

**Calling in Outdoor Education to Create Anti-Colonial Change in Canada**

by

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BASc, University of Guelph, 2016

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Land Acknowledgement

This thesis was written on the traditional, unceded territory of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, including the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, as well as the traditional, unceded territory of the WSÁNEĆ peoples. Not only written, this work continues to be shaped and inspired through living and practicing outdoors on these lands, as well as by past experience in Outdoor Education occupying lands of the Anishinaabe, Mississauga, Algonquin, and Huron-Wendat peoples. I want to acknowledge and share my gratitude to these vibrant, resilient peoples who have long been, and continue to be in relation with these lands. This study stands as one of the ways I am working to reckon with my personal implication in settler colonialism. I hope that it will contribute to ethical, meaningful anti-colonial change in OE and outdoor practice, and I intend on continuing this work moving forward.

## Dedication

It is important to me to take a moment to share my gratitude for all of those who have supported me on this journey. This thesis could not have happened alone. I want to start by thanking the participants who took part in this study, and for the vulnerability and openness they brought to these conversations. I cannot thank Nevin Harper enough for the limitless and shockingly prompt guidance, as well as creative problem solving as I have made my way through this program and this study; and to Carmen Rodriguez de France for graciously stepping in midway and providing thoughtful insight to support me in bringing this home. Thank you to Michaela Louie, for your insight, encouragement, and friendship, and for helping to shape how I see the world; to the youth who continue to inspire me and remind me why I do what I do; to my parents, Bill and Karen, and my brothers, Aidan Thomson, Alex Pearce, Liam Braithwaite, and Liam Cole, it is my honour to know you are all a part of me; and finally to Luna, Loki, and Charlie.

## Abstract

Contemporary Outdoor Education (OE) has been criticized for continuing to operate in ways that uphold settler colonialism, including having taken minimal action in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015b). Despite their advantageous positioning, the voices of organizational leadership in OE have been observed to largely be absent from the anti-colonial conversation. This study strives to contribute to anti-colonial change in OE through calling in three executives representing leadership from national-level, Canadian OE organizations to explore the question: *How can OE leadership mobilize their organizations towards meaningful anti-colonial change, specifically in regards to the TRC's Calls to Action (2015b)?* Guided by a narrative methodology informed by anti-colonial theory and critical constructivism, two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted. Results highlighted ongoing inaction characterized by unintentional and intentional exemption, sustained by colonial cycles of unawareness, innocence, and ignorance. Several current and future anti-colonial pathways were identified, which target evolving OE and its organizations into spaces that are safe, welcoming, and belonging for Indigenous peoples. An anti-colonial framework for settler OE practitioners and organizations is also proposed. Future research is encouraged to explore Indigenous perspectives of OE as safe, welcoming, and belonging spaces; improving awareness, implication, and accountability throughout the field; and, identifying avenues to bring the field together in anti-colonial action.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

My name is Calvin Walker, welcome to my thesis. I am a White, straight, able-bodied, English-speaking, cis-male, settler Euro-Canadian from a middle class family who was born and raised in southern Ontario on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat, and Haudenosaunee peoples, in what is colonially known as the city of Kingston. I am the older of two boys, raised by two university-educated parents with predominantly Scottish ancestry on my mother's side, while English with a touch of Southern drawl on my father's side. I completed my undergraduate degree on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron people and the Mississaugas of the Credit, in Biology and Psychology at the University of Guelph. As a graduate student at the University of Victoria, I am currently an uninvited visitor on the traditional, unceded territory of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, including the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, as well as the WSÁNEĆ peoples.

My professional history in youth care has typically been oriented towards outdoor education (OE), including a variety of roles at RKY Camp just north of Kingston, Ontario, as well as teaching at The Boundless School in Palmer Rapids, Ontario. I have also worked in youth shelters and group homes providing care for youth with complex needs. At the time of writing, I am also a practicum student with Human-Nature Counselling Society, serving as a developing nature-based clinical counsellor. These experiences and positions have and continue to foster my interest in the intersection of the outdoors, development, and mental health, particularly in the context of youth care, and I intend on continuing to pursue opportunities to provide care for youth, families, and communities with complex needs outside.

I have had the privilege to engage with and develop a deep appreciation for the lands that I have lived on, and as such recognize and am deeply grateful to the peoples long connected and relationally tied to these territories. My engagement with and appreciation for the land has largely been encouraged through the privilege I have had to participate in OE programming, which I believe has had an immeasurable influence on my personal growth and development, through a variety of roles not limited to camper, student, group and one-on-one counsellor, and teacher. Not only personal, I have also witnessed profound growth and healing arising from OE programs. These experiences and beliefs continue to fuel my engagement and participation in this field and have further encouraged a desire to contribute to the growth of the field itself. This desire first took academic form in an undergraduate project supervised by Dr. Stephen Crawford (Department of Integrative Biology at the University of Guelph), in which I interviewed veteran OE practitioners on their experiences facilitating wilderness solo experiences in OE programming. At the same time, a second project under the supervision of Dr. Crawford (then sponsored faculty member by the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation), introduced me to knowledge system engagement and involved addressing the assessment of Indigenous knowledge system engagement in the Canadian environmental assessment process. I believe both projects made significant contributions to the foundations on which I am building this study.

In addition to a deep curiosity regarding OE's potential in development and therapy, my current research interests have also been heavily influenced through my exposure to literature addressing the colonial complicity of the field of OE, namely settler Canadian academic Liz Newbery's (2012) *Canoe Pedagogy and Colonial History*. This

literature has shown me that much work remains to be done in the outdoor field, especially by its non-Indigenous practitioners and researchers in terms of unsettling, reconciling, supporting Indigenous resurgence, and ultimately moving towards decolonization. These works have inspired in me the desire to explore (in hopes of meaningfully contributing to) cultural sensitivity, cultural safety, and anti-colonial progress in OE. Defined by the very spaces we practice in, Newbery (2012) challenges perceptions of OE as politically neutral, writing that the language of the outdoors is “neither natural or neutral, but *cultural* and *hegemonic*, [and] written through relations of power” (p. 34, emphasis in original). Central to this work is the recognition that OE theory, practice, and research is political (Clement, 2019; Newbery, 2012; Tuck (Unagax) et al., 2014).

Reconciliatory roles and duties of Child and Youth Care (CYC) practitioners and educators have been laid out in multiple documents, including the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) Final Report and Calls to Action (See Appendices 1 & 2; 2015ab; Jones & Segal, 2018; Korteweg & Fiddler (Weagamow and Onigaming), 2018). These documents echo and reaffirm long-heard calls for education and practice reform regarding reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization, clearly articulated by scholars and practitioners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, addressing curriculum content, pedagogies, educators, learners, and the educational system as a whole (not limited to Battiste (Mi’kmaw) & Henderson (Chickasaw and Cheyenne), 2009; Claxton (Tsawout) & de France (Kickapoo), 2018; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Korteweg & Russell, 2012; Newbery, 2012; Scully, 2012; Simpson (Michi Saagiig

Nishnaabeg), 2014; Tuck et al., 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wildcat (Nehiyaw) et al.<sup>1</sup>, 2014). The fields of OE and Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) have been specifically criticized for failing to appropriately engage with the intersection of settler colonialism and the environment in theory and practice, despite being two key factors that contemporary practice is founded upon (Clement, 2019; Newbery, 2012). In addition to broad labels of racism (Clement, 2019; Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021), research has challenged contemporary OE for enacting colonial violence in a number of ways, including facilitating Indigenous erasure (Clement, 2019; Newbery, 2012; Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021), lacking critical discourses (Clement, 2019; Newbery, 2012), lacking Indigenous voices and perspectives (Lowan-Trudeau, 2019; Ritchie et al., 2015), and ongoing appropriation in practice (Newbery, 2012). This colonial nature is not new, but a legacy traceable back to early settler perspectives of the out-of-doors, and the ideological foundations on which the field was formed.

This study aims to promote ethical and socially just change in the field of OE. Focused on ongoing legacies of oppression and harm, which inherently involve relations of race, culture, knowledge, and power, it was necessary to build this study in a careful and sensitive manner that makes sense and is accessible to all parties involved and potentially impacted. This is especially important in consideration of my social location as a White, male settler and outdoor practitioner writing in the context of graduate studies at a Canadian university, and in recognition of the legacy of harm that has resulted from research with Indigenous peoples and people of colour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). It is

---

<sup>1</sup> Wildcat (Nehiyaw), McDonald (Maskikow-iskwiw), Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), 2014

This footnote included in order to recognize authors' respective nations, which aside from primary author would be otherwise excluded through the standards of APA 7.

my hope that with the appropriate guidance, openness to learning, communication, and reflexivity, I will be able to appropriately navigate challenges to contribute in a positive and meaningful way.

This work is further inspired and driven by my own beliefs regarding the responsibility of OE in creating meaningful anti-colonial and reconciliatory change. First and foremost, I believe that our undeniable implication and ongoing complicity as settlers identifies us as responsible and accountable. Second, I believe our responsibility extends from our accountability to others, including families and communities. Third, I believe in a responsibility arising from our membership as OE practitioners, in a field whose colonial implication and complicity is not only historical, but also very real and ongoing. Lastly, I believe it is our responsibility as a professional group to actively work towards and take ownership of our capacities to help create just, imagined worlds (Bang (Ojibwe), 2020), as we have the great privilege and great task of helping to raise our children and youth, as well as supporting families and communities. While our individual implication, resulting responsibility, and capacity to engage in this work has been noted to vary (Shotwell, 2016), I want to take this opportunity to advocate for the engagement of each and every one of us.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This study aims to activate concepts of unsettling, anti-colonization, and reconciliation in Outdoor Education (OE) and to engage commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC, 2015abc). This literature review begins by operationally defining OE for the purposes of this study and situating it within the context of the TRC. Attention then turns to a review and discussion of OE's responsibility in reconciliation and in dismantling settler colonialism, through problematizing OE's colonial roots and addressing how contemporary OE continues to benefit from and uphold settler colonialism, with attention to existing decolonizing and anti-colonial efforts in OE as well. The literature review concludes with a review of organizational leadership positions, their roles in the change process, and discussion of how this relates to OE.

### **Defining Outdoor Education**

Despite significant ideological and practical overlap as well as their common interchangeable use, Environmental Education (EnvE), Experiential Education (ExpE), and Outdoor Education (OE) can be understood as distinct approaches (Adkins & Simmons, 2009). EnvE is understood to be grounded in goals of increasing environmental appreciation and literacy, as well as protection, prevention, and problem-solving in response to environmental harm and crisis (Gilbertson et al., 2006). ExpE however, is defined by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) as “a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values” (AEE, n.d.). In its simplest form, OE is education that happens outside

(Hammerman et al., 2001). In further carving out the OE approach, multiple sources point to the works of American OE advocates Julian W. Smith (1955) and L.B. Sharp (1947) (Adkins & Simmons, 2009; Gilbertson et al., 2006). Building from OE's most reduced form, Julian W. Smith (1955) specifies OE to be: "Education 'in' and 'for' the outdoors", while Sharp (1947) writes: "That which ought and can best be taught inside the schoolrooms should there be taught, and that which can best be learned through experience dealing directly with native materials and life situations outside the school should there be learned" (Adkins & Simmons, 2009, p. 2; Gilbertson et al., 2006, p. 11). With roots in organized camping (Adkins & Simmons, 2009; Gilbertson et al., 2006), Gilbertson et al. (2006) explain contemporary OE to generally focus on three subject areas, including: ecological relationships, developing physical skills, and interpersonal relationships. They further add that OE often calls for longer periods of time as well as exposing students to more potential risks relative to typical classroom settings, while also often requiring specialized equipment and instructor expertise (Gilbertson et al., 2006). With special attention to increased perception of risk and challenge, OE extends into Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE), defined as "education conducted in a wilderness-type setting or through nature and physical skill development to promote [personal and] interpersonal growth or enhance physical skills in outdoor pursuits" (Gilbertson et al., 2006, p. 8). Hattie et al. (1997) list common features of OAE programming to include: wilderness or backcountry settings, a small group (usually less than 16), assignment of a variety of mentally and/or physically challenging objectives, such as mastering a river rapid or hiking to a specific point; frequent and intense interactions that usually involve group problem solving and decision making; a nonintrusive, trained leader; and a

duration of 2 to 4 weeks. As such, OAE includes activities such as canoeing, kayaking, out-tripping, rock climbing, and navigation, among other things (Gilbertson et al., 2006). While OE and OAE inherently involve elements of EnvE and ExpE (Adkins & Simmons, 2009), EnvE and ExpE remain distinct approaches with distinct bodies of literature, which furthermore do not require the outdoors in order to practice.

This study will focus specifically on OE and OAE in theory and practice and refer to them collectively as OE. Building from the criteria outlined by Gilbertson et al. (2006) and Hattie et al. (1997), for the purpose of this study OE will be defined as youth programs primarily operating in outdoor and wilderness environments that aim to foster personal and interpersonal development, including physical skill development, as well as awareness and understanding of ecological relationships (but not to exclusion). This includes programs operating as day camps, overnight camps, and out-tripping programs, among others. With that said, due to the goal of working to promote anti-colonial progress, specifically through alignment with the TRC, this definition of OE is intentionally exclusive of Indigenous land-based practice to solely focus on programs grounded in Western worldviews.

### **OE and the TRC**

The TRC was established with the goal of making known the truths of the experiences of the Indigenous peoples who attended Indian Residential Schools (IRS), in order to “lay the foundation for the important question of reconciliation” (2015a, p. vi) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in so-called Canada. While “reconciliation” is acknowledged in the literature to have multiple interpretations (Regan, 2010; TRC, 2015a), and has been fundamentally challenged due to its alignment with

settler futurity (Tuck & Yang, 2012), the TRC operated with a conceptualization of reconciliation as a process of “coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people, going forward” (TRC, 2015a, p. 6). Grounded in data consisting of six years of interviews with IRS survivors, the TRC’s findings were released in 2015 in the form of multiple documents including the Summary of the Final Report (2015a), Calls to Action (Appendix 1, 2015b), and Principles of Truth and Reconciliation (Appendix 2, 2015c), among others. Their findings implicate “[v]irtually all aspects of Canadian society” (TRC, 2015a, p. vi) as accountable in reconciliation, of which OE is certainly not exempt. Sections of the TRC’s Calls to Action (2015b) that are particularly relevant to OE are indicated in Appendix 1. Despite these calls, and six years having passed, action has been reported to be largely unsatisfactory and insufficient (Jewel & Mosby, 2020). In December of 2020, a report by Anishinaabekwe scholar Eva Jewell and settler scholar Ian Mosby on behalf of the Yellowhead Institute, determined only eight of the 94 Calls to Action to have been completed, of which none related to education, or the sections identified relevant to OE. The OE literature appears to be consistent with these findings, as my investigations have found it to reflect minimal action regarding the TRC Calls to Action (2015b). I believe that this is a valuable opportunity to engage and encourage a field that has the potential to have a significant social and anti-colonial impact, through reflexively attending to our relationships, curriculums, pedagogies, practitioners, participants, and organizations.

### **Problematizing OE's Colonial Roots**

Grounded in Western worldviews characterized by Eurocentrism, neoliberalism, capitalism, universalism, and individualism (Mackenzie, 2020), early European and settler conceptualizations of wilderness drew on Christian biblical influence and reflected frontier experiences, which positioned wilderness as a challenging and often morally threatening environment to conquer and domesticate (Cronon, 1996; Nash, 2005). Considered typical of Western cultures, Mitten (2017) further explains that these perspectives were understood to inspire a violent relationship between humans and the more-than-human world. Foundational OE programs were established on this adversarial relationship, employing militaristic pedagogies that positioned the outdoors as a testing ground in which to physically and mentally toughen weak boys (Brookes, 2015; Mitten, 2017). In response to concern that civilization had led the British man to grow soft and immoral, Sir Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts (of the Empire) were established in 1908 as one of, if not the first Western-informed OE program, with the explicit goal of reasserting Britain's military virility (Macdonald, 1993). The Boy Scouts drew on a glorification of the frontiersman, inspiring the return to the wilderness (Macdonald, 1993). Outward Bound, a second early OE program, was established in the UK in 1941 by Kurt Hahn and Laurence Holt (Outward Bound Canada, 2020). Influenced by experiences during World War II, Outward Bound was founded on the similar belief in the need for youth character education, in the form of expeditions, in response to "declines of diseased civilization" (McKenzie, 2003, p. 9).

**Situating OE in North America.** The Boy Scouts and Outward Bound were brought to Canada, in 1914 (Scouts Canada, 2009), and 1967 (Outward Bound Canada,

2020) respectively, and both remain in operation today. As for North American-grown OE, Adkins and Simmons (2009) point to roots in organized camping and recognize Julian W. Smith's National Outdoor Education Project as one of the first, which was founded in 1955 and aimed to facilitate "a more complete enjoyment and intelligent use of the nation's outdoor resources" (Smith, 1955, p. 17). In addition to OE's Eurocentric colonial roots, OE's arrival and development in North America establishes an additional, fundamental colonial layer that involves the acknowledgement of North America as colonized land.

While settler social conceptualizations of wilderness have shown variation over time, from harsh, hopeless places of beasts to sublime environments of discovery and rejuvenation (i.e., romantic), the underlying principle that these spaces are *unpeopled* remained constant (Nash, 2005). This perception of unpeopled began with settler conceptualization of Indigenous peoples as an aspect of wilderness (Nash, 2005), further enacted and fulfilled over time through the violent, sustained removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands. This construction of wilderness as empty is also inherently accompanied by the belief that these spaces are untouched and discoverable (Cooke, 2018, cited in Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021). Developed by and largely for White Europeans and settlers, contemporary OE in North America has been criticized for remaining dominated by Western worldviews and catering primarily to White settlers (Clement, 2019). The following section builds on the recognition of these pervasive, foundational ideological influences, to highlight how OE of today continues to be implicated and complicit in settler colonialism.

## **How Contemporary OE Continues to Benefit From and Uphold Settler Colonialism**

Having grown from colonial roots while steeped in settler colonial society, it is not surprising that contemporary OE continues to benefit from and uphold settler colonialism. These benefits start with the unearned freedom to operate on stolen and unceded lands and extend to the use and appropriation of Indigenous knowledges and practices (Newbery, 2012; Ritchie et al., 2015). In addition, these benefits can be understood to arise from the field's racialized construction and centring of White settler normativities and values, which function to foster perceptions of exemption in terms of OE's responsibility to engage with matters of settler colonialism and racial injustice (Clement, 2019; Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021; Newbery, 2012). Propped up by these benefits, OE practitioners and pedagogies have received specific criticism in the literature regarding their functioning in upholding settler colonialism. With that said, having not gone entirely without corrective efforts, the literature regarding anti-colonial work in OE is also discussed.

**Practitioner Implication.** Multiple voices have reported OE practitioners to engage in behaviours, both intentional and unintentional, which function to uphold oppression and settler colonialism. Writing in the context of canoe tripping, settler scholar/practitioner Liz Newbery's (2012) interviews with canoe trip leaders revealed practitioners choosing to avoid critical discourses as a result of beliefs that they are "beside the curricular point" (p. 30), threaten inspirational program framings, and due to a variety of anxieties. Newbery (2012) further unpacks these anxieties, identifying roots in "knowledge mastery, wounding students, complicity, appropriation, unruly affective content, and the unpredictability of student engagement" (Newbery, 2012, p. 38), noted to

be fuelled through practitioner unknowing, ignorance, and/or perceived unpreparedness in providing appropriate support to students engaging with “difficult knowledge” (Newbery. 2012, p.30). Newbery (2012) also cites a struggle to be self-reflexive, as an underlying contributor to OE practitioner failure to implicate themselves in settler colonialism, and further reflects on her own experiences in which her practices reduced Indigenous history to basic land acknowledgements, while celebrating settler narratives and accomplishments. Also working in the context of canoe tripping, Pludwinski and Grimwood (2021) applied an immersive approach that involved participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and journaling, underpinned by a post-colonial methodology, to investigate how the discourses relied upon by contemporary OE canoe trip leaders in Algonquin Provincial Park uphold settler colonial worldviews and narratives. Practitioners were shown to enact and recreate settler colonial worldviews and narratives using discourses that “wrongfully rebrand[ed] a socio-political and cultural space as an empty, pristine, and undiscovered space” (p. 16), further reinforced by the disapproval, silencing, and ignoring of trip encounters that suggested different ways of knowing. Pludwinski and Grimwood (2021) link practitioner behaviour to the socialization processes of canoe trippers, addressing constructions of what it means to be canoe trip leaders, and how these constructions are transmitted, including past out-trippers and park maps. Settler scholar/practitioner Sarah Clement (2019) also discusses the social constructions of OE practitioners. Through interviews with OE practitioners, as well as reflection on her own experiences, Clement (2019) draws the conclusion that contemporary OE practitioners fail to appropriately engage and reckon with oppression in practice due to a prioritization of physical risk management and technical skills in OE,

relative to interpersonal and emotional risk management. Citing practitioner discomfort and perceived lack of capacity to support and engage with the sharing of deep, personal information by program participants, Clement (2019) further criticizes the general omission of critical discussions such as social identity and positionality during practitioner trainings and while in programs, as well as their ramifications regarding OE experience and OE responsibility.

**Practitioner Unsettling.** While limited in the specific context of OE, multiple pathways for anti-colonial practitioner growth have been discussed in the literature, spanning outdoor environmental education (OEE), Child and Youth Care (CYC), teacher-education, and ecopsychology, in addition to OE. CYC literature contains a variety of terms describing processes of acknowledging and working to account for one's implication and complicity in oppression, such as troubling one's consciousness (Chapman, 2013), "unontologize[ing]" (Mackenzie, 2020), practicing critical reflexivity (Saraceno, 2012) and reckoning (Hillman et al., 2020), while teacher-education scholar Tompkins (2002) refers to a similar process, particularly regarding White educators, as "leading people to see what they have, up to this point in their lives, been unable to see" (p. 409). However, "decolonizing" (Root, 2010) and "unsettling" (Regan, 2010) are typically used specifically in the context of settler colonialism. Settler scholar and member of the TRC, Paulette Regan (2010) grounds the unsettling process in mental and emotional vulnerability, humility, and discomfort, partnered with a willingness to change our beliefs, attitudes, and actions. She explains unsettling requires settlers to begin "with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society" (Regan, 2010, p. 23-24), with the goal of transformative

learning that fosters socio-political action. Settler OEE practitioner/scholar Emily Root (2010) describes the unsettling of settler OEE practitioners as one's "decolonizing journey" (also used in Regan, 2010; Wildcat et al., 2014). Emerging from interviews with veteran OEE practitioners, Root (2010) describes a three-phase "decolonizing journey", which includes: experiences that set the stage for the decolonizing journey; an unconscious decolonizing journey; and a conscious or intentional decolonizing journey. Unconscious decolonizing journeys are "characterized by shared experiences with [Indigenous] peoples, immersion in [Indigenous] communities, exposure to Indigenous worldviews, and an openness to learning throughout" (p. 111). The importance of having meaningful and genuine interactions with Indigenous peoples and communities is a common theme in the literature (see also work of teacher-educators Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018, and Scully, 2012). Specific attention is drawn to spending time with Indigenous people on the land (Root, 2010), further emphasized by settler scholar Scully (2012), who writes: "sharing perspectives on literal common ground means shared points of reference seen in a whole new way" (p. 152). With that said, it is important to recognize the burden that this phase invites onto Indigenous peoples and communities, regarding emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental resources, as well as the onus for providing education. The third phase, conscious or intentional decolonizing journeys, involves "exposure to conceptualizations of decolonization, introduction to a language with which to describe and name their decolonizing experiences, and the recognition of (and desire to disrupt) their own ignorance and Eurocentrism" (p. 111). In this sense, the decolonizing journey can be understood to operate as a feedback loop whereby learning contributes to better recognition and disruption of colonialism, further fuelling awareness and insight

(Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Root, 2010). While it is important to be conscious of the anxiety that can arise from this feedback loop, this process is said to promote commitment and participation in reconciliation (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018). Multiple voices advocate the importance of validating and maintaining openness to the emotions that can arise during decolonizing journeys (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Tompkins, 2002), noting failure to do so can drive practitioners away (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018).

This process has also been said to call for affective work, both intra and interpersonally, as well as naming power and privilege, hearing voices seldom heard, building relationships, and positioning oneself as a continual learner (Tompkins, 2002). Other voices, including contributions from ecopsychologists, further advocate critical self-reflection and healthy engagement regarding one's experience of colonialism (Fisher, 2019; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Newbery, 2012), and learning accurate accounts of Canada's colonial history (Jones & Segal, 2018; Newbery, 2012; Scully, 2012), as well as traditional territory histories and protocols (Jones & Segal, 2018), vulnerability, and the capacity to learn from mistakes (Root, 2010). Jones and Segal (2018) also encourage engagement in co-resistance in Indigenous resurgence projects.

While this work inherently presents significant emotional labour, it remains labour that can and must be done in order to fulfil the responsibilities as OE practitioners and as people committed to anti-colonial change and reconciliation. Root (2010) provides encouragement: "it is... important for us not to retreat from the colonial problem. As colonizers, our minds are also colonized and we can learn to disrupt oppressive worldviews" (p. 108).

**Pedagogical Implication.** OE pedagogies continue to receive criticism in the literature identifying a variety of ways in which they continue to overtly and covertly uphold oppression and settler colonialism. Backed by explicit intentions of avoidance, Newbery's (2012) findings saw OE opt for "pedagogies of palatability" (p. 38) and avoid critical pedagogies (of colonialism or implication). While practitioners were seen to have a role in pedagogical selection, Newbery's (2012) findings are also indicative of the broader pedagogical assumptions of the field, from which practitioners are informed and guided. Métis OE/OEE scholar Gregory Lowan-Trudeau (2019) describes the representation of Indigenous people in OE to be "almost invariably from non-Indigenous perspectives, romanticized, racist, and horribly misinformed" (p. 350). Lowan-Trudeau's words echo earlier criticism that saw the engagement of Indigenous content in OE and OEE often done in a manner that contributes to erasure through essentializing Indigeneity while glorifying settler narratives of voyageurs, pioneers, and frontiersmen, and avoiding the historical and ongoing realities of genocide and colonization (McLean, 2013; Newbery, 2012). Settler anti-racist scholar Sheelah McLean (2013) also points out that outdoor curricula are often presented in depoliticized, post-racial contexts, functioning to spread settler "mythologies of innocence" (p. 358) while avoiding discussion of the realities of unethical systems such as colonialism, capitalism, and White supremacy.

While they may have shed some of their militant lustre, including contested changes in rhetoric, such as shifts to "self-discovery" and "personal growth" (Freeman, 2010, p. 23, cited in Brookes, 2016), settler scholar Andrew Brookes (2016) identifies a sustained favouritism of leadership skill and personal qualities over local knowledge, the "venture-into-the-unknown" model (p. 14), and in pedagogical focuses on changing

values and loyalties. While Brookes' (2016) analysis interpreted these as indications of enduring militarism in OE, they can also be understood as lingering indications of the dominance of Western worldviews and settler colonialism. These values are also visible in criticism targeting contemporary OE's sustained pedagogical use of contrived challenge (Clement, 2019). This longevity likely speaks to the success of programs meeting their prescribed goals; however, challenge-based pedagogies remain subjects of specific criticism, including fostering an adversarial and individualistic relationship with nature built on competition, power, and control (Mitten, 2017). Also framed as a separation from nature rather than a relationship, this approach has even been said to contribute to the existing environmental crisis (Mitten, 2017). As well, challenge-based pedagogies are said to completely lack acknowledgement and understanding of the intersection of challenge and privilege (Clement, 2019). In their article *White privilege and experiential education*, Rose and Paisley (2012) explain:

Simplified and generalized, privileged people may appreciate many of the traditional challenges and pedagogies of experiential education because we are more likely to live free from many everyday structural challenges, such as institutionalized racism, sexism, ghettoism, classism, ageism, and similar forms of othering taking place through discourses surrounding various minoritized and marginalized populations (p. 144, cited in Clement, 2019, p. 8, emphasis in original).

Despite the different appearance of challenges in OE programs, challenge-based pedagogies position Whiteness as normal, reducing the capacity to acknowledge, and further support, how those who face oppression in their daily lives could experience program challenges.

**Pedagogical Re-direction.** Effort has been directed in OE to correct for ongoing objectification of nature and failure to facilitate meaningful connections to place. A shift

in the conceptualization of OE pedagogies has gained traction in recent years, moving towards place-based pedagogies and land-based pedagogies (Mullins et al., 2015, cited in Harper et al., 2018), which aim to connect participants with the outdoors through slowing the pace of programming (Payne & Wattchow, 2009). Place-based, also referred to as place responsive or place sensitive pedagogies (Stewart, 2004) revolve around facilitating a meaningful connection between place, self (Tuck et al., 2014; Stewart, 2004), and community (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000, cited in Gruenewald, 2008). Often operating as slow pedagogies (Harper et al., 2018), these approaches encourage connection through taking time, reflection, and sensory pathways, as opposed to the “cultural logic” (Payne & Wattchow, 2009, p. 16) of fast pedagogies in outdoor education, which objectify the more-than-human world as quantifiable challenges to overcome (Lowan, 2009; Payne & Wattchow, 2009). However, place-based pedagogies have received substantial criticism largely due to a lack of critical discourse (Gruenewald, 2008; Tuck et al., 2014).

Gruenewald (2008) responded with what he called a ‘critical pedagogy of place’ (p.308), claiming to centre on cultural and ecological politics. Despite explicit attempts to make space for decolonization (Gruenewald, 2008) and reconciliation (Scully, 2012), this approach is seen to continue to fall short, particularly regarding colonialism, through problematic concepts such as “reinhabitation” (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 308; Scully, 2012, p. 148), which promote settler futurity through emplacement and replacement, ultimately contributing to re-colonization (Tuck et al., 2014). Encouraging development in line with culturally sensitive pedagogies, Lowan (2009) suggests Indigenous course design, conducting courses in communities’ traditional territories, increasing local Elder and knowledge holder involvement, increased Indigenous instructor development, and cross-

cultural training for Indigenous and non-Indigenous instructors. As well, Tuck et al. (2014) reminds us: “Relational pedagogies of land are not new” (p. 9).

Rooted in Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (Tuck et al., 2014), land-based pedagogies, also referred to as land education, and more broadly as Indigenous worldviews (Simpson, 2014), emerge from “familial, intimate, intergenerational, and instructive” (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 9) relationships between Indigenous peoples and land, and are understood to ground language, ways of knowing, teaching, learning, knowledge transmission, spirituality, traditions of agency, leadership, decision-making, and diplomacy (Simpson, 2014). Relative to the ontology of place-based pedagogies as “I am, therefore place is,” (Bang et al., 2014, p. 45), Bang et al. describe that of land-based pedagogies as “Land is, therefore we are” (2014, p. 45). Land-based pedagogies address all land, including urban (Tuck et al., 2014), as well as the accompanying “spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects” (Styres et al., 2013, p. 37, cited in Tuck et al., 2014, p. 9). Land-based pedagogies return to traditional educational pathways that revolve around intergenerational transmission of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for daily life, as well as family and community survival (Kirkness, 1999, cited in Claxton & de France, 2018). In conjunction with the colonially disruptive nature of Indigenous education (Tuck et al., 2014), land-based pedagogies are recognized as essential in the fostering and continuing of Indigenous resurgence (Simpson, 2014; Alfred, 2009, cited in Wildcat et al., 2014). Claxton and de France (2018) discuss one example, involving the revitalization of a traditional WSÁNEĆ Reef Net Fishery (SXOLE) with youth in a tribal school setting. The SXOLE is described as a practice, belief system, knowledge system, and the backbone of WSÁNEĆ traditional society. Its creation and use requires an

intimate relationship with the land, while also being understood to instil and reinforce WSÁNEĆ philosophies and worldview. Youth engagement in this project fostered practices and values of cultural resurgence and resistance.

### **Calling In OE Leadership**

Demonstrated through the general focus on practitioners and pedagogies, the literature base regarding socially just, anti-colonial mobilization in OE appears to largely target change in the frontline workers themselves. This targeting carries grassroots implications for anti-colonial change, while also positioning responsibility for change heavily on the shoulders of OE practitioners themselves. Albeit necessary work, this grassroots practitioner approach suffers from multiple weaknesses, including settler practitioner accountability and a narrow scope. Consistent with the lack of literature, there appears to be very little in terms of ethical coding for settler OE practitioners. This is a cause for concern as the field's current alignment with settler colonialism means that its complicity is not recognized as an ethical problem. Accountability for change is then localized to the few with the capacity and willingness to challenge the field (Hillman et al., 2020), often losing settlers who opt out and enact the privilege of retreating to the safety of their comfort (Mackenzie, 2020). The narrow scope of this approach also falls short in acknowledging the collective nature of this work (Hillman et al., 2020), and failing as a result, to account for others who may be in advantageous positions to enact change within organizations, or to apply pressure and hold government agencies accountable to their responsibilities, such as those in positions of organizational leadership.

A robust research lineage has emphasized the critical role of top management in successful organizational change (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Holton and Brenner (2015) report the importance of management engagement in change, conceptualized as participation, information delivery, and communication, specifically regarding employee appraisal of change. Kotter (1995) further underlines the importance of leadership engagement, noting: “Worst of all are bosses who refuse change and who make demands that are overall inconsistent with the overall effort” (p. 64). While organizational change stands as an inherently complex and individualized process, Fernandez and Rainey (2006) identify a number of important roles for managerial leaders in change, including: the legitimization and communication of the need for change; developing and implementing a plan that is integrative, engaging, and comprehensive; rallying support and navigating resistance from internal and external bodies, and; appropriately acquiring and allocating sufficient resources (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). With this in mind, OE leadership currently remains a valuable and necessary path yet taken towards creating meaningful anti-colonial change. Offering some potential places for leadership to start, Clement (2019) calls for an increase in anti-racist education in OE programs and practitioner training and “for organizations to just start *doing* the work in whatever way they can, learning as they go” (p. 14), suggesting potential changes in hiring practices, reconsideration of organizational missions, and meaningful efforts to build relationships with local Indigenous peoples, communities, and groups.

Seeking to build on past and ongoing efforts, this chapter explored the existing literature centring the intersection of the field of OE and settler colonialism. While

limited, a clear research lineage has voiced the need for anti-colonial change in OE. However, this lineage largely focuses on frontline practitioners and their pedagogies, leaving organizational leadership out of the anti-colonial conversation. In order to move towards engaging organizational leadership in anti-colonial change, literature investigating the roles of organizational leadership in organizational change was also explored. The following chapter shifts to describe the methodology in which this study was grounded.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

Grounded in the goal of mobilizing anti-colonial change in the field of Outdoor Education (OE), this study aims to engage directly with the OE community in order to collaboratively construct theory that supports the field in fulfilling obligations outlined by the TRC (2015abc). Underpinned by anti-colonial theory and critical constructivism, this study is further guided by Black, Feminist scholar Loretta Ross' (Bennett, 2020) conceptualization of *calling in*, and a methodology of narrative inquiry.

#### Shifting from Decolonizing to Anti-colonizing

Decolonization remains a complicated and contested concept (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In 2012, Tuck and Yang identified and challenged the superficial and metaphorical proliferation of “decolonizing” and “decolonized” in education and social science discourses. Describing the trend as “domestication,” they explain that these problematic uses of decolonization contribute to a variety of harms, which operate to “reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity” (p. 3), often fail to involve Indigenous peoples and worldviews, render decolonization an “empty signifier” (p. 7) that further impedes meaningful work, and homogenizes the experience of diverse oppressions. In response to these challenges, Tuck and Yang (2012) clarify that, “decolonization specifically involves the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 21).

As a White, male, settler student who is invested in working ethically and appropriately, I believe it is necessary to recognize this criticism, and work to account for it. My attempts to do so led me to anti-colonialism, which fundamentally rejects colonialism and works to correct the resulting oppression (Hart et al., 2017). While anti-colonialism has been defined as “the proactive, political struggle of colonized people

against the ideology and practice of colonialism” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 11), multiple voices have identified anti-colonialism as a perspective that is appropriate for settler scholars to work from (Carlson, 2017; Hart et al., 2017). Hart et al. (2017) suggest multiple avenues for settlers, including: “educating members of their own group, challenging overt and covert colonial oppression, and supporting Indigenous peoples in acts of self-determination” (p. 333). They further emphasize the maintenance of reflexivity and sincerity so as not to recreate colonial oppression themselves, and echo Tuck and Yang’s (2012) calling out of behaviours that attempt to assuage the guilt and pain of settler colonial implication. Encouraging settler scholars to work from anti-colonial perspectives, settler scholar Emily Carlson (2017) advocates for the adoption of an anti-colonial methodology in what she describes as a “fundamental reorientation of research values and practices” (Carlson, 2017, p. 512). Carlson’s (2017) methodology is founded on eight principles, which include: resistance to and subversion of settler colonialism; relational and epistemic accountability to Indigenous peoples; land/place engagement and accountability; egalitarian, participatory, and community-based methods; reciprocity; self-determination, autonomy, and accountability; social location and reflexivity, and holism. With intention to identify and disrupt colonial structures of power in OE, this study aims to enact these values throughout the research process. As such, this study will continue to draw on anti-colonial literature as well as Carlson’s (2017) proposed anti-colonial methodology throughout.

### **Critical Constructivism**

Constructivism is understood in the social sciences as a perspective or paradigm that positions humans as active creators of knowledge and the realities in which they

participate (Charmaz, 2006; Hershberg, 2014). Knowledge is generated both subjectively and intersubjectively, and in contextually specific and value-laden ways, resulting in the social creation of local worlds and multiple realities (Charmaz, 2006; Hershberg, 2014). These knowledges and realities are conceptualized as interpretations and considered “core to understanding human phenomena” (Hershberg, 2014, p. 7), as constructivist research strives to “show the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 132). Active in knowledge creation themselves, constructivist researchers conceptualize their work as interpretations and, as such, self-reflexivity is encouraged and required in order to understand their values and biases, and how they influence their interpretations (Charmaz, 2006).

Described as pluralistic, multi-perspective, and as a bricolage (Steinberg, 2014), critical constructivism (CC) draws on a variety of worldviews and perspectives including critical theory and non-dominant knowledges often neglected by mainstream sources. Aligned with action research, CC researchers seek pragmatic outcomes, rather than “isolated ‘facts’ and ‘truths’” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 2-3), striving to “[challenge] authoritative accounts of the world and [interrogate] the power structures that influence these accounts” (Hershberg, 2014, p. 2), including the processes of knowledge validation and invalidation (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical constructivist approaches pay close attention to how people, in addition to knowledge and worlds, are socially and historically constructed and situated, and the resulting influence on generated interpretations and actions (Kincheloe, 2008). With this in mind, researcher reflexivity and transparency are seen as especially important in critical constructivist approaches. A methodology

informed by CC was necessary and valuable in interrogating OE's ongoing alignment with settler colonialism and resulting harm.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative Inquiry (NI) is a qualitative research methodology that works to explore and understand experience through stories (Hickson, 2016; Caine et al., 2019). Grounded in the belief of “experience [a]s a storied phenomenon” (Caine et al., 2019, p. 2), NI seeks to engage with stories created and used by humans in order to make meaning and navigate “lives that are shaped by [sic] experiences within personal, social, institutional, professional, linguistic, cultural, and historical narratives” (Cain et al., 2019, p. 2).

NI evolved out of a shift in social sciences away from realism and positivism, and towards relationality, interpretivism and dialogic approaches, with common aims to “keep conversation going... to activate subjectivity, feeling, and identification in readers or listeners; to raise consciousness; to promote empathy and social justice; and to engage activism” (Bochner & Riggs, 2014, p. 11). Influenced by Deweyan philosophies of pragmatism, experience, and relationality (Cain et al., 2018; Clandinin, 2006), NI founders Clandinin and Connelly (2000, cited in Clandinin, 2006) describe NI to be housed by a metaphorical space defined by the three dimensions of: continuity, interaction, and situation, also referred to as temporality, sociality, and place (Caine et al., 2019). Not only an indication of NI's attention to personal, cultural, social, historical, and contextual situation (Caine et al., 2019), this space highlights the relationality of NI as inquirers locate themselves within the shared space, or “in the midst” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, cited in Huber et al., 2013, p. 227), considering themselves to be active in the production of data as they explore experiences of their participant(s), themselves,

and those co-created along the way (Clandinin, 2006). Offering further opportunity to foster relationality, Kartch (2018) encourages inquirers to challenge traditional research power structures and reframe the traditional researcher-participant or interviewer-interviewee relationship, as listener-narrator.

NI also stems from constructivist roots (Lal et al., 2015; Yang, 2011), particularly articulated through shared emphases on reflexivity, interpretivism, and representation (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). Huber et al. (2013) further recognize “co-composing, relational ethics, multiple perspectives, tensions, not fixing and replacing but evolving and shaping, slowing down, and careful, deep attending” (p. 229-230) as key elements of narrative thinking, while Bochner & Riggs (2014) explain NI’s interpretive and pluralistic pursuit of “[n]ot Truth but truth; not truth but truths” (p. 23).

Considered “alive, unfinished, and always in the making” (Huber et al, 2013, p. 227), the telling of stories is accompanied by opportunities to “reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415, cited in Huber et al., 2013, p. 217), ultimately contributing to the potential to change lives. Introduced by Nelson (2001, cited in Bochner & Riggs, 2014), counterstories involve intentional efforts to disrupt dominant master narratives through restorying (Bochner & Riggs, 2014), and have been described to “hold tremendous potential for educative reverberations in lives, in and outside of schools” (Huber et al., 2013, p. 229). Appropriate in the exploration of personal and organizational narratives (Kartch, 2018), NI has long history of application in educational contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990), including students, frontline staff, and organizational leadership. However, there appears to be no existing literature specific to OE leadership. Despite this, NI presents a valuable approach to engaging with the

personal and organizational narratives of OE leadership, in order to challenge ongoing colonialism on route to re-imagining and reshaping the OE landscape.

### **Connecting & Calling In**

Relationality and collaboration are core themes throughout decolonizing literature, in and out of the research context, specific and unspecific to OE (see Jones & Segal, 2018; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Lowan-Trudeau, 2019; Pidgeon, 2019; Root, 2010; Scully, 2012; Simpson, 2014; Snow, 2018). As a settler practitioner/researcher, investigating colonialism, oppression and cross-cultural engagement in OE practice and research, these themes of relationality and collaboration must be and remain central. While my position as a student researcher imposes some limitations on how collaborative this study can be, there remain many avenues to foster relationality and meaningful engagement, including self-location (Carlson, 2017), Ross' approach of calling in (Bennett, 2020), and continued efforts to seek confirmation and consent from participants regarding analysis and results following data generation.

Black feminist scholar Loretta Ross advocates for a shift from a culture of *calling out*, to one of *calling in* (Bennett, 2020). While calling out involves public displays that promote guilt and shame, Ross presents calling in as private gestures of constructive reckoning, informed by compassion and respect (Bennett, 2020). As such, this study aims to engage relationally and collaboratively with participants through an invitational approach of calling in, in order to jointly generate meaningful, practical solutions to OE's ongoing grounding in settler colonialism and the resulting harm.

## Methods

This study will apply narrative methods, guided by a methodology of narrative inquiry grounded in anti-colonialism and critical constructivism. These methods draw influence from existing NI literature, including Levin et al. (2018), Riessman (2008), and Slay and Smith (2011).

**Participants & Recruitment.** Through engagement with the literature, it was observed that individuals in positions of OE organizational senior leadership present a valuable and largely untapped group for creating anti-colonial change in the field of OE. Grounded in this observation, this study aimed to connect and collaborate with individuals holding positions whose roles include the development and implementation of organizational policies, practices, and ideologies. With hopes of generating a rich, detailed and transferable analysis (Polit & Beck, 2010), this study took a common narrative approach of sampling non-randomly (Riessman, 2008), seeking to engage with national-level organizations that met the described criteria for OE organizations. Potential organizations were selected through discussion between supervisors and myself. Once selected, one supervisor made initial contact by way of email using his existing network connections and public data, to individuals within those organizations meeting the criteria for senior organizational leadership. Initial emails introduced the project and bridged communications to myself, as the primary researcher. Those responding with interest in participation were then sent a follow up email introducing and locating myself, as well as further outlining the goals and methods of the study (Letter of Invitation, Appendix 3). Drawing on constructivist and narrative values of relationality, as well as Ross' conceptualization of calling in (Bennett, 2020), this initial self-location served a key role

in the process of establishing and building meaningful relationships on route to a welcoming and equitable, collaborative environment (Carlson, 2017). Participants continuing to show interest were then sent the Letter of Information (Appendix 4), which described the project in more depth, including purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks and discomforts, potential benefits, confidentiality and data management, participation and withdrawal, and participant rights. Those who agreed to participate following receiving and reading the Letter of Introduction were sent the Written Prompts Script and given the option to take part through interview or written response. Consent for follow-up contact, as well as ongoing member-checking procedures, was explained, requested, and gained via email as well as during initial interviews. While participants were interviewed individually, they were invited to consult other organizational members in preparation.

The individuals who took part in this study ( $n = 3$ ) each held positions of executive leadership with national-level organizations operating in the field of OE in Canada. All three participants identified as White males between the ages of 35-45, having served in their positions for tenures between one month and two years. Represented organizations were noted to overlap in some of their missions and stated purposes however, each had unique objectives.

Gary held the position of Executive Director with a membership-owned, not-for-profit organization that stands as a certifying body, while providing advocacy, leadership, and networking, with sights set on “becom[ing] the industry association for the Canadian outdoor sector.” This organization is run by handful of paid employees, further supported by approximately 50 volunteers, and represents roughly 2000 members. For the purpose

of this project, this organization will be referred to as the Certification and Representation Organization. Hank served as the Executive Director with an organization holding charity-status that provides socio-emotional learning and development through outdoor programming. This organization employs 120 staff, supported by 30 leadership volunteers, and serves approximately 2500 students per year (non-pandemic). This organization will be referred to as the Program-Providing Organization. Ryan sat as the Executive President to the Board of Directors with an organization that brings provincial bodies together to provide advocacy, leadership, and networking in the context of Canadian camping. Volunteer-run, this organization represents over 800 camps, nationwide, and will be referred to as the Networking and Leadership Organization.

**Data Generation.** All three participants participated in initial, semi-structured (Riessman, 2008) interviews over Zoom, ranging in length from 25-60 minutes. These interviews built off of three foundational questions accompanied by multiple potential prompts, which asked in regards to obligations outlined in the TRC (2015a):

1. Can you tell me about your personal story of decolonization and reconciliation in Outdoor Education?

*Potential Prompts:*

- a. How were you introduced to topics of decolonization and reconciliation in OE?
  - b. Could you share a particular experience of decolonization or reconciliation in OE that stands out to you?
2. Can you tell me about **OE organization's** story, or experience, of decolonization and reconciliation?

*Potential Prompts:*

- a. How have topics of decolonization and reconciliation been introduced at **OE organization**?
  - b. How have the TRC's Calls to Action been introduced at **OE organization**?
  - c. How has **OE organization** acted on the TRC's Calls to Action so far?
  - d. Could you share a particular experience of decolonization or reconciliation that happened at **OE organization**?
3. What could your organization's future story of decolonization, reconciliation, and commitments look like?

As outlined in the Letter of Information, and discussed during the initial interviews, it was hoped that participants would continue their engagement throughout analysis to encourage a collaborative process grounded in participant perspectives. After some initial analysis, participants were contacted for follow-up interviews. One participant was not able to continue; however, two participants did continue, with one taking part in a second interview, while the other submitted written responses to follow-up prompts (Riessman 2008). Follow up prompts asked:

1. How do you understand your role in your organization's future story of decolonization and reconciliation?
2. What is the role of senior leadership in your organization's future story of decolonization and reconciliation?

**Data Analysis.** Analysis was inspired by by Levin et al.'s (2019) approach in their narrative inquiry into the personal and organizational narratives of university

presidents, and draws on Riessman's (2008) process of narrative thematic analysis. Also referred to as *narrative under analysis* (Bochner & Riggs, 2014), this narrative approach treats stories as data, as opposed to other narrative approaches that work to compose a story as the final product (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). Similar to other qualitative approaches, such as grounded theory, thematic analysis functions to identify and investigate common themes, within and across responses; however, Riessman's (2008) approach emphasizes "preserving narrative features... to keep the 'story' intact" (p. 111). Also described as a narrative unit, these narrative features can be defined differently, from life stories to specific bounded segments or incidents (Riessman, 2008). While ideologically inspirational, Riessman (2008) lacks an explicit analytic process, which was important to have as a green researcher. For this reason, Braun & Clarke's (2006) step-by-step process of Thematic Analysis (TA) was relied upon to guide data analysis. Understood to be commensurable with narrative approaches, Braun & Clarke's (2006, p. 87) six-phase process includes:

1. Familiarizing yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Grounded in the conceptualization of participant narratives as data, analysis followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases above, with a focus on "keep[ing] the 'stor[ies] intact" (Riessman, 2008, p. 111) as narrative units, while also building in opportunities

for member-checking. More specifically, analysis involved transcription of recordings; countless readings of transcriptions; many rounds of coding, at levels of single words, phrases, and narratives (narrative unit, Riessman, 2008), initially by hand, followed by coding and collation on Word Processor; supplementary note-taking addressing observations and interpretations, potential connections, and running questions; coming up with working themes; multiple rounds of mind-mapping; trying out analytic software (Quirkos), but ultimately finding success through printing and cutting out all the collated coded units, and moving them around by hand to carve out themes. Drawing on more recent work by Braun et al. (2019), coding began with focuses on more explicit, surface or “semantic” codes, before moving to deeper, implicit or “latent” codes. A snapshot into this sequence is displayed in the following table:

**Table 1**

**Sample of coding process**

Quote (Hank)	Semantic Codes	Latent Codes	Notes
So we're trying to kind of shift that, um and, and really kind of do what I was, you know, we I, I think even this year I think we're going to get to the point this year where we won't do anything with [programs specifically for] Indigenous youth unless there is Indigenous leadership at the table with us and I think that's the most important thing.	Organizational change  Indigenous leadership in program-planning for Indigenous youth	Creating Space  White Unsettling	<i>Will this change reduce the number of Indigenous peoples/youth/communities served? Less programs?</i>  <i>What about anti-colonial effort in programs that aren't specific to Indigenous youth?</i>

Upholding participant voice, insight, and interpretation throughout the study was an important piece of establishing and maintaining a genuine anti-colonial and relational dynamic. Inspired by the action cycles of participant action research approaches (Pant, 2014), this was enacted through ongoing engagement with participants regarding analysis procedures, interpretations, and drawn conclusions. Member-checking was built in at two stages: first, following the drafting of the Results chapter; and second, following the draft of the complete thesis document. Centring participant perspectives and values of co-creation, these efforts offered opportunities for re-interpretation, deepening interpretations, and confirmation. At each point, documents were emailed to participants, accompanied by invitations for feedback. In both cases, it was made clear that participation remained voluntary and was not obligatory. One participant provided feedback at both instances, taking the form of positive support for drawn themes and overall efforts, as well as minor grammatical edits that were indicated through the Track Changes function on Word.

**Self-Reflexivity.** Named as part of my personal ethics, and further recognized as an important aspect by multiple methodological influences (Carlson, 2017; Charmaz, 2006; Hart et al., 2017), it was necessary to practice and maintain self-reflexivity throughout this study. Reflexive processes took the forms of note-taking, iterative analytic cycling (intra-rater reliability), return to and further exploration of the literature, and naturally plenty of intentional reflection from a comfy chair, and during evening bike rides. It was further fostered through member-checking with participants and conversations with supervisors. Common themes of reflection included my social location as a white, settler student researcher, including determining appropriate action

from my location, as well as enacting ongoing accountability to Indigenous peoples; engagement with national-level executives; wrestling uncertainty and questioning analytic processes and results; and, communicating potentially challenging results within a methodology of calling-in. While I feel that these self-reflexive efforts were effective, one major piece of learning to carry forward from this experience involves being more intentional about journaling, as many of my notes can be found scribbled in margins, and across multiple notebooks and documents.

This chapter described this study's methodology and accompanying methods. Building from a methodology of narrative inquiry grounded in anti-colonial theory, critical constructivism, and *calling in*, three executives from national-level OE organizations took part in semi-structured interviews to explore their engagement in anti-colonial change, as well as that of their organization. The following chapter presents the results of the analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results from interviews with three participants representing three national-level Canadian outdoor education (OE) organizations and exploring the research question: *How can OE leadership mobilize their organizations towards meaningful anti-colonial change, specifically in regards to the TRC's Calls to Action (2015b)?* Participants each held positions of executive leadership with these organizations, and have been given the pseudonyms Gary, Hank, and Ryan in an effort to maintain confidentiality.

Thematic Analysis was applied, guided by Braun & Clarke (2006), Braun et al. (2019), and Riessman (2008), which resulted in the construction of three main themes, each containing two subthemes (see Table 1): (1) *Organizational & Field Accountability for Anti-Colonial Change*, involving *implication* and *conceptualization*; (2) *Reckoning OE as a White Space*, including *creating space* and *unsettling*; and (3) *Anti-Colonial Change Amidst Capitalism*, separated into *resources availability and organizational prioritizations* and *staffing*.

Table 2

## Themes, subthemes, and descriptors: Overview of results

Themes	Subthemes	Descriptors
<p><i>Organizational &amp; Field-wide Accountability:</i></p> <p>Addressing organizational and field-wide anti-colonial accountability for change through participant understandings of how OE participates in settler colonialism, well as perspectives regarding of what anti-colonial change means and looks like in the context of OE.</p>	<i>Implication</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change hindered by lacking implication</li> <li>2. Building awareness and implication</li> </ol>
	<i>Conceptualization</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shared features: process/journey, relationality, truth, and justice</li> <li>2. Scope of change</li> <li>3. Guidance: TRC and other sources</li> </ol>
<p><i>Reckoning OE as a White Space:</i></p> <p>Comments and narratives recognizing, accounting for, and dismantling ongoing White dominance in OE.</p>	<i>Creating Space</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staffing and positions</li> <li>2. Fostering Welcoming, Belonging, &amp; Safety</li> </ol>
	<i>White Unsettling</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual level: staff, leadership, and members</li> <li>2. Organizational level</li> <li>3. Field-wide level</li> </ol>
<p><i>Anti-Colonial Change Amidst Capitalism</i></p> <p>Comments and narratives regarding the impact of capitalism on creating organizational and field-wide anti-colonial change.</p>	<i>Resource Availability and Organizational Prioritization</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflections on organizational decision-making due to resource availability</li> <li>2. Anti-colonial efforts as societally non-valuable</li> <li>3. Pathways forward</li> </ol>
	<i>Staffing</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Volunteers and non-permanence</li> <li>2. Systemic economic privileging of Whiteness</li> </ol>

### **Organizational and Field-Wide Accountability**

Grounded in participant reflections of “very, very limited, um actual change, yeah, in terms of like experience and actual action” (Gary), that “could be a ton more” (Ryan), the theme *Organizational and Field-Wide Accountability to Change* includes participant understandings OE’s past, present, and future participation in settler colonial society, as well as their perspectives regarding what anti-colonial change means and looks like in the context of OE. This theme serves to better understand how anti-colonial change has been approached and enacted in Canadian OE so far, and will be drawn on later, in order to discuss and guide future anti-colonial efforts in the field. This theme involves two subthemes: *implication in settler colonialism* and *conceptualization*.

**Implication.** All interviews involved similar narratives regarding OE’s implication in settler colonialism, reflecting ongoing insufficient awareness across personal, organizational, and industrial levels, while sharing hopes and goals of improvement moving forward, on route to fostering anti-colonial change. Drawing attention to his own lack of awareness, Hank described his initial confusion with the apparent irony of his organization’s anti-colonial efforts:

“When I came here three years ago, I mean honestly the first question I asked is like, ‘Why are we doing this?’ You know, [Program-Providing Organization] was started by the Royal Family. It’s like, you know, you’re not lost on me that it’s born out of colonialism. And, and so, you know, it’s like why are we doing this?”

While reflecting the need for change, Ryan spoke to having taken part in minimal change due to his distance from the camp settings, indicating a perspective that locates anti-colonial change outside of his professional scope:

“Yeah, I mean I think [my] personal experience is really quite minimal, partly because my work in the last 10 years hasn’t been as a camp director. I’ve been a consultant for camps, I have been a, an advocate and trainer of camps. And so

there hasn't been a lot of direct experience, like I haven't had, you know, we weren't in, involved in a camp that we could actually make changes in."

Limited organizational action was also connected to insufficient implication stemming from a lack of seriousness, discomfort, and preparedness. Despite recognition of variation in investment and leadership across Canadian camps regarding anti-colonial change, Ryan spoke to a general lack of implication, indicated by his hopes of "push[ing] on Canadian camps to get serious about decolonization." He also named discomfort as a barrier, noting: "[F]iguring out how to make these fairly broad changes at a pace that a lot of people, probably most, are not comfortable with. It needs to move quickly, and that's uncomfortable for lots of people." Similarly, Gary identified comfort as an aspect that influences his organization's action: "So that [organizational effort] is something that actively we, we can do, and be comfortable in doing." Gary also drew specific attention to lacking implication in his organization's leadership:

"There's really that there is just that reality, like within the senior leadership, the senior leadership is not ready... We know it's a good thing, and, and, and we are ready for it, and we're not just thinking we're ready for it."

However, while optimistic of getting to a place of readiness, Gary articulated the importance of continuing to encourage this work within the Board, as it is not to be taken as necessarily inevitable: "But understanding that if I just wait for them, we're going to wait 25 years."

Expanding to the field-wide level, Gary talked about societal influence on organizational morals and resulting behaviours, and further how there is currently insufficient social pressure in Canada to mobilize OE organizations towards anti-colonial change:

“Well we are social animals, and there is a cultural momentum that established what is a priority, what you’re supposed to do, right? There’s a whole cultural messaging, and the momentum in the culture in Canada is not yet at a level where it’s actually pushing everybody towards action. And it’s like, the weight has been going on for long enough, it might get there, but it’s not there yet. So yeah, the day that the push is strong enough, every organization will be moving, because that’s the thing you’re supposed to do... So there’s not enough yet to force the organization to do.”

While speaking to a variety of sources of lacking implication by OE in ongoing settler colonialism, all participants also shared intentions and specific avenues with which to build awareness and implication regarding settler colonialism. Hank described an ongoing process of learning that has led to efforts to account and correct for how the Program-Providing Organization has typically upheld settler colonialism through the nature of its relationships with Indigenous communities and groups:

“I think we’re having a real reckoning around the fact that the way we tend to do this is through fundraising and philanthropy, and, and I mean the issues that you know, we’re trying you know, that you know, they’re just, people are trying to solve, it shouldn’t be charity, it’s an issue of justice... In the philanthropy model, we have typically reinforced colonial behaviour, whereby we see Outdoor Education as an “intervention” to help Indigenous youth” (Hank).

Both Ryan and Gary spoke to improving OE’s implication through challenging elements of Whiteness. Ryan articulated the need to address the privileges stemming from Canadian camps serving predominantly White participants:

“[C]amps in particular was, obviously that’s all I can speak on behalf of, is that we have to acknowledge that there has been hurt done that has benefitted this industry. And we have to acknowledge also that the people who the clients have, summer camps are rarely non-White people. And so yeah, I think that’s a big part is we have to think about how we can listen to the stories of the hurt, how we can consider that as, you know as we start being more serious, taking this more seriously, making better plans. I think there are a lot of people who have a lot of privilege and therefore, don’t see, don’t see, let alone understand the hurt... So I think we need to you know, look at the day to day that happens at camp, and help people understand why that’s hurtful, and you know, make plans or give them resources to try to make those changes”

Grounded in an observed trend of his White colleagues focusing on a reconciliation that detours around truth, Gary advocated for a reset that centres Indigenous calls for prioritizing and centring truth:

“When I’m talking about why, like with my peers, it’s like it’s just about reconciliation... So there’s conversations between White people that like needing to hold each other in a space of like it’s important to, things such as most White people care about reconciliation, they don’t even name truth. Where what I’m hearing from most people from [Indigenous] community... I hear them talk about truth. They want truth to be recognized. And there’s a reason why it’s called Truth and Reconciliation, truth is first. You don’t reconcile, not in this context without actually holding space for truth. And to me that’s an important key point. White people stop thinking about reconciliation because it’s like, reconciliation makes you feel good. It’s like ‘Oh, we reconcile, we’re good... All the damage of the past is now healed,’ as I know we’re not going to jump from where we’re at to heal, like this, right? It’s just not. So let’s start from truth, you know? And it’s not, the truth is not easy to hold.”

While ranging across individual, organizational, and field-wide levels, all participants identified areas in which OE has and continues to lack *implication*, as well as specific routes to take in order to improve awareness. The following section depicts participant perspectives of how anti-colonial change is understood in the context of OE.

**Conceptualization.** The subtheme *conceptualization* highlights participant understandings of anti-colonial change in the context of OE. This section begins by addressing conceptual foundations of anti-colonial change voiced by participants, continuing into considerations of scope, and wrapping up with reflections concerning guidance.

Interviews displayed a variety of shared and unique perspectives regarding conceptual groundings of anti-colonial change. Each participant described change along the lines of an ongoing process to engage with over time, rather than an individual event, or quick occurrence. Approaching change as a “journey,” Gary colourfully explained:

“So, yeah, using outdoor metaphor, like I'm fully aware that we're not actually reaching a summit, and that's it, that's the end point. But nonetheless, we are in the mountains in the journey in the mountains, and we're going to go to a summit on the way to another summit on the way to a ridge, the way to a meadow and whatnot. And those points are not clear.”

Ryan mentioned having “been an advisor on a couple of other camps that have gone through the process,” while Hank spoke of both “day to day” and “longer term” considerations. Hank also highlighted his organization’s long-standing connection with Indigenous communities:

“So, we started doing work with Indigenous communities 40 years ago, and Indigenous people. It’s gone up and down over that time, both in terms of the number of people we’re working with, the types of programs, you know, it’s a change.”

Every participant further echoed the importance of centring relationality in creating anti-colonial change. Building connections, partnership, and collaboration were called for broadly in anti-colonial change, by Gary, who said: “[I]t’s all going to be about relationship,” as well as Hank: “I think, you know, to truly decolonize, you know partnership, and beyond inclusion.” Relationality was also discussed in more specific forms. Ryan named the importance of “work[ing] with the [Indigenous] communities,” while Gary described part of his role being “to create enough trust and relationship until, and have open invitations, until [Indigenous] people say: ‘Hey, I want to work with you.’” Interviews also highlighted inter-organizational and field-wide collaborative efforts, intra-organizational engagement, and fostering connection on the frontlines: “[Y]ou know, it’s connecting them, and then helping them see each other as humans... kids [with] two different experiences in a place together” (Ryan). These efforts are further developed in the following sections. Voicing additional relational considerations, Ryan shared:

“I always think of these problems as being communication problems, you know, to solve, which is, is, I think the right place for, for any organization. Is, you know, how do we make change? We have to communicate it and not impose it. And I think that, that always comes back to storytelling.”

Gary similarly emphasized the importance of not imposing change on his Board: “[I]t’s not something that I can just be like, ‘Well, this is what we’re going to do now, and that’s it.’ It’s like, I need to engage with the people within the organization to make sure that it’s done in a good way.”

Several other conceptual foundations were mentioned during interviews. Gary called emphatically and repeatedly for the centring of truth: “How about I add truth to that,” “I think it starts with truth. We just, we just need to hold the truth,” and “[T]here’s a reason why it’s called Truth and Reconciliation, and truth is first.” A conceptual grounding in justice was shared by Hank, who said: “I mean the issues that you know, we’re trying, you know, that you know, they’re just people are trying to solve, it shouldn’t be charity. It is an issue of justice” (Hank), and Gary, who listed justice among other conceptual elements: “I mean, there’s a couple pieces, guiding pieces such as: it needs to elevate, it needs to empower, it needs to increase justice, and things like that.” Gary also introduced challenges regarding the non-universality of anti-colonial change, as well as questions of what constitutes meaningful change.

Despite the variety and depth of conceptual understandings demonstrated by participants, Gary described an ongoing gap between theory and action, and further critiqued the irony of colonized approaches to organizational and field-wide change:

“What is decolonizing the outdoors? As a concept, it's possible to grasp it. But as a concrete action plan and implementation to meet, you, I mean, to meet outcomes, which is itself a colonized way to look at doing something. I mean, to meet outcomes, which is itself a colonized way to look at doing something. Can you tell me your key, KPIs, key performance indicators, and how you're going to

decolonize. Yeah, or any of the situation makes me laugh. But, but the reality is that, ultimately, like what does it mean concretely what is like what is the, what, what is not the endpoint, but where is this, what is the destination we're aiming to achieve, or at least walk through on this journey of the decolonization?"

Scope of change was another area of conceptualization that all participants spoke to.

Interviews described a variety of efforts in which anti-colonial change is being, and could be fostered within the leadership, staff, and membership that make up their organizations, as well as change being made at their frontlines. These intra-organizational changes are expanded upon in the following section. Interviews also addressed change at other levels.

Gary described wrestling with the value of his actions, leveraging the impact of individual anti-colonial acts against systemic work:

“[S]o at the ground level, I can go for a sweat with an elder, like, I can work with the [partner organization], I can, like, I don’t know if I told you last time when we met, but I have a friend who actually engaged with another program, she’s Indigenous, and then there was a whole, there’s a, there was a whole re-traumatizing happening, due to lack of knowledge. So I can engage with that other organization with whom I have a great relationship, and be like, ‘Hey, I know you care about decolonization, and that happened. Let’s talk about it, so we can do better.’ You know, and ultimately all those things are very, like, you know, tiny, tiny pieces. They’re not like systemic work.’

Continuing discussion of systems-level change, Hank explicitly named “the economic, cultural, and the legal systems,” as “the major systemic issues that kind of propagate” how OE “has been reserved... for middle to upper middle class White people”, while excluding Indigenous people. Reminiscent of Hank’s previously noted call to pursue “partnership, beyond inclusion,” Gary also advocated for systemic change: “[T]o me, it’s much more about decolonization than Indigenizing. It’s about like unpacking the power structures in place to recreate new power structures.” However, Hank leaves us with an acknowledgement of challenge: “And it’s hard because [systemic work], you know, it’s, it requires people to think differently.”

Considerations and sources regarding guidance for creating anti-colonial change were discussed across interviews. Despite this study being framed around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015), each interview heard participants report interacting with the document in ways that did not translate into guidance. While highlighting the shift in social awareness as a result of the TRC, Hank described its lack of day-to-day relevance: "[Y]ou know, the TRC and everything that's come after a certain, just raised the general level of awareness... [W]e don't point to the TRC you know, every day, but I think the TRC kind of, you know, raised that." Gary spoke similarly to the improved awareness stemming from the TRC, adding its lack of applicability to his context:

"[T]he TRC has a massive, it will, it was an ignition, turning point, but it's not, it's not an endpoint. Plus, a TRC Calls to Action specifically mention that it is for education for governments, educational institutions, and I think they also mentioned big industries or big companies... And their specific implementation in my context is not, it's not a perfect fit. So it's a useful framework, it's just I feel like I have more better guidance from elsewhere than the TRC."

Ryan described referencing the TRC, but not explicitly for guidance: "[D]efinitely consult and inspired, guided no not specifically." However, Ryan did share a goal of developing "some solid plans or guidelines to follow" for creating anti-colonial change in Canadian camps.

Gary continued to described a lack of available, effective written guidance, preferring to source it relationally: "Because this journey is relational, there's very little in terms of written resources that I've found meaningful. So it's all about the relationship that I have been immersed." Ryan and Hank also spoke to drawing guidance relationally. Ryan described following the lead of a partner organization who has "been piloting

[ibid.] and guiding” anti-colonial efforts, while Hank situated building and seeking guidance as one of his organizational duties:

“As the leader of our organization, my role is to ensure we have a diversity of voices in the leadership team and the Board, so that our decisions are informed by those we aim to serve. This can be accomplished by increasing diversity within our leadership team itself, and also engaging people through lived experience through advisory committees, and other similar structures.”

Hank also emphasized “see[ing] feedback, insight, and clarity from Indigenous leaders and elders, including through our Indigenous Advisory Committee... [a]s it relates to programs which are intended to be for Indigenous students.”

Warning about harm resulting from poorly guided, good intentions, Gary voiced the need for more guiding knowledge to support OE in anti-colonial mobilization:

“So, this knowledge piece is more like, well, what is it that we need to know? What is it that we need to learn? Like, where are the resources to do this work? Where are the experts? Though by experts, it might not be the right word, but who are the people that we can engage with so that we’re not just reinventing the wheel here? Like, I like all of that knowledge, like it’s not, it’s not like you have a Decolonization Fair of Canada, and you can just go in and, and get good at that stuff.”

This subtheme explored participant conceptualizations of anti-colonial change in the context of OE, which included shared and unique, conceptual foundations of change, as well as considerations for scope and guidance. The following section digs into participant reflections of ongoing White supremacy in OE, and resulting attempts to recognize, account for, and undo it.

### **Reckoning OE as a White Space**

Each interview heard participants identify various aspects of White supremacy throughout the OE field. Gary spoke of OE’s ongoing grounding in cultural legacies of dominant Western perspectives of land and narratives of what it means to go outdoors,

while Ryan drew attention to OE's clientele, pointing out that "we have to acknowledge also that the people who the clients have summer camps are rarely non-white people."

Perhaps most explicitly, Hank explained: "[I]t's not a belonging place for [non-White] people, you know, because it is still run by the dominant culture," and further elaborated:

"[W]hen you think about Outdoor Ed., summer camps, I mean it's a space that has been for, I think, you know, I got a lot of opinions on why, you know, systemically has been reserved, nevermind, you know, exclusion of Indigenous people but you know just, it has been reserved for middle to upper middle class White people."

These reflections underlay this theme *Reckoning OE as a White Space*, as all participants further spoke to efforts to challenge and dismantle ongoing White supremacy in OE, which are organized into two subthemes: *white unsettling* and *creating space*.

**White Unsettling.** This subtheme includes participant descriptions of efforts to foster the doing of the emotional and intellectual labour of unsettling, as well as efforts to decentre organizational and field-wide practices and norms grounded in White, Western worldviews and settler colonialism.

Hank and Gary both spoke to the importance of encouraging unsettling within the members of their organizations:

"[W]e have spent a lot of time with you know, with our, kind of, quote-on-quote 'corporate' staff, you know like, the non-field staff, or whatever you want to call them. You know, we've encouraged people to do more education. There's been both voluntary and mandatory, you know, a ton of people have done that University of Alberta course just to get some more, you know, sense of you know, higher sense of awareness. Yeah. You know, we're doing, you know, all kinds of training around you know, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice" (Hank).

Hank further emphasized the relational element of this work, noting: “the continuing education of our staff, and rais[ing] awareness, and not just reading books, but also you know, or taking online courses, but like you to actually, you know, getting out and meeting with people.”

Stemming from his labelling as a White organization, Gary voiced the importance of targeting and facilitating change in their White membership: “I think as a White organization, we can play a role with White people. I think it’s very important for White people to talk with White people, and hold space for each other and challenge each other, and whatnot.” He further shared a short narrative of success resulting from organizational action:

“So for example, that training that was offered as part of the summit, there’s folks in Quebec that attended, and then they came back to me, and they talked to me, and they’re like: ‘Wow, that opened my eyes, I never realized,’ and then there’s those conversations.”

Building from change at the individual level, participants discussed changes that have and are being made to organizational processes. Ryan described concrete efforts of re-naming in recognition of histories of appropriation:

“Mostly just simple things like re-naming things that had been, just summer camp traditions that had been appropriated, or you know, things as simple as you know, camps that would have had in a camp divisions that they would have called tribes, or sections of camps that were named after, you know, local nations that, you know, just had been appropriated 40, 50, or 100 years ago.”

In response to acknowledging the ongoing upholding of colonial power dynamics in their relationships with Indigenous communities and groups, Hank spoke to his organization’s efforts to unsettle the nature of their relationships through:

“mov[ing] from a relationship of philanthropy to one of partnership and reciprocity... We are moving away from this model, to a place where we work as part of an overall program, in which we partner with or act as vendors to

Indigenous communities (for example an Indigenous-led school will ask us to support their land based programming). In this model, Indigenous leaders are empowered to make decisions about the services they need... So we're trying to kind of shift that, um and, and really kind of do what I was, you know, we, I, I think even this year, I think we're going to get to the point this year where we won't do anything with [programs specifically for] Indigenous youth unless there is Indigenous leadership at the table."

Inspired in a governance workshop Hank had recently attended, he also spoke of organizational goals of building connections through "be[ing] in the communities that, who we claim to be serving, and bringing that voice forward."

Panning further back, Hank and Gary described routes towards unsettling cultural norms and perspectives across the field. Hank reflected on the prospect of engaging different worldviews, stemming from recent feedback received from the Program-Providing Organization's Indigenous Advisory Circle regarding dominant settler perspectives embedded in OE:

"[W]e've got an Indigenous Advisory Committee, or Circle I guess, what, we're trying to still figure out what we call it, but you know, I even got some feedback through that, like even just calling it land-based education as a way to determine, you know their, you know, the one person who was an Indigenous leader saying, 'We call this going to ceremony, and you guys are talking about your shoulder seasons, are four seasons. We call it six, there's six seasons.' So, you know, the entire lexicon, values, and everything we use, and the way we approach it is just completely different."

Gary echoed similarly:

"[U]ltimately it's understanding that it's very different worldviews, which can really enrich each other, so that means that settler people with settler worldview, is it's a head scratcher. It's like, how can you even understand the world to be that way because I've never been immersed. I mean, even for myself, there's so many pieces that I'm like, Okay, well that is very far from how is it conceptualize the world and the meaning of it, which takes time to chew on it, and like digest, and not necessarily embrace it as my own worldview, but at least understand it as an important worldview that is that has a lot of richness with."

More specifically, Gary advocated for the decentring of dominant, Western-grounded narratives that the field continues to stand on, and re-storying in ways that acknowledge and embrace Indigenous experiences:

“I love expedition, but it's a dominant narrative, and the, there's a lot more narratives, to what it means to go outdoors... And having narratives about going outdoors, that is, as, as predominant as the expeditionary one, that is more to Indigenous ways of going on the land which varies, you know, depending where you are in geography and whatnot. That's very important.”

He also emphasized the need to re-story in ways that centre truth and recognize Indigenous agency, presence, and action, while dismantling narratives of settler supremacy:

“The original outdoor guides in this country are native, period. The knowledge that was transferred from one nation to the settler nations to survive was from the native nations... [So] recognizing the integral contribution of this knowledge exchange as part of our heritage... [I]n the history books, it's like Jacques Cartier was tapping on the floor, and he was smart, he tricked the Hurons. And it's just like, no he didn't. And if you don't get tea, you would have died... [S]o recognizing that as part of truth, as part of like transmission of outdoor skills.”

Last, Gary drew attention to how the field's current grounding in certification excludes Indigenous ways of being, further calling for unsettling by way of acknowledging community protocols for skill recognition:

“The other industry is very certification based, which is one method to confirm that somebody has the skills required to deliver a good experience, and a safe experience. Now confirming that somebody has the skills required to provide a good experience outside and do it safely has been done on this continent for 15,000 years, and never certification associated with that. So within different cultures, there are mechanisms in place. Some cultures it's societies, some culture is to work with elders. Like it varies from one nation from the different nations. But nonetheless, there are social structures to ensure that somebody has the skills to do what they're supposed to do. So, it's like, we have an opportunity as we further professionalize the role of being an outdoor leader to do it in a way that's not just the western ways of confirming somebody has the skills... I don't know the specifics for each of them but that is clearly something as we build upon that, it's how can we, how can we have those mechanisms being recognized?...”

Yeah, so that, you know, the guy who, like, I'm thinking of a guy named [ibid.] right now who still built canoes and still run rapids like that, nearby town can be recognized without him needing to come and do a Paddle Canada cert...

But here's an [another] example: I know somebody who has been taught since he's been three years old to harvest. He knows the plants. Now the way it is done in his community is that the elders just watch the little ones, and they notice what the little ones care about. And then they feed that and feed that and if the kid engages with that, then they go into like teaching, you know, over years and years. So this guy has been going outside harvesting plants since he's three years old. All of that knowledge, that like it, it's possible for all of that knowledge to be recognized. And for those, you know you call the knowledge systems, but those systems to be essentially just validated.”

Building from acknowledgements of White supremacy across OE, all participants described efforts to account for and disrupt it moving forward, and specifically in anti-colonial ways. The following section continues this work to reckon ongoing Whiteness in OE, through efforts to evolve OE into a safe, welcoming, and belonging space for Indigenous peoples.

**Creating Space.** Parallel to *unsettling*, the subtheme *creating space* involves participant discussion of organizational and field-wide efforts to improve Indigenous presence in OE, including representation, leadership and worldviews, as well as fostering Indigenous belonging, welcoming, and safety.

Two interviews heard participants describe efforts to improve Indigenous presence in their organizational leadership. In addition to the development of their Indigenous Advisory Circle, Hank brought up discussions of “diversifying structure pools,” and reflected on hopes of correcting the current lack of Indigenous representation in the Program-Providing Organization’s senior leadership:

“I look at every, you know, start at the Board, you know, we've got one Indigenous person on our Board right now, out of 15, you know. I think, ideally we have more than that, right? So we have you know more leadership there. I think, you know, within our leadership team, you know directly, we've got zero Indigenous people, right?”

Grounded in similar intentions, Gary outlined “active effort to recruit Board members, or leaders, or helpers that are Indigenous.”

Not limited simply to boosting representation, for Hank, improving representation served to foster Indigenous belonging, which in turn promoted ethical organizational decision-making:

“I think that’s probably the most important thing is that, you know, Indigenous leadership is inculcated within organizations like ours. We actually do the work to try to make that a welcome new space, and you know, because I, you know, any other decisions that will kind of have a better filter there.”

Efforts also targeted improving Indigenous representation on organizational frontline staff. Ryan described efforts to “work with the communities to make sure the leadership [at camp] is there, that those kids can see themselves in.” Connecting participant wellbeing to a lack of staff representation, Ryan tied recruitment goals to the creation of safety:

“I hear lots of people saying, when it’s looking at any kids of colour, you know, ‘We’re just going to work to get those kids of colour to camp.’ But we know it’s not safe for them if there aren’t adults who look like them in that place.”

Further emphasizing the connection between staff representation and participant perceptions of belonging, Ryan also articulated how he has interpreted recruitment efforts to signal preparedness in moving forward with anti-colonial work:

“I think that there are definitely camps who are interested in leading on that, and want to lead on that, and they’ll take that role. But those camps have also been really smart in the last, well really two and a half years, about considering, you know, the makeup of their staff, been intentional about hiring staff, more people of colour on staff so kids will feel welcome at camp.”

While anticipating some struggles, Hank had similar sights set on improving Indigenous representation in frontline staff, and building belonging relationally:

“We’re still gonna have a challenge with [recruiting] instructors like that, for all the reasons I had just mentioned before, but we are... working with our Indigenous Advisory Committee and different recruiters to try and build up into some Indigenous leadership within that, so that we can actually have a better shot at making meaningful connections, and staff”

Non-recruitment efforts to foster Indigenous welcoming and belonging were also discussed. Gary and Ryan advocated for doing so through elevating and integrating Indigenous voices and worldviews. Speaking more broadly, Ryan said: “I think that we need to make sure that part of what we are doing is this bringing in more [Indigenous] voices and storytellers.” While naming inter-organizational collaboration to offer “working groups on integrating Indigenous perspective[s]” in OE, Gary described two additional examples, the first involving action to empower an Indigenous Board Member during organizational tasks:

“[H]ere’s an example: There was a national campaign with the National Parks for protecting Canada’s forest, and they wanted an article from the [Training and Certification Organization]. Well, of the Board members that we could choose, I asked one that’s Blackfoot, and that was like: ‘Hey, how about you speak to that in your own way?’ And she was like: ‘What do you want me to say on behalf of the [Training and Certification Organization]?’ I’m like: ‘Whatever you want, you will speak well. Like just speak what you want to speak.’ So these types of just being intentional and mindful.”

Gary’s second example involved upholding and supporting the work of an Indigenous peer, with caution not to impose:

“When [Indigenous colleague] comes to me with [a project] like, ‘Hey, I would like our help with x,’ then it’s about helping and elevating his work as best as possible. But it’s not going to [him] and saying ‘We think you should, and, and this looks really good, or whatever, you know.’ So, it’s really being a position that can elevate and, and take any opportunity to elevate Indigenous ways of being.”

Ryan also spoke of ongoing, collaborative efforts to create space for Indigenous presence, history, and worldviews in OE programming, drawing attention to local context. These

efforts involve “bring[ing] in local nations, elders, and leaders to, you know, to teach about the local cultures, and you know, for those camps in those different areas.”

Finally, Gary shared a story similarly highlighting efforts to foster Indigenous belonging in organizational leadership, with special consideration for establishing safety through navigating settler resistance and defending Indigenous protocols:

“So, to the request of one of my Board members. Okay. [Screen share]. And this is a portion of the agenda for a Board meeting. Okay, Board meetings we always start with a five minute hangout, and then the next item is a prayer and intention setting. So, she is Indigenous, and she joined the Board, like I don't know, a year and a half or whatever ago. As part of the conversations with her at some point in time was like ‘Hey, is there anything you want in Board meetings or whatever?’ and she was like, ‘Yeah I would like to start with prayer and intention setting.’ And I was like, double thumbs up, so we'll just add it... to the agenda, it's going to happen, and if people complain about it, well, I am a little bit of a grease in the mechanism, because I knew people would complain. So for example my Vice President, who is the lead of the Executive, so he's supposed to be like looking at agenda. When he was beginning that role of leading the Executive, he looked at the agenda and was like, ‘Prayer?!’ And he was like, ‘People are gonna like blah blah blah blah.’ I'm the one who took the brunt of his White reaction, which I totally understand, and when I said the brunt it's not like it was bitching and swearing, but like it wasn't, it wasn't her the Indigenous member, who again had to sit down and listen to White people explain to them why prayer is so [sic] weird [to them], it was me. And then I just told him, ‘You know what, considering our Board and the priority set by our Board - and I know my Board quite well, because I've been working with some of them for six years - I think it's gonna go just fine. Just trust it. It's going to be good.’ He's like, ‘Okay.’

So that's what we've been doing, we've been trusting it. And she's been starting every meeting, except one where she put me on the spot, damnit! But with her saying a prayer and intention setting. And to be honest, it's awesome. Because she just speaks about, like it does a good tone set, amongst other things, it reminds people why we're here and what we're trying to do together. I believe our Board meetings are richer because of that, and it's only three minutes of meeting. So I don't know, like two months after we started doing that I was talking with her, and I said ‘So how's that going for you?’ And she's like, ‘You know what, to me it just feels normal.’ Because for her, every time that she is in any type of meeting in community or anything, of course you start with a prayer. It's not even a freakin' question. Um, so for her, her reality is that well that's just normal, and that should be the reality, there's nothing that [she] should be like grateful [for], or whatever.”

This subtheme discussed participant reflections on efforts to reckon with ongoing Whiteness in OE through creating space for Indigenous peoples and worldviews, with additional focus on fostering safety and belonging for Indigenous peoples. The following section presents the final theme *Anti-Colonial Change Amidst Capitalism*.

### **Anti-Colonial Change Amidst Capitalism**

The third theme includes participant reflections regarding anti-colonial mobilization as organizations participating in capitalist society. This theme discusses pressures and limitations felt, as well as creative solutions, and is divided into two subthemes: *Resource Availability and Organizational Prioritization*, and *Staffing*.

**Resource Availability & Organizational Prioritization.** This subtheme highlights participant perspectives on how organizational decision-making and the potential for anti-colonial change is influenced, and largely hindered, as a result of resource availability. However, despite reported handcuffing across interviews, constructive, positive pathways are also discussed.

All three participants cited limited resources to have reduced their capacity to pursue anti-colonial change, due to the need to prioritize more lucrative pathways. Gary spoke of his ongoing battle to avoid bankruptcy:

“We are extremely limited in resources. Every dollar matters and everything that we do that does not bring in dollars directly, as of right now, is really not a possibility because of the pandemic and other things. We are facing the real possibility of bankruptcy. So I’m like, it’s looking good enough, but I’m still in the mode of managing avoiding and bankruptcy. So I don’t have additional dollars for non-bankruptcy avoidance related things. However, again with resources, it takes time to find the right funding and apply for the funding, and all that stuff. And right now, my time has to be applied in things that will bring dollars back.”

Similar sentiments were echoed by Ryan, mentioning: “[H]onestly, I don’t, I don’t know how much of that people will be able to hear one way or another... the camps are kind of

in survival mode,” and Hank, who additionally named complexity arising from the pandemic:

“[E]specially in a pandemic I mean it's been like this conflation of two major issues right? Like one is the realization of, you know, equity and justice issues in this country period right? Which everybody has a lot of time for and empathy for, and at the same time, to run an organization to try to get out of the pandemic. Yeah, it's actually still alive right, and those are two gun shows that you know, sometimes don't need it, right? And that's certainly has caused challenges for us as well, right? Because you know staff, you know, who are like, you know, we need to be all about diversity, equity inclusion like right now, and make all these changes immediately, which I like all the changes, but it does sometimes, you also have to just, you know, put you know food on the table, right? And so, which sometimes doesn't, you know, lead you down that path, saying what other factors, always been this, there is a strong tension.”

Having painted anti-colonial work as less profitable relative to other organizational activities, Hank and Gary further named capitalist societal values to undermine anti-colonial action within their organizations:

“You know that the whole economic system of it is broken, so it doesn't really allow for a genuine discussion around decolonization because right out of the gate, you're, you know you can't actually afford to have that conversation in a meaningful way. And that's a very society value system in my view... I'll see on, you know, social media and stuff people like well we want all these, you know these great jobs as instructors, which I totally agree with, I used to be one. And then, but then on, the other side of the business has to be there, and the value from society has to be there in order to support it, right? So you kind of need that whole thing and then within that, then it's up to us to figure out, you know how to, how to better support our Indigenous, you know, experience right, or staff experience and, and build leadership pathways and, you know, get people to the table in really meaningful ways” (Hank).

“[A]nd the cultural momentum in regards to decolonization is very much like ‘Yeah it’s, it’s the right thing to do. It’s the moral thing to do.’ But we got money to make. There are really like other priorities in our, in our day-to-day, you know, that makes sense” (Gary).

While describing an incidence of a camp approaching change despite opposition, Ryan also brought up an additional consideration involving the impact of donors on organizational decision-making:

“I’ve seen lots of camps who haven’t done it well for like, you know, we need to make this change, we should have made it 20 years ago, and so we’re going to do it despite, you know, despite the opposition within the community. And, you know, I know that, that’s cost them donors, that’s cost them, you know, supportive alumni.”

Despite these challenges of resource limitations, all participants shared optimistic and constructive avenues towards change. Hank spoke of his organization making progress “as we stabilize and, you know, kind of come out of [the pandemic], you know, we’ve laid a lot of groundwork, and I think there’s more opportunity to do more.” Moving forward, he pointed to being “intentional about our supply chain, and work[ing] with Indigenous businesses as much as possible,” and described anti-colonial intentions regarding the use of:

“a huge investment of seven and a half million dollars from the Feds to do instructor training, and we are intentionally going about that and trying to, you know, working with our Indigenous Advisory Committee and different recruiters to try and build up into some Indigenous leadership.”

Inter-organizational collaboration was also discussed as a creative and positive pathway forward amidst resource limitations. Ryan spoke of ongoing partnership that has supported anti-colonial progress in the context of Canadian camps:

“Yeah, [building connections with neighbouring Indigenous communities] is really growing, now it’s been a much more active in the last 12 months, so it’s starter, starter. And you know, thank goodness [other organization] has piloted this and, and they can afford to, because camps are always stressed about money. We’re trying to run programs as inexpensively as you can, so as many kids as possible can have this experience. But you know, so piloting programs that, you know, require Human Resources invested is hard.”

In recognition and response to the trend of resource limitations across the OE field, Gary shared his vision of bringing organizations together to collectively foster anti-colonial progress:

“I want us to come together. We’re all poor as shit, we’re all struggling, be we’re all wanting more or less the same thing. So why don’t we come together, we all pitch in \$1000, we all apply for a grant, boom! We can hire a staff that we share, or hire a consultant, whatever, but we can share resources together, and develop a good plan together, and we know, we know who’s doing what. And then we know we’re part of a concerted effort, which having that one conversation, and during that conversation, making that plan, and that enticement to work together at a greater level explicit. That is way more powerful than slapping a page in our manual. Plus, it’s free to just call people.”

Participants collectively reported experiencing economic influence on organizational decision-making, resulting in the general prioritization of lucrative pathways over socially undervalued, and less lucrative, anti-colonial routes. However, participants were not entirely without generative avenues towards anti-colonial progress.

The final section addresses specific considerations around staffing.

**Staffing.** This subtheme highlights participant reflections regarding staffing considerations in creating anti-colonial change within capitalism. All participants voiced restrictions on anti-colonial capacity as a result of reliance on volunteers and non-permanent staff. Ryan described personal consideration of organizational capacity based on his organization being entirely volunteer-run: “I’ve been, you know, thinking about as, as part of whatever leadership we can offer as this volunteer organization that brings camps together to speak.” Taking this further, Gary directly pointed to his organization’s senior leadership, noting “the Board is and will always remain volunteers, so their capacity to meet their responsibility is severely limited.”

Hank brought up how anti-colonial capacity at his organization is undermined due to non-permanence of their Indigenous advisory body:

“[W]e have this Indigenous, you know Advisory Committee to help consult on things, but you know they’re not there permanently at the table, right? And I think that’s a real, you know, in let’s say 2025 or whatever, you know, we want to have,

you know that that there, you know and, and you know, bringing those voices to the table.”

Hank also articulated ongoing systemic, economic privileging of Whiteness in the OE business model, which has functioned to undermine staff diversity and handcuff anti-colonial progress:

“I think there's a lot of barriers to entry, you know, that come with that, a systems level. So, you know, one is the economics of it. There's, you know, I mean I'm assuming you've been a guide or instructor. You're living contract to contract, trying to make ends meet some paper and others. And the business model of outdoor education in Canada in general doesn't value it to the extent that it should be valued. And so, businesses, whether they're profit or non-profit, have to make decisions around pricing and cost structures which inevitably comes on the back of staff. So staff get underpaid, and that then reinforces the issue of allowing, you know, you know, typically White, middle class, upper-middle class, White people who have 'Bank Mom and Dad' to rely on, you know, an overgeneralization because there's lots of people who make it into the sector without those things, but you know, I think that that's number one.”

He followed up later in the interview, with the goal of building the company up in order to develop a business model that “honours the experience of non-white middle class people,” through offering more job stability and security. This was further projected to foster an organizational cultural shift:

“And then the other part of decolonization I think is [Program-Providing Organization] and, you know, in particular, you know to deal with that economic issue and we need to be, we need to build the business to a big enough size, so that we can create meaningful year round opportunities, you know, for, for staff, you know, so you don't have to kind of constantly be looking over your shoulder for the next job, if that's what you choose. And I think, you know, if we can deal with the economics of that gives us a better shot to deal with the, with the cultural elements and actually bring more, you know, whether it's just Indigenous, or just a more representative of the Canadian make up into the roles. But that that whole thing has to work together right like it's, it's a kind of a virtuous circle here.”

Three themes were identified, each accompanied by two subthemes. The first theme of *Organizational & Field-Wide Accountability* included subthemes *Implication* and *Conceptualization*. The second theme *Reckoning OE as a White Space* included

subthemes *Creating Space* and *White Unsettling*. The final theme *Anti-colonial Change Amidst Capitalism* included subthemes *Resource Availability and Organizational Prioritization* as well as *Staffing*. These results will be discussed in the following chapter in relation to existing literature and personal experience in the field.

## Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore how organizational leadership engages in anti-colonial change in the field of Outdoor Education (OE). This chapter discusses the results in relation to existing literature to further explore the research question: *How can OE leadership mobilize their organizations towards meaningful anti-colonial change, specifically in regards to the TRC's Calls to Action (2015b)?* Continuing to draw on a narrative methodology, this discussion is framed temporally, working to piece together the story of OE's engagement in anti-colonial (in)action over time, from stories shared by individuals holding positions of executive organizational leadership. Grounded in hopes of pragmatism and practicality, this discussion is structured in three sections: *Unpacking Inaction*, *Current Efforts*, and *Looking Forward*, culminating in a proposed anti-colonial framework for Western-grounded OE. The chapter then wraps up with conclusions, acknowledgement of limitations, and recommendations for future research.

### Unpacking Inaction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report identified "[v]irtually all aspects of Canadian society" (TRC, 2015a, p. vi) as implicated and accountable in reconciliation, including the Canadian education system, and as a result Canadian OE. In addition to an in-depth report, the Commission provided a list of 94 specific Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) to guide change. However, a five-year review of progress found the fulfilment of the Calls to Action to be poor (Jewel & Mosby, 2020), including zero related to education having been completed. These results extended to the sections identified relevant to OE (Appendix 1). Review of the literature observed a similar trend, with a variety of voices criticizing ongoing colonialism in OE (not limited to Clement,

2019; Newbery, 2012; Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021). Interviews displayed variation in anti-colonial action taken, with no participant feeling that sufficient change had been made, while some spoke directly to lacking action. At its most explicit, one participant acknowledged “very, very limited, um actual change, yeah, in terms of like experience and actual action” (Gary) had been undertaken. Literature has identified a variety of factors fuelling inaction, largely in the contexts of frontline practitioners and broader field-wide norms (Clement, 2019; McLean, 2013; Newbery, 2012; Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021). These factors foster perceptions of exemption, as practitioners and field-wide norms fail to acknowledge or avoid engaging with concepts of settler colonialism, which ultimately results in the upholding of settler colonialism. OE executives and their organizations were found to exhibit similar forms of exemption, in both *Unintentional* and *Intentional* ways.

**Unintentional Exemption.** Unintentional exemption involves inaction stemming from unknowing, rooted in lacking awareness, implication, and responsibility. It is important to note that the use of “unintentional” in this instance is not to be interpreted as “excusable.” In her study with veteran OE practitioners, Newbery (2012) connected anti-colonial inaction of practitioners to lacking self-implication, further grounded in insufficient self-reflexivity and unknowing. Present in multiple interviews, participants reflected struggling to understand their implication in settler colonialism and resulting responsibility to act. Acknowledging his lacking personal awareness, Hank shared his initial challenge to understand why his organization, endorsed by the British Royal Family, was pursuing anti-colonial efforts at all. Reducing anti-colonial accountability and action to the frontlines, Ryan explained his minimal recent engagement in change as

a result of spending a majority of his time in administrative capacities. Not limited to executives, Ryan also linked inaction to unknowing in his largely White participant base, identifying privilege as a factor driving inabilities to “see, let alone understand the hurt.” While these examples can be interpreted to indicate the “success” of the Canadian colonial project on the minds of settlers, they can also be understood to reflect an ongoing, field-wide cycle of unknowing and perceived innocence that sustains colonialism in OE, rippling all the way from frontlines to executive offices.

**Intentional Exemption.** Presenting as more sinister than the previous section, intentional exemption involves a choice being made to avoid anti-colonial engagement. The literature displays a variety of forms of intentional exemption, broadly characterized by anxiety and ignorance. Clement (2019) and Newbery (2012) reported discomfort and unpreparedness to drive practitioner avoidance of anti-colonial content; more specifically, anxieties regarding “knowledge mastery, wounding students, complicity, appropriation, unruly affective content, and the unpredictability of student engagement” (Newbery, 2012, p. 38). Interviews found similar themes of unpreparedness and discomfort as barriers to organizational anti-colonial action. Feeling “not ready” (Gary) was described not only within organizational leadership, but also interpreted by executives to be present throughout their organizations and in their broader organizational communities, further connected to considerations of (dis)comfort regarding (in)action. Reflecting concerns for potential harm rooted in perceived unpreparedness, one participant described avoiding certain organizational anti-colonial routes as a method of damage control, and to avoid exposing ignorance. Natural questions in response to reported unpreparedness include asking when, how, and what now? However, participants were not able to provide an

answer to “when.” Gary further expressed that in the context of his surrounding senior leadership, anti-colonial readiness is not necessarily close or inevitable: “But understanding that if I just wait for them, we’re going to wait 25 years.” The “how” and “what now” will be addressed later in the chapter.

Connected to practitioner anxieties of unpreparedness and discomfort (Clement, 2019), literature has also pointed to avoidance of anti-colonial content on grounds of “difficult knowledge” (Newbery, 2012, p. 30) undermining OE’s positive and inspirational framings. Ryan spoke directly to this perceived handcuffing, wondering: “[H]ow can we make those changes just to be positive experiences?” Appearing quite superficial and contradictory in light of contemporary OE’s employment of challenge-based pedagogies (Clement, 2019), this rationale also serves to undermine the developmental value of the field, painting OE as a utopic bubble that shields participants (as well as practitioners) from experiencing difficult emotions and real-world issues.

Exemption rooted in ignorance was seen in interviews to mirror literature, while also offering new insights. Practitioners have been seen to whitewash, avoid, silence, and even disapprove of anti-colonial engagement (Newbery, 2012; Pludwinski & Grimwood, 2021) further representative of ongoing colonial norms across the field. Executives described ongoing ignorance within their organizations, taking specific forms such as vocal opposition from individuals in leadership to the incorporation of an Indigenous protocol. Ignorance was also spoken of more generally, as Ryan articulated a perspective that saw anti-colonial efforts not being taken seriously, while Gary described how current social pressures were “not enough yet to force” organizational and field-wide change. Highlighting a very real challenge for anti-colonial progress, this statement displays the

problematic nature of a settler organization putting accountability for change on a settler society that has it in its best interest not to acknowledge the need for change. Gary's observation of his White peers' commonly voiced focus on a "feel good" reconciliation that bypasses truth demonstrated a similar ignorance rooted in goals of settler futurity (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Related to exemption through ignorance, guidance and lack thereof, presented in interviews as an aspect of inaction. There appears to be no existing literature regarding guidance for organizational anti-colonial change in OE. As such, this study operated on the assumption that national-level organizations would be leaning on the work of the TRC as a guiding resource for organizational change; however, this was found not to be the case. While participants spoke to the awareness-raising and inspirational impacts of the TRC, they cited a lack of fit to undermine its application as a guiding framework for their organizations. An important finding on its own, participants further complicated the matter in identifying a gap between theory and action, a lack of meaningful written resources, while additionally voicing desires for more guidance. Albeit indicative of necessary caution regarding potential harm resulting from unguided efforts, inaction grounded in lack of guidance also fosters exemption and functions to shift anti-colonial accountability onto Indigenous peoples through imposing the responsibility to educate and guide settler practitioners. While listening, learning, and appropriately consulting are essential elements to ethical anti-colonial change, inaction due to lack of guidance falls short in acknowledging the necessary internal labour of unsettling, and positions organizational anti-colonial change as a process centring their products and services

rather than their people. Encouraging organizational introspection, Regan (2010) emphasizes the necessity of starting anti-colonial change at the individual level.

Another finding not currently reflected in the literature, involved the impact of Capitalism on anti-colonial organizational change. All participants described inaction as a result of organizational prioritization grounded in “avoiding bankruptcy” (Gary), being “in survival mode” (Ryan), and needing to “put food on the table” (Hank). Echoing Gary’s comments on insufficient cultural momentum, Hank further described a “broken” economic system reflecting a “society value” that under-appreciates OE, serving to undermine organizational and field-wide capacity for anti-colonial engagement. These reflections draw attention to a major tension arising from organizational needs to generate income as participants in capitalist society. Not only handcuffed from directing current resources to anti-colonial efforts, executive’s reflections also painted anti-colonial work as less lucrative, which in the context of strapped OE organizations in a capitalist society, translates to less deserving of space. A gross and oxymoronic notion, the tension of needing to capitalize and package anti-colonial work for it to deserve space in OE certainly requires future attention.

This section unpacked past and present anti-colonial inaction in OE from the perspectives of executives. Unintentional and intentional exemption continues to be visible at all levels of OE, fostered by a colonial cycle of unknowing, anxiety, avoidance and ignorance. The following section shifts gears to explore named anti-colonial efforts.

### **Current Efforts**

“So, yeah, using outdoor metaphor, like I'm fully aware that we're not actually reaching a summit, and that's it, that's the end point. But nonetheless, we are in the mountains in the journey in the mountains, and we're going to go to a summit on

the way to another summit on the way to a ridge, the way to a meadow and whatnot. And those points are not clear” (Gary).

As an exploratory study into the engagement of OE organizational leadership in anti-colonial change, it is important to spend some time discussing the results regarding how OE executives and surrounding organizational leadership are presently enacting anti-colonial change. Despite Jewel & Mosby’s (2020) bleak findings, among other critical literature, as well as the variety of factors fuelling inaction, interviews heard participants share a variety of ongoing anti-colonial efforts taking place within their organizations. While variation in engagement and depth of organizational change was seen across interviews, all participants acknowledged the responsibility for engaging in anti-colonial change as part of their role as leaders of their respective organizations. Simply showing up to take part stood as the first indication of accountability, but their efforts proved to go further. Not acting in isolation, it’s important to note that described actions are not necessarily initiated or executed by the executives themselves; however, their reflections speak to their necessary roles in organizational change. This section digs further into *Executive Conceptualizations*, *Tangible Change*, and *Exploring Executive Responsibility*.

**Executive Conceptualizations.** Participant conceptualizations of decolonization, reconciliation, and unsettling were found to reflect those seen in the literature. Much of the anti-colonial actions described by the executives can be understood to stem from their collective echoing of Clement’s (2019) criticism that contemporary OE remains White dominated, in terms of demographics, as well as accompanying worldviews and normativities. Displaying a shared central belief of anti-colonial change as a relational process or journey (Clement, 2019; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Root, 2010; Scully, 2012), interviews also found participants align with the TRC’s stated goal to “establish a

respectful and healthy relationship among [Indigenous and non-Indigenous] people, going forward” (2015a, p. 6) as they approached change-making through the establishment and building of meaningful connections: “[I]t’s all going to be about relationship” (Gary), “you know, partnership, and beyond inclusion” (Hank). Additional stated conceptual foundations included centring truth; increasing justice; elevating and empowering Indigenous people, groups, and communities; and recognizing the non-universal nature of anti-colonial work. These ideological groundings set the stage for anti-colonial efforts characterized as *White Unsettling and Creating Space*, which combined to display the general theme that anti-colonizing OE means evolving their organizations and the field into spaces where Indigenous people feel/are safe, welcome, and belonging. However, participants described a variety of different routes to do so.

**Tangible Change.** Despite the shared perceived restriction of anti-colonial capacity, executives described multiple concrete ongoing efforts to unsettle and create space. Different voices have advocated for organizational efforts to target the building of awareness, implication, and accountability within existing staff and membership, such as cross-cultural (Lowan, 2009) and anti-racist (Clement, 2019) trainings, which serve to foster unsettling (Regan, 2010) and decolonizing journeys (Regan, 2010; Root, 2010; Wildcat et al., 2014). One participant named the implementation of both voluntary and mandatory justice-based staff trainings, while another spoke to helping create intentional spaces for these conversations through workshops at conferences. Stemming from his organizational identity as a White organization, this same participant advocated for creating similar spaces specifically for White people to engage in critical conversations and hold each other accountable. Mackenzie (2020) has drawn attention to the value of

building inter-settler accountability through the creation of spaces for White practitioners. Offering a variety of potential benefits, these unsettling spaces present avenues towards: reducing the burden of educating from Black, Indigenous and people of colour; decreasing potential tokenizing; dismantling performative actions through embodying the understanding that this work is more than just behaving a certain way when Black, Indigenous, and people of colour are present; and fostering sincere White settler engagement through lessening participant anxieties around exposing ignorance in the presence of non-White folks. These spaces offer a particularly valuable route towards change in consideration of ongoing dominant demographic Whiteness in OE and its organizations.

In addition to changing appropriated names, and working to support Indigenous businesses, one particularly interesting reflection of unsettling involved Hank's discussion of ongoing reckoning surrounding an ideological shift in his organization's approach to programming specifically for Indigenous youth. This shift involved dismantling a traditional philanthropic model that "see[s] Outdoor Education as an 'intervention' to help Indigenous youth," and reconstructing on relational grounds of "partnership and reciprocity." Partnered with an organizational goal to ensure the presence of Indigenous leadership (Lowan, 2009) for programs specifically for Indigenous youth, Hank described how the strings attached to donors in the philanthropic model undermine Indigenous autonomy, and how the reckoning intends to return power. A vivid statement of ongoing colonialism in OE, this naming stands as a powerful example of organizational self-reflection. Lowan-Trudeau (2019) further emphasizes the value in this shift through his identified trend of harms occurring in programs without

Indigenous leadership. However, this shift also returns attention to how capitalism influences the ethical treatment of Indigenous people in OE, as programs may only be available to many Indigenous youth with colonial conditions. This shift prompts further questions: Will this reduce the number of Indigenous youth served and programs offered from now on? Can this colonial handcuffing be communicated and navigated with donors? How do organizations understand the role or involvement of Indigenous leadership in programming not specific to Indigenous youth?

While connected with inaction, guidance also stood out as an important aspect of creating space. Rather than relying on written sources such as the TRC (2015abc) due to inapplicability and general non-existence, executives spoke to drawing guidance relationally. One participant named seeking relational guidance as an explicit responsibility of their role as his organization's leader. Intentional hiring efforts, suggested by Clement (2019), were consistent across interviews, as executives described attempts to build Indigenous presence throughout their staff ranks, from frontlines through leadership. Not limited to simple, potentially tokenizing representation, improving presence was directly linked to hopes of building in-house guidance (as well as welcoming and belonging), such as establishing Indigenous advisory bodies. Executives also spoke to inviting relational guidance through seeking connection, insight, and collaboration with Indigenous peers, knowledge holders, elders, communities, and groups (Clement, 2019; Lowan, 2009). In Ryan's case, this involved partnering with a non-OE organization that offered Indigenous leadership and a higher perceived capacity to facilitate change. While these efforts uphold the non-universal nature of this work, and despite some reported collaborative efforts, they also display how anti-colonial change in

OE is largely siloed, as each OE organization appears to be acting largely independently. Reinforced by the lack of shared guiding resources, the highlighted range in organizational anti-colonial success suggests a guiding framework may be of use not only individually, but also in fostering a concerted field-wide effort.

Not limited to staffing and guidance, efforts to create space involved desires to elevate and integrate Indigenous voices through collaborative construction and execution of programming, as well as in organizational leadership practices. Named actions included encouraging and centring Indigenous perspectives in material published on behalf of the organization, as well as learning and embracing Indigenous protocols (Jones & Segal, 2018) in Board meeting procedures. Standing as an indication of OE's ongoing colonial grounding, some of these efforts were unfortunately accompanied by internal resistance; however, one participant acted in line with Fernandez and Rainey's (2006) identified executive role to defend change and navigate opposition. Healthy navigation of discomfort and resistance appears to be a particularly important role for executives in consideration of the widely recognized discomfort common to this work (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Newbery, 2012; Root, 2010; Tompkins, 2002), and the numerous avenues of opting out. Not only does this indicate the need for strong advocacy and conflict resolution skills, but it also emphasizes the importance of executive's role modelling the doing of their own emotional and intellectual labour. One additional route to create space that was not heard in interviews involves creating spaces specifically for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour to "collaborate outside of the White gaze" (Razack, 1998, p. 15, cited in Mackenzie, 2020, p. 96).

Not mutually exclusive, the distinction of types of action, White Unsettling and Creating Space, can be understood to focus on different aspects of anti-colonial change. Whereas unsettling efforts function primarily to improve Indigenous safety, efforts to create space continue to build safety while emphasizing Indigenous welcoming and belonging. Based on a prioritization of safety, this understanding implies a loose sense of precedence in which White Unsettling appears to be the necessary starting point for Western-grounded OE organizations. This is certainly not to say that it is more important, nor a call for further exclusion of Indigenous people from the field; rather, recognition of the risk of harm, and similar to much of our programming, a call for organizations to begin by looking inward. Not limited to potential resulting racism, putting unsettling on the backburner presents dangers of tokenizing, added emotional and intellectual labour, and potential inappropriate expectations of current Indigenous staff and new hires as anti-colonial “fixers.” Questions of “what is safe,” “safe enough,” or “what is required for safety” in the context of OE are deserving of more attention.

**Exploring Executive Responsibility.** As the recognized leaders of their organizations, it is important to consider their resulting responsibility for anti-colonial change. Due to position alone, is there a greater responsibility for anti-colonial change on the shoulders of OE executives? By definition, these roles carry responsibilities to provide organizational direction, care for staff, role modelling, engagement with the larger field, and are naturally imbued with greater power, suggesting a simple “yes.” Organizational leadership has also been recognized in the literature to play an integral role in successful organizational change (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010), not limited to engaging in, advocating, and legitimizing change

(Holton & Brenner, 2015; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). Participants reflected this understanding, with Gary carving it out clearly:

“Well, as the executive director, like, I’m responsible for everything... And hence, why somebody has been hired to execute on those responsibilities, or direct the execution, which de facto, gives me the responsibility for everything that is executed at the [Certification and Representation Organization], whether it's bookkeeping, sending an email, or decolonization. So how I understand my role is, yeah, it's pretty central and essential like without an executive director, that directs the actual execution of that, it probably, it most likely will not get anywhere.”

While all participants acknowledged their executive role to include fostering anti-colonial change within their organizations, successful action took many different forms, and was reported to vary widely. Despite voicing wishes for their organizations to do more, and speaking to personally being ready for greater action, multiple executives located barriers to change outside of themselves (and their control). Often citing exemption of others, executives dressed inaction as patience stemming from needs to communicate and guide rather than force or impose in response to lacking awareness and readiness. There are of course limits to the healthy wielding of the power accompanying these roles. However, exploring the navigation of these barriers and boundaries presents an important piece to address, as maintained inaction sustains settler colonialism and contributes further harm. Building executive and leadership implication and accountability offers an important step, beginning with their doing of emotional and intellectual unsettling labour. Drawing again on Regan (2010), this would hopefully lead down the path towards becoming

“socio-political actors,” (p. 24) translating to augmented organizational action. Rooted in the ongoing tension of prioritizing corporate needs, and their ultimate role to execute on them, a second route deserving of attention involves finding ways to embed anti-colonial progress into corporate wellbeing.

This section dug into present anti-colonial efforts taking place in OE organizations, touching on the executive conceptualizations that influence how change is approached and enacted, actual ongoing efforts, and an exploration of executive responsibilities. The following section continues down the timeline to explore future avenues for anti-colonial change.

### **Looking Forward**

Building on an understanding of how anti-colonial change has and has not occurred in OE over time, this section offers a look ahead to what could be. While all participants reported feeling restricted in their capacities to enact change presently, they also collectively acknowledged there being plenty of room to grow. Beginning with *Aspirations for Change*, this discussion then shifts to *Exploring “Meaningful” Change*, and wraps up with a proposal of *Groundwork for an Anti-Colonial Framework in OE*.

**Aspirations for Change.** Participants spoke optimistically of the potential for future anti-colonial change. Grounded in the same intentions of evolving OE and its organizations to spaces that are safe, welcoming, and belonging for Indigenous peoples, executives identified multiple anti-colonial pathways deserving of attention, that so far have been out of reach. In addition to continuing current organizational efforts, participants shared goals of “opportunit[es] to do more” (Hank) that address tackling systemic issues as well as cultural norms at the field level.

In response to his identification of an economic system in OE that favours the White, middle and upper-class experience, Hank described hopes of building the organization up in order to be able to offer employment that “honours the experience” of non-White people, including overcoming the dominant seasonal nature of the field to improve job security and stability. While addressing and dismantling systemic barriers to entry is an essential element of creating space in the field, this stands as yet another tension encouraging the prioritizing of corporate economic needs over anti-colonial interests. Hank named this tension explicitly, sharing: “[I]f we can deal with the economics of that, [it] gives us a better shot to deal with the, with the cultural elements.” Rooted in perceived financial handcuffing, this approach maintains an ironic twist that positions anti-colonial work as a privilege for successful participants in capitalism. This tension appears to be a powerful narrative standing in the way of anti-colonial change in OE, desperately requiring re-storying. A valuable pathway to mobilizing anti-colonial change involves helping OE, its organizations, and their executives to explore, identify, and pursue “affordable” avenues.

A second systemic piece fostering Indigenous exclusion in OE included multiple participants pointing to the field’s current focus on risk and liability as a factor undermining Indigenous presence and engagement. While Hank described it as less commensurable with Indigenous worldviews, Gary articulated how this focus manifests in the field’s certification basis, which fails to recognize Indigenous knowledges and contributes to the exclusion of Indigenous practitioners. Clement (2019) has also challenged this focus within the field, on grounds of prioritizing physical over emotional risk management.

One question that has underlain this whole project asks: how safe, welcoming and belonging can colonially-rooted OE organizations actually be? Much of this conversation has revolved around organizational shifts and adaptations, which do not necessarily reach the depths of the field's colonial roots. While it remains necessary to make OE safer, more welcoming, and more belonging for Indigenous people, without getting to these roots, the task remains sewing anti-colonial seeds in a colonial garden. In order to get at the roots, it is necessary to revisit understandings of purpose and meaning from individual through field levels, and to explore what informs those understandings. Clement (2019) has suggested revisiting organizational missions, encouraging those involved to ask: what is the purpose of this organization? Offering one path to the roots, Gary advocated revisiting the dominant narratives that currently prop up the field. Reminiscent of McLean (2013), Gary called for the dismantling of glorified settler narratives, and further re-storying in ways that centre truth. Naming what he understands as a dominant expeditionary perspective, he offered a desire to complicate field-wide understandings of what it means to go outside. An aspect of the narratives that hold up the field involves driving socialization processes, and informing us as participants, practitioners, executives, and all involved, what it means to be a part of OE. Research has previously identified the need to challenge socialization in OE, as Pludwinski and Grimwood (2021) reported problematic socialization to fuel colonial behaviour in the context of canoe trippers. Not only challenges, they also stand as exciting and important invitations to revisit OE's colonial groundings in order to deconstruct, re-build, and re-story OE in ethical, collaborative ways.

**Exploring “Meaningful” Change.** An important question to consider when exploring concepts of decolonization, reconciliation, and anti-colonial change is: what does it mean to make *meaningful* change? At a time where social trends often see anti-colonial organizational change reduced to hollow land acknowledgments, this question is especially relevant to explore in the context of organizational change in a field whose existence depends on occupying stolen land. While implied to align with the textbook definition of “having a serious, important, or useful quality or purpose” (Oxford Languages, 2022), the common nebulous use of “meaningful” in the anti-colonial literature (TRC, 2015a), as well as in the conversation more broadly, lack concreteness serving to further cloud actual change. Themes of meaningfulness arose in all interviews, presenting as similar ill-defined ideals; in interpretations of efforts, such as Ryan’s “[m]ostly just simple things”; and, through explicit discussion of what constitutes meaningful action. Multiple voices identified the need for systemic work, which in one case was articulated as a perspective that advocated “more about decolonizing than Indigenizing” (Gary), further describing non-systemic efforts as less valuable in comparison. While one interpretation of downplaying the meaningfulness of efforts and non-systemic work aligns with exemption, another involves acknowledging the common OE organizational dance to maximize the efficiency of limited resources. This interpretation sees organizations attempting to postpone anti-colonial change, or “hedging to bet” (Gary), in order to identify the route that provides the most bang for their limited buck. However, this again has roots in organizational change as defined by services and products, rather than their people. In addition to previous recognition identifying the

individual as the necessary starting point (Regan, 2010), much of this work can be undertaken for free.

Ultimately, if anyone is to define “meaningful,” it should be Indigenous voices; however, getting hung up on whether something is meaningful or not is a slippery slope to inaction. Advocating that any change is better than no change, Clement (2019) encourages “organizations to just start *doing* the work in whatever way they can, learning as they go” (p. 14).

**Groundwork for an Anti-Colonial Framework in OE.** The final section of this discussion seeks to address the observed and reported scarcity of anti-colonial written resources, and desire for more relevant in the context of settler OE practitioners and organizations. This framework is intended to offer practitioners and organizations an applicable and doable starting point that encourages engagement, awareness, implication, and commitment, on individual, organizational, and field-wide levels. Prior to proposing, I return to my limits as a White settler student to acknowledge that it would be unethical, inappropriate, and nonsensical to follow advocating anti-colonial change grounded in relationality with a brand new, independently defined, Western-rooted code. I also recognize and align with McNamee’s (2015) criticisms of the universal and decontextualized nature of ethical codes. Instead, I have chosen to offer some initial thoughts for an ethical framework for settler OE practitioners and organizations, grounded in an anti-colonial standpoint that seeks to uphold Indigenous sovereignty. This proposed framework has been shaped by the literature, including Call to Action 92 (TRC, 2015a), results, and personal experience as an OE practitioner, as well as current nature-based counsellor working within an organization trying to enact anti-colonial change

itself. Each element should be understood to be ongoing and interconnected. This proposed framework encourages settler practitioners or organizations to:

1. Do the emotional and intellectual labour of unsettling, recognizing that it is ongoing.
2. Commit to establishing meaningful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples, communities, and groups.
3. Learn and follow the Indigenous laws and protocols of the territory.
4. Request permission from the appropriate Indigenous governing bodies to operate in their territories.
5. Invite local communities and knowledge holders to collaborate on program construction and execution, especially for programs for Indigenous youth. This includes allowing communities and knowledge holders to define and guide the parameters of knowledge engagement, including what is shared, how it is shared, how it is applied in program, and ongoing informed consent.

This initial framework is founded on hopes of encouraging socially just behaviour and accountability on the part of settler OE practitioners and organizations. Rough and openly incomplete, I invite collaboration and feedback, with the sights on ethical construction through collectivity and solidarity. It is also important to acknowledge additional references grounded in Indigenous worldviews, such as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's (2000) *Ethics Guidelines for Aboriginal Communities Doing Healing Work*, which should be used to guide ethical and sensitive relationship building with Indigenous communities.

One potential scenario practitioners and organizations may find themselves in is that despite claims of decolonizing/reconciliation/etc., there is a very real possibility that communities will want nothing to do with settler-driven outdoor youth programming. Again, this is a right to be respected of Indigenous Peoples, who are not, and should never be made to feel obligated to engage. With that said, this does not negate the obligation of OE practitioners and agencies to reckon with themselves and their programs, or the obligation to follow Indigenous laws and protocols, such as gaining permission prior to practicing on Indigenous land.

This section worked to build from the optimistic reflections of OE executives regarding future anti-colonial change in their organizations and the field. Named aspirations for change were explored, followed by an interpretation of the use and conceptualizations of “meaningful” in the context of change, and finally an anti-colonial framework was proposed in response to the lack of and desire for written resources in the context of settler-grounded OE. The final section of this chapter addresses conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## **Conclusion**

A number of voices, including Indigenous and settler, have criticized OE’s sustained upholding of settler colonialism and resulting inaction. Motivated by these voices, as well as personal experience in the field, this study aimed to encourage anti-colonial progress and contribute to anti-colonial literature in the context of outdoor education. Despite their positions and resulting roles, the voices of executive organizational leadership were observed to largely be absent from the academic, anti-colonial conversation. As such, a narrative methodology grounded in constructivism and

anti-colonialism was taken to invite three executives representing national-level OE organizations to interviews in order to explore past, present, and future anti-colonial (in)action. Executives described inaction and action that aligned with existing literature, while also adding new insights. Rooted in the field's ongoing dominant Whiteness, executives described inaction in both intentional and unintentional forms, further interpreted to indicate normalized colonial cycles that foster settler unknowing, innocence, and avoidance. Inaction was also commonly connected to the tension of prioritizing corporate wellbeing over anti-colonial interests. Actions described by executives displayed the over-arching theme that anti-colonizing OE means evolving their organizations and the larger field into spaces where Indigenous people are safe, welcome, and belonging. Actions were categorized into two groups, including unsettling efforts to dismantle ongoing Whiteness, and efforts to create space for Indigenous people and worldviews. Efforts included present actions as well as future, largely systemic goals. In conjunction with significant recognized inaction, participants collectively voiced the need for greater anti-colonial effort. In response to observed and reported lacking guiding literature, an anti-colonial framework for settler OE practitioners and organizations was proposed, with hopes of offering practical, attainable pathways and a common field-wide reference point.

**Limitations.** A variety of limitations can be recognized to have influenced this study. The first stems from my positioning as a White settler student researcher, writing individually in an anti-colonial and Canadian context. I align with voices in the literature as well as participant reflections centring relationality and Indigenous presence in anti-colonial work, and it was important for me to have Indigenous oversight throughout this

project. While I was able to receive guidance from Indigenous faculty at certain checkpoints, the academic context imposed restrictions on how relational this project could be. Ultimately, this work should be conducted in relation, and I believe this project would be stronger having been done more collaboratively, and with Indigenous presence throughout. Naturally, another similar limitation stems from the recognition that all participants involved identify as male settlers. While this certainly relates to the study's intentional focus on Western-grounded OE organizations, it remains a limiting factor. Despite groundings in perceived greater likelihood of transferability from national-level organizations down, rather than smaller organizations up, the nature of organizations being national-level remains to carry potential limitations in the ability to transfer results to smaller organizations. Last, in terms of existing literature, the observed lack of anti-colonial literature in the context of OE, and especially that involving organizational leadership's engagement in the anti-colonial conversation, inherently constrains the transferability of results; however, it also offers an exciting opening for genuine contribution.

**Recommendations for Future Research.** As a response itself to the minimal anti-colonial literature in the context of OE, and observed gap in that pertaining to organizational leadership entirely, this study only scratches the surface, offering a variety of potential future research avenues. As such, this study invites and recommends further, similar research in order to continue building this body of knowledge grounded in hopes of fostering stronger, field-wide transferability moving forward.

While executives were found to understand anti-colonizing as building safety, welcoming, and belonging, it is important to explore this from Indigenous perspectives.

What does it mean to Indigenous peoples for OE and its organizations to be safe, welcoming, and belonging? Further questions include “what is safe/welcoming/belonging,” “safe/welcoming/belonging enough,” and/or “what is required for safety/welcoming/belonging?” It is also important to explore what OE does or could offer to Indigenous youth, peoples, and communities. This stands as an important piece in dismantling OE’s deep colonial roots, such as lingering framings that see OE as an intervention for Indigenous youth. Executives also spoke to the richness that Indigenous presence and knowledges bring to OE, and it is necessary to clarify how OE, its organizations, and practitioners can reciprocate.

Future efforts should also work to tackle the rampant exemption exhibited by the field, which includes further investigating how to build awareness, implication, and accountability top to bottom; exploring “affordable” anti-colonial routes; and, the major task of bringing the field together.

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**Appendix 1: Sections of TRC Calls to Action Relevant to Outdoor Education  
(2015b)**

***Education***

- i. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
  - i. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
  - ii. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
  - iii. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
  - iv. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
  - v. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.
12. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.
20. We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.
21. We call upon all levels of government to:

- i. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
  - ii. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
  - iii. Provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals.
22. We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

### ***Reconciliation***

43. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation.

### ***Education for reconciliation***

- ii. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
  - i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.

- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
  - iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:
- i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
  - ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
  - iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
  - iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

### ***Youth Programs***

66. We call upon the federal government to establish multi- year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

### ***Business and Reconciliation***

92. We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core

operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.

This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

**Appendix 2: TRC's Principles of Reconciliation (2015c, p. 3-4)**

1. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.
2. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
3. Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.
4. Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
5. Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
6. All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
7. The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.
8. Supporting Aboriginal peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.

9. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.
10. Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
SCHOOL OF CHILD & YOUTH CARE

**INTRODUCTORY EMAIL**

*Calling In Outdoor Education to Create Change*

Hello [insert name]

Thank you for your interest in the project. I am not sure how far Nevin went in explaining the project during his initial recruitment, so I figured I would give you a general rundown.

This work has largely grown from my personal experiences in a variety of roles in Outdoor Education programming, as well as ongoing learning and development regarding social justice, my personal ethics and my accompanying sense of duties.

The broad goal of this project is to promote ethical, socially just, and in particular anti-colonial change in the field of Outdoor Education. In order to do so, I am hoping to connect with senior organizational leadership in OE to collaboratively develop theory and possible organizational commitments that support the field in creating change, specifically regarding obligations outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015.

Participation would involve taking part in a semi-structured Zoom interview and/or responding to writing prompts, as well as further contact over the course of data analysis to ensure that drawn conclusions are collaborative and remain reflective. It is expected that interviews will last between 30 minutes to one hour, and total participation in the study to involve a time commitment between 3-5 hours.

If you are interested in moving forward with participating in this study, I have attached a Letter of Information, which is a more technical rundown of the study, including your rights as a participant. After getting a chance to go through that document, I am happy to make myself available to talk further, to make sure we are on the same page, and to address any questions or concerns. If at this point, you are still onboard, we can schedule an interview, or if you prefer written response, I can send you the writing prompts. I am also happy to send the interview questions ahead of the interview so that you have time to prepare. This study has received approval from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board.

Thank you again for your interest in this study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Calvin Walker

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
SCHOOL OF CHILD & YOUTH CARE

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

*Calling In Outdoor Education to Create Change*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Calvin Walker (Master's Student, Child and Youth Care), and advised by Dr. Nevin Harper (School of Child and Youth Care) and Dr. Nick Claxton (School of Child and Youth Care) at the University of Victoria.

This study is being undertaken as a partial fulfillment of the thesis requirements for the Master's of Arts in Child and Youth Care. This project is an opportunity to give the student experience in doing interdisciplinary research, and thus it is a training and teaching exercise. Please note that if you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, the student's progress through the program will not be affected.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Dr. Nevin Harper, Child and Youth Care: [njharper@uvic.ca](mailto:njharper@uvic.ca), or Dr. Nick Claxton, Child and Youth Care: [nickclax@uvic.ca](mailto:nickclax@uvic.ca).

This project has been approved by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to promote ethical and socially just change in the field of Outdoor Education (OE), with the goal of developing theory that supports the field in creating real anti-colonial change specifically regarding the fulfillment of obligations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action. This study aims to do so through engaging with individuals in positions of organizational leadership in OE organizations, guided by the research question: How can OE leadership mobilize their organizations towards meaningful anti-colonial change, specifically in regards to the TRC's Calls to Action.

**PROCEDURES**

You are being invited to participate in this study because you hold a position of senior leadership in a large, established outdoor education organization, and you responded positively to an email invitation from the research team. If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to participate one semi-structured telephone or Zoom interview lasting between 30 minutes to an hour. The graduate student researcher will conduct the interview. You may leave your email address or mailing address should you wish to obtain a summary and/or full copy of the final research report. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded to aid in transcription and analysis. Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed without any identifying information.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is the possibility that the interview may prompt the experience of challenging emotions; however, if at any point you do feel uncomfortable you can withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer specific questions.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participation may benefit participants in fostering personal anticolonial progress, and through collaborative efforts to identify realistic and constructive avenues to create meaningful, anticolonial change within their organizations. This organizational change then stands to foster broader anticolonial change, rippling out through ideologies, staff, pedagogies, and programming, which further encourages change in their participants, other organizations, and broader society.

This research also stands to benefit society through its specific construction to address and act on reported findings documenting insufficient and unsatisfactory progress, despite six years having passed since the release of the TRC's Calls to Action. As such, it intends to develop theory and encourage organizational commitments in order to foster the fulfilment of outlined obligations, further aligned with broader, societal, anticolonial change.

#### PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There is no payment for participation in this research study.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. Your identity and contact information will be kept confidential and not be recorded in the interview nor used in the publication of the results.

By agreeing to participate in this study you acknowledge that the information you provide may be made public in a research report, poster presentation and/or publications and potentially in the presentation of undergraduate/graduate courses offered by the advisors. If permission is granted, interviews will be recorded for use in subsequent transcription and analysis by the student researcher. Please note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the internet (e.g. Zoom transmissions). All recordings and digital documents will be password protected and only accessible by the student researcher and the course advisors.

All digital files will be kept on an encrypted computer. All signed consent forms will be kept separately from all recordings and digital documents. All signed consent forms, recordings and digital documents will be housed under lock and key by the course advisor. After completion of the thesis project, the student and advisor will evaluate the possibility of preparing a manuscript for consideration of publication in the scholarly, primary (peer-reviewed) literature. All documents or records will be destroyed after seven years.

#### PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind, and you may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. Please note, if you would like to withdraw after the interview, we only ask that you let the student researcher know within a timely manner after the interview (i.e., within two weeks) to enable the student researcher to complete their thesis in a timely manner. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

#### RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (RAIS#21-0511), please contact:

**Human Research Ethics Board**  
**University of Victoria**  
**ethics@uvic.ca**