

Bridging the divide: An inquiry into post-secondary decolonization policy and practice

by

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B.A, University of Victoria, 2012

M.A., University of Victoria, 2017

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on  
whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose  
historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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## Abstract

Post-secondary institutions in BC, Canada, continue to engage with reconciliation objectives and processes of decolonization, practices which are detailed in a growing body of literature, and which are informed by various developments and documents (e.g., the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act). Policy for these processes is diverse and ongoing. This dissertation aimed to understand some of the ways that policy and practice are connected in one Faculty at one post-secondary institution—the University of Victoria—using Narrative Inquiry. I interviewed administrative and teaching professionals to gain insight into some of the practices facilitating reconciliation and decolonization pathways. My findings included identifying policy as a relational process involving multiple interested parties—educators, administrators, and students, and involved policy as fluid, and dynamic from its creation to its implementation or enactment.

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## **Dedication**

For my loving family

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

I am a descendent of immigrants to what we now call Canada who originally travelled from La Rochelle, France to what we now know as Quebec City in the early part of the seventeenth century. These French ancestors lived on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat people for the last 400 years, and many of their descendants continue to live there today. I would like to begin this paper by acknowledging the Huron-Wendat people whose relationships with that land continue to this day. Although my parents were raised in Quebec, I was born and continue to live and work on the territories of the ləkʷəŋən people, and acknowledge the Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

### Background

In 2015, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report and 94 Calls to Action. The establishment of the TRC was a result of a successful large class-action lawsuit against the state and various church organizations for their roles in Indian Residential Schools (IRS), the last of which closed in 1997. Residential schools were a tangible expression of assimilatory policies and practices in Canada (Gebhard, 2017; Godlewska, et al., 2017), and have had, and continue to have, serious consequences for Indigenous peoples in this country (Jaworsky, 2018). The TRC was created to “facilitate reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities and all Canadians” (Government of Canada, 2022). Further to this, in 2016, the Federal Government endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)—a document affirming the rights of Indigenous

peoples globally. The province of British Columbia (BC) subsequently passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) in 2019 to establish a provincial mandate endorsing the UNDRIP as well as the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (BC Government). The development of the TRC in Canada, and the subsequent release of its findings, as well as the UNDRIP, have significantly impacted the discourse around Indigenous/state relations in Canada, “to the extent that the federal government has promised to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s ‘94 Calls to Action’” (Baskatawang, 2022, p. 2).

Within the 94 Calls to Action report that was released by the TRC, education is marked as a significant site of reconciliation (TRC, 2015). The TRC’s 94 Calls to Action references Education in actions 6 through 12, as well as 62 to 65; however, education in the form of training is also references in relation to other fields such as Health. Post-secondary institutions and other organizations, as well as governments, have come to consider ways in which reconciliation and decolonization should be implemented (Madden, 2019; Schmidt, 2019)—through policy and practice. The UNDRIP references Education in Articles 14 and 15, but also have references within other Articles. Article 15, for example, notes that “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information” (United Nations, 2007). The DRIPA subsequently states that the provincial government of BC must implement those recommendations of the UNDRIP.

I was introduced to the terms decolonization and reconciliation, and came to engage my curiosity about the what those terms mean throughout my post-secondary

experience. I will discuss this process further in Chapter 3: Methodology. This curiosity led me to undertake the research project that I will discuss in this dissertation, which centres around how one Faculty within a post-secondary institution engages with reconciliation and decolonization in the classroom and through their policies. Before I go any further, I think it is prudent to outline here some possible definitions for these terms—reconciliation and decolonization—that have come to inform my engagement with this topic, as well as other terminology used throughout this dissertation.

### ***Decolonization***

The term decolonization has various foci throughout the literature on post-secondary decolonization and reconciliation. I have come to understand decolonization in a post-secondary context to refer to several processes. Central to decolonization is the understanding that settler populations within settler states (such as Canada) will need to engage critically with colonial histories (both historic and ongoing) (Csontos, 2019; Koelwyn, 2018). Within the context of post-secondary spaces, this process of engagement would need to be reflected within the curriculum, and amongst various interested parties (i.e., teachers, students, and administrators). Other scholars (Attas, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2018) have similarly indicated that the process of decolonizing in a post-secondary context involves learning and understanding how processes of colonization have had and continue to have adverse effects on Indigenous populations (see Lokugamage et al., 2020) globally. There is also recognition that these processes are entrenched throughout various state systems, such as education, and that in order to decolonize, those systems must be fundamentally transformed to respect and promote Indigenous knowledges and systems of knowledges. For example, Mitchell et

al. (2018) suggest that “[t]he social and political interruptions that Indigenous populations endured through the settlement of Canada must be understood from the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and contextualized [...] for post-secondary institutions to authentically and productively engage in processes of decolonization” (p. 353). This concept of counter-narratives resonated throughout my research.

Decolonization in this case includes the implementation and presence of Indigenous counter narratives within the context of education, which contrast with the dominant colonial narratives of history and state systems that circulate.

The return of land by settler states to Indigenous peoples is also central to the process of decolonization (Csontos, 2019; Koelwyn, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Settler states engage in settler colonialism, which can be defined as settlers or outsiders claiming land as their own (Stein, 2020). This return can have implications for post-secondary institutions and their physical manifestations/locations, in the context of those settler states (such as Canada). For example, a decolonial perspective might consider historical and ongoing relationships between the institution, the land on which it sits, and the Indigenous populations that were/are affected by colonization (Stein, 2020). There are also varying degrees of the return of land. For example, designated Federal lands and other land owned by state could be returned to those Indigenous communities to which it belonged before colonization (Koelwyn, 2018). Considering land in the context of decolonization may also require settler populations to consider the history of the land on which they have settled (Koelwyn, 2018).

Some critiques of decolonization offer the opinion that it can run the risk of symbolizing or implying meaningful change without actually transforming the systems

(such as education) that it is intended to (Saini & Begum, 2019). In order to create meaningful change through decolonization, institutions will need to engage in processes that undo the commitment to various colonial practices within them. The notion of transformative change links with Friere's (2004) conceptualization of conscientization to action, or bringing theory and action together to bring meaningful change to society.

These definitions of decolonization all worked to inform this research project; however, much of the literature tended to lean into decolonizing state systems to respect and promote Indigenous Peoples, knowledges, and ways of knowing. I examine how these iterations of decolonization—decolonizing state systems, promoting Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and the role of land—can be considered in the context of post-secondary education in Chapter 5: Discussion.

### ***Reconciliation***

I have come to think about reconciliation as a process grounded in relationships. Aitken and Radford (2018) suggest that:

Reconciliation is a term that refers to peaceful coexistence and/or justice in post-conflict societies or ones that have been divided by human rights violations. It is also used for processes and practices that are intended to foster the new relationships. (p. 40)

I have also come to understand that reconciliation is the responsibility of non-Indigenous people to facilitate and engage with, particularly around the promotion of better relationships (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018, Vaudrin-Charette, 2019). This responsibility was evident throughout the literature as well as in the context of the

interviews that I conducted. In order to facilitate reconciliation, however, settler populations must engage with processes of decolonization, including understanding historical and ongoing processes of colonization in the context of various state systems (Csontos, 2019), such as education, or they risk replicating/continuing the processes of colonialism.

Referencing the relationship to land as described above, reconciliation may also involve a consideration of the relationship of self to land. Specifically, settler populations will need to reconcile their relationship to the land on which they have settled, by considering the historical and ongoing context related to that land.

### ***Terminology***

Throughout the literature and in the interviews that I conducted, there were some references to the notion of resurgence. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) identify resurgence as a “movement [...] focused on rebuilding and strengthening Indigenous culture, knowledges, and political orders” (p. 224). This term is referenced throughout various chapters in this dissertation.

Throughout the paper, I use the terms Indigenous and non-Indigenous to describe those groups that engage in reconciliation, decolonization, and resurgence in the context of post-secondary education. Indigenous, in the context of Canada, refers to individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis (Stein, 2020; TRC, 2015). Non-Indigenous people, or settlers, in contrast, are those who do not identify as Indigenous to the land, “or whose ancestors came from elsewhere” (Bissell & Kortewag, 2016, p. 3). I also utilize the term settler to describe these individuals in the context of Canada, as a settler state. I have to acknowledge, however, that this framing

can be problematic in that it presupposes a clear distinction between two identifiable groups. The language indicates that these groups exist as either/or, rather than indicating a possibility of both. Using alternative terms, Indigenous/settlers or immigrants offers the same presupposition. I would like to caveat my writing here to suggest that these terms are but some possibilities. In the context of reconciliation, it is indeed the responsibility of non-Indigenous/settler/immigrant or immigrant descendent communities to engage in reconciliation action (TRC, 2015), and ultimately this is the distinction that I am making. However, as Donald (2012) reminds us, identities are not so easily categorized. Dichotomies can be problematic insofar as they can limit our understanding; in this case, limiting our understanding of possible identities that individuals hold. Some individuals experience both Indigenous and non-Indigenous/settler/immigrant identities and I would like to offer here the possibility that this is true in this context. For the purposes of this discussion, utilizing these terms offered me a way to delineate a sense of responsibility—specifically that non-Indigenous/settlers/immigrants have a responsibility to engage in reconciliation, and that there are differing roles in the process of reconciliation and decolonization, rather than describing individuals' self-identification.

As a white researcher, I experienced some tension at the beginning of this process, wanting to ensure that what I was doing was appropriate. I came to the realization, through conversations and some self-reflection, that it was not only appropriate but necessary. I discuss the process of this further in Chapter 3: Methodology.

### **Research problem/puzzles**

As I began this doctoral program, I envisioned myself researching the ways in which public spaces “educate” the public around reconciliation or decolonization. While I had originally considered public spaces as in public monuments and other collective spaces, I came to the realization that post-secondary education was an important point of consideration, as it has wide networks of influence. As I delved into the available literature on this subject, I wondered how teachers in these spaces could best engage with decolonization and reconciliation, in a way that was respectful and meaningful. As I pursued this line of questioning, it occurred to me that the available literature for decolonizing education broadly offered pedagogical tools that teachers could implement (e.g. Louie et al., 2017), and the literature reviewed ways that policy at can have implications for various goals (e.g. Young & Diem, 2017) such as decolonization. However, I wondered how the two components related. My research “puzzle” then became discovering the connection between policy and practice at post-secondary institutions. Instead of viewing policy and practice as separate and distinct realities, how did these come to inform one another on the subject of reconciliation or decolonization? How were teachers and administrators at post-secondary institutions working in the space in between government policies and enactment?

Questioning the relationship between policy and practice—or whether these could even be considered separate and distinct entities—was a large task. I opted to investigate the University of Victoria, and to further narrow the scope, I selected the Faculty of Education as my point of focus for this research. One of the more prominent reasons for this decision was the indication that education is a significant site for reconciliation (Kearns et al., 2018; TRC, 2015) and decolonization, and that the Faculty

of Education is not only involved in the post-secondary landscape, but has an influence on future K-12 teachers and students as it contains an approved BC Teacher Education program. Two bodies of research then came to inform my research development: (1) literature surrounding teaching for reconciliation and/or decolonization; and (2) education policy.

### **Context**

The University of Victoria is located in Victoria, BC, at the southern tip of Vancouver Island on the traditional territories of the ləkʷəŋən people. Vancouver Island is situated in the Pacific Northwest, and offers varied topography, including mountains, valleys, rainforests, as well as lakes, rivers, and the Pacific Ocean. Victoria is the capital of British Columbia, and the seat of the provincial government.

The Faculty of Education is comprised of four departments, and offers a wide array of programs including teacher education, graduate programs, Indigenous programs, minors and electives, and professional development. There were over 100 members of Faculty, over 800 undergraduate students, over 300 graduate students, and almost 300 new alumni in 2022 (UVic Faculty of Education, 2022).

### **Research Aims, Objectives, Questions**

In developing this research puzzle, I came to identify four themes throughout the literature, which were recurring, and which helped me to structure my understanding of the topics. I identified these in the literature through recurring iterations on teaching for reconciliation in post-secondary education as well as the literature around decolonization policies in post-secondary spaces. These themes were: 1) self-reflexivity, 2) respectful engagement, 3) synergy of policy with practice, and 4)

inclusion. Self-reflexivity, although the term had various iterations, came broadly to mean to me, the development of awareness of self and community knowledge, with some consideration of how one's actions impacted community. Respectful engagement in the literature was frequently referenced in terms of pedagogies, curriculum, and other tools to promote decolonizing practice. Synergy of policy and practice was referred to in the literature as these two factors co-creating space for decolonization and reconciliation. Inclusion overarchingly referred to the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and systems of knowledges in post-secondary spaces. I will discuss these themes further, both as referenced in the literature and as they emerged in the research project in Chapter 5: Discussion.

In congruence with these four themes, I then developed my research questions, the process of which I will further detail in Chapter 3: Methodology. The first question I posed was “what is the connection between decolonization or reconciliation policy and practice within the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria?” The second was “how does self-reflexivity inform theory or practice for policymakers or educators within the Faculty of Education?” The third question became, “what is considered to represent respectful engagement and inclusion with reconciliation objectives in mind within the Faculty of Education?” I explore the process of developing these questions further in Chapter 3: Methodology.

### **Significance**

The significance of this research project is in highlighting some perspectives on policy and its enactment within a Faculty at one institution. The literature offers exploration of teaching practices and educational policy, but as I came to realize, these

are not necessarily distinguishable from one another. In Chapter 2: Literature Review, I will outline some of the literature available on post-secondary policy and enactment, as well as literature discussing post-secondary initiatives for decolonization and reconciliation. This research project contributes to the growing body of literature in these areas by identifying some ways that one post-secondary institution engages with decolonization and reconciliation policy and its enactment. This research identifies some of the ways that the two concepts overlap and how they inform decolonization and reconciliation within a Faculty in one institution. The research is aimed at understanding the processes that underlie policy and policy enactment, from multiple perspectives, including some perspectives from educators and administrators within the Faculty. The findings can inform policymaking at a broad level; if policymakers from government bodies who are creating post-secondary policies understand some of the nuance that policy takes as it travels through institutions and is interpreted by individuals, then the findings can operate as a sort of feedback loop for policy. The findings can further inform practice at the institution, including the practice of policymaking at an institutional or Faculty level. Finally, this dissertation has been a practice in decolonizing my own sense of post-secondary education and putting it to words. The significance to me has been finding ways to develop and articulate this process as a non-Indigenous individual.

### **Limitations**

Potential limitations of this dissertation include the scope of the research. For example, this research focused on some of the educator and administrator perspectives within the Faculty of Education at one institution (UVic). Gathering data

from eight participants may have limited the diversity of views that are held throughout the Faculty, a limitation which is further discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Although this could be a limitation in terms of generating data that is generalizable, I opted to ground the research within a methodology that does not seek generalizable data, but rather identifies various perspectives. In this research project, I found value in attempting to understand the perspectives within this small sample to better understand policy development and enactment in situ.

Other factors which influenced the research include the methods used to generate data. For example, during the interviews, I utilized question prompts, but found that as my understanding of the topic grew, I was better able to navigate organic lines of questioning throughout later interviews. Additionally, my results and subsequent interpretations and findings may be limited by the questions that I chose to ask in the interviews. As a result, it is possible I was not able to capture certain aspects of participants' experience through the questions that I posed. In order to mitigate this possibility, I asked a range of relatively broad questions as well as more specific ones, in order to capture a range of participant experience.

## **Structure**

This dissertation will outline the literature on policy and practice for decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary institutions starting in Chapter 2. It will consider various perspectives for this work, including the diverse ways that decolonization is approached. The literature promotes multiple terminology for these practices which can include but are not limited to decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization of those institutions. Some of the work that informed my understanding

of these terms were conceptualized by Mitchell et al. (2018) with a discussion of various principles of decolonization. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) also informed my understanding outlining three methods for Indigenizing post-secondary institutions. Both will be further outlined in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

Engaging in decolonization work can trigger “unsettling” for non-Indigenous, settler participants. There is a significant body of literature that focuses on the effects of unsettling (see for example: Hollinsworth, 2016; Koelwyn, 2018; Mackenzie, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2018; Regan, 2010) and how this has implications for “taking up” the important work of decolonization. I will review what unsettling means, some of the challenges that are associated with unsettling as illuminated by the literature, as well as some of the “antidotes” to this. As I mentioned previously, there are practical tools that teachers in post-secondary and other institutions can apply within their own practice to implement decolonizing behaviours. I will review some of these practices as they are recommended, as well as the literature around policy at post-secondary institutions. Some of the literature is primarily focused on the effects of various policy developments in institutions as well as the enactment by various actors within the institutions (Levinson et al., 2018). The enactment of policy is frequently discussed in terms of resistance to policy created by actors within institutions (Lashaw, 2018). I will review the conceptions of policy and its enactment as inseparable entities.

Chapter 3 will outline the methodology, Narrative Inquiry, as well as Indigenist methodologies, as they apply to my project. I applied principles of both in shaping and conducting this research and dissertation. I will consider ways in which the principles around Métissage (see Burke & Robinson, 2019; Donald, 2012) have also come to

inform my theory and methodology as a white researcher considering issues of decolonization in post-secondary spaces. Métissage assisted me in tying the pieces of methodologies and theories together in a way that made sense, but more importantly in a way that was respectful and considerate of multiple perspectives. In particular, I appreciated the lack of need to resolve tensions in sensitive subject matter (Burke & Robinson, 2019; Donald, 2012). These methodologies highlighted a concern for respect, and care, for participants, and for a diversity of views, which aligned with the approach that I felt would be best, as I considered the possibility that I might encounter diverse views. I conclude Chapter 3 with an outline of the methods of data collection, participants and the rationale for those choices, a plan for data analysis, and some of the considerations I had for validity and trustworthiness in this research project as well as the potential challenges associated with the methodology.

Chapter 4 involves a review of the results of my conversations, and observations. I highlight eight sub-themes under the umbrellas of the four broader themes that I identified above. Under the umbrella of *Self-Reflexivity*, two sub-themes included: 1) responsibility, resistance, and tension; and 2) the reliance on Indigenous Education colleagues. Under *Respectful Engagement* were the sub-themes: 3) pedagogy as decolonization; 4) decentring Western perspectives; and 5) tools/supports for decolonization. *Synergy of Policy with Practice* included the sub-themes: 6) challenges with university structural dynamics; and 7) accountability. And finally, within *Inclusion*, I identified the sub-theme of 8) possibilities and challenges of inclusion. In Chapter 4, I also reveal the variety of interpretations around reconciliation, decolonization, and resurgence as indicated by the participants. Resurgence, a

concept introduced in my review of the literature, also made an appearance during my interviews, and I will discuss the significance of this term in this chapter.

**Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes**

<b>Theme</b>	Self-Reflexivity	Respectful Engagement	Synergy of policy with practice	Inclusion
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility, resistance, and tension</li> <li>• Reliance on Indigenous colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogy as decolonization</li> <li>• Decentring Western perspectives</li> <li>• Tools/supports for decolonization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges with university structural dynamics</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibilities and challenges of inclusion</li> </ul>

Chapter 5 is a discussion of key findings from interviews and the document analysis in Chapter 4, as well as interpretations of those findings that I have made throughout my research project. I will discuss the implications of those key findings and interpretations, acknowledge the various limitations to key findings and interpretations, and outline my recommendations for future research and work. I centre this discussion around the three research questions that I posed in Chapter 1.

Finally, I conclude this dissertation by summarizing my key findings and interpretations, and offering some possibilities for moving forward with decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary spaces.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter reviews the available literature on decolonizing post-secondary education in colonized contexts, as well as the literature on education policy—what policy is, what policy does, and how it is enacted. I begin with an overview of various models of decolonization primarily as illustrated by Mitchell et al.'s (2018) four principles of decolonization, Pewewardy et al.'s (2018) Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model, which highlights stages of educators' decolonization of self and praxis, as well as three models of Indigenizing post-secondary institutions as described by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018). Unsettling—a potential effect of decolonization—is then reviewed as a common feature within the literature on decolonization, and I include a discussion of resistance to decolonization as a result of unsettling. There are various enactments of decolonization in post-secondary institutions, and I review those enactments as various pedagogies and tools utilized by educators. The chapter then addresses various aspects of policy—including what it is, who it is for, why it is used, and how it is tied to decolonization practice, followed by a description of existing policy documents pertaining to decolonization and reconciliation at UVic and within the context of BC and Canada.

### **Decolonization**

The literature on decolonizing teacher education, and higher education more generally, reflects the involvement of various interested parties within those institutions—students, teachers, administrators, etc.—but there are multiple visions for how reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization can or should be presented in post-secondary education. To better understand the diversity of those applications, I

turned to Mitchell et al. (2018) for an assessment of relational principles of decolonization, and Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) for a reflection on various modes of Indigenizing those institutions. These frameworks were reflected in various iterations in many sources throughout my research process. I would like to address these frameworks and their relationship to the themes I have identified throughout the literature on decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization. These themes include *self-reflexivity, respectful engagement, Indigenous inclusion, and the synergy(ies) of policy with practice.*

### ***Principle 1***

Mitchell et al. (2018) deliver a set of principles for the decolonization of post-secondary spaces, and while the authors note “that the transformation required for decoloniality is immense,” (p. 352) there is the potential to transform these spaces, and indeed a responsibility to do so. Principle 1 states that “[d]ecolonization is embedded in and informed by an Indigenous lens/worldview” (p. 351). Fundamental to this argument is that post-secondary institutions are presumed to operate on the assumption that they maintain curriculum that “represents the neutral and necessary story for ‘all’ of us” (Battiste et al., 2002, p. 83). While I had considered the idea that post-secondary institutions were generally lacking in diverse representation, the notion that they represent a “neutral” story implies post-secondary institutions as apolitical, somehow separate from the entanglements that are constituted by historical, social, historical, and political processes of which higher education is a part (Bell, 2020). In order to decolonize post-secondary institutions, therefore, those places would need to work to make space for Indigenous knowledges and worldviews.

Indigenous researchers have long advocated for Indigenous representation and knowledge within education, or as Korteweg and Fiddler (2018) write, “establish[ing] the urgent importance of honouring Indigenous cultures, histories, perspectives, and knowledge in all levels of education, including teacher education” (p. 255). Much of the literature is engaged with exactly this process of Indigenous representation and knowledge within education (e.g. Louie et al., 2017; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Attas (2019) and Louie et al. (2017) argue that this process can occur through a paralleling of Indigenous epistemologies and Western worldview, and particularly should occur in tandem within course content, rather than as a separate branch of study, or exclusively within Indigenous Content Courses (Louie et al., 2017). Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) highlight the possibility of a “dual university” structure for Western and Indigenous university “sides” to collectively serve community while maintaining autonomy. Ottman (Louie et al., 2017) describes “claiming” and “connecting” exercises “to develop identity and leadership in students” (p. 24), as one way to facilitate the incorporation of Indigenous values within classroom settings. Louie et al. (2017) incorporate negotiation as an Indigenous principle in order to “collaboratively assign grades” (p. 25) as another example. Negotiation, as one of the key principles in Indigenous worldviews (Smith, 2012), includes withholding grades until after the teacher has delivered feedback on an assignment to the student and the student can “negotiate the merits of their submission” (Louie et al., 2017, p. 25).

A challenge with this aspect of Principle 1 is the commensurability of historical thinking, colonial frameworks that shape institutions, and Indigenous knowledges (Miles, 2019). Paralleling Indigenous and Western epistemologies throughout

institutions would also require a consideration of localized Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. Although Smith (2012) and others (Wilson, 2008) have outlined tenets of Indigenous worldviews, “it is important to understand that Indigenous knowledges are specific to local contexts and to different Indigenous peoples” (Miles, 2019, 51). This must be a consideration of institutions and participants within this first principle of decolonization. Honouring Indigenous worldviews and perspectives within this first principle of decolonization also considers the notion that Indigenous voices must be present throughout all areas of post-secondary institutions. This includes areas of leadership and administration (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). This inclusion runs the risk, however, of “placing the burden for decolonizing and Indigenizing higher education onto Indigenous Peoples by asking them to lead the change” (Attas, 2019, p. 126). I have ascertained through various other texts (for example, Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020), that a balance is needed within this Principle to ensure that non-Indigenous participants are actively disrupting colonial frameworks and “unsettling” themselves and their pedagogies, while institutions simultaneously do a better job of inclusivity at all levels to ensure diversity of voices. Balance in this context means doing the work of disrupting colonial frameworks as well as working to include Indigenous perspectives at all levels of the post-secondary landscape. Inclusivity in this context means for example, inclusion at teaching positions, administrative positions, and various committee membership positions.

### ***Principle 2***

Principle 2 argues that “[d]ecolonization interrupts colonial power dynamics holding non-Indigenous faculty and students responsible for understanding and

engaging in respectful relations with Indigenous peoples” (Mitchell et al., 2018, p. 351). Interrupting colonial power dynamics is not limited to certain areas or disciplines. While authors such as Schaepli and Godlewska (2019) have recounted that many modern individual disciplines served to facilitate and entrench colonial power systems of thought within post-secondary institutions, institutions as a whole (including those individual disciplines) would do well to attend to an interruption of colonial power dynamics (Attas, 2019). Scholarship in this field has well-articulated the idea that non-Indigenous participants need to be held accountable and fully engage in this process in order to see progress of decolonization (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Attas, 2019; Csontos, 2019; Vaudrin-Charette, 2019). This accountability can include the mandate of non-Indigenous teachers to incorporate Indigenous perspectives within their curricula. However, a challenge of this principle lies in the “inexcusable yet oft-repeated rationale that many teachers hold: they cannot teach this material or content since they never learned it during their own K-16 educations or they cannot source appropriate resources” (Kortewag & Fiddler, 2018, p. 259). Considering education is political (Kortewag & Fiddler, 2018)—a topic which I discuss further in this chapter—the consequences for Indigenous peoples are vast if non-Indigenous participants do not take up this mantle. This is compounded by the idea that some teacher education programs, in the United States as an example, can be predominantly white cohorts (Sleeter, 2017), which may influence the level of resistance by teacher cohorts.

Zembylas (2021) argues for refusal as a method to “mar[k] a political ethos and praxis that denies, resists, reframes and redirects colonial and neoliberal logics, while asserting diverse sovereignties and lifeworlds” (p. 2), in the context of engagement with

decolonization. Specifically, they argue for the implementation of refusal frameworks within curriculum and pedagogies to refuse colonial frameworks of state education.

Some scholars, such as Hollinsworth (2016), note that resistance is largely the domain of white settler citizens who want to resist the change that decolonization champions. Hollinsworth (2016) notes that “students often resist recognition of their own racial position, associated privilege, and the impact of racism on Aboriginal people” (p. 413), while other authors such as Aitken and Radford (2018) reflect on the resistance of teachers to the same principles. The reasons for resistance are varied. As noted above, some authors articulate the message that some, or most (Bissell & Kortewag, 2016), non-Indigenous teachers simply do not feel prepared to teach Indigenous content—through a lack of resources or personal training (Kortewag & Fiddler, 2018; Louie et al., 2017). Csontos (2019) reflects that “without adequate support in learning about how colonization operates in Canada and of Canadians’ complicity with colonialism, reconciliation cannot be attained” (p. 150), furthering the position that supporting teacher education in this topic is critical to the success of reconciliation objectives, and that supporting this objective throughout teacher education is an institutional imperative (Koelwyn, 2018). Resistance to decolonizing can also stem from the “threat” that some non-Indigenous participants may feel to their privileges. Indeed, theories of interest convergence from Critical Race Theory (CRT) suggest that White actors in education would advance aims which converge with White interests (Sleeter, 2017). Without critical reflexivity, non-Indigenous people can run the risk of replicating those colonial frameworks (and interest convergence) in their desire to resist the “unsettling” emotions that come with decolonization.

Mitchell et al. (2018) articulate clearly through Principle 2 that students and faculty are accountable or responsible for their roles in the academy, and “understanding and engaging in respectful relations with Indigenous Peoples” (p. 361) as argued elsewhere (Csontos 2019; Koelwyn, 2018). I am interested, however, in drawing attention to the discourse around policy development and enactment in many of these calls for interrupting colonial frameworks, as I believe it is critical to the discussion of decolonizing institutions. As some policy authors have noted, policymakers, authorized and otherwise, are a crucial component of education, (Lashaw, 2018), and in this respect deserve consideration throughout the activation of this principle of decolonization in order to understand the greater scope of decolonization in post-secondary settings. Considering policymakers in addition to teachers in post-secondary institutions will develop a more fulsome context for the ways in which policy is created and enacted.

### ***Principle 3***

Principle 3 engenders a sense of accountability or responsibility throughout the process of decolonization (the responsibility of non-Indigenous actors within an institution to engage with decolonization action). According to Mitchell et al. (2018), this principle “progress[es] from conscientization to action” and “begin[s] with a foundational understanding of history and Settler-Indigenous power relations as a foundation to decolonial policy and action” (p. 361). I have come to understand this as both a personal journey for non-Indigenous participants as well as one in which individuals petition their respective institutions to embrace learning historical and ongoing colonial power relations to better facilitate good relationships between

Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada. Aspects of decolonization, as noted here, also impact reconciliation objectives. As Korteweg and Fiddler (2018) argue, “Indigenous scholars contend that reconciliation means non-Indigenous Canadians must be held accountable by addressing ongoing settler-colonial dominance and oppression as well as supporting Indigenous self-determination in institutions such as education” (p. 257). Aitken and Radford (2018) similarly support the need for individuals to examine their responsibilities in respect to reconciliation, using reflexive practices—marked elsewhere as an important tool in examining historical and ongoing colonial power relations (Zembylas, 2021).

One of the circularities around this particular principle, however, is the cycle of settler ignorance (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018) that can be perpetuated if an outside force does not interfere. Without awareness of their ignorance, a non-Indigenous person may be hard pressed to identify their complicity, yet without learning about their complicity, they may be challenged in attending to their ignorance. Non-Indigenous people who have been enculturated to a Western ontologies and epistemologies may not recognize the impacts of their daily practices that perpetuate cultural harm for Indigenous communities (Csontos, 2019). This circularity highlights the necessity for institutional involvement in creating cycles of awareness, and the necessity in creating policies that effectively encourage this process, of which there is a growing body of literature (Aitken & Radford, 2018). Cote-Meek (2020) notes education as a critical site of reconciliation, and the TRC’s (2015) Calls to Action have also provided a starting point for critically examining those relationships, and addressing settler complicity in colonial frameworks.

### ***Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model***

The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM) was created by Pewewardy to “promote critical awareness and cultural consciousness” (Pewewardy et al., 2018) amongst educators to better serve children within the school system, but especially Indigenous children. It echoes some of the components of decolonization laid out by Mitchell et al. (2018), as well as those contained in the variations on Indigenization described by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018). For example, later stages of the TIPM reflect the concepts of decolonization through teachers including Indigenous worldviews within their curriculum. Comprehensive engagements with Indigenization as described by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) also highlight the need for Indigenous content and Indigenous knowledge frameworks to guide curriculum.

The TIPM is particularly useful in identifying where individuals are as they engage with decolonization and Indigenization, but it was specifically created as a reference for teachers interested in critical pedagogies, assisting students in their critical thinking. This is described as a “scaffolding process” (Pewewardy et al., 2018, p. 53), wherein teachers occupy various stages of a pyramid model of four phases—the Contributions Approach, the Additive Approach, the Transformation Approach, and Cultural and Social Justice Action. While teachers can work their way through the pyramid to achieve greater cultural agility and critical pedagogies, it is likely that they will shift throughout the model, sometimes occupying more than one stage. The authors identify that it is by no means a fixed model, and is rather context dependent; teachers may find themselves showcasing aspects of each stage in their transformation depending on context. Pewewardy et al. (2018) write:

This is not a path to a pure form of enlightenment, it is a tool to ignite educators at all levels to critically analyze their social justice efforts in Indigenous communities and envision culturally responsive learning pathways through a higher level of self-awareness. (p. 53)

The tool also references some of the challenges that educators face when they are within the scope of each stage. The values showcased in the development of this model—critical analysis, self-awareness and reflexivity, cultural agility—are in tandem with the findings of other scholars writing on decolonization and Indigenization (regarding educator and student self-awareness and reflexivity, see Csontos, 2019). As I discovered more strategies throughout the literature, it became apparent to me that these general values were frequently present, particularly when it came to non-Indigenous educators. While the literature was diverse in its presentation of those values—varying from theory to the application of decolonization and Indigenization in teacher education specifically—the pattern of these values presented in various iterations. Csontos (2019), for example, discusses the value in non-Indigenous educators and students considering their identities in relation to colonization (historic and contemporary), and in relation to Indigenous people. Koelwyn (2019) highlights self-awareness of shame as a tool for non-Indigenous people to engage with reconciliation. The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model discussed here may be rather generalized (as in, providing a generalized set of values for each stage) in how teachers exhibit decolonized praxis; however, when viewed in conjunction with the literature on decolonization and Indigenization, it becomes clear that it is a matter of exhibiting key values. The authors also note that this is not a one-size-fits-all approach,

or “that these stages are precise” (Pewewardy et al., 2018, p. 58), but are rather a tool for engaging with decolonization and Indigenization, locating oneself in the scope of possibilities, and discovering the potential for growth.

The Contributions Approach (Phase 1) “represents an unreflective or challenged thinker with a dysconsciousness of racism” (Pewewardy et al., 2018, p. 54). The individual within this stage will not exhibit knowledge of critical socio-political issues which disproportionately impact Indigenous communities, such as the historical contexts of the residential school systems and their ongoing effects on Indigenous communities, or of Canadian child welfare policies (Csontos, 2019), wherein 48% of the children represented in foster care system are Indigenous, while only 7% of children in Canada are identified as such. This staggering figure represents the contemporary policies and practices that serve to strengthen colonial frameworks (Csontos, 2019). Other scholars have noted that resistance to decolonization and Indigenization can be framed as an argument of “we are all the same,” (see Hollinsworth, 2016; Steinman, 2020), while Pewewardy et al. (2018) identify this particular form of resistance is most likely to be represented by educators within Phase 1. The threat to colonial frameworks is limited within this phase, and methods of resistance are minimal to reflect this. Curricula are standardized and generally reject diverse content. Teachers may feel pressured to maintain the status quo due to factors such as future employment for new graduates, or having not yet established themselves within the school system.

My understanding of this phase is that it is absent of the themes identified throughout the literature of reflexivity, respectful engagement, and inclusion. On the

topic of synergy of practice and policy, this phase appears to assume that policy (both wider state-policies and local school administrative policies) is aligned with practice in that they both have a desire to maintain colonial frameworks, either consciously or not. There is a thread throughout this model of understanding that the school systems and teachers within those systems represent different values. In this particular example, teachers are represented as participants that do not resist colonial frameworks, and are generally comfortable perpetuating their unawareness and that of some of their students. In this example, there is an understanding that policy (school policy) and practice (that of the teachers) is synergistic in their maintenance of colonial frameworks.

The Additive Approach forms the second phase of the TIPM (Pewewardy et al., 2018), in which the authors describe teachers as “beginning to deconstruct and change structural colonial frameworks” (Pewewardy et al., 2018, p. 55). While teachers in this phase may be attempting to develop self-reflexivity, this is not generally reflected in their praxis as educators. Teachers in the Additive Approach may attempt to incorporate some diverse content in their curriculum to apply a critical lens (Lees et al., 2021), but may face resistance from their peers as they attempt to do so. As curriculum is developed in conjunction with other parties (administrators, other teachers), the teachers of this phase may feel pressured to defend their desire to decolonize or Indigenize content. Vaudrin-Charette (2019) offers a description of this experience; as the author engaged with transformational praxis in teaching for post-secondary education, their colleagues questioned the need for this at all. For example, it was noted that colleagues questioned the need for Indigenizing education,

specifically, rather than “simply advocating for diversity” in representation and content (Vaudrin-Charette, 2019, p. 111).

The Transformation Approach as the third phase sees “practitioners move toward liberatory pedagogy” (Pewewardy et al., 2018, p. 56), as well as face stronger opposition. Teachers will negotiate conversations of race and racism and apply their knowledge of cultural content within the classroom but still feel compelled to balance school administrator expectations (Lees et al., 2021). Pewewardy et al. (2018) write that teachers may “avoid direct language, [in critical discussions] such as “racism” and “white privilege,” in favor of more general terminology, such as “human relations” and “equality,” to appease the white, conservative leadership” (p. 60). I had to wonder as I processed this piece, whether there is an unexpected advantage to teachers using more generalized terms in this context. The literature on decolonization is replete with discourse around “unsettling” as non-Indigenous participants engage with facing their complicity in perpetuating colonial frameworks. I wondered how certain terminology would impact the level of engagement with critical thinking around decolonization. I wondered within this phase how using variations of terms impacted engagement. I continue to wonder how terminology in critical discussions impact both the active participation in engagement and quality of learning.

The fourth phase is Cultural and Social Justice Action, which sees educators who have progressed to become “accomplished critical thinker[s] and embod[y] intellectual creativity in which their navigation of colonial resistance in efforts of decolonization have become second nature” (Pewewardy et al., 2018, p. 57).

Educators in this phase often educate teachers or are viewed as community leaders or

knowledge keepers within their communities, having advanced understanding of Indigenous knowledges, and exhibiting humility. They are committed to transforming education and fulfill an advocacy role in this respect, acting to decolonize and Indigenize education. Resistance to this phase, however, can take a similarly active role. Pewewardy et al. (2018) cite the “prohibition of Indigenous spirituality, forced relocation of entire tribal nations, and a wide range of other efforts,” (p. 60) such as violent protests to maintain the colonial structures that uphold Western societies. As the resistance to various phases within this model can drain educators as they attempt to decolonize and Indigenize their praxis, creating support networks are cited as an effective antidote to this fatigue (Pewewardy et al., 2018). While the model is specifically oriented to engage K-12 teachers in their quest for transformation, I imagine the principles outlined here would greatly impact actors within the post-secondary landscape such as administrators and authorized policymakers. For example, policymakers at an institutional level could provide greater synergy with practice of educators within this phase. As actors within the academy, they could offer support and alignment with practicing educators at this phase of transformation.

#### ***Principle 4***

The fourth principle “transforms policy, curricula, and institutional spaces” (Mitchell et al., 2018, p. 361). While the transformation of policy and curricula has been marked as a key aspect of decolonizing higher education, some authors have observed that these transformations in institutions have not transformed actual practice. The policies that may have been implemented have not provided for substantive change throughout the university. Heleta (2016) argues that “while universities have had new

policies and frameworks that speak about equality, equity, transformation, and change, institutional cultures and epistemological traditions have not changed” (p. 2). The literature on this challenge is varied; some authors agree with Heleta’s (2016) contention that institutional cultures have not changed substantively with the advent of decolonization policies (for example, Brunette Debissage et al., 2022; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018), while others have found that policymakers and administrators who facilitate changes in policy and curricula are only a part of the story (Levinson et al., 2018). Non-authorized policymakers such as teachers, in these instances, can sometimes facilitate change at a practice level (Levinson et al., 2018), and affect social practices as a result. Policy changes that involve inclusion—that is, hiring Indigenous faculty and other members of the institution are also reported throughout the literature (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Heleta, 2016). They may also involve changes to curricula; for example, Hollinsworth (2016) highlights the “use of as much Aboriginal literature as possible, inclusion of Aboriginal guest lectures, videos, and websites to provide Aboriginal voices” (p. 421) in a classroom. Although this author’s experience is in relation to Indigenous content courses and anti-racism courses at an Australian university, the principle of curriculum transformation remains the same. Other areas (other disciplines including those not specifically related to Indigenous Content and anti-racism) of the academy can similarly transform curricula using these strategies. While the efficacy of these policies and curricula are diverse, there is a clear indication that policy and practice must co-exist and influence one another for any meaningful change to exist.

### **Indigenization**

Indigenization is another focus in the literature on decolonization and reconciliation within higher education institutions. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) provided a well-composed outline for the diverse perspectives on Indigenization in these settings. Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation Indigenization, and decolonial Indigenization are the three models that the authors represented in institutions across Canada that seek to engage with decolonization as well as the Truth and Reconciliation objectives as recommended by the TRC (2015).

Indigenous inclusion is aimed at the incorporation of “Indigenous students, faculty, and staff within the Canadian academy” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 218), primarily through the incorporation of institutional policies or directives. Canadian universities might maintain quotas to ensure diversification in various parts of the institution, but as Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) and others (Louie et al., 2017) maintain, this does little to substantively engage with reconciliation objectives or decolonization. The colonial framework underpinning those institutions effectively remains untouched, and in fact encourages assimilatory behaviour. That is, Indigenous peoples are expected to “fit” themselves into this colonial framework, whether as students, faculty, or staff. Addressing the role of student in this framework, Csontos (2019) suggests that “Indigenous students’ success is measured based on their engagement within colonial schools” (p. 155). This often takes the form of “deficit learning” (Anuik & Gillies, 2012), in which learners are judged against their ability to assimilate to their surroundings. The impact to reconciliation in this context is that the responsibility of “reconciling” is left to Indigenous participants (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018), while the TRC details reconciliation as the responsibility of “all Canadians, as Treaty peoples, shar[ing] responsibility for

establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships” (TRC, 2015, p. 4). Some scholars, however, establish that the responsibility for reconciliation is with non-Indigenous participants (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2018). While the framework alone is not sufficient to facilitate meaningful change, it can enable auxiliary benefits, such as Indigenous learning support centres, or services pertaining to health and cultural wellness, and through these resources, aid in the development of stronger community ties for Indigenous participants (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Additionally, if more Indigenous staff and faculty are hired throughout Canadian institutions, then those participants are more likely to receive promotions to authorized policy-making positions within the institution. This can promote meaningful change throughout the institution as Indigenous voices are “at the table” for critical change initiatives such as policy and strategic planning for the institution (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

The second vision, reconciliation Indigenization, integrates hiring policies as well as Indigenous knowledges throughout the institution. This vision centres around ideation of reconciliation and the role of post-secondary institutions in reconciling “Indigenous knowledges and European-derived knowledges” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 219) and relationships between those institutions and Indigenous communities. The notion of reconciliation, while entering public discourse in the 1990s, became more widely used after the release of the TRC’s (2015) Calls to Action (Cote-Meek, 2020; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Education was named as a key site for reconciliation, and institutions are well-positioned to deliver culturally agile content for learners. While

Indigenous advisory committees were largely formed after the release of the 94 Calls to Action, some programs also implemented mandatory Indigenous Content Courses or Indigenous Course Requirements (ICRs), such as in Teacher Education Programs in an effort to address the post-secondary education and its role in reconciliation objectives. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) note that “university faculty who teach Indigenous studies, still overwhelmingly believe that ICRs have the potential to help settler Canadians gain greater understanding of Indigenous-Canada relations” (p. 222). This connects with the theme of reflexivity that I have identified throughout the literature. ICRs can facilitate non-Indigenous self-awareness and reflexivity and lead to better understanding of historical, social, political, and economic contexts for colonial frameworks, as well as an opportunity to reflect on complicity within those systems.

Decolonial Indigenization is the most challenging vision for post-secondary institutions to embody as the “most radical and substantive approach to indigenization” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 223). While the previous two visions involve policy changes, policy enactment, and Indigenous content integration to varying degrees, this approach seeks to undermine the underlying colonial framework that perpetuates colonial power relations and currently fortifies post-secondary education (Cote-Meek, 2020). The authors argue for a treaty-based method of governance which would affectively create a “dual-university” wherein the Indigenous and non-Indigenous sides of a university would be equal in their level of institutional authority in decisions affecting education which include policy and curriculum (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). This method would also see a resurgence of Indigenous knowledges and principles and

would embody land-based and community-based learning which are generally presented away from traditional classroom settings.

As with the approaches to decolonization, the approaches to Indigenization that I discovered throughout the literature appear to be more synergistic when they are applied in concert with one another; rather than relying on an exclusive approach, decolonization and Indigenization will require a collective approach in post-secondary education if institutions want to provide meaningful change.

### **Unsettling**

Unsettling is widely discussed throughout the literature on decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary education (See Hollinsworth, 2016; Koelwyn, 2018, Mitchell et al., 2018) but has also been used in other contexts and academic disciplines such as law (Mackey, 2014), and child and youth care (MacKenzie, 2020). Unsettling is described by Koelwyn (2018) as “dismantling the settler privilege that has upheld dominant narratives” (p. 235). It refers to the process of unsettling colonial frameworks and the settler participants within those systems, which can invoke feelings of shame and guilt for settler participants as they learn colonial histories and engage with Indigenous perspectives, as well as understand how they may benefit from processes of colonization. In the context of Canada, unsettling can be a practice wherein settler Canadians learn about historical processes of colonization, including residential schools (Regan, 2010). Through unsettling settler colonialism, those settler communities may identify with feelings of uncertainty and discomfort (Mackey, 2014), as they are prompted to engage with their own ignorance to—or complicity within—those structures. Mackenzie (2020) describes this process as “challenging colonial

violence, racism, and white settler fragility” (p. 82), while Steinman (2020) views unsettling as “a framework for understanding the place and relationship of non-Indigenous people to Indigenous decolonization and settler colonialism” (p. 561).

### ***Resistance***

The process of unsettling can result in settler feelings of guilt and shame, as they grapple with historical, social, political, and economic consequences of colonialism. While this process is necessary to decolonization (Mitchell et al., 2018), unsettling and the emotional response for settler participants can become a form of resistance to decolonization. This can have implications for taking “consciousness towards action” (Steinman, 2020, p. 562) and stymie the effort to decolonize post-secondary institutions. Students may embody this form of resistance when decolonizing pedagogies are in place, as cited by Hollinsworth (2016). The author notes in the context of teaching Aboriginal studies and anti-racism courses at an Australian university, that some white students become ambivalent toward decolonization as they may not view ongoing colonial frameworks as “their fault” (p. 413). Denial as resistance occurs at several levels, with scholars noting that at both individual level and national level (Hollinsworth, 2016), this is a significant challenge in decolonization efforts.

Another form of resistance in this context is the resentment that some settler participants feel toward the state providing Aboriginal communities with what they frame as “unique and unfair benefits” (Hollinsworth, 2016, p. 415). This rhetoric is common in settler states like Canada, and provides a significant roadblock to settlers unsettling themselves as the basis for these assumptions is not true.

A commonly deliberated and less obvious form of resistance to decolonization presents itself as the benevolent notion that everyone is equal. This concept also invokes denial as it acts to deny the fact that colonialism has had resoundingly disproportionate negative consequences for Indigenous communities. As Steinman (2020) has articulated, “settler colonialism operates through denying its existence” (p. 559). It is beneficial to the perpetuation of settler colonialism and its actors to preserve and sustain this argument. Critical Race Theory (CRT) would identify this as a form of interest convergence (McCarty & Castagno, 2018; Sleeter, 2017), in which settler participants have a stake in resisting decolonial praxis due to the benefit that settler colonial frameworks receive. A question that emerged from the literature is around the idea of how small and large scale resistance formed. That is, I frequently found myself wondering where resistance started—was it with the individual, or was it messaging from a larger system that operates to facilitate its own benefits, particularly in the context of interest convergence. Hollinsworth (2016) does, however, note that resistance happens on both individual and national levels, particularly through denial as mentioned above.

While the literature did not often espouse how these forms of resistance operate in small and large scale contexts, it did present some pedagogical tools to counter them within post-secondary education. Hollinsworth (2016), for example, has utilized reflective journals and assignment feedback as a method to engage students with decolonization content on terms that are socially “safe.” Students can offer their reflections, and associated feelings (such as shame and guilt), and the educator can provide feedback that is personal and personalized; this strategy allows educators to

work through resistance in conversation with the student participants. Hollinsworth (2016) reflects that students often want to discuss concepts, but fear the condemnation of their peers. Without discussion, the student may not transform their resistance, so open discussion between teacher and student is advised (Hollinsworth, 2016). Journal writing and reading have also been cited by hooks (1994) as a pedagogical tool in classroom settings for tackling challenging topics. Indeed, Anuik and Gillies (2012) have argued that “the task of the teacher is to establish an environment that evokes an outpouring of critical thought and passion” (p. 64). When students engage with the content and experience “learning blocks,” writing can provide a way to work through them. If students can feel supported and validated through their writing, such as applying “participation” grades, then there is an opportunity for teachers to begin transformative education. Hooks (1994) offers the perspective that journal entries can be shared by each person in the class, to avoid the privileging of certain voices over others. In this way, the author argues that classrooms can be a space of inclusivity and exchange, whether the topic is uncomfortable or otherwise.

Other examples of unsettling in a post-secondary context include examining colonial frameworks and their historical development (Mitchell et al., 2018). Post-secondary curriculum should address and examine those processes that formed and continue to inform colonial thinking, as a form of reflexivity—identified as one of the significant themes throughout the literature. This examination, however, should engage with multiple perspectives, and highlight Indigenous perspectives of those processes to develop a more robust understanding. As part of the commitment to the TRC (2015)

recommendation that everyone participate in reconciliation, Mitchell et al. (2018) advise “nam[ing] and deconstruct[ing] dominant narratives that invisibilize, normalize, and sustain the status quo” (p. 351). Implementing Indigenous counter narratives about colonization (including the notion of colonial violence) (Koelwyn, 2018), as well as applying Indigenous literature, guest lecturers, and Indigenous-created content as Hollinsworth (2016) suggests is part of this process. It is here that the policies around Indigenous inclusion (content, participants, etc.), work in tandem with other forces (or themes, such as self-reflexivity), to engage in decolonizing praxis. Some authors advise that some of these aspects can be facilitated within the context of Indigenous content courses (e.g., Hollinsworth, 2016), such as in helping to develop self-awareness as described above, but others suggest that some institutions do not make these courses mandatory as part of teacher education, for example (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004); ICRs would have less impact in these situations. Additionally, some scholars argue that it would take longer than a university semester “to support the development of critical capacities for anti-racism” (Hollinsworth, 2016, p. 422; see also Sleeter, 2017). In BC, teacher candidates who graduate from approved teaching programs are required to obtain at least three credits related to Indigenous content (BC Ministry of Education, 2018) in order to support the development of those critical capacities, although incorporating Indigenous content throughout the institution in curriculum affecting a wider range of participants would offer more substantive engagement with developing critical capacities (Attas, 2019).

### **Pedagogy, Praxis, and Bridging Themes**

The use of emic perspectives from teacher education present throughout the literature help to paint a picture of pedagogies and experiences in decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization. Emic perspectives included teachers and teacher educators in post-secondary and K-12 settings. This inside perspective highlights some of the possibilities and challenges that participants face undergoing this work. The perspectives offered throughout the literature on experience and pedagogies for transformation also exhibited the thematic aspects that I highlighted above: self-reflexivity, respectful engagement, synergy of practice and policy, and inclusion. Vaudrin-Charette (2019), for example, learned through self-reflexivity that they “needed to recognize the privileged position of giving voice” (p. 110) as an educator. This realization turned into a consideration of pedagogies that include diverse voices throughout class discussions, and a respectful engagement with those voices. For example, the author aimed to ensure that students have ample opportunity for discussion in the classroom.

Louie et al. (2017) offered a set of experiences as Indigenous faculty members engaged in this work. Poitras-Pratt considered teaching practices that involved “artistic traditions, such as deep-listening activities, sharing circles, storytelling, metaphorical representations, performance, and dance” (Louie et al., 2017, p. 26) to disrupt colonial education practices. Hanson describes using storytelling in classrooms (Louie et al., 2017), which aligns with other scholars’ practices (see Hollinsworth, 2016; hooks, 1994), as well as Indigenous principles (Louie et al., 2017). Storytelling “helps to create a space where individual perspectives are honoured and where understandings are generated collectively” (Louie et al., 2017, p. 27). Similarly, Barkaskas and Gladwin

(2021) suggest that “talking circles showcase an alternative pedagogical practice that encourages people to listen openly to other viewpoints and perspectives” (p. 21). This tool can be utilized in all disciplines in the post-secondary landscape, and develops self-reflexive practices as well.

Decolonization praxis is not limited to encouraging non-Indigenous Canadians to embark on this process, but also involves supporting Indigenous frameworks, and participants in these settings. Ragoonaden and Mueller (2017) describe the development of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a Canadian university to highlight this process. Specifically, they identify a program at the University of British Columbia, Canada, which prepares First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students for “degree studies by providing parameters to facilitate a holistic approach to the social, emotional, and cultural adaptation to campus life and to first-year university level courses” (pp. 23-24). This program teaches math, biology, and English with respect to Indigenous worldviews and encourages experiential learning, rather than transmission-style learning. Student participants were involved in activities and circles of learning after short introductory lectures, and classes organized guest speakers throughout the program. Ragoonaden and Mueller (2017) found that through Indigenizing curriculum as seen throughout this program, post-secondary education could develop “academic skills but also relationships, shared experiences, and community-building in first-year students” (p. 37). Similar findings have been noted elsewhere (Alejandro et al., 2020). This paper really underscored for me the importance of shifting underlying colonial structures to systemic change in the process of decolonization. Shifting those structures makes space for multiple ways of learning and knowing.

## Policy

In this section, I will review the literature on education policy and consider what policy is/does, who is involved in policy, how policy applies to the research that I have undertaken, and why I believe it is an important consideration for studies in education. I will also examine policy in relation to the themes which I have identified in the body of literature on decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary institutions.

Policy is a term used in a variety of settings for a variety of reasons, but is rooted in governance (Levinson et al., 2018) and has come to be largely associated with the actions of government(s). While policy is often considered the purview of governments, as a way to organize society's participants (Levinson et al., 2018), it is also applied in other organizational contexts such as educational institutions. This particular context (educational institutions) has recently become a significant site for the creation, implementation, and practice of policy for governments, governing bodies, and unions (Adams, 2014; Diem et al., 2014). Although policy is not law, it does act to "*defin[e] reality, organiz[e] behaviour, and allocat[e] resources accordingly*" (Levinson et al., 2018, p. 24, italics in original). This is generally done with an eye for solving macro-level societal issues, or institutional issues at the micro-level, and as Hamann and Vandeyar (2018) suggest, "what policy *is* cannot be understood apart from what policy *does*" (p. 43). In this vein, I would like to consider policy as social and political, not separate from ideology or social construction (Adams, 2014; Levinson et al., 2018).

If we consider the above noted description of policy by Levinson et al. (2018) as defining reality, then the act of creating policy is fundamentally influenced by social and

political factors. How policymakers determine which problems are important to resolve, the methods that they choose to apply in those resolutions, and how they envision the outcomes of those resolutions are entrenched in social and political values such that “the way to unpack policy analytically is to see it as a kind of social *practice*—specifically, a practice of wielding power” (Levinson et al., 2018, p. 26). Additionally, political agendas can be mobilized in the application of certain evidence over other forms of evidence in the formation of policy (Bradshaw & Dunn, 2020). Policy as a practice is an important consideration for the purposes of this research. Wright and Raaper (2019) suggest that policy is not just political, but that it shapes and contests identities of those participants within institutions. This can have implications for various agents’ involvement in policy discourse—whether through protest, lobbying, or interrogation through research.

Policy is often considered a “thing” that governing bodies create and officialize, and then anticipate that those participants in the society will enact (Adams, 2014). Policy implementation or enactment, on the other hand, is frequently viewed as the work of other agents in the organization; in the context of post-secondary institutions, these agents can include teachers (Koyama, 2018) and students, as well as administrators and institutional policymakers at the micro level. Institutional policymakers inhabit an interesting liminal space in this dichotomous approach to policy, as those participants that are both policymakers and the agents of enactment. In traditional configurations of policy, governments create policy at the macro-level, and institutions implement those policies. Policymakers at those institutions at this level of configuration are subject to governmental policy, and act accordingly; they are

the stewards of policy, and liaise between governmental policy and other actors such as teachers and students. Levinson et al. (2018), along with others (Hamann & Vandeyar, 2018), suggest that policy and policy enactment ought not be considered distinct and separate. Instead, what if we consider policy to be “a complex, ongoing social practice of normative discursive cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts” (p. 24)? This reframing of policy and its actors considers policy as fluid and, rather than as a reified component of societal organization, a political and social act that is both developed and enacted across actors and institutions. As such, the agents within organizations that include policy-making are not limited to those authorized policymakers but are also the work of other actors across those sites (Levinson et al., 2018). These actors in their varying capacities (teachers, students, etc.) negotiate policy meaning, and have the agency to implement policy as they both interpret and as they view necessary to their practice. Students, teachers, and other staff also have an interest in the success of their institutions (McVitty, 2020), and have agency to act accordingly in respect to policy. Adams (2014) views policy as both product and process in that these actors co-create and modify policy, while McCarty and Castagno (2018) consider the position that teachers enact policymaking in their own right.

As one of the themes I have identified throughout the literature concerning decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary spaces, synergy of policy and practice is especially pertinent here in the discussion of policy and policy enactment. As shown in the policy literature above, considering policy and practice as two separate entities limits our possible understandings of the ways in which policy

functions throughout post-secondary education, with the effect of limiting the understanding of various roles in an institution and what impact they have on policy implementation. Lashaw (2018) cautions us, for example, that the work of policy analysis has often considered that:

strategies of educational critique have been honed either by interrogating the discourses and institutions through which elite actors perpetuate relations of domination or by highlighting the creative responses of subaltern actors who must suffer the damaging effects of market-inspired reforms. (p. 103)

Elite actors, as authorized policymakers, from a critical theory perspective, may succumb to theories of interest convergence (Sleeter, 2017), in which dominant societal actors perpetuate those frameworks that benefit the dominant society. Indeed, as McVitty (2020) notes, “[u]niversities are especially vulnerable to being portrayed as elitist and complacent, pursuing their own interests at the expense of those of the country at large” (p. 5). Other actors in this instance (i.e., students) can exert agency in policy by forming unions, and acting in other ways to resist “damaging” policies, or policies that perpetuate those dominant frameworks.

As I considered these common approaches to examining education policy, I realized that it was important to discern multiple perspectives of institutional policy, and to view those participants as human actors with social and political motivations, rather than limiting their representation in research to this either/or dichotomy of policy analysis. Addey and Piattoeva (2022) draw attention to the implications of researching policy; the authors suggest that through research, scholars “do not just examine but

also enact education policy realities shaped by their own and others' metaphysics, and that the practices of researching education policies are in turn constituted by these realities" (p. 9). In connection with the methodologies selected for my research as I will discuss in the next chapter, narrative inquiry highlights a notion of caring throughout all phases of the research (Caine et al., 2019) to ensure a consideration of implications, in order to understand the impact on research participants and communities. Respectful engagement, as a theme identified throughout the literature on decolonization and reconciliation work in post-secondary institutions, involves a consideration of the researcher's impacts, or potential impacts on a community. In conjunction with the notion of caring, I am reminded of respectful engagement within the context of policy as well; policy is not separate from the participants who are involved in co-creating or facilitating it.

I have thus considered policy in terms of what it is and who participates in its making and implementation, but I would like to consider now what policy *does* in conjunction with what policy *is* (Hamann & Vandeyar, 2018). For example, policy "must be *performative*, in that it must lead people to act or to change the way they act to achieve some form of desired effect" (Wright & Raaper, 2019, p. 66). While thinking through the implications of policy-making and implementation at post-secondary institutions, it is fruitful to consider the role of those institutions in the wider public sphere. For example, Fletcher (2020) notes that university policies have implications for the broader society, whether through economic participation in that society, or social participation (policies that allow students to volunteer at local organizations, for example) (Bolingbroke & Winther, 2019). In the context of my research, I have given

thought to the implications of the university policies around reconciliation and how those might impact the broader public. As teaching and teachers are significant to the process of decolonization and reconciliation in Canada (see TRC, 2015), teacher education is therefore a significant discipline in which policy can profoundly impact students across the K-12 experience. If teacher educators are equipped to apply decolonizing pedagogies, and their students (as future teachers) are thus similarly equipped, the broader societal impacts involve systemic change in education as well as informing the broader public (as recipients and actors of that education) of decolonization practices over time.

## **Documents**

The Faculty of Education's Strategic Plan (University of Victoria Faculty of Education, 2021/2022) includes the Values which state that:

We are a caring community of people who mentor and are mentored by others.

We are committed to creating and accepting a fully inclusive learning environment with deep respect for all forms of diversity. We are committed to social justice and ethical practices as a way to promote professional integrity and nurture our educational community.

We embody engagement through our commitment and involvement in diverse local and global communities of educational practice and research. We value opportunities for high-quality, transformational learning and inquiry as we strive for excellence.

The priorities of the Faculty include: Learning and Teaching, Indigenous Resurgence, Healthy Environments, Community Connections, Research Capacity, and Research

Culture. Indigenous Resurgence includes the priority to “foundationalise Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and researching by: decolonizing methodologies, canons, curriculum and pedagogy; connecting to the land and communities; [and] valuing diverse spaces and ways of knowing” (University of Victoria Faculty of Education, 2021/2022). In addition, the Faculty’s Strategic Priority highlights a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusivity, and decolonization, and is guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, the Uvic Strategic Framework, and other documents including DRIPA.

The Uvic Strategic Framework (2018-2023) includes the following priorities: cultivate an extraordinary academic environment, advance research excellence and impact, intensify dynamic learning, foster respect and reconciliation, promote sustainable futures, and engage locally and globally. Fostering respect and reconciliation includes the following strategies:

- Implement and advance the applicable calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the goals of our own Indigenous Plan;
- Develop new pathways for access to higher education for Indigenous students;
- Increase the number and success of Indigenous students, faculty, staff and leaders at Uvic by developing priority recruitment strategies across the university, along with programs to support success;
- Implement transformative programs to provide a welcoming, inclusive campus environment for all, and include the entire university community

in Indigenous-engaged learning to promote mutual understanding and respect;

- [and] foster respectful partnerships with Indigenous communities, governments and organizations—developing and supporting educational and research programs that align community needs and priorities with Uvic strengths and capabilities. (University of Victoria, 2018)

Although the University has since implemented another Strategic Framework and Indigenous Plan, the contents of this dissertation, including the references made to strategic planning in the interviews, reference the above noted strategic planning documents.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

I will begin this chapter by identifying the research questions that guided my process, as well as identify common themes that I have generated. I then outline some of the theory that informed my perspective, including the postmodern approach of disengaging with our assumptions that often guide day-to-day practices. This theory came to inform many of the methodological choices that I made. After outlining those methodological choices, including justification for those choices in the context of this research project, I will connect qualitative methodologies, narrative inquiry, Indigenist methodologies, and métissage to my perspectives and the research project. Following this, I provide an outline of my methods for data collection, procedures, the plan for data analysis, and notes on trustworthiness and validity in the context of this project. I close the chapter with some thoughts on the challenges of this methodology.

#### **Research Questions**

As I developed my research project, I identified several key themes throughout the literature on decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary education. These themes were reflected in the literature around pedagogies and praxis for decolonization as well as the literature around policy in post-secondary education. The themes include self-reflexivity, respectful engagement, synergy of policy and practice, and the principle of inclusion. While many questions came out of my engagement with the literature, I wondered at the connection between policy and practice, as it appeared to be a significant component of decolonization. Some texts, for example, alluded to the notion that policy aimed at decolonization is largely insufficient (Gaudry

& Lorenz, 2018). Other texts identified that even with policy in place (specifically, curriculum-based policy), teachers and other actors within a post-secondary setting may choose to opt out (Heleta, 2016), as has been noted in K-12 curriculum (Lamb & Godlewska, 2021). Some policy scholars identified that actors in an institution may “resist” policy, or use practice as a means to negotiate or contest top-down policy (Levinson et al., 2018). Bell (2020) offers the opinion that “[p]olicies rarely emerge fully formed, and so the enactment process involves revising, re-ordering and reinventing” (p. 32). In this view, policy and practice are not so easily delineated, and to describe policy is to also describe the practice of making and negotiating, as well as contesting policy (as a practice).

Keeping with this idea of policy-practice, I formed a line of inquiry into how this process is manifested for some individuals within the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. My initial research question was formed as “what is the connection between decolonization or reconciliation policy and practice at the University of Victoria?” This question, while broad, would be directed at two different groups in the institution, within the Faculty of Education. The groups that I identified as potential participants included administrators—those faculty members who have some involvement in the making of policy from an official perspective, and educators. Teachers can be seen as a group of actors who do not directly form policy but “act” on policy to contest or transform (Lashaw, 2018), as previously discussed. On an individual level, I wanted to understand whether or not participants felt policy and practice could be considered synergistic—that is, whether they aligned in the context of their departments, the Faculty, and the University at large. A secondary rationale

behind this decision would be to ascertain whether these two groups viewed the existing policy landscape and practice in the same way. If not—as the literature had suggested might be the case—there could be considerations for the way that policy and practice are co-created and produced.

After identifying the need to question multiple perspectives on this issue (i.e., that I would need to ascertain policymakers' perspectives as well as practice-based perspectives, such as educators), I determined the next question to be, broadly, “how does self-reflexivity inform theory or practice for policymakers or educators within the Faculty of Education?” Self-reflexivity formed a significant part of the literature as a critical tool to better understand the assumptions that form daily practices as well the theory that underpins an individual's worldview. Researchers such as Vaudrin-Charette (2019) highlighted the process of self-reflexivity in their own process of decolonizing, which allowed them to incorporate decolonizing pedagogies. Pewewardy et al. (2018) indicate that when progressing through the various stages of transformation, teachers are able to more fully engage with processes of self-reflexivity. I did consider the notion that self-reflexivity is especially critical to non-Indigenous participants in the process of reconciliation and decolonization, but noted that Indigenist research methodologies—Indigenous research methodologies as observed by a non-Indigenous person—are also concerned with reflexive practices (Ritenburg et al., 2014). Given this context, I did not see a necessity in limiting participants based on their cultural self-identification. I opted to invite a cross-section of participants from the four departments that make up the Faculty of Education, using only the position they held at the institution as an identifying marker to ascertain whom to invite. Additionally, I was reminded by the

literature on métissage (discussed in a later section) that cultural identification is much more complex than an either/or selection, the notion of which further encouraged me to rely upon Faculty position/association with Faculty department as the only identifying marker for participation in this project.

The third and fourth themes, *respectful engagement* and *inclusion*, prompted me to consider a third question: “what is considered to represent respectful engagement or inclusion with regards to reconciliation objectives within the Faculty of Education?” This question is applicable to both groups of participants as educators and administrators (who may also be educators). This question is also concerned with both theory and practice—theory in the sense that there could be components of engagement that are conceptual, and practice in the sense that there could be representations which are grounded in application, such as through pedagogy. Again, the literature exposed an area where research has indicated some conceptual and practical aspects of decolonization or reconciliation in post-secondary education for teachers, but has represented a limited amount of perspectives on this issue for policymakers and administrators. I wondered if the answer to this question would help to explain the discrepancy illustrated by the literature between policy and enactment.

### **Theory**

As I considered theory, and how theory continues to inform my learning and perspectives, I had to consider the notion of finding value in more than one theory. My understanding of theory became distinctly non-linear, in that I imagine having drawn on more than one theory throughout my education. I have found notions of postmodern theory outlined by Scheurich (2013), who draws on Foucault, to be useful in

considering diverse perspectives, and certainly see the value in other theories such as various iterations of critical theory, particularly as influenced by Friere (2004). After all, theorizing about policy and practice will not actually tell us about the lived experience with policy and practice. Pragmatism, to my mind, advocates for those lived realities (see de Waal, 2022), or “relates knowledge of the world to experiences and practical exploration” (Cersosimo, 2019, p. 2), and what actually happens “on the ground.” Critical theory has informed some of the literature on post-secondary education (Patton, 2016), as well as approaches to policy (Fernandez & Lopez, 2017; Gill et al., 2017; Welton et al., 2017), and consequently, some of my thinking around decolonization and reconciliation. The social advocacy of critical theory (Friere, 2004; Tichavakunda, 2019) underscores the need to view our actions as non-neutral (Brown & Jackson, 2022); in this way, I see these divergent theories as compatible, in practice. In this section, I will highlight some of the overarching principles of postmodern theory that have been useful to considering this research project, and draw attention to my perspectives as I engaged with the research project.

### ***The Postmodern Approach***

Postmodern theory asks us to undo the commitment to the assumptions that shape many of our day-to-day practices. As a framework for examining the processes of decolonization, it stands out as a useful tool, particularly in its application to recognizing Western ontologies and epistemologies and how they have come to shape those daily practices. As Scheurich (2013) states, “postmodernism is Western civilization’s best attempt to date to critique its own most fundamental assumptions, particularly those assumptions that constitute reality, subjectivity, research, and

knowledge” (p. 2). As a critical piece of decolonization, taking this approach to consider Western assumptions about knowledge and knowledge construction can offer fruitful discoveries, and certainly has impacted my own growth in working to decolonize myself throughout my post-secondary education, through understanding historical and contemporary contexts of colonization. In essence, I view this as an act of self-reflexivity, an attempt to understand how Western knowledge has come to inform some of the structures that stem from it, like education and healthcare in settler-colonized contexts. Understanding that many of these structures have histories with processes of colonialism (Capovin, 2019; Mackenzie, 2020; Pewewardy et al., 2018) and more broadly, Western perspectives and values, is a key part of engaging with processes of decolonization, as noted earlier.

Postmodernism emerged in contrast to modernism and its associated narratives. Some of those modernist narratives include the notions that rationalism and science would improve the human condition. These narratives in turn influenced much Western thought, art, technology, and other socio-economic and political endeavours into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Capovin, 2019; Ellaway, 2020). Postmodernism, as contrast, offered an opportunity to disrupt some of the taken-for-granted normalization of these narratives in the context of Western societies; for example, within fields of education, health care, and others.

Relationality is also a significant contribution from the theory of postmodernism, while noting that other theories and methodologies value relationality as well—such as Indigenous methodologies (Gerlach, 2018; Le Grange & Mika, 2018; Wilson, 2008), in that knowledge is viewed as a relational experience—one in which knowledge and the

knower are inherently connected. Knowledge in this capacity is not fixed or inherent but rather fluid and negotiated, as well as dependent upon the individual—including their relationship to the knowledge. As Ellaway (2020) notes, “[n]ot only do postmodernists examine contextual dependencies and critically appraise any inherited, intrinsic, or assumed qualities or characteristics from them, but they also critique the categories, symbols, and identities that are imposed upon them” (p. 857). This has close connections to the relevant literature on decolonization and reconciliation in post-secondary education, as well as connections to the methodologies I selected—narrative inquiry and Indigenist—and that I will outline later. In the dichotomy portrayed between policy and practice, I found that these two categories were not neatly bound and distinct from one another, but fluid in their acting upon, and impacting one another.

Some of the critiques of postmodern approaches include the idea that they tend not to offer definitive answers to research questions (Ellaway, 2020). However, I believe it can prove useful in precipitating a self-reflexive standpoint to issues such as decolonization. In connection with the methodologies that I have selected, this exploration is about examining possibilities rather than uncovering a generalizable truth. Ellaway (2020) suggests considering three analytical tools for applying postmodernism to examine narratives that are taken for granted within the context of modernism as discussed above. The first is considering knowledge as relational; understanding objects of study outside of either/or dichotomies will allow more space for considering possibilities. The second is a consideration of alternative meanings or contradictions within meaning. The third tool (Ellaway, 2020) is discourse analysis; this

approach identifies ontological and epistemological assumptions embedded within communicative acts. Ellaway (2020) uses the example of medical education to highlight how discourse analysis within a postmodern theoretical context can illuminate significant implications of education. The postmodern approach allows us to consider the assumptions we carry about what constitutes a “good” education, so that we can reflect upon the implications of that for the education system.

Postmodern theory is a useful launchpad for non-Indigenous researchers to consider our roles and complicity in systems such as education in order to begin to decolonize ourselves and those institutions of which we are a part, in order to make education a space for all learners.

### **Methodology Choices/Justification**

Using aspects of narrative inquiry as a methodology offered me the opportunity to investigate multiple perspectives or narratives around reconciliation and decolonization in post-secondary spaces. I felt that this particular methodology resonated with Indigenist methodology principles as well as *métissage*, in that the values or principles inherent to these methodologies had remarkable overlap. Narrative inquiry, for example, has a concern for enacting “caring” (Caine et al., 2019) throughout the process of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data, where Indigenist methodologies are concerned with respect (Ritenburg et al., 2014). I identified respect in Indigenist research to mean respecting multiple forms of knowledge, including Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, which also lends itself to respect for others (Ritenburg et al., 2014). Caring, as in caring for others as well as caring for ideas (Caine et al., 2018), aligned with my understanding of respect. I was acutely aware of

this concern throughout the research process, as I interviewed participants and as I discussed my findings and interpretations. I wanted to ensure that I treated those participants with respect throughout the process, and did not mis-interpret their words. I found that I often reminded myself of the concept of understanding the connections between perspectives and actions.

The conceptual approach of *métissage* offered a theoretical bridge between Western and Indigenist principles in research methodologies and helped me to develop an understanding of research that can hold diverse perspectives in tension, rather than seeking to resolve them (Donald, 2012). While I did not want to assume from the outset of my research that there would be tension between perspectives of administrators and educators, I felt that there was a possibility for this outcome given the literature that I had reviewed, and wanted to consider the possibility of holding diverse views in tension with respect for the participants. *Métissage* grounded this possibility within the principles of narrative inquiry and Indigenist methodologies. The idea of this theoretically became abundantly clear in practice as I considered the findings around policy and enactment.

### **Qualitative Methodologies**

Opting for qualitative methodologies overall suited my research purpose of “seek[ing] to understand some facets of human experience” (Lewis & Hildebrandt, 2019, p. 6). Qualitative methodologies are inclusive of a variety of research methods, data collection, and interpretation. Critical qualitative inquiry “seeks to understand how power and ideology operate through and across systems of discourse, cultural commodities, and cultural contexts” (Denzin, 2016). Given that policy is political

(Marshall et al., 2017), social (Whiteman et al., 2017), and ideological (Lashaw, 2018), utilizing critical qualitative methodologies certainly aligned with my observations drawn from the literature review. As inquiry, qualitative methodologies lend themselves well to navigating subjects such as decolonization and reconciliation in education, as well as policy and practice, because of the focus on human experience. They also make central the notion that research is not separate or removed from the researcher, and that they are part of the process. I felt that the research questions posed could be best answered within the scope of qualitative methodologies.

Under the umbrella of qualitative inquiry, one might find narrative inquiry, ethnography, phenomenology, case study, and grounded theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2020) as methodologies to guide one's research. These methodologies have developed in a diverse range of disciplines, and generally support research that centres human interaction (Watkins et al., 2021). These methodologies can incorporate data collection methods which include interviews, participant sharing through writing, and participant observation, but many of these methods are reliant on storytelling-as-research (Lewis & Hildebrandt, 2019). As I initially considered qualitative research for my purposes, I knew that while storytelling-as-research was important to facilitate painting a picture that was human-based policy and practice, I had to explore various options when it came to selecting methodologies.

I identified several possibilities to generate storytelling-as-research including phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry. Johnson and Christensen (2020) note that phenomenology seeks to describe "one or more individuals' experiences of a phenomenon" (p. 404), which occurs in relation to a

particular event or experience. Eberle (2017) notes that phenomenology is particularly useful for considering the subjective perspective. Ethnography, frequently a methodology of choice in Anthropology, is utilized to “describe the cultural characteristics of a group of people and to describe cultural scenes” (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p. 404). It takes on a longer duration than some other methodologies, and identifies themes throughout the research findings, using storytelling-as-research tools for groups or individuals. Case studies are diverse in their collection of data, the types of data that they employ, and in their application across disciplines. They identify “rich description of the context and operation of the case or cases” as well as involve “discussion of themes, issues, and implications” (Lewis & Christensen, 2020, p. 404) of a case or cases. Grounded theory as a methodology emerged out of Sociology and aims to “inductively [...] describe[e] and explain[e] a phenomenon” (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, 404), using interviews and observation as data collection methods. Although each of these had potential in engaging with the research questions that I had posed, I felt that aspects of narrative inquiry were most closely aligned with the subject matter as well as research principles.

Narrative inquiry as the embodiment of storytelling-as-research, uses individual account or description as its primary source of data collection to understand human experience (Mertova & Webster, 2020). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) originally articulated its use in research and application within the realm of qualitative inquiry. Given my theoretical alignments and research goals, this methodology felt appropriate—both as a way to respectfully engage with a sensitive subject matter, and as a strategy for examining my research questions.

## **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is a “way of understanding experience” (Caine et al., 2018, p. 2) through storytelling. While it is not guided by a specific set of “steps” to take, it is guided by notions of “caring” (Caine et al., 2019) and ethics throughout the research process. The notion of caring in this this context was shaped by the work of Noddings, in that caring refers to relationship between people—between teacher and students—but the concept of caring within the context of narrative inquiry later grew to include the idea that the inquirer might also “care” for the ideas shared (Caine et al., 2018). Johnson and Christensen (2020) outline four aspects of narrative inquiry that helped me process what my methodology might look like and how the research could unfold.

These four stages of research include living stories, telling stories, retelling stories, and reliving stories. While the stages are not necessarily “step-by-step,” or sequential in nature, the living stories stage is shaped by the understanding that participants are living experiences, from which they will then tell stories. This “telling” can happen in conjunction with retelling stories, as the researcher “com[es] alongside participants and inquir[es] into lived and told stories” (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p. 406). When the researcher is engaged with this process amongst participants, the researcher too can retell their stories as context changes and storytelling take place. This is one way in which narrative inquirers should see themselves as part of the research, not separate and detached. It is important for the researcher to attend to listening as they process the stories told, to better understand the stories as well as to understand how they are part of the inquiry; this relationship of storytelling is central to the demands of narrative inquiry (Huang, 2018). Reliving stories is the process of

sharing stories with one another as co-participants in the inquiry; this is the act of telling as reliving those stories. I found myself doing just that throughout the interviews—sharing some of the experiences or thoughts I had around the subject matter with participants. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, but there was sufficient time in which this sharing could take place, and I believe, developed a better sense of communication than if I had adhered strictly to a set of interview questions. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, sharing ideas and thoughts was one method I used for developing stronger communication within the interviews.

Narrative inquiry shares common interests and goals with other methodologies, and in this way intersects with qualitative and arts-based research (Damiani et al., 2017). Some of these methodologies include autobiographical narrative and autoethnography, as modes of storytelling-as-research. While they are considered distinct entities, narrative inquiry utilizes autobiographical narrative throughout the research process. Autobiographical narrative works to indicate a researcher's positionality in the research, and to situate themselves as part of the research. The self-reflexivity that is exhibited here reflects one of the themes that was identified at the beginning of my research, making this methodology a relevant one for the subject matter. The self-reflexivity, while important, must be secondary to the stories of the participants and should not take the focus of the final renderings of research (Lewis & Hildebrandt, 2019).

Furthering my understanding of narrative inquiry processes, Johnson and Christensen (2020) state that inquirers should be able to articulate three justifications for the research they choose to conduct. These include personal justifications,

practical justifications, and social/theoretical justifications. Clarifying these reasons will help to assert the “point” of a narrative inquirers research, or the “why” of doing research.

Personal justifications will “allow researchers to justify a particular narrative inquiry in the context of their own life experiences and personal inquiry puzzles” (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p. 401). As I considered what this meant for my project, I reflected on some personal experiences that shaped my progression to the PhD program which facilitated the research. Throughout my experience as an undergraduate student and subsequently as a Master’s student in the Department of Anthropology, I developed an understanding of the complicated history of that discipline and other Social Sciences with Indigenous communities globally, and particularly the discipline’s connection to colonization. Smith (2012) argues that “indigenous Asian, American, Pacific and African forms of knowledge, systems of classification, technologies and codes of social life, which began to be recorded in some detail by the seventeenth century, were regarded as ‘new discoveries’ by Western science” (p. 121). The commodification of knowledge as well as artefacts happened in conjunction with other systems of commodification, including those concerning flora and fauna. This served to “reaffir[m] the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, [and] the arbiter of what counts as knowledge” (Smith, 2012, p. 125).

Additionally, Anthropology has historically turned its ethnographic gaze on Indigenous communities which has contributed to processes of colonization as well as developing detrimental relationships with those communities by exploiting knowledges

and objects. Throughout my post-secondary education, I came to understand some of the efforts to engage in ethical work and research with consideration for improving relationships between the academy and Indigenous communities, as well as the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as per the TRC (2015) recommendations for reconciliation. In particular, I began to recognize these processes when some of the post-secondary Anthropology courses I enrolled in explicitly engaged in undermining assumptions about knowledge and knowledge construction. This had a profound impact on my thinking regarding knowledge and colonial frameworks that have come to shape many institutions such as education. Education has been named a critical site of reconciliation by the TRC (2015) as well as others (Smith, 2012), and I developed an interest in the post-secondary landscape through this particular lens.

Practical justifications will allow the researcher to consider ways in which practice will be affected by the research. Prior to my research, in which I planned to explore the relationship between policy and practice, my practical justification was that the results and findings may have an impact on understanding and illuminating possibilities and challenges in this space. Social and theoretical justifications include considerations for social justice action and developing contributions to the field in which the researcher works. I determined that my research could contribute to the knowledge on policy and practice in education studies, as well as furthering the aim of decolonizing post-secondary education. As decolonization is facilitated by multiple groups—policy makers, educators, students, and others (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018), I understood my research to develop some of those perspectives in this context. Some

policy studies indicate that understanding the perspectives and actions of these groups may offer significant value in policy inquiry, to better understand how policy is created and implemented (Levinson et al., 2018).

Ethics are an important consideration in narrative inquiry and analysis (Esin et al., 2017). In particular, Caine et al. (2019) and Clandinin (2020) argue for a relational ethics-based inquiry. This means considering ethics and care throughout the research process, including during its development. It also means considering the research in relation to others—to individuals and to communities. The authors provide four questions to attend to as the inquirer engages in the research, at all stages of the research. The questions include: “what is done with the story? [...] what kind of story is being told? [...] who does something with the story?; and why is this done?” (Caine et al., 2019, p. 7). Answering these questions can be a tension-filled project, if uncomfortable truths emerge; however, narrative inquiry embraces those tensions as a valuable source of self-reflexivity to the inquirer. In answering these questions, the researcher can attend to their assumptions and develop “care” for the impacts that the research may have on others—participants as well as other communities. In the case of my research project, I found myself frequently returning to these questions as I processed information, as I conversed with participants, and as I analyzed data and began writing this dissertation. I wanted to ensure that participants felt that I had respected their perspectives. I also reminded myself of their positions within the institution, that these participants were not separate from the institution whose policies and practices were the centre of discussion. Given this particular dimension of the research, and the ethics-based approach that I felt was necessary, I determined, for

example, that keeping participants anonymous in the analysis of my findings was the best approach, so that they would not be easily identifiable in the research.

### **Indigenist**

As a white researcher examining subject matter involving reconciliation and decolonization, I wanted to explore methodologies that engaged respectfully, as one of the key themes that I identified throughout the literature. Although my research does not involve research within Indigenous communities, and is not explicitly about Indigenous communities, it examines how post-secondary institutions can improve the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as well as improve their relationship with local First Nations communities, as per several of the 94 Calls to Action from the TRC (2015). Considering this examination, I felt that it was important to my methodological choices to understand how I could best do research in a respectful way, and understand how my work could come to impact those communities, as well as understand the colonial framework for post-secondary education.

Considering the role of research in the process of colonization, I did not want to replicate that colonial model. As Ryder et al., (2019) have noted, Western hegemony “has created control and ownership, over research conduct and findings, which informs government, key stakeholders, policy, and models of care” (p. 256). Walter and Suina (2019) for example, have identified ways in which research findings have impacted the health and healthcare of Indigenous communities. They suggest that this research has perpetuated the focus of data on the 5D approach, or “items related to Indigenous difference, disparity, disadvantage, dysfunction, and deprivation” (Walter & Suina, 2019, p. 235). This ensures that colonial hierarchies continue in the context of

healthcare and other areas as it informs policy. Since I am interested in how policy can offer decolonization sensibilities, I wanted to ensure that my methodologies aligned and did not create the framework for my data to be used in this way. Indigenist research methodologies qualify my understanding of Indigenous research principles as a white researcher (Wilson, 2007).

I was first introduced to Indigenist methodologies through Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (2008). My interpretation of the principles outlined in this text connected to the themes that I had identified in the literature review. One fundamental tenet of Indigenist research is relationality. Wilson (2008) writes, "relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality" (p. 7). Relationality should be a consideration for methods of data collection, analysis, writing, as well as the dissemination of the research findings. Utilizing narrative inquiry, I thought, would be a way to respect this tenet, as one in which relationality is a primary consideration. I also considered the notion that the subject matter I was interested in was also fundamentally relational. Policy and practice are not two separate entities that can be researched in silos (Levinson et al., 2018), but rather come to inform and shape one another throughout their development and enactment, much in the same way that narrative inquiry highlights the relationships between participants and researchers as informing each other, not as separate, distinct entities. This tenet requires the researcher to situate themselves within the research, as a part of the research. Kovach (Ritenburg et al. 2014) notes that Indigenist knowledge systems inform methodologies and:

have been associated with descriptors as holistic, inclusive, animate, and pragmatic, and are nested within a relationality that binds both the experiential

and theoretical, contests knowledge compartmentalization, and does not instantly acquiesce to a constant comparative methodology of knowledge creation. (p. 70)

These nested relationships were central to my intended research, as was the notion of disrupting “comparative methodology.” This point resonated strongly with my theoretical framework, which seeks to disrupt the either/or dichotomies that often shape Western worldviews (Scheurich, 2013).

Grounding research in the principles of “respect, reverence, reciprocity, and responsibility” (Ritenburg et al., 2014, p. 74) is central to Indigenist research methodologies. This can be done in practice, Ritenburg et al. (2014) suggest, by following certain protocols, such as researchers introducing themselves in accordance with their ancestry and with an acknowledgement of place.

Navigating the frameworks of Indigenist and Western-based methodologies can seem incongruent, but as argued by Ryder et al. (2020), these methodologies can become harmonious and inform one another. The authors write:

[w]hen weaving a methodology for ‘research at the interface’, the two diverse knowledge systems and worldviews, Indigenous and Western, do not just sit over the top of each other and overlap, they intertwine, are weaved together, to ensure structural integrity (p. 260).

As informed by key tenets such as respect, I imagined narrative inquiry and Indigenist principles aligning in the context of my research. Although I saw some alignment in the methodologies presented here, Kovach notes that Indigenous methodologies come from Indigenous worldviews (Ritenburg et al., 2014). Métissage is a research

methodology that embraces the tension produced from this research “at the interface.” It helped to clarify how these two seemingly disparate methodologies (Indigenous and Western) could come to intertwine in a respectful way. While I did not utilize the methods of research associated with *métissage* as a methodology, the underlying theory of this methodology greatly informed my understanding.

### **Métissage and Bridging Methodologies**

*Métissage* as a research methodology has been used in various disciplines including history, literature (Burke & Robinson, 2019), autobiography, and education (Donald, 2012). While it has had multiple interpretations across disciplines, Burke and Robinson (2019) provide a definition for how I have come to view this methodology. *Métissage* “has been used to explore the ideas of mixed identities, languages, and ideas around space and place” (p. 151). In the context of my research, I developed an appreciation for the use of *métissage* in trying to understand humanity without the restrictive nature of common dichotomies. Donald (2012), for example, discusses the idea of the colonizer and colonized, and uses the concept of *métissage* to understand other ways in which people identify themselves, sometimes as a combination of groups, for example, with ancestry of both colonizer and colonized. Burke and Robinson (2019) suggest that these individuals “often evoke discomfort in others because they challenge established racial hierarchies and boundaries and because people are uncomfortable with the possibility that individuals, or a collective, have multiple ways of identifying themselves” (p. 151). The highlight of *métissage* in these research contexts is that it seeks to explore those tensions through storytelling-as-

research, without seeking to resolve the tensions as many other methodologies endeavour to do (Donald, 2012).

As I developed my research methodology, I came to appreciate this sense of exploration of possible tense subject matter, such as decolonization policy and practice in post-secondary education. Indeed, Burke and Robinson (2019) note that “métissage is not a Métis concept or even an Indigenous concept and can be used by any researcher whose goal is to interweave different, even contradictory, realities and lived experiences and to explore and challenge dualistic notions” (p. 152). Although the research presented in this dissertation had not unfolded when I came upon the concept of métissage as a research methodology, I had to consider the possibility that I may come across different or contradictory realities through narrative inquiry with participants. Even as I engaged with the literature, I noticed that there were several realities around policy and practice in decolonizing post-secondary education. For example, Pewewardy et al. (2018) identified multiple phases of educator decolonization, Mitchell et al. (2018) noted multiple realities for decolonization in practice within post-secondary institutions, and Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) highlighted three varieties of decolonization within post-secondary institutions. This literature showcased the range of possibilities for how individuals and institutions can envision and enact decolonization.

Practicing métissage as a research methodology involves multiple participants and explores their diverse perspectives. It is collaborative and performed, and relies upon storytelling-as-research. This methodology, to my mind, had strong ties to the other methodologies that I explored. While I intended to conduct individual interviews,

rather than collect multiple perspectives at one time (such as in a focus group setting), I felt that the theoretical underpinnings of *métissage* helped me to understand respectful ways to conduct my research. One of the unique aspects of *métissage* is the notion of a Third Space. Researchers who may not fully align with Western theoretical and methodological frameworks can also engage in research that honours Indigenous principles for doing research, and multiple ways of knowing (Burke & Robinson, 2019). As a non-Indigenous researcher considering the subject of decolonization in post-secondary spaces, I wanted to honour Indigenist methodological and theoretical principles such as respect and collaboration through narrative inquiry.

These frameworks are complementary in many ways. Wilson (2008) uses the example of feminist theory to suggest that there are parallels between various critical approaches to research. The author notes that “much of the ideology surrounding these areas is similar to an Indigenous worldview in that it challenges the cultural outlook of mainstream society” (Wilson, 2008, p. 16). I envision this parallel in the context of decolonization research, particularly in challenging the dominant outlooks in post-secondary education around what constitutes education, and how education should be enacted, according to Western systems of knowledge.

Some scholars have highlighted the need for non-Indigenous researchers to apply a critical lens to Western systems of knowledge which reinforce colonial hierarchies (Hall, 2014; Krusz et al., 2019; Ritenburg et al., 2014). Kovach (Ritenburg et al. 2014) argues, for example, that “for all of us trained within Western thought, Indigenous knowledge and methodologies offer a decolonizing space for collective consideration of knowledges not engendered by the constant comparative,

subject/object, mind/body dualities” (p. 71). It is in this respect that I considered these methodologies congruent for the purposes of my research project. Another connection which emerged throughout the literature was relationality as previously discussed. As Caine et al. (2019) have noted in relation to storytelling through narrative inquiry, “while an individual’s experiences are personal...they are also nested within and shaped by, the social, familial, cultural, linguistic, and institutional narratives within the individual’s life” (p. 5). There is an active, rather than passive, component to experience and sharing stories, in addition to all of the factors which contribute to an individual’s experience and perspective. The sense of relationality exhibited here is also critical to Indigenist methodologies (Ritenburg et al., 2014; Wilson, 2008), which seek to “affirm that embodied decolonization and Indigenization begins with facilitating relationships with family, community, and land” (Ritenburg et al., 2014, p. 77). Through my research I intended to facilitate the conversation between members of the community, through a conversation (or conversations) around decolonization policy and practice. The results and discussion of these conversations are detailed in Chapters 4 and 5.

While some authors have debated the commensurability of Indigenous and non-Indigenous frameworks for research, there are aspects noted here which align (Kovach, 2019), and have become the backbone of this research project, particularly in the guiding principles of respect and relationality.

## **Participants**

**Table 2: List of Participants**

Administrator 1	Educator 1
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Administrator 2	Educator 2
Administrator 3	Educator 3
Administrator 4	Educator 4

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There were two target groups for participation in this research project. Administrators and educators comprised the two perspectives that I felt would highlight the relationship between policy and practice at the University. Eight participants were identified to represent these groups in different ways. Due to the limited number of administrators within the Faculty of Education, I utilized purposive non-random sampling to select individuals who fit administrative, policymaking criteria. These individuals would have had experience in developing policy around reconciliation or decolonization at Uvic, or have had experience in the strategic planning process or other administrative tasks. Four participants identified their work as primarily administrative. Policy in this context was largely centred around strategic planning and setting policy and procedure for hiring and committee membership. I utilized the Faculty's online directory to identify potential participants and collect contact information. In the second category of participants, the educators, I opted for convenience non-random sampling in selecting individuals. Four participants identified their work as primarily teaching responsibilities. The requirement for these participants was that they work in the Faculty of Education, and mostly perform teaching duties. I interviewed individuals from each Faculty department—this included the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership

Studies, the Department of Indigenous Education, and the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education.

While I could have extended this reach beyond the Faculty of Education into other disciplines, I decided to limit this approach. Based on the findings from the TRC's (2015) 94 Calls to Action, education has been noted to be a significant area for reconciliation to be facilitated. Given that teacher educators—that is, educators who teach future K-12 teachers—are well-positioned to engage with this work through influencing pedagogy of future teachers, I determined that it would be useful to examine their role in the policy and practice of reconciliation and decolonization at Uvic. The educator participants were also selected using the Faculty's online directory, which included contact information. I initially sent invitations to participate to a limited number of faculty, as I was unclear how many individuals would be interested in participating. After five individuals from this group generously agreed to meet with me (four administrators and one educator), I then contacted another “wave” of individuals, followed by a third wave to generate more interview data. Once I had conducted interviews with 8 individuals, I began to analyze the data.

Although non-random sampling can be limiting in its ability to garner a generalizable set of research findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2020), this research project did not aim to generalize a population's perspectives on one issue. Non-random sampling, such as purposive and convenience sampling in this case, offered the best opportunity to select participants who met certain criteria (i.e., potentially involved in reconciliation or decolonization at some level of policy and practice). The participants totaled eight, and while this is generally considered a smaller sample size

(Johnson & Christensen, 2020), the sample size suited both the methodology (narrative inquiry), as well as the research goals. Rather than drawing generalized claims around reconciliation and decolonization in higher education, this research project intended to identify some perspectives of the relationship between policy and practice at the University of Victoria. The range of participants from administrators to educators was intended to present coverage of multiple perspectives, rather than limiting it to one group—I wanted to consider how various actors in the University engaged with the concepts of reconciliation and decolonization, and how they viewed the relationship between policy and practice.

### **Method/Data Collection**

I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to generate data. I maintained a list of questions to ask participants, but allowed the conversations to progress organically, and often found myself asking iterations of the questions at different points throughout the conversations, sometimes using different language with different participants. I began the conversations with a reminder of my general research questions and goals, and then asked each participant to describe their role within the university—whether they held more administrative responsibilities or whether they held mostly teaching responsibilities. Once I began, I found that participants were very generous with their time and experience. The data was recorded using Zoom software (for online interviews) as well as two recording devices, and interviews lasted anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. Throughout the interviews, participants referenced various documents, which also formed part of my data generation for this project, and which are highlighted in Chapter 2: Literature Review. In generating data, I also kept a

research journal in which I kept track of the process, and made notes for interpretative purposes throughout. The procedures that I used are described next.

## **Procedures**

After identifying methodologies which aligned with my research and theoretical positioning, I outlined a plan including methods for data collection and a list of potential questions to ask participants (Appendix A). I then submitted this proposal to the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board for approval. Once approved, I began the process to invite participants to have conversations with me. Once I identified potential participants, I emailed those individuals along with a general outline for my intended research. When participants agreed to participate, they were asked to sign their consent to the research after I explained my motivations and intended procedures for the study. Some participants due to technical issues instead sent emailed confirmation of their consent. Without wanting to make participants feel like I “put them on the spot,” I opted to send out a prompt of four of the general research questions before our meeting, in order to give them time to consider. I then met with most of the participants using Zoom software. Interviews were initiated during COVID-19 restrictions for in-person meetings. One interview was conducted in person once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, and only two recording devices were used for this occasion. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions for in-person visiting at the outset of my research, virtual meetings allowed the project to continue while restrictions were in place, and also offered other benefits, too, even once restrictions for in-person meetings were removed. Using this virtual format allowed me to record interviews easily, and to save the data to a password protected hard drive backup. I

transcribed each of the interviews once completed, and saved this data to a password protected hard drive as well.

As I moved from data collection to data analysis, I considered the notion that truth is a relational experience, and therefore perspectives are relational (Scheurich, 2013). The researcher is part of the data and data collection process (Anuar, 2022). This was true for the transcribing of materials (Kowal et al., 2017), as I interpreted and edited words and sounds, as well as their analysis. Once the interviews were transcribed, and after familiarizing myself with the data to ensure data was effectively captured, I used Microsoft Word to make notes and summarize sections of text, as well as label those sections in relation to each other (coding). I opted to examine the transcriptions for themes throughout the interviews using readings and re-readings to hone in. This process helped me to generate themes across the interviews, particularly by frequency of their reference, as well as develop my understanding of the content. Given that themes are generated by the researcher, some of literature review helped to inform my process of identifying larger themes from the categories. My awareness of the literature in conjunction with readings of the interview data led to the identification and creation of sub-themes. My process for finding sub-themes and themes centred around identifying connections between interviews (see Sparkes & Smith, 2012). I also worked to identify connections across themes. As I identified themes and generated interpretations, I sent my findings back to the participants for feedback, to ascertain whether I was “on the right track” in interpreting their stories and messages. The member-checking document that I sent participants contained themes, sub-themes, and relevant quotations to their interview. Once this part of the process unfolded, I

could then elucidate my research findings. I returned frequently to the interview transcriptions, and followed up with documents that participants had identified throughout the interviews to read and re-read.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

As I analyzed the data generated from the interviews, I reflected on Kim's (2016) process for analysis. Kim (2016) suggests that it is useful to consider data in relation to "the idea of surprise and curiosity, as we don't know what is going to evolve and emerge until we deal with the data" (p. 188). This reminder reflects an organic and ongoing sensibility of data analysis in narrative inquiry, throughout the research process—interpreting, interacting in the context of interviews, and again interpreting and interacting with the data generated from those conversations.

In this research project, I found myself returning to the idea that administrators and educators did not exist in a simple dichotomy of positions within the University, as well as the notion of a dichotomy of creating policy versus having policy enacted in the institution. The data exhibited the relational quality of policy—that is, that actors in the institution both create and transform policy, through formal means as well as everyday teaching or administrative practices. I also found myself returning to this idea in relation to what I had read throughout the literature—what were the interviews revealing that could expand my view or knowledge of practices in this context? I also read the interviews in conjunction with my interpretations within my research journal. I used this as a way to consider multiple possibilities for interpretation.

### **Trustworthiness/Validity**

There is some debate over whether the concepts of trustworthiness or validity are applicable to qualitative methodologies (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Although some scholars view these concepts as the purview of quantitative methodologies (Johnson & Christensen, 2020), there is a general consensus that there are specific considerations in assessing qualitative research, and narrative inquiry more specifically. Mertova and Webster (2020) suggests validity “refers to the strength of the analysis of data, the trustworthiness of the data and ease of access to that data” (p. 74). Trustworthiness relates to presenting sufficient data, and avoiding oversimplification of research findings (Caine et al., 2019; Mertova & Webster, 2020). Johnson and Christensen (2020) note several strategies for developing strong qualitative research methodologies. One such strategy is attending to researcher bias. This can impact various aspects of the research, including the interpretation of research findings. While I have the sense that researchers cannot remove their bias, as research is relational (Scheurich, 2013), there is certainly value in positioning oneself throughout the research. Taking a self-reflexive approach throughout the research process can highlight the biases that researchers do have. Rather than downplaying the possibility for bias, this approach attends to those biases in order to provide context. Narrative inquiry interprets at every stage (Kim, 2016) of the research; self-reflexivity can allow the reader to ascertain modes of interpretation taken by the researcher.

Relational restorying is a strategy which ensures the data is interpreted in alignment with participants’ intentions. It ensures that the researcher does not compose interpretations that are outside the scope of stories that the participants have

shared, and it involves the researcher obtaining participant feedback (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). It assists the researcher in ascertaining that they have correctly understood the participants' intentions for the stories and identified themes for the purposes of research findings. As Johnson and Christensen (2020) note, interpretive or emic validity is critical to delivering an accurate representation of participants' stories. For this research project, I provided participants with a summary of findings—both my interpretation of key themes, as well as some key quotations that I identified. Although not every participant wrote back with comments, those that did gave their approval of the thematic findings subject to some grammatical changes.

Theoretical validity is another concern within the realm of qualitative methodologies, as it pertains to developing theoretical explanations for research findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Extended fieldwork involves the researcher spending “sufficient” time with participants in order to examine nuance of narrative and behaviour. This measure for attending to theoretical validity operates with a subjective analysis for what constitutes “sufficient” in a given research context. In the context of my research, I engaged in participant feedback throughout the data collection and analysis in order to identify nuance in narrative, as noted above.

Engaging with multiple theoretical perspectives is another consideration for attending to theoretical validity in qualitative research. This process involves working with the data and theoretical perspectives in order to produce research findings that are congruent with participants' objectives. This strategy was utilized in the analysis portion of my research project to hone in on participant perspectives. As I worked through the transcripts of the interviews, I considered multiple ways of viewing. For

example, I considered use of language, the institutional narratives as described by participants, how participants viewed the connection between levels of policy-making, and other perspectives.

### **Challenges of Methodology**

One of the challenges that I encountered was the idea that I was imposing on others' time—I felt it acutely as I asked Faculty members to spend time with me, knowing that they had full workloads. In addition to the time it took to conduct the interviews, I also asked those participants to consult on a summary of each interview so as to determine that I was identifying themes that resonated with them; I wanted to ensure that I did not misinterpret their meanings throughout the interviews.

Another inherent challenge of the methodology is the notion that not all members of a group will participate in such a project. There is potential in this case that some members of the Faculty have divergent perspectives from the perspectives listed here. However, returning to the original aims of this research project, I was interested in understanding some of the perspectives within the institution, and not anticipating that I would generate generalizable findings for all faculty. Certainly other methodologies could complement this one in ascertaining a wider sample of faculty perspectives on decolonizing post-secondary education.

## Chapter 4: Results

In keeping with the four themes identified at the beginning of this dissertation, I will review the results of my data collection and synthesis in this chapter relevant to: self-reflexivity, respectful engagement, synergy of policy with practice, and inclusion. Engaging in the research process, particularly with interviews, illuminated several sub-themes within each of these topics, which will be identified in this chapter. As I engaged with participants on the subject matter, I discovered more about them as individuals. Rather than just administrative roles or teaching roles, the participants reflected on their personal and professional values, as well as illustrating the lived day-to-day experience of being Faculty members within this institution. The individuals came from various academic backgrounds—which some of them identified during the course of our discussions. While I did not ask participants to share their background during the course of interviews, some individuals opted to share that information with me as well. One important finding throughout the interviews was the consideration of “Faculty members,” as individuals with varied perspectives. I will outline the key findings in this chapter, and follow with a discussion chapter containing my interpretations, implications, and limitations of the findings.

### **Theme 1: Self-reflexivity**

The broad umbrella of self-reflexivity reflected two sub-themes: 1) responsibility, resistance and tension, as well as 2) reliance on Indigenous Education colleagues. Responsibility was reflected in terms of the participants’ self-identified responsibility to engage with decolonization and reconciliation, while resistance and tension was

reflected as ways in which participants viewed the uptake of decolonization in their setting. They noted ways in which resistance came from various sources, including students. Some of the participants also expressed concern that non-Indigenous faculty may rely too heavily upon their Indigenous colleagues in the Indigenous Education department to provide Indigenous content. This resonated with the notion that Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) identify as “[...] a vision that ultimately expects Indigenous people to bear the burden of change” (p.220).

### ***Responsibility, Resistance, and Tension***

Several of the participants noted resistance and tension in the context of decolonizing education, albeit in different ways. Resistance in the literature presented as various ways that non-Indigenous or settler students and teachers or educators resist recognition of colonial frameworks as well as accompanying decolonial curriculum and pedagogies. In the context of the interviews, I found resistance to mean ways in which educators, administrators, or students (as perceived by either of those aforementioned groups) resist decolonizing curriculum or policy. Unsettling the idea of teachers as the only knowledge holders within a class; the role of students in decolonized curriculum; and, institutional constraints were voiced areas of potential tension. Responsibility was a common thread throughout the discussion around resistance and tension. Responsibility was referenced in terms of responsibility to community, and to students.

Unsettling the notion that teachers should be the only knowledge holders, or experts in a classroom setting was a shared objective amongst some of the administrative and teaching participants as a part of decolonization. However, one of

the administrative participants suggested that students may resist the shift from teachers as the only knowledge holders in a classroom: “even students can be highly resistant to it because they’re so used to a model where knowledge is dispensed from the expert” (Administrator 1). The participant suggested that students are well-positioned to encourage decolonization, and in fact, could hold teachers to account in that regard through discourse with faculty and administration. For example, one of the stories that the administrator participant shared indicated that there is an effort to develop policy around protecting students from backlash should they speak out about the content of their courses not aligning with what they viewed as decolonization principles.

Veronique: [...] are there any supports [...] to administrators or to educators to help [deliver on reconciliation]?

Administrator 1: Yeah, so I think there are some things we try and do to help and support [...] in particular, you know the idea of speaking back to instructors who raised troubling topics in a class and don’t leave space for a different worldview [...] so students would feel safe, to bring their concerns and have someone speak with them about what their options were and ways to advance their concerns in, in ways that don’t create tension for them.

Another administrator participant indicated that students had a role in the decolonization of education within their department: “the curriculum from the Ministry is offering those things [making courses decolonizing] too, but it’s the individuals [...] the students have the power to make the change” (Administrator 2). These seemingly disparate ideas—that students can both be resistant and powerful facilitators of

decolonization—indicated to me that regardless of what role they play, some participants within the study found students to be involved in processes of decolonization and reconciliation.

There was a clear distinction made by some participants about what non-Indigenous actors' roles should be in the process of decolonization and reconciliation. Indeed, the notion of reconciliation as indicated by participants appeared to be very much linked to the responsibilities of non-Indigenous actors in the institution, and of non-Indigenous members of society more generally. For example: one administrator noted that: “reconciliation seemed to me like the word non-Indigenous people have to do to repair relationship” (Administrator 3). Another administrative participant mentioned that some resistance or tension emerges from the process of having non-Indigenous faculty engage with their role in decolonization and reconciliation, noting that administrators are “constantly navigating this terrain with non-Indigenous educators” (Administrator 1), and that educators have very different relationships to decolonization and reconciliation, resulting in very different levels of uptake across the Faculty.

One of the categories of resistance that resulted from these interviews is the idea that there are varying levels of interest and uptake in decolonization and reconciliation actions across the Faculty, and even in the institution more broadly. Some of this variability is due to the nature of some of the work that various disciplines engage in. For example, one administrative participant noted that while Social Sciences ethics protocols have become more accustomed to illuminating how research may impact Indigenous populations, other disciplines, particularly in the

experimental sciences, might be grappling with how to view evolving ethics protocols, “where you’re working with anonymous populations often and you’re not tracing Indigeneity, for example, or someone’s race or gender” (Administrator 1). This highlighted for me the complexity in faculty experience and perspective, as well as resonating more broadly with concepts of *métissage* and having multiple perspectives.

Other reasons that there may be resistance to decolonization and reconciliation within the Faculty were various practical constraints. Some of these concerns as indicated by one teaching participant were often financial—for example, in their experience, taking courses to improve understanding of decolonization and ways to implement decolonized practice had to be approved if the course was to be held during typical working hours—the resources for both the course (if funding was sought) as well as the time away from other activities had to be accounted for:

Veronique: Are there any tensions that you’re aware of in terms of delivering on sort of reconciliation objectives from the strategic frameworks,[...]?

Educator 2: [...] these [courses] cost money, who do we ask to pay for it? Is there a line in the budget? [...] someone has to either say no, or yes, or only three of you can do it, or not [...] human resources, which I guess is almost a financial as in time [...] as in this adds to a workload. Does it mean we hire a person, or does it mean we go from 5 to 6 because this has added a financial element?

I realized at this point that what we were talking about here was not whether participants or the approvers for these instances believed in the value of these courses, but that there were institutional constraints to the behaviours and practices

that could be realized. The participants within the study were not just individuals within the institution either performing administrative or teaching roles, but people navigating various roles and responsibilities professionally in conjunction with their own personal views.

To be clear, participants were not suggesting that the reasons for resistance noted above were accepted rationales for resistance to decolonization. Indeed, all participants indicated value for decolonized pedagogies and policies. One educator participant indicated: “I want to [...] dig deeper into this [decolonization/reconciliation]. I want to learn more. I want to be challenged by this. I want to feel uncomfortable” (Educator 3). These forms of resistance (resistance to unsettling teachers as the only knowledge holders, workload, and institutional constraints), however, indicated a sense that there was some disconnect between institutional practice and moving forward with decolonization and reconciliation. I was left wondering how these disparate perspectives could be bridged. This disconnect will be a point of discussion in the next chapter.

Self-reflexivity was a point of responsibility for several participants. For example, one participant noted that “persona[al], engaged efforts at decolonization” (Administrator 1) were central to enacting decolonization across the institution. Another showcased this sense of self-reflection: “How do I contribute? What are the legacies I am going to leave behind and what are my responsibilities, especially as an educator, then as a parent, as a committee member?” (Educator 1). This teaching-focused participant indicated both a responsibility to students and the institution (and institutional practices), but also reflected that those behaviours and practices were not

limited to the institution—that these practices affected their personal lives, and those around them. One of the educator participants noted the following about decolonization:

Veronique: What practices do educators see as decolonizing and how does that inform their classroom practice [...]?

Educator 3: So, for myself, I think that I take the...my responsibility very seriously in terms of like, learning about decolonization, understanding what that means, realizing that this is not like a one stop shop where you just pop in, decolonize, and you walk away, that this is an ongoing journey of learning [...] I would say I'm continually working to learn and unlearn things, and it's not gonna happen overnight. And I know that.

This gave me the sense that self-reflexivity and this idea of responsibility was a very personal process, and rather than exclusively an institutional experience, was a lived practice—one that reached much further than the interested parties of that institution.

Yet another administrator noted “an incredible sense of responsibility to the community: [...] that’s how I see my job as I’m serving community” (Administrator 4), reflecting the idea that responsibility to do the work of reflection was not a checklist item. The practice of self-reflexivity was noted to be rooted in ties to the community, both internally to the interested parties of the Faculty (students), as well as the greater institutional community and beyond, and indicated a personal process of engagement. One administrative participant noted a balance between establishing:

performative requirements and leaving it in the hands of individuals to deeply examine their own practice because [...] the personal is [...] an essential feature

of how one comes to shift your beliefs and knowledge and understanding [...] and that in itself will be served as catalyst to change in your practice.

(Administrator 1)

In addition to self-reflexivity creating the opportunity for decolonizing praxis, there was also the sentiment that while not everyone may engage in self-reflection, that those who do will exhibit a path for others to follow, or become the “vanguard for some of this” (Administrator 2) decolonization work. This could be done by exemplifying decolonization strategies in their own practice, and could also be done through sharing with others their experience with self-reflexivity work.

### ***Reliance on Indigenous Education Colleagues***

An administrator participant highlighted the reliance of non-Indigenous faculty on their colleagues in the Department of Indigenous Education to facilitate the learning of Indigenous content for students. There was a narrative of concern described by several participants that faculty may rely too heavily upon the Department of Indigenous Education for providing content through mandatory Indigenous content courses, as well as for performing land acknowledgements. One participant indicated the following:

When you put Indigenous educators in the position to try and help or teach their non-Indigenous colleagues about decolonization and Indigenization [...] when we had a [resurgence] coordinator begin to do this work, it wasn't very long before they started to have...concerns with [...] the degree to which the work was falling on Indigenous peoples, rather than non-Indigenous peoples.

(Administrator 1)

Another participant suggested that:

We're also informed by, influenced by our colleagues who are, there's another unit now within the Faculty of Education—that's Indigenous Education [...] I'm always concerned about how much we ask these individuals [...] and if it's an inappropriate burden to expect those individuals to do all the work. We have a large responsibility to that ourselves. (Administrator 2)

Several participants—both administrative and teaching—highlighted that faculty should be facilitating Indigenous content within their own curriculum, regardless of the subject area taught, and that land acknowledgements ought to be performed by the individual teaching the class.

Through the interviews, I was informed about an Advisory Group within the Faculty, comprised of faculty and community members, whose work it is to advise the Faculty on various aspects of programming: “whether that's reduced barriers to admissions or it's trying to create programs that we think would be more enticing and engaging and inclusive of Indigenous people and perspectives” (Administrator 3). Faculty at large are invited to participate in this group. Community members that are involved with the Advisory Group include members from other institutions (Camosun College), local school districts, and community organizations. However, there was a noted sense of resistance, according to this participant, from non-Indigenous faculty to participate in the advisory group, particularly with those outside of the Indigenous Education Department.

One administrative participant noted that resistance appeared to be a result of a sense that if students wanted to receive Indigenous-related education, that they could

find it within the Indigenous Education department and get their mandatory courses there (Administrator 3). Several participants also noted the work of a Resurgence Coordinator, whose job it has been to support resurgence initiatives within the Faculty, but several participants suggested that there might be too much reliance from non-Indigenous faculty on the Resurgence Coordinator as well as the Indigenous Education Department to facilitate their own personal learning and growth.

Underlying this theme of resistance to self-reflexivity is the notion that some individuals can locate the responsibility outside themselves for undertaking decolonization or reconciliation efforts. In other words, the responsibility for undertaking decolonized practice (in teaching and policy-practice) remains with someone else. While one participant noted that “[w]e have a large responsibility to do that ourselves” (Administrator 2), another noted that there were challenges with encouraging individuals to undertake this process of self-reflexivity for the purposes of decolonization and reconciliation. They indicated that this was work that non-Indigenous members had a responsibility to do:

So those are the ways that we’re trying to work now as a Faculty is [...] this notion of working as accomplices, understanding the responsibility of non-Indigenous people to do their own work. And then to act as an accomplice to support and talk with Indigenous people about steps we can work on together to reconstruct or reconfigure the systems we have. (Administrator 1)

This was voiced in various capacities throughout the interviews, with some participants highlighting concrete ways in which this could be done. One participant suggested that rather than relying upon the Resurgence Coordinator to attend various classes and

perform land acknowledgements, that faculty could be educated en masse on ways to perform land acknowledgements that they could then replicate in their classes, and feel empowered to do so in a respectful way:

So there's a lot of requests on their time for things like well, can you come do a land acknowledgement for my course. And then the Resurgence Coordinator has to think about is that a good use of my time? Or could [they] maybe instead, do a workshop and how to do land acknowledgement in a good way, so that you can do your own instead of asking [them] to do that. (Administrator 3)

This could reduce the strain on the Resurgence Coordinator position, and other Indigenous Education faculty that have been asked to undertake this work. During one of the interviews, a participant noted that they sought out courses, including courses that were facilitated by the Department of Indigenous Education. This participant indicated that one of the strategies they implement to decolonize their curriculum is to educate themselves by “read[ing] as much as I can and talk and listen. And go to presentations and all the education that is made available to us. We have no excuse to say ‘I don’t know’” (Educator 2). This was a an “aha” moment for me, as I had previously only considered the idea of coursework for faculty as separate from the courses available within the Faculty for students. However, the idea that faculty could partake in existing coursework, particularly out of the Department of Indigenous Education, to better understand how to apply decolonized pedagogy within their own classes or practices seemed like a great resource.

Another participant noted that land acknowledgements were in and of themselves examples of self-reflexivity, as “recognition that we are, visitors on some

levels and settlers here” (Administrator 2). While there was the sense that some faculty experience anxiety around doing land acknowledgements incorrectly, there seemed to be a sense that resources were available to help faculty through this process.

## **Theme 2: Respectful Engagement**

While the theme of Respectful Engagement could be found within the literature as well as in the context of the interviews, I identified three sub-themes within this: pedagogy as decolonization, decentring Western perspectives, and tools/supports for decolonization. These sub-themes permeated the notion of respectful engagement with decolonization or reconciliation practices, and the interviews illuminated various possibilities and challenges within each sub-theme.

### ***Pedagogy as Decolonization***

The interviews illustrated several perspectives around pedagogical strategies for decolonizing curriculum, under the umbrella of respectful engagement for classroom settings. I identified this as a sub-theme given the prominence within the interviews, but was also informed by the availability of pedagogy-based discussions in the literature, such as that by Louie et al. (2017).

One participant suggested that a continued reference to Indigenous worldviews or practices was a powerful tool for representation in curriculum. They noted that BC’s K-12 curriculum had implemented examples of Indigenous fishing practices to ask math questions, as an example: “they use that as kind of the basis for all of the measurement questions. Like if you wanted to catch 22 fish, what diameter would you need? And so [...] you’re using all the same mathematical principles to come up with the answers” (Administrator 3). They go on to note that it is very powerful to have

Indigenous representation in learning. This also tied into the sub-theme of decentring Western perspectives. Highlighting Indigenous examples of practice underscores the notion that there are multiple ways of viewing—in this case, multiple ways of viewing a subject like math.

An administrator participant noted their view on decolonization as:

Administrator 1: it's the approach you take to teaching and learning that doesn't...that doesn't centre the teacher as the only knowledge holder is one of the most primary things to have to give up.

Veronique: Okay

Administrator 1: if you're going to decolonize your practice. So, you have to move to a model...this is my interpretation of Indigenous pedagogy, ways of knowing, is that you have to leave...this notion of expert in the instructor aside, in order to replace that with us, with spaces where expertise is shared [...] I think it really offers so much richness in a learning environment, if you can take that pedagogical approach. But even students can be highly resistant to it because they're so used to a model where knowledge is dispensed from the expert, right? So I see decolonizing in teaching and learning as primarily a pedagogical act [...] and then you can add in other ways of acknowledging or representing research.

Similarly, another administrator participant identified that some courses within the Faculty are “bring[ing] in multiple ways of learning [...] through different perspectives” (Administrator 2):

Veronique: So, what practices do educators see as decolonizing and how do you think that informs their classroom practice?

Administrator 2: ...So I can give you examples of what I see inside some of the courses [...] I see lots of individuals trying to come by or bring in...so like in a music class trying to bring in multiple ways of learning music through different perspectives and different views [...] it goes back to that idea about broadening things up [...] Where, what kind of a reading list do you have...

There was suggestion from this participant as well as others (Educator 3) that conscientious reading lists, for example, could reference Indigenous perspectives or that music courses have multiple ways of learning music (Administrator 2). Some of the challenges with these pedagogical tools, however, were noted in some interviews as a discomfort with teaching Indigenous-specific content, or lack of clarity around what was appropriate to teach—particularly for some non-Indigenous faculty. In other interviews, participants indicated that faculty could research and identify resources that can assist with this process. One participant sat in on a course regularly taught within the Faculty for students to better understand ways that they could apply decolonized pedagogies in their own courses (as described above). In all scenarios, however, pedagogy as decolonization was indicated to be of value, regardless of the participant's position.

### ***Decentering Western Perspectives***

Decentring Western perspectives, while an undercurrent throughout the theme of respectful engagement, came with a set of possibilities and challenges according to participants—possibilities involved furthering a decolonized pedagogy, and challenges

included the process making one feel uncomfortable at times, as well as identifying assumptions which underpin one's knowledge. This sub-theme resonated with the underpinnings of postmodernism, specifically around identifying assumptions which shape one's knowledge.

One way of realizing a decentring of Western perspectives is to disrupt the notion of teachers as "experts" or the only source of knowledge in a classroom setting—particularly as they engage with Indigenous content or decolonizing curriculum. For example, one administrative participant utilized their combined teaching and administrative experience to provide this assessment:

I think there's also an orientation that you have to ready yourself for and prepare to be making mistakes. And I think that's another thing that's very hard for someone in a position of authority to do, which we often find ourselves in as the teachers of classes and scholars on topics, to be told that we might not know. (Administrator 3)

Another participant indicated their personal experience with this process, as a non-Indigenous Faculty member. They relayed to me the idea that they openly tell students that they are also learners in this area, and that students have been largely respectful of them and their willingness to be learners alongside them.

Veronique: And you feel comfortable taking that [Indigenous research methods] to a [...] classroom setting?

Educator 2: I'm getting more comfortable with it [...] I think I'm getting better at knowing how to say it; you know, this is my perspective. This is where I'm...this

is what I understand to be [...] and for the most part, students I think have been respectful and receptive.

One administrative participant also noted that the process of decolonization in classrooms was dependent, in part, on the notion that “teaching and learning [...] doesn’t centre the teacher as the only knowledge holder,” and to instead view the classroom as a shared space of expertise (Administrator 1). This was reflected in another interview, too, with the participant noting that they view the classroom as a “partnership with students” (Administrator 4). Through exposing students to a variety of perspectives in the classroom, this participant viewed the partnership as an opportunity to have meaningful discussions about improving the problems that the field (education) is facing, decentring themselves (the teacher) as the only knowledge holder in the classroom.

One of the administrative participants noted a strategy to approach the challenge of decentring Western perspectives is that they use the word “becoming” to underscore the process of being a teacher, and being a knowledge holder, rather than viewing teachers as fixed “experts”:

There are so many dominant discourses or ideologies in the post secondary sector and being one of them, right, then you have to become the expert, but the word I like to use is become, so I am becoming an expert about, and so this notion of putting a word like becoming there takes away the pressure to be the expert. (Administrator 1)

Another challenge of decentring the idea of *teacher as expert* or the only knowledge holder within the classroom, which emerged from the interviews, is that it can be a

difficult process to unpack assumptions of Western perspectives in order to facilitate this shift. While this process can be difficult, however, my sense of unpacking Western perspectives is that this is work that non-Indigenous practitioners can feel confident in both learning and facilitating. Throughout the interviews, the idea of decentring Western perspectives was central to the process of decolonization and reconciliation, which marks this sub-theme as significant within the context of this research project. Although it maintains some challenges such as potentially feeling uncomfortable and identifying assumptions which underpin one's knowledge, the possibilities associated with this sub-theme are significant in that a decolonized pedagogy could be fully realized.

### ***Tools/Supports for Decolonization***

Participants indicated multiple tools or supports for decolonization throughout the interviews. One example was the potential of offering faculty release time and funds to re-write curriculum (Administrator 1). This was echoed by another participant, who indicated that Faculty or institutional resources were a significant component of engaging with decolonizing practice. Another tool was a decolonizing grant program that one participant mentioned, in which students and faculty could work on projects pertaining to decolonization. For example, some students had created various decolonizing workshops through this grant program in the past, which were then put on for the faculty and others to participate in. There was recognition that creating some kind of advocacy or feedback system was also important—where students could reach administrators through alternative channels (outside the knowledge of classrooms

teachers) to voice concerns without facing consequences, as previously mentioned. These tools are largely grounded in Faculty and institutional procedures.

Several participants indicated that the topic of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization is currently on departmental meeting agendas, which helps to bring awareness to the work of decolonization and reconciliation and offers a space for discussing related topics (Administrator 1). One participant noted that this addition to meetings began with some awkwardness:

You know, it's the first time it's on the agenda and there's just kind of silence around the room and nobody really knows what to say. And then somebody finally says something and it just feels kind of awkward to begin with. But it opened a space for you know, tough questions to come to the fore that can be safely asked. In an environment where people who can openly talk about things that trouble them, and to share ideas. And one of the things that came out of that is they developed an online decolonization [...] web site. And so they post resources and there are links to courses and [...] posters and all kinds of things.  
(Administrator 1)

When the conversation turned to policy as a tool for decolonization, some of the responses that were shared with me indicated that policy is certainly helpful, but tempered with the challenges associated with using policy. For example, one participant indicated that if students and faculty and other members of the institution did not feel as if policies were well-communicated, or if they were not invited to participate in the making of policy, that it might render policy less useful:

The more you can talk with others about the reasons why. So a dialogue around “here’s what the issue was, here’s the way we explored the problem. Here are some of the solutions we considered. And here’s what we’re recommending,” and inviting everyone into a dialogue around that so that they feel a part of the decision making is a really important part of how administrators need to do this work. (Administrator 1)

According to several participants from an administrative perspective, one of the reasons that it is so important for faculty at the University of Victoria to engage with policy-making is the fact that faculty are governed by the collective agreement rather than by the dictates of administrators. If change is to be made, they suggested, it would need to come from the individuals:

there is no policy that demands you will make your course an Indigenous one or a decolonizing one. There’s certainly movements towards that [...] The curriculum from the Ministry is offering those things, too, but it’s the individuals [who choose how to teach]. (Administrator 2)

Faculty are also challenged to fulfill multiple roles in their positions and this was noted as a potential challenge to supporting decolonization efforts. For example, participants noted that they are responsible for teaching courses (for some), administrative duties (for some), research activities, committee activities, and producing publications (for some). While participants did not suggest that an increased workload was an accepted rationale for not supporting decolonization, they suggested that it was one item that could certainly impact the uptake by faculty as a whole.

One participant noted that another reason it is important for faculty to be engaged with policy-making is because:

Administrator 2: ...having more people at the table doesn't...and more variety at the table doesn't hurt what we're trying to achieve. The plurality is better.

Veronique: So you mean like in the context of decision making—the table of decision making?

Administrator 2: Yeah, and what this looks like for hiring process and how we go about for admissions and inside programs...certainly for decision making [...] we work by a principle at the institution where decisions are really made by ... by faculty in the democratic process [...]

Given this democratic process of decision-making, they argued, a valuable tool was to ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making groups as another way to support decolonization efforts. Specifically, encouraging diverse views, including Indigenous perspectives, at various levels of committees and decision-making groups was important in order to ensure that decision-making was representative of multiple perspectives. One of the teacher participants also valued diverse views in the context of the classroom:

Veronique: So we talked about decolonization and you referenced reconciliation. I'm wondering if you can define how you think about those terms?

Educator 3: [...] decolonization is like shifting the lens with which we view everything [...] also elevating the value of the way we see other ways, perspectives and ways of knowing so bringing, raising the value of those Indigenous perspectives, Indigenous ways of knowing

The participant also suggested that student participation was in itself a tool for decolonization. They alluded to the power of students to hold faculty accountable by bringing forward decolonized content (Administrator 2), as did other participants.

Another challenge of implementing decolonization tools in the institution that I identified was educators feeling confident to offer multiple ways of knowing or perspectives within their classrooms, particularly if they had not been taught in that way. One participant indicated that supporting supervisors of teachers in the K-12 setting was also an important aspect of this work:

Another way we're going about it is really trying to think about our supervisors.

So from teacher education, for example, we're trying to provide some degree of training for individuals who supervise in the schools because the students have some of these needs and ideas and the schools have as well. (Administrator 2)

It was apparent throughout the interviews that multiple groups should receive training pertaining to Indigenous Cultural Acumen training, anti-racism, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training, etc., and while some groups are provided access to those courses (i.e., teachers, supervisors), other groups, such as administrators, generally have to seek out specific training on their own terms (Administrators 2 and 4). One participant noted that:

We have a couple of courses for teachers. And that's one approach where we (...) first tried to get the teachers to analyze self. Like why do you think these things? What sort of beliefs do you have about the nature of reality or of the nature of being? And as we've started to question those, then we can also question the systems we find ourselves in. We can say "why is this system

designed this way?” And even if it wasn’t meant to have this effect, “what effects is it having and how can we change the effects it has?” It’s meant to be a way of analyzing education as a system and schools as institutions to see (...) how we can decolonize them to make them more representative of Indigenous beliefs and realities, whatever those might be. Because there’s so many.

(Administrator 3)

Another participant indicated that there was less of a focus on “training” tools, and more emphasis on providing resources for self-directed learning. There was quite a diverse realization of training and development for teachers and administrators. Some participants indicated that the process of training and development was largely self-directed (in terms of finding resources), while others indicated that the Faculty and institution provided resources to help guide them.

As another tool to support decolonization, one participant shared stories about the institution employing Indigenous artists to create art for the institution, rather than simply including Indigenous art in various forms and locations throughout the campus. The employment of Indigenous artists to represent Indigenous art was more aligned with supporting decolonization intention for this participant. This Faculty or institutional-level initiative could have more bearing on the support for decolonization:

Partly because Indigenous artists were hired with institutional money so it gave them some income for the purpose or for the time, the period that they were doing the work. That they were bringing Indigenous worldview and approaches to making of the art...(Administrator 3)

In addition to policy and training opportunities, institutional procedures such as hiring and committee membership came through various interviews as relevant tools for decolonization in action (Administrator 2 and Educator 5). For example, practices for hiring Indigenous faculty and artists, as well as inclusion on various levels of committees, were voiced as a significant way in which diverse perspectives can be facilitated throughout the Faculty, an important step in decolonization.

### **Theme 3: Synergy of Policy with Practice**

Multiple participants indicated a desire to see stronger linkages between policy, planning, and practice at the university. The sub-themes which I have identified include *Challenges with University Structural Dynamics and Accountability*, which will be discussed further below.

#### ***Challenges with University Structural Dynamics***

The structure of the institution emerged as an issue for committing to decolonization practice, as indicated above. In particular, it was noted on several occasions that educators within the Faculty, and at the institution more broadly, are required to maintain certain practices in order to obtain tenure, promotions, raises, etc. In other words, the mode of evaluation does not necessarily promote a movement towards decolonization, whether that includes re-writing curriculum, or shifting pedagogical practice. One reason for this is the time commitment to undertake some of these activities. Institutional practices around fiscal responsibility as well as academic traditions may make the uptake of decolonizing praxis challenging, particularly if it limits the ability of educators to access training.

Another participant indicated some challenges across the Faculty, its departments, as well as the institution, pertaining to hiring and committee membership, particularly if the policies for such do not align. Hiring and supervising was an area of potential challenges according to one teacher participant:

[Hiring and supervision] also can be a little bit challenging because a composition of a committee if it's interdisciplinary and inter-, intra- Faculty. Sometimes it can be challenging to adhere to certain regulations pertaining to the Faculty and sometimes pertaining to the overall university with regard to process and procedures (Educator 1).

In the context of graduate supervisory committees containing participants from multiple departments within the Faculty, for example:

Being able to support a student who is in Indigenous Education being supervised by an Indigenous faculty and trying to follow the procedures with regard for example, to have these exams, the format and the structure of those exams that sometimes they are not aligned with what the student is wanting, or what the supervisor might also want to encourage the student to do. So sometimes there are clashes between those two departments because our policies are different (Educator 5).

Navigating the challenges of disparate views or procedures, in this case, may have an impact on the overall ability to decolonize policy and procedures. Having Indigenous membership across these hiring and supervisory committees was something that still required advocacy, this participant argued, in order to bridge some of the dis-alignment between policies across the Faculty and institution.

A teacher participant noted that there are many groups involved in decision-making at the institutional level, including the President, Chancellor, Provost, Board of Governors, Senate, and that these entities all have a role to play in the process of decolonization at the university. Given that there are many interested parties within the Faculty and institution, and many perspectives within them, implementing policy and procedures that support decolonization at a broad level across the institution appeared to be a relevant initiative in the process of decolonization, as was ensuring that Indigenous perspectives were considered at each level of decision-making.

Another teaching participant indicated that procedures across the Faculty may not align with the institution. For example, they noted that “making a change to a program where collaboration is required, you know, like a more relational aspect, or more different media, like non text based formats are required” (Educator 4) sometimes involves advocating at different levels of administration for change to be made.

### ***Accountability***

Accountability emerged as another sub-theme of synergy of policy with practice. In this sub-theme, some participants viewed accountability as “a very tenuous link between asking people to do this work and holding them accountable for it” (Administrator 1). Throughout the interviews, participants indicated various strategies for accountability. Some participants noted that accountability could be measured through administrative pathways, some identified community as a source of accountability, and some reflected on personal accountability. Administrative pathways of accountability were discussed as administrators having accountability or responsibility to various parties such as students, the institution, and to their

colleagues. Some participants, as I will discuss further, highlighted the ways in which these parties could hold them to account (could hold them responsible) for engaging with decolonization and reconciliation in the context of post-secondary education. Community as a source of accountability included the notion that the institution (and Faculty, Department, more specifically), had a responsibility to the community in which they worked, which will be discussed further below. Personal accountability included the notion that some participants indicated they felt they had a personal responsibility to engage with decolonization and reconciliation efforts.

Several participants identified the use of strategic planning within the Faculty and departments as a tool for some level of accountability. For example, one participant noted that strategic planning can be used as a tool for perpetuating the narrative of decolonization. In reviews of the department, the strategic planning document can be referenced to ascertain where the department is and set goals/priorities (Administrator 1). It can also be used as a conversational tool for identifying which faculty are interested in advocating for various parts of the strategic plan. As the strategic planning documents are democratically co-created throughout the Faculty and departments, they can be used as tools for identifying who will engage with “next steps.” One participant noted the following:

We have a strategic plan and all these plans are supposed to be woven together and they do have mechanisms in which there’s a requirement to record. So those give us some mechanisms that we can ask and use to assist faculty moving their professional learning towards accountabilities that illustrate how they’ve changed their practice. (Administrator 1)

Although strategic planning documents were noted as possible sources of accountability, there was also a sense of tension in the use of strategic planning, particularly around how those documents become ratified or operationalized. Given that faculty are responsible for casting a vote on these documents, there was a sense of tension in this part of the strategic planning process—for example, the possibility that faculty will not vote congruously.

Policy established by the institution (for example, the Indigenous Plan), as well as provincial government policy (for example, DRIPA) was identified in some interviews as a possible resource for accountability. Indeed, several participants indicated that clear policy from government or at an institutional level would assist administrators in their work to establish decolonizing practices in the Faculty. However, this was tempered by other perspectives that adding policy pertaining to classroom practice may not improve the uptake of decolonized praxis, as the responsibility for decolonization was up to the individual (Administrator 1, Administrator 2, Educator 3).

The collective agreement as a tool for accountability came up more than once in the interviews. Given that faculty are guided by the collective agreement, it was suggested that this could be a place to identify accountability measures for individuals. Another measure of accountability that was identified by one participant was utilizing unit standards as a means to evaluate whether faculty are engaging with decolonization principles in practice, as well as some form of mandate:

what is helpful about having things driven by admin is it makes it easier for me who is somebody who cares about equity and diversity and [...] feels that it is a

mandate that I have is to make sure that we are addressing these things in an intentional way. (Administrator 4)

Another participant (Educator 2) indicated that faculty have the option to include their work in decolonization, including courses and workshops that they attend to facilitate this aim, through annual reviews of their work. The use of policies was also described by Educator 4: “for any system to work you need to have [...] clear and transparent policies and practices or you need to have a strong mentorship program, you know, that’s relational.” This participant indicated the use of policies would do well to address making changes as a frame of reference.

Accountability to community was identified through the use of the aforementioned Advisory Board. Given that community stakeholders are involved at the Advisory Board, alongside faculty and other institutional members, this tool was marked as a valuable method to remain accountable to community needs. Another level, or example, of accountability to community was noted by one participant:

There’s a second level of accountability too, especially with our language programming. And this is our service agreements. So when we enter into a partnership with an Indigenous community to deliver a language program, we are accountable to them and what they want from that program (Administrator 3).

Multiple participants indicated that students were a source of accountability, as noted previously. One participant, for example, expressed that students had previously voiced their desire to have mandatory Indigenous Education courses near the

beginning of their programs to ensure that they had sufficient opportunity to further engage in other Indigenous education courses throughout their program. Engaging with mandatory Indigenous Education courses earlier in a teacher education program can also have the added benefit of informing other courses, by offering the potential for diverse perspectives. For example, “so that [...] they are thinking about Indigenous implications for the rest of their course[s]” (Administrator 3).

Finally, some participants offered the perspective of accountability as a personal process:

I know that I have that privilege to be doing this work in this position [...] the other side of that point is my responsibility and accountability for the work that I do. So it's, it's this kind of unwritten ethical code. And it serves as well because it also models Indigenous ways of being and doing (Educator 5).

This eloquent message showcased the ability to view accountability as a personal undertaking, aligned with the tenets of Indigenous perspectives around relationships, and understanding how the work one does impacts others.

While accountability manifested in the diverse ways mentioned here, accountability to the process of decolonization and reconciliation was prevalent throughout these interviews.

#### **Theme 4: Inclusion**

Inclusion of Indigenous content within teacher education curriculum as well as the policies that govern departments, the Faculty of Education, and the university as a whole, emerged as a theme throughout the interviews. This aligns with the Strategic Plan for the Faculty—the priority “Indigenous Resurgence” highlights “valuing diverse

spaces and ways of knowing” (University of Victoria Faculty of Education, 2021/22, p. 4). I chose to identify the sub-theme of Inclusion as possibilities and challenges, because participants simultaneously identified possibilities for inclusion as well as challenges. This theme resonated as well within the literature, for example Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) who identify Indigenous Inclusion as having benefits as well as implications for decolonization, as discussed in earlier chapters.

### ***Possibilities and Challenges of Inclusion***

One possibility associated with focusing institutional resources on Inclusion as expressed by some participants was the notion of the presence of Indigenous perspectives in committees, through hiring processes, and decision-making settings. This could have future impacts on the ways in which Indigenous knowledges or perspectives are represented within the institution and the Faculty.

Several participants spoke about the challenges of approaching the integration of Indigenous content into curriculum without first decentring the Western perspectives that were previously foundational to the curriculum. One of the administrative participants noted that:

I think most of us believed as non-Indigenous educators that integrating Indigenous content into our [...] curriculum was the primary way in which we would shift our practice. But I think for those people who have begun that process, they soon realize that if you continue to deliver curriculum in very similar ways, and you organize curriculum as if it's boundaried by particular worldviews, it becomes comparative again, and it privileges Western knowledge. (Administrator 1)

Several participants from different departments throughout the Faculty referenced the idea that peppering in Indigenous content throughout existing curriculum tended to have consequences for comparing worldviews. For example, one administrator participant noted that:

I thought I was treating [Indigenous content] just as a separate topic, but when I started to get into the details, I started to see [...] how is maintaining difference all the time, in a comparative way, by comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. So [...] I had many conversations with the students about how we might do this work differently. (Administrator 1).

Another participant suggested that an inverted approach tended to be more successful, wherein teachers start with Indigenous principles, and work their curriculum out from there:

What I find is if I start with the principles, and then layer in all the content that I'm trying to do in my lesson or unit plan, it goes so much more easily, and it's embedded in the Indigenous [...] as the first thing and then everything else comes from there. It's about my relationship with my students and it's about my approach to the assignments and the assessment (Administrator 3).

Another challenge expressed by some participants was the idea that some faculty are unsure about how to respectfully include Indigenous content, or implement meaningful land acknowledgements. Administrator 2 noted, for example: "that's where the tension probably happens and this concern, trepidation of can I do more damage, or will I do more damage if I move, right in that process, inaccurately?"

## **Reconciliation**

Several of the participants indicated that reconciliation is a process that non-Indigenous people should engage with in order to facilitate better relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities. Part of this process involves an acknowledgement and developing awareness of historical and ongoing inequities in the education system and in other aspects of society, more broadly. Participants—both in administrative and teaching roles—indicated that the current system was failing Indigenous peoples, and that part of reconciliation involved bringing awareness to those inequities. Another aspect that participants flagged was the ways in which we can and should move forward with that knowledge. They underscored reconciliation as the development of more inclusive systems, the ideation of possibilities and potentials. One participant noted reconciliation as the “public commitment to doing things differently so that we can honour and respect” (Administrator 1), while others also suggested that this was a personal endeavour (Educator 1), and in which members of society act in ways to repair relationship (Administrator 3).

Some participants referenced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission during the interviews as a backdrop to discussions around reconciliation. One teaching participant, for example, noted that “we need to do the truth part and then figure out how to help fix it” (Educator 2). Developing awareness and understanding of historical and contemporary inequities was an important first step to reconciliation, according to some of the participants. Many of the participants also indicated that reconciliation was a process rather than a fixed “destination”—that it required ongoing commitment to education and developing awareness about those historical and contemporary inequities.

## **Decolonization**

As with reconciliation, decolonization was largely discussed as a process, something that is continuous and ongoing. It was also implied that participants largely viewed decolonization as facilitating relationships. Relationships from this perspective could include the individuals' relationship to decolonization—how they enact this in various contexts. It also referred to the relationships between Indigenous and Western worldviews, and to creating space for these perspectives to co-exist. There was a sense that decolonization involved developing a variety to one's perspective, and seeing from multiple points of view. One participant indicated that they believed decolonization was foundational to the work of reconciliation, and once we collectively decolonize ourselves and the systems in which we operate (health care, education, social services, etc.), we can then act on reconciliation objectives (Administrator 1). If one's perspective shifts, then one is better able to engage with reconciliation practices. Another participant identified decolonization as shifting their practices to encompass multiple perspectives, for example, in the classroom (Educator 3).

More than one participant indicated that their understanding of decolonization was the return of Indigenous land, but also noted that there were other ways to facilitate some level of decolonization through additional practices, namely through decentring Western perspectives. The undercurrent in this case was again on the process, that it is continuous and ongoing work that is required. This was a shared understanding across multiple interviews, that whatever practice each participant identified as decolonizing practice, it was something to be continuously worked at.

## **Resurgence**

As I inquired into the perspectives on reconciliation and decolonization, some participants also noted the concept of resurgence. And while reconciliation was for non-Indigenous people to contend with, this, some participants indicated, was the work of Indigenous peoples, in supporting the Indigenization of institutions, as a goal by and for Indigenous communities. As one participant noted:

Reconciliation seemed to me like the word non-Indigenous people have to do to repair relationship. And resurgence is the work Indigenous communities are trying to do within and with Indigenous people to achieve goals, aspirations, desires, needs... (Administrator 3).

Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) highlight a method of decolonization which embodies resurgence as an aspect of Indigenization. Resurgence, according to the authors, is an embodied act of Indigenous knowledges and principles in post-secondary contexts. Resurgence was also of significance as it referenced the Resurgence Coordinator position within the Faculty, as discussed above. Participants described various responsibilities of the Resurgence Coordinator position—supporting Indigenous resurgence initiatives within the Faculty, as well as indicated that there was a chance that non-Indigenous individuals within the Faculty may rely too heavily upon that position to provide Indigenous content for learners. The position was implied to be of significant value to the faculty, according to some of the participants.

### **Summary**

I used four themes to organize the data that I collected throughout the interviews. Those themes included *self-reflexivity*, *respectful engagement*, *synergy of*

*policy with practice*, and *inclusion*. Participants also shared their interpretations of reconciliation, decolonization, and resurgence.

Self-reflexivity contained two sub-themes: 1) responsibility, resistance, and tension, and 2) reliance on Indigenous Education colleagues. The first sub-theme, *responsibility, resistance, and tension* was reflected in the interviews as aspects of decolonizing post-secondary education (through policy and classroom practice). Some participants shared the notion that they had a responsibility to several interested parties within the context of post-secondary education—these parties included students, as well as the post-secondary community and broader community. Resistance and tension in this context were referenced as potential challenges to decolonizing education, but were tempered by the notion that every participant indicated that decolonization was an important goal in their work. Resistance was referenced within the Faculty, as well as the university at large. The sub-theme *reliance on Indigenous Education colleagues* was identified as the concern that multiple participants shared that non-Indigenous members of the Faculty may rely too heavily on their colleagues in the Department of Indigenous Education to present Indigenous content to students as well as to facilitate decolonizing perspectives on behalf of the Faculty at large.

Respectful engagement includes the sub-themes: 1) pedagogy as decolonization, 2) decentring Western perspectives, and 3) tools/supports for decolonization. *Pedagogy as decolonization* reflected participants' perspectives regarding ways in which Indigenous worldviews and knowledges could be/are reflected in their various practices. Multiple participants noted that pedagogy was central to

learning, and decolonization. *Decentring Western perspectives* included the notion of decentring the idea of teachers as the only knowledge holders within a classroom. This process, some noted, was part of an overall approach of unpacking Western assumptions in the context of education. *Tools/supports for decolonization* included participants indicating that institutional resources were important in facilitating decolonizing curriculum. Participants shared ways in which institutional resources have impacted how they have been able to (or have seen others) decolonize their curriculum. Another tool of decolonization as discussed in some of the interviews was the ways in which policy can impact decolonization. Several participants indicated that while policy could be a useful tool, that the responsibility for decolonization was ultimately to the individual.

Synergy of policy with practice included the sub-themes: 1) challenges with university structural dynamics, and 2) accountability. *Challenges with university structural dynamics* was noted in several instances, and described the idea that some Faculty or institutional policy may not align completely with decolonization actions on behalf of educators and administrators. *Accountability* was referenced in multiple interviews as possible administrative pathways, community as source of accountability, and personal accountability. Administrative pathways for accountability included showcasing policy (in some cases strategic frameworks) as a pathway for administrators to show their accountability to the institution as well as to their colleagues and students by utilizing those policies as guidelines for administrative work. Accountability to community was referenced specifically in relation to Indigenous Education programming, in that the department is accountable to the community for

their program offerings. Multiple participants indicated that accountability was also personal, and that they had a personal impetus to decolonize.

Inclusion involved the ways in which the Faculty and institution incorporate Indigenous content, as well as Indigenous perspectives within curriculum and other policies as well as in practice. The sub-theme for Inclusion was *possibilities and challenges of inclusion*. Some participants noted that in order to integrate Indigenous worldviews within curriculum, it was important to first consider the ways in which Western perspectives shape education. Some participants also noted that simply including Indigenous content at various points within a curriculum may lead to a comparative framework between Western and Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. Some participants expressed ways in which they approach the inclusion of Indigenous content, including by starting with Indigenous principles and building curriculum from that lens.

Participants shared their interpretations of the terms reconciliation, decolonization, and resurgence. Reconciliation was highlighted as a process that non-Indigenous people should engage with in order to facilitate better relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous groups. This process includes (as described by participants) learning about historic and ongoing colonial frameworks, and creating decolonized pathways. This is an ongoing process. Decolonization was also discussed as an ongoing process, which worked in relation to reconciliation (i.e., decolonization is foundational to reconciliation), and involved practices around including diverse perspectives (within curriculum, for example), and was referenced in relation to land. Resurgence was noted as important to Indigenous communities, as a goal by and for

Indigenous people. Resurgence was also noted in relation to the work of the Resurgence Coordinator within the Faculty.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Post-secondary education constitutes an interesting and complex space for policy to develop and emerge. The post-secondary institution is governed by government bodies and their associated policies (e.g., provincial policy and legislation). In the case of BC, universities are held accountable to the University Act—provincial legislation which sets the standard for institutional operations and procedures, as well as outlining those institutions' structure. In the case of the University of Victoria, it is also governed by a Board of Governors as well as a Senate. At an institutional level, there is a strategic framework or plan which Bell (2020) suggests is “the way in which policy trends emerge with increasing clarity from the socio-political environment, the parameters within which policy is to be established are set and policy priorities are set” (p. 34). However, in the context of UVic, there are further strategic plans or frameworks which are set at a Faculty level. Faculty members vote on and ratify these strategic plans (Administrator 2), as well as evaluation policies set by the Faculty of Education. As a distinct element within policy development and enactment, strategic planning offers an insight into institutional or Faculty-level priorities for future policy work.

However, this top-down view of how policy is formed and enacted is muddled by the notion that these strategic frameworks are co-developed through consultation, voting, and ratification by members of the institution or Faculty (in the case of Faculty-specific strategic plans). A top-down view of policy in this case would not fully capture the involvement of various actors within the institution to developing as well as enacting policy. While some policy literature considers ways in which more local-level

actors of an institution “resist” policy and act to change or transform policy, often as an understanding of power and resistance, this case highlights the need to view policy as an ongoing process. Sandler (2018) argues that “policy regimes are also affected, indeed produced, by the very activists and practitioners that they in turn shape” (p. 86-87). Working through this idea of policy as non-linear, there are multiple ways to identify meaning across policy and those actors who both shape and re-shape, as well as enact policy in context. Actors with various roles in the institution can be illuminated as part of the policy process to better understand those processes.

In this section, I will discuss the results of the previous chapter to expand and explore perspectives from the Faculty of administrators and teachers, although the distinction between these is not finite, either. It became clear through my interview process that administrators are also teachers, or have had experience teaching. A clear distinction therefore, between administrators and teachers is not explicit, but what follows will be a “slice” of the ongoing practice and policy-practice around decolonization and/or reconciliation within the Faculty of Education at UVic.

This discussion will specifically centre around the three questions that I posed at the initiation of my research: what is the connection between policy and practice at the University of Victoria? How does self-reflexivity inform your theory or practice as policymaker or educator? And, what is considered to represent respectful engagement and inclusion with reconciliation objectives in mind?

### **The Connection between Policy and Practice: Catalysts for Change?**

Understanding policy and its associated practices evokes a need to understand what the policy “problem” is, or to borrow a term I used earlier, what “puzzle” that

policy seeks to resolve. The literature indicated that a contemporary issue of post-secondary institutions is engaging in meaningful decolonization or reconciliation action. Throughout the interview process, I could ascertain that participants felt there was more to do in that regard as well at this university. In reviewing the strategic plans for both the Faculty and its departments, as well as the University at large, reconciliation emerged as a policy “puzzle,” or a set of social practices that actors within the institution are resolving. The inclusion of reconciliation and decolonization-themed aims within the Strategic Frameworks or Plans, indicated to me that there was an awareness and a collective “push” for these goals.

However, Bell and Stevenson (2015) suggest that understanding policy simply as a solutions-based response to an identified problem may limit the full scope of policy work, and that it is valuable to understand educational policy as a process of wider societal discourse. Similarly, Bell (2020) suggests that “[e]ducation is always implicitly or explicitly a political issue” (p. 31) (see also Bradbury, 2020), but that to view policy as a linear solutions-based approach to resolving problems may not be sufficient to understand the process of policymaking and enactment.

Contextually, the stories that participants shared with me were situated in this post-secondary landscape that sought to resolve or engage in meaningful reconciliation or decolonization. The Faculty of Education’s strategic plan, for example, indicated that there were five overarching priorities: Learning and teaching, research capacity and culture, Indigenous resurgence, community connections, and healthy environments (University of Victoria Faculty of Education, 2021/22). Broader context for the institutional level reconciliation and decolonization or resurgence policies include

the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report (2015), which has subsequently influenced Canadian post-secondary institutions (Miles, 2018), as well as the UNDRIP and provincial DRIPA (BC).

In Bell's (2020) view, "[p]olicy is about both intention and outcome" (p. 32). This statement resonated with my findings from participant interviews. The process by which participants indicated policy was formed and enacted was grounded in both intention and outcome—that faculty set the intention and democratically elect to support its inclusion in Faculty policy, and that Faculty administration account for outcome through the use of Strategic Frameworks and other policies.

### ***Key findings and Interpretation***

Levinson et al. (2018) view policy as a practice of power. This power can be exercised in diverse ways, across a diverse set of institutional or government agents or bodies, for or by diverse actors, but that ultimately policy is tied to a practice of wielding power. This concept came through during my interviews with participants—that power was indeed central to the use of policy. However, it was not until I spoke with participants that this process became clear.

One of the key findings throughout the conversations I had with faculty members was the notion that policy could help navigate social power structures in the context of decolonization work. For example, one participant (Administrator 1) noted that if policy was in place to protect student voices (should they speak on behalf of a decolonizing framework), then that would, in a sense, create impetus for faculty to engage more fully with the same framework. Following the notion that policy is not linear (Sandler, 2018), the underlying sentiment here is that students act on policy, and

co-create policy within educational settings. Indeed, as interested parties to education and education policy, students occupy a significant role, according to several participants, not only around issues of accountability (i.e., holding teachers accountable to decolonizing frameworks as noted here), but also to the co-creation, and implementation of education policies more generally. This participant identified that students had an opportunity to become embedded in the Faculty policy. The participant suggested that policy could “protect” students from negative retaliation if they spoke against the curriculum or pedagogies in a class setting. While this human resources-related policy may influence teachers’ behaviours in a classroom (the “surface” of the policy), the underlying message is that students have a voice in the direction that classes take, including curriculum and pedagogy. They are fundamentally co-creating policy through their ideation of what constitutes appropriate practice, as it pertains to decolonization.

Other participants—both administrative and teaching—noted that policy would be well positioned to navigate the dynamic between administrative personnel and educators within the Faculty. For example, if specific initiatives for decolonizing curriculum came from the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, potentially outlining how the objectives from the TRC, UNDRIP and DRIPA could be implemented, then administrators could point to that in encouraging teachers to engage with decolonizing frameworks. The implication to both of these points around dynamics is that there is notable resistance from some educators to engage (fulsomely?) with decolonizing frameworks, and participants did note some of the reasons they thought that might be the case; for example, non-Indigenous educators

not feeling confident to include Indigenous content due to a lack of expertise or concern for offending (Administrator 2, Administrator 3, and Educator 3). One possible conclusion drawn from this finding is that there currently does not exist a policy to encourage faculty to engage with decolonization in classrooms, leaving an opportunity for development, although the institution does have Strategic Planning documents as well as an Indigenous Plan.

The finding around dynamics between administrators and educators suggests that policy is ongoing through practice, not limited to textual representation; even though some strategic frameworks were in place at the time of writing, there was some resistance to implementing decolonizing frameworks (as observed by some of the participants). Again, utilizing the view that policy is not a linear process from development to enactment, this finding suggests that policy is worked at—by government officials, yes, but also educators who act on policy and drive some of the discourse around policy. More still, the ongoing work of policy is done by administrators, who are engaged in the discourse surrounding policy, through the advocacy work they do for implementing various decolonizing frameworks in their respective fields.

Although the participants mentioned here that Faculty structural dynamics could be navigated through the use of policy, it also became apparent that there is significant strength in the actions of teachers who do engage with decolonizing frameworks. Several participants noted that teachers had the ability and power to encourage their peers through their actions. Some argued that this was the best path towards reconciliation and decolonization, but also noted it would take time for all faculty to get

on board, and that some external initiative(s) would probably be required. In either scenario, these possibilities are what one participant called “catalysts for change” — whether that occurred through students, the self, or policy and administration, the focus on catalyst for change was very apparent, as a manifestation of power.

### ***Implications***

The implication of the finding that participants noted policy or practice can act as catalyst for change is that there is still work that participants think can be done within the Faculty, as well as from the larger institution. While in some situations, policy might work to decentralize power (as in the relationship between educators and students), in other situations, practice and peer-to-peer influence might encourage faculty to engage with decolonization, suggesting that different iterations of policy and enactment can work in tandem to facilitate decolonization objectives. In particular, some participants (Administrators 1 and 2) highlighted that many of the decision-making processes within the Faculty are governed by democratic principles, and that in so doing, if many Faculty members are not aligned with decolonizing frameworks, that can have implications for decisions that get made—around strategic planning, as one example. This highlights the value in supporting faculty to think about the value that decolonizing frameworks can have—not just within certain disciplines, or certain individuals, but for every learner (Louie et al., 2017).

Lashaw (2018) contends that:

dwelling on the more ambiguous agency of liberal reform actors who occupy the fault lines between official and unofficial authority and who do not fit existing

categories of political engagement has greater potential to renovate existing theories of agency and power. (p. 110)

In this context, students as actors within the post-secondary landscape occupy a position that is outside of the expected power dynamic between official policymakers (government) and the actors expected to implement those policies (administrators and educators). The notion that students have power in the creation, implementation, and transformation of policy was evident throughout several interviews, and highlights the idea that policy is not as simple as top-down or vice versa. Rather, this finding indicates that there is a distinct non-linear pattern to policy. The implications include the notion that students occupy an obscure position in the dichotomy of authorized versus unauthorized policy actors in the institution, and have the potential to offer significant reflections on the process of policy in post-secondary settings. While students are not authorized policymakers per se, findings from my interviews would suggest that they maintain some power in the non-linear process of policy development, enactment, and practice.

### ***Limitations – Western Entanglements, Decolonizing Complexities***

Levinson et al. (2020) trace the origins of policy “most broadly to the Enlightenment’s emphasis on rational social engineering, and over the course of the twentieth century to an increasingly technocratic rendering of liberal democratic governance” (p. 364). Given the historical context of policy as suggested here, I have to wonder whether decolonizing policy is possible if the concept of policy itself emerged from colonial entanglements. This sentiment is essential to Stein’s (2020) contention that there are multiple dimensions to the connection between post-

secondary institutions and coloniality which include historical, political, economic, and epistemological processes.

The historical dimension refers to those colonial entanglements. This includes but is not limited to the relationship that universities and colleges have had in Canada with Indigenous peoples. Until 1951, Indigenous people in Canada could lose their “Indian” status if they attended post-secondary education (Stein, 2020). These assimilatory policies and others have perpetuated the post-secondary institution as an historically colonized space as well as an active participant in colonizing. Politically, institutions are engaged in relations of power (Stein, 2020). These relations include the “distribution of resources and governing authority in a particular place” (Stein, 2020, p. 164). Although Stein (2020) identifies power relations in relation to the institution, the sentiment was expressed at a more micro level amongst participants. Participants in the interview process indicated some level of power relations. Multiple participants suggested that part of undoing the commitment to perpetuating colonial thought processes was to engage in the process of decentring Western perspectives. From a practical perspective, this involved the idea of educators viewing themselves as part of a learning environment in which they are not the only “expert” in the room. Stein’s (2020, p. 165) inquiry into political processes undertaken by institutions involves asking the question: “[c]an universities shift from relationships premised on ownership and mastery (of land and knowledge) to ones premised on answerability?” The participants in the interviews that I conducted highlighted the value in educators locating themselves within the space of answerability. Answerability, in this context, involved notions of accountability and taking responsibility, as well as reciprocity. For example,

some of the participants discussed their roles as being accountable to multiple parties (students, colleagues, community), as well as indicating their role in serving those parties.

The economic dimension as described by Stein (2020) involves thinking through ways in which universities and colleges are economically and epistemologically tied to broader aspects of society. For example, Stein asks “how are public and private sources of funding for higher education derived (directly and indirectly) through extracting ‘natural resources’ from Indigenous lands” (2020, p. 165). While the relationship between the institution and Indigenous lands is another point of consideration (i.e., how those lands were acquired), it is also important to think about how land is used in continued sustainment of those properties and institutions.

Several participants indicated a sense that decolonization involved a return of Indigenous land by settler states (or in this case, institutions), to Indigenous communities, and questioned whether that was a possibility. It is possible that some of the dissonance expressed around decolonizing institutions is grounded in some of these paradoxical behaviours. While institutions might genuinely seek decolonizing perspectives, it becomes challenging to navigate ways in which the institution can persist while simultaneously disengaging from colonial perspectives around land and land use. For me, these questions certainly added context and complexity around the process of decolonization, but as indicated throughout my interviews, I felt a sense of possibility in spite of those challenges, wherein participants noted distinct ways in which educators could still fundamentally change the way institutions operate.

Decentring the teacher as the only knowledge holder within a classroom setting is

certainly one example that stood out for me. I am also reminded here of the notion of holding two divergent perspectives in tandem—a perspective realized in the literature around *métissage*. Not seeking to resolve the complexities identified here, I wondered if an institution hold multiple perspectives in relation to one another without resolving one or the other.

### ***Recommendations***

Rather than viewing policy and practice as separate and distinct entities, moving forward in the direction of decolonization and reconciliation requires those within the post-secondary landscape to undo the commitment to Western perspectives, through processes of policy-practice and enactment. In other words, I believe that policy can contribute to decentring Western perspectives (i.e., through more inclusive hiring protocols, committee development, curriculum re-development), but that more can be done to encourage faculty to consider ways in which they might begin to decolonize themselves, which would have implications for the ways in which they navigate classroom settings. Specifically, this may have implications for encouraging self-reflexivity amongst non-Indigenous students as well.

Several key items came out of my conversations with participants that I believe would contribute to the wider implementation of decolonizing frameworks within the Faculty. These are reflected in the following two sections which consider self-reflexivity and respectful engagement.

### **Does self-reflexivity inform your theory or practice as policymaker or educator?**

The need for self-reflexivity was frequently identified throughout the literature on decolonization and reconciliation within post-secondary education. For example, the

Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (Pewewardy et al., 2018), principles of decolonization (Mitchell et al., 2018) and other resources as described above (see Aitken & Radford, 2018; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018, Vaudrin-Charette, 2018; Zembylas, 2021) highlighted the need for educators to embrace reflexivity as part of their praxis. As I conducted interviews, it was also manifested throughout the conversations, as participants identified the value in self-reflexive practice. For example, some participants indicated that understanding their own knowledges and assumptions were important steps to decolonization and reconciliation. There appeared to be a connection between an individual's willingness to turn their gaze inwards and a desire to engage with decolonization and reconciliation, according to what participants saw and/or experienced. Out of this finding, I discovered that the conversation sometimes surrounded issues of tension or resistance to decolonization. This discussion will centre around not only how self-reflexivity informs participants' theory or practice, but to also include how participants viewed potential barriers to self-reflexivity.

In order to facilitate this discussion on self-reflexivity, I want to recount some possible definitions of reflexivity, as well as the possibilities that are engendered by reflexivity and the challenges. Ryan and Walsh (2018) contend that reflexivity is central to an educator's ability to disrupt assumptions and educational norms. A key element of reflexivity is to look inward, at your own knowledge, how you came to arrive at that knowledge, the assumptions that are carried by this knowledge, as well as taking a wider view of how that understanding is situated in wider communities of knowledge. This situating includes understanding how knowledge is used in various contexts, including how it becomes a tool of power. Ryan and Walsh (2018) further note that

“building a capacity to read the world with a view to understanding and resisting dominant social norms and forces is key to the effectiveness of every educational intervention” (p. 4). Underlying this statement is the notion that educational interventions are necessary tools to develop more equitable education for all learners globally. Once educators are able to identify those knowledges and sources of knowledge that shape their own worldviews, as well as those by “dominant cultures,” they can potentially challenge certain “truths” as established by that body of knowledge. In the context of decolonization, and educating for decolonization and reconciliation, I believe that this acknowledgement is a fundamental step towards identifying multiple knowledges and ways of knowing.

D’arcangelis (2018) cautions, however, that while reflexivity has potential for founding change, there are considerations for how reflexivity is used. In particular, the author suggests that “paradoxically, self-reflexivity is seen as the main tactic that we should use to avoid re-centering ourselves, and hence our power, in knowledge production” (p. 339). Reflexivity should involve not just an individualized approach, but also a collective—in other words, educators may identify how they have come to certain truths or knowledges, but should also do the work of identifying how society or collectives have come to certain knowledges or truths. This is an important step to understand the connection between the self and society, and in particular, for settler communities, how they have come to benefit from those knowledges.

### ***Key Findings and Interpretations***

One administrator participant indicated that having worked as a teacher helped them to understand some of the challenges around decolonizing courses and syllabi.

There were notable challenges with unpacking assumptions within existing course content:

As an administrator, that [experience] helps me to understand some of the resistance I've seen to the efforts we've undertaken as a Faculty to try and decolonize both our institutional practices, the administrative procedures, the policies, and so on, that we use as a Faculty as a whole as well at the unit level, but also in the classroom (Administrator 1).

The challenge as described here is grounded in the need to work within the framework that is established by the institution. Attending to decolonizing curricula while bound to inherently Western processes and procedures is one instance of tension that participants indicated. For example, some participants noted that there can be challenges when advocating for non-text-based formats in curriculum (Educator 1 and Educator 4).

Regarding resistance to reflexive practice, and ultimately to practices of decolonization, some of the rationale behind resistance was represented as pertaining to fear of making mistakes as well as a sense that the responsibility of decolonization or Indigenous content was for someone else. For example, within the Faculty, there is a Department of Indigenous Education. Some participants felt that members of the Faculty sometimes relied too heavily on the members of the Department of Indigenous Education for producing and providing Indigenous content to teacher candidates. There was also the sense from one participant that this was the rationale for some Faculty members not to attend the Advisory Board to which they were invited—that they felt it “wasn't for them” and that perhaps the Faculty members associated with the

Department of Indigenous Education would do that work. This resistance alluded to the idea that reconciliation or decolonization was the purview of certain groups rather than the institution as a collective.

### ***Implications***

Participants widely noted that reflexivity happened in conjunction with a willingness to learn and being prepared to make mistakes. Much of the tension surrounding resistance to decolonization and reconciliation was noted to be a result of a desire to get things right for fear of offending Indigenous communities. Faculty from multiple departments may experience anxiety around delivering appropriate decolonized content and around providing land acknowledgements in the most respectful way. Participants indicated that they had either experienced or witnessed this anxiety, but also noted that this had a strong connection to the idea that faculty are seen as experts in the classroom setting. If educators are experts, and they misstep, how does this affect their credibility? This observation connects with an earlier point about decentring Western perspectives; in this case, decentring the idea that educators will not make mistakes, and that they are the only experts in the room in a classroom setting was noted as relevant to decolonization and reconciliation. Understanding the role of students in this context would be particularly illuminating. Some participants mentioned that there can be resistance from students to the idea of teachers making mistakes, or not being the “expert” in subject matter within courses (e.g. Administrator 1).

Another interesting point that emerged from the conversations around resistance is the idea that educators are in fact well-equipped to decolonize their

classroom practice. While there seemed to be some reliance on the Indigenous Education department for producing “Indigenous content” for students, some participants indicated that this was due to a lack of desire to find information through research. Teachers may resist decolonization practice if they believe someone else can do it better, or if they believe it is not their responsibility. Multiple participants indicated some concern over whether the Faculty relied too heavily on the Department of Indigenous Education for this content, as well as the Resurgence Coordinator position.

However, some participants indicated that resources were available to help educators within the institution consider ways in which to decolonize curriculum. One participant even indicated that they could easily find resources to assist in this work themselves (Administrator 4).

### ***Limitations***

Limitations for this particular finding include the composition of the research sample. The participants that agreed to meet with me and provide insight into their perspectives and practices showcased their willing self-reflexive practices during the interviews. Other perspectives on this issue could exist. As I consider the possibility of this, however, I am reminded that the purpose of this research was not to provide a generalized view of all Faculty members, but rather to consider some of the possibilities that exist in this Faculty. Regarding self-reflexivity, I believe that the findings illustrate that participants valued self-reflexivity in their practice.

Faculties, and the departments that constitute them, are not silos of practice. They are informed by and act on procedures and policies that are implemented from other groups within the university community. These groups may include the Senate,

the Board of Governors, and others. One participant indicated that decolonization would require all bodies within the institution to employ this practice (Educator 1). Indeed, some participants indicated a sense that university policy did not always work well in conjunction with practices set by the Departments. For example, some participants noted that practices surrounding the use of different media (non-text based) formats in curriculum may vary across departments and the institution (Educator 1 and 4). Another limitation, therefore, is the scope of the research project, and how those groups all come to inform policy and practice. For example, this research project focused on Educators and Administrators in one Faculty; however, given that policy is implicated across many groups in the institution, it would be relevant to understand ways in which the practices surrounding non-text-based formats are encouraged across disciplines and the institutional administration.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings associated with how self-reflexivity impacts faculty roles as administrators and educators, as well as the findings that indicate a responsibility for all individuals to engage with decolonization and reconciliation, there could be some argument to the notion of prescribing policy to enforce this process. However, in connection to the underlying principles of self-reflexivity, a willingness to learn and make mistakes, to decentre Western perspectives of knowledge and knowledge construction, prescribing policy may not make sense. What may be useful, in this context, is offering spaces to listen and talk about experiences, sharing ways in which Faculty members have engaged with the work of decolonization and reconciliation, and supporting faculty in this process.

**What do you consider to represent respectful engagement and inclusion with reconciliation objectives in mind?**

Self-reflexivity lends itself to the next research question—both informing and informed by—the notion of respectful engagement and inclusion with reconciliation objectives. The interviews highlighted a sense of what respectful engagement and inclusion looked like—through pedagogy, decentring Western perspectives (including the idea that the teacher is the only knowledge holder in the classroom), various tools and supports for decolonization, as well as some of the challenges of those themes. The participants also identified Indigenous representation as a key consideration, including the different approaches across the Faculty to inclusion as well as the relationship of Faculty policy to the larger network of the institution.

***Key Findings and Interpretations***

Pedagogy for decolonization and/or reconciliation had several iterations throughout the interviews. Many of the participants, however, indicated the need to value multiple ways of knowing. Central to this process of valuing multiple ways of knowing, I found, was the concept of decentring Western perspectives within courses and other institutional practices. Across departments, I noticed that some faculty indicated an awareness of the challenges of decolonizing curriculum from the perspective of “incorporating” Indigenous content. For example, some participants suggested that as they undertook the work of decolonizing their curriculum, Indigenous knowledges often became a contrast to the Western knowledges that underpin the curriculum. This in turn led to a comparative stance—rather than holding these knowledges as equally valued, some participants indicated that incorporating

Indigenous content into courses in this way could have deleterious effects for the representation of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) offer cautions about the methods associated with Indigenous Inclusion, and this finding certainly attested to those challenges. While Indigenous inclusion was marked as a particularly helpful aspect of decolonization in many ways—consider, for example, Indigenous inclusion in committee membership and hiring practices—the interviews highlighted those aspects of Indigenous inclusion that could have associated challenges.

In response to these challenges, however, some participants also indicated taking a different approach. Rather than incorporating some Indigenous content into course curricula that were pre-existing, some participants suggested that once they altered their approach to begin with Indigenous knowledges or principles, that decolonizing those curricula became a more streamlined process. The underlying concept for this approach is a sense of unpacking assumptions about what constitutes knowledge and knowledge construction, and what constitutes education—tying into the idea that many participants alluded to in decentring Western perspectives as a key component of decolonization in Education. This aligned with some of the findings from the literature in that decentring Western knowledges involves showcasing Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing (Ritchie, 2016). Participants, for example, alluded to the notion that knowledge does not have to “begin” with a Western conception of knowledge construction. If teachers and administrators decentred Western perspectives of education (i.e., did not showcase Western knowledges as the main

framework for curriculum), then developing plurality within curriculum becomes possible.

Decentring Western perspectives involves the participation of students in addition to educators. For example, one participant indicated that students have been respectful and receptive to their process of decentring Western knowledges. This has implications for the ways in which teachers not only engage with decolonization, but for how that engagement is received—in this case, by the students in their courses. Some scholars (Hollinsworth, 2016) have indicated that students and other stakeholders within an institution can impact the uptake of decolonization principles, and the interviews suggested that this was no exception.

### ***Implications***

The results here indicate policy as a practice involving multiple actors. Castagno and McCarty (2018) note the value in “scrutinizing the often covert ways in which official policies are constructed and become naturalized, while simultaneously attending to the ways in which people ‘make’ policy in everyday social practice (p. 4). The process of decentring Western perspectives was shown here to be an active process engaged by multiple parties—administrators, teachers, and students—in relation to one another. In the manner of unpacking assumptions, I think it is useful to consider the notion that policy is a production (Levinson et al., 2018) rather than a fixed “thing” to be adhered to. These negotiations at the classroom and Faculty level—negotiations between teachers and students, between administrators and teachers, etc.—showcase the ongoing production of policy in this environment. Levinson et al., (2018) suggest that “social practice...goes into the formation, negotiation, and

appropriation of policy” (p. 27). These examples elucidated by participants highlight the social practice that is developing policy around reconciliation and decolonization in this Faculty/institution. Practices involving pedagogy, enacting curriculum, and student/educator interactions were exemplified as practices impacting decolonization and pedagogy. Classrooms, meeting spaces, and communications between parties, are all instances of the production of policy for this Faculty. While these instances can be guided by official, textual policy (curriculum guidelines, provincial and federal policy/legislation), they are also instances of production that can be shaped by the individuals participating.

While policy can sometimes be considered as textual, as affirmed, and then delivered and implemented, these examples highlight the process by which policy can also be viewed as developed “up” to authorized (official governmental or institutional) policymakers (Levinson et al., 2018). Policy as a process, therefore, is one of the underlying bases for these findings. Various parties practice in relation to one another to form ideations of what reconciliation means, and how it is or should be reflected in the classroom, in the Faculty, and in the institution more broadly.

While multiple participants indicated that reconciliation and decolonization policy at the institutional and Faculty level were insufficient, and suggested that some members of the institution were not addressing reconciliation and decolonization, this highlights both the tension around policy and its enactment, but also that policy is in the process of being formed. Those actors in the institution who want to field more change, are actively practicing in ways to encourage the adoption of reconciliation and

decolonization practices, and the power maintained by those actors in the process of affecting textual policy and social practice is relevant.

### ***Limitations***

One challenge of the implication that multiple parties are involved in the production of policy in this context is the notion that textual policy does not have power in its own right. Levinson et al. (2018) for example, caution against “overstating” the power of unauthorized actors in a policy context, as well as limiting the understanding of authorized policy in context.

I suggest, however, that power is not limited to the dichotomy of having versus not having power in this context. Given the results of the interviews, that participants shared many instances in which power is observed or experienced, across actors in the institution, it seems useful to me to understand power in context. Localized contexts in which teachers, administrators, and students act on decolonization and reconciliation policy—or act to produce, are instances in which power is negotiated. Policy as produced by government entities and institutional administrators are also negotiating power. Power in all variations described to me in the interviews, however, was a production in relation to other social, historical, and political developments. For example, several participants highlighted the power of students to impact decolonizing curriculum—whether through resistance or advocacy work. This highlights the political nature of policy (Diem, 2017) and curriculum development—in that it is reliant upon those interested parties’ validation. Some participants alluded to the notion that textual policy, or a “top-down” approach to policy in this context, would not have the ability to effect change, as multiple parties were responsible for delivering decolonizing

frameworks through their own agentic power. However, without the textual policy, some participants suggested, those parties may not feel empowered to act to substantively decolonize. Additionally, administrators within the Faculty are not limited to authorized or unauthorized policy actors, but rather inhabit varying levels of authorization in relation to others and in relation to the institution. In relation to the broader policy community, administrators at a Faculty level may be seen to have less authorization in the formation of policy. However, at the Faculty level, based on interpretations from the interviews, they may be seen to have more authorization in the formation of Faculty policy and procedure, such as determining Faculty or departmental strategic planning, as well as hiring practices and committee formation. Power is not easily defined in this case, as a matter of have or have not, but is important in understanding how policy is negotiated between those authorized, unauthorized, and other parties in context.

### ***Recommendations***

Engaging in this research project highlighted instances wherein authorized actors work to produce policy and enact textual, official policy around decolonization and reconciliation. I came to understand some of the possibilities and challenges associated with policy in this context. However, another possible research project could involve a better understanding of how official, textual policy is produced as well. Insofar as encouraging decolonized practice and policy is concerned, both textual, official policy as well as unauthorized actions have the capacity to facilitate decolonization. Institutions can work to develop one, and encourage the other through community involvement. Relationality has both informed this project as well as

highlighted the need for institutions to engage with all interested parties to facilitate decolonization. Upon implementation, it would be relevant to gain understanding of how those actors in the institution engage with the official policy.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

In developing this research project, I aimed to better understand the connection between decolonization and reconciliation policy and practice within the Faculty of Education at one post-secondary institution. I spoke with eight Faculty members to better understand these connections—four administrators and four educators.

The literature illuminated some of the ongoing possibilities and challenges associated with undertaking a decolonization of post-secondary institutions, including within the classroom contexts. These included understanding decolonization as a process involving several aspects. One aspect of decolonization in a post-secondary context is the mandate for non-Indigenous or settler populations to understand historical and contemporary processes of colonization. Another aspect of decolonization involved the inclusion of Indigenous counter narratives to those colonial frameworks and understandings of history and various state systems such as education. The return of land, in various ways, was also central to the process of decolonization. Reconciliation in the context of post-secondary education, as I discovered both through the literature as well as the interviews which I conducted, involved engaging in various aspects of decolonization, as well as focusing on relationship—developing good relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Reconciliation was identified as the responsibility of non-Indigenous or settler populations.

The literature also identified ways in which post-secondary policy is produced and enacted in various contexts, and highlighted the roles of authorized and

unauthorized policy actors. Policy works to resolve societal or localized (i.e., institutional) issues, and is inherently political and social (Adams, 2014; Levinson et al., 2018). Levinson et al. (2018) view policy as an act of power, specifically in that policymakers determine which problems to address, as well as ways in which they should be addressed. Policy has implications for various actors within a given policy context, for example, within a post-secondary landscape (Wright & Raaper, 2019), policy can impact interested parties such as students, teachers (or educators), and administrators. In the context of BC post-secondary education, the 94 Calls to Action, UNDRIP, and DRIPA impact the ways in which institutions engage or consider decolonization and reconciliation. The University of Victoria maintains a Strategic Framework in which reconciliation is a key feature (University of Victoria Strategic Framework, 2018-2023), and the Faculty of Education at UVic also has a Strategic Plan (University of Victoria Faculty of Education, 2021/22) which highlights reconciliation, and guides Faculty planning and goals. My findings from the interviews in conjunction with the literature supports the notion that policy is non-linear, and co-created by multiple parties in the context of eight perspectives within the Faculty of Education. I also considered decolonizing policy in relation to the concept that policy itself emerged from colonial frameworks.

I approached this research project with an eye for postmodern theory in conjunction with critical theory and some degree of pragmatism, but wanted to ensure that my approach aligned with Indigenist methodologies throughout. Narrative inquiry was the conduit for aligning these aspects of the research project, and allowed me to engage in reflexive activity throughout all phases of the research. Narrative inquiry as a

tool for understanding human experience, was useful in this project to highlight various perspectives on the research questions which I posed. The theoretical underpinnings of *métissage* helped me to understand ways in which I might “bridge” the connections between seemingly disparate ideas. The literature on Narrative Inquiry suggested that “uncomfortable truths” may emerge during the process. This can elicit some tension amongst participants, or the researcher(s). *Métissage* seeks to understand diverse perspectives without resolving those tensions. Because of the nature of the research that I chose to consider, I wanted to honour Indigenist research principles (particularly respect, relationality, and responsibility) in the context of my Narrative Inquiry. I found the theory of *métissage* to be a useful tool to bridge not only my background as a white researcher, but those theories that have come to inform my knowledge and approach in this research project (e.g., postmodern), with Indigenist sensibilities such as respect, and the idea of considering multiple ways of knowing.

The four themes that I identified throughout the literature and interview data included *self-reflexivity*, *respectful engagement*, *synergy of policy and practice*, and *inclusion*. Self-reflexivity included the sub-themes: 1) responsibility, resistance, and tension; and, 2) reliance on Indigenous Education colleagues. Responsibility, resistance, and tension was shown through the interviews to include different aspects of decolonization. Some participants spoke about their responsibility to engage in decolonization and reconciliation efforts, and several noted that it is the responsibility of non-Indigenous or settler actors to engage with these efforts. Some participants, however, noted that they have observed various levels of resistance or experienced tension in the process of decolonization (decolonizing their own thinking as well as

various institutional practices—teaching or administrative). It is important to note that participants also indicated that observed reasons for resistance were not justified. Financial constraints in the effort to educate oneself was an area of tension, as was the notion that students may not be receptive to unsettling the idea of the teacher as the only knowledge holder within a classroom setting. Reliance on Indigenous Education colleagues was a sub-theme that I identified as a result of several participants indicating that they had concerns that non-Indigenous faculty would rely too heavily upon the expertise of their Indigenous Education colleagues in order to facilitate decolonization, as well as the general impression that students could receive Indigenous content within the context of that department, rather than take responsibility for including Indigenous content throughout each department, and each curriculum.

Respectful Engagement included the sub-themes: 1) pedagogy as decolonization; 2) decentring Western perspectives, and 3) tools/supports for decolonization. Pedagogy as decolonization was the result of some participants indicating that including diverse perspectives within curriculum was an important aspect of decolonization. One participant noted that using Indigenous knowledge-based examples was a powerful tool for curriculum practice. Others noted that including multiple perspectives or ways of knowing a subject was a strategy that they have utilized or observed in the context of classrooms. Some of the challenges that participants indicated to me, however, were that some participants had either felt or observed others feel a level of discomfort around understanding what was appropriate to teach, particularly if they themselves were not Indigenous. Other participants

indicated that there was a responsibility of non-Indigenous faculty to find courses and other strategies to learn about Indigenous content, which they could then incorporate into their own curriculum or practices.

Decentring Western perspectives included decentring the idea of teachers as the only experts within a classroom. One teaching participant indicated that they share how they are situated in the context of decolonizing their views—specifically, that they discuss with students that they are in the process of learning and that students have been receptive to this. An administrator participant indicated their perspective as a teacher in “partnership with students” (Administrator 4). Another administrator participant also viewed the classroom as a space in which expertise is shared across students and teachers (Administrator 1). Tools/supports for decolonization included various ways in which participants indicated there is or could be support for decolonization within the institution and faculty. Some examples of this included the offering of time and funds to work on decolonizing curriculum, bringing awareness of decolonization and reconciliation through the use of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization topic within departmental meetings, policy as a tool for decolonization as well as the democratic process of policymaking within the faculty, and Indigenous inclusion, which involved hiring processes as well as processes for inclusion on various committees.

Synergy of policy with practice included the sub-themes 1) challenges with university structural dynamics, and 2) accountability. Challenges with university structural dynamics included various perspectives from some participants that certain practices or expectations by the institution and academia more broadly may make it

difficult to promote decolonization. For example, some participants indicated that processes for obtaining tenure and promotions may make it difficult to spend the necessary time to decolonize a curriculum.

Other instances of structural dynamics included the notion of institutional fiscal responsibility as well as hiring and committee membership practices. Fiscal responsibility was mentioned in relation to the processes of obtaining permissions or funding in order to take various training, as training may cost to participate, but during the course of training, participants may also require time away from their regular work duties, which would need to be accounted for. Departmental hiring and committee membership practices may also not align with institutional or faculty policies. One example of this that was given by an educator participant (Educator 1) was that in the process of graduate supervisory committees with participants across departments, there may be diverse views on what constitutes appropriate exam procedures and formats, particularly if there was a need to align with Indigenous methodologies.

Accountability was indicated to mean several possibilities. Accountability was discussed as accountability of faculty to their colleagues, to the institution, but also to the broader community (localized as well as provincial) as well as to themselves and to students. Accountability was noted in reference to the ways in which accountability was shown throughout the faculty at present, as well as methods in which accountability could be developed. Some participants noted the use of strategic plans as tools for accountability (to the Faculty, institution, and colleagues). Strategic planning in this case was utilized as a tool to plan departmental or faculty goals, and facilitating decolonization and reconciliation. Provincial and institutional policy was

identified as a possible future tool of accountability. Some participants indicated that explicit policy at these levels for decolonization and reconciliation may work to encourage decolonial action, however some participants suggested that this method may not work in that way. The collective agreement governing faculty was also noted as a possible source of accountability for decolonizing praxis within the context of classrooms and administration. Some participants noted a sense of responsibility and accountability to the community. For example, one participant indicated that some departmental offerings (i.e., Indigenous language courses) are accountable to the Indigenous community in terms of what that community wants from the course offering.

Inclusion involved the sub-theme possibilities and challenges of inclusion. Hiring processes, committee membership, and decision-making settings were identified throughout the interviews with several participants as areas for including Indigenous perspectives, and that this could impact ways in which Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing are represented throughout the Faculty and institution. Some of the participants indicated that one of the challenges of including Indigenous content in existing curriculum is that simply adding this content may have a comparative outlook in relation to Western worldviews that may currently shape much of the curriculum.

Reconciliation, decolonization, and resurgence were discussed throughout the interviews. Reconciliation was discussed by several participants as facilitating better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as the responsibility of non-Indigenous people. Developing an awareness and learning about historic and ongoing colonial frameworks was central to the process of reconciliation according to

several participants, as it was important in the process of decolonization.

Decolonization also involved the process of including Indigenous content throughout education, and diverse perspectives. Decolonization was also understood by several participants as the return of land to Indigenous communities. Resurgence emerged throughout some of the interviews in relation to the work of the Resurgence Coordinator within the Faculty, as well as the notion that resurgence is work for and by Indigenous people in supporting Indigenization initiatives.

The research questions that I posed for this project included: “what is the connection between policy and practice at the University of Victoria?” The second, “how does self-reflexivity inform theory or practice as a policymaker or educator?” The third question became, “what is considered to represent respectful engagement and inclusion with reconciliation objectives in mind?”

My interpretations led me to consider policy as a complex process, or a social production involving multiple parties. In this research project, I identified several groups involved in the production and enactment of policy—educators, administrators (faculty), students, but also various groups at the institutional level including the Board of Governors and the Senate. Individuals involved in the day-to-day management of curriculum would also be involved in policy production, as would individuals such as the President of the institution. I came to consider ways in which policy could be considered as relational—that policy and the power associated with policy was complex and diverse across actors within the Faculty. Administrators for example, occupied levels of both authorized and unauthorized policy actors, and while it is helpful to consider ways in which unauthorized policy actors engage with policy to

enact or to change textual policy directives, it is important to consider those actions contextually rather than view these relationships as fixed. This fed into the notion that policy is not linear or straightforward in this instance, but that it is shaped, and re-shaped as various actors become involved in the process, and can involve notions of power. Some of the challenges associated with decolonizing policy within the context of the post-secondary institution included understanding policy as a product of Western worldviews, and how that implicates policy and policymaking in processes of decolonization.

Self-reflexivity was noted in several instances by participants to be an important step in the direction of decolonization and reconciliation. This aligned with the literature, such as the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model created by Pewewardy (Pewewardy et al., 2018), principles of decolonization as outlined by Mitchell et al. (2018), and others.

Respectful engagement and inclusion with reconciliation objectives throughout the interviews were noted as including various pedagogical strategies, decentring Western perspectives, and tools and supports for decolonization efforts. Participants also indicated that Indigenous inclusion and representation across curriculum as well as in hiring and committee membership practices were central to processes of decolonization and reconciliation. Associated decolonization and reconciliation policy was identified as potential negotiated instances of power. Taking the view that dichotomies limit our possible understanding of various social, political, economic, and historical developments, I showcased throughout this dissertation that there are other possibilities for interpreting instances of power, for example, as well as understanding

policy and enactment to be intertwined in many instances, rather than distinct phases of policy.

Developing textual policy to support the ongoing efforts of faculty, staff, and students appeared throughout the interviews to have relevance in future work. Additionally, supporting faculty in developing decolonized frameworks for operations, whether curriculum or procedural, was alluded to in order to encourage the transition to a more decolonized Faculty as a whole.

Policy at the federal, provincial and institutional levels indicated that decolonization and reconciliation are a priority in the context of post-secondary education, and at UVic more specifically. However, given the findings from the interviews with participants, it became clear to me that there may be opportunity to improve the change management of those textual policies, and the ways that policy is enacted in practice. For this reason, future considerations for research might include understanding processes of change management in the context of post-secondary education, and the decolonization and reconciliation policies that are developed in relation. For example, research might include not only the policy that is created, the implementation of the policy, but also the ways in which that policy is managed as it is delivered through various stages.

The process of researching and writing on the subject matter of decolonization and reconciliation has been an important part of decolonizing my own understandings of state systems like education.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview prompts**

Interview questions:

- What practices do institutional administrators see as decolonization practice and how does that shape their policy-making?
- As they develop policy around decolonization, what measures are taken to ensure the success of those efforts?
- What practices do educators see as decolonizing and how does that inform their classroom practice?
- Describe your understanding of reconciliation and decolonization.

## Appendix B

### Participant consent form



### ***Participant Consent Form***

#### **Bridging the divide: a narrative inquiry into post-secondary decolonization policy and practice**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Bridging the divide: a narrative inquiry into post-secondary decolonization policy and practice* that is being conducted by Veronique Plante.

Veronique Plante is a Graduate Student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by phone at.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ted Riecken. You may contact my supervisor at.

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to identify areas of strength and limitations in the policy-making process, from the perspective of how individuals interpret curricular and policy objectives, and to determine how policy and practice can better inform one another within this context.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because it will illuminate the relationship between decolonization and reconciliation policy and practice at the University of Victoria. The purpose of this research is to understand how policy and practice come to inform each other in this field of research; this can have ramifications for how future policy is developed, not only within this institution, but more broadly as well.

#### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you work in the Faculty of Education and currently hold a position involved in administration or teaching within this Faculty.

#### **What is involved**

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an hour-long interview, either on campus at a location of your choice, or via virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom or Skype.

[Audio-tapes and-written notes, observations will be taken.] [A transcription will be made.]

Please be advised that information about you that is gathered for this research study which may contain identifiable information may be conducted using an online program located in the U.S. or a program that can be accessed from the US (Zoom; Skype). As such, there is a possibility that information about you may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the US government in compliance with the US Freedom Act.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including an hour of your time for the interview, and possibly more in findings review.

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the state of knowledge around post-secondary policy-making, through understanding the connections between policy and practice.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used.

### **On-going Consent**

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will follow up with my data to ensure that it aligns with your intended descriptions and explanations. During this time, you can choose to withdraw your data or make changes to the interview findings. The data collected for this study will only be used for this study.

### **Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity, names will not be used in the dissemination of the research findings. The limits of anonymity include the small pool of interview candidates that will be drawn from the Faculty of Education, and who have experience in administrative positions as well as teaching post-secondary.

**Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by locating the data on a password-protected hard drive, and any paper records being stored off-site (away from UVic campus) in a locked cabinet.

**Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: dissertation, presentations at scholarly meetings/conferences, and potentially published articles.

**Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be disposed of in 5 years according to practices laid out in UVic's Directory of Records, Research RE001 General. At this time, paper records will be shredded and electronic hard drives will be erased.

**Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Veronique Plante, Researcher, who can be contacted at or and Dr. Ted Riecken, Supervisor, who can be contacted at or.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

*Name of Participant Signature Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

*Template Revised November 2019*