

**Active Witnessing: Decolonizing Transmogrified Ontology and Locating  
Confluences of Everyday Acts of Reconciliation**

by

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BA, Anthropology/Women and Gender Studies, Athabasca University, 2013

MA, Indigenous Governance, University of Victoria, 2015

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Department of Human and Social Development

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University of Victoria

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## Abstract

This research is inspired by Albert Memmi's paradox of the colonizer who refuses, yet remains the colonizer, complicit in colonial structures. It is explorative, qualitative, speculative and possibility orientated. It utilizes a Critical Disability Theory (CDT) lens to seek out confluences with Indigenous Resurgence, decolonial actions and reconciliation praxis. It explores the concept of Everyday Acts as being applicable for resurgence projects and non-indigenous solidarity and reconciliation practices that center Indigenous self-determination and land and water based lifeways as paramount to ecological justice. The research design is phenomenological, embodied and transformative. It endeavours to explore some of the more nuanced pockets of possibility for emergent ally-ship, and solidarity within the context of the settler who refuses through engaging with Access Intimacy, symbiosis/solidarity, gifting economy, failure as praxis, and relationship building. It does this through a thematic literature review, an interview and the idea of email essays as Life Writing. Interview and Email essays are offered as phenomenological life writings from four Collaborators, that share personal insights and stories conveying everyday experiences of accountability, responsibility, community care, community engagement, intergenerationality, embodiment, disability, collaboration, friendship and everyday acts. In concentrating on the smaller felt spaces of engagement, this modest research project hopes to bring insight and awareness to how small conscientious intergenerational everyday acts of solidarity can catalyze meaningful change and the possibility of transformation. To conclude, the research offers a discussion and some recommendations for future research.

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## Glossary of Terms

**Ableism:** Discrimination that favours able bodied and able minded people. Social prejudice against individuals with disability based on a system that favours abled persons.

**Access Intimacy:** A relational approach generated between disabled people or between disabled and non-disabled people that emerges through a) collaborative effort or b) is spontaneously intimated. Access Intimacy as a term describes the experience of being genuinely understood and our access needs anticipated and respected.

**Active Witnessing:** A term used to describe the everyday acts that encompass the notion of Access Intimacy as well as accounting for, acknowledging and acting against settler colonial structures, race-based discrimination, sociopolitical systemic power imbalances. It comprises small individual acts, larger collective action as well as intergenerational shifts. It is a fluid and adaptable action that actively seeks the creation of spaces for Indigenous resurgence.

**AFAB:** Assigned Female At Birth

**Agential Realism:** A concept proposed by Karen Barad. It is a “post-humanist performative ethics that uses the insights of quantum theory to reconceptualize our understandings of subjectivity, agency, causality, and ultimately the being of the universe itself.”<sup>1</sup>

**AMAB:** Assigned Male At Birth

**Anthropocene:** An unofficial Epoch or “unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems.”<sup>2</sup>

**Anthropogenic climate change:** A Theory that suggests “humans are causing most of the current changes to climate by burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas.”<sup>3</sup>

**Aromantic:** A term used to describe having little or no romantic attraction to others. Some aromantic individuals are sexual and others asexual.

**Asexual:** A term used to describe someone who does not experience sexual attraction toward individuals of any gender. Asexuality is a sexual orientation that differs for each individual. The term asexual is not a term that should be imposed on another individual without consent but rather claimed by the individual who experiences it.

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<sup>1</sup> Text sourced from [https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/review\\_essays/vint105.html](https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/review_essays/vint105.html) ; Also this link can further outline Agential Realism <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/p/phenomena-agential-realism.html>

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.

**Capitalism:** An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

**CDT/Critical Disability Theory:** Describes the interwoven aspects of racism and ableism that operate jointly, intensifying and borrowing from each other.

**Cisgender:** A person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.

**COVID-19:** Also called SARS-Cov-2. An acute respiratory illness in humans caused by a coronavirus, capable of producing severe symptoms and in some cases death.

**Decolonial:** In this paper this term is used to describe the intellectual work articulating a broad rejection of Western European supremacy by colonial/racial subjects.

**Disability:** a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

**Disability (medical model):** This model places the source of the problem within the person (intrinsic to the individual) = solutions found by focusing on the person.

**Disability (social model):** This model identifies systemic barriers, derogatory attitudes, and social exclusion (intentional or unintentional), which make it difficult or impossible for individuals with impairments to attain their valued functions.

**Disablement:** The state of being disabled or the experience of becoming disabled. A state of imposed disablement due to hegemonic domination/oppression.

**Disablement from/of land:** The dispossession and/or destruction of land through practices of settler colonialism that are “inextricable from the disablement of Indigenous ontology, peoples, and communities. The disablement of land/body as a tactic of settler colonialism has persisted for centuries and takes multifarious forms.”<sup>4</sup>

**Ecological Awareness:** A state of mind in which a person ceases to feel separate from the environment in which he or she exists.<sup>5</sup> Ecological Awareness means realising that beings are interconnected.<sup>6</sup>

**Enablement:** The action of giving someone the authority or means to do something.

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<sup>4</sup> Sourced from Laura Jaffee and Kelsey John, “Disabling Bodies of/and Land: Reframing Disability Justice in Conversation with Indigenous Theory and Activism,” *Disability and the Global South*, vol. 5, no. 2, (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Alan Watts, text sourced from <https://www.organism.earth/library/document/ecological-awareness>

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Morton, text sourced from <https://lab.cccb.org/en/tim-morton-ecology-without-nature/>

**Everyday Acts/Everyday Acts of Resurgence:** The choices made daily to engage with land culture and community. They are often small actions that are significant in informing both the micro and macro processes of community resurgence and change. The conscious struggle for maintain and enacting Indigenous land and water based lifeways, culture and tradition. Transformational moments of regeneration of Indigenous nationhood, health and well-being. Quiet, transformational, intimate actions that occur daily in ways that are seen and unseen that form the basis for revolutionary shifts.<sup>7</sup>

**Eugenics:** The scientifically erroneous and immoral theory of “racial improvement”

**Eurocentric:** focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as preminent.

**Flat Ontology:** A model for reality that says that all object, even those that are imagined, have the same degree of being-ness as any other object. No object is more a subject than any other. All subjects are simply objects. The key factor in determining ontology is the ability of an object to affect another object.<sup>8</sup>

**Genocide:** The intentional destruction of a people — usually defined as an ethnic, national, racial, or religious group — in whole or in part.

**Hegemony:** leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others.

**Heteropatriarchy:** The combination of male - patriarchal - and heterosexual dominance essentially describing the severe sex and gender bias prevalent among the elite ruling classes of nation-states.

**Incommensurable:** not able to be judged by the same standard as something; having no common standard of measurement.

**IRS Indian Residential School:** A network of boarding schools made specifically for Indigenous children and youth. Attendance was mandatory from 1894 to 1947. The network was funded by the Canadian government's Department of Indian Affairs and administered by Christian churches. The school system was created to isolate Indigenous children from the influence of Indigenous culture, language and religion in order to assimilate them into the dominant Canadian culture. Innumerable children suffered extreme abuse, severe neglect, illness and death in these schools.

**Indigenous:** People/communities having ancestral connection to and originating naturally in a particular place.

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<sup>7</sup> Sourced from <https://intercontinentalcry.org/everyday-acts-resurgence-people-places-practices/>

<sup>8</sup> Sourced from [https://scalar.usc.edu/works/material\\_philosophy/flat-ontology](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/material_philosophy/flat-ontology)

**Indigenous Nationhood:** A term that expresses a movement towards the resurgence of multivariate Traditional and distinct Indigenous forms of self-determination governance and law. This includes their “distinct political entities that should rightfully exercise control over their lands, over how those lands are used and cared for, over their own internal affairs including how they govern those affairs, and over the definition of their interests and over how those interests are pursued—even as they continue to exist within encompassing states.”<sup>9</sup> Indigenous nationhood is a living and dynamic aspect of Indigeneity.

**Intersectionality:** The acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. It considers everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

**LGBTQIA:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual.

**Neurodivergent:** Neurodivergence is the term for people whose brains function differently in one or more ways than is considered standard or typical.

**Nonbinary:** An individual who does not identify only as a man or a woman, i.e. the traditional gender binary

**Object Orientated Ontology:** A speculative philosophy that explores the non-hierarchical reality, agency, and private lives of living, non-living, human, and non-human entities as objects of equal beingness and significance. It rejects anthropocentric ways of thinking about and acting in the world.

**Ontology:** The branch of philosophy that studies concepts such as existence, being, becoming, and reality.

**Phenomenology:** The study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.

**Privilege:** a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.

**Queer:** A word that describes sexual and gender identities other than straight and cisgender.

**Queer theory:** The lens used to explore and challenge how scholars, activists, artistic texts, and the media perpetrate gender and sex-based binaries, and its goal is to undo hierarchies and fight against social inequalities.

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Cornell, “Processes of Native Nationhood: The Indigenous Politics of Self-Governance.” *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, vol. 6 iss. 4. (2015).

**Racial Capitalism:** The process of extracting social and economic value from a person of a different racial identity, typically a person of color; however, a person of any race might engage in racial capitalism, as might an institution dominated by one race.

**RCAP:** The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People.

**Reconciliation:** In Canada, the process of reconciliation is tied to the federal government's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

**Settler:** A person who moves with a group of others to live in a new country or area.

**Settler colonialism:** A form of colonialism that seeks to replace the original population of the colonized territory with a new society of settlers. It is a process of structuring rather than a single event.

**Situational Mutism:** Another term for Selective Mutism (formerly called Elective Mutism) Selective mutism is a severe anxiety disorder where a person is unable to speak in certain social situations.

**Symbiogenesis:** Literally 'becoming by living together', refers to the crucial role of symbiosis in major evolutionary innovations.

**TEK:** Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

**TRC:** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

**Two-Spirit:** Refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity.

**Ungovernable:** Impossible to control or govern.

**Withdrawal:** Objects are independent not only of other objects, but also from the qualities they animate at any specific spatiotemporal location. Accordingly, objects cannot be exhausted by their relations with humans or other objects in theory or practice, meaning that the reality of objects is always present-at-hand.<sup>10</sup>

**Transmogrified:** Transformation in a surprising or magical manner.

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<sup>10</sup> Sourced from <https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2010/01/20/relations-and-withdrawal/>

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the Semiahmoo (SEMYOME)<sup>11</sup> land and waters who nourished my childhood body, mind and spirit. And to thank the Semiahmoo peoples for allowing my family to live with and share their beautiful territory and community on the Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve during the 1970s. What an amazingly wonderful place to grow up! Much gratitude to the University of Victoria, Department of Human and Social Development for the many grants and bursaries kindly offered to me to finish this project. I could not have done it without this support. I would also like to express appreciation to my excellent and patient supervisor, Dr. Jeff Kanohalidoh Corntassel (Tsalagi) and committee members, Dr. Devi Dee Mucina (Ubuntu) and Dr. James Tully. Deep appreciation to Dr. Dian Million (Tanana Athabaskan) for their excellence and taking time to be present. Much gratitude to my mentors Quinn and Caliban and to my generous and caring colleagues; Dawn, Erynne, Jarrett, John R., Kahala, Lianne, Melina, Mick, Nikki and Shelby. Deep gratitude to Toby and Lisa for their insight and unconditional support. And to all those who generously embodied mutual aid and are too numerous to name, but deeply appreciated, you know who you are. I am especially grateful to the generous Collaborators. I am so humbled by all they have shared. I am also humbled by those who could not share. My heart has been filled again and again. Most of all I would like to acknowledge my grandmothers Valborg and Aileen, my mother Ida, my sisters, my daughters, and my grandchildren. You have re-shaped my being with your being.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.semiahmoofirstnation.ca>

I acknowledge the unceded territories of the Lekwungen, Songhees and W̱SÁNEĆ on which the University of Victoria is located, and I am currently squatting on.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation has been done as an act of intergenerational solidarity.  
It is dedicated to my daughters Wendy, Sonja, Alisha and Manjula, their ancestors and  
their future generations.

## Preamble Ramble: An Everyday Day

Late one afternoon on August 12, 2018, there were over 750 wildfires in BC, Canada. It was a record breaker—for the second year in a row. The air quality was at its highest risk, the visual field foggy, everything was wreathed in smoke. From dawn to dusk the sky was various shades of tangerine, the sun a deep burnished gold, and as it was setting (or rising) it was blood red. Breathing was difficult (many stayed indoors) and people suffered sore throats, irritated eyes, migraines, asthma, and breathlessness. It was hotter and drier than it had ever been. And the world looked post-apocalyptic. All around us we saw the result of BC burning up in flames— smoke, ash residue, dust, dryness—there was no reprieve, no relief.

The Anthropocene is well underway. It's no one's fault, but the fault of a colonial system that is grotesquely capitalistic and achingly archaic...that doesn't work anymore, if it ever really did. There are youth shootings in schools, caravans of refugees migrating from a life of violent oppression, starvation where children waste with hunger under the nose of wealthy nations, communities with no potable water adjacent to communities with more than enough, wars are still being waged and anthropogenic climate change is a fact. If I keep thinking about it (and really, I can't stop) my being implodes.

I sit at a laptop in a one-bedroom basement suite. I live here with two youths, two cats, two dogs, two guinea pigs and a fish. Sometimes one of my adult children comes and stays with me for a time. We live adjacent to my oldest daughter (Mohawk through her father), her partner (Sts'ailes), his two kids, their newborn, a roommate and a liquescent flow of cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. And in the driveway are two small trailers, one occupied by the adult son of the roommate the other by a family friend, his partner, and twice a week his two-year-old. As I write this, I'm listening to sound loops via my headphones. The sound loops are repetitive noises, deep waves of pulsating noise from various Sci-Fi spaceship engines, backgrounds to dystopian movies and soundtracks from 'old school' RPGs.

I do this to block out the chaos of the everyday messy family life around me...teens playing on the X-Box One, neighbours outside venting about municipal laws,

couples vociferously arguing, the drumming of traffic on the highway, the yowling of sirens, the younger kids upstairs shouting over each other and negotiating game rules and laughing those deep belly laughs. I put the headphones on not because I detest the noises of day-to-day life...at least I don't think I do...rather, I do it to focus my mind, to relax my body and allow myself to go inward. Otherwise, I would be lost in a cyclone of distraction. The sounds intermingle with the smell of wildfire smoke, car exhaust, cat litter, food cooking, old coffee, dog—the dog who rolled in something not alive and stinking. Most likely that poor raccoon carcass left at the side of the highway two weeks ago. Just a dried out furry husk now. But ghastly in terms of smell—the scent of dish soap, dusty books, old laundry, freshly washed laundry, my computer overheating—the sound of my breathing deep and even, my heart beating.

It saturates my being with a deep melancholy about futurity. And my day loops like the Sci-Fi sounds. Complete with the staccato of interruptions that continuously occur from the slow second-hand Wi-Fi connection I have. My day is interspersed with such interruptions...difficult for someone who likes to hyper-focus...but it teaches me to laugh at my restrictive habits and loosen up a bit and reminds me to play. Not play in terms of frivolity, but to play as an act of witnessing. An act of a deep and gorgeous love. I think as a non-indigenous researcher, squatting on unceded Lekwungen territory, one must have a kind of somber sense of irony with themselves. Without it we might succumb to a malaise or apathy so vast that passion is burned down to ash and extinguished by the torrent of arduous rigor and a nihilistic hopelessness.

On this note, I ask that the reader enter this discussion with a reflective thoughtfulness and a good dose of speculative possibility. You may find my work a bit contradictory and unclear in some respects. But I feel that for research to be meaningful we need to include error, contradiction, absurdity, and inconsistency. Irreconcilability and imagination are vital to the subject of non-indigenous solidarity with Indigenous nationhood and resurgence imperatives. Thus, even incommensurability such as the assertion that the colonizer cannot decolonize, can become catalysts to tangible decolonial change. I'm not hoping for a revolution with my work. I simply hope to tease out something which can act as a kind of humble *axis mundi* to the next scholar who comes along after me.

It is in this atmosphere that I have embarked on this project.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

*Capitalism's grow or die imperative stands radically at odds with ecologies imperative of interdependence and limit. The two imperatives can no longer coexist with each other—nor can any society founded on the myth that they can be reconciled hope to survive.*<sup>12</sup>

How can we shift the effects of the Anthropocene? This is the question that haunts me every time I hear about or experience extreme weather conditions, political violence, and social suffering around the world. Every time I hear about the construction of pipelines, tar sands, mining projects and hydroelectric dams. Every time I read reports of desolating impoverishment, homelessness, lack of potable drinking water, neglect, and illness among oppressed and marginalized communities my heart aches. I look around and see so many horrific things happening all over the world on so many levels.

Increasingly Indigenous peoples are criminalized for protecting their lands and waters. In 2016 the USA used militant police force against Indigenous land protectors who were blockading the construction of the Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL).<sup>13</sup> In 2017 and 2018 southern and northern BC, Canada and parts of the USA experienced horrific wild fires that exceeded past records.<sup>14</sup> On December 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 a record breaking windstorm was experienced in south west BC, leaving thousands without electricity for days.<sup>15</sup> Further, on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 the world witnessed *Kānaka Maoli* and allies in Hawai'i stand up to the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on the sacred summit of Mauna a Wākea.<sup>16</sup> On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, residents in BC Canada witnessed

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<sup>12</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview," *Green Perspectives. A Social Ecology Publication* no. 24, October (1991), accessed March 12, 2018, [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist\\_archives/bookchin/gp/perspectives24.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/bookchin/gp/perspectives24.html)

<sup>13</sup> "Dakota Access Pipeline," *The Congressional Digest*, vol. 95, no. 10, December 1, (2016): 12; Julia Carrie Wong, "Dakota Access Pipeline: 300 Protesters Injured after Police Use Water Cannons," *The Guardian* (2016), accessed June 18, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/21/dakota-access-pipeline-water-cannon-police-standing-rock-protest>

<sup>14</sup> BC Wildfire Service, *Wildfire Season Summary*, (2017), accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-history/wildfire-season-summary>; BC Wildfire Service. *Statistics & Geospatial Data*, (2018), accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-statistics>.

<sup>15</sup> "2018 Year in Review," *Crowsnest Pass Herald*, January 02, (2019) <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/2163188786?accountid=14846>

<sup>16</sup> Nikki Sanchez, "Mauna Kea: What It Is, Why It's Happening, and Why We Should All Be Paying Attention," *Intercontinental Cry*, August 12, (2019) accessed August 15, 2019 <https://intercontinentalcry.org/mauna-kea-what-it-is-why-its-happening-and-why-we-should-all-be-paying-attention/>

the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) forcefully and brutally arrest women, elders and men from a peaceful occupation of their own land at the Wet'suwet'en Access Point on Gidumt'en Territory. And in January of 2020, Gidimt'en Access Checkpoint was once again raided, igniting protests across Canada, mainly led by Indigenous youth. Highways were obstructed, railways blockaded, and youth were sleeping on Parliament steps and occupying parliamentary offices.<sup>17</sup>

These are but a few examples of ongoing systemic discrimination and colonial harm that have become all too familiar. While some Canadians seem indifferent, there are people from all walks of life who are working to make regenerative and encouraging changes. Much of this work is not in the news, in protest rallies or on social media. Rather, it is quiet work, done daily as a part of everyday acts.<sup>18</sup> This has come to form the centre of my current work.

But what are everyday acts? This study views everyday acts as defined in the book, *Every Day Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*.<sup>19</sup> They are described as the day-to-day way in which people break away from colonial structures and mentalities that, “often go unnoticed but are no less vital” to change making.<sup>20</sup> They are “critical sites

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attention/; For another Mauna Kea report please see: <http://www.mtv.com/news/3133883/hawaii-protests-mauna-kea-telescope/>

<sup>17</sup> Unist'ot'en Camp, “ACTION ALERT – International Call to Action for Gidimt'en Access Checkpoint,” *Unist'ot'en: Heal the People, Heal the Land*, (2019) accessed April 2, 2019, <https://unistoten.camp/action-alert-international-call-to-action-for-gidimten-access-checkpoint/>; January 2020 Wet'suwet'en Strong: <http://unistoten.camp/supportertoolkit/>

<sup>18</sup> Jeff Kanohalidoh Corntassel “Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination”, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, (2012):86-101; Jeff Corntassel and Mick Scow, “Everyday Acts of Resurgence: Indigenous Approaches to Everydayness in Fatherhood” *New Diversities*, vol,19, no. 2, (2017) [https://newdiversities.mmg.mpg.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017\\_19-02\\_05\\_Corntassel-Scow.pdf](https://newdiversities.mmg.mpg.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017_19-02_05_Corntassel-Scow.pdf); Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics,” *The Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, (2015):154-172.

<sup>19</sup> Jeff Kanohalidoh Corntassel, Gerald Tehaiá:iake Alfred, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Noenoe K. Silva, Hokulani Aikau, and Devi Mucina (Eds), *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*, (Olympia Washington: Day keeper Press, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics,” *The Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, (2015):154-172.

of relationship building.”<sup>21</sup> They can be enacted by everyone, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. They reflect our everyday lives, and shape how we engage with family, friends and community.<sup>22</sup> Everyday acts also shape our empathy, compassion, responsibility and accountability to Indigenous peoples, lands and waters. Every day acts might seem ordinary, like grocery shopping, clothes washing, house cleaning or childminding. Even the act of communicating with children at the kitchen table can be understood as an intergenerational act of decolonization, resurgence, or reconciliation.<sup>23</sup>

Everyday Acts can look like parenting and, “...witnessing from within intimate spaces of relationship as mother.”<sup>24</sup> For others it is about shared parenting with extended family and friends, the act of being Aunty or Uncle or Grandparent or Other Mothering and Other Fathering.<sup>25</sup> These small everyday acts are what build and sustain a revolution of change<sup>26</sup>. They are acts of love and care.<sup>27</sup> Everyday acts are also about relating to land in the ways of ancestors.<sup>28</sup> And even if one is non-Indigenous, it’s about relating to the land and possibly creating spaces for the resurgence of Indigenous land and water-based ways of being. This might be volunteering to remove invasive species,<sup>29</sup> participating in garden projects,<sup>30</sup> supporting the restoration of clam gardens<sup>31</sup> or witnessing resurgent

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<https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/assets/docs/admissions2018/Hunt%20and%20Holmes%20Everyday%20Decolonization.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization”

<sup>22</sup> Corntassel, et al. *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*.

<sup>23</sup> Jeff Corntassel and Mick Scow, “Everydayness in Fatherhood,”

<sup>24</sup> Natalie Clark, “Intimate Acts of Resurgence,” in *Everyday Acts*, 104).

<sup>25</sup> Devi Mucina, “Decolonizing Indigenous Fatherhood,” in *Everyday Acts*, 43).

<sup>26</sup> Mick Scow, “Relentlessly Coastal,” in *Everyday Acts*, 38)

<sup>27</sup> Erynne Gilpin, “From a Place of Love,” in *Everyday Acts*, 50).

<sup>28</sup> Nick Claxton, “The SXOLE (Reef Net Fishery) as an Everyday Act of Resurgence,” in *Everyday Acts*, 93

<sup>29</sup> Cheryl Bryce and Jeff Corntassel “Practicing Sustainable Self-Determination: Indigenous Approaches to Cultural Restoration and Revitalization,” [https://www.corntassel.net/sustainable\\_selfdetermination.pdf](https://www.corntassel.net/sustainable_selfdetermination.pdf) (2012)

<sup>30</sup> No’eau Peralto “Mālama‘ina Koholālele,” in *Everyday Acts*, 64

<sup>31</sup> Brad Coombes “Evading the Neo-colonial State Without Running to the Hills,” in *Everyday Acts*, 99

acts of land and water-based communication.<sup>32</sup> It can even look like walking.<sup>33</sup> These are small acts of defiant alignment and collaborative congruency. Engaging in and reflecting on these small acts are what I define as Active Witnessing. Settlers engaged in these acts are not trying to substantiate their presence on Indigenous land and negate, “their complicity, or potential complicity in colonization.”<sup>34</sup> The end goal of these acts is not gain for themselves. They are everyday acts of resurgence and reconciliation.

Reconciliation in this study is a verb that interrelates in tandem with resurgence as outlined in the book, *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-settler Relations and Earth Teachings*.<sup>35</sup> In the introduction, Anishinabek Legal Scholar John Borrows and Political Science Professor James Tully, state these terms are used in Canada as representing ideas related to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)<sup>36</sup>. Resurgence exemplifies, “Indigenous peoples exercising powers of self-determination” and points towards revitalization of Indigenous governance, law, language, economic and social self-reliance, and sustainable relations with ecosystems<sup>37</sup>. Reconciliation is a contested term and can represent several modalities from reparation and compensation to decolonial acts and ongoing relationships. Along these lines, Borrows and Tully identify two forms of reconciliation practices in Canada; one that perpetuates reconciling to the status-quo, and one that “...holds potential to transform the unjust relationships.”<sup>38</sup> This study embraces the latter with a focus on the more nuanced on-going everyday acts of reconciliation as a way to underscore, “robust practices enacted in nonviolent, contentious relationships of transformative reconciliation.”<sup>39</sup>

In this way, reconciliation does not mean recognition. It means that truth must precede reconciliation processes and go deeper than apologies and reparations, although

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<sup>32</sup> Maya L. Kawailanaokeawaiki Saffery, “Ua pā i ka leo,” in *Everyday Acts*, 112

<sup>33</sup> Senka Eriksen, “Fearless Regeneration,” in *Everyday Acts*, 74-75

<sup>34</sup> Snelgrove, Dahmoon and Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism,” 26

<sup>35</sup> John Borrows and James Tully “Introduction” *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-settler Relations and Earth Teachings*

<sup>36</sup> TRC, <http://www.trc.ca>

<sup>37</sup> Borrows and Tully, Intro, *Resurgence and Reconciliation*

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

it does not dismiss this at all. It most certainly asks settlers to demand Canadian governments engage in honest accountability, transparency and, “massive restitution, including land, financial transfers, and other forms of assistance to compensate for past harms and continuing injustices...”<sup>40</sup> Notwithstanding, reconciliation also requires deep emotional work of self-awareness, commitment to changes and purposeful action. We must ask difficult questions like: How do non-indigenous people see reconciliation applying to their individual lives? What is the non-indigenous individual’s personal role, responsibility, and accountability to reconciliation? Pathways to real change in terms of reconciliation depend on settlers following the appropriate route. In the context of coexistence this means transformative reconciliation needs to empower, and be empowered by, vigorous practices of resurgence that can, “...infuse reciprocal practices of reconciliation in self-determining, self-sustaining, intergenerational ways”<sup>41</sup> The path of reconciliation holds transformative potential over time, space, and situation. It holds this for all participants.

To begin reconciliation practices in a deep and meaningful way requires rebuilding trust by exhibiting trustworthy acts. It means hearing each other’s stories, getting to know each other’s humanity and taking concrete action to show that the relationships will be different.<sup>42</sup> For the settler reconciliation includes, “...restorying settler colonial narratives and assertions of what reality is and finding our own truths that align us with Indigenous Nationhood.”<sup>43</sup> No matter the situation, if we are to heal and move towards reconciliation, “the decisions of our ancestors are now our responsibility.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, reconciliation means a move towards an equitable and balanced coexistence. Mi’kmaw Scholar Marie Battiste emphasizes that we should view Indigenous and non-indigenous not as oppositional but as complimentary.<sup>45</sup> We need to

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<sup>40</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse*, (University of Toronto Press, 2005); Jeff Corntassel and Cindy Holder, “Who’s Sorry Now? Government Apologies, Truth Commissions, and Indigenous Self-Determination in Australia, Canada, Guatemala, and Peru” *Human Rights Review*, <http://www.corntassel.net/CorntasselHolder.pdf> 2008

<sup>41</sup> Borrows and Tully, Intro, *Resurgence and Reconciliation*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Eriksen, *Fearless, Everyday Acts*, 76

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, (Vancouver: UBC Press 2013)

find congruency that does not interfere but engages in meaningful ways. Mi'kmaw Elders, Murdena and Albert Marshal refer to *etuaptmumk*, or two-eyed seeing, describing the appreciation of two perspectives providing wider vision and greater imagining for co-existence and knowledge sharing.<sup>46</sup> This is in line with Borrows and his understanding of *kaswentha* or the Two Row wampum belt.<sup>47</sup> It is made up of two rows of purple beads on a bed of white beads, with each row representing independent paths of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The space between them is a location of interdependence, of friendship, peace and respect.<sup>48</sup> As well, Cree Educator Willie Ermine speaks of spaces of engagement that can offer "...a venue to step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur."<sup>49</sup>

Along these lines, Cree Academic, Karen Recollet suggests 'spatial tagging' holds potential "for new ways of thinking about the processes of solidarity building, social activism and the generation of new pedagogical practices of resistance".<sup>50</sup> Métis scholar Margaret Kress extols principles of *pimitwism*, the good life, and *kananayhitowin*, care and gentle teaching<sup>51</sup>. Tslagi Professor, Jeff Corntassel speaks of *tohi*, which is "a process of balance and according to the pace of the natural world", *gadugi*, "which is a spirit of community camaraderie where no one person is left alone to climb out of a life endeavor," and living in a 'longer now'<sup>52</sup> Ubuntu Author and Academic, Devi Dee

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<sup>46</sup> Murdena and Albert Marshal, "Two-eyed Seeing and Other Lessons Learned within a co-learning Journey of Bringing Together Indigenous and Mainstream Knowledge and ways of knowing," *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* (2012) no. 2, vol. 4  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257804329\\_Two-Eyed\\_Seeing\\_and\\_other\\_lessons\\_learned\\_within\\_a\\_co-learning\\_journey\\_of\\_bringing\\_together\\_indigenous\\_and\\_mainstream\\_knowledges\\_and\\_ways\\_of\\_knowing](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257804329_Two-Eyed_Seeing_and_other_lessons_learned_within_a_co-learning_journey_of_bringing_together_indigenous_and_mainstream_knowledges_and_ways_of_knowing)

<sup>47</sup> John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, (University of Toronto Press, 2010): 76

<sup>48</sup> Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous*, 76

<sup>49</sup> Willie Ermine, Ethical Space of Engagement, *Indigenous Law Journal*, (2007), vol. 6, no. 1, 202,  
<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/ilj/article/view/27669/20400>

<sup>50</sup> Karyn Recollet, "Glyphing decolonial love through urban flash mobbing and Walking with our Sisters" Taylor Francis online Publishing, (2015) vol. 45, Is. 1

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Kress, Reclaiming Disability through *Pimatisiwin*: Indigenous Ethics, Spatial Justice, and Gentle Teaching. *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education*. (May, 2017). 9: 23-57

<sup>52</sup> Jeff Kanohalidoh Corntassel, "Re-envisioning resurgence" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society*: 86-101

Mucina speaks about how, “the Indigenous worldsense of Ubuntu centers relational reciprocal engagement in the web of life”.<sup>53</sup> Nuu-cha-nulth Scholar Umeek Richard Atleo offers *tsawalk* meaning ‘one’, indicating “that all living beings are reciprocally interdependent.”<sup>54</sup> Tully suggests that, “the basis for such shared relationships of reconciliation are available to us here and now.”<sup>55</sup> And Margaret Kovach asserts, real change demands a “move beyond binaries found within Indigenous-settler relations to construct new formation of dialogue, research, theory and action.”<sup>56</sup> These interrelational spatial concepts inform us that there is ample room for coexistent modalities that can foster both independence and interdependence.

To this end, this research asks:

1. What do every-day acts of Active Witnessing look like in a reconciliatory context and how are they enacted?
2. How do non-indigenous people see reconciliation applying to their individual lives?
3. What is the non-indigenous individual’s personal role, responsibility and accountability to reconciliation?

To begin looking towards some answers, this study attempts to look for alterity in the ontological ways settlers might re-view themselves, their own structures and explore alternative understandings regarding emergent possibility, solidarity, accountability and reconciliation. It does this by highlighting the concept of Active Witnessing as a form of reflexive everyday reconciliatory action that can be engaged in to accelerate and support decolonization and resurgence alongside structural, institutional and systemic demands for change. Although like Everyday Acts of resurgence in terms of combining life experience, education/knowledge, critical examination of ontological preconception or systemic discriminations, Active Witnessing engages in self-reflexivity and discrete purposeful acts ranging from resistance and defiance to alterity, collaboration and

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<sup>53</sup> Devi Mucina, *Ubuntu Relational Love: Decolonizing Black Masculinities*, (University of Manitoba Press, 2019)

<sup>54</sup> Richard Umeek Atleo, *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005)

<sup>55</sup> James Tully, “Reconciliation Here on Earth,” *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*. Eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows and James Tully, (TO: University of Toronto Press, 2018): 83

<sup>56</sup> Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, Contexts*. (TO: University of Toronto Press, 2009):12

intimate accessibility regardless of extant barriers, as a form of anarchic resurgent solidarity.

Here the term anarchic does not indicate pandemonium, chaos, or extreme individualism. It suggests a deeper investigation of the definition: an/absence and archy/rule. So, an absence of rule/authority. This does not mean an absence of order, compassion, mutual-aid and care. In this way, it can be useful to critically examine where one's notions of authority are emanating from. It can compel us to assess one's privilege and find ways to channel this toward equity, capacity building and space making for Indigenous Resurgence. We can begin to do this by looking for small ways in which to move around, under, over and sometimes straight through colonial obstacles. And it means understanding one's agency to choose to enact change. Further, the term 'resurgent solidarity' is used to indicate that to be in solidarity with Indigenous peoples it is incumbent upon settlers to co-resurge. To dismantle settler colonial structure and create new ways of being and organizing society that are conducive to robust Indigenous self-determination.

Active Witnessing means honouring one's own truth<sup>57</sup> through introspective inquiry and story-weaving that underscore, "crucial moments of representational challenges."<sup>58</sup> Conversely, it can mean doing without needing to call attention. So, facilitating while keeping off to the side or in the background to offer accessibility, information, or give a strong platform for Indigenous voices<sup>59</sup>. It is examining our motives and asking; "are there strings attached to our stepping aside?"<sup>60</sup> In this way, it is about becoming accountable to how we think about inequity, socio-economic disparity, systemic injustice, land rights and environmental racism among other things.

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<sup>57</sup> Lynn Gehl, *Claiming Anishinaabe: Decolonizing the Human Spirit*. (SK: University of Regina Press, 2017)

<sup>58</sup> Julie Vaudrin-Charette, "Melting the Cultural Iceberg in Indigenizing Higher Education: Shifts to Accountability in Times of Reconciliation," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*. Vo.2019. Is. 157, 2019: 105-118.

<sup>59</sup> Vaudrin-Charette. "Melting the Cultural" 105-118

<sup>60</sup> Tracey Lindberg, "On Indigenous Academia." *Revisiting The Great White North*, Ed. by Darren E. Lund, (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Springer, 2015): 71-87

The reason for creating a term like Active Witnessing has to do with the settler's location of accountability within decolonization processes and reconciliation praxis. Tunisian/Jewish Anticolonial Theorist Albert Memmi's presents a colonial paradox wherein the colonizer must refuse or accept their position. Either way, they remain colonizers and complicit in colonial violence. Thus, the colonizer cannot decolonize<sup>61</sup>. If this is true, then how can the colonizer challenge colonization? Memmi asserts that for the colonized revolt is the only way out of the colonial situation. As such, a break from colonization must occur as an uncompromising and radical shift within the minds, epistemologies and ontologies of the colonized.<sup>62</sup> Intrinsically, if the futurity of coexistence is to be considered, the challenge to the colonizer is to also make an absolute break from colonialism. For Memmi, this would entail the colonizer leaving the colony. However, this is not fully conceivable in the case of settler colonialism. Australian Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism states,

the primary object of settler colonization is the land itself rather than the surplus value to be derived from mixing native labour with it. Though in practice indigenous labour was indispensable to Europeans, settler colonization is at base a winner takes all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement. The logic of this project, a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the indigenous population, informs a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct—invasion is a structure, not an event.<sup>63</sup>

This is the definition this research uses. As such, the term 'settler' is applied to those individuals and groups who overtly or covertly uphold, pursue and perpetuate settler colonialism and who are descended from settler colonists, continuing to benefit from and purvey settler colonial structures, systems and institutions. For this discussion, the term settler does not include refugees, individuals or groups fleeing oppression, or those who were or are displaced through forced enslavement or trafficking. The reason I do not include these groups of people under the umbrella term settler is because systemic racism in Canada is embedded within settler colonial structure. Further, there are deeply intersecting and complex historical nuances embedded with various communities and

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<sup>61</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991):19-44

<sup>62</sup> Memmi, *The Colonized*, 19-44

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, (NY: Cassel, 1999): 163

groups of people that I cannot address or unpack in a comprehensively deep or rich way within the scope of this dissertation or via my own limited location and perspective.

Furthermore, in relation to settlers, three terms that often arise are privilege, white or whiteness and white supremacy. Privilege in this paper is defined as an “unearned asset or benefit received by virtue of being born with a particular characteristic or into a particular class.”<sup>64</sup> White refers to a set of assumptions, beliefs, and practices that place the interests and perspectives of white settler people at the center of what is considered normal and everyday.<sup>65</sup> White supremacy refers to the operation of the often subtle and extensive forces that saturate the everyday mundane actions and policies that shape the world in the interests of white people.<sup>66</sup> Significantly, within the collectivity of settlers there are differences in terms of the benefits whiteness confers.<sup>67</sup> The interests of poor working-class and marginalized white settlers is generally forgone in the name of protecting the racial privilege of upper-class settlers.

The intersection of race with identity categories such as gender, class and sexual orientation is related to the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality as a term was first introduced by Feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.<sup>68</sup> The concept was developed by Black Feminists in the 1970s and 80s who contended that Black women’s lives were affected not only by sexism but also racism, colonialism and capitalism, which in turn impacts how sexism and patriarchy are experienced.<sup>69</sup> This challenged mainstream white feminism to shift how they understand how being a woman intersects with being Black and working class and this has now expanded to Indigenous and other marginalized populations.

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<sup>64</sup> Tonette Rocco & G. Wayne West, “Deconstructing Privilege: An examination of Privilege in Adult Education”, (1998): 173

<sup>65</sup> Dave Gillborn, “Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory and the Primacy of Racism: Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in Education” *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 21, no 3. (2015): 277-287

<sup>66</sup> Gillborn, Intersectionality, 278

<sup>67</sup> Camill Geer Rich, “Marginal Whiteness” *California Law review*, vol.98, no.5 (2010):1503-1504.

<sup>68</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Colour, *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241-1299.

<sup>69</sup> Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins”, 1241-1299.

Regarding Memmi, we might ask, how can the settler make a break with settler colonialism? Is it possible? Is it possible? At first blush it really does seem like an insurmountable undertaking. Settler colonial structures are fractal, with specific patterns repeating outward into macrocosmic configurations of global enterprise and reflecting inward into the microcosmic makeup of the self and being. This is where everydayness and everyday acts of accountable reconciliation in the form of Active Witnessing can become transformative. To begin exploring ways in which to answer the question of how to break from settler colonialism, this study needed a firm theoretical foundation that would inform critical analysis and from which new ideas can emerge.

### **Critical Disability Theory (CDT)**

Since I am a person with disability, I felt Critical Disability Theory (CDT) would be the best fit for this research. While this dissertation cannot encompass the wide swath of CDT perspectives or the multitude of illuminating scholars who have forged foundations and enriched its capacity it can offer an incomplete intellectual ancestry to CDT and three main convergences, Crip-Theory, Dis-Crit and Post-Colonial/Decolonial Disability Theory, the latter being the convergence this paper engages with.

CDT is an emancipatory and emergent discourse.<sup>70</sup> It scrutinizes norms and normative ideologies that create a society in which disablement occurs. Furthermore, Critical Disability Theory is an interdisciplinary and multivariate approach.<sup>71</sup> It interrogates social norms that define bodies as abled or dis-abled as well as the conditions that segregate, oppress, and contain stigmatized and stereotyped embodiment.<sup>72</sup> As a concept, CDT has roots in the Marxist Frankfurt School with an intellectual ancestry rooted in Adorno, Habermas, Horkheimer, and Marcuse.<sup>73</sup> As an interdisciplinary

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<sup>70</sup> Dan Goodley, Rebecca Lawthom, Kirsty Liddiard, and Katherine Runswick Cole, “Critical Disability Studies”, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Social Psychology*, Brendan Gough (ed.), (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 491–505

<sup>71</sup> Goodley, Lawthom, Liddiard, Cole, “Critical Disability,” 491-505

<sup>72</sup> Sami Schalk, “Critical Disability Studies as Methodology”, *Lateral*, vol. 6, no. 1, (2017)

<sup>73</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag. E. B. Ashton (trans.), (London: Routledge, 1973); Jane Braaten, *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society*, State University of New York Press, 1991; Max Horkheimer, Max, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, Matthew J. O’Connell and others

approach CDT flows outward converging with Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Indigenous Theory, Post-colonial Theory and Decolonial Theory.<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, it draws on French Philosopher Michel Foucault's post structuralist and humanistic work as can be seen in the work of scholars such as Shelly Tremain, Licia Carlson, Nirmala Erevelles, Aimi Hamraie, Joshua St. Pierre, and Marilou Gagnon, among numerous others.<sup>75</sup> In addition, it draws on embodiment and phenomenology, rooted in various works by Martin Heidegger, Søren Kierkegaard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Paul Sartre, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Havi Carel and Kevin Aho.<sup>76</sup> It further values Life Writing, reflexivity, mindfulness and ethics of care as seen works by Susannah Mintz, Rosi Braidotti, Kelly Fritsch and Griet Roets, among many more.<sup>77</sup>

Crip theory interweaves Disability Studies and Queer Theory to examine new ways to understand how disability interrelates with identity and embodiment.<sup>78</sup> Notable contributors include Lydia X Z Brown, Eli Clare, Kelly Fritsch, Rosemarie Garland-

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(trans.), (New York: Continuum, 1972); John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb, eds., *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, (New York, London: Routledge, 2004)

<sup>74</sup> Goodly, Lawthom, Liddiard, Cole, "Critical Disability," 491-505

<sup>75</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*, (New York: Picador, 2006); Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, (London: Routledge, 2006); Shelly Tremain, "Field Notes on the Naturalization and Denaturalization of Disability in (Feminist) Philosophy: What they do and how they do it," (*Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, (2020); Licia Carlson, *The Faces of Intellectual Disability*, (Indiana University Press, 2009); Nirmala Erevelles, "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, (2010): 127-146; Aimi Hamraie, "Universal Design Research as a New Materialist Practice," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol.32, no. 4, (2012); Joshua St. Pierre, "Distending Straight-masculine Time: A Phenomenology of the Disabled Speaking Body," *Hypatia*, vol.30, no. 1, (2015): 49-65; Marilou Gagnon and E Manning, "The Complex Patient: A Concept Clarification," *Nursing and Health Sciences*, vol.19, no. 1, (2017): 13-21.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, (SUNY Press, 2010); Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, (Sart Publishing, 2012); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (Routledge 2012); Jean Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, (New Directions, 2013); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Havi Carel, *Phenomenology of Illness*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Kevin Aho. *Body Matters: A Phenomenology of Sickness, Disease and Illness*, (NY: Lexington Books, 2008)

<sup>77</sup> Susannah Mintz, *Unruly Bodies: Life Writing by Women with Disabilities*, (NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, (Polity Press, 2013); Kelly Fritsch, "Desiring Disability Differently: Neoliberalism, Heterotopic Imagination and Intra-corporeal Reconfigurations," *Foucault Studies*, 2015: 43-66; and Griet Roets and Dan Goodley, "Disability Citizenship and Uncivilized Society: The Smooth and Nomadic Qualities of Self-advocacy," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol.28, no.4, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Sami Schalk, "Coming to Claim Crip: Disidentification with/in Disability," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol.10, no. 1, 2013

Thomson, Michelle Jarman, and Alison Kafer among others<sup>79</sup>. Sexism and ableism are deeply discriminatory and rely on normative categorizations like abled/disabled, and male/female. Crip-Theory problematizes dichotomies and binaries and seeks new ways to enact diversity and multiplicity.<sup>80</sup> It understands the disabled individual as embodying dynamic identities and lived experiences.

Likewise, Dis-Crit (Disability and Critical Race Theory) reveals interconnections between Disability Theory and Critical Race Theory.<sup>81</sup> It is deeply rooted in Critical Race Feminism and Activism building on scholars such as Anna Julia Cooper, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Sojourner Truth.<sup>82</sup> Racism and ableism are interactive and co-oppressive. They are interrelated and require intersectional analysis.<sup>83</sup> Like Crip-Theory, Dis-Crit examines and interrogates multiple, intersecting power relationships that affect whole persons through pathologizing, stigma, and exclusion. Both interrogate categorical notions of both disability and ability.

Post-Colonial/Decolonial Theoretical scholars such as Helen Meekosha, Shaun Grech, and Fiona Kumari Campbell scrutinize western Disability Studies, engaging in implicit critique and noting that this silences the majority of disabled people who live in

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<sup>79</sup> Lydia X Z Brown, E Ashkenazy and MG Onaiwu, *All the Weight of Our Dreams*, (DragonBee Press, 2017); Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*, (Durnham: Duke University Press, 2017); Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “The Story of my Work: How I Became Disabled,” *Growing Disability Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2, (2014); Michelle Jarman, “Coming up from Underground: Uneasy Dialogues at the Intersections of Race, Mental Illness and Disability Studies,” *Blackness and Disability, Development and Education*, vol. 65, no.3, (2018): 286-303; Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer Crip*, (Indiana University Press, 2013)

<sup>80</sup> Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, (NY: New York University Press, 2006)

<sup>81</sup> Subini Annamma, Beth Ferri, and David Connor, “Disability Critical Race Theory: Exploring the Intersettional Lineage, Emergence and Potential Futures of DisCrit in Education,” *Sage Journals*, (2018): 47

<sup>82</sup> Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, (Xenia, Ohio: The Aldine Printing House, 1892); Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241–1299; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York: Routledge, 2002); Angela Davis, *Woman Race and Class*, (NY: Vintage Books Edition, 1981); bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*, (William Morrow and Company, 2000); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, (Crossing Press, 2007); Sojourner Truth, *Ain't I a Woman?*, (UK: Penguin Books, 2020)

<sup>83</sup> Annamma, Ferri and Connor, “Disability”

the Global South.<sup>84</sup> Further, Decolonial Disability Theory holds an Indigenous and often culturally contextual lineage.<sup>85</sup> These are rooted in the work of Indigenous scholars such as Margaret Kress, Huhana Hicky, Lavonna Lovern and Devi Mucina. And more recently in their Academic work, Nicole Ineese-Nash and Wyatt Shiefelbein.<sup>86</sup>

Significantly, Post-colonial/Decolonial Disability Theory deals with the tangled impacts of colonization and settler colonial structures. It also confronts minimization of disability within community and the concerns of many Indigenous peoples about identifying as disabled as doing so can further oppress.<sup>87</sup> As well, Brayboy introduces the term “TribalCrit”, which complements Critical Race Theory and describes the racialization of Indigenous peoples in the USA. TribalCrit provides a framework to help explain the lived experiences, traditions, and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples by addressing Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination and confronting continued colonization and oppression.<sup>88</sup>

CDT is a capacious foundation in which research about settler colonial studies and reconciliation praxis can find generative traction.<sup>89</sup> Rather than scrutinizing body or

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<sup>84</sup> Karen Soldatic and Shaun Grech, *Disability and Colonialism: (Dis)encounters and Anxious Intersectionalities*, (NY: Routledge, 2016); Fiona Kumari Campbell, *The Contours of Ableism*, Palgrave & MacMillan, (2008).

<sup>85</sup> Subini Annamma, Beth Ferri and David Connor, *DisCrit Expanded: Reverberations Ruptures and Inquiries*, (NY: Teachers College Press, 2022)

<sup>86</sup> Margaret Kress, “Reclaiming Disability through *Pimatisiwin*: Indigenous Ethics, Spatial Justice, and Gentle Teaching” *Ethics Equity and Inclusive Education*, (May 10, 2017):23-57; Huhana Hicky and D L Wilson, “Whānau Hauā: Reframing Disability from an Indigenous Perspective,” *Mai Journal*, vol. 6, iss. 1, (2017):82-94; Lavonna Lovern, “Native American Worldview and the Discourse on Disability,” *Essays in Philosophy*, vol. 9, no. 1, (2008); Devi Mucina, *Ubuntu Relational Love: Decolonizing Balck Masculinities*, (University of Manitoba Press, 2019); Nicole Ineese-Nash, “Disability as a Colonial Construct: The Missing Discourse of Culture in Conceptualizations of Disabled Indigenous Children” *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, (2020); Wyatt Shiefelbein, “Learning Disabilities and Methodologies of Harm: Indigeneity, Pathologization, and Ambiguity in the Psychological Disciplines” *MA Thesis*, (University of Alberta, Canada, 2020)

<sup>87</sup> Devi Mucina, “Ubuntu: A Regenerative Philosophy for Rupturing Racist Colonial Stories of Dispossession,” *PhD Thesis* (University of Toronto, Canada, 2011)

<sup>88</sup> Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, “Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education,” *The Urban Review*, vol. 57, no. 5, (March 14, 2006): 425-446

<sup>89</sup> Sami Schalk, “Coming to Claim Crip: Disidentification With/in Disability Studies,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2013): no page, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3705>; Julie Avril Minich, “Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now,” *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016), <http://csalateral.org/wp/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-now-minich/>.

mental impairments it interrogates social norms that define particular impairments as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations.<sup>90</sup> Significantly, CDT critically analyses oppressive phenomena such as heteropatriarchy, sexism, ableism, classism and provides a nuanced approach to vulnerability and power. It also reconnects analysis itself to the body, radicalizing wonderment, mindfulness, and care.<sup>91</sup> In this way, it offers a unique perspective with attention to hierarchies of capability that deepen understandings of ableism.

One of the most startling statements concerning Ableism and intersecting components of systemic racism in Canada is a statement in the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP):

As far as Aboriginal people with disabilities [are concerned] ... we are less recognized and the most violated against by both races, both sexes, and both communities. We are raped by disabled men; we are raped by disabled women; we are raped by Aboriginal women; we are raped by Aboriginal men; we are raped by white women; we are raped by white men. And believe you me we have been raped by our medical attendants, doctors, nurses, occupational therapists — you name it, we've had it. We know what it is like to be down low, but for God's sake, you don't have to keep us there either.<sup>92</sup>

This statement presents grave realities. It embodies the severe actuality many Indigenous peoples with disability experience. Cycles of systemic abuse, oppression, racism, disrespect, and disregard that lay foundations during early settler colonialism remain embedded systemically. Indigenous based racism permeates Canadian state neglect through intergenerational poverty, lack of potable water, inadequate housing, limited mental health resources, isolation, exploitation of Indigenous lands as well as systemic discrimination via RCMP, hospitals, schools, government offices and other institutions. As Kress asserts, for systemic change to occur today, the devaluing of

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<sup>90</sup> Schalk, "Coming to Claim,"; Julie Avril Minich, "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now", *Lateral*, vo. 5, no. 1, (2016) . doi:10.25158/L5.1.9

<sup>91</sup> B. Misztal, (2011). *The Challenges of Vulnerability: In Search of Strategies for a Less Vulnerable Social Life*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Margaret Fineman, "The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, No. 20, (2008): 1-23.

<sup>92</sup> (J. Johnny, November 18, 1992 as cited in RCAP, 1996d: 56 [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/aj-ja/rr06\\_vic1/p7.html](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/aj-ja/rr06_vic1/p7.html)

Indigenous bodies and spaces must be heavily disrupted.<sup>93</sup> Decolonial CDT can interrogate and disrupt systemic racism and discrimination by critically examining, truthfully confronting and problematizing settler colonial structures that produce and perpetuate not only disablement, but also the violence directed towards those who experience disablement. In turn, a shift can occur creating, “space for positive Indigenous ontology to take hold while dismantling the colonized projection of disability and the shielding of normality.”<sup>94</sup> Such a shift holds potential to further problematize ableism.

Fiona Kumari Campbell defines ableism as,

A system of causal relations about the order of life that produces processes and systems of entitlement and exclusion. This causality fosters conditions of microaggressions, internalized ableism and in their jostling notions of (un)encumbrance. A system of dividing practices ableism institutes the reification and classification of populations. Ableist systems involve the differentiation, ranking, negation, notification and prioritization of sentient life.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, she stipulates, “ableism is not just a matter of ignorance or negative attitudes...it is a trajectory of perfection, a deep way of thinking about bodies, wholeness, permeability and how certain clusters of people are enabled via valued entitlements”. Hence, it functions to, “inaugurate the norm.”<sup>96</sup> Further to this, Mucina injects an interwoven Indigenous informed perspective. He posits that colonial structures regulate normalcy and that these are inevitably internalized and perpetuated through discriminatory gatekeeping. In this way, Mucina suggests regular self-reflection to check if our “individual actions are maintaining the status quo and if they are helping to dismantle the status quo we should know how so we can share this knowledge.”<sup>97</sup> This means it is incumbent on researchers to critically reflect on our work and be accountable for both negative and positive outcomes.

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<sup>93</sup> Margaret Kress Reclaiming Disability Through Pimatisiwin: Indigenous Ethics, Spatial Justice and Gentle Teaching, Agnes Gajewski (Ed.), *Ethics, Equity and Inclusive Education*, Emerald Group Publishing, (May 11, 2017): 28

<sup>94</sup> Kress, Reclaiming, 33

<sup>95</sup> Fiona Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Abledness*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 5.

<sup>96</sup> Campbell, *Contours of Ableism*, 205.

<sup>97</sup> Devi Mucina, “We exist because They exist”

Like Mucina, Scholars Laura Jaffee and Kelsey John assert in their essay, *Disabling Bodies of/and Land: Reframing Disability Justice in Conversation with Indigenous Theory and Activism*, that CDT cannot be effective without being informed by Indigenous worldviews and Decolonial Theory. This is because the anthropocentric destruction of ecology and environment via settler colonial practices is “inextricable from the disablement of Indigenous ontology.”<sup>98</sup> Reframing Disability Justice as a Decolonial Critical Disability Theory directly addresses the, “enmeshment of disability oppression with white supremacy, imperialism and settler colonialism.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, a decolonial informed Critical Disability Theory illuminates ways in which settler colonial practices inscribe a disablement of the Earth through land theft, resource extraction and environmental degradation that is inextricable from the disablement of Indigenous ontologies, cultures, languages, knowledges, bodies and communities<sup>100</sup>.

Emphasizing CDT in the context of decolonization, and informed by Indigenous ontologies, underscores the impact of colonial occupation, structuring, and dispossession that produces disablement among Indigenous peoples in ways that are distinctly different from non-indigenous peoples<sup>101</sup>. The ongoing theft, destruction and exploitation of Indigenous land are devastating for Indigenous lifeways but foundational to capitalistic settler colonial lifeways. Jaffee and John suggest that this aspect of disablement experienced by Indigenous peoples, communities and nations is the root of what must be addressed, a concept shared by many Indigenous scholars such as Charlotte Loppie, John Borrows, Val Napoleon, Michael Chandler, William Dunlop, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Henrietta Mann, Paula Gunn Allen and more. For Indigenous peoples, the body, mind, emotion and spirit are enmeshed in the land, ecology, environment in ways that enable their languages, cultures, worldviews and lifeways.<sup>102</sup> Severing and

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<sup>98</sup> Laura Jaffee and Kelsy John, “Disabling bodies of/and land: Reframing disability justice in conversation with indigenous theory and activism” *Disability and the Global South*, (2018) vol.5, no. 2: 1407

<sup>99</sup> Jaffee and John. “Disabling Bodies” 1407

<sup>100</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling Bodies” paraphrased: 1407

<sup>101</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling Bodies” 1410-1142

<sup>102</sup> See for example: Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. (Arbiter Ring Publishing, 2011); Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*, (2004)

preventing this relationship is disablement.<sup>103</sup> Too few non-indigenous CDT scholars examine this, and I would venture that there is even less within Settler Colonial Studies. Not including a robust examination of the settler colonial context in terms of CDT renders it bound up with settler colonialism<sup>104</sup>. It narrows and restricts how disability is read and omits land disablement. To dismantle ableism means to dismantle settler colonial structures<sup>105</sup>. Reconciliation is achievable when accountability is trusted, land is rejuvenated, and Indigenous territories are returned to Indigenous communities.

In attempting to understanding this, I have endeavored to examine some of the settler colonially driven transmogrified ontologies as foundational to the structuring of everyday settler colonial ways of being.<sup>106</sup> For this study the term ‘transmogrified’ is defined as a grotesque and illogical transformation. An example of this in the context of settler colonialism can be seen in Social Darwinism, a concept formed in the late 1800s early 1900s to justify specific social, political and economic views. Arising from Charles Darwin’s notion of “survival of the fittest”, Social Darwinism (as coined by British Scientist Herbert Spencer in 1864) as ‘proof’ that certain people are innately better than others. In this way, it was used to further imperialism, racism, social inequity and eugenics<sup>107</sup>. In this transmogrified form, Euro-centric evolutionary ontology was promoted as superior to Indigenous ontologies and used to justify settler colonization

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<sup>103</sup> Maureen Lux, Jaffee and John, “Disabling Bodies”; Incese-Nash

<sup>104</sup> Maureen Lux, “Perfect Subjects: Race Tuberculosis, and the Qu’ Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial” *CBMH/BCHM*, (1998) vol. 15: 277-95.

<sup>105</sup> Helen Meekosha and Karen Soldatic, “Human Rights and the Global South: the case of disability,” *Third World Quarterly*, (2011) vol.32, no. 8: 1383-1397

<sup>106</sup> Nikki Sullivan, “Transmogrification: (Un)Becoming Other(s)” *The Transgender Studies Reader*, (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2006): 552-64. I first encountered the word transmogrification in this essay as well as in the work of Gayle Salamon, “Phenomenology,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, vol. 1, 1-2 (NY: Duke University Press, 2014): 153-155 and *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*, (NY: Columbia University Press, 2010). Transmogrification is defined as changed, transformed in a way that is absurd and/or grotesque. This transformation can be subtle or obvious, covert or overt. Transmogrification is not in of itself negative. It can result in imaginative and transformative shifts.

<sup>107</sup> Maurice E. Stucke. *Better Competition Advocacy*. Herbert Spencer in his *Principles of Biology* of 1864, vol. 1, p. 444, wrote "This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection', or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life." Eugenics is a term coined by Francis Galton, A cousin of Charles Darwin.

processes and to legitimize systemic racism/ableism and the methodical abuse, neglect, starvation and genocide of Indigenous peoples.

‘Ontology’ is often understood to be a philosophical term describing the study of what is, or of being. Developing ontology entails processes of defining categories, data sets and specific structural aspects. In this way, “ontologies define a common vocabulary enabling the capture, proceeding, reuse and communication for domain knowledge.”<sup>108</sup> However, there are even deeper and richer definitions of ontology developed by Indigenous scholars. An example of this is *Quandamooka* Ontology, a relational way of knowing that is similar to those put forth by Indigenous scholars such as, Kovach, Shawn Wilson, Richard Umek Atleo, Linda Smith and Marie Battiste.<sup>109</sup> The foregrounding of Indigenous ontologies confronts the status quo and embedded structural inequities rift in settler colonial society by challenging how knowledge is produced, disseminated and consumed. It directly challenges objective universalism, provoking deeper thought about reality/realities<sup>110</sup>.

Furthermore, it acknowledges relationality and is grounded in an understanding that reality is based on relationships. It is not simply that every entity is interrelated but that everything is the actual relationship. This includes family, place, ancestors, ideas and so on. These are not separate from beingness<sup>111</sup>. Australian scholars Karen Martin and Booran Mirraboopa insist that it is crucial ontology be addressed in scholarship. This is because, “it is through ontology that we develop an awareness and a sense of self, of belonging and for coming to know our responsibilities and ways to relate to self and to others.”<sup>112</sup> By developing *Quandamooka* Ontology the authors draw on the realities of the multiplicity of Indigenous worldviews. Moreover, *Quandamooka* Ontology insists

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<sup>108</sup> Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel Wildcat. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, (Fulcrum Pub. 2001); What is Ontology? IGI Global: Publisher of Timely Knowledge, (2021) <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/ontology/21117>

<sup>109</sup> Karen Martin and Booran Mirraboopa, “Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous and Indigenist re-search,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, 2009, vol. 27, Is. 76: 203-214.

<sup>110</sup> John Borrows, *Drawing Out Law: A Spirits Guide*, (TO: University of Toronto Press, 2010)

<sup>111</sup> Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*.

<sup>112</sup> Martin and Mirraboopa “Ways of knowing” 203-214

that humans are not the only people, thus it is not anthropocentric. Instead, land is people, water is people, plants, sky, climate ideas, all are also people. No one entity is raised above any other. In this way, humans are no more and no less significant than animals, pebbles, trees, or wind.

Significantly, *Quandamooka* Ontology is a contextual Indigenous ontology and is intended for Indigenous researcher's use. Yet it noticeably enriches and deepens all research methodology, method and understanding. To not take this into account as a non-Indigenous researcher can serve to maintain hierarchies that exist within academia. As such, to respect both independent and interdependent facets of research, I have tried to find congruent knowledges that can meld together with Indigenous knowledges in ways that do not appropriate or exploit but rather, as suggested by Battiste, complement each other.<sup>113</sup> To explore I briefly cover concepts that inform and shape how I understand this project including Phenomenology, Agential Realism and Object Orientated Ontology (OOO). On this note, this research gently embraces Nia Emmanouil's notion of "ontological openness" as a "willingness to stay open to different ways of knowing".<sup>114</sup> An ontologically open approach allows for incommensurability in the form of "multiple realities" as ontological pluralism.<sup>115</sup> This often becomes much more evident in the process of narrative, discourse or oral storytelling.

In this regard, Jaffee and John offer three areas of convergence between CDT and Decolonial Disability Justice. These are: 1) Eugenic logic of elimination: change cannot rest on ideology. It must include altering socioeconomic structures of settler colonialism. 2) Self-determination and sovereignty as a location of solidarity offering political frameworks for efficient mobilization. 3) Imagining alternative futures that refuse ableist settler projected futures devoid of disability and Indigeneity. And I have added number 4) CDT informed everyday acts of accountable reconciliation as a form of Active

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<sup>113</sup> Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the learning spirit*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013)

<sup>114</sup> Nai Emmanouil, Ontological Openness on the Lurujarri Dreaming Trail: A Methodology for Decolonizing Research, *Learning Communities Special Issue: Decolonizing Research Practices* (2017), 82-96.

<sup>115</sup> Emmanouil, "Ontological Openness" 82-96

Witnessing. I use these four areas of convergence as an organizational guideline for Chapter 2 of this study.

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, Chapter 2 is an investigative/explorative and ongoing part of the dissertation. It is meant to be a troubled and incorporated aspect that is drawn upon throughout the entire research process and into the conclusion. In this chapter, I disclose my identity, self-location and biases. I also define settler colonialism. Subsequently, I look at the three themes I call Confluences and how this interconnects with decolonization, resurgence, reconciliation praxis and CDT. Confluence 1 examines: knowledge production, hegemony, ideology, eugenic logic, and disablement from land. Confluence 2 looks at: Access Intimacy as Active Witnessing, phenomenological interrelationships and phenomenological bodies as homelands. Confluence 3 explores; Anthropogenic climate change, reconciliation and ecology, and reconciliation and more-than-humans.

With decolonial CDT and Everyday Acts as its theoretical foundations and Active Witnessing as part of its explorative analysis strategy, Chapter 3 outlines the basic methodologies considered including witnessing, storytelling and life writing. Additionally, this chapter fleshes out the primary methods used to explore the subject matter. Furthermore, it examines the trials, failures, and insights of this research journey. Since this study is atypical it required a creative conceptual framework. As such, it considers Norman Denzin's concept of *bricoleur-bricolage* in terms of doing the necessary research with accessible apparatuses, materials and skills<sup>116</sup>. This required a foundation that placed Indigenous resurgence and land and water-based lifeways as central. The ensuing methodologies outlined in this chapter were the guiding parameters through which the study would emerge/engage.

While transmogrified ontologies affect the macro-structures of settler colonial society, they also affect the smaller spaces of day-to-day interactions and thoughts. In Chapter 4 and 5 of this study, I try to delve a bit deeper into what these might look like in terms of accountability and reconciliation processes. I do this in reference to the concept of Active Witnessing. Life experience contain intimate space. these are the vulnerable

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<sup>116</sup> Norman Denzin, *The Qualitative Manifesto: A Call to Arms*, (CA: Left Coast Press, 2010)

foundations of deeper relationships, the corporeal experience of bodies, the interdependencies of the family, the home space, the perceived worldview, the interrelationships between community members and the natural environment. As such, everyday acts are crucial aspects of reconciliation and solidarity praxis.<sup>117</sup>

The second part of the study focuses on two main research questions:

1. How does Decolonial CDT apply to Active Witnessing as an emergent concept to describe the application of accountability in the day-to-day lives of non-indigenous Canadians?
2. What can Active witnessing look like and how can this hold the possibility of opening spaces for Indigenous Resurgence, Self-determination and Reconciliation?

Chapter 4 investigates Life Writing essays from four Collaborators. The point of including the four Life Writing essays is to offer examples of the subtlety of Active Witnessing as well as the intergenerational aspects. Since Active Witnessing is rarely pointed out, and for simplicity and clarity, I have coded them by numerical order. So, Collaborator 1, 2, 3, and 4. These include moments of day-to-day actions that shift personal and relational perspectives and understandings. In concentrating on the smaller felt spaces of engagement, I hope to bring awareness to how small conscientious intergenerational acts of solidarity can catalyze meaningful change. I have also endeavored to look at ways in which Active Witnessing can be aligned with decolonization processes by shifting personal relationships and thus shifting actions. As such, I hope to explore the usefulness of everyday intergenerational reconciliation strategies that can catalyze Access Intimacy convergences with accountable reconciliation and decolonial CDT.

Chapter 5 offers a discussion about the various subjects put forward. As well, it encompasses a transitory synthesis utilizing my own voice and comprehension about study, and some possible future research recommendations. Hitherto, this research is not anti-science, anti-modernity or anti-intellectual in composition nor in comprehension.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Gerald Tehaiá:iake Alfred, Jeff Kanohalidoh Cornassel, and Lisa Strelein, "Everyday acts of resurgence," *The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)*, Lawson Cres., Canberra ACT (2017), Vimeo Video, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/181131726>

<sup>118</sup> Kim TallBear, "Kim TallBear Speaks Truth to Power," *University Affairs*, Interview by Jackie Wong, (March 8, 2019), <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/kim-tallbear-speaks-truth-to-power/> In terms of changes needed in scientific production and dissemination this dissertation questions production, containment and distribution, particularly in terms of western Eurocentric hegemony, definition

This study assumes that all collaborators engage in ways that are accessible and related to their own capacity. It also assumes all conversations and correspondences are to be taken at face value, without significant interpretation, explanation or in-depth clarification (unless otherwise specified). In addition, all Indigenous traditional knowledges and information shared by collaborators belong to the Indigenous peoples and communities they originate from. Due to my own biases, embodiment and experiences, I cannot offer a completely neutral study.

This is further complicated due to my close relationships with two of the collaborators. To keep this in perspective I applied ethics in accordance to those put forth by the Indigenous Governance Program (IGOV) and the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at the University of Victoria.<sup>119</sup> Although I strived to maintain ethics and a balance of perspectives, this study is clearly subjective and does not serve to try and produce universal conclusions. As such, my research does not extol a specific answer or solution to the problems identified. And as a researcher, I take responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies, mistakes, appropriations or misunderstandings articulated by or found within the dissemination of the study and will make amendments where necessary. Furthermore, because of the subjective relationality of the study, I anticipate learning far more than I can ever disseminate. Accordingly, this study has been embarked upon as a learning journey. It aims to offer a modest steppingstone towards encouraging others to take on this work of finding and enacting extra-ordinary acts of everydayness and imagining new ways of engaging and being.

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and dominion. Kim TallBear states, “Engaging people with diverse lived experiences in scientific production...is part of how to improve the fields of genomics and bioinformatics.” Further, she asserts, “Indigenous people, queer people and people of colour will probably do science better if they can have more agency within those fields...They’re going to be more open to different kinds of questions, to counter-intuitive questions. We want to help train Indigenous scientists to not just critique science that’s gone wrong, but produce people who will do science better.”

<sup>119</sup> “Indigenous Governance,” *University of Victoria*, (2019), <https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/igov/>; “Human Research Ethics,” *University of Victoria*, (2019) <https://www.uvic.ca/research/conduct/home/regapproval/humanethics/index.php>

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

...the only thing extraordinary about white people  
is that they think something is extraordinary about white people.<sup>120</sup>

### Introduction to the Research

In late May of 2021, amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, the news announced that the unmarked graves of 215 Indigenous children were found in the schoolyard of a Residential School in Kamloops, BC, Canada.<sup>121</sup> And Canada reeled in shock. Canadian Flags around the country were at half-mast, and 215 children's shoes lined the parliamentary steps. Canada's Prime Minister stated on Twitter, "...it is a painful reminder of that dark and shameful chapter in our country's history...we are here for you."<sup>122</sup> Social media lit up in shock and horrified responses of Indigenous anger, sorrow and support, and settler's words of abhorrence, solidarity, and everyone's Face Book profile was bright orange, signifying every child matters. They do matter. Their families, their communities and all their relations hear their voices. Nevertheless—Canada has been aware of unmarked graves and undocumented deaths of Indigenous children for decades.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, (NY: Nation Books, 2016): prologue, 11. For excellent and comprehensive discussion on the nuances of the term settler please see the following: Anthony Morgan, "Black People in Canada are not Settlers," Ricochet: Public Interest Journalism, 2019, <https://www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/privilege-vs-complicity-people-colour-and-settler-colonialism>; Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence, "Indigenous and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?" Ch. 6, *Breaching the Colonial Contract: Anti-Colonialism in the US and Canada*, Ed. Arlo Kempf, (TO: Springer Science, 2009), 105-134; Sujith Xavier, "Loving, Working and Living on Stolen Land: People of Colour, Settler Colonialism and White Supremacy," *Reconciliation Syllabus: A TRC-Inspired Gathering of Materials for Teaching Law*, December 8, 2018, <https://reconciliationsyllabus.wordpress.com/2018/12/08/loving-working-and-living-on-stolen-land-people-of-colour-settler-colonialism-white-supremacy/>; Malissa Phung, "Are People of Colour Settlers Too?" *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*, Dirs. A. Mathur, J. Dewar, M. DeGagné, dirs., (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011), 289-96.

<sup>121</sup> Courtney Dickason and Bridgette Watson, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc say ground-penetrating radar was used to locate remains, CBC News, Posted: May 27, 2021 at 9:58 PM PT <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/tk-emlups-te-secwepemc-215-children-former-kamloops-indian-residential-school-1.6043778>

<sup>122</sup> Justin Trudeau Twitter: 2021 <https://twitter.com/canadianpm/status/1399812945916436485?lang=en>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was initiated in 2008 to address Indigenous injustice regarding Indian Residential Schools (IRS), Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls (MMIWG) and subsequently LGBTQIA and Two-Spirit persons<sup>123</sup> were added. Many survivors spoke out between 2010 and 2015, giving testimonies about the conditions in residential schools. Many were live streamed so others could bear witness, including settlers<sup>124</sup>. Over 139 residential schools operated across Canada between the 1870s and 1990s. More than 150,000 children were forcibly taken.<sup>125</sup> Vol. 4 of the TRC is entitled, *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials*. It contains 266 pages dedicated to children who did not come home. It estimates 6,000 of these children died from disease, abuse and neglect.<sup>126</sup> In 2009 the TRC asked for 1.5 million dollars to help search for unmarked graves, which was denied.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, although the current government has pledged several million towards these efforts, this “dark and shameful history” as benevolently stipulated by the Prime Minister, it is still happening. The Kamloops Indian Residential School ran from 1890 to 1969. Then it ran as a day school until 1978.<sup>128</sup> It is not an ancient historical time located in a medieval dark age that remains a shameful lesson for Canadians. It is a living part of settler colonial genocide. Furthermore, it is an ongoing reality for Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

For many Indigenous peoples, communities and nations, this moment of truth is not a revelation and represents the constant settler colonial violence of erasure. It is also a Call to Action, both for federal accountability and for Canadian citizens to take personal responsibility in this endeavour. What can non-Indigenous Canadians do? Write letters? Volunteer our services? Use our location of privilege to the benefit of Indigenous

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<sup>123</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Government Website <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>

<sup>124</sup> TRC <http://www.trc.ca>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, Vol. 4  
[http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Volume\\_4\\_Missing\\_Children\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Volume_4_Missing_Children_English_Web.pdf)

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

communities? Donate to legal fees and other supports? Advocate for changes in policy, institutions? Yes! Yes, to all of that! But also, to hold our leaders to account and not let them dust off implications with fluffy chamois ‘tweets’ of goodwill. To be accountable, we need to reflect on what we accept as truth. Additionally, we must do more than whisper pseudo-humble reconciliatory apologies while holding the truncheon of Rule of Law behind our back and equality as an impenetrable shield. Reconciliation must become an action that moves towards equity, an internal drive in our everyday lives. As Maori Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts, “regimes of truth” are specifically located within structure and systems that require decolonization.<sup>129</sup>

Unpacking this will take a deep reflexive dive. Firstly, I would like to do an in-depth self-location as a person and a researcher. I’m a white settler Canadian, Danish on my maternal side and Irish/Scottish on my paternal side. Those are familial lines that I can genealogically trace. I am also in the process of further understanding relations who are Sami, Greenlander Inuit and North African. In this way, I acknowledge this part of my genealogy, but I do not claim it as identity. Genetically, 23andme<sup>130</sup> tells me that there are traces of ancestors from South India, China, Philippines, Portugal, Italy, Spain, and West Africa. Significantly, by the time my immigrant Danish mother met my fifth-generation Irish Canadian father, these links to the rest of the world were long since severed. Pointedly, I mention this because I do not actually belong to any of these communities, ethnicities or cultures—I’m just a random Euro-western settler Canadian. I was born on Musqueam territory, grew up on the Semiahmoo First Nation reserve and am currently squatting on unceded W̱SÁNEĆ and Lekwungen lands. I am also a person with multiple disabilities; I’m neurodivergent, I have Fibromyalgia, Arthritis and an autoimmune disorder (still a mystery after 40 years). I also have Complex Post Traumatic Disorder (CPTSD), anxiety, parasomnia and Situational Mutism. I’m assigned female at birth (afab) and queer; nonbinary, aromantic, asexual.

I do not consider myself to be an expert, but I hold a deep passion for Decolonial Theory and Critical Disability Studies. I have taken on this study not because I am an

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<sup>129</sup> Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (Zed Books, 1999) p, 30.

<sup>130</sup> A DNA testing Company

authority in the subject I am undertaking. Rather, it is an account of academic scholarship, on-the-ground knowledge and lived experience coalescing with a lifelong learning journey. It emerges out of a desire to explore convergences between decolonial CDT and Indigenous Resurgence as spaces of accountability, truth, reconciliation and Indigenous Nationhood. My embodiment, my corporeal neurology, shapes this modest intellectual project. This act of self-location is an act of disclosure. I out myself and tell you how this affects my studies as well as my perception of the world(s) I exist within. It's solipsism and it's an act of transparency, vulnerability and trust. Significantly, none of these intersections negates my location as a white settler. This aspect of my self-location is embedded systemically and is an embodied part of me that remains steeped in privilege. For this reason, self-location contains a level of Call to Action, a call for Active Witnessing that entails settler Canadians to look deeper at our everyday acts and how these acts facilitate or disable decolonization, Indigenous Resurgence and equitable reconciliation.

### **Settler Colonial Racial Capitalism**

Significantly, we cannot have a truthful and intimate conversation about transmogrified ontologies, Decolonial CDT, and Everyday Acts of Active Witnessing without looking at settler colonial systemic racism and the production of Racial Capitalism. Given the scope of this dissertation, and the brilliant scholarship offered by Black, Brown and Indigenous academics and activists on these subjects, this section will offer a concise overview.

In *Marx & Engels Collective Works Vol 5*, German Philosophers Karl Marx and Frederich Engels state that in capitalism, money and commodities stand in for human relations and human beings, objectifying them by removing their human essence.<sup>131</sup> Subsequently, Italian Marxist Philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, suggests that capitalism thrives because it works through and because of the culturally specific character of labour power.<sup>132</sup> Settler colonialism and Eurocentric racism are intertwined with capitalism.

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<sup>131</sup> Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *Marx & Engels Collective Works Vol 5: Marx and Engels:1845-1847*, (1976):.36

<sup>132</sup> Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 10, no. 2(June, 1986): 5-27.

Drawing on French Martinican Author Aimé Césaire's analysis of the colonized as objectified via his stark equation; colonization=thingification<sup>133</sup>, French Martinican Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon introduces a new Marxist understanding of class struggle and divisions between the colonized and the colonizer that is influenced by racism<sup>134</sup>. He does this through emphasizing the dehumanizing effect of colonialism, particularly in terms of internalizing. Colonial violence is understood to include an epistemic aspect—a racist attack on culture, ideas and value systems of the colonized.<sup>135</sup>

Racism in settler colonial states is systematically mobilized on a sociopolitical level to ensure white supremacy.<sup>136</sup> Racial differences are ever present within extant structures systems and institutions and internalised as ideologies.<sup>137</sup> Race relations that are put into place during colonization survive long after many of the underlying economic structures have changed. The devaluation of BIPOC haunts their descendants, the racist inequities still structure earnings and opportunities. Racial stereotypes and contemporary power imbalances amalgamated during colonization remain embedded within settler colonial systems.

This is further illustrated in Scholar Nancy Leong's essay, *Racial Capitalism*. Leong informs us that there is always an imbalance in power that frames the value of BIPOC or non-whiteness.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, Leong defines Racial Capitalism as the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person.<sup>139</sup> It is a long standing common and deeply problematic practice. It is a systemic phenomenon that necessitates close examination of causes and consequences. White individuals and white institutions use non-white people to acquire social and economic value. Approbatory action, policy and practices produce and maintain it.<sup>140</sup> This includes diversity paradigms

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<sup>133</sup> Aimé Césaire, "Between Colonizer and Colonized," (1955), <https://staff.kings.edu/sites/cristoferscarboro/HNRS%20204/Cesaire.htm>

<sup>134</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (NY: Grove Press, 2008)

<sup>135</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin*, 41, 125

<sup>136</sup> John Rex, *Race, Colonialism, and the City*, (Routledge, 1973): 136, 150

<sup>137</sup> Rex, *Race, Colonialism*, 181, 253, 226, 262

<sup>138</sup> Nancy Leong, "Racial Capitalism" *Havard Law Review*, vol. 136, no. 8, (2013):2153-2225.

<sup>139</sup> Leong, *Racial Capitalism*, 2173

<sup>140</sup> Leong, *Racial Capitalism*, 2154.

which encourages white people and predominantly white institutions to engage in racial capitalism by deriving value from non-white racial identity.<sup>141</sup>

When white people and institutions seek out BIPOC without reflecting and examining their motives and practices it becomes an exploitive act.<sup>142</sup> Striving for diversity without fully addressing racism, disablement and settler colonial violence risks these acts becoming a useful means for white gain; economically, socially and politically. It inhibits decolonization, racial equality and genuine inclusiveness and justice.<sup>143</sup> Legal and social emphasis on diversity has ironically contributed to the degradation of BIPOC by commodifying and tokenising.<sup>144</sup> In these relationships there is self-interest on the part of the white institution. This is seen in recognition. The higher status/power derives benefit from the visibility of their inclusivity and diversity.<sup>145</sup> Due to their recognition, reputation increases for a white person who engages in exchange with BIPOC. As such, through affiliation they gain cross-cultural competency.<sup>146</sup> Thus settler colonial structures institutions and systems that hold to diversity and inclusivity paradigms are seen as progressive and non-racist.

Henceforth, we can see that capital as theorized by Marx and Engels, is rooted in political economy—the relationship between private property, accumulated wealth and exploitive social relations. This framework highlights the dynamism of the value assigned to racial identity—racial value fluctuates depending on the situation. Pointedly, the claim that a white person has relatives/friends who are BIPOC is a common move to innocence regardless of the racism they have internalized and resentments they harbour.<sup>147</sup> This is capitalizing on non-whiteness to upgrade one's reputation or competence. It is a screen that shelters the white person.<sup>148</sup> It signals cross cultural credibility and generates social

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<sup>141</sup> Leong, *Racial Capitalism*, 2154-2156.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Leong, *Racial Capitalism*, 2176-2178

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Leong, *Racial Capitalism*, 2179

status.<sup>149</sup> Not only do whites shelter and absolve themselves of racism, but they also want to be recognized as accepted into BIPOC spaces. The value of acquiring affiliation with BIPOC is rooted in how racism is converted into a commodity.<sup>150</sup>

To be clear, inclusion and diversity are not wrong in theory. However, abolishing racism means abolishing structures and ideologies that produce and maintain it. If we have not confronted our racism as settlers and interrogated systemic racism in our systems and institutions, who is inclusion and diversity benefiting? Likewise, in the essay, *Theorizing Racial/Colonial Primitive Accumulation: Settler Colonialism, Slavery and Racial Capitalism*, Academic Siddhant Issar suggests that settler colonialism and racism structure capitalism in North America.<sup>151</sup> He asserts that collaboration between capitalists and working-class white settlers is the foundation of white supremacy. It ensures smooth capital gain through the maintenance of BIPOC subordination. As such, the relations between race, labour, capital accumulation and resistance are mutable and variable across time.<sup>152</sup>

Further to this, Legal Theorist, Brenna Bhandar extensively details how the conversion of Indigenous land into property via property laws in settler colonial contexts is historically co-constitutive with the creation of racial hierarchies and the racial ordering of human populations.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, Bhandar underscores how colonial dispossession is simultaneously “a prerequisite and a consequence of the coproduction of racial value and property ownership.”<sup>154</sup> Likewise, Dene Author and Academic, Glen Coulthard’s work in *Red Skin, White Masks; Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, informs us about the particularly the ways that racialization and Indigenous dispossession restrict the accumulation of capital.<sup>155</sup> Further, he looks to Scholar Cheryl

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<sup>149</sup> Leong, *Racial Capitalism*, 2180-2181

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Siddhant Issar, *Theorizing Racial/Colonial Primitive Accumulation: Settler Colonialism, Slavery and Racial Capitalism*, *Sage Journals*, (April 9, 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0306396821996273>

<sup>152</sup> Issar, “Theorizing Racial.”

<sup>153</sup> Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land and Racial Regimes of Ownership*, (Duke University Press, 2018)

<sup>154</sup> Bhandar, *Colonial Lives*, 50.

<sup>155</sup> Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks; Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2014)

Harris and her assertion that, ‘The origins of whiteness as property lie in the parallel system of domination of Black and Native American peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights.’<sup>156</sup>

Along these lines, academic scholar, Shiri Pasternak expands on the concept of Racial Capitalism by drawing from Cedric Robinson’s *Black Marxism* and his assertion that capitalism, “requires difference to grind its gears as fuel for accumulation.”<sup>157</sup> It does this through organizing extreme inequity and inequality and normalizing it through discourses of “differing human capacities, historically race.”<sup>158</sup> This informs us that racial capitalism purposefully recognizes state sanctioned emancipatory rights, “to be fully saturated by racialized violence.”<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, Pasternak analyzes the deeper interconnections between settler colonialism and racial capitalism in her paper, *Assimilation and Partition: How Settler Colonialism and Racial Capitalism Co-produce the Borders of Indigenous Economies*. She suggests that to engage in a critical discussion about Racial Capitalism requires accounting for settler colonial investment in systemic racism.<sup>160</sup> This can be done through examining the extent to which Indigenous peoples hold authority to govern, manage and determine their lands and resources, as well as analyzing the “conjoined meanings of colonialism and capitalism as systems of power today.”<sup>161</sup>

Intrinsically, Pasternak stipulates that settler colonialism is “not just a form of racialized violence, but a form of domination that is itself constituted by the materiality of land theft and genocide.”<sup>162</sup> The dispossession of Indigenous land facilitated industrialization in tandem with the emergence of industrial capitalism. To ensure white wealth, segregation was enforced, limiting Indigenous economic participation and

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<sup>156</sup> Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 106, no. 8, (1993):1707-1791

<sup>157</sup> Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism*, (London: Zed Books, 1983) as quoted in Shiri Pasternak, “Assimilation and Partition: How Settler Colonialism and Racial Capitalism Co-produce the Borders of Indigenous Economies,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 119, no. 2, (April, 2020), 303

<sup>158</sup> Ibid

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> Pasternak, “Assimilation” 305

<sup>161</sup> Pasternak, “Assimilation,” 302

<sup>162</sup> Pasternak, “Assimilation,” 304

control. In addition, integration policies were set in place, asserting paternalistic power over Indigenous economic initiatives.<sup>163</sup>

Even with understanding the violence and unethical racism of the past, this history of state violence is still ongoing. Contemporary settler colonial state jurisdiction holds “paramount to Indigenous territorial authority through racial constructions of ‘indigeneity’”<sup>164</sup>. Indigenous peoples are partitioned from the market economy because of a “racist cultural anthropology of ‘indigeneity’” that denies them self-determination and governing authority over economic matters.<sup>165</sup> At the same time, Indigenous communities are “encouraged to participate...through sharing the spoils of resource extraction” through financial compensation but still, they are denied “authority to determine whether the permits, leases or licences for development are granted”<sup>166</sup> As such, settler colonial structures that maintain the Canadian state require depicting the exploitation of Indigenous lands waters, cultures and peoples as “inevitable natural and fair.”<sup>167</sup>

To elucidate, Pasternak describes how the settler colonial state creates barriers to Indigenous participation in Canada’s capitalist system while simultaneously exerting heavy pressures on assimilation. Notably, the Canadian state defines the rights for Indigenous nations to commercial economy, yet these economic rights are “configured through state resource revenue-sharing schemes with First Nations,” specifically in the resource extraction industry.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, through both partitioning and assimilation settler colonial white capital is secured.<sup>169</sup> This paradigm also serves to underscore how racial capitalism and settler colonialism have co-created a very specific form of ableism directed at Indigenous peoples and communities—disablement from land. This disablement maintains economic, social and political hegemony through preventing

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<sup>163</sup> Pasternak, “Assimilation,” 307

<sup>164</sup> Pasternak, “Assimilation,” 301

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> *ibid*

<sup>167</sup> Ibid

<sup>168</sup> Pasternak, “Assimilation,” 302

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

Indigenous communities from having authority over the “leasing, permitting and licencing on their lands.”<sup>170</sup> This in turn increases “land alienation and loss of meaningful possibility for self-determining and independence.”<sup>171</sup>

Pointedly, Pasternak asserts that Indigenous nations need to have governing authority to manage land and water based lifeways, resource sharing and stewardship. To this end, Pasternak suggests that a possible amelioration might be found in countersoveriegnity- an alternative form of sociality that contains the “principles of deep relationality, not just with other humans, but with water, land, and other-than-human beings within a kinship network” and “It is these grounds of authority that can undo racial capitalism.”<sup>172</sup> This concept is intriguing and beyond my capacity to flesh out in this dissertation. Nonetheless, it holds a wellspring of potential possibilities.

Hitherto, the capitalistic commodification of BIPOC bodies is implicitly interwoven with the settler colonial desire for Indigenous lands. This desire not only seeks to exploit Indigenous peoples and lands but simultaneously seeks the disappearance of Indigenous peoples who hold deep relations with land, place.<sup>173</sup> In *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, Poet and Scholar, Dian Million asserts that Indigenous Feminists have illuminated how Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies represent “...more than environmentally friendly ways of being.”<sup>174</sup> These theories represent subversive knowledge to capitalism itself. As such, in practice Indigenous Resurgence substantially challenges capitalistic ways of life.<sup>175</sup>

Moreover, in Mucina’s Doctoral Dissertation, he states, “Let me be honest, I am uncomfortable with putting Blackness and disability together because there is a history of viewing Blackness as disability. Yet I cannot be silent about disability within Black communities. These are the tensions that I must navigate when I make Blackness and

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<sup>170</sup> Pasternak, 303

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Pasternak, 307 examples of countersoveriegnity include the Idle-No-More movement, the massive DAPL blockade and the ongoing Unist’ot’en Camp.

<sup>173</sup> Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 2013): 90-98.

<sup>174</sup> Million, *Therapeutic Nations*, 177.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

disability rub up against each other in our neo-colonial global state society.”<sup>176</sup> Here we can see Mucina’s in-depth understanding of the interrelating oppressions, yet he is uncomfortable with associating disability alongside Blackness because Blackness has long been viewed as a disability. I think that this points towards an understanding of the settler colonial mindset of disablement. Throughout, Mucina speaks with raw truth and deep vulnerability about disability and how this was often used as a weapon of oppression with labels of shame, inferiority and deficit. Hence, Decolonial CDT must fight to make certain that neurodivergences and other disabilities/disablements are understood as struggles in a normative society. But they are also gifts, and necessary for health and wellness in a collective society. And we must also be extremely conscious that our urge to be benevolently inclusive can be a covert strategy for perpetuation enablement that benefits white structures, systems, institutions, and people.

### **Settler Colonial Location**

In *Melting the Cultural Iceberg in Indigenizing Higher Education: Shift to Accountability in Times of Reconciliation*, Julie Vaudrin-Charette suggests non-indigenous Canadians become personally, collectively and institutionally accountable.<sup>177</sup> She suggests using reflexive inquiry and story-weaving in which “crucial moments of representational challenges and (im)possibilities with/in collaborative work” are underscored.<sup>178</sup> Personal experience and learning influence how we think about being accountable at an institutional level. Experiencing one’s location in the context of self-location and land acknowledgement can be a beginning in terms of responsibility and expressing our interrelated beingness, our families and our accountability.<sup>179</sup> Like self-locating, injecting ourselves within reconciliation praxis creates a space in which we become personally responsible. Not to absolve or relieve guilt but rather “as a human who refuses to be complicit to genocide,”<sup>180</sup> an assertion recapitulated by Henderson and

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<sup>176</sup> Devi Mucina, “Ubuntu: A Regenerative Philosophy for Rupturing Racist Colonial Stories of Dispossession,” *PhD Thesis* (University of Toronto, Canada, 2011): 84

<sup>177</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 107

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 108

<sup>180</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 109

Wakeman, in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives On the Culture of Redress*<sup>181</sup> and who assert that to consider reconciliation without taking into consideration Indigenous land rights, systemic injustice and social suffering only serve to widen the gap between nations in the Canadian context.<sup>182</sup> Likewise, in Elizabeth Carlson's article, *Anticolonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies*, she proposes that not until Indigenous peoples regain their lands, resources, governance, laws, and nationhood will any form of true justice be accomplished.<sup>183</sup> Indicating that reconciliation is not even conceivable without directly addressing issues of genocide and land theft. While this must happen at a structural level, it begins with personal accountability to implement and continue these structures.

Henceforth, self-locating, personal responsibility, and reweaving our stories urges us to think about how we came to be on Indigenous land and what this means to how we think and act and how we may or may not uphold oppressive systems by our attitudes and actions<sup>184</sup>. Further, it is a call for other settlers to interrogate our implications in the perpetuity of Canadian structures as well as to confront uncomfortable ongoing truths such as the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the forced interruption of Indigenous culture and the theft of Indigenous lands as a part of our everyday acts of reconciliation. This means understanding that reconciliation is not an encapsulated, objective or benevolent endeavour. Instead, it is an incomplete, messy and a personal responsibility. I am making a call for Active Witnessing, that is embedded within Everyday Acts and move towards a reconciliation that demands our accountability and confronts through the lens I am personally and phenomenologically enmeshed with—Disability.

To clarify my own use of 'disabled', every person who identifies with disability or being disabled has their own unique preference for how they might want to identify (or not!). I am most comfortable with being a disabled person as opposed to a person with disability. I do this because I am disabled by a society in which a specific kind of

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<sup>181</sup> Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives On The Culture of Redress*, (TO: University of Toronto Press, 2013)

<sup>182</sup> Henderson and Wakeman, *Reconciling Canada*; 106-107

<sup>183</sup> Elizabeth Carlson, "Anti-colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies." *Settler Colonial Studies*. Vol. 7. No. 4. (2017): 496-517

<sup>184</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, "Melting the Cultural" 110-111

body/mind/emotional expression that precludes those outside of its specified parameters, is the norm. I kind of use both interchangeably but some individuals have strong preferences and that should always be recognized, validated and respected. For many disabled non-indigenous researchers, there is a confluence with decolonization regarding our relationship with colonial institutions including academia. Settler colonial academia is an inherently ableist system that contains an insidious morphing dynamic.<sup>185</sup> The current policy gives the appearance of inclusivity and diversity. Ironically, it promotes accessibility, fairness and equality not through changing the actual structure of academia—but through transforming the disabled into something whole, adapted and assimilated into a system that remains fundamentally created for their disappearance.<sup>186</sup>

Moreover, Disability Theorist, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson asserts, “disability is a reading of bodily particularities [emotional, mental, physical] in the context of social power relations. [an] attribution of corporeal deviance not so much a property of bodies as a part of [sociocultural] rules about what bodies should be or do.”<sup>187</sup> To this, Campbell suggests that ableism is the desired component in settler colonial society to enshrine a specific ontology of ableist normativity and a specific ontology of human subjectivity, a transmogrified ontology of what is considered a genuinely human existence.<sup>188</sup> Thus, feeding ableist compulsions to make accessibility a thing to be bestowed by the greater to those who are lesser.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, Campbell stipulates that ethics of normalization secure the loose ends of political morality,

...on the view that being a well-functioning individual is critical to performing the social responsibilities of citizens. Normalization qualifies functionally defective individuals for citizenship by repairing them to execute everyday social interactions and sustain common social responsibilities. Whoever cannot perform completely as a cooperating contributing and therefore as an equal social partner is fully neither citizen nor person.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Campbell, *Contours of Ableism*, 61-62; Schalk, “Coming to Claim,”; Minich, “Enabling Whom?”

<sup>186</sup> Campbell *Contours of Ableism*, 63

<sup>187</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extra Ordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, (NY: Columbia University Press, 1997): 5 Online copy: [http://courses.washington.edu/intro2ds/Readings/35\\_Thomson-extraordinary.pdf](http://courses.washington.edu/intro2ds/Readings/35_Thomson-extraordinary.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> Campbell, *Contours of Ableism*, 64

<sup>189</sup> Helen Meekosha, Russel Shuttleworth and Karen Soldatic, “Disability and Critical Sociology: Expanding the Boundaries of Critical Social Inquiry” *Critical Sociology*, (2013), vol. 39, no. 3: 319-323.

<sup>190</sup> Meekosha, Shuttleworth and Soldatic, “Disability and Critical” 319-323

Thus, a sovereign self in settler colonial states such as Canada is the standard of ableism.<sup>191</sup> The settler colonial state (and its citizens) assesses people's value in what they can contribute. Lives are judged as legitimate and productive *if* they are a functional part of society. If they do not fall into this normal, they are pathologized and deemed aberrant, dysfunctional, problematic, and a burden.<sup>192</sup> And it goes even deeper.

Notions of normal, natural and ability reflect specific cultural ecologies that enable autonomy, agency and liberty from constraint.<sup>193</sup> Disability emerges not only from inaccessibility but also from the broad disablement within everyday settler colonial society.<sup>194</sup> In her book, *Feminst, Queer, Crip* Alison Kafer postulates that technologies and ideologies institutionalize neoliberal individualist ways of representing them as 'natural' values and prescribe them as a lifestyle to which everyone aspires.<sup>195</sup> This notion echoes Campbell's previous assertion. Intrinsically, ableist ways are unsustainable.<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, in, *Decolonial Theory and Disability Studies: A Modernity/Coloniality of Ability*, Thomas Dirth and Glen Adams assert that such hegemonic perspectives of disability reflect and reproduce the 'coloniality of being,' a term describing the modalities of settler colonial life ways.<sup>197</sup> In the essay, *On the Coloniality of Being*, Nelson Maldonado-Torres examines the coloniality of being and recapitulates Emmanuel Levinas' understanding of gift-giving and reception as a metaphysical act and a fundamental trait of the self. It is an act that makes communication possible.<sup>198</sup> For Levinas' this means that without giving to another, there is no self. This idea resonates with Mucina's understanding of "We exist because they

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<sup>191</sup> Alison Kafer, *Feminst, Queer, Crip*, (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2013)

<sup>192</sup> Campbell *Contours of Ableism*; Kafer, *Feminst, Queer*

<sup>193</sup> Michael Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement*, (UK: MacMillon Education Ltd. 1990)  
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm%3A978-1-349-20895-1%2F1.pdf>

<sup>194</sup> Oliver, *Politics*.

<sup>195</sup> Kafer, *Feminst, Queer*,

<sup>196</sup> Campbell, *Contours of Ableism*,

<sup>197</sup> Thomas Dirth and Glenn Adams "Decolonial Theory and Disability Studies: A Modernity/Coloniality of Ability" *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, (2019) vol. 7, no. 1; Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, (NY: Duke University Press, 2018)

<sup>198</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a concept," *Cultural Studies*, (2007), vol. 21, Is. 2-3:240-280.

exist”, an Ubuntu understanding.<sup>199</sup> It is through interconnection that we come to be. As well, Canadian Academic Toby Rollo offers that the concept of gifting is an act or deed that holds the potential for being done silently and anonymously.<sup>200</sup> An act that needs no articulation to exist as a whole and meaningful relational phenomena.

Moreover, the significance of the phrase ‘coloniality of being’ resides in its comprehension of the extent of hegemonic settler colonial processes of enablement and disablement. Settler colonial violence enables a dominant population by providing capacity for action, freedom from constraint, and substantial scaffolding to achieve the “full realization of white humanity.”<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, it “launders and legitimizes colonial violence and injustice portraying inequity as a natural result of inability.”<sup>202</sup> This scaffolding of enablement gives the illusion of individual property, merit-based success and reward. On top of this are layers of hegemonic settler colonial institutions that view themselves as a superior standard for universal emulation.<sup>203</sup> In this way, decolonial CDT illuminates affordances based on epistemic and material outcomes and investments that Arturo Escobar calls “performance enhancement devices that artificially inflate their outcomes in ways that are irreducibly illegitimate”<sup>204</sup>

Carlson further proposes embracing humility in anticolonial practices of white settler colonial scholars.<sup>205</sup> Humility here is in acknowledging Indigenous Resurgence at the center of decolonization and the roles of the white settler academics at the periphery, creating space and pushing back against settler colonial ideology and structure. Further, she stresses that entitlement and denial prevent many white settlers from engaging in

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<sup>199</sup> Devi Dee Mucina, “We Exist because They Exist” *Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, (2010), vol. 16, no. 3 [https://www.academia.edu/3638220/We\\_exist\\_Because\\_They\\_exist](https://www.academia.edu/3638220/We_exist_Because_They_exist)

<sup>200</sup> Toby Rollo, “Everyday Deeds: Enactive Protest, Exit, and Silence in Deliberative Systems,” *Political Theory*, (2017) vol. 45, no. 5: 587-609

<sup>201</sup> Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 240-270

<sup>202</sup> Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” 276

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Arturo Escobar, “World and Knowledge Otherwise,” *Cultural Studies*, (2007), vol. 21, no. 2: 179-210

<sup>205</sup> Carlson, “Anti-colonial Methodologies,” 500, 03, 05

anticolonial practices.<sup>206</sup> This concept is similar to Canadian Academic Stephanie Irlbracher-Fox's concept of the 'settler's privilege line'. She states,

I am somewhat skeptical about the willingness of settlers to support a movement in a sustained way on the basis of either moral responsibility or self-interest. I have found that even the most supportive settlers have a privilege line they refuse to cross. It is the existence of that line and the refusal to cross it, which requires long-term effort. Erasing that line is predicated on personal transformation.<sup>207</sup>

It can sometimes be difficult for settler colonial researchers to accept the concept of privilege. Primarily because in being called out in this regard, they think it is about themselves—about what they have gone through in terms of historical and contemporary crosscutting oppressions as well as how hard they may have worked to overcome these and succeed. However, privilege, as used in a settler colonial context, is not about this. It is a privilege that weaves into the settler colonial structure, and it is systemic. With this understanding, it is about a political location that exists because oppression exists.

In his essay, *From Adversaries to Allies: Forging Respectful Alliances between Indigenous and Settler People*, Scholar Adam Barker suggests that the first step to engaging in decolonial praxis is contesting against colonial ignorance that allows settlers to maintain power and privilege.<sup>208</sup> As Canadian Author Paulette Regan states in her book, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, "it is virtually impossible for us not to know [about the oppression of Indigenous peoples]."<sup>209</sup> Many settlers do choose to deny our complicity in perpetuating a colonial system rooted in violence and social injustice.

In this way, Carlson stresses pushing back against settler colonial systems of dominance to return space for Indigenous Resurgence.<sup>210</sup> These broad-spectrum issues

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<sup>206</sup> Carlson, "Anti-colonial Methodologies," 500-505

<sup>207</sup> Stephanie Irlbracher-Fox, "#IdleNoMore: Settler Responsibility for Relationship," *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education, Society*, December 27, 2012, <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2012/12/27/idlenomore-settler-responsibility-for-relationship/>

<sup>208</sup> Adam Barker, "From Adversaries to Allies: Forging Respectful Alliances between Indigenous and Settler People," *Alliances: re/envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships* (2010), University of Toronto Press: 316-333.

<sup>209</sup> Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011) as quoted in Barker, 319

<sup>210</sup> Carlson, "Anti-colonial Methodologies," 500-505

are paramount, and many settler colonial scholars are examining, interrogating and writing about them. In this way, they reveal the white supremacy and racist discrimination that permeates settler colonial structures. Nonetheless, Barker cautions that “appealing to the benevolence of hegemonic forces and or by altering relations between those forces” generally does not produce the emancipatory efforts proponents expect.<sup>211</sup> As suggested by Richard Day in, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, gains only appear within the logic of the existing order and come at the high cost of others.<sup>212</sup> This notion requires asking ourselves, what am I acting for, and how do I do this? Am I willing to give up my comfort and safety to ensure that of someone else? These questions necessitate an acceptance of uncertainty because the other side of the decolonial struggle is unknown.

Such understanding is reiterated by Sium, Desai and Ritskes in their essay, *Towards the Tangible Unknown: Decolonization and the Indigenous Future*.<sup>213</sup> Herein, they describe decolonization as a “messy, dynamic and contradictory process.”<sup>214</sup> As such, they propose that there are no strict definitions of precisely how decolonization emerges. Because Indigenous knowledge and decolonization are a part of Indigenous communities and individuals and so deeply embedded in everyday life activities, western Eurocentric ontologies cannot categorize them.<sup>215</sup> In other words, as Sarah deLeeuw and Sarah Hunt propose, processes of decolonization and Indigenous Resurgence are distinct and unique to particular contexts and specific geographies.<sup>216</sup> It seems to follow that reconciliation praxis needs to be mindful of this.

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<sup>211</sup> Barker, “From Adversaries” 316-333

<sup>212</sup> Richard Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005):80, as quoted in Barker, “From Adversaries,” 318.

<sup>213</sup> Aman Sium, Chandra Desai and Eric Ritskes, “Towards the 'Tangible Unknown': Decolonization and the Indigenous Future,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*. (2012) vol. 1, no. 1: 3

<sup>214</sup> Sium, Desai, Ritskes, “Towards the Tangible,” 3

<sup>215</sup> Sium et al, “Towards the Tangible,” 3; Battiste, *Decolonizing Education*; Marie Battiste and James Sákéj Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2000).

<sup>216</sup> Sarah de Leeuw and Sarah Hunt, “Unsettling Decolonizing Geographies,” *Geography Compass*, vol. 12, no.7, (July, 2018)

Significantly, settler colonial history is one of myth, displacement and replacement. A concept illustrated by the ‘peacemaker myth’ as identified by Regan suggests that settler colonizers become so entrenched in the idea that they often see themselves as benevolent peacemakers.<sup>217</sup> Consequently, the social suffering affecting Indigenous communities across Canada and elsewhere becomes surprising and confusing—they cannot follow the logic to see the actions that lead to brutal consequences for Indigenous peoples.<sup>218</sup> Hence, the abhorrent shock of non-Indigenous Canadians when confronted with unmarked graves of over 215 Indigenous children. The residential school violence done to Indigenous children is an embodied fact in their families and communities. Our incredulousness arises because settler colonial epistemologies are grounded within ontologies explicitly transmogrified to facilitate settler colonial agendas. Thus far we can conclude that complicity is a given if one is a settler.<sup>219</sup>

However, Sium et al. also suggest that complicity looks different for everyone. There are no neat categories, no simple guidelines. As such, they propose that,

“Complicity cannot be collapsed into simple and neat categories without historicizing the political legacy of colonialism and the way in which it manifested and continues to manifest itself both here and across the globe. It is important to consider the process and logics of colonial modernity and white supremacy, how Europeans defined and classified people –as human and non-human –and then used this as a basis to conquer land and subjugate populations through enslaving, indenturing in labour, genociding and warring.”<sup>220</sup>

This passage informs us about complicity and the underlying scaffold of ableism that settler colonial structures are constructed on that enable it to continue its mandates of conquer, subjugate, dehumanize, disappear, and hold power over.

Since settlers interconnect with settler state structure, it is incumbent on us to relearn and restore knowledge production and enact this in our everyday lives. Furthermore, this cannot occur through familiar venues of recognition and

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<sup>217</sup> Regan, *Settler Within*, 11, in Barker, 319-320

<sup>218</sup> Sium et al, 3 paraphrasing Sylvia Wynter, Sylvia (2003) “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review*, vol, 3, no. 3, (2003): 257-337.

<sup>219</sup> Peggy McIntosh. “White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible Knapsack”, *Peace and freedom Magazine*, (1989): 10-12

<sup>220</sup> Sium, et al, “Towards the Tangible”, 3-5

correction.<sup>221</sup> As Rollo stipulates in, *Everyday Deeds: Enactive Protest, Exit, and Silence in Deliberative Systems*, “refusal may be considered necessary in order to promote legitimacy”.<sup>222</sup> In this case, Rollo is considering refusal within the context of the primacy of speech, but he also stipulates it may also apply to refusal of recognition. Especially in terms of Indigenous land and water-based lifeway as there are elements that are “considered so sacred or so vulnerable that cultural prohibitions have been placed on communicating them to outsiders.”<sup>223</sup> Such an understanding means structural change needs much more than apologetics and reconciliation. A concept aptly captured by Dene Scholar Glen Coulthard’s essay, *Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts*, wherein he asserts that when Indigenous peoples seek acceptance and recognition from colonial institutions, they reassert the authority of the colonizer and validate its control over Indigenous life.<sup>224</sup> Rather than seeking recognition, Coulthard advocates changing the criteria by which people view the world. The land is the primary materiality of the decolonization struggle.<sup>225</sup>

Furthermore, in Mohawk Academic Audra Simpson’s book, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler Colonial State*, Simpson asserts that a politics of refusal, serves to stand up against a politics of recognition<sup>226</sup>. She contends that it is entirely possible for one sovereign nation to exist as nested within another sovereign nation. Moreover, the contentions that occur regarding jurisdiction, legitimacy and so forth may well be incommensurable. This incommensurability is a natural outcome of the nested nation to nation relationship and may actually serve to strengthen both the agency of each nation as well and the alliances between them.

To this, Dirth and Adams offer that change is made via creativity, the re-envisioning of the value of disabled beingness as an alternative to the destructive

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<sup>221</sup> Rollo, “Everyday Deeds” 587-609

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous peoples and the politics of recognition in colonial contexts,” *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol.6, (2007):

<sup>225</sup> Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire”

<sup>226</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler Colonial State* (Duke University Press: 2014).

grindstone of ability.<sup>227</sup> Disabled beingness constitutes adaptation, survivance, bridging and innovation. It challenges assimilation and includes ways of thinking about and being “attuned to the relationality of everyday life.”<sup>228</sup> Moreover, the disablement of settler colonial violence occurs not just through the production of bodily impairment but through constraint on action and achievement by multitudinous diversities. Nations, communities, networks, families and individuals are disappeared, devastated and disabled—and for Indigenous peoples, communities and nations, this includes disablement from land.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Dirth and Adams “Decolonial Theory”

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Nicole Ineese-Nash, “Disability As a Colonial Construct: The Missing Discourse of Culture in Conceptualizations of Disabled Indigenous Children”. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* (2020) 9 (3):28-51. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i3.645>.

## **Confluences: Active Witnessing, Everyday Acts, Reconciliation**

To organize the rest of this Chapter, this study considers three main confluences between Critical Disability Theory, Indigenous Resurgence, and Reconciliation as identified by Jaffee and John:

- 1) Confronting embedded eugenic logic of elimination: change cannot rest on ideology. It must include altering structures of settler colonialism.
- 2) Self-determination and sovereignty as a location of solidarity offering political frameworks for efficient mobilization.
- 3) Imagining alternative futures that refuse ableist settler projected futures devoid of disability and Indigeneity.

These points of convergence are places in which collaboration and solidarity between Indigenous and non-indigenous people and communities can occur. For this research, locating convergences calls on settler colonial scholars engaging with CDT to collaborate and actively decolonize the production of disability. To decolonize disability requires the interrogation and reflexive examination of settler colonial structures, Institutions and systems that disable people as well as disabling communities and nations.

### **Confluence 1.**

**Confronting embedded eugenic logic of elimination: change cannot rest on ideology. It must include altering structures of settler colonialism.**

In this section I outline some of the enabling/disabling foundations underpinning settler colonial societal structure, such as settler colonial foundations, hegemony and ideology, and eugenic logic. I do this to render enabling/disabling settler colonial scaffolding visible. In turn, this helps to describe what disablement from land means and how we can work towards creating spaces of engagement between non-indigenous communities and Indigenous communities in terms of decolonization, Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation. It also frames transmogrified core beliefs commonly found within in day-to-day settler colonial life ways and acts. This is important because the more conscious we are of ableism within our daily lives, the more we can become conscious of how we participate in enablement/disablement within our everyday actions and ways in which we can think about and engage in Active Witnessing.

## Settler Colonial Foundations

To begin, this study defines settler colonialism to aid in understanding the kind of foundations that underlie systemic prejudices such as racism, sexism and ableism. These prejudices seep into our everyday lives, our common activities and thoughts, in ways we are not always aware of until it is pointed out to us. Settler colonial structure can be understood through Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe's oft-quoted statement,

The primary object of settler colonization is the land itself rather than the surplus-value to be derived from mixing native labour with it. Though indigenous labour was indispensable to Europeans, settler colonization is a winner takes all project whose dominant feature is not only exploitation but replacement. The logic of this project, a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population, informs a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct—invasion is a structure, not an event.<sup>230</sup>

Wolfe's assertion is that settler colonial invasion is not an event located in some distant past but instead is a continuing set of ideologies and practices that continue to be constitutive of the very structure of the settler state and its persistent institutionalized policies of elimination. Concurrently, Scholar Lorenzo Veracini asserts that settler colonialism,

...is characterized by a persistent drive to ultimately supersede the conditions of its operation. The successful settler colonies' tame' a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, coopt and extinguish Indigenous alterities and productively manage diversity.<sup>231</sup>

The goal of settler colonialism is the erasure of relationship and presence of Indigenous peoples and ways of being, lands and Nationhood. Ultimately, it seeks its own erasure and the memory of its erasure<sup>232</sup>. This erasure centres around notions of development, advancement and progress. As embedded ideologies, they have roots in the settler colonial thought and structure that holistically destabilizes and endeavours to disappear Indigenous peoples. These concepts provide a framework for perpetuating social hierarchy, racism and eugenics. To impose a single understanding of development, advancement, and progress is to suppress imagination, negating the multiplicity of futurity.

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<sup>230</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*, 135

<sup>231</sup> Veracini Lorenzo (2011) Introducing, *Settler Colonial Studies*, (2011) vol. 1, no. 1: 1-12, DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648799

<sup>232</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1413

Significantly, in their essay, *Towards a Relational Paradigm: Four Points of Consideration*, Indigenous Academics Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark and Gina Starblanket suggest that Wolfe's assertion that settler colonialism is a structure underscores this aspect, "as an analytic." They propose that this definition, "risks eliding both power relations and decolonial possibilities if too much focus is given to a Native/settler binary."<sup>233</sup> Moreover, Stark and Starblanket interrogate the narrative of Wolfe and Veracini's logic of elimination. They suggest this restricted focus "draws out to the exclusion of the productive nature of settler colonialism." This is a concept that is touched on by Academic Scholar Dean Itsuji Saranillio in his paper, *Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference*, wherein he defines settler colonialism as,

"the body of work that replaces one landscape for another, one people for another, one mode of production for another" and is a thing that "necessitates a discursive regime underpinned by juridical and military force that is productive of normalizing occupation. It is productive in making sense of the genocide that this kind of replacement requires."<sup>234</sup>

For Stark and Starblanket, "This productive nature of settler colonialism is rooted in relationality." Like Saranillo, they assert, "settler colonialism doesn't just try to eliminate but, in its place, seeks to produce something new." They take this even further with suggesting that "...settler states do so through relationship with Indigenous nations. Settler colonialism is not so much eliminatory as it is concomitantly reductive and productive." This highlights a vital aspect of settler colonial strategies of assimilation and underpins a significant risk in restrictive understandings. Stark and Starblanket state "We risk becoming further entangled within these productive and reductive tenets of settler colonial logics when we fail to account for how settler regimes regulate or circumscribe our relationships." This is something that should be cautioned in terms of eugenics logic of elimination as well, especially considering the understanding of reductive and

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<sup>233</sup> Heidi Stark and Gina Starblanket, "Towards a Relational Paradigm: Four Points of Consideration" *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, (TO: University of Toronto Press 2018)

<sup>234</sup> Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference." *Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Alternatives in Global Context*.(2): *Recuperating Binarism*. (2013), vol.3. Is. 3-04.

productive replacement. We need to caution and ask, what is being reduced and what is being produced in its place?

### **Knowledge Production, Hegemony, Ideology**

This section offers a brief foundation to lay out some of the socio-political elements that work to produce overt and covert oppression. One of the recurring terms within antioppression and decolonial discourse is 'hegemony,' a term formulated by Gramsci. In his, *Quaderni del carcere/Prison Notebooks*, he argues that hegemony was achieved not only by processes of force and coercion but also by creating willing subjects who submit to being ruled.<sup>235</sup> Gramsci posits that ideology is crucial to creating this consent and is the medium that transmits specific ideas held to be true. Accordingly, hegemony is achieved by direct manipulation and indoctrination and plays on the people's common sense, and everyday lived systems of meanings and values.<sup>236</sup> Therefore, as reiterated by Scholar Vine Deloria Jr. in, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, there is a direct link to coercion and force coupled with manufactured and involuntary/voluntary consent to specific ideologies founded on ontologies that have led to today's settler colonial neoliberal capitalistic situations.<sup>237</sup>

Colonial paradigms gain the consent of some groups while excluding others. For instance, the suffrage movement gained consent through western feminism. Nevertheless, this was done mainly to the exclusion of Black, Brown and Indigenous women.<sup>238</sup> Ideologies create the terrain on which people move.<sup>239</sup> Gramsci's notions of ideology underpin how systemic racism intertwines with capitalism. While not denying this, French Philosopher Michel Foucault suggests the human subject is not a free entity.<sup>240</sup> He

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<sup>235</sup> Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 324, 377 paraphrased in Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 28-31

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1969)

<sup>238</sup> Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd Ed. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017): introduction; Joanne Barker, ed., *Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, (NY: duke university press, 2017): introduction; William E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Pocket Books, 2005):195

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<sup>239</sup> Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 324, 377 paraphrased in Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 30

<sup>240</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Archaeology of Knowledge," *Information* (International Social Science Council), vol. 9, no. 1 (1970) 175–185: ix

generally rejects the notion of ideology. Instead, he argues that all human ideas and knowledge are constructed and determined by “laws of a certain code of knowledge.”<sup>241</sup> Further to this, Foucault postulates that no single individual is the sole source of any expression. Hence, innocent apparatuses such as university, family, entertainment, and others are understood as ideologically and conditionally accepted values of a hegemonic system.<sup>242</sup>

In this way, Sami Academic Rauna Kuokkanen suggests that western ontology emerges via the authority of academics, institutions, and government policy rather than emerging from research itself.<sup>243</sup> They create knowledge, ideological baselines, and the very reality they appear to describe.<sup>244</sup> Consequently, knowledge about and power over colonized lands and people are deeply interrelated.<sup>245</sup> Producing transmogrified knowledge about others is part of the process of maintaining power over them. As such, ideology, epistemology and ontology always exist in an apparatus, in its practice and structural systems. This is one reason why discriminatory practices such as racism, sexism, ableism and classism are functionally systemic.<sup>246</sup>

In, *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that knowledge gained via ‘othering’ becomes the political vision of reality whose structure promotes racism via Native and non-native as the starting and endpoint of analysis, research and public policy.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, Said contends that knowledge profoundly connects to operations of power and resistance. Knowledge of the other is both an ideological and an ontological accompaniment of colonial power. In other words, when western minds produce

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<sup>241</sup> Foucault, “The Archaeology”, intro.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, *Restructuring Relations: Indigenous Self-Determination, Governance, and Gender*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>244</sup> Kuokkanen, *Restructuring*

<sup>245</sup> Grande, *Red Pedagogy*; Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003)

<sup>246</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (NY: Routledge Classics, 2014): 95, 281; Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2009); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (NY: Grove Press, 1963)

<sup>247</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (NY: Vintage Books, 1979);

knowledge, it is already warped and embedded in colonial relationships.<sup>248</sup> Colonial authority legitimizes through a constant negotiation with those it seeks to control. In the book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault asserts that dominant structures legitimate themselves by allowing a controlled space for disobedience—resistance is both produced and inoculated against by those in power.<sup>249</sup> While Foucault stresses that modern punishment mechanisms are insidious, this is not necessarily true for Indigenous-led demonstrations, activisms and blockades.<sup>250</sup> These are often met with heavy military strategies, ritualized violence, and demoralization tactics to reduce the resistance to the corporeality of their bodies.<sup>251</sup> This strategy occurs from Oka to Idle-No-More. From Duck Lake to the Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL). From Grassy Narrows to Tiny House Warriors.<sup>252</sup>

An example of hegemonic knowledge propagation is Swedish Naturalist Carolus Linnaeus' inauguration of the binomial nomenclature in the late 1700s, a classification system from which a western Eurocentric totalizing conception of the world emerged.<sup>253</sup> Living things were taken from their place in the intricate, interrelated web of existence and symbiosis and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order. The western Eurocentric eye familiarized new places by incorporating them into their

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<sup>248</sup> Said, *Orientalism*; Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (Sage Publications, 2013); James Tully. *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

<sup>249</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1977);

<sup>250</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 302; Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*; Bhabha, *The Location*; Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme/Discourse on Colonialism*, (New York University Press, 1950)

<sup>251</sup> Bhabha, *The Location* 95, 281; Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*

<sup>252</sup> For information on these significant issues, please see Oka Crisis: Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1993), Idle-No-More. <http://www.idlenomore.ca/>, Duck Lake: Mulvaney, Charles Pelham *The History of the North-west Rebellion of 1885: Comprising a Full and Impartial Account of the Origin and Progress of the War, Scenes in the Field, the Camp, and the Cabin; Including a History of the Indian Tribes of North-western Canada*, (Toronto: A.H. Hovey & Co., 1886): 32, DAPL Protests: a great quick reference is the Wikipedia site, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakota\\_Access\\_Pipeline\\_protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakota_Access_Pipeline_protests). Grassy Narrows: <http://freegrassy.net/>; and Jody Porter's *Children of the Poisoned River*, <https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/children-of-the-poisoned-river-mercury-poisoning-grassy-narrows-first-nation/>, Tiny House Warriors-Our Land is Our Home <http://tinyhousewarriors.com/>.

<sup>253</sup> Carolus Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita per classes, ordines, genera, & species*, (Leiden: Haak, 1735): 1–12; Gunnar Broberg, *Linnaeus, the Man and his Work*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983); T. A. Sprague, "Linnaeus as a nomenclaturist," *Taxon*, vol. 2, no. 3, (1953): 40–46. A further note: Linnaeus began a systematic study of human skull size and brain weight to endeavour hierarchal categorization.

categorical systems. Labels became globally applied.<sup>254</sup> This universalization process is about creating a nexus for sharing knowledge. Nonetheless, it is troubling. As Professor of Iranian Studies, Hamid Dabashi states, “There is, thus, a direct and unmediated structural link between an empire...and the presumed universality of a thinker thinking in the bosom of that empire.”<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, in her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Professor of Language and Literature, Mary Louise Pratt states that Western colonial science developed as a universal nexus, as opposed to being one of many, to endeavour to master the globe through incorporating, appropriating and learning from while simultaneously oppressing and displacing other knowledge systems.<sup>256</sup> It is through the violence of paternalistic objectivity that settler colonial invasion is considered legitimate.<sup>257</sup>

### **Eugenic Logic**

This paternalistic violence saturates the notion of indexing, categorizing and sifting human beings. In the book *Measuring the Master Race: Physical Anthropology in Norway, 1890-1945*, Norwegian Science Historian Jon Røyne Kyllingstad contends that the idea of a superior Nordic race held a crucial position in early anthropological research on racial identity and origins.<sup>258</sup> He suggests it was a common theme for the

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<sup>254</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (NY: Routledge, 2003) Pratt's book is an excellent introduction to the nuances and interconnections between settler colonialism, imperialism, power and capitalism. Significantly, the universalizing of categories describing the natural world is strategically hegemonic and demands that all other knowledge become secondary to this particular universalized knowledge. For example, the Latin binomial nomenclature names for a specific plant, such as Taro, will render the same thing regardless of location. Scientifically, Taro is called *Colocasia esculenta*. It belongs to a Kingdom, a Clade, a Family, an Order, a Genus and a Species. This scientific name applies universally. Nonetheless, locally it is called many names; each one is related to the specific place and cultures it interacts with. For instance, it is called ndalo in Fiji, talo in Samoa, amateke in Rwanda and cocoyam in Ghana. In Hawaii, it is Kalo, and it is the elder sibling to kanaka maoli. It is an integral part of the ecosystem of Hawaiian culture. Nonetheless, with the imposition of universalization, the Indigenous knowledge of that plant and its interrelationships will be accepted academically only as secondary or folk.

<sup>255</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (NY: Zed Books, 2015): 36

<sup>256</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 36; Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, (Cambridge University Press, 1995)

<sup>257</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 29, 30-35, 36, Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 30-35; Vine Deloria Jr, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003) Eugene Richard Umeek Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis*, (Vancouver: UBC Press 2011); Leanne Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011)

<sup>258</sup> Jon Røyne Kyllingstad, *Measuring the Master Race: Physical Anthropology in Norway, 1890-1945* (Open Book Publishers, 2015). This book can be found here: <https://books.openedition.org/obp/2372>; A

rationalization of settler colonization processes, slavery practices and settler occupation. Along with the universal application of Linnaeus' binomial nomenclature, Danish Archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen's system of three ages: Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age, published in 1836 and translated to English in 1848 and Darwin's theory of evolution in 1859, the notion of classifying various human beings into evolutionary groups took hold of white supremacist minds.<sup>259</sup> Just on the threshold of the 1840s-1860s industrial revolution, the burgeoning eugenics movement and the construction of disability.

Intrinsically, disability is not fixed in embodiment but is located socially within geographical and historical contexts.<sup>260</sup> The word disability is a blanket term used to describe many people with nothing in common except they do not fit a Eurocentric normal. Meekosha argues that universalizing renders disabled people invisible and ignores colonial production of disabled bodies and Indigenous disablement from land. In this context, the process of disabling is a total dehumanizing process, including the destruction of physical, emotional, psychic, economic and cultural life.<sup>261</sup> The definition of disability is not static but is fundamentally linked to the needs of capital accumulation.<sup>262</sup> Being disabled as a social identity was nonexistent in many Indigenous communities. In these communities, there is no word for disability.<sup>263</sup> Correspondingly, it

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significant note: American Samuel George Morton is often cited as the 'father of scientific racism, as he was doing studies that are very similar to what was happening in Europe, scientifically inaugurated via Carolus Linnaeus' work, *Systema naturæ per regna tria naturæ, secundum classes, ordines, genera, species, cum characteribus, differentiis, synonymis, locis* 10th ed., (Stockholm: Laurentius Salvius, 1758):1–824 and Scandinavia. This is direct evidence of the sort of knowledge sharing that was happening to reinforce the validity of scientifically proven racism as evidence to justify the brutality of colonialism and settler colonial violence. For more information on Samuel George Morton, please see Stephan Gould's "Morton's Ranking of Races by Cranial Capacity." Archived 2011-06-18, Wayback Machine *Science* 200 (May 5, 1978): 503–509, <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/pdf/10.1098/rstl.1836.0025>

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<sup>259</sup> Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006): 122; Bo Gräslund, "The Birth of Prehistoric Chronology: Dating Methods and Dating Systems in Nineteenth-Century Scandinavian Archaeology," *CUP Archive* (1987): 23-29

<sup>260</sup> Jaffee and John, 1411

<sup>261</sup> Meekosha, "Colonial Practices" 672

<sup>262</sup> Marta Russell and Ravi Malhotra, *Capitalism and Disability*, *Socialist Register*, (2002): 216

<sup>263</sup> Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for Their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled*, (Gallaudet University Press, 2002)

was nonexistent in western society until the industrial revolution. Disability was constructed during specific historical circumstances.<sup>264</sup> During the industrial revolution, able-bodied meant higher productivity.

By the late 1800s, early 1900s, racist ideologies in Europe asserted back-up by science. Norwegian scholar Narve Fulsås suggests that the most prominent popularizer of anthropological racial theories was the Norwegian amateur scientist and writer Andreas Hansen. He gathered information from various disciplines such as geology, archaeology, linguistics and geography and constructed a historical synthesis based on the anthropological findings. Namely, skull measurements. White Anthropologists were entirely preoccupied with measuring skulls to determine the humanness of various populations.<sup>265</sup> During the last four decades of the 19th century, ideologically charged ideas about evolution and race were developed, criticized and tested against biological theories and empirical findings (all set in a white Eurocentric context, of course).<sup>266</sup> Such knowledge could be and was readily used to legitimize racist, imperialist and settler colonial ideologies.

Additionally, the eugenics ideology led to an organized eugenics movement in the early 20th century.<sup>267</sup> The International Federation of Eugenics Organization (IFEEO) was formed in 1912 to manage international cooperation between national groups. Eugenicists were united in the belief that natural selection in humans was decreasing due to modern life.<sup>268</sup> The spread of so-called less worthy elements at the expense of valuable human material had to be countered by public intervention in the biological reproduction of individual members of society.<sup>269</sup> The idea of improving the human race did not

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<sup>264</sup> Victor Finklestein, *Attitudes and Disabled people: Issues for Discussion*, International Exchange of Information in rehabilitation. (1980)

<sup>265</sup> Narve Fulsås, *Historie og nasjon. Ernst Sars og striden om norsk kultur*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1999): 159; Kjeldstadli, Knut, "Andreas M. Hansen," *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, Jon Gunnar et al eds., (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1999-2005):47-48, [http://nbl.snl.no/Andreas\\_Hansen](http://nbl.snl.no/Andreas_Hansen)

<sup>266</sup> Kyllingstad, *Creating the Master*, 50

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Colette Leung, "The Living Archives Project: Canadian Disability and Eugenics," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2010): 143–66, 151: "Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada 2012 Overview" (PDF).

<sup>269</sup> Stefan Kühn, *Die Internationale der Rassisten*, (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1997); Kyllingstad, *Creating the Master*, 51

necessarily link to the concept of 'human races' in the physical anthropological sense. Much thought centred on the frequency of inherited traits for health and disease without much attention to racial classification. Heritable traits were measured against a specific normative and produced in tandem with the industrialization of Europe and settler colonial states such as Canada.<sup>270</sup>

After the Industrial Revolution in Europe (1820-1840), populations designated as inferior became a locus for reformation to produce competent labourers. As capitalism flourished and cities grew, hundreds of families and children were oppressed and impoverished. Many families could not afford to feed, clothe and educate their children. Countless children were orphaned. Authorities of the time asserted that these children had no choice but a life of pauperism and crime. This led to the emergence of 'ragged schools' in 1844.<sup>271</sup> From these schools emerged state-run Reform Schools and the Industrial School Act in 1857.<sup>272</sup> The Industrial schools were so successful in reformation and assimilation that they formed a composite model for a specifically segregated school for Indigenous children in settler colonial states. Various churches from the 1830s had already established earlier schools. These came to be known as Indian Residential Schools (IRS), run by church and state and mandatory in terms of attendance after Canada's confederacy in 1867.<sup>273</sup> Indigenous parents faced high penalties, including imprisonment, if they did not comply. The IRS system was deplorably underfunded and rife with malnourishment, disease and physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse.

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<sup>270</sup> Colette Leung, "The Living Archives Project: Canadian Disability and Eugenics," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2010): 143–66, 151: "Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada 2012 Overview" (PDF).

<sup>271</sup> Laura Mair, *They 'Come for a Lark': London Tagged School Union Teaching Advice in Practice, 1844-70*. Cambridge University Press 2019: The History of Ragged Schools, <https://www.maybole.org/history/articles/historyofraggedschools.htm>

<sup>272</sup> Courtney Dickason and Bridgette Watson, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc say ground-penetrating radar was used to locate remains, *CBC News*, Posted: May 27, 2021

<sup>273</sup> needs citation: non-indigenous children were not required to attend Industrial schools. Most were homeschooled or schooled in small one-room schoolhouses. Some were sent to Europe for formal education.

Thousands of children perished due to these factors; buried in the school grounds in unmarked graves.<sup>274</sup>

Meanwhile, in the newly emerging 20th century, several sections of the IFEO movement adopted racial ideals viewing the protection of the Nordic race as a primary goal.<sup>275</sup> Consequently, the term ‘racial hygiene’. This created a market for racial anthropology, and eugenics became a strong justification for research into racial differences.<sup>276</sup> From the mid-1920s, racial theories were linked with an interconnected system of racist dogmas with international support (USA, Canada, Germany/Western Europe and Scandinavia). Interestingly, this was met with increasingly vigorous and coordinated academic opposition.<sup>277</sup> Nonetheless, it is essential to note that opposition does not equate dismissal of the view of a racial hierarchy as authentic and scientific.<sup>278</sup> This was a general understanding among academics. White hierarchy remained, but many rejected dogmatic racism.

Significantly, during this time, Canadian Suffragists, specifically the Famous Five, were closely associated and proponents of the IFEO and advocated for the mandatory sterilization of people with substance abuse disorder, people with epilepsy, the impoverished, crime repeaters, sex trade workers, many BIPOC, LGBTQIA and Two-Spirit, individuals who were physical and mentally disabled, and people with mental health conditions.<sup>279</sup> According to Cecily Devereux, all five of the Canadian advocate leaders participated in the Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta, Canada. In her book *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism*, Devereux

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<sup>274</sup> Erin Hanson, “The Residential School System” Indigenous Foundations, (2009), [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_residential\\_school\\_system/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/)

<sup>275</sup> Kühl, Die Internationale

<sup>276</sup> Kyllingstad, Creating the Master, 51.

<sup>277</sup> Gunnar Broberg, (1995) "Eugenics in Sweden, Efficient Care," *Eugenics and the Welfare State*, (1995): 77-150; Daniel K. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986): 123-27; Kühl, Die Internationale, 71-94

<sup>278</sup> Jon Røyne Kyllingstad, *Kortskaller og langskaller: Norsk fysisk antropologi i Norge og striden om det nordiske herremennesket* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2004): 153-156. Note: I think this is something that prevails today in that many settler colonizers claim they are not racist yet adhere to notions of cultural evolution, superiority, progress and development.

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<sup>279</sup> Cecily Devereux, *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism*

proposes that many suffragists held the belief that immigrants from other countries would corrupt the white race.<sup>280</sup> Between 1928-1972, 4,800 cases were proposed for sterilization in Alberta, and 99% received approval.<sup>281</sup> However, this practice was distributed unequally among the population, including people with disability, women, children, unemployed persons, domestic workers, rural citizens, unmarried mothers, the institutionalized, Roman and Greek Catholics, Ukrainians, Indigenous; Inuit, First Nations and Metis. Many of these populations were perceived as unable to participate in the normal of mainstream white protestant society. In other words, those considered by the state to be unable or disabled. Nellie McClung, the celebrated Canadian suffragist, and Emily Murphy, the first Canadian female magistrate for the British Empire, advocated and promoted the forced sterilization of those individuals stigmatized as 'feeble-minded'.<sup>282</sup>

White imaginings of society and nationalism based on the idea of a master race never made a hegemonic breakthrough via a single discipline. However, what did take hold and became hegemonic was the idea of a unilateral, albeit not always linear, cultural evolutionism as advocated in the early 1900s. From savage to civilized, social developmental hierarchy was asserted.<sup>283</sup> Eugenics ideology supported itself through transmogrifying ontologies that would substantiate and support its ideology. This fueled and justified the IRS system in Canada to assimilate and eliminate Indigenous ways of being.

While not a complete conceptualization of the history involved, since that is outside of the scope of this study, this humble glimpse illuminates the kind of environment that undergirds the foundational apparatus' of contemporary Canadian structures, systems and institutions. It is significant to note that white supremacy was the reality in Western settler colonial discourses no matter which way the argument. This offers insight into why being white means we are racist. Further, it discloses that settler

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<sup>280</sup> Cecily Devereux, *Growing a Race*

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> John Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, (TO: The University of Toronto Press, 2016): ix, 134, 159; Patrick Macklem, *The Sovereignty of Human Rights*, (NY: University of Oxford Press, 2015): 41-51, 164-171

colonialism and its racist structures have foundations in ideologies and ontologies that are affected and constructed by white western Eurocentric human beings arguing about the intricacies that explain how modern developed society/civilization (white) is superior to other modalities of being. In this way, racism moves from being an ideological effect of religiosity to being a benevolent quality of empirical modernity. As such, settler colonialism becomes a classic mode of helping, developing, progressing and advancing societies it deems as less civilized, underdeveloped or unable, even though settler colonial processes are often the root cause of these apparent states of being.

Part of this consists of appropriating and incorporating traditional knowledge. Settler colonial knowledge production occurs via negotiation with and incorporation of Indigenous ideas. Racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada is a confluence of white supremacy, transmogrified ontology, specific ideology and eugenics. And a significant eugenics weapon used against Indigenous peoples is disablement from land. In fact, along with forced starvation, contagious diseases, brutal abuse and murder of countless women, men, girls and boys, LGBTQIA and Two-Spirit persons. Along with the atrocities of lies, broken treaties, continuous oppression, state neglect, denial of potable water, and regulated assimilation agendas—land theft endures as one of the most fatal of eugenic tactics.<sup>284</sup> I would even propose that Indigenous land theft is genocidal wounding and disablement perpetrated through authoritarian militant terror. Return of Indigenous spaces is the locus of reconciliation praxis.

### **Disablement from Land**

In their paper, *Decolonizing Antiracism*, Mi'kmaq Writer Bonita Lawrence and Feminist Scholar Enakshi Dua state that “to speak of Indigenous nationhood is to speak of land as Indigenous, in ways that are neither rhetorical nor metaphorical.”<sup>285</sup> Further to this Sium et al assert, “where possibility of failure lies, is when we fail to recognize that land, spirit, and mind are inherently connected –creating sharp separations has been an

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<sup>284</sup> John Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, (TO: The University of Toronto Press, 2016): ix, 134, 159; Patrick Macklem, *The Sovereignty of Human Rights*, (NY: University of Oxford Press, 2015): 41-51, 164-171

<sup>285</sup> Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice*, vol. 32, no. 4 (2005): 125

important part of the colonial project.”<sup>286</sup> Indigenous relationships to land include intimate connections that must not be idealized or appropriated. Instead, they can generate ontology, theory, and instructions for everyday acts needed for the survival of all living beings.<sup>287</sup> For Lawrence and Dua, decolonizing means taking and enacting direction via the full reclamation of Indigenous histories, present conditions and vision for the future.<sup>288</sup> This is further underscored by Michael Chandler and William Dunlop in *Cultural Wounds Demand Cultural Medicine* wherein they stipulate that “there are wounds that supersede the boundaries of single individuals, damaging whole cultural communities at once,” and further, Indigenous peoples “require intervention strategies aimed at restoring to such wounded groups, ownership and control of their own past and collective futures.”<sup>289</sup>

Settler colonial eugenic logic renders settler colonialism as enablement and all other ways of being as varying degrees of disablement. The logic of elimination strives to erase and replace all that stands in the way of capitalistic profit, including Indigenous peoples, cultures, ways of life, ontological understandings and relationships to land because it wants to solidify categories like Indigenous, disabled, race, gender, sexuality. However, such ideological solidification creates a situation that values privileged over and above the ‘less fortunate’. This is because, as Jaffee and John declare, the state quickly absorbs the privileged.<sup>290</sup> The ontology of elimination is a horrendous transmogrification and seeks to erase that which does not fit its ableistic mandate. Separating humans from nature through separation from land is one of its most destructive weapons.<sup>291</sup>

Garland-Thompson suggests that an ontology of elimination is a eugenic logic functioning to legitimize genocidal practices on disabled people in ways that echo the

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<sup>286</sup> in Sium et al. “Towards the Tangible” 5

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Lawrence and Dua, “Decolonizing Antiracism”

<sup>289</sup> Michael Chandler and William Dunlop, chapter 14 “Cultural Wounds Demand Cultural Medicines” Chapter 14, *Indigenous Determinates of Health*, (2015)

<sup>290</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1413.

<sup>291</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1414

logic of elimination in settler colonialism.<sup>292</sup> As Wolfe suggests, settler colonial logic rests on eliminating the original inhabitants of the land to justify land theft for capital accumulation.<sup>293</sup> Indigenous peoples' existence threatens the legitimacy of settler colonial land claims which are foundational to capitalism. In terms of disability, it is a mandate to eliminate those deemed unfit to work.<sup>294</sup> Disabled people are reduced to humiliation because they are less exploitable by the ruling class who control capitalist economy.<sup>295</sup>

Appropriation and dispossession are not simply just denying Indigenous peoples physical space but speaks to the efforts to disappear Indigenous peoples for the sake of capitalist profit and accumulation, settler colonial territorial expansion, destruction of language, culture, and history that inextricably interweave within land and water-based lifeways.<sup>296</sup> As Sarah Hunt stipulates in her paper *Embodying Self-determination: Resisting Violence Beyond the Gender Binary*, "the heart of the colonization of Turtle Island is the settler colonial project of indigenous disappearance necessary for land resource extraction and exploitation and for capitalistic economy."<sup>297</sup> Paternalistic ideologies of unfit, savage, incompetent, subhuman and dependent are ascribed to those who cannot or refuse to be used to expand capital. The entanglement of race and disability emerges through the transmutation of ontologies about ability and embodiment. Settler colonial logic of erasure and land theft ensures the continuity of displacement, confinement and genocide of Indigenous peoples.

Moreover, Jaffee and John propose that Indigenous struggles to protect the earth and protect the land, water, and resources suggest an ontology specifically related to land.<sup>298</sup> It is an ontology that is culturally contextual, open and adaptive. As Diane

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<sup>292</sup> Garland-Thomson, *Extra Ordinary Bodies*, 28

<sup>293</sup> Wolfe *Settler Colonialism*, 163; Clare, *Exile and Pride*

<sup>294</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling bodies" 1415.

<sup>295</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling bodies" 1415

<sup>296</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*; Taiaiake Alfred, "The Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program: A Mohawk Approach to Land Based Education," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, (2014), vol. 3, no. 3:134-144

<sup>297</sup> Sarah Hunt, "Embodying Self-determination: Resisting Violence Beyond the Gender Binary" *Determinants of Indigenous peoples' health in Canada*, (2015) 104-119.

<sup>298</sup> Deloria 1972; Jaffee and John "Disabling bodies" 1407

Million states in her essay *Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History*, it is “felt and experiential.”<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, Indigenous ontology about land informs CDT that the disablement of space via settler colonial practices of land appropriation and exploitation for profit yields the disablement of Indigenous bodies and worldviews.<sup>300</sup> Anthropocentric destruction of ecology via settler colonial processes as express by Jaffee and John is, “inextricable from the disablement of Indigenous ontology, peoples and communities.”<sup>301</sup> Removing children from their families and communities is disablement. Hunt asserts this causes land, spirit, culture and Indigenous bodies to be devastated.<sup>302</sup> Kovach, Smith, Deloria, Mucina, Alfred, Simpson, Corntassel and many other Indigenous scholars emphasize how Indigenous ontologies stress kinship, language, ceremony, song and story-telling within social organization. Indigenous peoples have held ontological connections to their ancestral lands for millennia. Resisting ableism is resisting settler colonial transmogrified ontologies that create settler colonial supremacist structures.<sup>303</sup>

Indigenous ontologies question inherent dualities such as sacred/secular, human/animal, land/knowledge, mind/matter.<sup>304</sup> They challenge scholars to think differently about binaries and view things through a different ontological lens—and this manifests in distinct ways of living, being, interacting with the world.<sup>305</sup> Settler colonial genocidal assimilation enlists a simultaneous ontological slaughter and ontological replacement. Moreover, in the article, *Disability: the “difference” that global capital makes* Nirmala Erevelles contends that it requires able-bodied supremacy forged on disablement from land and reflects the material production of disabled bodies.<sup>306</sup> It

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<sup>299</sup> Million, “Felt Theory”

<sup>300</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1408

<sup>301</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1407; Million, “Felt Theory”; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*

<sup>302</sup> Sarah Hunt, “Embodying Self-Determination: Resisting violence Beyond the Gender Binary” UBC Event, (November 4, 2015) <https://grsj.arts.ubc.ca/events/event/sarah-hunt-lecture/>

<sup>303</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1412

<sup>304</sup> Deloria *Custer Died*; Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1407

<sup>305</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1410

<sup>306</sup> Nirmala Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic*, (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2011); Tech 2015; Meekosha and Shuttleworth “Disability and Critical Sociology” 319-20; bell hooks 2006 in Jaffee and John, “Disabling Bodies” 1406-1407

challenges Eurocentric CDT by rejecting dualism and addressing what Jaffee and John call the “enmeshment of disability oppression with white supremacy, imperialism and settler colonialism.”<sup>307</sup> Additionally, they assert that Indigenous ontological conceptions of interdependency and mind/body/space inform and enrich understanding of the ongoing violence of settler coloniality.<sup>308</sup> Furthermore, they stress that Indigenous Resurgence significantly centres on human, animal and plant communities, family, relationality, prayer, love, protection, ceremony and reverence for ecology, environment and nature. It rejects interwoven systems of power such as settler colonialism, patriarchy and white supremacy, as well as concepts of hierarchy between species and other beings living and nonliving.<sup>309</sup>

Significantly, Disability Scholar Minerva Rivas-Velarde, suggests most discourse on disability comes from non-indigenous settler colonial sources.<sup>310</sup> She makes a call to non-indigenous scholars to collaborate and decolonize disability. As stipulated by Scholar Helen Meekosha, colonial practices are directly linked to high rates of preventable disability and current disability rights and disability justice models do not sufficiently reflect assimilation, dispossession or genocide experienced by Indigenous peoples<sup>311</sup>. Jaffee and John reiterate that medical models fixate deficiency in individual bodies and minds that require repair through medical intervention. This depoliticizes disability by obscuring the shared experiences of oppression, whereas social models locate issues and problems in society that render particular bodies and minds disabled.<sup>312</sup>

Nonetheless, Jaffee and John caution that for settler colonial states to universalize disability and disability rights is highly problematic and perpetuates oppression, assimilation and saviourism.<sup>313</sup> This is the same transmogrified logic used to force

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<sup>307</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1407

<sup>308</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1408

<sup>309</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1408

<sup>310</sup> Minerva Rivas-Velarde, “Indigenous perspectives of Disability” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, (2018), vol.38, no. 4.

<sup>311</sup> Helen Meekosha, “Decolonizing Disability: Thinking and Acting Globally”, *Disability and Society*, (2011) vol. 26, no. 6

<sup>312</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1411.

<sup>313</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1412

relocation, removal, dispossession and disavowal of Indigenous Nationhood. Disability Activist Karen Soldatic stresses that even a human rights model is confined to Eurocentric frameworks and does not account for disability consequent of imperialism, colonialism and globalized capitalism.<sup>314</sup> Further, Meekosha argues that universalizing renders disabled people invisible and ignores colonial production of disabled bodies and disablement from land. In this context the process of disabling is a total dehumanizing process, including the destruction of physical, emotional, psychic, economic and cultural life.<sup>315</sup> For Soldatic the structure of settler colonialism fundamentally transforms the social ontology of disability for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge systems map the body and mind differently from settler colonial models.<sup>316</sup> Hunt gives the example of the Indian Act as a totalizing institution infiltrating into all aspects of Indigenous lives and designed to assimilate and dissolve Indigenous governments.<sup>317</sup> Status life was highly categorical and regulated.

Residential schools were crucial for disabling families by removing children and disabling children by removing them from land, language, culture and imposing racialized gender. On entering the IRS, the children became Indigenous *boys* and *girls*.<sup>318</sup> Hunt asserts that cultural practices were systematically shifted and replaced by imposed settler colonial values, race categories and gender roles.<sup>319</sup> The construction of these categories was to assimilate and erase Indigenous peoples over time, intergenerationally. Settler colonial practices of oppression, dispossession, division, minimization and erasure of Indigenous Nationhood makes settlers able—and perpetuates settler colonial violence.<sup>320</sup> In their book, *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*, Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman and Alison Carey suggest

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<sup>314</sup> Karen Soldatic, “The Transnational Sphere of Justice: Disability praxis and the Politics of Impairment,” *Disability, Global Conflicts and Crisis*, vol. 28, no. 6, (2013), 744-755

<sup>315</sup> Meekosa “Decolonizing Disability” 672)

<sup>316</sup> Karen Soldatic, “Post-colonial re-productions: Disability, Indigeneity and the formation of the White Masculine Settler State of Australia,” *Social Identities*, (2015), vol. 21, no. 1: 1-16.

<sup>317</sup> Sarah Hunt, “Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept” *Cultural geographies*, (August 16, 2013): <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1474474013500226>

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Jaffee and John “Disabling bodies” 1413

that ableistic ontology gives rise to eugenics, reproductive control, forced sterilization and pathologizing of race.<sup>321</sup> Disability is a symbol of settler colonial violence. It is also a location that is valuable in terms of resistance to intersecting systems of oppression. The logic of elimination targets indigenous peoples and disabled people. The result for Jaffee and John is that settler colonialism disables the land.<sup>322</sup>

In her paper *Perfect Subjects: Race, Tuberculosis, and the Qu'Appelle BCG Vaccine Trial*, Maureen Lux asserts that social Darwinism infuses settler understanding of Indigenous peoples.<sup>323</sup> Ideas of evolutionary survival of the fittest as applied to societies have been used to explain and justify settler colonial violence to Indigenous peoples. Moreover, we cannot relegate such action to a dark historic period, as per Canada's Prime Minister's 'tweet' regarding the unmarked IRS graves, because we still justify the theft of land with conquest and inevitable due to modernization. Disease and death were seen as a part of the difficult transition from savagery to assimilation into civility. However, we cannot see this as a correct understanding because it does not consider the emergence and development of an Indigenous Nation/hood that retains territory and autonomy: i.e., starvation, disease, exposure, overcrowding, high infant mortality, lack of potable water are not the normative for Indigenous life ways. Indeed, it is just a powder-puff version of what Indigenous peoples know to be genocide.

For many settler Canadians this means rethinking concepts we take for granted. For example, settler colonialism is not the status quo nor the fundamental baseline for existence on Indigenous lands. Indigenous peoples have a long-time relationship to land water and life in the places where they live. The settler has a much shorter relationship to this place. The fundamental baseline for human existence on these lands is in fact Indigenous. People whose ancestors and communities have always existed here and, "... have a continual right to their lands and waters, to sovereignty and indeed their right to exist beyond fetishized historical memory of settler colonialism."<sup>324</sup> Dispossession of

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<sup>321</sup> Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman and Alison Carey, *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*, (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2014): 162-181

<sup>322</sup> Jaffee and John "Disabling bodies" 1423

<sup>323</sup> Maureen Lux, "Perfect Subjects," 277-95

<sup>324</sup> Sium et al, "Towards the Tangible," 3

land and access to waterways is materially and spiritually destructive to Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous peoples the desire to reclaim and retain relationships with land and water requires sacrifices difficult for non-indigenous peoples to understand.<sup>325</sup> Land as property is deeply entangled in ideologies of settler colonialism and dependent on constructions of land as extractable capital, the denial of Indigenous sovereignty, myths of Discovery, *terra nullius* and the inevitability of the nation-state.<sup>326</sup> Land in an Indigenous context is not property. It is knowing and knowledge.<sup>327</sup> Kanaka Maoli Poet and Scholar Manulani Aluli Meyer states,

The land is our mother. This is not a metaphor. Land was the central theme that drew forth all others. You came from a place. You grew up in a place and you had relationship with that place...Land, ocean shaped my thinking, my way of being and my priorities...One does not simply learn about land, we learn best from land.<sup>328</sup>

The struggle for decolonization and reconciliation takes hard work to weave tentative connection between peoples and communities into durable relationships.<sup>329</sup> Imaginatively, new ways of entering relationships can be constructed, but the work takes much more than simply imagining. There is a deeper location from which emerges the possibility of recasting human relations.<sup>330</sup> The very conception of what it means to settler Canadians to be human as symbiotic with our planet needs to be re-made while simultaneously staying away from anthropomorphizing or anthropocentrism. That is what decolonization, resurgence and reconciliation means. The removal of colonial imposition, thought and ideology. The resurgence of Indigenous Nationhood, the return of Indigenous land and water ways to Indigenous communities and peoples. The elimination

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<sup>325</sup> Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill, “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy,” *Feminist Formations*, vol.25, no.1 (2013) (pp. 8-34):21

<sup>326</sup> Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, “Decolonizing Feminism,” 22

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming. Collected Early Writings of Manulani Meyer*, (HA: ‘Ai Pōhaku Press, 2003): 218, as quoted by Arvin et al: 22. And to further this, we do not have to perceive the land as female for it to be our mother. A mother is one who does mothering.

<sup>329</sup> Ruben Gaztambide-Fernández “Decolonization and the pedagogy of solidarity” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society*, vol.1, no. 1, (2012)

<sup>330</sup> Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument.” *CR: The New Centennial Review*, (2003) vol. 3, no. 3: 257-337

of colonial presence within our everyday corporeal actions. It doesn't just turn the world upside down and flip the narrative. It re-envision and re-makes the future.<sup>331</sup>

## **Confluence 2:**

### **Self-determination and sovereignty as a location of solidarity offering political frameworks for efficient mobilization.**

In this section I examine Access Intimacy and how this concept directly informs what Active Witnessing is and has helped me to form a model for what Active Witnessing looks like. Furthermore, this section also looks closely at the importance of agency in terms of self-determining bodies and how we interrelate with the greater collective. This informs us about being accountable and responsible within our everyday actions.

### **Access Intimacy**

Disability Activist, Mia Mingus proposes that the notion of Access Intimacy can transform ordinary access into a tool of emancipation, transformation and interrelationality rather than enforcing ideologies of inclusion and equality<sup>332</sup>. Additionally, echoing the understanding of Indigenous knowledge as whole and complete (as opposed to being extra or added on), Mingus asserts that disability cannot simply be included into able-bodied agendas. Settler colonial structural violence cannot simply be noticed only when it is convenient<sup>333</sup>.

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<sup>331</sup> Sium et al, 12

<sup>332</sup> Mia Mingus, "Access Intimacy, Interdependence and Disability Justice" 2017 <https://sfpirg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Access-Intimacy-Mia-Mingus.pdf>

<sup>333</sup> Another extremely significant concept developed by Indigenous scholars and activists is Indigenous Disability Justice. This model addresses Disability Rights models as well as centering on and interrogating the deeper levels of colonial standardizations that produce conditions of disability through systemic ableism. This includes embedded systemic oppressions such as class, race, gender, sexuality and more. It confronts the very colonial structures that create conditions of inaccessibility in the first place. In many ways, Indigenous Disability Justice is fundamental to all justice. To take a deeper look into this please see the following: Dion, J. "Falling through the cracks: Canadian Indigenous children with disabilities." *McGill Center for human rights and legal pluralism*. (Vo. 5. No. 12. Spring 2017):1-34; Ineese-Nash N. "Disability as a Colonial Construct: The Missing Discourse of Culture in Conceptualizations of Disabled Indigenous Children". University of Toronto Research Associate, Schools of Early Childhood Education and Child and Youth Care, (Ryerson University. N.d.): 1-22; Jaffee, L. and John, K. "Disabling Bodies of/and Land: Reframing Disability Justice in Conversation with Indigenous Theory and Activism". *Disability and the Global South*. (Vol.5, No. 2, 2018): 1407-1429.

As such, there is a need to look deeper into the transformative power of CDT rather than focusing on only gaining access to the current system. It is not enough to simply include people with disability into an ableist system. Likewise, it is not enough to include women in patriarchy, queer persons in hetero-cisgendered society, and persons of colour into systemic racism or Indigenous peoples, places, and languages as an extra, or distinct part of the settler colonial whole<sup>334</sup>. This is because it is the system that excludes that must be challenged, dismantled, and questioned as to why there are hierarchies of privilege and power. Mingus posits that cultivating Access Intimacy directly challenges ableism and the relentless isolation of oppressed communities endure.<sup>335</sup> Access Intimacy recognizes and understands the relational and human quality of access and deepens relationships involved. It moves away from logistics into the realm of relationships and understanding disabled people as human beings. Access Intimacy is interdependence in action. It does not focus on perfect accessibility or calling out ableism but rather on the impact of inaccessibility and ableism has on disabled people and their day to day lives.<sup>336</sup> This includes acts such as finding ways to bypass barriers.

For example, when I was going through a court process for a settlement, I was unable to hire a lawyer. I had to rely on the limited capacity of the court offices where they can offer some assistance but no legal advice. I found this process impossible to navigate since every time I filled out my paperwork the court clerk would inevitably turn me away. This is a very time consuming and physically demanding problem since you can end up in line for several hours at a time. At one point, a person I had spoken to in the legal offices noticed me once again in line for a court clerk's signature. She slipped me a handwritten note telling me to hold off waiting in line as she had a connection that would by-pass this process. After months of futile trying, within a week my whole case was resolved. When I later asked her how she figured out how to by-pass the bureaucracy she told me she was lying in bed thinking about why it was so difficult for me to get through the system, when she realized there had been a case similar to mine so she looked it up and figured out who would be the best connection to get the paperwork done.

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<sup>335</sup> Mingus, "Access Intimacy"

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

Her act of Active Witnessing is that extra effort she made in thinking about the situation, her own legal connections within the bureaucratic court offices and putting this into purposeful action.

Access Intimacy as Active Witnessing is an Everyday Act of conscious and purposeful facilitation for Indigenous Resurgence. It is an Everyday Act of Reconciliation. The experience of Access Intimacy as Active Witnessing is transformative, generative, caring, life loving and holds space. Holding space is a conscious act of being present, open, flexible and protective.<sup>337</sup> As such, it means applying intention and attention to the spaces of privilege that are held by dominant societal, political and cultural narratives. And returning or offering these spaces to those who do not have the same privileges. Holding space is a location of and recognition of vulnerability in which the holder must offer safety, trust and trustworthiness. In terms of Active Witnessing, this requires that the privileged ally serves as a buffer against settler colonial structural violence. Furthermore, it entails maintaining scrupulous transparency, confidentiality, impeccability and accountability. This also means that the suspension of self-importance as deeper a form of care.

It is intimacy; symbiotic, interstitial, agential and relational. It is a collective responsibility of individuals engaging in acts of care and shifts from hidden to visible, from silence to freedom, from burden to value, from isolation to connecting, from rigid to creative and emergent. It resists a world we don't want and builds one in which we do want. It dispels the insidious myth of independence.<sup>338</sup> Independence is the ideology that individuals can and should be able to do everything on their own. But this is of course impossible. This myth rewards predatory capitalism and reveals a deep level of privilege especially in this unevenly individualistic capitalist society. It has produced the false idea that individuals can even mildly conceive of their lives or their own accomplishments as solely their own. The myth of independence is about the high value that gets placed on buying into the myth and believing that everyone is independent and the high value

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<sup>337</sup> Adam Brady, "Holding Space: The Art of Being Present with Others." *The Chopra Center*, (2019) <https://chopra.com/articles/holding-space-the-art-of-being-present-with-others>

<sup>338</sup>Mingus, "Access Intimacy"

placed on striving to be independent as a cornerstone of the current ableist culture.<sup>339</sup> Instead of independence, Mingus, suggests considering interdependence. The notion of interdependence moves towards mutual aid and symbiosis. It moves away from burden towards value, humanness and love.

### **Phenomenological Interrelationships**

While settler colonial states like Canada are built on hierarchal ontologies of development, progress and advancement, there are other ontological ways to understand the world around us. In her essay, *Felt Theory*, Million proposes that histories and genealogies are storied in the body and in places, lands and waters. They are storied in relationship to each other, to animals, to plants, to places, to the seen, and the unseen worlds.<sup>340</sup> As such she describes Indigenous knowledges as responses to situations. They are embodied and come from a body rather than being about a body.<sup>341</sup> Further, she stipulates those emotions are experienced differently from sensation and they require specific language to express them. Emotions are part of culture and form a foundational part of Indigenous culture. They are socio-relational. In this way, they are engaged, deeply social and relational, and they can be managed and connected with social agency.<sup>342</sup> Without a concept of emotionality, cultural analysis is insufficient. Once emotion is accepted into sociology, the divisions between the private and the public, the micro and the macro, begin to dissolve. The social structure itself is both the medium and the outcome of emotionally embodied practices.<sup>343</sup>

Along these lines, in the article *Intimate Assemblages: Disability, Intercorporeality and the Labour of Attendant Care*, Kelly Fritsch eschews any notion of independence or autonomy for an interrelational and interdependent model.<sup>344</sup> To better understand human-machine, human animal and disabled-abled relationships Fritsch employs French

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to affect and History" *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 24, no2, pp 53-76

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Kelly Fritsch, "intimate assemblages: disability, intercorporeality and the labour of attendant care," *Critical Disability Discourse*, vol. 2 (2010): 1- 14

philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of assemblages, found in their book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.<sup>345</sup> This concept is understood as the culmination of experience and expression—an always emergent condition of the present.<sup>346</sup> In this condition, the relationship between mind and body is always on the same level, always in flux and always in motion. There are no beginnings and no endings there are no hierarchies and neither body, mind, nature or society are separated. Thus, relationships and relationalities are never fixed but rather are perpetually emerging, evolving and unfinished within the unfolding experience.<sup>347</sup> This alludes to a kind of embodied mutability and potential for change in any one of these locations. Further to this, the concept of assemblages is applicable to Decolonial CDT inquiry. Fritsch uses assemblages to move towards “an intercorporeal and relational ethics that has repercussions for all being.”<sup>348</sup>

This can help us to see how interrelated being is, how bodies are produced together. The body itself being an interrelation of parts. Life is a symbiotic process not a static state of being. Fritsch suggests life is a “becoming-in-the-world-with-others, a concept that is reiterated in Mucina's article, *We Exist Because They Exist*, wherein he describes a significant Ubuntu principle, *Umuntu ungu- muntu ngubuntu*. He translates this as meaning, “A person is a person among other persons or a person is a person only through their relationships with others, but here there is also a sense that humanity is bound up in one.”<sup>349</sup> Individually and collectively, bodies have always been, and always will exist<sup>350</sup>. Fritsch states that every human being gives and receives care based on some complex social arrangement at some point in their life.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1987)

<sup>346</sup> George Marcus and Erkan Saka, “Assemblage” *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol.23, no. 2-3 (May 2006): 101-106

<sup>347</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand*

<sup>348</sup> Fritsch, “Intimate Assemblages,” 1- 14

<sup>349</sup> Mucina, “We Exist because They Exist”

<sup>350</sup> Sarah Kunzler *Flesh and Word: Reading Bodies in Old Norse-Icelandic and early Irish literature*, Vol 31 *Trends in Medieval Philosophy*, (DeGruyter, 2016): 2

<sup>351</sup> Fritsch, “Intimate Assemblages,” 3

The idea that embodiment is interrelated, interdependent and felt is echoed in Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work in phenomenological embodiment theory.<sup>352</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, attention to the felt sense of the body need not require the assertion of a body that stands behind or exists prior to our preconceptions. A body is a nexus of living meanings, gaining these meanings through proprioception, the primary but unloading 'felt sense' that allows a body to be experienced as a coherent whole rather than a collection of disparate parts.<sup>353</sup> This felt sense challenges philosophical accounts of embodiment that rely on dualistic conceptions of body and mind/body theorists whose conceptions of the body are predicated on starkly drawn models of inside and outside. He suggests our bodies are inextricably intertwined with ourselves and the worlds in which our bodies are situated. Bodies become material through relations with others.<sup>354</sup>

Regarding relational materiality, Feminist Theorist Karen Barad states in her article, *Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality*,

“Learning how to intra-act responsibly within the world means understanding that we are not the only active beings—though this is never justification for deflecting that responsibility onto other entities. The acknowledgement of nonhuman agency does not lessen human accountability; on the contrary, it means that accountability requires that much more attentiveness to existing power asymmetries”<sup>355</sup>.

As such, she reveals notions not only of shared worlds with non-human beings but also of the many worlds that coexist on planet earth. Furthermore, non-human beings participate within the environment, both perceiving and responding to it via the mediation of sensory apparatuses that are definitively distinct from our own<sup>356</sup>.

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<sup>352</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. (NY: Routledge. 2013)

<sup>353</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Karen Barad, “Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1998): 87–128, 116–117. Barad's work is excellent and very complex. I am limited in my capacity and comprehension. As such, I cannot possibly do Barad's work full justice. I bring it into the discussion to deepen the research and underscore the significance of relationality and interrelationality. I bring into the research to problematize western theory and methodology.

<sup>356</sup> Barad, “Getting Real,” 87-128

Barad further examines this through her theory of Agential Realism.<sup>357</sup> According to Barad, the deeply connected way that everything is entangled with everything else means that any act of observation creates a temporary separation for the duration of the observational act.<sup>358</sup> This view of knowledge informs us about how culture and habits of thought can underscore and highlight some things while overlaying, erasing and omitting other things. It asserts that agency is relational and not own-able. There is no true objectivity because everything is falsifiable.<sup>359</sup> Further to this, Agential Realism describes the universe as encompassing all phenomena as ontologically inseparable from ‘intra-acting’ agencies. Like Foucault’s assertion that the human subject is not a free entity and no individual is the sole source of any expression.

This informs us that existence is a myriad of entanglement and emergent circumstances producing conditions of possibility of ‘humans’ and ‘non-humans’ ideologically and materially. In this way, Agential Realism is a non-anthropocentric positioning on meaning making. Barad suggests that it points to a symbiotic relationship between meaning and matter, what she refers to as Entanglement. This allows for reality as an abject disorder that coalesce into order through relationality. Thus, the reality we build is a cyphered messiness, with the very real possibility for new ideas about how we exist with other exiting entities, beings and things. And this leaves a wide space for finding ways in which to coexist.

Another non-anthropocentric concept that helps to flesh out reality as relational is Object Orientated Ontology (OOO). There are several theorists who describe OOO in different ways including Jane Bennet, Graham Harmon, Levi Bryant, Sam Mickey and Timothy Morton. The main concepts that I think are relevant are Flat Ontology, Withdrawal and Ecological Awareness. Flat Ontology is a non-hierarchal ontological understanding that has been by German Philosopher Edmund Husserl, French

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<sup>357</sup> Barad, 87-128.

<sup>358</sup> Barad, 116-117

<sup>359</sup> This is not meant to refute Scientific fact or truth as false, but to note that observation (and production) is never done completely free of bias or affect from the observer. Further, all fact is falsifiable and thus can always be re-examined, reknown and relearned. That is (falsifiability) what makes fact, scientifically proven.

philosopher Bruno Latour and Mexican/American Artist and Philosopher Manuel De Landa. American Theorist Levi Bryant defines it as:

“Flat Ontology makes two key claims. First, humans are not at the center of being, but are among beings. Second, objects are not a pole opposing a subject, but exist in their own right, regardless of whether any other object or human relates to them. Humans, far from constituting a category called “subject” that is opposed to “object”, are themselves one type of object among many.”<sup>360</sup>

In this way, Flat Ontology puts all things on the exact same level of significance while simultaneously insisting on the variegated diversity of all of it and each of it. No one object is higher, better, more important or lower, lesser, insignificant.

Relevant to this is the notion of Withdrawal. This term developed from German Philosopher Martin Heidegger’s work on existentialism and phenomenology and is used to describe the spectral way in which the closer you examine a thing the less of it becomes apparent. Withdrawal does not imply shrinking back in measurable space. It means something eludes direct access.<sup>361</sup> Like Million, Fritsch and Barad, Harman claims that there are no established foolproof procedures for surmounting emotions and beliefs because these are integral for reality. Moreover, reality is never encountered directly but is approached indirectly.<sup>362</sup> Reality, relies on relations, processes as well as internal complexities and contextual relations.

In Morton’s work on Ecological Awareness, he describes existence and beingness as a symbiosis which he frames as a “fragile, contingent, uneasy relationship.”<sup>363</sup> For Morton, Ecological Awareness means taking into account the marco-ecology of planets, storms, ponds and the internet, but also bioms that include the human body as food for predators, foragers and bacteria as well as internal gut, genital and oral bioms in which we shelter myriads of minute life forms.<sup>364</sup> And I would venture to suggest, Ecological

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<sup>360</sup> Channa van Dijk, Eva van der Graaf, Michiel den Haan, Rosa de Jong, Christiaan Roodenburg, Dyane Til and Deva Waal, eds., *Under Influence - Philosophical Festival Drift*, 2014. Lectures Omnia, <https://philpapers.org/archive/VANUI.pdf> (2015): 64-80

<sup>361</sup> Morton, *Humankindness*; Harman, *DoctorZamalek*

<sup>362</sup> Harman, *Object Orientated Ontology*

<sup>363</sup> Morton, “Being Ecological”

<sup>364</sup> Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. (New York: Routledge, 2002); E. D. Yong, *I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grand View of Life*, (ESCO Publishing, 2016)

Awareness means understanding land as un-ownable and its care located within Indigenous knowledges. This requires decentering settler colonial practices in favour of alterity, imaginative and creative practices that seek to understand difference as solidarity.<sup>365</sup> Ecological Awareness questions western Eurocentric fantasies of holistic coexistence and allows problems to be problems—differences to be differences. An awareness emerges in which everything exists as multitudes living in multitudes and in becoming aware we are vulnerable and exposed.<sup>366</sup>

While this analysis is by no means a fully comprehensive examination, it does offer different ways of knowing generated by various scholars. These concepts are useful for non-indigenous researchers engaging in Decolonial CDT because they describe an interrelational way of understanding the politics, ethics, and agencies of any act of observation and/or any kind of knowledge practice. Through foregrounding Million's Felt Theory, Fritsch's interdependency and assemblages via Deleuze and Guattari, Merleau-Ponty's embodiment, Barad's Agential Realism, OOO and Morton's Ecological Awareness, perhaps we can begin to see how kinetic beingness with others is, how bodies are produced together. The body itself being an interrelation of parts. Life is felt and a symbiotic intermeshing, not a static state of being.<sup>367</sup> Agentic being and existing is not dependent on a species perfect model. Rather it is a continuum of flux and interrelationality. Diversity and interdependency of being is necessary for physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual ecology. That being is not only individual but is a grouping of parts, organs, processes, behaviours and acts that do not necessarily form order. They coalesce while being "spatiotemporally connected", which is relevant to the concept of simultaneous individualism and collectivity.<sup>368</sup>

This is an assertion that has been known by Indigenous peoples, communities and nations since time immemorial and extolled by Indigenous scholars for decades. As

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<sup>365</sup> Lynn Margulis *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look At Evolution*, (NY: Basic Books, 2008): 6, 41-53. Symbiosis is defined as the living arrangement of different organisms in mutuality.

<sup>366</sup> Morton, "Being Ecological"; Mickey, *Coeixentialism*, 75, 172

<sup>367</sup> Chester and Walsh, 2005 in Fritsch, "Intimate Assemblages," 7

<sup>368</sup> Bennett, 2010:23, in Fritsch, "Intimate Assemblages," 7

Chandler and Dunlop stipulate, healing must begin with the individual but can only truly happen at a collective level and through Indigenous Resurgence.<sup>369</sup> As such, it is the only path towards all our collective healing. While, disabled and Indigenous struggles differ in significant ways, they do converge in ways that can form spaces of engagement and solidarity. CDT also calls for bodily sovereignty and self-determination. And this requires a completely new way of structuring and doing society.

Decolonial and reconciliation practices must look at the disablement of Indigenous peoples from land as a paramount ableistic struggle.<sup>370</sup> Land is not separate from body and the intimate relationships of Indigenous peoples to land is intricately tied to health, well-being, cultural knowledge language community.<sup>371</sup> The essay, *Land and Nature as Sources of Health and Resilience Among Indigenous Youth in Urban Canadian Contexts: A Photovoice Exploration*, compiled by Andrew Hatala, Chinyere Njezem Darrien Morton, Tamara Pearl and Kelly Bird-Naytowhow, offers an exemplary scholarly look at this with an abundance of scholarly links to data.

Colonial and imperial practices disable millions of people in oppressed occupied nations which undermines liberation of all exploited and oppressed persons.<sup>372</sup> The material and corporeal realities of racialized settler colonial capitalism silences and leaves those structures and system in place. Emphasizing CDT within the context of decolonization underscores how colonial occupation, structuring, destruction and dispossession produces disablement among Indigenous peoples. Not only in terms of oppression yielding higher rates of disability among Indigenous peoples but also the ongoing theft destruction of land that is foundational to capitalistic settler colonial life. This is a paramount aspect of disability and inaccessibility experienced by Indigenous peoples and communities.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Michael Chandler and William Dunlop, "Cultural Wounds Demand Cultural Medicines" Paraphrased *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples Health: Beyond the Social*, Eds. Greenwood, M., de Leeuw, S., and Lindsay, N. M. (TO: Canadian Scholars, 2018):147

<sup>370</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1415

<sup>371</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1416

<sup>372</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1411

<sup>373</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1412

### Phenomenological Bodies as Homelands

Along the lines of the relational theories previously presented, as well as decolonial CDT, is Scholar Eli Clare's book *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*, and in particular Chapter One *The Mountain*. Herein, Clare asserts that the body, regardless of how settler colonial structure perceives or describes it, is home. Our bodies come embedded with histories—violations, skin colour, an imposed gender, a queerness and a sexuality.<sup>374</sup> This informs us that bodies are never singular, but rather are intermingled with, strengthened and underscored by countless other bodies.<sup>375</sup> They shape our sense of self by countless other beings—trees, animals, oceans, rivers, mountains—bodies are home. They are deeply connected to community and culture. Bodies can be stolen, lied to, poisoned, and torn away by hunger, war, displacement, illness, abuse, factory work, thirst, lack of shelter, imprisonment, stereotype, racism and discrimination. They can be cast as defective and those stolen aspects can lodge deep into our bodies—living and festering in them. But bodies can also be reclaimed—those that have struggled before us must be realized and understood for their struggle and their resistive will. And the lies, theft and false normalization must be removed, transformed and something new must be generated—created to repair and replace them.<sup>376</sup> Something deeply vulnerable.

Haida Storyteller, Roberta Kennedy stipulates that this strength must begin with learning self-love.<sup>377</sup> Kennedy attributes her own healing to Indigenous mentors guiding her to perform traditional storytelling building her confidence and self-love. After a near-death experience she was gifted the capacity of transcendent love. A strong multivariate, ever-present love that she feels, reciprocates and shares with everyone and everything.

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<sup>374</sup> Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 9-10

<sup>375</sup> Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 11: Also of interest (in terms of bodies) is Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (NY: Routledge, 1991); Jacques Derrida's book, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, (NY: Routledge, 1994) and Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsa, eds. *Vulnerability in Resistance*, (NY: Duke University Press, 2016). If you are interested in Marxist notions of body, a good starter resource can be found here: Marx Engels Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/index.htm>

<sup>376</sup> Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 11

<sup>377</sup> Kress, "Reclaiming Disability"

An interweaving love that flows through the entire universe and can be accessed and shared by anyone and anywhere. This is agentic self-determination.

### **Confluence 3:**

#### **Imagining alternative futures that refuse ableist settler projected futures devoid of disability and Indigeneity.**

In this section I explore some of the ways in which we can shift how we understand anthropogenic climate change through moving away from anthropocentric narratives and towards alterity. This included the idea of reconciliation as not just a practice between humans but also enacted ecologically, in relation with more-than-human beings and in relation to the planet as a whole. If we are to re-imagine a future that does not consist of settler colonial underpinning structures, we will need to shift how we understand living with one another and within the world.

#### **Anthropogenic Climate Change**

In the preamble to this study, I shared a short piece of prosaic life writing. A personal and phenomenological glimpse into a specific day in August 2018. To fill in some of the facts regarding the seriousness of the increase in wild fires in BC, we can turn to a study entitled, *Attribution of the Influence of Human-induced Climate Change on an Extreme Fire Season*, recently published in January of 2019 by five Academic Researchers; M. C. Kirchmeier-Young, N. P. Gillett, F. W. Zwiers, A. J. Cannon and F. S. Anslow, at the University of Victoria.<sup>378</sup> In 2017, 1.2 million hectares of southern BC land burned during the extreme wildfire season. This adds up to 40% more area than any previously recorded years between 1950 and 2017. Over 65,000 people were displaced.<sup>379</sup> This and further projections of increased wildfire activity and increased suppression costs as well as the impacts of air quality on people's health make anthropogenic (human

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<sup>378</sup> M. C. Kirchmeier-Young, N. P. Gillett, F. W. Zwiers, A. J. Cannon, and F. S. Anslow, "Attribution of the Influence of Human Induced Climate Change on an Extreme Fire Season," *Earth's Future*, vol. 7, (2019) <https://doi.org/10.1029/2018EF001050>.

<sup>379</sup> BC Wildfire Service (2017). Wildfire season summary. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-history/wildfire-season-summary>

generated) climate change a key consideration.<sup>380</sup> After performing attribution analysis researchers feel confident that anthropogenic climate change is indeed considered an influence.<sup>381</sup>

Some of the factors regarding the wildfire season of 2017 are as follows. July to August was anomalously hot and dry with long periods of no precipitation. There was a large increase of wildfire activity in southern BC that lasted until mid-September, breaking previous records.<sup>382</sup> Anthropogenic influences contribute to approximately 96% of the probability of the 2017 wildfires.<sup>383</sup> This increased probability also further increases chances of wildfire conditions by 20 times. This suggests an increase in the likelihood of long hot dry periods and this contributes from 50-95% of the risk factors in terms of extreme wildfires.<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, the study suggests that 86-91% of the area burned in 2017 can be attributed to anthropogenic climate change and can be expected to reoccur. In fact, this is just what has been happening. The 2018 wildfire season saw anomalously long hot and dry periods in northern BC which burned over 1.35 million hectares.<sup>385</sup> Extreme heat and extreme prolonged dryness cause at least 84-87% of the area burned and can be attributed to anthropogenic influence. The researchers conclude that we will likely see more of these kinds of extreme conditions around the world in the future.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Wildland Fire Management Working Group, *Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy*, Ottawa: Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (2016); Y. Boulanger, S. Gauthier and P. J. Burton, "A Refinement of Models Projecting Future Canadian Fire Regimes using Homogeneous Fire Regime Zones," *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*, vol. 44, no.4, (2014): 365–376.; E. S. Hope, D. W. McKenney, J. H. Pedlar, B. J. Stocks, and S. Gauthier, "Wildfire suppression costs for Canada under a changing climate," *PLOS ONE*, vol. 11, no. 8 (2016): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157425>

<sup>381</sup> Previous works that considered anthropogenic climate change have been done such as N. P. Gillett, A. J. Weaver, F. W. Zwiers and M. D. Flannigan, "Detecting the Effect of Climate Change on Canadian Forest Fires," *Geophysical Research Letters*, vol. 31, (2004): L18211, <https://doi.org/10.1029/2004GL020876>; Kirchmeier-young et al, (2017). Note: Attribution analysis was done in accordance to the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine.

<sup>382</sup> Kirchmeier-Young et al, "Attribution of the Influence," 2

<sup>383</sup> Kirchmeier-Young et al, 3

<sup>384</sup> Kirchmeier-Young et al, 5

<sup>385</sup> BC Wildfire Service, *Statistics and Geospatial Data*, (2018) <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-statistics>. There is no conclusive evidence as to why one year the conditions occur in the south and another they occur in the north.

<sup>386</sup> Kirchmeier-Young et al "Attribution of the Influence," 7

Anthropogenic climate change is not a theory. It is a fact. How long it has been happening and when or how it started is highly debated. But it is happening. The notion of an Anthropocene is not one of dystopian imagination. It is here and now. To understand this better this study looks at some of the ideas surrounding the concept of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene Epoch is a period when the activities of human beings have begun to have significant global impact on the earth's climate and ecosystems. Early Anthropocene hypothesis postulates that the Anthropocene began sometime around 12,000 to 8,000 years ago. This is based on the examination and analysis of Milankovitch cycles, before, during and after the Neolithic era.<sup>387</sup> These patterns are scientifically verifiable and changes correspond to the Neolithic revolution in which many cultures shifted from hunter gathering to agricultural settlement and farming. However, the last 200 years of fossil fuel and deforestation has increased emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> in far greater amounts than ever before.<sup>388</sup>

In their article, *Earth System Impacts of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas After 1492*, British Geographers Alexander Kocha, Chris Brierleya, Mark M. Maslina, and Simon L. Lewis offer a data laden essay that essentially proves that human beings have contributed to earth systems changes before the industrial revolution.<sup>389</sup> In fact, they propose that colonialism of the Americas directly led to anthropogenic climate changes. They state,

The great dying of the indigenous peoples of the Americas led to the abandonment of enough cleared land in the Americas that the resulting terrestrial carbon uptake had a detectable impact on both atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and global surface air temperatures in the two centuries prior to the industrial revolution.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> "A Milankovitch cycle is a cyclical movement related to the Earth's orbit around the Sun. There are three of them: eccentricity, axial tilt, and precession. According to the Milankovitch Theory, these three cycles combine to affect the amount of solar heat that's incident on the Earth's surface and subsequently influence climatic patterns". Definition found at <https://www.universetoday.com/39012/milankovitch-cycle/>

<sup>388</sup> Jan Salick and Nanci Ross, "Traditional Peoples and Climate Change," *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 19, no. 2, (2009): 137 <https://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/science/article/pii/S0959378009000168>, accessed November 21, 2018

<sup>389</sup> Alexander Kocha, Chris Brierleya, Mark Maslina and Simon L. Lewis, (2018) "Earth System Impacts of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas After 1492," (2018) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277379118307261>. For the pdf, please look here: <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0277379118307261?token=AD52B912C4FBA185802C4FD174870D2AF9A6747E1AF0CF6CCD71DDB556CFDD5AC13C1A2A3C392AC9471AF361D5EF4FC1>

<sup>390</sup> Kocha et al, "Earth System Impacts"

But how? To explain, they first assert that there is evidence of anthropogenic land use in the Americas for well over 15,000 years. This evidence lies in archaeological data, historical documentation, aerial surveys and remote sensing techniques. Over 56 million, that is 90% of the population of the Americas, was killed via colonial contacts including disease, starvation, war and murder. Thus, states Mi'kmaq Legal Scholar and Activist, Pamela Palmater, the genocide of Indigenous peoples is proven to be not just cultural but also physical and biological.<sup>391</sup>

During the period of what has become known as the Little Ice Age (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) Europe experienced major changes coinciding with colonial impositions. European crops failed due to increased precipitation; the population decreased by 25 million in one century. The potato which was imported to replace European staple crops succumbed to cooling conditions. Further, this coincided with Reformation, Counter Reformation, the 30 Years War, the end of feudal societies and consolidation of European national governments. The great dying and its reverberating effects, account for global shifts and changes on the sociological, biological and atmospheric levels. Evidence reveals that the genocide of Indigenous populations had an adverse effect on Indigenous culture, people and on the planet.<sup>392</sup>

In a study done by Naomi Oreskes at the University of California, San Diego who examined 928 abstracts on global warming published in 1993-2003 in specialized peer reviewed journals. All were in consensus over the existing reality of human induced climate change. It is the tempo and mode that are contested.<sup>393</sup> Climate scientists posit that humans are more than simply biological agents. They are also a geological force.<sup>394</sup> Human presence has changed the chemistry of the atmosphere, the sea level is rising, ice is melting, the climate is changing and the land is burning. With this comes the

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<sup>391</sup> Pamela Palmater, in “‘Little Ice Age’ Caused by Death of 55 million Indigenous People after Colonization: Study,” Global News, article by John Hadden, (2018) <https://globalnews.ca/news/4924534/little-ice-age-death-55-million-indigenous-people-colonization-study/>

<sup>392</sup> Kocha et al, “Earth System Impacts”

<sup>393</sup> Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 200-01

<sup>394</sup> As Morton states in *Humankindness* neoliberal capitalism is no longer politics. It is a Hyperobject and a part of the biosphere. As well, it is important to remember that all life is a geological force. It is life that produces coal, oil, gas and other geological components.

understanding that humans are a force of nature in the geological sense.<sup>395</sup> It is in this time of climate upheaval that a web of transmutation begins unravelling.

As such, American biologist and naturalist Edward Osborne Wilson suggests, “...we need the longer view...not only to understand our species but to more firmly secure its future.”<sup>396</sup> This idea of a longer view is very close to the Tsalagi concept of living in ‘the longer now’ as offered by Corntassel. He offers the following,

...a Tsalagi saying, ‘Live in a longer ‘now’— learn your history and culture and understand it is what you are now,’ urges us to consider that notions of time are fluid and flexible...the Tsalagi word for ‘I am forgetting’ is *agikewsga*, which literally means I ... am unable to see something that happened in the past. To live in a longer ‘now’, it becomes one’s responsibility to live in *tohi*, or a process of balance and according to the pace of the natural world. In this sense, ‘the longer now’ implies not just a different time scale but also future generational responsibilities<sup>397</sup>.

Thus, we might come to understand that conceptualization of time is not so much linear as it is fluid and subject to changing. Our being is the result of past, current and future beingness and interconnectedness with other beings.<sup>398</sup> Change is intergenerational.

Significantly, in his article “Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises,” Potwami Scholar and Activist Kyle Whyte suggests that settler colonial narratives of climate change crisis often erase colonial violence that has interrupted and devastated Indigenous societies.<sup>399</sup> I would also add that colonial narratives occlude transmogrified ontology as a central figure within this discourse. Whyte further asserts that colonization processes have categorized planetary ages or ‘cenes’ which often serve as privileged backdrops for environmentalists and allies who view themselves as advocates (and sometimes as saviours) for Indigenous peoples.<sup>400</sup> This concept of categorizing everything from a

<sup>395</sup> Chakrabarty, “Anthropocene Time,” 12-15; Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 200-02, 07

<sup>396</sup> E. Wilson, *In Search of Nature*, (Washington, D.C., 1996), pp. ix-x, in Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 213

<sup>397</sup> Snelgrove, Dhamoon and Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism,” 20

<sup>398</sup> Chakrabarty, “Anthropocene Time,” 213; Graveline, *Circleworks*; Kuokannen, *Restructuring Relations*; Manulani Aluli-Meyer, “Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense,” *China Media Research*, vol. 9, no.2, (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa/Māori University of New Zealand, 2013)

<sup>399</sup> Kyle P. Whyte, “Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises,” *Environment and Planning: Nature and Space*, vol. 1, no.1-2, (2018): 224-242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618777621>

<sup>400</sup> Whyte, “Indigenous Science,” 224. Significantly, while anthropogenic climate change is very real, I think that reactionary responses to global warming serve to prop up a heightened sense of urgency that hold the potential to be captured by neoliberal capitalistic agendas. In this regard, settler colonizers would be well

flower to geological ages was both necessary for and established by settler colonial structures and processes.<sup>401</sup>

Whyte proposes that many Indigenous peoples do not share the kinds of dystopian post-apocalyptic sense of futurity that settler colonizers express. Many settler colonial narratives focus on crisis, alarmist and shock to insight their imaginaries. However, many of the predicted hardships of the colonizer imaginary have already been experienced by Indigenous peoples, communities, and societies. They have already endured centuries of environmental destruction, ecosystem collapse, economic crash, socio political change, drastic relocation, lethal diseases and cultural and physical genocide.<sup>402</sup> Many non-indigenous narratives forget Indigenous peoples hold enormous experiences and adaptation to changes as well as deep relationships with non-humans. On this note, Anishinabek Botanist Robyn Kimmerer stipulates, “Once again, we are in a situation of forced climate change adaptation.”<sup>403</sup> Because many Indigenous communities have not forgotten these things there are numerous examples of Indigenous Resurgence and renewal of knowledge, cultural traditions and governance and law, from Akwesasne to Tsilhqot’in.<sup>404</sup> For Indigenous peoples the Anthropocene apocalypse has been ongoing for the last 500 years and it is still ongoing. As stated by Sprague, “We already inhabit what our ancestors would have understood to be as a dystopian future”<sup>405</sup>. The question that emerges is how do we become good ancestors?<sup>406</sup>

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warned that we do not have any solutions, scientific or otherwise, to stop the Anthropocene. Rather, we need to mitigate it and to learn to live in ways that no longer contribute to it; i.e. not-colonial.

<sup>401</sup> Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2016)

<sup>402</sup> Whyte, “Indigenous Science,” 225; Candis Callison, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter: The Communal Life of Facts* (Vancouver: UBC Press 2014): 42. So if the settler colonizer wants to know what the future looks like in terms of anthropogenic climate apocalypse, look directly at what our forbearers did to Indigenous peoples’ lands, waters, cultures and communities. Look at what we uphold today in settler colonial society. To know the future, we need to be unbearably truthful about our present and critically examine the past.

<sup>403</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

<sup>404</sup> Whyte, “Indigenous Science,” 225; Gerald Tehaiá:iake Alfred, The Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program: A Mohawk Approach to Land Based Education, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 3, no.3 (2014): 134-44; Summary of the Tsilhqot’in Aboriginal Title Case (William Case) Decision, (June 26, 2014) [http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/Portals/0/PDFs/2014\\_07\\_03\\_Summary\\_SCC\\_Decision.pdf](http://www.tsilhqotin.ca/Portals/0/PDFs/2014_07_03_Summary_SCC_Decision.pdf)

<sup>405</sup> Sprague, as quoted by Whyte (personal conversation, 2017), “Indigenous Science,” 228-229

<sup>406</sup> Whyte, “Indigenous Science,” 229; Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

### Reconciliation Includes Ecology

There so many points of intersectionality wherein accountable reconciliation praxis can take shape and change can occur. Tully proposes that if we can come to see interconnecting and converging relationships with one another and the living earth, we will begin to see a reciprocal pedagogical relationship between the ecological and the sociological reconciliation.<sup>407</sup> Furthermore, he suggests that this offers new ways to reconcile differences through living together, learning the arts of conciliation and peacemaking as well as arts and science, to learn to live sustainably on this planet.<sup>408</sup> Moreover, Tully reminds us that sustainable human to nature relationships offer important teachings about human to human relationships and how they are enmeshed and embedded in all human to nature relationships. Ecology has formed over 3.8 billion years and has much to teach us.<sup>409</sup>

For those of us whose societies have turned away from interconnectivity with ecology and towards control and exploitation, reconciliation exists because of failure of conciliation.<sup>410</sup> We must become free from everyday practices that divide and separate, use and exploit and relearn to engage in everyday practices that perceive and embrace interactions with each other as kin both human and more than human.<sup>411</sup> It must be a mode of ethical practice that can be enacted here and now. It must bring us into enacting the basic ethical relationship of mutual symbiotic responsiveness, care, peace seeking, and sustainability.<sup>412</sup>

This reconnection renders everyone involved different and transformed with new skills or acquiring new knowledge that is shared and produced. It is a relationship that understands shared struggle and shared failure. This are a plethora of animate earth systems theories; from James Lovelock's Gaia or living earth<sup>413</sup>, to Steven Harding's

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<sup>407</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here" 85

<sup>408</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here" 86

<sup>409</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here" 86-87

<sup>410</sup> Tully, "Reconciliation Here"; Atleo, *Tsawalk*; Borrows, *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide*, (TO: University of Toronto Press 2010)

<sup>411</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here" 90; Morton *Being Ecological*; Haraway *When Species Meet*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2008)

<sup>412</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here" 91

<sup>413</sup> Lovelock, *Gaia*

Animate Earth<sup>414</sup> to Lynn Margulis' Planetary Symbiosis<sup>415</sup>, a balanced global symbiosis. For Margulis, the living earth sustains us as we sustain it. Moreover, we in our everyday acts, sustain the planet through our symbiotic participation and symbiogenesis. This is defined as the way in which complex mutually symbiotic systems that are interdependent give rise to new life systems.<sup>416</sup>

While these appear to be innovative concepts, such understandings are not so new. In her article, *Why Interspecies Thinking Needs Indigenous Standpoints*, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Science Academic Kim TallBear draws on her own Lakota/Dakota knowledge ethics to inform and bring together thoughts about “interspecies communities”<sup>417</sup>. She examines the term symbiogenesis (the evolution of new species by symbiosis as opposed to linear survival of the fittest).<sup>418</sup> For TallBear, the notion of symbiogenesis, although significant, is somewhat humorous because it echoes the Indigenous concept of “all my relations”. She further points out that symbiogenesis is a looping, uneven and nonlinear process. Thus, writers about symbiogenesis like Dorian Sagan write in an interwoven fashion to articulate a “networked set of biological relation as ‘interspecies communities.’”<sup>419</sup> Something already long embedded within Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

TallBear asserts that this notion has been described via Deloria's concept of an American Indian Metaphysics as meaning, “...a set of principles we must possess in

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<sup>414</sup> Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth: Science, Intuition, and Gaia*, (Science Writers, 2006)

<sup>415</sup> Lynn Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at evolution*. (Basic Books, 1999)

<sup>416</sup> Tully, “Reconciliation Here” 96

<sup>417</sup> Dorian Sagan, “The Human is More than Human: Interspecies Communities and the New Facts of Life,” p.1, ch. 1, *Cosmic Apprentice: Dispatches from the Edges of Science*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) in TallBear, “Why Interspecies.” Interspecies Communities is a term coined by Dorian Sagan.

<sup>418</sup> Symbiogenesis is a concept first articulated by Russian botanist Konstantin Mereschkowski in the early 1900s and later put forth by American evolutionary theorist, biologist and Educator Lynn Margulis and further built on by her son Evolutionary Theorist and Fiction Writer, Dorian Sagan. It is based on the Endosymbiotic Hypothesis which “states that the organelles of eukaryotic cells came to be via symbiosis between separate microorganisms.” This means that chloroplasts and mitochondria originally lived as separate bacterial organisms that were absorbed by other cells. These organelles then continued to live inside (endo) the larger cell as units called endosymbionts. The fact that each component benefited the other (symbiosis) allowed the new eukaryotic cell to grow and reproduce, passing on these newly acquired organelles to the next generation.” <https://theendosymbioticshypothesis.wordpress.com/>

<sup>419</sup> Sagan, *Cosmic Apprentice*, in TallBear, “Why Interspecies”

order to make sense of the world in which we live.”<sup>420</sup> She further explains American Indian metaphysics as,

the realization that the world and all of its possible experiences, constituted a social reality, a fabric of life in which everything had the possibility of intimate knowing relationships because, ultimately everything was related <sup>421</sup>

Significantly, while TallBear proposes and asserts that Indigenous thinkers have much to offer to enrich and shift western thinking and knowing, she cautions against the ease of saying, “...western thinkers are finally getting on board,” with Indigenous thinking.<sup>422</sup> She further interrogates Sagan’s adherence to the duality of ‘life’ and ‘not-life’. She suggests he limits himself to life as something “organismically defined.” Moreover, TallBear notes that in Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy’s essay, *The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality*, he documents reciprocal exchanges between “hunters and non-human persons who they know to be thinking persons.”<sup>423</sup> There is a person-to-person relationship between beings. These are articulated by Nadasdy as hunting society’s ontology. In other words, it is not a metaphorical relationship. And the understanding of non-humans as persons extends to objects and forces such as trees, stones, lightening, rain, mountains and rivers as “sentient and intelligent persons.”<sup>424</sup>

TallBear asserts that the material and the social are not separate realms nor are they differing aspects of each other. Rather, they are co-constituted. They cohabitate in symbiosis, caring, feeling, making and remaking.<sup>425</sup> This being the fundamental solidarity of being and appearing.<sup>426</sup> Likewise, TallBear proposes that science needs to change from the inside, becoming inhabited by what was “formerly food” (subjects, and the researched). I agree and hope for this to happen to all research modes, methodologies,

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<sup>420</sup> Deloria, *Metaphysics*, in TallBear, “Why Interspecies”

<sup>421</sup> TallBear, “Why Interspecies”

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Paul Nadasdy, “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality,” *American Ethnologist*, vol. 34, no. 1, (February, 2007): 25-43

<sup>424</sup> Nadasdy, “Ontology of Hunting” in TallBear, “Why Interspecies”

<sup>425</sup> TallBear, “Why Interspecies”

<sup>426</sup> Timothy Morton, “Dark Ecological Chocolate,” *NIBIO Svanhovd*, Svanvik, Norway, (June 10, 2016) Published June 20, 2017 by *Sonic Acts*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJprenbVvBY>, accessed April 4, 2018; Timothy Bloxton Morton, *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*, (NY: Verso Books, 2017)

methods, strategies and ethics. For example, TallBear leads an Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society (Indigenous STS) Research and Training Program, which is, “dedicated to Indigenous self-determination and self-governance through Indigenous scientific literacy and techno-scientific projects.”<sup>427</sup> This program connects international Indigenous scholars and engages them in changing “how science is done.”<sup>428</sup> It does so through challenging assumptions that, “Science comes from, and is practiced in, a neutral space by examining how Eurocentric and colonialist thinking shape mainstream understanding – to the exclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.”<sup>429</sup>

### **Reconciliation is More than Human**

In the article, *Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought*, Cree (Driftpile Cree Nation) Academic and Poet Billy-Ray Belcourt proposes that decolonization must also include non-human beings.<sup>430</sup> He suggests that it is “Anthropocentric to ignore animality if our politics of decolonization is to disrupt all colonized spaces and liberate all colonized subjects.”<sup>431</sup> Furthermore, he asserts that many activists act, “...through a politics of morality that cannot disrupt capitalistic production on a large scale.”<sup>432</sup> In this way, decolonial politics seem to only interweave within environmental justice paradigms or animal rights activism when it benefits the settler colonizer’s agenda without fully comprehending the rooted fact that settler colonialism not only allows for the presence of socio-environmental and animal mistreatment, it facilitates and maintains it.

To remediate this, Belcourt moves away from human-centric animalization strategies, wherein the ‘Other’ is subordinated and reduced to an ‘animal state’ towards,

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<sup>427</sup> Jackie Wong, “Kim TallBear Speaks Truth to Power,” *University Affairs* by Jackie Wong, (2019) [https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/kim-tallbear-speaks-truth-to-power/?fbclid=IwAR2bv7xI\\_5D82zK4GrCvZczBFp6Z0Yq4jlnuK9enZ-kY-y0SabAKSXAaiOY](https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/kim-tallbear-speaks-truth-to-power/?fbclid=IwAR2bv7xI_5D82zK4GrCvZczBFp6Z0Yq4jlnuK9enZ-kY-y0SabAKSXAaiOY)

<sup>428</sup> TallBear as interviewed by Wong, “Truth to Power”

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Billy-Ray Belcourt, “Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought,” *Societies*, vol. 5, no. 1, (2015): 1-11 <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/5/1/1/htm>; Another excellent work in terms of conceptualizing the non-human world as significant in terms of sentience and solidarity (as well as Anishinabek governance, law and culture) is John Borrows’ book, *Drawing Out Law: A Spirits Guide*, (TO: University of Toronto Press, 2010)

<sup>431</sup> Belcourt, “Animal Bodies,”

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

“tracing ways in which anthropocentrism is weaponized as white supremacy and disrupt species logic that circumscribes anticolonial theorization of animality.”<sup>433</sup> This means to look at non-humans as subjective agents, not merely a, “labouring body within economics of food and commodity production...”<sup>434</sup> Significantly, this commodification is a facet of settler colonialism that attaches animals to state. Thus, animals (and the use of animalization of BIPOC, LGBTQIA, persons with disability, women and children) and the environment are purposely stripped of emancipation and tied into settler state structure.<sup>435</sup> The solution is to actively engage in decolonial processes of these spaces. For the settler colonizer, this means to interrogate and dismantle settler colonial structures and support Indigenous self-determination and resurgence of relations and knowledges. Belcourt’s work informs us about the deeper layers of the transmogrification of ontology in settler colonial states. It also informs us that there are much more than just humans that we need to consider in terms of reconciliation.

Ultimately, reconciliation creates space for resurgence. It is a series of intergenerational practices between Indigenous and settler nations as well as efforts to strengthen the relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples with the living planet and making that relationship the basis for both resurgence and Indigenous and settler reconciliation. For Tully this requires multidisciplinary work. Undoubtedly this dissertation cannot and does not incorporate even a fraction of what needs to be done in terms of the 94 TRC Calls to Action, solidarity with Indigenous Resurgence and revitalization projects or sociopolitical and economic decolonization. What I am hoping to address in this study is the possibility of Decolonial CDT as a viable component in strategies toward uncomplicated and accessible everyday action that anyone can put into practice.

In his chapter, *Reconciliation Here on Earth*, in the book, *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, Tully points to two intersecting loci of reconciliation: 1) that between peoples and 2) that between people and

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

the living earth.<sup>436</sup> He asserts that these two aspects must be addressed simultaneously to be successful.<sup>437</sup> These intersecting points are intimately independent, enmeshed and interwoven and thus cannot be addressed as separate issues. Indigenous self-determination, resurgence and nationhood is ecological activism.<sup>438</sup> And land disablement becomes a very relevant and crucial part of understanding and change making.<sup>439</sup> In relation to the first point, Tully lists multiple forms of intergenerational social and ecological suffering such as; understanding and misunderstanding, working together and domination, dispossession, colonization cultural genocide subordination impoverishment, residential school and starvation to name but a fraction of the atrocities done via settler colonialism.<sup>440</sup>

Resistance to this imposed suffering can look like many actions, ranging from treaty negotiations, exit and refusal, blockades, armed and unarmed conflict, constitutional change, court cases, modern treaty making, successful and failed consultations. Significantly, Tully suggests that if we are to try and reconcile Indigenous to non-indigenous people without reconciling our way of life with the living earth we will fail.<sup>441</sup> While this is certain, have we not already failed? And isn't that failure impetuous enough to move us into transformative modes; rather than assemblages of failure on top of failure can we rebuild on assemblages of bio-philia?

In this way, Tully acknowledges that the current settler colonial system has failed. He proposes a form of solidarity between human communities as well as more-than-human communities. Further, he asserts that simply focusing on ecological reconciliation also fails because we have not nourished relationships with Indigenous peoples who have practiced deeply sustainable living for millennia.<sup>442</sup> This failure renders our ecological vigilance inert. Indigenous peoples retain the presence of their TEK through oral

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<sup>436</sup> Tully, "Reconciliation here on earth", in *Resurgence and Reconciliation* 84

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies".

<sup>440</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here", 83

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Tully, "Reconciliation Here" 84-85

storytelling and land and water based practices. They have co-existed and cohabitated with the ecology of the place in which they have lived. Their epistemologies and ontologies are informed by ancestral and more-than-human teachers.<sup>443</sup> This is described by Deloria and Wildcat in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, in which they assert that perceiving sacred places as abstract and temporally symbolic, establishes the limits of western understandings. Both the colonizer and the colonized experience colonial difference and both have very distinct experiences. Time and history allow global designs (social, religious, economic and epistemic) to emerge as responses to the circumstances of a given place that are assumed to have universal value across space and time.<sup>444</sup> The experience in which global designs emerge becomes silenced when a given global design is exported and programmed to be implanted on top of the experience of a distinct place.<sup>445</sup> Future ethics, politics and epistemology cannot be built on categories premised on western philosophy and social science. They require a deconstruction and reconstruction. Not a validation of the colonized epistemology/ontology by the colonizer. It must underscore the displacement of perspective activities and futurity.<sup>446</sup>

As reiterated earlier by Carlson, it is up to us to hold humility within settler colonial structures institutions and systems.<sup>447</sup> And critically examine the ideas and knowledge non-indigenous humans have developed in the last five hundred years. We need to recognize transmogrification arising from settler paradigms; institutional pathologization, systemic racism, deeply embedded childism and the omnipresent heteropatriarchy.<sup>448</sup> It is vital that we open ourselves to the damages done and watch closely for our biases entangled in notions of developmental hierarchy, models of modernity rift with ideologies of modernity, advancement and progress.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Tully, "Reconciliation Here" 84-85). Battiste, *Decolonizing Education*; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Tully, "Reconciliation Here" 70

<sup>447</sup> Carlson, "Anticolonial Methodologies"

<sup>448</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here"; Rollo, "Everyday Deeds"; James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford University Press, 1987); Nancy Turner, *Earths Blanket: Traditional Teachings for Sustainable Living*, (Douglas and McIntyre, 2005); Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*, (Milkweed Editions, 2013).

<sup>449</sup> Tully "Reconciliation Here" 85

To counter these biases Tully promotes a ‘double revolution’ wherein Indigenous and non-indigenous join hands and work together sharing knowledge. This of course is a concept forged by revolutionaries including Mahatma Gandhi, Frantz Fanon and Martin Luther King. Are we there yet? Not quite. To find the path towards this, Tully suggests finding intersections and convergences. And there are cautions regarding engagement between Indigenous and non-indigenous people and communities must be approached with vigilance and care.<sup>450</sup> Snelgrove et al. advise that such solidarities be grounded in actual practice and place-based relationships. Approached as incommensurable but not incompatible. As Rollo cautions, some aspects of Indigeneity are “considered so sacred or so vulnerable that cultural prohibitions have been placed on communicating them to outsiders.”<sup>451</sup>

There are many ways this can be done. For example, Battiste advises that Indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives be viewed not as oppositional but as complimentary.<sup>452</sup> Similarly, Kovach asserts, real change demands a “move beyond binaries found within Indigenous-settler relations to construct new formation. Further to this, Marshal and Marshal refer to *etuaptmumk*, or two-eyed seeing, as a strategy for imagining for co-existence.<sup>453</sup> A concept shared with Borrows and his understanding of *kaswentha*.<sup>454</sup> Furthermore, Ermine speaks of Spaces of Engagement<sup>455</sup> and Kress offers the principle of *kananayhitowin*, care and gentle teaching<sup>456</sup>. As well, Atleo’s *tsawalk* indicates the interconnectivity of all communities.<sup>457</sup> Of course, this is only a small sample of ways in which we can engage without imposing or appropriating or demanding commensurability.

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<sup>450</sup> Snelgrove et al., “Unsettling”, 30

<sup>451</sup> Rollo, “Everyday Deeds”

<sup>452</sup> Battiste, *Decolonizing Education*

<sup>453</sup> Marshal and Marshal, “Two-eyed Seeing”

<sup>454</sup> Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous*

<sup>455</sup> Ermine, “Ethical Space of Engagement,” 202

<sup>456</sup> Margaret Kress, “Reclaiming Disability through Pimatisiwin: Indigenous Ethics, Spatial Justice, and Gentle Teaching.” *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education*. (May, 2017). 9: 23-57

<sup>457</sup> Atleo, *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth*

To move away from anthropocentrism in our existence it is ironically important to understand that we are always witnessing ourselves through a specific filter. And in western academia this is generally white, heterosexual/normative, male/patriarchal.<sup>458</sup> And this is a deeply violent and destructive political and ontological problem. Therefore, when we say the settler/settler colonizer problem we are also talking about this particular ontological issue. Because any other perspective would alert us to the fact that invasion, theft, genocide and occupation of Indigenous land is absolutely *not* a good idea. It is a default perspective that has been layered onto western colonized social space over lengthy periods of time.

Intergenerational decolonization is the bigger picture. The colonizer who is born on Indigenous land and lives there, breathes there, consumes there, possibly reproduces there and eventually dies there must learn to deeply love and respect the land of their birth. And the people on whose land they are born. This deep respect and love will develop responsible reciprocity and accountability that will enable us to embrace new ways of being with others—ways that are life-giving, space making, and deeply interdependent. This symbiotic interdependency is what will make the diversity and multiplicity of many worlds chaotically cohesive and beautiful. That is how the colonizer begins to undo colonization.

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

*I think of brilliance as a collective phenomenon, and I think that true brilliance emanates from and results in collective processes and collective changes.*<sup>459</sup>

### Methodologies

#### Witnessing as Methodology

In her article, *Researching within Relations of Violence: Witnessing as Methodology*, Hunt reiterates that Indigenous knowledge systems are active, embodied and relational.<sup>460</sup> Furthermore, she gives a definition of witnessing as being present, attentive, alert and involved. She suggests that witnessing is an embodied practice. This informs the research that witnessing is not simply watching and noting. It requires engagement.<sup>461</sup> Hunt cautions that one must be attuned to the responsibilities that come with wielding power as researchers. Indigenous community members experience risk and vulnerability produced by colonization and researchers can reproduce this violence via dismissing, silencing and ignoring this. Accordingly, Hunt proposes the concept of witnessing as a methodology to ensure grounded awareness in research processes.<sup>462</sup>

She specifically focuses on gendered colonial violence and states, “Witnessing in the context of settler colonialism comes with a set of responsibilities specific to the network of relationships within which researchers live and work.”<sup>463</sup> Moreover, she asserts that to be a witness you must, “step up to validate what you have observed when an important act is denied or forgotten.”<sup>464</sup> As such, she proposes that being a witness means “sometimes creating new language, new stories, new avenues for validating the

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<sup>459</sup> Angela Davis, “You Have the Right to Be Brilliant: Dr. Angela Davis,” *Paper: Know Your Rights*, Interview by Miabelle Bocicault, Dr. Ameer Hasan Loggins, Dr. Christopher Petrella, (August 20, 2019) <https://www.papermag.com/dr-angela-davis-colin-kaepernick-2639895561.html>

<sup>460</sup> Sarah Hunt, “Researching Within Relations of Violence: Witnessing as Methodology,” Ch. 17, *Indigenous Research: Theories, Practices, and Relationships*, Deborah McGregor, Jean-Paul Restoule, Rochelle Johnston eds., (Canadian Scholar, 2018): 282

<sup>461</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 282

<sup>462</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 283

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 284

voices that are more at risk of being erased.”<sup>465</sup> Hunt further quotes Gayatri Spivak’s avowal that, “the subaltern cannot speak” which argues that, “if there [is] no valid institutional background for resistance it [can] not be recognized.”<sup>466</sup> Witnessing is a methodology wherein researchers, “are obligated through a set of relational responsibilities to ensure frameworks of representation that allow for the lives that we have witnessed to be made visible.”<sup>467</sup> Moreover, settler researchers must come to understand violence against Indigenous peoples as, “intrinsically tied to the creation, occupation and erasure. And [that] indigenous families and communities have always resisted this.”<sup>468</sup>

Accordingly, in seriously taking up witnessing as methodology the settler colonial researcher’s academic career and ego need to be secondary. This reiterates Carlson’s assertion that researchers must resist hegemonic pressures of name, fame and uniqueness thus, refusing its potential to re-empower settler voices and marginalizing Indigenous scholarship and resistance. Hunt also suggests that the witness not simply tell their own story but also, “what they have experienced from their own perspective in order to validate someone else’s actions, rights, or stories.”<sup>469</sup> The role of the witness is to allow knowledge to merge within individual stories, quiet moments of interrelationality and reflexivity.<sup>470</sup> Witnessing entails reciprocal relational knowledge creation. It can act as remembrance and a “powerful form of recovery from a colonial past.”<sup>471</sup> When Indigenous voices, knowledge and works must be translated into colonial language in order to be validated in the context of western knowledge systems, it reinforces that

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<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Ch. 4, *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory* P. Williams and L. Chrisman eds. (NY: Columbia University Press, 1988): 228

<sup>467</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 286

<sup>468</sup> Leanne Simpson, “Not Murdered, Not Missing: Rebellious Against Colonial Gender Violence,” *Personal Website*, <https://www.leannesimpson.ca/writings/not-murdered-not-missing-rebellious-against-colonial-gender-violence>, as quoted in Hunt, 286

<sup>469</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 286

<sup>470</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 287

<sup>471</sup> Judy Iseke, “Indigenous Storytelling as Research,” *International Review of Qualitative Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, Winter, (2013): 559-577 DOI: 10.1525/irqr.2013.6.4.559:312

“Indigenous knowledges are not valuable in their own right or defensible on their own terms.”<sup>472</sup>

As Smith states, “Western research is imbued with an attitude and spirit that at some level assumes ownership of the entire world.”<sup>473</sup> Along this line, Hunt informs us that witnessing requires us to bear witness to the ontological violence of forgetting certain stories. “Colonial violence is normalized through ongoing denial, silencing ontological gaps” that make Indigenous stories impossible “to be heard on their own terms.”<sup>474</sup> At its heart, witnessing reintegrates the voices of the silenced, forgotten, erased and spoken over. And I hope that my research amplifies this.

### **Life Writing as Methodology**

Life Writing is a form of story-telling. It is the writing of the experiential, phenomenological self into the story being told. It is an intentional and interrelationally felt methodology that allows the researcher to use not only their critical mind and physical body to engage with the everyday sociocultural and political world as in but also to express the heart via contextual aspects such as feeling, emotion, imagination, rhythm, vulnerability and brokenness.

One of the disadvantages of Life Writing is the risk of becoming self-indulgent and slippage into solipsism. Solipsism is the theory that the self is the only thing that can be known to be true “you have to be one to know one”. One of the ways that I countered this disadvantage was to turn the research lens towards myself and critique my own processes of interpretation, biases and strategies of reasoning. Another way I countered this was to keep a separate ‘book’ going while writing the actual dissertation. This way I could express and keep track of the more ‘autobiographical’ topics in an appropriate manner that did not detract from the research study. In many ways, solipsism in Life Writing can reveal ways in which we perceive and may misperceive other experiences by

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<sup>472</sup> Adam Gaudry, “Insurgent research” *Wicazo Sa Review*, University of Minnesota Press, vol. 26, no.1 (2011): 115 as quoted in Hunt, 290; Adam Gaudry, “Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, (2018)

<sup>473</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as paraphrased in Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 292

<sup>474</sup> Hunt, “Witnessing as Methodology,” 292

basing them solely on our own perceptions. In this manner, solipsism becomes an engaged method. Life Writing can be a way to understand the phenomenological construction of self-encompassing constructions of gender, sexuality, race, culture, disability, ability, ethnicity along with place, nationality and space.<sup>475</sup>

In their book *Critical Approaches to Life Writing; Methods in Qualitative Research*, by Thalia Mulvihill and Raji Swaminathan propose that Life Writing is an existentially phenomenological approach. It holds potential for transformative cognitive shifts and can reveal new emergent paths towards self-healing and growth<sup>476</sup>. As such, Life Writing is playful, emergent, experiential, subjective, relevant, changeable poetic and meta-analytic. It radically problematizes impersonal and dislocated theory produced in academia. It creates a space of accountable engagement by asking the researcher to bring their history into their work. It is a creative (and co-creative) way in which to speak to representation, self-location and intersectionality. It is a convergence of artistry and social science and may include poetry drama memoir genealogy photography sketches paintings, blogs, music, websites, AI and EI games and other expressions<sup>477</sup>.

Life Writing consists of fact and confabulation making it a unique interstitial space of engagement and expression. Confabulation in this context is meaning a gestaltic filling in of the gaps to form a recognizable meaning to an embodied moment located in the past, present or future. It can reveal ways in which we perceive and may misperceive other's experiences by basing them solely on our own perceptions. Life writing can be a way to understand the phenomenological construction of self-encompassing constructions of gender, sexuality, race, culture, disability, ability, ethnicity along with place nationality and space. It involves subjectivity, identity, memory and accountability to truth, narrative representation and imbalances of power<sup>478</sup>.

As a methodology, Life Writing challenges, problematizes and interrogates the status quo. Kadar and Sing define critical life writing as a practice meant to engage the

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<sup>475</sup> Mulvihill and Swaminathan, *Critical Approaches* 7-9

<sup>476</sup> Marlene Kadar 1992 in Mulvihill and Swaminathan *Critical Approaches*

<sup>477</sup> Mulvihill and Swaminathan *Critical Approaches*

<sup>478</sup> Mulvihill and Swaminathan *Critical Approaches*

reader as co-creator.<sup>479</sup> This is especially true if the writer can leave the text open and incomplete. The text then becomes a living embodied being, capable of growth, emergence evolution and regeneration. Life Writing acknowledges that embodied experience and subjective perceptions shape the writer's reality. It creates awareness and serves as a catalyst for change, to complicate and illuminating intersectionality, disability trauma and colonization.<sup>480</sup> Life Writing is reflexive, inwardly ambiguous, responsive, fluid and weavable. It deepens understanding and remains beautifully endless,<sup>481</sup>

#### Ten Propositions for critical approaches to Life Writing

1. Understands the constructed nature of self (Bhaktin, 1992)
2. Privileges and empowers individuals to talk and write as critiques of oppression and engage with concepts of voice ethics reflexivity and the politics of representation
3. Engage with discourses histories and ideologies to explain contextualized life (Kelly, 2013)
4. Work against forms of division and compartmentalization through creating portraits of lives that are meaningful (Kadar, 1992).
5. Encourage individuals to counter narrate or tell counter stories that create meaning of their lives that challenge the dominant discourses or race, class, gender, sexuality and disability (Solarzono and Yossa, 2002). Such approaches confront singular dominant understandings of social and political conditions surrounding life.
6. Resembles culturally responsive approaches. There are many resources to access in terms of culturally responsive approaches (ie: Gloria Ladson Billings, Geneva Gay, Tyrone Howard) To be a culturally responsive researcher entails a willingness and commitment to deeply investigate and understand the context in which subjects experience is lived.

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<sup>479</sup> Kadar and Sing, 2016 in Mulvihill and Swaminathan *Critical Approaches*

<sup>480</sup> Mingus, "Access Intimacy"; Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1407-1429)

<sup>481</sup> Mulvihill and Swaminathan *Critical Approaches*

7. Projects have the potential to elevate interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge we have about people in meaningful ways resulting in greater understanding and empathy for human conditions (Eagan and Helms 2002; Baena 2013).
8. Foster social justice lenses when interpreting experiential phenomena and lived lives. A variety of perspective are used to examine assumptions and analyze power dynamics as they are played out within context and interrogate the processes of how narratives simultaneously make some aspect of the lived experience highly visible and other aspects interminably indivisible.
9. Are messy. Life writers struggle with these choices and communicate their awareness of the consequences of their choices through a process of reflexivity. Life writers share their decision-making processes and interrogate their own processes vis-a-vis the project with which they engage.
10. Make possible the compatibility of feminist, queer and post-colonial [decolonial] critical practices (Moore and Gilbert 2009).

## **Primary Information Collection Methods**

### **Documentary Analysis**

Chapter 2: The Literature Review is both a foundational review and an ongoing part of the actual research project. Over the past five years I amassed a large amount of documentary analysis with which I could work with. Accordingly, I looked through the archive and found innovative ways to deepen the experience of textual analysis and documentary research. The documents were explored within the literature review and organized into Confluences, so areas where aspects of decolonial CDT and reconciliation might be found and how this might look in term of Active Witnessing. They are also analyzed throughout the dissertation as an ongoing aspect of the work. They serve to deepen understandings of the location of settler colonizers as researchers, to look at how history and knowledge is produced via western Eurocentric transmogrification processes and to examine alterity in terms of how we can engage in creating new ways of being that

are not-colonial. This component of the research is inconclusive to trouble current research paradigms within mainstream academia.

Documentary analysis was also done via the royal British Columbia Museum, social media, online searches and other media. To locate applicable archives, documents and resources for the suppositions and other aspects of the research, I typed in key words such as decolonization, resurgence theory, *bricolage*, phenomenology, embodiment, ecophenomenology, decolonial research, resurgence, reconciliation, settler colonialism, vulnerability, ecofeminism, access intimacy, transmogrification, ephemera, solidarity, and *bricolage*. I used the Google search engine for accessing scholarly articles and online links to blogs. I also utilized the University of Victoria's McPherson library services. I specifically looked for peer reviewed scholarly articles, essays, books and other works. If I could find them publically available on pdf I downloaded them and saved them for later and ongoing reference.

### **Email Essay as Life Writing**

This study is not an evidence-based project. Instead, it endeavours to generate phenomenological and emergent insight that can be further explored by others more competent than myself. Thus, my inclusion of four Collaborators and their email essays as Life Writing is not to verify, prove or disprove any outstanding hypothesis. Rather, it is to gain insight into Active Witnessing through Collaborators' honest and empathetic understandings of relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous people and everyday acts of accountable reconciliation. Furthermore, it seeks to underpin the experiences of individuals within the nation state paradigm that perceives western ontologies, heteropatriarchy, ableism, anthropocentrism and neoliberal capitalism as normal states of being and how this intertwines with settler colonial structure. The significance of this kind of research is to offer a space/voice to the actual experiences of individuals engaged in intergenerational decolonial solidarity, who may not otherwise have this opportunity. Furthermore, it expands the current understanding of what reconciliation processes and Witnessing might look like. It also considers participating individuals as intricately complex actors with agency and consciousness, not as subjects.

As such, this research understands that different people experience and understand the same reality in differing ways and thus have individual reasons for their actions.

I started off with the intention of interviewing approximately five family members and five colleagues. However, what I first began is not exactly what I ended up doing. I did not want to concentrate on a fixed quantity but rather on a deeper, richer exploration. Additionally, since this study collaborates with participants as opposed to doing research on participants it was important to have a deeper rapport. Consequently, I focused on four Collaborators. To begin connecting with the possible Collaborators, I sent them each an email asking if they would like to participate. I identified myself as a graduate student in the IGOV program in the Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. Further, I let them know that their relationship with me would not be affected regardless of their decision.

Four potential adult participants responded positively, and I then sent them the consent form. We went over this together. I did this by phoning and or emailing each participant. I then read the form to each person and/or had them read it over. I asked if they were comfortable with the information in the form or if they had any questions or needed clarification. I ensured that I had their free, prior and informed consent before continuing with the interviewing process. I also ensured that each participant understood they were Collaborators and established my own accountability and responsibility in terms of transparency in my role as researcher/collaborator. After signing the consent forms, we corresponded to make appropriate arrangements for their interviews. Each Collaborator had unique situations and we navigated these through a combination of in person, phone, skype, chat apps and email conversations.

The four Collaborators assisted in creating their own specific essay format which was casual and open-ended. We mainly concentrated on attention and rapport to create conditions conducive to the collaborative paradigm. While I offered prompts for topics such as decolonization, reconciliation, solidarity, ally-ship, language and everyday acts as decolonial practice, the essays are fundamentally phenomenological. The prompts and suggestions were not meant to be invasive or too personal, but rather to encourage Collaborators to speak to their own narrative and perception. No one was pushed to reveal more than they were comfortable with sharing at any time. To ensure no undue

coercion or potential harm I had each of these four Collaborators tell their story without interruption. The collaborators also regulated when to stop or continue the conversation. Further, collaborators have stewardship over their data and the results to be presented as they felt most comfortable. They also retain the right to withdraw at any time or request that their interview not be used, and their data destroyed.

Since two Collaborators are my close relatives, it is impossible to preserve anonymity. There are also limits to my ability to protect their confidentiality. This was made known to the related Collaborators, who let me know they were fine with this. Further, it is important to acknowledge the power relationship involved when researching with relatives. This relationship can influence the voluntariness of participants. However, having close relationships to Collaborators creates a unique intergenerational and reflexive study that expresses the more nuanced and intimate feelings that people engage in within the context of decolonization. Moreover, this relationship contributes to useful familial and intergenerational reconciliation strategies and actions. In addition, these two relatives offer two differing perspectives, one from an elder point of view and the other from a younger viewpoint. The two Collaborators who are not my close relations, nor my colleagues balance the study by offering a phenomenological window into how Active Witnessing can be enacted in terms of everydayness. Additionally, they are juxtaposed in that one is an intergenerational Canadian and the other is a British Immigrant.

For organizational simplicity and clarity, I refer to Collaborators by numerical order. Accordingly, Collaborator 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. This is also conducive to maintaining protocol and ethics surrounding confidentiality. To further clarify who is speaking during interviews I used a simple number coding method for each Collaborator; **C1**, **C2**, **C3**, and **C4**.

**C1** is British immigrant who worked as a doctor in small Central Northern and Coastal Indigenous communities. His contribution informs us about the inner struggle against stereotypes surrounding settler colonial conceptions of Indigenous families and communities and his personal witnessing of intergenerational trauma. **C2** is a settler Canadian who lived in a small Coastal community during the 1950s. She has been a midwife, a nurse and a coroner. She is also a Fibre Artist who specializes in quilting. Her contribution informs us about Active Witnessing as access intimacy and collaborative art.

Together these two in depth interviews as Life Writing inform us about Active Witnessing as every-day acts. C3 is decedent from a settler colonizer mother and an Indigenous father. She shares her experience of foster care through personal conversations. She also includes some of her art and Spherical Text. Her work informs us about Active Witnessing as an experiential and embodied process. C4 is a Danish immigrant who came to Canada in 1952. Her Life Writing informs us about Active Witnessing as intergenerational solidarity. Together these two in-depth interviews of family members inform us about Active Witnessing as intergenerational.

To record the data, each participant sent me an email essay. They then added or took away as they felt necessary. I stored the original email essays in my computer along with ensuing correspondences. Some Collaborators also included some photographs/images that are meaningful to them. These are included with their permission. Collaborators were able to access their own data and review it as they wished. I stored the data on my laptop in a password protected file. All original photographs and Art works are retained by the Collaborators. I only accepted copies of images, which are used with permission, properly cited and then deleted along with the rest of the data as requested by contributors or within five years' time.

Collaborators articulated their own personal experiences and did not speak on behalf of any collective or community. They share insight but do not represent any specific Indigenous culture, people or community. The study was wholly conducted in Canada and specifically in British Columbia. The purpose of doing email essay as Life Writing is to explore the day-to-day everyday experiences of individuals engaged in interrelationships and relationship building between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals. The essay format allows the collaborator to use their own words and style to convey their phenomenologically felt experiences. Some of these do include accountable reconciliation practices including intergenerational decolonization processes, access intimacy and/or gift economy and expressions of friendship and love. The inclusion of relatives helps to gain insight into intergenerational factors involved in reconciliation acts that are strengthened by a deeper more meaningful respect for Indigenous knowledges and land/water based practices. All participants provide a deeply embodied and

experiential narrative regarding what has made their life difficult and what has assisted them.

A significant disadvantage often noted in interviewing family and colleagues is over rapport. Over rapport occurs when researchers over identify with subject and fail to approach the research itself in a critical manner<sup>482</sup>. Since my research plan was (very) casual and explorative rather than directive, and my methodology followed a vulnerable Life Writing as witnessing framework, I found this actually worked as an advantage. It permitted an approach that combined creative and academic research practices, including artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation.

I acknowledge that most of the research paradigms strategies or results cannot be fully duplicated or tested but the overall design of the study could certainly be followed, built on and deepen mu limited results. That is part of the phenomenological and immersive felt aspects of *bricolage* and life writing as methodology. Notwithstanding, I also acknowledge that I function as this project's Principal Investigator. As such, I take complete responsibility for any errors, inaccuracies, mistakes, misappropriations and/or misunderstandings articulated or found within the dissemination of the study.

### **Everyday Acts of Reconciliation as Active Witnessing**

This everyday action is what I am framing as Active Witnessing. I engaged in this method throughout the research process. Everyday acts might be described as day-to-day action, interrelated collective acts or solitary endeavours. It is a form of leadership and engagement in which you 'walk your talk' each day. It is the act of doing, reflecting and talking in ways that deepen one's commitment to decolonization processes and to a robust relationship with the planet. This method is indispensable in terms of locating the ephemerality of engagement. These are often small moments that are intimate, personal and deeply moving experiences that have transformative effects.

### **Ups and Downs with the Research Process**

While working on this project I encountered ongoing personal obligations, unexpected health issues and several family crises. At several points during the research

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<sup>482</sup> Mulvihill and Swaminathan, *Critical Approaches*, 7-9

process, I found myself floundering in tremendous anxiety trying to balance structure with flexibility, research with emotive felt experience and to be quite honest, with the overall management of my time. This anxiety created numerous complications in terms of my personal health and time management. Further, my university department went through several changes that affected me academically. As well, during the last half of 2019 and the next ensuing year and a half the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes that many of us did not have time to fully adapt to. Nonetheless, while these setbacks presented obstacles and appeared to take up valuable time, I also felt that this revealed something very interesting about the stress and pressure of the research process. I felt that a large part of time mismanagement is not necessarily through the fault of the researcher themselves. It often happens simply because life keeps happening—no matter the academic demands and/or constraints on our body/mind self. Many standard methodologies and methods do not work for neurodivergent individuals and those with other disabilities. You have to really dig around to form a methodological framework that is pragmatically doable for your research. And this is precisely why intimate methodology and methods can work in decolonial research. Because it is specifically about challenging normative assumptions of achievement and success in academia and exploring everyday acts/interactions, the ordinary, the messy, the unexpected, the ephemeral, the interstitial, the unnoticed and the intimate arenas of witnessing.<sup>483</sup> The difficulties, physical, intellectual, interpersonal and emotive, are the precise aspects of this research that are to be deeply experienced and intimately investigated.

Due to the meta-reflexivity involved, there was a constant need to check and recheck the work. This was done by engaging my own self in some of the phenomenological research in the form of a separate ‘book’.<sup>484</sup> These notes contain thoughts, visceral reactions to writing and researching processes as well as memories that spontaneously arose. They bring attention to the ambiguously ineffable. These are kept in a private file as they are not a necessary part of the dissertation. In addition, I also welcomed supervisors, committee members, colleagues, community members, friends

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<sup>483</sup> Alfred, Cornthassel and Strelein, “Everyday acts of resurgence,” <https://vimeo.com/181131726>

<sup>484</sup> This idea was suggested to me by my sister, who used this strategy when working on her own PhD dissertation.

and family to critique the work as it progressed while also steadily persevering in terms of my topic of choice.

But most of all, I found it utterly exhausting to try and find willing participants, navigate academia, deal with rejection, rapid changes, heavy stress loads and isolation. This was partially due to unforeseen circumstances but also partly due to my neurobiology. I am autistic and for me executive function is a real and painful struggle. I noticed throughout academia there was not much accommodation, understanding or acceptance of this. As well, I am Situationally Mute. I literally cannot speak in certain circumstances. Unfortunately, I was aware of nor offered alternatives to help accommodate. As a result, I often kept my disabilities to myself. Nonetheless, I was deeply affected in term of my inability to give presentations, attend conferences, broaden my focus (I tend to hyper focus and compartmentalize) or travel (I have absolutely no sense of direction in built environments). I was also constantly exhausted by the assemblages of burden: academia, family obligations and crises, navigating systems as an autistic person, chronic body pain and chronic fatigue. This was further exacerbated by the state of emergency surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. I really relied on social media to connect to support systems and individuals that I felt safe with. Conversely, during the many on-the-land and cultural exchanges I have had in the past, I connected with some amazing people who extended unconditional Access Intimacy with me. There are a few colleagues who deeply encouraged and affected my work. And of course, my wonderful committee members and exceedingly supportive supervisor. That is what has kept me afloat and re-attempting to cross the finish line again and again. Through others belief in my work, I have come to believe in myself. It's a nourishing regenerative form of love that has extended from several hearts. As Mucina offers, *umuntu ungu- muntu ngubuntu*, "A person is a person among other persons"<sup>485</sup> and Corntassel shares with the philosophy he fully embodies, *gadugi*, "which is a spirit of community camaraderie where no one person is left alone to climb out of a life endeavor."<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Mucina "We Exist Because They Exist"

<sup>486</sup> Corntassel, "Toward Sustainable"

## Chapter 4: Collaborating Life Writing as Active Witnessing

*I don't know much about much,  
And what I don't know I don't say,  
And when I have nothing to say,  
I'm quiet.<sup>487</sup>*

### Introduction

#### Everyday Acts

In their article, *Everyday Resurgence During COVID-19: A Social Media situation Report*, Corntassel, Robyne Edgar, Renee Monchalin and Carey Newman reflect on how the COVID pandemic created a situation from which an online resurgence project began.<sup>488</sup> This is an Instagram social media account that began on May 20, 2021, called Everyday Indigenous Resurgence (EIR). It highlights decolonial and resurgent acts that Indigenous peoples do every day even amidst times of isolation and danger. Edgar notes the importance of check-ins with Elders, the presence of medicinal and sacred plants, the sharing of medicines, and the resurgence of small food gardens.<sup>489</sup> Monchalin notes the presence of oral protocol teachings that are passed down through generations of epidemic survivors and the adaptability of Indigenous communities. She further expresses her own growth through ancestors, blood memory and google!<sup>490</sup> Corntassel mentions the need for slowing down, and enacting *tohi*, (peacefulness, not being rushed, everything flowing smoothly). He notes a difference in growing food and medicines, language learning, singing and storytelling.<sup>491</sup> Newman notes the creativity that surged, reflecting on trauma and the ripple effects of injustice and the exponential harm it does.

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<sup>487</sup> Malvina Reynolds - Sings the Truth (1966) <http://www.malvinareynolds.com/songmenu.htm> Malvina Reynolds work as a poet, song writer and activist is unparalleled in terms of Active Witnessing and everydayness. I would recommend perusing her writing.

<sup>488</sup> Jeff Corntassel, Robyne Edgar, Renee Monchalin and Carey Newman, "Everyday Resurgence During COVID-19: A Social Media situation Report" *Alter-Native: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, (2021) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1177180120968156>

<sup>489</sup> Corntassel et al. "Everyday Resurgence"

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

He also reflected on ancestral epidemics and pandemics shifting his view of colonialism. Newman perceived colonialism as a pandemic, in need of a vaccine.<sup>492</sup>

In reading these personal accounts I also reflect on how the pandemic has changed my perceptions. I have seen pop-up online communities of mutual aid, food sharing, delivery of essential goods such as medicine, food, clothes, furniture etc., clothing exchanges and caregiving. One of my daughters entered college and is taking Indigenous Studies and so has engaged in decolonial and resurgent conversations and virtual talking circles. And when my mother visited in July of 2021, she told me about how the Nuxalk Nation took it upon themselves to protect their community and the Bella Coola Valley. They stood up to local government and blockaded the main road, refusing access to tourists and visitors.<sup>493</sup> Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland suggest working with others to make changes through disengaging from the dominant system as much as possible. An example from the COVID pandemic is Facebook groups exercising human capacities of self-organizing, self-government, local co-sustaining networks. They do not emerge from above or below but from everywhere and every day.<sup>494</sup> Engaging in reconciliation can happen right here right now. Even amidst the Pandemic we have been living through for the past two years. And may well continue to learn to live with.

Moreover, in their article, *Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics*, Kwaguł Scholar Sarah Hunt and Canadian Academic Cindy Holmes propose that decolonization is best explored via every day quiet activism, queer feminism and decolonization practices (ally/solidarity).<sup>495</sup>

Daily settler colonial realities are ever unfolding on unceded lands, and they are the starting point for a politics of decolonization.<sup>496</sup> Understanding and analysis of ally-

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Personal Conversation, 2019.

<sup>494</sup> Corntassel et al. "Everyday Resurgence"

<sup>495</sup> Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics," *The Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, (2015):154-172. <https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/assets/docs/admissions2018/Hunt%20and%20Holmes%20Everyday%20Decolonization.pdf>. This essay has been instrumental in guiding how I approached my research and ensuing dissertation, mainly because the subject matter and authors' perspective resonated and was relatable to my own personal and familial experiences, history and worldview.

<sup>496</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 155

ship in this context centers on relational knowledge productions, conversation, dialogue and Life Writing.<sup>497</sup> Story telling is about everyday decolonization in our personal lives. This means looking closely at daily interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous people across relational geographies of ally-ship.<sup>498</sup> This provides numerous possibilities for furthering decolonial efforts on colonized lands.<sup>499</sup>

Hunt and Holmes essay informs us that decolonization and queering can be active, interconnected, critical and everyday practices that take place within and across diverse spaces and times. Queer is often used as an identity category. But it is also about a critique of essentialist constructs and identity politics.<sup>500</sup> When used as a verb, it is a deconstructive practice that challenges normative knowledges, identities, behaviours, and spaces. Further, it unsettles power relations and everyday common assumptions.<sup>501</sup>

As such, Hunt and Holmes endeavour to queer white settler colonialism and to render it visible, abnormal and to boldly challenge the body and mind<sup>502</sup>. In the Canadian context, decolonization is inherently connected to the land's histories and futures of Indigenous peoples. Decolonization is sustained by indigenous experiences and knowledge which is diverse and contain an embedded nature unique to a particular geography<sup>503</sup>.

The everydayness of decolonization acknowledges resistance in daily acts of embodying and living indigeneity, honouring long standing relationships to land, water life forms and each other.<sup>504</sup> Hunt and Holmes suggest that making every acts visible is a way to come to value quiet relational processes of change that are necessary for non-indigenous peoples who seek to align themselves with indigenous struggle.<sup>505</sup> Discomfort

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<sup>497</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 156

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 157

<sup>503</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 157; Sium, Desai and Ritskes, "The 'Tangible Unknown'," ii

<sup>504</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 157-158

<sup>505</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 158

and unsettling are vital processes to solidarity/coalition and decolonization processes. This is often brought up in discussions on the topic of indigenous settler solidarity. However, there are intimate spaces of comfort in which ally-ship and activism and decolonial processes can also occur between friends, family and lovers.<sup>506</sup> While home is a site of comfort it is also a site of transformational change that are deeply interrelated with public spaces of the streets and politics.<sup>507</sup>

Decolonization actively challenges transmogrified systems of knowledge that do not fully account for the lives of Indigenous peoples, queer peoples, trans peoples and others whose lives are erased through epistemic and material violence.<sup>508</sup> This manifestation of decolonization is already active in embodiments of Indigeneity and queer gender and sexuality. Embodied decolonization processes begin in ways that percolate down into generations of descendants. it is a fundamental shift of embodied being—not just the mind, not just the body, not just the spirit—but rather a shift of the embodied experience of phenomenological being within a paradigm not of difference, not of inclusion, not of multiplicity, but one of interrelationality and symbiosis.<sup>509</sup> Significantly, it must include intergenerationality.

Ongoing settler colonial processes of categorization of Indigenous peoples are integral to the denial of Indigenous self-determination.<sup>510</sup> Hunt and Holmes suggest supporting decolonization strategies that focus on strengthening knowledge of local Indigenous practices, building knowledge of both contemporary and historic issues.<sup>511</sup> Most importantly, decolonization strategies must be defined by Indigenous peoples and communities. The process of strengthening everyday acts in relationships is the hub of successful decolonization praxis.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Hunt and Holmes, 159

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Hunt and Holmes, 160

<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

Like Denzin and Million; Hunt and Holmes suggest storytelling and Life Writing raises questions and tensions. It centers the dynamic messy quality of relationships among individuals who are engaged in processes of unsettling dominant power dynamics and colonial ideologies.<sup>513</sup> Friendship and intimate relationships are spaces in which allyship can be fostered within the context of decolonization. Furthermore, friendship can provide opportunity for enacting allyship and integrated friendships of solidarity. Further, it enables the possibility to develop a desire to do something or change something through shared experience and knowledge. As stated by Okanogan educator Jeanette Armstrong,

There's no point in sharing this with you if it's only going to excite you for a day. And then you go on your ways. You're wasting my time and your time. If you're willing to do something, I'm willing to talk with you.<sup>514</sup>

Friendship can emphasize the significance of relationships in Indigenous systems of knowledge and practice, framing a cross-cultural friendship as one space in which critical interrogation can contribute to decolonizing praxis as researchers.<sup>515</sup> Friendships of solidarity require trust and communication across differences. They require ongoing and reciprocal works.<sup>516</sup> They are spaces in which white privilege is contested rather than reproduced. However, allyship does not need reciprocity on the part of the marginalized individual. It requires the accountability of the members of the dominant group.<sup>517</sup>

Intimate relationships, partners or lovers requires questioning how to enact decolonial practices across axes of race, gender, class and sexuality and so on. This requires self-education and self-reflection that is reciprocal in different ways than in friendships. However, intimate spaces are arenas of white privilege and settler colonial oppression. This requires extra work in the area of allyship.<sup>518</sup> There is a significant lack

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<sup>513</sup> Hunt and Holmes, 161; Sarah de Leeuw, Emilee Cameron and Margo Greenwood, "Participatory and Community-based Research, Indigenous Geographies, and the Spaces of Friendship: A Critical Engagement," *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien*, vol. 56, (2012): 180-194.

<sup>514</sup> Hunt and Holmes, 161; Jeanette Armstrong, "Keepers of the Earth," *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth/Healing the Mind*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books Publishing, 1995): 299

<sup>515</sup> de Leeuw et al. "Indigenous Geographies,"

<sup>516</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization," 162

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

<sup>518</sup> Hunt and Holmes, 162. Sometimes this work is called SOFA (significant others, friends, family and allies)

of commitment by white settlers to challenge racism and colonialism/settler colonialism and practicing a politics of accountability to Indigenous peoples and people of colour. A decolonial queer praxis demands we ask why this remains marginal to the discussion of ally-ship and decolonial processes.

Parenting, home ownership, and education are all potential sites of discussion through a queer decolonial politics<sup>519</sup>. Involvement in solidarity practice is played out in everyday acts of sharing support friendships, standing beside or behind in struggles (in doing dishes, baking for others, babysitting, talking, hugging, driving, cooking). Hunt and Holmes suggest we can do these things. Just do them with some semblance of love and care.<sup>520</sup> Emotional conversations can be sites of change and growth, strength and understanding. They can be sites of deep pain, trauma, long term abuse and deep ongoing healing. The very act of telling white settler stories of ally-ship is troubled with tensions given that white settler narratives of good intentions and benevolence are a historical foundation of white settler identity.<sup>521</sup> As such, how can white settler allies talk about ally-ship without positioning themselves as better than other white settlers or perpetuating narratives that maintain white supremacy by propping up white settlers as benevolent survivors of the oppressed?

One way settlers can begin to do this is through becoming more reflexive in terms of the implications of our allyship. For instance, in the CBC Radio article, “The Language of Love: Artists Ursula Johnson and Angella Parsons on Mik’*maw* in their Marriage,” (interviewed by Zoe Tennant), Mik’*maw* Artist Ursula Johnson and Canadian Artist Angella Parsons work together under the name *kinuk*, which means “us, exclusive.”<sup>522</sup> They perform a play called, “*L’uwesimki El-noo-wee-simk*: Speaking Indian.”<sup>523</sup> It is based on their everyday kitchen table conversations that they have

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<sup>519</sup> Mick Scow, “Relentlessly Coastal: Parenting, Research and Everyday Resurgence,” *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People Places Practices*, (Day keeper Press, 2018)

<sup>520</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 162

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Zoe Tennant, “The Language of Love: Artists Ursula Johnson and Angella Parsons on Mik’*maw* in their Marriage,” *CBC Radio Canada*, (February 10, 2019), <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/snagging-romance-novels-and-bear-grease-unreserved-shares-indigenous-love-stories-1.5005570/the-language-of-love-artists-ursula-johnson-and-angella-parsons-on-mik-maw-in-their-marriage-1.5005577>

<sup>523</sup> Tennant, “Language of Love”

engaged in over time. The only scripted line is: “Will you teach me your language?”<sup>524</sup> Johnson and Parsons inform us that this question is more than just about ally-ship and learning a language. It is weighted and subjective. It not only asks to learn words and phrases but also culture, law, governance, land and water based lifeways, settler colonial violence and Indigenous survivance. It is a part of having a loving relationship. But it is also heavy with intricate crosscutting implications and accountabilities.<sup>525</sup> Johnson’s response to her wife learning Mik’maw is with generosity and honour. She stipulates that “...it’s not just, ‘oh I want to learn how to say all the jokes’...she wants to learn the philosophies and values behind it. And I think it’s really important to look at both sides of that conversation.”<sup>526</sup>

This informs us that there is no definitive example of ally-ship, no strict definition, no universal guidebook or list of rules.<sup>527</sup> It has to be applied as relationship emerges. Analysis of colonialism can take place at the kitchen table, on the way home from school, at the store, after watching a movie, or reading stories. The key is to challenge white settler myths and colonial narratives. White settlers must learn to “hold the tension of honouring ancestors while clearly naming their families role in colonization.”<sup>528</sup> Understanding our intimate connection with the violence of colonial history is not easy. It is not comfortable, and it can really hurt. But such understandings are necessary to resist racial amnesia and white settler narratives of innocence, denial, conquest and genocide.<sup>529</sup> We must move towards a practice of accountability to Indigenous peoples in Canada.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> If you are a settler and really would appreciate some guidelines or rules you can find several articles about allyship guidelines and solidarity here: *Unsettling America Decolonization in Theory & Practice* [https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/allyship/?fbclid=IwAR091kCtG3tggYus0evQZLGJ7YRc9HnwcVgWJv8l-OLzWn\\_NcOXUY3Kk8xA](https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/allyship/?fbclid=IwAR091kCtG3tggYus0evQZLGJ7YRc9HnwcVgWJv8l-OLzWn_NcOXUY3Kk8xA)

<sup>528</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 165

<sup>529</sup> Sharene H. Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law : Unmapping a White Settler Society*, (TO: Between the Lines, 2002)

<sup>530</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 165-166

To this, Regan suggests, settler stories are counter narratives that create decolonizing spaces both interior and relational. As such, they require us to risk revealing ourselves as vulnerable “not knowers” who are willing to examine our dual positions as colonizer perpetrators and colonizer allies.<sup>531</sup> This means learning to enact consensual allyship or risk enacting imposed solidarity and allyship, replicating the same oppression we are resisting.<sup>532</sup> This can be done even in intimate spaces and close relationships, in the name of protection from racism, colonial violence, colonial systems and interactions. Settlers are challenged to not speak for them<sup>533</sup>. We are challenged to unmask and unlearn white settler colonial ways of thinking and being in the world and to listen and learn from Indigenous peoples. A decolonial CDT praxis requires we engage in the complexities of reorienting ourselves away from white supremacy logics and systems towards more respectful and acceptable ways of being in relation to one another and land without appropriating Indigenous culture, language and knowledge<sup>534</sup>.

The notions of everydayness, reconciliation and witnessing as a significant part of intergenerational decolonial process is something that has been nudging me throughout my work, both past and present. This has paved the way for the development of an emergent concept I call Active Witnessing. As a concept, Active Witnessing describes a way of being in the world that creates accessibility, embraces vulnerability, holds space and seeks ways to act in solidarity even in the face of incommensurability. Significantly, it requires actively learning about Indigenous struggles and understanding these struggles as vital. It insists that settler colonizer allies stand behind them in robust unity without interference. Throughout this chapter, I suggest this term not as a theoretical construction but just as a term that can assist in describing various phenomenological and/or ineffable solidarity practices, via the application of accountable vulnerability and how this can not only become a robust resistance approach but also an integral intergenerational

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<sup>531</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 166; Regan, *Unsettling the Settler*, 28; Note: I might differ in this opinion, as I do not see us having a dual position. I see the colonizer only as colonizer. And our active praxis as we embody and enact it.

<sup>532</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 167

<sup>533</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 167; Toby Rollo, “Everyday Deeds: Enactive Protest, Exit, and Silence in Deliberative Systems,” *Political Theory*, vol. 45, no. 5, (2017): 587–609

<sup>534</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization,” 168

reconciliation strategy. Active Witnessing is an embodied act of creating everyday purposeful and/or spontaneous situations of Access Intimacy. It conscientiously holds space for Indigenous voices and presence. It is a vulnerable, risky, uncertain, discrete and exposed location of recognizing transmogrified ontologies that undergird structures, systems and institutions.

Active Witnessing entails an awareness of settler colonial violence and an accountability towards Indigenous peoples, land and water. Furthermore, it insists on alignment with Indigenous Nationhood (a confluence of Indigenous cultural intersection of law, politics and governance). It is the embodied act of becoming ecologically aware and moving into solidarity. It does not imply unity or oneness, nor any universal humanity. Instead, it is local, felt, nurturing creative and moves away from heteropatriarchy. It is a kind of holding space with Indigenous Nationhood, self-determination and resurgence as the vital center from which all other forms of social and ecological justice emanate. Moreover, Active Witnessing are acts of finding new ways of being non-indigenous that are not settler colonial, not heteropatriarchal, not ableist and not neoliberal capitalistic. It is intergenerational. And it is the small intimate everyday day-to-day conversations and acts that cultivate care.

In the following section, I explore the concept of Active Witnessing through the phenomenological essay contributions of four Collaborators. Each Collaborator's contribution begins with a coded number and a title. I try not to interpret or over analyze or redo my own responses in order to preserve the phenomenological approach. As well, I do note moments of Active Witnessing located within the everyday day-to-day conversations, the emergence of access intimacy, the deepening of ecological awareness and the gifting practices that cultivate reconciliation praxis and care.

## Confluences of Engagement: Everyday Acts of Active Witnessing

Many times, when settler colonizers involve themselves with Indigenous concerns, they do so out of some other settler centered agenda. This is especially apparent when settler colonizers incorporate environmental activism or social justice activism with Indigenous Resurgence. Although it is certainly apparent there are convergences between various group objectives, settler colonizers tend to arrogate; generally including Indigenous activism to support their own itinerary. Even within environmental justice paradigms, the settler colonizer's goal often remains detached from Indigenous understandings of land and water and detached from Indigenous contexts<sup>535</sup>. As Carlson suggests it is paramount that Indigenous self-determination and resurgence be at the center of decolonial praxis<sup>536</sup>. Further, although many settlers would rather not acknowledge it, both Carlson and Irlbracher-Fox assert that settler privilege inevitably taints settler endeavours to ally with Indigenous activism<sup>537</sup>. This is because settler privilege is systemic, infiltrating all institutions and spheres of settler colonial life from the public to the private.

How then can settler colonizers functionally participate in decolonial action? Kovach suggests settlers engage in aligning their work with Indigenous methodologies, methods and theories and shifting away from Eurocentric models of knowledge production/distribution<sup>538</sup>. This includes recognizing ways in which settler colonizers move towards innocence and deny complacency through our personal dedication to ecojustice, environmental activism and social justice<sup>539</sup>. This can be a point of contention and frustration because social justice and environmental activism can connect non-Indigenous allies to Indigenous led movements<sup>540</sup>. Yet, when settler colonizers are

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<sup>535</sup> Carlson "Anti-colonial Methodologies", 496

<sup>536</sup> Carlson "Anti-colonial Methodologies", 496

<sup>537</sup> Carlson "Anti-colonial Methodologies", 496; Irlbracher-Fox, "#IdleNoMore: Settler Responsibility".

<sup>538</sup> Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Introduction, Chs 8-9.

<sup>539</sup> Barker, "From Adversaries to Allies", 316-33

<sup>540</sup> Sium et al, 3-12

involved, there is the tendency to replicate colonial hierarchies and transmogrified ontological models of activism.

Throughout the Life Writing contributions of **C1**, **C2**, **C3**, and **C4** we are informed about the existence of reflexivity, creativity and deeper levels of understanding that exist, emerging from purposeful and fluid interrelationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that are done in ways that invoke mutual reciprocity, respect, care and connection. These relationships are intergenerational, creative and often unarticulated. One of the primary revelations of this study is that ordinary people often encounter and engage in Active Witnessing but are unaware of this because no one has pointed it out and asked for their insight. Part of the responsibility of the settler colonizer is to not only hold each other accountable but also to bring each other in, to highlight extant decolonial praxis already being done, unrecognized, on a day-to-day basis. It is not Indigenous peoples' responsibility to acknowledge solidarity and allyship<sup>541</sup>. This does not mean settler's need to call themselves allies when they feel like it, but simply to be aware of our actions as being aligned with Indigenous imperatives and resurgence goals. It is our responsibility to recognize what this looks like and to engage in this activity<sup>542</sup>. In this way, naming such praxis Active Witnessing is a form of accountability and acknowledgment of ineffable practices that are nonetheless impactful. It is also an emergent way to engage in research methodologies and methods that can underscore the work already done and being done by Indigenous researchers. In doing so, Active Witnessing becomes an Everyday Act of reconciliation.

Each Collaborator has their own unique way of enacting Active Witnessing that is embedded with their own biases, contextual circumstances and experiences. Nevertheless, they are united in terms of creativity, positive early childhood relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities, parental modeling of compassion, an ability to listen closely to Indigenous voices, to be reflexive, to learn and to care. They have found

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<sup>541</sup> Some Indigenous peoples have stipulated that Ally or Allyship cannot be self-declared. It is not the settler's right to call themselves an ally but rather it is the Indigenous person, group or communities right to decide. In this Sium et al, 5; Martineau and Ritskes, "Fugitive Indigeneity", 1-12.

<sup>542</sup> Of course this doesn't mean settler get to label themselves as allies. That's actually not for settlers to decide. Taking responsibility to recognize what ally-ship looks like is a way of being accountable not appropriating or taking credit for.

themselves questioning settler colonial narratives, legislative policies and programs, established bigotry, colloquial perspectives, commonplace stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and racism, even within their own lives. As such, we are informed about how individuals look at systemic oppression, how they can begin to realize its impact on oppressed communities and individuals. And we cannot help but think that non-indigenous people must have been noticing these social sufferings for a very long time. For generations. There really is no innocence nor ignorance in settler colonial invasion<sup>543</sup>. The knee-jerk reflex to turn away from that which we cannot recognize or change is a deeply embedded apathy, born of a sort of abject despondence and deep distrust<sup>544</sup>; we know the settler colonial system captures us too and if we don't acquiesce for the most part, we stand to lose. And losing in settler colonial society is a state of living death. Poverty, shame, punishment, indignity. Scarcity, guilt, subjugation, illiteracy. Our fragile state can easily shatter.

I want to take a moment here to unpack one of the things that keeps pushing in the back of my skull as I read through these accounts. Memmi's disclosure of the colonizer who refuses might be relevant. On numerous occasions, when settler colonizers talk about Indigenous families and communities and note the differences in how these social groups are organized, arranged and function; they do so in a way that holds a simultaneous blend of admiration, envy and repulsion. Memmi states that the colonizer who refuses desires adoption into the colonized people's lifeways and culture but cannot cope with the heavy reality and stark differences in domestic arrangement, family priorities, household noise, day-to-day acts, cultural and subsistence practices; what to speak of the multitudinous effects of colonial violence<sup>545</sup>. The colonizer who refuses must leave the colonized's community and return to what they consider comfortable and familiar<sup>546</sup>. Which is why settler colonialism brings along the colonizer's food,

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<sup>543</sup> Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 25; Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor", 1-40.

<sup>544</sup> Rollo does some excellent work in this regard, especially regarding intergenerational war trauma and state sanctioned intergenerational abuse within settler colonial family and educational intuitions.

<sup>545</sup> Memmi, *The Colonized*, 19-44, 22-24

<sup>546</sup> Memmi, 19-44

architecture, townships, civil planning, place names, language, and ecology along with them. And appropriates what it desires from Indigenous communities: such as art, language (sometimes anglicized), technologies, spirituality and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). By doing so, the settler colonizer reinforces both the romanticized vision of and an underlying embedded repulsion towards Indigenous suffering and survivance<sup>547</sup>. As a way of acknowledging privilege, racism and moves to innocence, I think this is a critical point that needs to be recognized within some of the contributed writings. Further, the candid and prosaic way the contributions are written helps to pinpoint a discrete embodied settler colonial attitude of ‘authenticity’ that often slides under the radar within carefully crafted settler colonial academic work.

Notwithstanding, significant to this work is the idea that everyday ordinary common folk people are not just that. They are complex beings who exist in relation with a myriad of other beings in manifold ways, including other human beings. Many concepts described by higher academia are indeed simply complex ways of describing aspects of day-to-day messiness of being and interacting with various phenomena<sup>548</sup>. This is one reason that I present the Collaborators contributions largely in full, rather than paraphrasing, or performing hierarchal (expert) decisive interpretive analysis. Instead, I endeavor to engage with their work in a more personal, felt manner. I do this because I hope to keep their work phenomenologically experiential and filtered through their own perceptions. It also allows me to express my perspective without insisting that I fully grasp exactly what each Collaborator is conveying. By this I mean that when a thought, or experience is presented as in-depth Life Writing it not only contains experience, but also deeper nuances of subtlety and interconnection. In this way, we can listen to their words and feel some of the deeper emotive sensations each Collaborator goes through. Furthermore, we can engage in noting the confluences of Everyday Acts of reconciliation and Active Witnessing embedded within some of the narrative.

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<sup>547</sup> Suffering means vulnerability and culpability. It invokes shame and guilt in the settler, which repulses them. Pity and benevolence softens this and endears Indigenous people’s plight to the colonizer. Survivance means strength and independence. It invokes fear and envy within the settler, traits which repulse the colonizer. Admiration and appropriation of Indigenous lifeways re-empowers the colonizer.

<sup>548</sup> Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization”, 154-172; Alfred, Corntassel and Strelein, “Everyday acts of resurgence”; Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 80

I use this strategy to problematize settler colonial academia, which often seems far too wrapped up in debate; locating time frames, apparatus, authoritative research, category, key concepts, theory laden discourse, catch words and catch phrases of the day. We get lost in a self-absorbed continuum of white privileged academic hegemony. If we look closely, we might begin to see not only the dichotomy between privilege and social suffering but also that there are moments of empathy in-between these polarities. And this everyday interstitial empathy has potential to discretely engage with reconciliation in ways that open up spaces for Indigenous Resurgence. Small moments of care, relationship building, exchange, mutual respect and access intimacy can become robust acts of Active Witnessing.

Significantly, both **C1** and **C2** expressed hesitancy and confusion regarding this project. **C1**, a retired community doctor expresses his apprehensions:

My wife and I weren't sure about being interviewed, but we talked about your project and remembered our experiences living in communities with First Nations people.<sup>549</sup>

As such, **C1** points out their initial trepidation at participating in an in-depth sharing of their own personal experiences. He and his partner took their time deciding. They talked it over, reflected and made the decision to add to the conversation with their lived experience. Similarly, **C2** a retired nurse and coroner also expressed her confusion:

To be honest, your project puzzles me; probably something to do with jargon required of you but not making sense to someone outside 'the loop'. The importance of 'accessibility' of language keeps hitting me.

Reading your proposal brought a sense of *déjà vu*. I think you might be caught between a rock and a hard place. ...academia has its jargon that you now understand and expects that you'll use those terms. I don't think that means 'dumbing down'. It's more a matter of using conversational English. Your research sounds like something which could be very valuable. Would it be possible to include a translation of your proposal as a necessary angle?<sup>550</sup>

I appreciate the fact that **C2** let me know that my criteria did not make sense outside of the university boundaries. I was so busy trying to convey what I was doing to the ethics board; I completely missed the fact that the language I was using might be inaccessible to the very people whose voices were most needed. It didn't occur to me that

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<sup>549</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>550</sup> See Appendix B

I was being ableistic and disabling Collaborators through gatekeeping jargon. She further adds:

Sometimes a person feels ‘hurt’ because they haven’t had a chance to contribute to something. That might be because no-one thought of them. Or because someone thought they ‘wouldn’t be interested’. Or maybe because someone thought they wouldn’t have anything of value to say. Or because there wasn’t a method of contact. You mention “looking for the smaller (even unexpected) spaces of reconciliation”. I don’t think you’ll find much variety among your current colleagues; you are trying to find to capture greater breadth by connecting with others. That means finding the language they (we) speak.<sup>551</sup>

I think it is very common to feel unsure or ‘hurt’ for non-indigenous people engaging in Indigenous activism. It is often quite difficult for them to find a way to express their experiences without the tug of fear, or guilt in relation to complicity. Perhaps this is in part because their experiences are often mixed and bittersweet. Relationships and experiences are always some combination of layers enfolded and metamorphosed in many ways. Indigenous to non-indigenous relations are much more so. They yield a galaxy of complex and nuanced components. As explored earlier via Vaudrin-Charette, and Sium et al., ever underpinning these relations is a systemic power imbalance. This in turn can reveal settler vulnerability to the ‘settler privilege line, as per Irlbracher-Fox and Barker’s, ‘moves to innocence’. Honesty, candor, transparency, generosity, respect and humility are so important for Active Witnessing. When we are honest with each other we make space for bringing one another in. And this strengthens our accountability and commitment, assesses our individual capacity (i.e.: speaking out vs. keeping quiet) and allows us to better understand the ways in which we can engage in Everyday Acts that make room for Indigenous Resurgence.

One of the themes I noticed that permeated all four contributions was that each one had interrelationships with Indigenous people, families and communities on a day-to-day basis. Some of these relationships were childhood friendships, some were due to their parent’s occupation/vocation and some were their own professional relationships in which they were able to provide Access Intimacy. For instance, when speaking about an Indigenous man his father knew when **CI** was a youth he states:

(S) didn’t really have much connection with his home reserve having been in trouble at an early age. However, we all liked him. He could have fun once he relaxed with us, and I

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

remember once he met me by chance on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg and invited me to have a coffee with him. I felt kind of proud to be treated as an adult.<sup>552</sup>

I think within this statement, the memory of being treated as a person with autonomy and agency is an experience that stands out for C1. We can see the immense impact that childhood interrelations and interactions have on how the individual perceives Indigenous peoples and communities later in life. He further states:

He told my Dad that in jail they all knew there were us Indians and the white guys, and you didn't mix with the whites or trust them. He said that since meeting my Dad he knew that was not true.<sup>553</sup>

Another vital component to generating interrelationships is building trust by being trustworthy. This is crucial for relationships that can lead to accountable reconciliation processes. Yet, at the same time there must be respectful caution. African American Islamist and Activist Malcom X would say no<sup>554</sup>. For example, he spoke openly regarding white people's allyship to Black initiatives. He suggested that white folks spend too much time trying to help out rather than confronting their own communities. Malcom X stated:

Where the really sincere white people have got to do their "proving" of themselves is not among the black victims, but out on the battle lines of where America's racism really is — and that's in their own home communities; America's racism is among their fellow whites. That's where sincere whites who really mean to accomplish something have got to work...And in our mutual sincerity, we might be able to show a road to the salvation of America's very soul.<sup>555</sup>

Further in this regard, African American Activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr states:

First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically believes he can set

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<sup>552</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Further understanding on the insidious extent of systemic racism it is worth watching these two episodes of Donahue in which Islamist Minister Louis Farrakhan navigates both the host and the audience. Recorded in 1985 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-OiUW\\_uGwM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-OiUW_uGwM); and in 1990 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Epjb-A6vOhQ>. I especially love how the white members of the audience make the exact same moves to innocence that we have always done and are still doing...30 years later! It underpins our 'stuckness' in white supremacy.

<sup>555</sup> Malcolm X (as told to Alex Haley) *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, (NY: Ballantine Books Trade Edition, 1992)

the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.<sup>556</sup>

I think this critique is urgently needed in contemporary strategies of problem solving. White solutions are not the answer to Indigenous issues. Because colonization has robbed Indigenous communities of capacity we need to provide retribution and reparation. This includes providing structural services that contemporary living often requires such as electricity and clean water. If Canada keeps terrorizing Indigenous communities with devastating neglect, uninformed indifference, and the ongoing tyrannical extraction of natural resources they perpetuate a slow and horrific genocide that affects physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing of all members, from infants to elders. The amount of demoralization, silencing and disregard Canada shows towards Indigenous land and water protectors engaged in Indigenous Resurgence is appalling. It shows a deep level of uncaring unresponsiveness. A heartlessness. There are solutions to be found. The actual solution finding will be done by the community members themselves according to their own cultural laws, governance and cultural practices<sup>557</sup>.

There is long way to go for healing to happen in Indigenous to non-indigenous relationships. And this healing often begins within the individuals and extends outward from there. In relation to this **C3** adds:

When I finally escaped the foster home...we had to do a lot of healing work. My mother has guided my path that has led to the grounding of my identity as a mixed heritage person with disability, an artist and an Indigenous woman. Though I still struggle every day, I now move through this path in life with these stories woven into the fabric of my being expressed by the way I love and the way I create art.<sup>558</sup>

As Chandler and Dunlop stipulate healing is both personal and collective. This means that families, communities and nations have much healing work and thus require capacity and space for that work to be done. Kennedy also shows the transformative power of self-love. In healing and learning self-love one builds their inner capability to share, express

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<sup>556</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter for Birmingham Jail," *Ebony: Incorporating Black World Magazine*, 1985, Vol. 41, No. 1:166.

<sup>557</sup> de Leeuw and Hunt, "Unsettling Decolonizing Geographies", 8-10.

<sup>558</sup> See Appendix C

and actively show their love to others. This is touched on in Gilpin's work wherein she suggests that "Indigenous love is alive and well."<sup>559</sup> Gilpin frames Indigenous love as being interwoven with kin, land, water, other beings and the earth. She proposes this concept as a tool for dismantling colonial violence within the self and in the larger global context. In this way deepening one's capacity for loving is a responsibility in terms of healing, regeneration and Indigenous Resurgence.

Here, **C1** relates another personal childhood experience. Significantly, he identifies himself and his wife as:

true 'settlers' having come over from Britain as children with our parents.

This correlates and contrasts with **C2** and her statement,

There were occasional other ethnicities but none created the same level of dislike (there's probably a stronger word I can't think of at the moment) as the Brits. They reeked with an attitude of coming to 'impart some culture to the colonies' – add the sneer and the accent – and we hated them. (When one of the grade seven boys decided to have a fist fight with the principal (British), we weren't disappointed that the student was the better fighter.)<sup>560</sup>

This informs us about the settler location. The term settler when used in the context of Indigenous Resurgence and Reconciliation is a way of understanding the political location of individuals, families and communities whose ancestors came and settled in settler colonial states like Canada. It is not meant to homogenize the settler colonizers experience. Settlers come from many walks of life, have variegated backgrounds, skills, understandings, connections to Indigenous communities and capacities to engage in Resurgence and reconciliation.

For example, **C4** describes her experience with English speaking Canadians and British Immigrants as fraught with prejudice:

we had no idea of what to expect. We couldn't speak the language [English] and things were quite different...We were picked on, laughed at and had rocks and sticks thrown at us for being different. But the First Nations kids were not like that. They only wanted to play and it seems a lot of them also couldn't speak English...the First Nations people were kind and tolerant with us, good natured and laughed with us. They helped us when we needed it and in return we helped them. To this day I feel closer to them than any of the other people I grew up with.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Gilpin, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*, 49-50.

<sup>560</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>561</sup> See Appendix D

From a personal perspective I grew up on the Semiahmoo First Nation reserve. My mother is a Danish immigrant from a working-class family. My father was a fifth generation Irish Canadian, also from a working-class family. My parents were close friends with Semiahmoo families. I also have three Mohawk adult children who embrace this aspect of their identity. And I have grandchildren who have various identities including Blackfoot, Mayan and Sto:lo/Coast Salish. All of these experiences and interconnections drive my own commitment to Actively Witness and engage in making space for Indigenous Resurgence. Each individual has their own set of components that determine their engagement.

There is an ambiance of self-reflexive accountability to all three of these experiences.<sup>562</sup> Each openly expresses relearning previously construed verities, deepening their own honest understandings and opening up to new ways of perceiving what being a settler is. I think this is difficult for many non-indigenous people. They don't want to seem uninformed, but they also want to be sincere. The problem with sincerity is that it becomes a means to an end. For example, the settler-colonizer academic can (and often does) remove themselves from Indigenous realities quite quickly and quite efficiently<sup>563</sup>. They can dust off their hands and go back to settler privilege with just a little less guilt because they did a little something good. There are some really interesting confluences in terms of intergenerational decolonial understanding, attitudes and the emergence of Active Witnessing.

Each one of the four collaborators indicates how their childhood experiences shaped their understanding of Indigenous people, communities and interrelationships with land and water. In this regard, **C2** adds her reflection:

I was born in Prince Rupert in 1943 to Caucasian parents. Mom was born in Saskatchewan; Dad in what was then Port Simpson, now called Lax Qualams (my spelling is probably iffy!). There was a hospital there in those days; Dad's parents lived on the reserve. It's only in the last 10 years that I've come to realize that his early history probably coloured the way I see the world.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 55; Denzin, *The Qualitative Manifesto*, 10-13.

<sup>563</sup> Regan, *Settler Within*, 11

<sup>564</sup> See Appendix B

Not only is childhood experience and familial attitude significant but also the way in which we reflect on these aspects. Another significant factor is the availability of Indigenous scholarship, media and art content. Because this immense body of work is widely available and accessible, settlers can engage in educating themselves on Indigenous topics, concerns and activism. Again, **C2** emphasizes how her perspective is informed by living with and alongside of Indigenous families and communities:

...I can't adequately express how much my worldview has been coloured by the seven years in Masset (plus the one year post-grad).<sup>565</sup>

The experiences children and youth have and the attitudes they are exposed to via family, school and other colonial institutions can influence the formation of externalized and internalized attitudes toward others and the self. This is aptly captured in Scow's statement,

Cultures of resistance are built upon everyday acts dedicated to the revitalization of Indigenous families, communities, and nations. Revolution, in the sense of a wheel turning, is propelled by small, everyday acts, like raising children in a good way.<sup>566</sup>

Furthermore, he asserts, "As a co-creator, she [daughter] has shown me that there is room for her, and for all children, within Indigenous research"<sup>567</sup> and, "Our children have taught me to be open and honest, to be vulnerable in ways I've never allowed myself to be."<sup>568</sup> With this deeper understanding of children as co-creators we are informed about the world around us in a way that supersedes settler colonial colonial myths and respects the perspective of all member of community. A world in which every perspective is meaningful.

Further to this, **C4** offers the following instances of how her mother's (mother's) attitude modeling her own childhood autonomy in situations of prejudice and racism:

Even my mother (mother) didn't understand the intolerance there seemed to be concerning the First Nations. She quite enjoyed stopping and chatting with the ladies as she walked to the store. She thought they were very interesting people.

I was the only white kid who invited First Nation kids to her Birthday parties... I wanted my friends A and C to come but they were shy and said they couldn't come because they

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Mick Scow, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*, 2018: 38.

<sup>567</sup> Scow, 39.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid. 39-40

had no money...so I said, I don't care about presents I just want you to come. They did come and somehow found enough money to buy barrettes for my hair, which I loved.

When my younger sister was Maybe 3 or 4 her best friend was a sweet First Nations girl called B. B's parents lived on a float house and were so poor. I would go and visit them sometimes and lend B's dad my book on Greek and Roman mythology... he was an avid reader! When mom sewed dresses for my younger sister she would make dresses for B too, but she asked B's mom if that would be ok first.<sup>569</sup>

Intergenerational aspects are crucial for transformational relationship building. Learning from Indigenous people, learning from engagement, learning through friendship and learning through healing are acts that are engaged in every day. These Everyday Acts are engagements that reverberate and filter down through generations, opening one another's understandings of the various situations that settler colonial structures have underpinned.

Moreover, I find it illuminating that Collaborators **C1**, **C2** and **C4** are speaking to the 1950s and kinds of racial segregations that were in place. Yet they as children and their parents made purposeful efforts to engage in ways that were open to listening, learning and reciprocating. I think this is very significant given that all too often 'past' injustice, prejudice and violence are relegated to being anachronistic, a 'sign of the times.' But hasn't there always been those who fought against and resisted oppression? Abolitions, revolutions, revolts, protests, blockades, strikes, refusal, exit, insurgence, upheaval, communes, collectives, mutual aid groups. These have always had their stories alongside the dominant narrative. Always. As Political Scientist, James Scott suggests, some activities look like indifference, but are actually "hidden transcripts" cyphers of resistance built into the dominant order.<sup>570</sup>

Another subject that was touched on in the Life Writing essays was Residential School. **C1** offers his experiences as follows:

My wife, M, and I met at an Indian Residential School in Winnipeg. The school was sponsoring a conference for grade 12 students in Winnipeg to discuss issues affecting Indigenous people in the city. The hosts were a group of Indigenous students from the school.<sup>571</sup>

He further elaborates on an experience he had with a chance meeting in first year university:

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<sup>569</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>570</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (Yale University press, 2008)

<sup>571</sup> See Appendix A

I ran into one of the guys from the residential school and we got talking. I remember him saying how he had witnessed a ceremony on his reserve in which young men underwent an initiation involving having sharp pieces of wood inserted into their chest and then being hung by these pieces of wood for hours. I was aghast and somewhat self-righteously said that I thought that the initiation was barbaric and had no place in modern society. I thought that such practices had no value for people who were no longer going to be hunters and warriors. Unfortunately, my response cut him off and I never did learn what he thought about it.<sup>572</sup>

Significantly, **C1** indicates that Residential Schools were not viewed by settlers as wrong, but rather as a method of education for Indigenous youth. He further reiterates his own repulsion to perspectives that he could not comprehend and this negatively affected his relationships and understanding of Indigenous people and culture. **C1** notes his own regret which compelled him to transform his own attitude. Additionally, he recalls;

we saw people who had difficulties with alcohol and saw some of the destructive consequences of that – violence, death, illness, poverty, broken homes, and children without functioning parents. I was largely unaware at the time of some of the reasons for these dysfunctional behaviours. I had not really heard of the abuses in residential schools, or the destructive effects that many children experienced in being forced to attend residential schools. These children never learned good parenting skills from their own parents because they were away from home. It was also quite apparent to us that alcohol was a huge factor in the disintegration of life on the reserve. We did not understand why alcohol was such a scourge and (ignorantly) attributed it to a particular susceptibility to alcohol addiction.<sup>573</sup>

Moreover, **C1** notes that Residential Schools imposed integrational harm that has deeply affected the health and wellness of Indigenous families and communities. This is something that Indigenous scholars such as Charlotte Reading Loppie, Cindy Baskin, Roberta Kennedy, Chandler and Dunlop, Madeline Dion Stout, Shirley Tagalik, Margaret Kress and many others have repeatedly expressed, especially in terms of Indigenous healing and Resurgence.<sup>574</sup> The notion that alcohol addiction/abuse is an inherent flaw in specific races, classes and groups of people is both a move to innocence and a deeply troubling systemic stereotype that covertly remains entwined in settler colonial minds. It is a particularly harmful stigmatization for Indigenous people and has led to preventable deaths and injury due to extreme police violence, state neglect and racialized prejudice.

In regard to childhood experiences, **C2** shares a memory:

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<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid

<sup>574</sup> Determinates of Indigenous health

When I was about to enter grade three, we moved to Masset. My new school had one classroom with the first three grades. Most of my classmates had at least some Haida blood though everyone lived in ‘New’ Masset – the reserve Haida were still away in residential school. It wasn’t until grade four that they came home again, apparently the first to do so. (I never have understood how that ‘returning’ happened for different Nations over such a long period of time.) It was 1952.<sup>575</sup>

This is significant in that it reveals the subtle differences that intersect settler-colonizers lives and how these differences such as growing up in small coastal communities with fluid interactions and relationship building with Indigenous peoples and communities can deeply affect perceptions of one another. She is actively witnessing the Residential School system and its imposition on Indigenous families and communities. Furthermore, **C2** notes that children sent to Residential Schools returned at different rates for different Nations over lengthy periods of time. Residential Schools were not suddenly shut down when the horrific conditions and results were observed. Many Residential Schools continued as day schools. The last Residential School shut down in 1996.

Similarly, **C4** shares her childhood account of Indigenous children who were ‘gone’ for lengthy periods of time:

As for residential schools, well up in Namu the First Nations kids were gone for parts of the year, and sometimes longer than that. I didn’t know where they went, I was just a kid and all I knew was they were gone. But it’s when they came back. They were different. They looked like the same person outside but it was their eyes. Something changed and it both puzzled and saddened me. And they never were the same...I just didn’t know anything about residential schools or what happened to Indigenous children and youth. It pains me. It pains my heart a lot.<sup>576</sup>

This account informs us about the noticeable internal damages incurred by many survivors of Residential School. Further to this, **C2** also offers her insight on the effects of the Residential School and the TRC:

... even if the schools were beautiful, comfortable, with caring staff and good meals, kidnapping a raft of kids to clone them into replicas of someone’s bright idea is just plain [wrong]...I wonder how those involved felt after the ‘official apology’ and cheques were done? I would have felt empty. Yeah, those were nice, but they’re almost a slap in the face if attitudes of government haven’t changed...The TRC provided a safe place for some to speak their truth and have it validated...But people don’t heal at the same rate. Some years from now, will there be those who wish they had taken part, but just couldn’t at the time? And for those who did take part, how do they feel now? At peace? Or somehow still empty? Where do they go from here?<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>575</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>576</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>577</sup> See Appenix B

These are some deeply pertinent questions and I think they model the kind of interrogation needed within settler-colonizer populations. **C2** troubles state methods and systems and the effects of this on Indigenous communities, families and individuals. Additionally, she asks these question on her own, drawn from her own experiences and understandings, not from a formal disciplined institution. This kind of deep examination reveals the thoughtfulness that can be invoked if we ask ourselves the right questions.

As a young urban mixed Indigenous woman with disability, **C3** shares her direct experience with the reverberating violence that Residential Schools caused:

After we learned our grandfather, my dad's dad, was Mohawk, my sisters once said this to me, 'we have a white mother, who grew up on a reserve and an Indigenous father who fled his Indigenous identity.' My father was put into an orphanage as part of the sixty scoop. He was only 4 years old and was severely abused in that orphanage. His father had survived residential school.<sup>578</sup>

She further speaks about the reverberating intergenerational effects of Residential School and her own removal from her family via the Ministry of Children and families:

my sisters and I were taken by the ministry of child protection services. Every child in that foster home was also Indigenous or a person of colour. Many of them including myself had disabilities. That's when I knew that what happened to my father and to my grandfather was still happening to my generation. The lived experience of being in care was the most vulnerable, isolating, and damaging experience of my young life. It was also the first time I was sexually assaulted.<sup>579</sup>

In many ways, the foster care system replicates Residential Schools by forceful removal of Indigenous children from their families, communities, culture and traditional lands with the imperative to achieve conformity assimilation. According to a 2016 Canadian report, Indigenous children only make up 7.7% of the child population yet 52.2% of children in foster care are Indigenous.<sup>580</sup>

Moreover, **C3** adds her own perspective as a child with Learning Disability growing up in settler colonial culture of enablement/disablement. She expresses her understanding of disability as a gift, rather than a deficit:

I think of Dyslexia as a struggle and a gift. I think my brain functions in ways that differ from mainstream views of how a brain should work. I know I'm gifted spatially and I think my ability to do art has developed because that's my main way of communicating. Ever since I was a little kid I drew pictures and painted my work rather than reading or writing it. So I think Dyslexia helped my drawing, painting and other creative abilities in a deeper more meaningful way. I always put so

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<sup>578</sup> See Appendix C

<sup>579</sup> Ibid

<sup>580</sup> Government of Canada <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352297/1541187392851>

much of myself into art as a way of sharing and expressing different thoughts, feeling and emotions.<sup>581</sup>

Clearly, for **C3**, there is no separation between Indigeneity, disability and the self. All of these aspects are intimately intertwined. As such, a significant issue confronting **C3** is discriminatory disablement. She expresses her experiences and frustrations:

...as a Visual Artist, an Outsider Writer,<sup>582</sup> and as an Indigenous student with disability. I do struggle to make sense of written words, which makes getting through average activities difficult. The settler world is highly reliant on literacy. There are a lot of people who have a low opinion of those who are either unable to be literate or are prevented from becoming literate. There's a lot of discrimination, harassment, shame and daily struggle in finding ways to adapt and get around filling out forms or reading ingredients in grocery stores or textbooks...Too many times I encounter situations in where I'm expected to be able to perform at the capacity of a person who doesn't have Dyslexia. It's not a visible disability so it's often brushed aside, ignored and even denied.<sup>583</sup>

In speaking to disability and ableism, Margaret Kress states, that Indigenous ways of being traditionally respect, "...worldviews of disabled Indigenous peoples as they determine, create, and occupy chosen spaces, and embrace particular ways of being and knowing."<sup>584</sup> This way of being and knowing is a particular ontology that is fluid and, "is a synthesis of embodiment that continues to be produced through ever growing social networks and the ongoing changes found in day-to-day life, similar to those in Indigenous knowledge systems"<sup>585</sup> For Indigenous peoples, ontology is a fused and critical aspect of traditional knowledge and contemporary being. She further describes ontology for Indigenous people with disability "rarely fits within a binary of a western disability ideology"<sup>586</sup> Moreover, Kress suggests that:

The ontological intersection of disability and Indigenous identity produces an epistemology or way of knowing which impacts social networks, both Indigenous and western, and how one approaches the pathway to *pimatisiwin* (the good life)<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> See Appendix C

<sup>582</sup> Outsider Writing is creative writing that is self-taught and produced without formal training.

<sup>583</sup> See Appendix C

<sup>584</sup> Margaret Kress, "Reclaiming Disability through Pimatisiwin: Indigenous Ethics, Spatial Justice, and Gentle Teaching". *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education*, Vol. 9, pp. 23-57

<sup>585</sup> Kress, "Reclaiming Disability"

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

**C3**'s experience highlights the tsunami of violence done when Indigenous families are forcibly broken apart by settler colonial imposition and structural apparatus. This systemic violence affects individuals even if they have no knowledge of their own Indigenous connections. This is because settler colonial structures are in place that demand the disappearance of Indigenous cultures, communities and peoples<sup>588</sup>. And it continues to affect them deeply as they struggle to piece together what this means in terms of identity, their own history, their present and their future. For **C3**, entering the foster care system was analogous to her father's removal from his family during the 60s Scoop era and her grandfather's removal from his family via the Residential School system. Although foster care happens for a myriad of reasons, for Indigenous children and families it has a specific harm that can run deep into preceding and future generations.

Furthermore, in **C3** we find a call for Active Witnessing in the form of Access Intimacy<sup>589</sup>. Her life is a constant daily battle against ableism. Everywhere she turns, she encounters obstacles. When she reaches out for help, she is told to fill out forms, something she finds excruciatingly difficult. Additionally, she is often given phone numbers and emails, which are also very problematic for her. Dyslexia not only affects her reading, but also writing down messages, writing emails, speaking, remembering, and organizing. It is an all-encompassing embodied phenomenon that exhausts her in a highly literate ableist society<sup>590</sup>. This is something most people who she interacts with do not take into consideration. As such, she suffers in terms of confidence and esteem, which she also must continuously keep in check. For **C3**, this means dealing with an exhausting amount of anxiety.

In the article, *We Need to Talk about Ableism Related Anxiety*, Imani Barbarin discusses her anxiety around going to the pool as a POC with a visible disability<sup>591</sup>. She expresses the anxiety as not so much about going to the pool as in the anticipation of the

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<sup>588</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*, 163.

<sup>589</sup> Mingus, "Access Intimacy"; Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement*. Introduction.

<sup>590</sup> Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 6-24.

<sup>591</sup> Imani Barbarin, "We Need to talk About Ableism-Related Anxiety" *Crutches and Spice.com* (2019), <https://crutchesandspice.com/2019/11/09/we-need-to-talk-about-ableism-related-anxiety/>

constant ableist and bigoted responses she receives when she goes. Similarly, for **C3** the very thought of asking for assistance or reaching out for support is as exhausting as the actual act of doing it<sup>592</sup>. She knows she will come up against people who will dismiss her, who will assume her comprehension, who will shrug her off onto another agency, bureaucracy, or institution. Furthermore, she knows she will be exhausted by the necessity of constantly having to self-advocate—or feel like a burden to others who she needs to advocate for her. It matters very little if everything turns out fine in the end<sup>593</sup>. The exhaustion is in not knowing and the anticipation of failure, shame, abuse and neglect.

Ableism is a settler colonial tool. It is used to demoralize, instill hierarchy, competition and the myth of survival of the fittest. In its current systemic form, it is the progeny of European racial hygiene ideology<sup>594</sup>. Settler colonial structure, systems and institutions do not care for disabled peoples, but rather find ways to eliminate or accommodate them in the name of ‘quality of life’ and the disabled individual’s capacity to ‘contribute to society’. Combating ableism is combating systematic discrimination and prejudice including racism, ageism, educationism, genderism, and sexism. It combats oppression of BIPOC, 2SLGBTQQAI, those living in poverty and the homeless<sup>595</sup>. Disability advocacy celebrates diversity, vulnerability, equity and equality. Ableism is a settler colonial apparatus deeply embedded within its structures, systems and institutions. Among many things, it serves to keep the status quo, to shame and to maintain supremacist oppression<sup>596</sup>. To challenge ableism means interrogating settler colonialism and hegemonic transmogrified ontologies.

**C2** reiterates her experience as a nurse:

I do remember a patient...a young Indigenous woman who had descended from the first floor window of a skid road room without the benefit of stairs or elevator, fracturing her leg...a doctor, who had come in to remove the pin [in her leg], came back out of her room and ordered pain medication because she was crying. I told him that the tears were because some of her roommates were talking about her. He made the mistake of saying, “Well, she’s just a slut!” Bad answer.

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<sup>592</sup> Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 6-24; Mingus, “Access Intimacy”.

<sup>593</sup> Imani Barbarin, “We Need to talk”.

<sup>594</sup> Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement*. Introduction.

<sup>595</sup> Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 6; Mingus, “Access Intimacy”.

<sup>596</sup> Rollo, “Everyday Deeds”, 587–609

Her account of the doctor's flippant and vehemently racist remark about an Indigenous woman with a broken leg underscores the heteropatriarchal misogynistic violence that mars accessibility to services and prevents Indigenous women and girls from receiving the kinds of support they need<sup>597</sup>. Instead, such attitudes further perpetuate rape-culture and the death of thousands of Indigenous individuals<sup>598</sup>. This is a critical point that many Indigenous Feminist Theorists have examined.

In explaining her concept of Felt Theory, as well as in, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, Million reveals the layers of trauma that infiltrate Indigenous communities and individuals everyday lives<sup>599</sup>. This trauma is repeated generation after generation via settler colonial structures. And gendered violence is one of the most insidious effects. Gendered violence, shaped by settler colonial transmogrified ontology, creates an atmosphere in which the victim is depicted as their own perpetrator. The specific language used to describe vulnerable women is one of the primary ways the state endorsed gendered violence<sup>600</sup>.

For example, to describe a woman or girl as involved in 'high risk activities' means that because they are involved in this activity they are in effect responsible for their own abuse. Yet why are we not questioning the very idea of 'high risk activity'? Why is that notion of 'high risk' not being critically examined and re-evaluated? To deepen this, the 2019 MMIWG Final Report specifically asks the question, what makes it, "okay to murder indigenous women and girls<sup>601</sup>?" The answer is intersectional structural forces, types of discrimination this produces and aspects of identity. Intergenerational trauma of land dispossession, murder, genocide, residential schools, imprisonment, Sixties Scoop, adoption, and child apprehension.

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<sup>597</sup> Razack, *Dying from Improvement*, 30-33.

<sup>598</sup> Arvin et al, "Decolonizing Feminism", 8-34.

<sup>599</sup> Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, (Tucson: the university of Arizona Press, 2013), 90-98.

<sup>600</sup> Razack, *Dying from Improvement*, 32; Arvin et al, "Decolonizing Feminism", 8-34

<sup>601</sup> MMIWG Final Report, 102

Significantly, disrespect, degradation and exploitation of land has been directly correlated to gendered violence<sup>602</sup>.

A good example of a settler colonial inquiry marred by its alliance with transmogrified ontological understandings is the 2013 Royal Canadian Mounted Police National Operational Overview (RCMPNOO). The Commissioner of the RCMP called for a report on the issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women<sup>603</sup>. The official final conclusion in the 2015 update was that:

- Missing and murdered Aboriginal women are over represented given their percentage in the Canadian population.
- Updates revealed the unmistakable connection homicides have to family violence. Most women, regardless of ethnicity, are being killed in their homes and communities by men who are known to them, be it a former or present spouse or family member. Prevention efforts must focus on stopping violence in family relationships to reduce homicides of women—and we are moving forwards with many initiatives on this front<sup>604</sup>.

It is this updated statement that reveals the foundation of transmogrified ontology through moves to innocence and denial of complicity. It quite blatantly places blame on the very people who are petitioning the state authorities to be accountable and asking Canadians and their government to take responsibility. In this way, Indigenous girls and women's voices are silenced, their communities reaffirmed as deficient and in need of colonial solutions. Yet, colonial solutions can only serve to reassert colonial dominance and preserve the Western narrative of colonization<sup>605</sup>.

Significantly, the entire concluding statement of the RCMPNOO report seems to completely eliminate any investigation on themselves as a community in question.

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<sup>602</sup> Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization", 154-172; Million, *Therapeutic Nations*, 122-130; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 27; Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*, Borrows, *Freedom*, 134, 159; Erynne Gilpin, *Land as Body: Indigenous Womxn's\* Leadership, Land-based Wellness and Embodied Governance*, (Victoria: University of Victoria, 2020).

<sup>603</sup> RCMP, *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview*, (2014), <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/460/original/0cbd8968a049aa0b44d343e76b4a9478.pdf>, 18-19

<sup>604</sup> RCMP, *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: 2015 Update to the National Operational Overview*, (2015). <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/455/original/c3561a284cfbb9c244bef57750941439.pdf>, 15

<sup>605</sup> Anderson, B., Kubik, W., and Hampton, M. R. *Torn From Our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Conference*, 2008. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, (2013).

Instead, it revolves around narratives of enlightened Europeans and dysfunctional Indigenous communities that need to achieve a status quo set by Western authorities<sup>606</sup>. Furthermore, it also come across rather intimidating, oppressing Indigenous communities through a protection narrative. This transmogrified narrative says that if you cooperate with state agencies it will change statistics and look good. Thus, you are protected. However, if you do not let the state impose on your communities with their solutions there are serious repercussions<sup>607</sup>. This is furthered by this statement:

Violence in our communities is a societal concern for Canada that goes beyond the law enforcement community. Canadians have a shared responsibility to address the health and welfare of all citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable to violent victimization. A collective focus on healthy relationships and community wellbeing, including health care, social services, child protection and administration of justice is needed.<sup>608</sup>

Here, the claim is that violence in Canadian communities is a Canadian concern. Statistics show that 62% of the homicides of Indigenous girls and women are committed by a known perpetrator. The number for non-indigenous women is similar at 72%.<sup>609</sup> This brings us back to the question proposed by the 2019 MMIWG Final Report, what makes it okay to murder Indigenous women and girls<sup>610</sup>? What are the factors leading to social suffering that seem so directly related to homicide of Indigenous women in Canada? And critically, if non-indigenous Canadian society has these appalling statistics why would it be rational to expect the state would have any viable solutions for Indigenous communities? While these are significant questions that must be addressed through challenging the state, they do not address the specific violence that Indigenous girls and women face due to systemic racism and colonial narratives that serve to uphold

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<sup>606</sup> Razack, *Dying from Improvement*, 32

<sup>607</sup> Pamela Palmater, “Shining Light on the Dark Places: Addressing Police Racism and Sexualized Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in the National Inquiry” (2016) 28:2 *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 253-284. In addition to this I think the following will be incredibly significant to read: Pamela Palmater, “Contemporary Genocide: Murdered and Disappeared Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada” (2020) *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* (accepted & in press).

<sup>608</sup> RCMP MMIW NOO (update).

<sup>609</sup> RCMP MMIW NOO

<sup>610</sup> MMIWG, *Final Report*, 102.

settler colonialism<sup>611</sup>. In short, the RCMP report seems more like a carefully crafted publication meant to blame the victim and deflect attention away from Canada's continued inaction to address this crisis which the United Nations (UN) calls a "Grave violation" of basic human rights<sup>612</sup>.

The 2019 MMIWG Final Report examines the confluence of colonialism, racism and sexism which produces systemic and targeted violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA persons.<sup>613</sup> Witnesses to this consistently and constantly experience failure in the context of basic human rights, systems, institutions and service providers offering adequate support, assistance and solution finding or any tangible prevention measures.<sup>614</sup> The MMIWG crisis is steeped in the colonial violence of transmogrified ontology. Colonial racism, misogyny and heteropatriarchy erased significant roles and rights embodied by women girls and gender diverse individuals.<sup>615</sup> Violence is experienced intersectionally, resulting from structures of oppression, their own experiences within their lives, family experiences and community dynamics. Intersectionality is a process that develops in relation.<sup>616</sup>

Significantly, violence within the context of social suffering exacerbates when individuals are unable to access services at crucial moments of need. If services, assistance and support are available and offered during critical moments, violence resulting in death can be prevented. This is a fact<sup>617</sup>. The key is for settler colonizers in positions of service, assistance and support to actively seek out moments in which they

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<sup>611</sup> Anderson, Kubik and Hampton, *Torn From Our Midst*; Sharene Razaack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody*, (TO: University of Toronto Press, 2015)

<sup>612</sup> Native Women's Association of Canada. The National Inquiry on Murders and Disappearances of Indigenous Women and Girls, Recommendations from the Symposium on Planning for Change – Towards a National Inquiry and an Effective National Action Plan, *Journal of Women and the Law*. [https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NWAC-FAFIAsymposium\\_22recommendations\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NWAC-FAFIAsymposium_22recommendations_2016_EN.pdf)

<sup>613</sup> MMIWG *Final Report*, 89

<sup>614</sup> MMIWG *Final Report*, 89-90

<sup>615</sup> MMIWG *Final Report*, 90; Arvin et al, "Decolonizing Feminism" 4-32; Lawrence and Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," 125.

<sup>616</sup> MMIWG *Final Report*, 90

<sup>617</sup> MMIWG *Final Report*, 100-102

can go ‘above and beyond’ or find alternative ways to provide functional accessibility, even if this sometimes looks like breaking the rules. In this way, morale and empowerment is regenerated, creating strength in relationships.<sup>618</sup>

In terms of relationship building and deepening understanding **C1** offers a reflective perspective on his work a young doctor in Sandy Lake:

I felt quite uncomfortable engaging with any of the Indigenous people – partly because few spoke English and also because we were outsiders...He [C1’s Uncle] told us the story of one of the elders calling him on the phone and asking him to find K, and just to let him know that he had called. Uncle B did this after some difficulty locating K, who was on the streets and dealing with alcohol. A week later the elder phoned Uncle B again to say he would be in Thunder Bay and to let K know that it was time to come back home. K remained non-committal, but a few days later when the elder arrived in town, they went together to get K and he had all his belongings together and was ready to go. It was an example of the oblique way that Indigenous people sometimes approached problems in contrast to our own rather blunt and direct approach to problems.<sup>619</sup>

He further shares a similar experience working in Bella Bella:

I felt completely out of my comfort zone in knowing how to work with Indigenous patients and understanding what was going on. Fortunately, the people of Bella Bella were very gracious and included [us] in the village’s activities (potlatches, memorials, funerals etc.). We learned about their families and how important family connections were. If there was conflict in the village, family came first. If there was someone in need family would take on the responsibility. Houses were often crowded with extended family, but there was always room for someone else. If someone had money it was expected that this would be shared with family. There was tremendous strength in these relationships, though to us it sometimes appeared to be dysfunctional. Abuse within a family was often not acknowledged, and family would often protect the abuser. (On reflection this is not so different in our own culture sometimes).<sup>620</sup>

Reflexive insight and learning to understand different ways of communicating and solving problems is invaluable to Active Witnessing. Within both contributions, **C1** illustrates his initial discomfort in Indigenous communities. I love that he became comfortable with discomfort and that this resulted in he and his family’s inclusion in community activities and ceremony that were open to their attendance. He also relates the stark differences between collectivity and communal living and Euro-western notions of nuclear family and individualism. Yet **C1** also reflects on similarities in terms of dysfunction, abuse and intergenerational pain. I think this points to how settler colonial violence, imposition and erasure (that is normalized within settler society) is the root

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<sup>618</sup> Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*, 177

<sup>619</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

cause for the immense social and environmental suffering in Indigenous communities as well as within many oppressed communities. Further to this he states:

I think the essence of my approach to working with Indigenous people has been to respect the person. I didn't always understand why people did what they did or reacted as they did, but the key to being an effective doctor was maintaining respect for the individual. I was practicing cross cultural medicine, and many times the patient's interpretation of symptoms, and what was happening to them was very different from my interpretation as a Western Medical practitioner. I had to learn to acknowledge alternate viewpoints and simply offer what I could. I have to admit that I came to some of this wisdom only after many missteps. *The community did a good job of training me!*<sup>621</sup>

In thinking about learning from Indigenous people and community **C2** adds an example of Access Intimacy from her experience as a nurse:

Many years ago an elderly Ulkatcho gentleman, for whom English was a second language, was admitted to our hospital. I needed to get a urine specimen. I decided to skip the 'mid-stream' aspect of the request, went into his room with a container and said loudly (he was deaf), "Joe, piss in this." He looked startled, threw his head back, laughed loudly, and headed for the bathroom. I went out into the hall where a medical student was standing red-faced. I simply said to him, "You have to speak a language people understand." I think accessibility is vital for the credibility of your thesis and the sample of people contributing to it.<sup>622</sup>

This informs us about the nuances, spontaneity, and relational basis of Access Intimacy.

Additionally, she recalls another incident:

The best example I can think of happened here. I went into an elder's room one night and found his bed turned end for end. **C2**: "What's up?" Patient: "Head's turned wrong way." **C2** "Let's move the bed slightly so your call-bell will reach." Apparently, some among the Nuxalk believe one should sleep with one's head pointing to the sunrise. Who knew? (It did mean, in later years when I was coroner, bodies were oriented that way in the morgue, just in case it mattered to someone.)<sup>623</sup>

In this example **C2** is expressing the kinds of understanding and acceptance she offers in her work. This is also a prime illustration of access intimacy in action. **C2** does not claim to know all about Nuxalk culture or to be an expert in terms of protocol or ally-ship.

Instead, she takes her cues from the people she is working with and finds ways to modify the system around the person rather than adjusting the person to fit the system. And she carried this through to her later work in the morgue, offering access intimacy by orientating bodies in the direction she learned was often appreciated by Nuxalk individuals and families. This is Active Witnessing.

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<sup>621</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>622</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>623</sup> Ibid.

**C1** adds his own personal reflections about learning from community that helped him to better understand how colonialism impacts Indigenous communities and how significant relationship building is:

I recently was talking with a woman I have known for 30 years, and who worked in the Bella Coola hospital while I was there. She herself had a history of sexual abuse and alcohol abuse. Her children had some of the same difficulties as she did when young. Now her life centers around bringing up and housing her many grandchildren and I see some hope for the cycle of abuse breaking. I am impressed that this rather ordinary Indigenous woman has tremendous courage and strength.<sup>624</sup>

I am very grateful for the chance we have had to live and work close to Indigenous communities, and to learn about ourselves, and these communities at the same time. I believe that our opportunity to know our Indigenous neighbours has allowed us to become appreciative and respectful of the Indigenous culture. Some years ago we were very honoured to be invited to a feast by an elder's council to recognize and thank us for the work we did over the years in Bella Coola. Both M and I were given Nuxhalk names.<sup>625</sup>

Further to relationship building, **C2** recalls:

Some years later I met my best friend's mother on the street and we hugged. I suggested coming to visit while I was in town...his [her husband] first statement to me indicated that his wife had been surprised at my greeting. "Whites don't talk to Indians anymore." (Did I mention she was Haida?) I gather that an Anglican minister, living on reserve, had his mother living with him. She was British, and her attitude had poisoned relationships between the communities.<sup>626</sup>

Likewise, **C1** reflects:

I remember walking in downtown Vancouver and meeting a Nuxhalk man I knew and greeting him – the only familiar face in the crowds on the street. He too seemed happy to see me and we spent some time talking about what he was doing in the city and how it was going. It struck me that we had more in common than I had with all those other people on the street. We could talk about people we knew, the fish, what was going on in Bella Coola and so on. Later I reflected that this felt normal, though I was quite aware that we were probably an oddity – a white man and a Native man on a downtown Vancouver Street greeting each other as friends.<sup>627</sup>

I think it is noteworthy that **C1** and **C2** had such similar experiences. As well, it is interesting that **C2** perceived the British woman living with her Anglican son on reserve as poisoning or having a very negative effect on relationship building between communities. I think this identifies an interesting historical location that white woman can often take in terms of family and intercommunity relations, specifically in the

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<sup>624</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>627</sup> See Appendix A

between the late 1800s and the 1950s. This is a subject that I hope will be touched on by other scholars in the future. Furthermore, **C2** adds that:

...neither of those interactions involved people who had been close friends. We were simply members of the same community that some might view as being two communities. I think the ‘take-away’ for me is that one doesn’t have to be ‘somebody’; we just need to treat each other with respect while we get on with our lives.<sup>628</sup>

In terms of reconciliation, **C2** was very prolific on her understanding and thoughts surrounding the topic. She offers the following:

For me, the next question was, “Where does reconciliation start?” I think the starting place is within each of us. There have been times where my choices have pulled me away from the person I want to be. Reconciliation meant (means) deciding what steps I need(ed) to take to ‘connect’ within. Funny how we never seem to ‘get it together’ permanently! There have also been times when choices made by others, or just circumstances, have ‘torn me apart’ (I once described it as ‘the kind of pain that doesn’t go into words; it just feels like it will rip you open.’) There seems to be a need for others to support us as we choose how we deal with those ‘pain moments’ – not to tell us what to do, so much as to be a sounding board, or someone to help us regain our balance. That person might also be the one who steers us away from the slippery slope of retaliation, where the ‘victim’ becomes a victimizer. I’ve noticed too that healing happens in stages – I remember a ten-year gap before leftover feelings started surfacing and needed to be addressed. I’m glad those occasions are less frequent but, like those teachers in Masset, they have the potential to sharpen understanding and, sometimes, help us bring healing to others.<sup>629</sup>

And she further adds:

You may want to don some steel-toed boots for this next bit. The way I see reconciliation is that the steps thus far help the person ‘within’. That’s good. But the process, growing within, needs to spread outside the individual in order for the community to heal – and that takes the ‘communicating at the level of pain’ I mentioned. That is really hard work, but for deep healing to happen, there is no shortcut. It’s a big ask from people who have had the experiences many have had. It may be that the survivors in some cases have to leave the next level of healing for the next generations, but somewhere along the line it will need to happen. Being aware that there might be a ‘next step’ is more important than having it imposed by someone’s artificial time-line. When I’m at my best, I shut up and listen.<sup>630</sup>

One really pertinent topic **C2** brought up is the lack of access to maternity and birthing facilities in Bella Coola. This means that Indigenous women who were pregnant must fly to another location to give birth:

The first question the band had for VCH was, “When can we get maternity back?” We can’t. But after the meeting, I went up to PD (our medical health officer I think is the title), to thank her for her approach – safety. Then I added something I’d only learned recently, “It’s important for the Nuxalk to be born on Nuxalk territory.” You could see the light bulb come on. “Is that why it’s

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

always the first question we get?" There is still no solution on that subject. Mom's still have to leave town for their last month of pregnancy and delivery.<sup>631</sup>

Here, C2 offers a significantly deep Access Intimacy by Actively Witnessing an embodied reality, "*it's important for the Nuxalk to be born on Nuxalk territory*". A fact that seems to have eluded policy makers. This example also shows the tiresome ongoing bureaucratic systemic discrimination Indigenous peoples must endure to achieve something as necessary, and as common as birthing on one's ancestral lands. As this study previously discussed, Indigenous Resurgence is intimately intertwined with land, water and ecology.

In regard to the subject of ecology, C4 shares an insight from childhood in Namu:

Once when I was maybe 8 or 9 years old (1955-1956), there was an event happening where some of the First Nations Elders were wearing regalia. I went up to one of the elders and he told me that when he was a young man there were so many fish in the river that you could scoop them in with your bare hands.... a full dugout canoe was sold for 25 cents.... I was amazed that they got so little but he was probably speaking of the early 1900s. Even then, though looking in the river to see the multitudes of spawning salmon, you thought there are so many! Not anymore.<sup>632</sup>

In this memory, C4 Actively Witnesses the depletion of Wild Salmon from the central coast of BC. She grew up in the small cannery village of Namu located on Heiltsuk territory on the central west coast of BC, Canada<sup>633</sup>. Settler colonizers invaded the area in the 1800s and in 1893 established a fisheries industry. In the 1930s the site was owned and operated by BC Packers and a small cannery village was set up<sup>634</sup>. This village was highly segregated and consisted of clearly designated areas for upper class administrative Europeans, lower working-class Europeans, Japanese and Indigenous employees and their families. Much of the work was seasonal with a peak population of up to 400<sup>635</sup>. This segregation was blatantly hierarchal, with many Indigenous peoples living in simple bunkhouses with no running water, no plumbing and no furniture. Further, there were

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>633</sup> [http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu\\_src/index.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu_src/index.htm); Paul Nadasdy, The gift in the animal: The ontology of hunting and human-animal sociality. *American Ethnologist*, 2007, 34: 25-43. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.1.25>

<sup>634</sup> Aubrey Cannon, "The Economic Prehistory of Namu: Patterns in Vertebrate Fauna," *Department of Archaeology and the Institute of Fisheries Analysis*, (Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, 1991), 63; [http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu\\_src/index.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu_src/index.htm)

<sup>635</sup> [http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu\\_src/index.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu_src/index.htm). Little talked about was the deeply embedded racism that was evident in the red lines across which Indigenous workers and families were not supposed to cross. These lines were not physically enforced after 1954 but yet they remained.

segregated washrooms, one labeled White and one labelled Native until 1954<sup>636</sup>. The cannery industry reached its full settler colonial potential between the 1940s and 1960s, depleting the Salmon as a resource<sup>637</sup>. After the 1970s, BC Packers attempted to establish a fish processing industry, but this failed. By the 1990s the village site of Namu was sold and abandoned. The buildings have since decayed allowing asbestos to leak into the environment. Fuel tanks, old machinery and boats have been left to corrode and pollute the surrounding lands and waters<sup>638</sup>.

Known as Na'wamu to Heiltsuk peoples, this traditional territory has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for innumerable generations<sup>639</sup>. There is abundant evidence of ancient clam gardens and fishing weirs dating back thousands of years<sup>640</sup>. In fact, I remember my mother telling me about the stone weir she used to see when standing on a bridge overlooking at the Namu River. She knew the weir belonged to the Indigenous people and was confused whenever company authorities would chase young Indigenous fishers away from the river. She knew, even as a small child, that this was injustice. That it was wrong. Furthermore, archaeological digs have uncovered a shell midden that had been used for at least 10,000 years<sup>641</sup>. For millennia, the lands and waters of Na'wamu were lived on, nurtured, stewarded and protected by the Heiltsuk and other Indigenous peoples. Yet less than a century after settler colonial invasion, the land

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<sup>636</sup> Figure 8

<sup>637</sup> [http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu\\_src/index.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu_src/index.htm)

<sup>638</sup> Sarah K. Campbell and Virginia L. Butler, 2010. Archaeological evidence for resilience of Pacific Northwest salmon populations and the socioecological system over the last ~7,500 years. *Ecology and Society* 15(1): 17. URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss1/art17/>

<sup>639</sup> Aubrey Cannon, "The Economic Prehistory of Namu: Patterns in Vertebrate Fauna," *Department of Archaeology and the Institute of Fisheries Analysis*, (Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, 191), 63

<sup>640</sup> Sarah K. Campbell and Virginia L. Butler

<sup>641</sup> Aubrey Cannon, "The Early Namu Archaeofauna in Human Occupation in British Columbia", Roy L. Carlson and Luke Dalla Bona (eds), *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia*. (UBC Press, 1995), 103-110; Excavations, Simon Fraser University. [http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu\\_src/NI000001.HTM](http://www.sfu.ca/archaeology-old/museum/bc/namu_src/NI000001.HTM)

and waters suffered extensive pollution, the Salmon depleted and the old cannery village left to considerable disrepair and neglect<sup>642</sup>.

The invasion, theft and misuse of Na'wamu is just one example of settler colonial resource exploitation and environmental destruction. Anthropocentrism and its concomitant anthropogenic climate change cannot be properly challenged until land and water ways are returned to Indigenous peoples who have utilized and stewarded those territories since time immemorial. To ignore this in favour of settler colonial led environmental activism or climate justice is erroneous to say the least. We will simply trade one settler colonial strategy for another, based on similar tactics of supremacy, corruption and occupation of stolen land. How is it that over five thousand years of strata layers that lead all the way back to the Ice Age hold no evidence of anthropogenic environmental harm<sup>643</sup>? While, just over a century of settler colonial state sanctioned private property ownership title, which changed several times, has resulted in the exhaustion of a keystone species and horrendous pollution<sup>644</sup>? How can we claim innocence, or even ignorance in the face of palpable fact? The answer is, we cannot. And we cannot claim to have answers.

Anthropocentrism seeks to justify human actions via equality, equity and rights discourse; forgetting to consider the needs and wants of the land, the water or other species. Anthropocentrism serves to justify supremacy and notions of progression, development and advancement. It gives us human rights, in a world dominated by white privilege and injustice, but does not allow for the rights of land, water, other species or the unseen realms. It does not give rights to climate, weather, or elements. It does not have a means to comprehend other worlds or other understandings of nature.

How do we shift this? We participate in reparations by engaging in Actively Witnessing through environmental restoration, capacity building and acknowledging

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<sup>642</sup> Aubrey Cannon, "The Economic Prehistory of Namu: Patterns in Vertebrate Fauna," *Department of Archaeology and the Institute of Fisheries Analysis*, (Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, 1991), 63; Aubrey Cannon, "The Early Namu Archaeofauna", 103-110.

<sup>643</sup> Cannon, "The Early Namu", 103-110

<sup>644</sup> There is no evidence that anthropogenic driven Salmon depletions (resulting from settler colonial interference) are in any way reversible. Sarah K. Campbell and Virginia L. Butler, "Archaeological Evidence for Resilience of Pacific Northwest Salmon Populations and the Socioecological System over the Last ~7,500 Years," *Ecology and Society* 15, no. 1 (2010), [www.jstor.org/stable/26268107](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26268107).

Indigenous traditional tenure of land and water ways. And we ask important questions such as, who speaks for the environment, the animals and plants? Where are the rights of water, land or climate? Where is the planet's justice? What about the elemental and unseen worlds? Do we even recognize these as worthy of justice? And if we do, is this justice still fundamentally anthropocentric? Specifically, we must ask ourselves, how can we come to see the world in new ways that are not based on settler colonial paradigms? What does this even look like? I don't have any solutions. But I think relearning how to be in the world with other beings might look like a lot of different things. It might look like OOO<sup>645</sup>. It might look like imaginative creativity. It might look like space exploration, or rewilding or communes and collectives. Or it might not look like any of these things. It might be something so new, so innovative we haven't even envisioned it yet. Whatever it looks like, it will consist of fundamental transformation, deep change, gifting, vulnerability, care and love<sup>646</sup>. And it must align with Indigenous ways of being.

In thinking about alignment, C4 adds an incredible story about being invited to assist in ceremony 1970:

[we]had arranged to go to the Big House on a reserve near Brentwood Bay. She (G's wife F) told me there would be a big ceremony with many singers and dancers from all over the place... So many people were there drumming and singing... At some point a group of dancers came out with shakers and sticks wearing cedar outfits, moving around the floor in the big house till they came to where we were seated. They grabbed G and F's brother and lifted them over their heads as they danced around the floor again before disappearing out into an area curtained off from the rest of the room... My job was to make sure that the Elders who had come from other reserves... were comfortable and to bring them tea and whatever they needed. Some of them only spoke their native language. But they were kind and sweet and showed me what they were doing... Every morning [G and F's brother] ran up to a stream to wash. During this time his [G] song and his spirit were fully revealed. G's spirit was a bear and he was a shaman... I learned a lot during this time and gained even more respect for how community minded and caring the people I was staying with were. After about ten days G and F's brother were finally ready to come out. They were ... introduced back with a huge celebration where once again people came from all over to join in. There were so many people there that night and watching G dance and sing his song was amazingly beautiful ... *he had transformed in front of me and in his transformation he also changed me.*<sup>647</sup>

Further, C4 adds:

From the beginning, I knew the invitation was going to be a difficult journey. I gave my full time and energy to doing whatever was tasked of me including bringing Elders tea, helping Elders in

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<sup>645</sup> Morton, "Humankind," Timothy Morton, "Humankind," *Environmental Humanities Centre*, (Santa Barbara: University of California, 2016).

<sup>646</sup> Kuokkanen, *Restructuring Relations*, 11-13; Jack/Judith Halberstam, *The Wild: The Aesthetics of Queer Anarchy*. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDP4lcoZ9s4>; Belcourt, "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects" 1-11 ; Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction)" 224-242.

<sup>647</sup> See Appendix D

making cedar outfits and sitting with G and his brother in-law, just whatever was needed. I always thought of this memory as a gift so I'm sharing it also in the spirit of gifting. G was my personal friend. He was the person who invited me to come live on the reserve, on Semiamoo land. I wanted to raise you on the reserve because of I wanted you to experience a relationship to Coast Salish peoples and lands like I did when I was little. I had so many good experiences and was friends with many of the families. I think being an immigrant and discriminated against made me see the difficulties Indigenous people have. We have a lot in common when I think about it, especially when I remember traditional Danish culture. I think being grounded in that helped.<sup>648</sup>

This kind of witnessing becomes Active Witnessing because it has a deep reflective effect on both those engaged in the acts being witnessed, and the witness' life. It shifts the witness' worldview, shapes the ways in which they understand Indigenous imperatives and contours their day-to-day interactions. C4's situation was that of working-class poor immigrant. They were less educated and less privileged than the upper-class whites. Nonetheless, they occupied a privileged space that overlaid the Japanese and the Indigenous cannery families. C4 underscores the plight of not speaking the colonial language (English) and not knowing Canadian settler colonial lifeways as being a serious impediment to her family's feelings of belonging. Thus, the non-English speaking immigrants were often discriminated against and ridiculed, the parents working the lesser paid jobs and their children often bullied.

Yet, overall, the children in the cannery village were generally left to their own as their parents worked long hours. Hence, they were often roaming about looking for friends and fun, interacting, exploring, playing, creating, breaking rules, babysitting younger children and making their own friendships. Working class poor white families encountered discrimination from upper-class families and this created a space of intersectionality in terms of shared oppression. And this shared suffering underpinned deeper relationship building and a kind of subversive ally-ship. However, even with distinct effects on the settler colonizer we must question the benefits for the Indigenous person in the relationship.<sup>649</sup>

One way of engaging in change making is through a sort of *bricolage*<sup>650</sup>. By this I am alluding to making new pathways through bolder engagements. Especially using

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<sup>648</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>649</sup> Personal conversation, September 12, 2018.

<sup>650</sup> Denzin, *The Qualitative Manifesto*, 10-13.

ordinary acts in inconspicuously extraordinary ways. **C2** does this through her fibre art creations<sup>651</sup>. She acknowledges that these collaborations are not hers but instead belong to an accord that emerges within the space of collaborative art production. **C2** recalls her endeavor to make a wall hanging as a collaboration with Indigenous Artists:

I wrote the proposal for the business and delivered it in person. The staffer read it and said, “They won’t go for this, you know. It’s too Indian.” A few days later, I phoned the couple [Nuxhalk] I’d discussed the idea with... He replied, ‘Well, if they think something if ‘too Indian’, they have a problem’...It took us four years ... We just didn’t know where the finished hanging was supposed to go. I wrote to a Haida artist I went to school with to get his advice. He suggested, ‘Just leave it alone. It will tell you at the right time.’ Fast forward to two months ago. A local woman phoned to ask if I carried a particular product. During our conversation, I mentioned the wall hanging. The following morning, she and her husband came for the product she’d wanted. I asked if they wanted to see the hanging. As we viewed and discussed it, the husband reached out, stroked the fabric, and said, ‘This is my *Smyusta*, my story.’ The hanging had spoken.<sup>652</sup>

These collaborative ventures are not something that is quickly put together. They take time, thoughtfulness, reflexivity and sometimes they are put aside for a while. Their realization depends on patience, perseverance, reciprocity and a willingness to let go of proprietorship. The settler colonizer engaging in collaborative endeavours must learn to step back and resist the urge to stand out. This act of humility is difficult to achieve because settler colonial society demands individualism, uniqueness and innovative distinction.

**C3** does this through creating Spherical Text. She creates these by putting text into a word generator app on her computer. For her contribution she made two Spherical Texts relating to the OOO concepts of Flat Ontology and Withdrawal. Her first spherical image gives equal weight to each word without giving emphasis to any specific order meaning or frequency of use<sup>653</sup>. She explains how she:

...edited repeating words for the first sphere. Within the sphere are small shared moments of memory. It’s a scramble of words so you can’t read it linearly. You have to kind of look around the sphere and allow the words to appear and be felt. The sphere is fluid amorphous and ambiguous. Just a cloud of text that emerges randomly. But the words themselves are not random. I think it ... reflects my life as a Dyslexic and as a mixed urban Indigenous person.<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> See Appendix B, Figure 1 and Figure 2

<sup>652</sup> See Appendix B, Figure 1

<sup>653</sup> See Appendix C, Figure 3

<sup>654</sup> See Appendix C

**C3**'s second image presents something different with larger emphasis on the small but more frequently words and smaller, sometimes imperceptible, lesser used words.<sup>655</sup> She states:

This one looked very different. The larger texts are visually prominent, almost physical. They kind of reveal the basic number of times a words was used. What I thought was interesting is that in between and riddled throughout there are the smaller words that are actually important but are also kind of hidden. They are necessary and underlie and hold up the moment.<sup>656</sup>

**C3**'s work with Spherical Text is interesting, haunting and deeply felt. On encountering her work, I felt a mix of curiosity and confusion; a kind of contentious surrender to one's intuitive felt self.

Interestingly, **C1** and **C2** and **C4** are older settlers, over the age of seventy. I found their contributions particularly useful because of this fact. They each held specific understandings of the difficulties that permeate settler to Indigenous relationships. Each is deeply reflective and revealed various ways in which they purposefully engaged in Active Witnessing. Older settlers have a unique vantage point because they have observed and learned specific attitudes from their parents. They then shift, unlearn, rebel and/or absorb, use and tweak these attitudes, depending on their own realizations. Further, because they have experienced many life changes and shifts, they can offer insight into settler colonial social structures and systems and how they have navigated restrictive constraints. This is especially informative in terms of transmogrified ontological underpinnings that drive commonly accepted but nonetheless devastating misconceptions. Older settler colonizers can help us to not forget.

**C3**'s experience highlights the reverberating violence done when Indigenous families are forcibly broken apart by settler colonial imposition and structural apparatus. This systemic violence affects individuals even if they have no knowledge of their own Indigenous connections. This is because settler colonial structures are in place that demand the disappearance of Indigenous cultures, communities and peoples<sup>657</sup>. And it continues to affect them deeply as they struggle to piece together what this means in terms of identity, their own history, their present and their future. For **C3**, entering into

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<sup>655</sup> See Appendix C, Figure 4

<sup>656</sup> Ibid

<sup>657</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*, 163.

the foster care system was analogous to her father's removal from his family during the 60s Scoop era and her grandfather's removal from his family via the residential school system. Although foster care happens for a myriad of reasons, for Indigenous children and families it has a specific harm that can run deep into preceding and future generations.

C4's contribution highlights healing done after experiencing discrimination as an impoverished immigrant child, the loss of her father as an adolescent and the loss of her mother as a young adult<sup>658</sup>. Healing occurs through embracing a deeper rootedness within one's ancestral culture, while simultaneously embracing and respecting Indigenous peoples, cultures, languages, resurgence and self-determination. She further expresses a form of humility in her own understandings of participating in ceremony and being entrusted with knowledge and insight. She knows these are not elements for her personal ownership. She knows they do not belong to her simply by dint of participation. These actions are shared gifts and entail responsible accountability.

All of the contributions are offered in a way that expresses the Collaborators as vulnerable. Throughout the Collaborator's contributions, we find personal elements of serious interrogation, humorous navigation, and creative solution finding in terms of settler colonial structures. Sharing these phenomenological accounts is a vulnerable expression for the Collaborators to engage in. I would like to add a note on vulnerability. Becoming vulnerable means recognizing that while settler colonialism is not a fixed entity. There has been a significantly longer period of time that settler colonial structure did not exist. And so there will be a significant amount of time that it will no longer exist in the future. While it seems to have immovable concrete pillars of hegemonic governance and law, this is in fact not true. These pillars are a part of a shapeshifting structure that has the potential for transformative dismantling. What that transformation looks like depends on many factors. One of these is a thorough examination of transmogrified ontology and how this has become a faulty foundation for heteropatriarchal hegemonic power. Part of the realization of this examination hinges on

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<sup>658</sup> See Appendix

our willingness to relinquish privilege, ownership and destruction of Indigenous land and water, and cultural hegemony.

Further, we need to recognize and underpin the forms of alterity that are occurring right now in our everyday lives. Collaborations, gifting, disrupting, mutual aid, exploring wildness, reaching into our ancestral roots are very feasible ways of subverting. These are things we actually do every day. Small acts of rule-bending means applying kindness, care and consideration. It means refusing hierarchy and accepting new ways of perceiving the world. Going above and beyond, extending an extra hand or simply breaking/ignoring redundant or repressive rules moves us into a place of not fearing, disempowering oppressive authority and frees us to see that we will not be lost if we reject neoliberal capitalism. But how can we stay away from that? That's a difficult question with no formulaic answers. I do not have a specific panacea that could be applied universally. Instead, solutions will likely be highly contextual in nature. It will certainly take a creative approach. Something emergent, creative, self-regulatory, self-disciplined, based on mutual aid and mutual respect. Done right, it can be deeply vulnerable, trusting and loving. But it will have to be founded on something definitively not-colonial.

I think if more settler researchers turned the lens back in on themselves and other members of settler society more insight into how intergenerational everydayness is actively making shifts, in spite of the obstructive colonial systems institutions and structures, would be revealed. This is significant because one of the arguments settlers use against Indigenous Resurgence is that settler colonialism equates modernity and hence it is an inevitability. This concept is based fundamentally on a developmental paradigm that is constructed on transmogrified knowledge. And it is not true. I highly recommend that fellow settler researchers who do the self-work and the groundwork needed within their communities to trouble settler colonial structures, deepen relationships with Indigenous people and communities and find a space of vulnerability, accountability, trust and trustworthiness. This can be done in so many ways that may appear ordinary but are intimately extraordinary and create spaces for decolonial acts. Places of a deeper, more vulnerable care.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

*Children now come out of the Earth...dragging the textures of wisdoms gone before and bringing it up with them. They're not tabula rasas, they're not empty slates. They're alive in the wisdom of ancestors that are still folded in the thick present. Pay homage to the multiple that is lingering within them.*  
~ Bayo Akomolafe <sup>659</sup>

### Introduction

These are precarious times; anthropogenic climate change is our reality. We can see in our day-to-day everyday lives that we live amongst mass extinction of species, climate change, extreme weather shifts and environmental disruptions. And we still live in the midst of horrific violence, war, poverty, starvation, social suffering (racism, sexism, adultism, ageism, ableism, misogyny, Islamophobia, xenophobia etc.), socio-economic inequity, heteropatriarchy, rape culture, political corruption and the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples.

In a 2019 CBC Radio program it was announced that from March 1 to May 26, 2019 the province of Alberta has seen 430 wild fires.<sup>660</sup> Where I live, in British Columbia (BC) Canada, the last two years (2017, 2018) have seen record breaking wildfires. Although wildfires are common in this area, the extent of the last two years is not a typical trend. If we look at statistics from 1922 it shows that 670,000 hectares were burned. In 1958; 861, 000 hectares burned<sup>661</sup>. And in 2003; 233,000 hectares. This compared to 2017 at 1.2 million hectares and in 2018 1.35 million hectares, shows a substantially anomalous increase. This last wildfire pushed BC into a provincial wide

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<sup>659</sup> Bayo Akomolafe, *Slowing Down in Urgent Times*, 2020  
<https://forthewild.world/listen/bayo-akomolafe-on-slowng-down-in-urgent-times-155?fbclid=IwAR0gFPAtnGcCspNWC4dGDe7M7r0YAVGrKL7IbtwXKO9-K5VEAx9jzlbGWA>

<sup>660</sup> CBC Radio, live broadcast on May 26, 2019  
[https://www.facebook.com/radiocbc/videos/477855706090650/?notif\\_id=1558901205806295&notif\\_t=live\\_video](https://www.facebook.com/radiocbc/videos/477855706090650/?notif_id=1558901205806295&notif_t=live_video); Also, to get an idea of the global scope of Anthropogenic climate change check out this article and time lapse video showing wildfire around the world during 2019, <https://www.sciencealert.com/this-alarming-video-shows-everywhere-the-world-was-burning-in-2019?fbclid=IwAR2RG8Sk-W-gXC8zAqT5of2hSHzqbJ8rF-LeUn4wJq2t586Yx8BQmeCsxPI>

<sup>661</sup> Tara K. McGee, Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation and Amy Cardinal Christianson, "Residents' wildfire evacuation actions in Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation, Ontario, Canada," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, vol.3, (February, 2019): 266-274

state of emergency and displaced over 65,000 people<sup>662</sup>. Given that there are 4.6 million people in BC and 2.5 million of them are located in the Greater Vancouver area 65,000 is a significant number<sup>663</sup>. Further, Indigenous communities are much more affected than non-Indigenous communities for several reasons. Many Indigenous community members are forcefully evacuated during wildfires. Mandatory evacuations mean that people are willingly or unwillingly removed from their homes, communities and homelands and taken to urban centers.

For Indigenous people this can have devastating emotional and physical consequences. Many do not want to leave, are inappropriately relocated to urban centers or their families are separated. In many Indigenous homes, grandparents raise the grandchildren<sup>664</sup>. Separating them can be overwhelming. As well, forceful evacuation removes agency, echoes residential school and sixties scoop trauma and can give the sensation of enclosure and demoralization. Recent research done in this regard stipulates that forceful evacuation is not the answer to wildfire emergencies<sup>665</sup>. If there is going to be a steady increase in wildfires it is becoming increasingly clear that community preparedness is the best line of action. And this means allowing Indigenous communities to come up with their own solutions and giving them access to the necessary resources for this to happen. Indigenous peoples in BC have always dealt with wildfires and have deeper knowledge on how to manage them. Settler colonial imposition does not help and often causes more harm in the long run. We don't have the answers. We (the settler colonizer) are not the decolonizer. And we cannot decolonize<sup>666</sup>.

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<sup>662</sup> McGee and Cardinal, "Residents' Wildfire"

<sup>663</sup> McGee and Cardinal, "Residents' Wildfire"

<sup>664</sup> McGee and Cardinal, "Residents' Wildfire"

<sup>665</sup> McGee and Cardinal, "Residents' Wildfire"

<sup>666</sup> For a comprehensive and accessible Decolonization reading list please refer to this excellent resource: "Further Reading List" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/decolonization-readings/>

## Let's Talk

*Everydayness encourages us to “live in a longer ‘now’ – learn your history and culture and understand that it is part of who you are now”<sup>667</sup>.*

1. How does Decolonial CDT apply to Active Witnessing as an emergent concept to describe the application of accountability in the day-to-day lives of non-indigenous Canadians?
2. What can Active witnessing look like and how can this hold the possibility of opening spaces for Indigenous Resurgence, Self-determination and Reconciliation?

Does this study answer these research questions? Possibly, but I don't think it presents any clear-cut answers. Yet, I also think that might be the purpose of a small intimate collaborations. You get a richer insight into the processes of the Collaborators and the researcher, biases included. In turn, this has a deeper, more humanizing effect on research. As well, the answers to these questions are going to look different depending on relevant contexts and extant factors, which we can easily see in the four Life Writings. But I also think that the answers are multitudinous and manifest in forms not directly recognized. Active Witnessing looks like a lot of things. It is dependent on the person enacting them to be accountable and responsible for their acts. Accountability and responsibility depend on purposeful reflexivity. In this way, I think this dissertation offers a humble but valuable insight into Decolonial CDT and how this converges with Everyday Acts in creating potential spaces for Indigenous Resurgence. Even if those spaces are so small to go largely unnoticed by the majority. Maybe this is actually a desired aspect. I hope those who read this paper can find the many nuances I have missed and accordingly, further enrich this work.

I do think Decolonial CDT is a vital lens in which to look at settler colonialism. This is because it scrutinizes not the embodied being but rather the social norms and environment that define who is abled and who is disabled.<sup>668</sup> As Kafer suggests, the knowledge produced via Decolonial CDT is for the support of justice for all people with

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<sup>667</sup> Jeff Cornassel in, Cornassel and Mick Scow “Everyday Acts of Resurgence: Indigenous Approaches to Everydayness in Fatherhood.” *New Diversities*, (2017) vol19, no.2 [https://newdiversities.mmg.mpg.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017\\_19-02\\_05\\_Cornassel-Scow.pdf](https://newdiversities.mmg.mpg.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017_19-02_05_Cornassel-Scow.pdf)

<sup>668</sup> Schalk “Coming to Claim”

stigmatized bodies and minds.<sup>669</sup> Further, it is in solidarity with the purposes of decolonization and emancipation with devalued and pathologized peoples.<sup>670</sup> It refers to lived experiences and toward transformation of circumstances through critical intersectional analysis. Moreover, Kafer recommends a refusal of a fixed definition of disability and describes it as a ‘collective affinity’ as in Joan Scott’s “wide net inhering in no particular persons but rather...a complex set of feature attributed to persons that pathologize and oppress”.<sup>671</sup>

Likewise, Vaudrin-Charette suggests non-indigenous Canadians become personally, collectively and institutionally accountable<sup>672</sup> using reflexive inquiry, story-weaving and collaborative work.<sup>673</sup> Personal experience and learning influence how we think about being accountable at an institutional level. Experiencing one’s location in the context of self-location and land acknowledgement can be a beginning in terms of responsibility and expressing our interrelated beingness, our families and our accountability.<sup>674</sup> Like self-locating, reconciliatory action creates a space in which we become personally responsible. Not to absolve or relieve guilt but rather “as a human who refuses to be complicit to genocide,”<sup>675</sup>

Nonetheless, Jaffee and John caution that for settler colonial states to universalize disability and disability rights is highly problematic and perpetuates oppression, assimilation and saviourism,<sup>676</sup> This is the same transmogrified logic used to force relocation, removal, dispossession and disavowal of Indigenous Nationhood. Furthermore, Soldatic stresses that even a human rights model is confined to Eurocentric frameworks and does not account for disability consequent of imperialism, colonialism and globalized capitalism.<sup>677</sup> What Jaffee and John call the "enmeshment of disability

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<sup>669</sup> Minich “Enabling Whom?”

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> Kafer, *Feminst, Queer, Crip*

<sup>672</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 106-107

<sup>673</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 107

<sup>674</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 108

<sup>675</sup> Vaudrin-Charette, “Melting the Cultural” 109

<sup>676</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1412

<sup>677</sup> Soldatic “The Transnational Sphere” 744-755

oppression with white supremacy, imperialism and settler colonialism." Moreover, Meekosha argues that universalizing renders disabled people invisible and ignores colonial production of disabled bodies and disablement from land. In this context the process of disabling is a total dehumanizing process, including the destruction of physical, emotional, psychic, economic and cultural life.<sup>678</sup> For Soldatic, the structure of settler colonialism fundamentally transforms the social ontology of disability for Indigenous people.<sup>679</sup> Indigenous knowledge maps the body and mind differently from settler colonial models. Hunt gives the example of the Indian Act as a totalizing institution infiltrating into all aspects of indigenous lives and designed to assimilate and dissolve Indigenous governments. Status life was highly categorical and regulated.<sup>680</sup>

Tully and others who extol collectivity as paramount to healing and coexistence between human communities also acknowledge the need for accountable reconciliation between human and more-than-human communities.<sup>681</sup> This resonates with Emmanouil's notion of "ontological openness" as a "willingness to stay open to different ways of knowing".<sup>682</sup> An ontologically open approach allowing for incommensurability in the form of "multiple realities" as ontological pluralism.<sup>683</sup> Ontological pluralism is crucial if we are to fully embrace a new way of being in many non-hierarchical worlds. Applying Decolonial CDT with ontological openness we can discuss, what is disability? Campbell defines it as, "a network of beliefs processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect species typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human."<sup>684</sup> CDT asks what ontology makes ability and disability? Thus, we can ask: what kind of disability does ability want/need us to be? Similarly, we can ask: What

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<sup>678</sup> Meekosha, "Colonial Practices" 672

<sup>679</sup> Soldatic "The Transnational Sphere" 744-755

<sup>680</sup> Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity"

<sup>681</sup> Tully, "Reconciliation Here"

<sup>682</sup> Nai Emmanouil, "Ontological Openness"

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

<sup>684</sup> Fiona Kumari Campbell, "Inciting Legal Fictions: Disability's' date with Ontology and the Ableist Body of Law" *Griffith Law Review* (2001) vol. 10 Is. 1:44

kind of problem do settler colonial ontologies (whiteness) want /need Indigenous to be? Moreover, we can ask what problem do settler colonial ontologies require resurgence and reconciliation to be? Asking these questions are the strength of CDT. It troubles the situated normative and informs ableism, racism, heterosexism, classism, childism, speciesism and other 'isms.

But why use CDT in the context of accountable reconciliation praxis? Well, to begin It offers a unique perspective with attention to hierarchies of capability that deepen understandings of Indigenous based racism in Canada. As well it holds an alliance with anticolonialism, critical settler colonial studies and queer studies.<sup>685</sup> In the context of coexistence this means transformative reconciliation needs to be accountable to, responsible to, and be empowered by vigorous practices of resurgence that can, "...infuse reciprocal practices of reconciliation in self-determining, self-sustaining, intergenerational ways"<sup>686</sup> The path of reconciliation grounded in accountability holds transformative potential over time, space and situation. It holds this for all participants. Notably, Clare suggests that understanding this allows for an association and convergence between disability theory and decolonial theory.<sup>687</sup> This is because of disability theory's focus on structurally embedded ableism. Such a focus can prevent pulling decolonization into a social justice axiom by bringing the location of ableist structures into the colonial-decolonial context.

Mucina offers his understanding of the Ubuntu principle, *Umuntu ungu- muntu ngubuntu*, He further elucidates, "but here there is also a sense that humanity is bound up in one." It is a complex not completely translatable concept that must be experienced and felt. Possibly akin to Merleau-Ponty's proposal of phenomenological embodiment in which attention to the felt sense of the body is a nexus of living meanings, gaining these meanings a 'felt sense' that allows a body to be experienced as a coherent whole rather than a collection of disparate parts. Our bodies are inextricably intertwined with ourselves and the worlds in which our bodies are situated. Bodies become whole through

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<sup>685</sup> Schalk "Coming to Claim" 206

<sup>686</sup> Borrows and Tully, *Resurgence and Reconciliation*

<sup>687</sup> Clare, *Pride and Exile*

relations with others.<sup>688</sup> For Mingus, Access Intimacy that transforms relationships. She further suggests that to change the world means changing access and how access is perceived. It is part of the everyday living for disabled peoples.<sup>689</sup> If Access Intimacy is conscientiously practiced with the purpose of decolonization and creating spaces for Indigenous Resurgence at its heart; it becomes Active Witnessing.

While Indigenous Resurgence is the fundamental component of Active Witnessing, there is some caution. Jaffee and John, suggest that non-indigenous research cannot just add in some Indigenous perspectives. Instead, it must centre on Indigenous priorities of decolonization, resurgence and Nationhood as the foundation from which settler colonial reconciliation must emerge.<sup>690</sup> Settler colonialism is the foundational structure with ongoing practices of land theft and devastation that are central to this structure. And these practices are part of the fabric of academia producing Disability Studies.<sup>691</sup> Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous needs to be approached with vigilance and care.<sup>692</sup> Notions of temporality and space are primary sources of disjuncture between western and non-western modes of knowledge making. Thus, the self, the community and nature are seen as independent parts of a single whole. Conceptions and comprehensions of the relationship between knowledge and the natural world and the social function of knowledge is markedly different.<sup>693</sup> Further he suggests Indigenous traditional knowledge offers a potential basis for rebuilding Indigenous communities. Such knowledge systems should be valued on their own terms.<sup>694</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> Merleux-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 5

<sup>689</sup> Mingus, "Access Intimacy"

<sup>690</sup> Jaffee and John, "Disabling Bodies" 1409

<sup>691</sup> *ibid*

<sup>692</sup> Snelgrove et al., "Unsettling" 30

<sup>693</sup> Navnita Behera, "Re-imagining IR in India". *Non-Western International Relations Theory (Orgs.)* Acharya, Amitav & Buzan, Barry. Perspectives On and Beyond Asia, 2010. 105

<sup>694</sup> Angela Cavender Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge". In *Indigenizing the Academy. Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities.* (Orgs.) Mihesuah, Devon Abbott and Wilson, Angela Cavender. (University of Nebraska Press, 2004)

CDT is great but it cannot stand alone. Critical thinking is not enough. Reconciliation as a series of apologies and symbolic mentions is not enough. It must become an everyday embodied act of witnessing. This is why making space for Indigenous Resurgence, knowledge, scholarship and praxis and the Indigenous people, communities, cultures and lands producing this is fundamental to actual change. Indigenous people have different approaches and strategies for decolonization and empowerment which deeply involve understanding Indigenous ways of knowing and appreciating the differences such as the non-separation of nature and society and the attribution of culture and consciousness to other beings.<sup>695</sup> Many Indigenous knowledge systems include spiritual dimensions that may not make sense to science or supersede the realm of science but there is way of being attuned to planetary symbiosis and deeper relationships to the more-than-human world.<sup>696</sup>

Kinship extends to humans and nonhumans natural and supernatural dimensions. There are elements and degrees of kinship among Indigenous peoples that are incomprehensible to western perspectives, and thus must be understood on their own terms, not proven or validated by the west.<sup>697</sup> As Levi-Strauss asserts, Indigenous cultures are no less scientific and its results no less genuine. They were secured 10,000 years earlier and remain at the basis of civilization.<sup>698</sup> Indigenous conceptions and interaction with environment are both intimate and respectful. It is a source of knowledge. These conceptions vary largely as each group has its particular ways of concerning and understanding established relations. The natural world is a symbiotic network of relations between and among human and non-human agents.<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity"; Enrique Salmon, *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food Identity and Resilience*, (University of Arizona Press, 2012)

<sup>696</sup> Deloria, *God is Red*

<sup>697</sup> Kimiye Tommasino, *A ecologia dos Kaingang da bacia do rio Tibagi*, Cap. 6 In: *A bacia do rio Tibagi*, (Org. Moacyr E. Medri et al. 2002:100)

<sup>698</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, (University of Chicago Press, 1966) 16

<sup>699</sup> Leanne Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2014, vol.3 no. 3: 1-25.

Settler colonial structure relegated Indigenous knowledge systems to an invisible position or even destroyed them. Mihesua and Wilson assert that remediating this means an instating of Indigenous epistemological and ontological foundations for knowledge making and distribution.<sup>700</sup> Epistemological and ontological parity is fundamental in order to uncover invisible actors or to hear unheard voices in understanding relationships. As per Snelgtove et al. it should be emphasized that not everything Indigenous is translatable or transferable via western institution. And it may well be inappropriate to do so, especially anything sacred that not for sharing outside of the community or subjected to study/research.<sup>701</sup> To this end both Paulette Regan and Alexis Shotwell assert that settler colonial forgetting, omission, and erasure is a part of settler colonial violence. The erasure of themselves in past wrong doings is a willful ignorance and a denial of the specifics in relationships, “that threaten our privilege and power.”<sup>702</sup>

The futurity of coexistence is contingent on the colonizer making an absolute break from colonialism. To accomplish this, we might begin with understanding Memmi’s colonial paradox of the colonizer who refuses but cannot decolonize, as an anthem of failure. If we cannot decolonize, can we fail at being settler colonial? What does this look like?

### **Failure, Wildness, Anarchy**

In their paper, *Wildness, Loss, Death*, Halberstam proposes that failure is transformative and revolutionary. They suggest that death makes us wild. In being with some one that we lose, we seek to continue a connection that is sad, melancholic, grateful, celebratory and indebted. And utterly agonizing. It’s confusing, overwhelming and hurts. You cannot find your way out of loss. you can only enter it and be propelled or paralyzed by it you succumb to it, and you become wild.<sup>703</sup> This wildness is not the

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<sup>700</sup> Devon Abbot Mihesua and Anglea Wilson *Indigenizing the Academy. Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*. 2004: 71, 104, 5, 6

<sup>701</sup> Snelgtov et al. “Unsettling”

<sup>702</sup> Regan, *Settler Within*, 35; also see Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity*

<sup>703</sup> Jack/Judith Halberstam, *The Wild: The Aesthetics of Queer Anarchy*. 2014. 137-138  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDP4lcoZ9s4>

stereotypical settler colonial wild. It is defined by Queer BIPOC as a strategy for critique.<sup>704</sup> The term wildness is a critical trope to potentially open a conversation across queer studies, ecology, aesthetics, animal studies, disability and critical race studies.<sup>705</sup> Wildness can be a space/name/critical term for what lies beyond current logics of rule.

In his book, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the wild: A study in terror and healing*, Anthropologist Michael Taussig asserts that death is a valid space of unmeaning and unbeing, where darkness and light, self and other, order and chaos slip out of their oppositional symbolic order, falter and collapse.<sup>706</sup> Wildness is the threat of unmeaning and the impact of death. Significantly, as mentioned earlier, Kennedy's own near-death experience was not filled with terror, chaos or unmeaning. Instead, it was overflowing with meaning and transcendent love! She states, "Encountering my own death after having emergency surgery allowed me to love myself inside and out. Through this self-love I know I now love everyone else."<sup>707</sup> I thought this was interesting because I have had people close to me in near death states who also reiterate this meaningful state of transcendent love. Further to this she asserts,

When we share our stories with one another, and when we really listen to each other, we will see the similarities between us. We will never be completely the same because we are meant to be different. Every species here in our world is different from the others. There are some things that will bring us together as one: some of us have similar traditional stories; some of us make the same kind of bread; we have similar songs; our beliefs have similarities, too. There will always be something that will draw us together, and it will help us to realize that we are not them and us, but that we are all of us."<sup>708</sup>

Again, we find Mucina's Ubuntu principle of *umuntu ungu- muntu ngubuntu* relevant. And Cortassel's Tsalagi principle of *gadugi* as infused in Indigenous experience.

Taussig further alludes to colonialism as projecting a [transmogrified] wildness onto the 'Other' and seeks to counter the imaginary senseless brutality of wild with a senseless

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<sup>704</sup> Halberstam, *The Wild*

<sup>705</sup> Halberstam, "The Wild Beyond"; Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*. (Duke University Press, 2020)

<sup>706</sup> Michael Taussig, "Culture of Terror-Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.(1984) Vol. 26, no. 3.

<sup>707</sup> Roberta Kennedy, "Raven Healing" in *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples Health: Beyond the Social*, Eds. Greenwood, M., de Leeuw, S., and Lindsay, N. M. (TO: Canadian Scholars, 2018):73

<sup>708</sup> Kennedy, Raven Healing, 73

brutality of its own.<sup>709</sup> Rational explanation is a center piece of colonial terror and violence and has no place in dismantling a colonial epistemology or ontology. If you are not rational you are wild. For Taussig, error thrives on the production of “epistemic murk” and metamorphosis.<sup>710</sup> It requires the hermetic violence that creates meagre fictions in the guise of realism, reducing contradiction, chaos and incommensurability. Hence, by immersing into phantasmagoric ‘Otherness’ the colonial terms of encounter are reproduced. In terms of colonial encounter, the wild ‘Other’ embodies the unknown, the magical, the antidote to all the ills of Eurocentric cultural values.<sup>711</sup> The rabbit hole of colonial magical thinking. Yet, this also can reveal structures in contemporary western epistemologies that prevent us from thinking in new creative ways about alternate worlds and realities.

In considering the usefulness of the term wild, Halberstam asks, is there potential in terminology long appropriated and exhausted by imperial function and imperative? Can wild become a new word, a new episteme?<sup>712</sup> Halberstam believes it is possible because wildness exceeds its own meaning. It is silent because the telling of the wild becomes a tool of colonial rule. When it is uttered in comprehensive western discourse it produces colonial order that give it meaning and association. But to employ it silently within one’s work disrupts that order through temporal spatial and bodily excess and eccentricity.<sup>713</sup> Wild is necessary. It is needed. For Fugitive Theorists Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, the wild inhabits regimes of knowing and being that form a part of the making and unmaking of modern racialized subjectivity.<sup>714</sup> Spaces where wildness is perceived as a

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<sup>709</sup> Jack/Judith Halberstam, *The Wild Beyond: With and for the Undercommons*, <http://s3.amazonaws.com/arenaattachments/1460896/a899a5ebf2ec18e9468f6c29cbef1911.pdf?1511808313>

<sup>710</sup> Taussig, Michael. “Culture of Terror--Space of Death. Roger Casement’s Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984): 467–97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/178552>. P. 492

<sup>711</sup> Taussig, “Culture of Terror”

<sup>712</sup> Halberstam, *Wild Things*

<sup>713</sup> Halberstam, “Wildness Loss and Death”. 140

<sup>714</sup> Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. (2013) <https://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf>

space that colonialism constructs, marks and disavows while also being a space of vibrancy that limits normativity and holds deviant monsters at bay.<sup>715</sup>

Perhaps we can see failure and wildness as an alternative logic that can lead us away from appropriative mechanisms of neoliberal capitalism.<sup>716</sup> It reveals contradiction and hypocrisy and does not shy away from complicity, guilt and pain. Queer failure moves away from identity politics, simplistic modes of subversion and idealized notions of safety. Wildness is the spirit of the unknown, the disorderly.<sup>717</sup> It is not a spirit that belongs to Indigenous contexts and gets stolen by others for other purposes. As Halberstam notes, it describes a space and mode of knowing that emerges in encounter between capital and chaos, privilege and struggle, myth and counter myth. Wildness instructs us can be a vector for profit, accommodation appropriation unless we constantly adjust the templates of change.<sup>718</sup> Why not let wildness move past order and explanation and dive deeper—let it moving towards spaces between the spoken and ineffable, the bureaucracies and the experiences of life and death. Let it give us access—intimate access—to the unknown, the disorderly and to our own beautiful risk.

Along these lines, Halberstam moves from failure to wildness to anarchy. They define anarchy as a move away from state authority. It is not a white revolution but rather a removal of the white revolution and the production of whiteness. They assert that we need the intellectual tools that enable us to notice anarchy in our everyday acts—to enable us to notice small imperceptible moments in which we rethink what settler colonial authority is. Anarchy is a baseline that requires an accessible archive, not an intellectual lineage. It is a space for new imaginings towards collectivity and solidarity. This includes the creation of new ontologies and deeper understandings of epistemologies, new genealogies of knowledge and new ways in which to socially collect. According to Scott, the actual need is to inhabit anarchism in the everyday. The

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<sup>715</sup> Halberstam, “Wildness Loss and Death”. 141-144

<sup>716</sup> Halberstam, “Wildness Loss and Death”. 145

<sup>717</sup> Ibid

<sup>718</sup> Munoz in Jack/Judith Halberstam, “Wildness Loss and Death”. (Duke University Press, 2014) 147

transgression of the rules of sense making projects in ordinary everyday acts and deeds.<sup>719</sup> In many ways, anarchy is already enacted in numerous people's everyday lives.

Anarchist positions are always rethinking, redesigning, relearning and reinventing. We can see small acts of everyday anarchism within each one of the contributions made by Collaborators in Chapter 4. Anarchy as such, is a space for critiquing 19th century born politics, laws and legislations that are permeated with corruption and have long since expired.<sup>720</sup> What is the alternative? Not diversity and inclusion. The violence of inclusion is neoliberal. It pulls people into its structures and systems by virtue of official and unofficial recognition state logics.<sup>721</sup> It pulls Indigenous peoples into identities that the state sanctions, accepts and makes sense out of what it does not understand<sup>722</sup>. It insists one make a choice for recognition. As asserted by Rollo, it can be more violent than being excluded.<sup>723</sup> Inclusion is a form of enabling; racism, classism, sexism, childism and ableism. For as long as we have had capitalism, we have had resistance to it. Resistance is always manifest.

Halberstam asks, can we look at wildness as an anticolonial anarchic strategy? Capitalism assumes competition. It interprets survival through the lens of 'survival of the strongest/fittest, most prolific reproducer. But this assumption of competition is false. In nature, there are many more examples of anarchy such as symbiosis, social cooperation, mutualism and gifting. This is how species survive and thrive. To live with each other and other beings, we must become at ease with contradiction: symbiosis and incommensurability, gifting and saving, transgressing and cooperating, mutual-aid and self-love. For Halberstam, the wild means outside of the enclosure. In enclosure we delineate space as one's own. We gain proprietorship through private ownership, parkland, cities and urbanization, borders fences...walls. We enclose this space from the outside...the spatial rendering of colonial enclosure. The colonizer then defines and

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<sup>719</sup> Rollo, "Everyday Deeds"

<sup>720</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

<sup>721</sup> Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. 2014)

<sup>722</sup> Patricia Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations Independence*, (Fernwood Publishing, 1999): Alfred, *Wasase*

<sup>723</sup> Rollo, "Everyday Deeds"

labels the wild as outside of civilization. But Halberstam insists the wild isn't outside, yet it exceeds the parameters of the enclosed colonizer and exceeds the parameters of recognition. Like grass through concrete, fern through lava and dust through windows, the wild is always around finding small intimate spaces to thrive.

To exceed state recognition and authority is what Cornstassel describes as ungovernable. In his paper, *To Be Ungovernable*, he argues that Indigenous peoples should always be ungovernable in state contexts.<sup>724</sup> This should be the entire project of Indigeneity. He suggests Indigenous peoples have as many forms of ungovernability, alternative economies, laws, customs, traditions, and knowledges as there are Indigenous cultures, communities and nations around the world. For the settler colonizer, maybe we need to learn to be ungovernable. To lose against capitalistic competition and embrace the loss. To love losing and to love the loser. Refuse winning and capital success. Colonialism is an inscription of order on people deemed as ungovernable. Every time we share, give, trade, gift, collaborate, cooperate, and enact concepts like Access Intimacy and Active Witnessing, we move against capitalism. We become a bit more ungovernable, and we enact a transformative multitudinous anarchy.

### **A New Long March: An Intergenerational Relay**

Now, why would we want to fail and succumb to some anarchic messiness? Why am I bringing in so many different angles to this dissertation that seem irrelevant? Isn't this just speculative, spewed into the computer and spilled onto the keyboard? I think it could look this way. But I think it could look like something else too. My goal is to problematize, to expand, to envision. It is an exercise in imaginative creativity. But it is based in very real possibilities. We need to build up our ability to imagine and re-story the way we move within the world. In this way, I am doing this work as an act of Active Witnessing.

Hopefully, we can ascertain from the exploration provided herein that while the settler-colonizer's power and privilege seem to hold a hegemonic positionality it also clearly restricts the capacity for deeper change making. Authorities are accountable firstly

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<sup>724</sup> Jeff Cornstassel "To be Ungovernable." *New Socialist*. Issue No. 58. September-October. 2006.

to colonial institutions, secondly to colonial people, thirdly to colonial ideology/ontology/ecology and only marginally to anything else. Consequently, they are only really capable of creating compromise, concession, adjustment and superficial, short-term remedies that appear to be useful and effective but are ultimately deficient in the long term, especially in terms of deeper social suffering and ecological degradation. Actual change making happens firstly within the minds, bodies and everyday acts and deeds of the common populace, the subcultures and the oppressed. In this way, it is not the system we need to appeal to or look to for solutions, although we can create beneficial accessibility and capacity building concepts this way. Changing the system via legislation, policy, law and capacity building will do little to relieve ongoing institutionalized social and ecological suffering. Instead, there needs to be capacity building through creating alternative emergent ways in which to render settler colonial structures redundant and irrelevant. And obsolete.

One of the most profound insights I have come across in my research concerning decolonial praxis is that it is not so much about changing the system as much as it is about rendering the system inert. For every handful of noisy settler colonial racists there is another quieter handful who are determined to eliminate the racist systems they actively live within. For every few self-proclaimed settler colonial allies there are many more everyday settlers involved in shifting how they perceive Indigenous lands, waters and peoples and how they raise their families on Indigenous territories. And for the countless oppressive, discriminatory and demoralizingly colonial attitudes expressed on social media, in media/social media comment sections and in other places, there are settlers holding very different opinions and engaging in decolonial processes through their everyday acts—actions that simply have yet to be named. These seemingly quiet and ordinary acts are not done to attract attention. They are surreptitious, imperfect movements and exchanges that on their own appear quite unremarkable. But when seen as an interconnected and intergenerational web, they become dynamic. Hence, the concept of Active Witnessing. It is this intimately accessible Active Witnessing, enacted alongside of Indigenous decolonial self-determination and resurgence, that holds an indomitable amount of change-making potential.

On this note, I propose a New Long March. In the 1960s German Student Activist Rudi Dutschke coined the phrase, “*der Lange Marsch durch die Institutionen*/the Long March through the institutions.” It was meant to describe a revolutionary strategy consisting of ‘woke/conscientious’ individuals learning and training in various professions to replace the old system with something new. In other words, changing the structure from within. This is not a new concept. Dutschke built his views largely from Gramsci’s notions of cultural hegemony. The concept of changing structures, systems and institutions from within has been closely examined by a number of different sociological and political scholars. Most agree that this cannot happen. Because the old faces simply become replaced by new ones, and they find their comfort zone and thus remain, comfortable, safe and settled<sup>725</sup>. That is the spell of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism.<sup>726</sup>

That being said, the idea of ‘the Long March’ through the institutions might actually offer an insight into what kinds of decolonial action settlers need to engage in. When we think of decolonial action we imagine protests, rallies, temporary blockades, workshops and awareness/fundraisers. But for white settler colonizers, this may not be our path. In fact, our presence in anticolonial protest can have detrimental effects. As Malcolm X states,

“If I have a cup of coffee that is too strong for me because it is too black, I weaken it by pouring cream into it. I integrate it with cream. If I keep pouring enough cream in the coffee, pretty soon the entire flavor of the coffee is changed; the very nature of the coffee is changed. If enough cream is poured in, eventually you don’t even know that I had coffee in this cup. This is what happened with the March on Washington. The whites didn’t integrate it; they infiltrated it. Whites joined it; they engulfed it; they became so much a part of it, it lost its original flavor. It ceased to be a black march; it ceased to be militant; it ceased to be angry; it ceased to be impatient. In fact, it ceased to be a march.”<sup>727</sup>

And as reiterated by Tully and Morton there are convergences in the realm of ecology, symbiosis, mutual aid, solidarity and much more, there are convergences within

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<sup>725</sup> A great example of this can be found here: Helmut Schelsky, “Die Strategie der „Systemüberwindung, Der lange Marsch durch die Institutionen,” (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, December 10, 1971)

<sup>726</sup> For more details, please see Gerald Degroot, “Rudi Dutschke’s Long March,” *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*, (NY: Routledge, 2014); Roger Kimball, *The Long March: How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s Changed America*, (Encounter Books, 2001): The term ‘the long march’ originates from the prolonged struggle of Chinese communist army who marched across China.

<sup>727</sup> Malcolm X, June 1936, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SmwX-ikkjk> (November, 1963) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a59Kwp35Z80> Keep the settler colonizer out.

intersection of Decolonial CDT and resurgence. Furthermore Snelgrove et al., Tuck and Yang, and Rollo reveal that incommensurability is desired.<sup>728</sup> Just as Minich and Schalk express how disability is also desired. And there are confluences of felt solidarity between the disablement of land and the disablement of body, mind, emotion, sexuality and spirit. It creates spaces through explosion or slow erosion. As Mucina extols, it tells stories of history, family, nation and creation. And reaffirms that “we exist because they exist”. It is a Long March that understand the interrelationality and the impact of everyday acts, is surrendered to the longer now, leaves no one behind and walks side by side.

Rarely do settler colonizers understand the implications of our benevolent helpfulness and support strategies. Rarely do we examine our deeper more intimate relationships we have between friends, partners, family and children as decolonial action. These are the everyday institutions we tend to forget and overlook in terms of change making. Perhaps the idea of the Long March needs to be revisited. But instead of marching through the institutions and replacing—ending up with exactly what we had before, just with new whitewashed faces—the New Long March must be an intergenerational one. A queerly vulnerable, ecologically aware, wildly ungovernable<sup>729</sup> and intimately accessible one. And at times a silent one.

It must be a Long March that no longer runs the neoliberal consumerist race to win, but instead engages in an intergenerational relay of gifting that resists capitalism’s capacious overdevelopment and appalling negligence and moves towards an alternative not-colonial future<sup>730</sup>. Not a relay that leaves in its wake a broken world, expecting the youth and children of future generations to clean up and mend. But rather one that gifts<sup>731</sup>, Actively Witnesses and works to make changes that will mark new pathways for emergent alterity. Such pathways are not clear-cut, demarcated and orderly. They are

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<sup>728</sup> Snelgrove et al. “Unsettling”; Tuck and Yang, “Not a Metaphor”; Rollo, “Everyday Deeds”

<sup>729</sup> For an Indigenous perspective on the concept of ungovernable, please see: “To be Ungovernable,” by Jeff Corntassel, *New Socialist*, no. 58. (September-October, 2006), <http://www.corntassel.net/ToBeUngovernable.pdf>

<sup>730</sup> Inspired by the quote “Life is not a race, it’s a relay.” by Dick Gregory.

<sup>731</sup> Gifting here means not only gifting towards the future but also recognizing gifts from those who have come before us and those that are present right now.

diaphanous, indicated and fluid, embracing creativity, nascence, ephemera, ambiguity, failure and incommensurability as strengths in combating settler colonial structures that overtly rely on notions of progress, development, advancement, inclusion, success and finding the middle ground. It is a Long March that disregards restrictions but does not ignore them. It does not simply recognize the system but remains acutely aware of it to move through, over, around and under it within the unseen interstitial spaces that exist within the hearts of the people themselves.

Interspersed throughout this study is the concept of accountable reconciliation as a praxis. And alongside of this are the words ‘converge/convergence’ and ‘resurge/resurgence’. Together these two words coexist in solidarity in what Kānaka Maoli, Academic No’eau Peralto calls a ‘Convergence of Resurgence’. This is also the title of Tagé Cho Hudān/Northern Tutchone Artist Lianne Charlie’s artwork on the front cover of the book, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. Furthermore, Peralto states, “he *lani ko luau houa ko lalo*” meaning, “That of the heavens is connected to that of the Earth. That of the uplands is connected to that of the sea. And that of the ‘aina is connected to that of our people.”<sup>732</sup> Everyday acts reverberate inward and outwards in transformative ways. A such, Kānaka Maoli Activist Kīhei de Silva asserts that everyday acts can help Indigenous peoples see through false reflections.<sup>733</sup> For non-indigenous people this means we need to halt the ongoing placing and propping up of transmogrified fun-house mirrors and insisting that those reflections are the most important truth. For example, Professor Lisa Streiland has dedicated much of her work in solidarity with Quandamooka peoples, lands and spirit. She understands and accounts for her privilege by respecting and accepting that Indigenous peoples embodies land and that land embodies Indigenous peoples. It is a reciprocal symbiosis that is felt rather than described.<sup>734</sup> Streiland accepts it with needing to fully know it.

This acceptance is necessary in terms of incommensurability, requiring a deeper respect that Metis Academic Erynne Gilpin describes as an interactive love that “teaches

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<sup>732</sup> No’eau Peralto, “Mālama’ina Koholālele”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 64

<sup>733</sup> Kīhei de Silva, “Lawa Ku’u Lei”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 20-23

<sup>734</sup> Lisa Streiland, “Representing Indigenous Peoples in the Landscape”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 68-70

us to not only acknowledge interconnected relationships but also how to enact a practice of accountability and respect to those relations.”<sup>735</sup> This interactive love is experienced in the ordinary acts such as described by Anishinaabe, Academic Jana-Rae Yerxa in her conversations with her grandmother. These reciprocal interactions exchange wisdom, acceptance and ineffable love that coalesces and extends from one generation to the next.<sup>736</sup> For Cree/Saulteaux Scholar Gina Starblanket these acts are a multiplicity of living, evolving everyday practices.<sup>737</sup> Northern Tutchone Academic Shelby Blackjack suggests these everyday acts are witness to the ongoing colonial violence but also to the vitality of Indigenous resistance and resurgence. She enacts this witnessing through being herself and being accountable to loving interrelationships.

Ingeniously, Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua stipulates that dreaming is an act of resurgence.<sup>738</sup> Dreaming heals, prepares and teaches. We face our fears, our pain, and relive our horror. It also nurtures our desires, needs and hopes. Dreaming is surprising, unpredictable, prophetic and playful. It interrelates us with a deep symbiosis that exceeds materiality and interacts with the more-than-human world. Dreaming is an everyday act of deep intercommunication, deepening our understanding of our stories for both Indigenous peoples and for non-Indigenous peoples. Everyday convergences of resurgence can be nurturing spaces and places as symbiotic ecological kin and practicing traditional harvesting and cultivation regardless of imposed settler colonial structures.<sup>739</sup> Asserting Indigenous practices as self-determination as well as to nourish traditional symbiotic relationships, as an act of deep access intimacy for the living earth. Everyday

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<sup>735</sup> Erynne Gilpin, “From a Place with Love”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 49

<sup>736</sup> Jana Rae Yerxa, “~NIBWAAKAAWIN (wisdom)”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 23

<sup>737</sup> Gina Starblanket, “Resurgence as Relationality”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 30

<sup>738</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, “Dreaming is an Everyday Act of Resurgence” *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 83

<sup>739</sup> Noenoe Silva “Recovering Place Names from Literature in Hawaiian”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. 50; Brad Coombes, “Evading the Neo-colonial State Without Running to the Hills”, *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*, 98

acts are dynamic, physical, emotive and experiential. They are struggle, blockade and refusal<sup>740</sup>. They are reciprocal, mutual and symbiotic.

All of the afore mentioned collaborators, all of the literary works cited and all of these individuals in the preceding paragraphs are actively engaged in an intergenerational relay of Everyday Acts, Active Witnessing and Reconciliation. Their everyday acts are alive, inter-corporeal, felt, agentic and collectively relevant. Thus, the New Long March must be a journey of love, care and relationality through storytelling. It is solidarity with human and more-than-humans. It is being in love with disability (not disablement) as gift and as beauty. It is respecting Indigenous sacred protocol and finding our own deeply buried ceremonies. And it is in saying the names of the murdered, the missing, the failures and the deep agonizing losses. It is a long March that nurtures the kind of love Kennedy shares; self-love, love for children and youth, love for elders, love for members of family and community, love for those we don't know, those more-than-human, the elements, the cosmos, the universe and its multitude of appearances.<sup>741</sup> It is a long march that has always been happening and always will be happening. Perhaps we can move together, along our unique paths, to coexist in an integrational march of revolutionary everydayness.<sup>742</sup>

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The settler colonizer cannot decolonize, and settler colonizers cannot be factual allies to Indigenous peoples, communities and nations. Settler colonizers are extant because settler colonialism exists. To become not-colonial means to remove settler colonial structures. Who are we without these structures? What is our identity, culture, law, governance? What does un-colonial agential existence look like in the context of coexistence with Indigenous Nations? How can we concretely instigate shift? We can engage in Active Witnessing and embrace an Ecologically Aware solidarity. But to do so we must fight to remove the transmogrified ontological meanings that support settler colonial structures, human-centric systems and stop western Eurocentric intergenerational

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<sup>740</sup> Simpson, A. *Mohawk Interruptus*

<sup>741</sup> Roberta Kennedy, "Raven Healing"

<sup>742</sup> Mick Scow, "Relentlessly Coastal" *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*, 37

violence. We must learn to redefine just what solidarity can mean. What its potential, its capacity and its possibility might be, and how we can embrace and enact this. Canada, and Canadians, need to step down from a location of oppression and start walking alongside. And it is up to each one of us as individuals, families and communities to do this.

Cree Scholar Harold Johnson reiterates that when settlers came to *Kiciwamanawak* (Cree) territory they were invited to live as family and to maintain harmonious relations through Cree law. Treaty making was initiated by the Cree Nation according to their laws, governance and worldview, and settlers as newcomers to the territory were expected to, "...join the families already here, and in time, learn to live like us."<sup>743</sup> Not that settlers were to 'become Cree' but they were expected to learn how to become good relatives. Johnson further emphasizes, "No one expected you [settlers] would try to take everything for yourselves, and that we would have to beg for leftovers."<sup>744</sup> Such is the ongoing relationship the Canadian state maintains with Indigenous land and water defenders.

Furthermore, Johnson states, "...we thought that maybe, if you watched how we lived, you might learn how to live in balance with this territory."<sup>745</sup> This statement is deeply troubling in its relevance to what is happening to the ongoing environmental destruction facilitated by settler colonialism. The trusting relationship the Cree, and many other Indigenous Nations, expected from settlers has been ruthlessly breached. Thus, it is incumbent on settlers and their government to regain this trust by becoming trustworthy. This means to honour treaties and re-learn to walk and live with Indigenous peoples on Indigenous land. To learn to be a good relative and trustworthy neighbor, ensuring a future of reciprocal and mutually beneficial coexistence. As stipulated by Johnson, such a vision of the future, "...must be one that provides for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. This should be a vision that has at its end freedom from tyranny. The

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<sup>743</sup> Harold Johnson, *Two Families: Treaties and Government*, (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Purich Publishing, 2007) p. 20

<sup>744</sup> Johnson, *Two Families*, p.29

<sup>745</sup> Johnson, *Two Families*, p.27

steps toward that vision will be small and deliberate.”<sup>746</sup> These small purposeful acts towards the abolition of settler colonial tyranny are vital components of decolonization and reconciliation; *Everyday Acts of Active Witnessing*.

Models of coexistence already exist. In the introduction, this paper mentions just a handful of the many concepts put forward by various Indigenous scholars, including Marshal and Marshal’s *etuaptmumk*, Ermine’s *Spaces of Engagement*, Recollet’s *Spatial Tagging*, Kress’ principles of *pimitwism* and *kananayhitowin*, Corntassel’s *undertstading of tohi* and *gadugi*, Mucina’s *umuntu ungu- muntu ngubuntu*, Atleo’s *tsawalk* and the *kaswentha* wampum as put forth by Manuel and Posluns, Alfred and Borrows. Simpson further gives the example of *Gdoo-naagananinaa*, a living dynamic treaty known as “Our Dish” by the Anishinabek and “Dish with One Spoon” to the Haudenosaunee. The concept of a dish represents shared hunting grounds wherein no one takes more than they need and surplus is redistributed equitably. There are ceremonies, protocols and laws within these understandings. Such treaties are meticulously designed to, “promote peaceful coexistence and...required regular renewal of the relationship through meeting, ritual and ceremony.”<sup>747</sup> It is based on mutual sharing of, “extensive knowledge of the natural environment, including its physical features, animal behavior, animal populations, weather and ecological interactions.”<sup>748</sup> This ensured everyone had enough to thrive into the future, including the more-than-human nations.

Additionally, in their 2014 publication, “Resetting and Restoring the Relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada” Rollo and Alfred reiterate the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). This commission was created in 1991 and submitted in 1996, “to establish the steps necessary for restoring a just relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples.”<sup>749</sup> It is an extensive five-volume document,

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<sup>746</sup> Johnson, *Two Families*, p. 117

<sup>747</sup> Leanne Simpson, “Looking after *Gdoo-naagananinaa*: precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships,” *Wicazo Sa review*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2008. Pp. 29-42.

<sup>748</sup> Simpson, “Looking after *Gdoo-naagananinaa*,” p. 37

<sup>749</sup> Toby Rollo and Taiaiake Alfred, “Resetting and Restoring the Relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada” in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* (ARP Press, 2014). More about the RCAP can be found here, Library and Archives Canada <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>

and it has been three decades since its inauguration and twenty-five years since submission, with little progress. Rollo and Alfred annotate the RCAP into a concise, accessible two-page pamphlet outlining five fundamental recommendations: 1. Declaration of Responsibility, 2. Legislated Recognition of Political Authority, 3. Legislated Devolution of Governance, 4. Legislation of Crown Fiduciary Duty, and 5. Unrestricted Modern Treaty Process.<sup>750</sup> As these examples show, the groundwork already exists for coexistence based on “mutual respect, friendship and peace.”<sup>751</sup>

Significantly, settler colonialism is not an inevitable end point. How could it be? It must always justify itself with various strategic moves to innocence proclaiming development, progress and economic advancement. To wit, settler colonialism is propelled by thousands of generations of intergenerational violence. It is a purposeful, layered, organic structure, meant to universalize transmogrified meaning. What is inevitable is that settler colonialism will end. Because its life force is people adhering to transmogrified ontology. And this ontology is destroying itself through the very structure it has been implemented with to prevent its destruction. Through rampant overdevelopment and deplorable neglect, it is destroying the various environments, ecosystems, cultures, socioeconomic systems and much more. It is exacerbating anthropogenic climate change. This human generated destruction is the direct result of transmogrified hierarchal ontology, and it can only end in its own demise. Which is certain. When humans are gone, the Anthropocene will shift into something that does not include humans. The settler colonial organism is structured on specific and malleable apparatuses. Without this the organism withers away. How this withering begins and ends, is up to us.

There is so very much work to be done. My research barely touches the surface of the depth of settler colonial insidiousness. We must move away from notions of assimilation, incorporation and settler colonial frameworks of coexistence and move towards something else. Something new and not yet known. Along these lines,

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<sup>750</sup> Rollo and Alfred, “Resetting and Restoring”

<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

Halberstam stresses that those who struggle in a system based on settler colonial norms must,

...refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls. We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming. What we want after “the break” will be different from what we think we want before the break and both are necessarily different from the desire that issues from being in the break.<sup>752</sup>

Such a ‘break’ could be bold, audacious and ostentatious. It could be unity, solidarity and undercommons. It could also be personal, quiet and even silent. In this regard, I have outlined the notion of Active Witnessing, meant only as a modest concept to be built on, or around, or beside. Or tossed out if it’s not useful. It is not a theory. And it’s definitely not a new category of solidarity or a label for settler allies<sup>753</sup>. It is meant to compel the reader to think about and strategize non-colonial ways of being in solidarity. It is the named lifelong and intergenerational undertakings already being done but often going unnoticed. These are the phenomenological experiences of intergenerational change making that is *already occurring* vis-à-vis every day, day-to-day actions. I think this notion of purposeful self-reflexive Active Witnessing holds potential for further theorizing, possibly into a strategic solidarity tactic.

### **Loving Behaviour as Solidarity**

To this end, Kimmerer offers several loving behaviors that can nurture inter-social and inter-ecological connections. These are as follows:

- 1) Nurturing health and wellbeing
- 2) protection from harm
- 3) encouraging individual growth and development
- 4) desire to be together
- 5) Generous sharing of resources
- 6) Working together for a common goal
- 7) Celebration of shared values
- 8) Interdependence
- 9) Sacrifice for the other

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<sup>752</sup> Halberstam,

<sup>753</sup> An insightful and excellent article on allyship can be found here: Robyn Ward, “Building Trust Before Truth: How Non-Indigenous Canadians Become Allies,” *Indigenous Innovation*, (February 22, 2019), [https://www.animikii.com/news/building-trust-before-truth-how-non-indigenous-canadians-become-allies?fbclid=IwAR1\\_JmYABvB73x1mZI5dBdquOZZWNXXnjdqfOs5oCPwwRXqkODZvFZgZdoM](https://www.animikii.com/news/building-trust-before-truth-how-non-indigenous-canadians-become-allies?fbclid=IwAR1_JmYABvB73x1mZI5dBdquOZZWNXXnjdqfOs5oCPwwRXqkODZvFZgZdoM)

10) The creation of beauty<sup>754</sup>

Kimmerer also shares her understandings of Indigenous horticultural/agricultural practices that she is familiar with and how these focus on modifying the plants to the land rather than modifying the land itself.<sup>755</sup> She offers some guidelines for the Honourable Harvest, as a sustainable method of food and medicine collection:

- 1) Know the ways of the ones who take care of you so that you may take care of them.
- 2) Know whose land you are on and who the peoples of the land are. Talk to them, work with them and learn.
- 3) Introduce yourself. Be accountable as they are the ones asking for life.
- 4) Ask for permission before taking. Abide by the answer.
- 5) Never take the first, never take the last.
- 6) Take only what you need.
- 7) Take only that which is given.
- 8) Never take more than half. Leave some for others.
- 9) Harvest in a way that minimizes harm
- 10) Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken.
- 11) Share.
- 12) Give thanks for what you receive/have been given.
- 13) Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken.
- 14) Sustain the ones who sustain you and the Earth will last forever.<sup>756</sup>

Kimmerer posits that settlers have a rootless past. Thus, we live as though we are grabbing up a free for all exploitation and should it run out, or if we should happen to destroy the ecosystem, we can just up and go.<sup>757</sup> She suggests that instead, settlers need to keep both feet on the shore. But how do settlers make this land our home? More urgently, should we? And what does that look like? In her book, *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi*, Siksikaitstapi Scholar Betty Bastien states that knowing who you are is knowing your relatives—knowing your relatives is knowing one's place in the universe.<sup>758</sup> A human being (a body) can only exist in relation to their relatives. Existence is more than relational.

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<sup>754</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 123

<sup>755</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 260-64

<sup>756</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 183

<sup>757</sup> Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 183-84

<sup>758</sup> Betty Bastien, *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi*, ed. Jürgen W. Kremer, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 120

These seeds of transformative change making are gifts, offered for no other reason than to live on the planet with other beings in a good way. For this research project the Life Writings offered by the four Collaborators are gifts. Shared moments of their lives given from the heart. Each Collaborator went to a phenomenological place of embodied experience and deep memory to gather, write and contribute to something a bit cyphered, jagged and unfamiliar. They are not specialists in Settler colonial Studies. They are not wealthy elites or well-known public figures. They are not fragile, blameless or redeemed. They are ordinary folk, from ordinary walks of life. And they do ordinary things each and every day, some of which serves to Actively Witness.

### Closing Mentions

In Chapter 1, at the beginning of this dissertation I stated, “*I am not hoping for a revolution with my work. I simply hope to tease out something which can act as a kind of humble axis mundi to the next scholar who comes along after me.*” That is because the revolution has long been underway. And it is not a white person’s revolution. It is not the settler colonizer’s revolution. It is far deeper and far more powerful than that. It is Indigenous led and decolonial. It is, in fact, not-colonial. It is intergenerational, creative, ecological, symbiotic, and filled with deep care and a deeper love. And it is happening. Right now. What is this love I keep mentioning? I’m not sure. I think many feel it and know it. Yet, I don’t really think it is something that can (or should) be articulated. But I do know that this kind of love is probably not what we think it is. It’s something that’s already known, embodied in our corporeality and beingness. It just needs to find expression. As Science-Fiction Author Ursula le Guin states, “Love doesn’t just sit there...it has to be made...remade all the time, made new.”<sup>759</sup> Love must be reimagined, recreated, and reshaped. Love needs to regenerate the real, the messy and the everyday. We must learn to love softly when content, when all is calm and balanced. To love openly when prospering or in the midst of success. Love in tender abundance when filled with bliss and joy. But love even more and even deeper when things grow dim. Love in the shadows of the abyss. Love when you are down and can’t get back up. Love when you’re hurt and broken. Love furiously in the middle of the struggle, the fight, and the battle. Love in your flesh, blood and bones. Love deep, love gorgeous and love free.

*In the world we want—everyone fits.*<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> Ursula le Guin, *The Lathe of Heaven* (Avon Books, 1971):198

<sup>760</sup> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, (Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberations Mexico, (January 1996).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### **Collaborator 1: Active Witnessing as Community Care**

I do not personally know Collaborator 1 (C1). He is an older male, in a long term marriage partnership with his wife. He expresses his identity as a British immigrant/settler.

**C1:** My wife and I weren't sure about being interviewed, but we talked about your project and remembered our experiences living in communities with First Nations people. Both of us are true 'settlers' having come over from Britain as children with our parents.

We moved to Bella Bella (Waglisla) in 1974 for me to work as a general practitioner doctor. We had both lived in cities most of our lives, and our contact with Indigenous people was limited. I remember my Dad worked as a volunteer helping Indigenous prison inmates manage when they were released. In particular we all got to know S, a pleasant man from one of the northern Manitoba reserves, who had spent most of his adult life (and adolescence) in jail. Dad would help him with problems (housing, money, job searching, further legal difficulties, etc.) and S would come over to our house every Sunday afternoon to join us in whatever we were doing and have supper.

I had very few ideas about what 'Indians' were like and was only vaguely aware of the fact that many of them ended up in jail, and had trouble holding a job. I learned a little about S and the multiple rather minor crimes that had landed him jail (alcohol often seemed to be a contributing factor). He didn't really have much connection with his home reserve having been in trouble at an early age. However, we all liked him. He could have fun once he relaxed with us, and I remember once he met me by chance on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg and invited me to have a coffee with him. I felt kind of proud to be treated as an adult. I learned later from my Dad that he eventually moved from Winnipeg, and got into further difficulties in spite of my Dad's efforts. However, he would call Dad on the phone (collect!) from wherever he was and let my Dad know how he was doing. He told my Dad that in jail they all knew there were us Indians and the white guys, and

you didn't mix with the whites or trust them. He said that since meeting my Dad he knew that was not true.

Well, my Dad also worked running an upholstery shop (he was an upholsterer, by trade) set up by the province to help indigenous 'ex cons' learn work skill. My Dad really enjoyed the 'kids' (probably young adults) that he worked with and he would describe all sorts of things that went on. (There was a nailing gun in the shop, and of course all the guys wanted to shoot the nailing gun. So my Dad would introduce new workers in the class and tell them about the dangers of shooting the gun. However, the newcomers were allowed to shoot the gun as much as they wished for 10 minutes while everyone watched. After that if they misused the gun, they were suspended, and maybe fired if it were a repeat offence. He never had any of them misusing the gun!) . I gather there were lots of jokes and fun in the shop and none of them wanted to be 'fired'.

My wife, M, and I met at an Indian Residential School in Winnipeg. The school was sponsoring a conference for grade 12 students in Winnipeg to discuss issues affecting Indigenous people in the city. The hosts were a group of Indigenous students from the school. Next year in 1st year university I ran into one of the guys from the residential school and we got talking. I remember him saying how he had witnessed a ceremony on his reserve in which young men underwent an initiation involving having sharp pieces of wood inserted into their chest and then being hung by these pieces of wood for hours. I was aghast and somewhat self-righteously said that I thought that the initiation was barbaric and had no place in modern society. I thought that such practices had no value for people who were no longer going to be hunters and warriors. Unfortunately, my response cut him off and I never did learn what he thought about it.

M, for her part had a favourite uncle, B, who was a United Church minister in Sandy Lake Ontario. We visited him together one Christmas, and this was my first experience on a reserve. I felt quite uncomfortable engaging with any of the Indigenous people – partly because few spoke English and also because we were outsiders. However, we learned a bit from M's uncle about native spirituality and some of the difficulties native people faced particularly on going into the city. He had obviously learned a patience and acceptance of a very different lifestyle. He continued to keep in contact with the Sandy Lake people even after he moved to Thunder Bay. He told us the story of one

of the elders calling him on the phone and asking him to find K, and just to let him know that he had called. Uncle B did this after some difficulty locating K, who was on the streets and dealing with alcohol. A week later the elder phoned Uncle B again to say he would be in Thunder Bay and to let K know that it was time to come back home. K remained non-committal, but a few days later when the elder arrived in town, they went together to get K and he had all his belongings together and was ready to go. It was an example of the oblique way that Indigenous people sometimes approached problems in contrast to our own rather blunt and direct approach to problems.

So going back to the beginning, I guess I would have to say I did in fact have some interaction with Indigenous people before moving to Bella Bella. We came with at least some positive attitudes. Bella Bella is a reserve located on an island on the central coast forming part of the inside passage. My job was to be one of two doctors serving the Bella Bella as well as Oweekeno and Klemtu (and Namu in the summer). I felt completely out of my comfort zone in knowing how to work with Indigenous patients and understanding what was going on. Fortunately the people of Bella Bella were very gracious in putting up with our faux pas and made us very welcome, and included in the village's activities (potlatches, memorials, funerals etc.). We learned about their families and how important family connections were. If there was conflict in the village, family came first. If there was someone in need family would take on the responsibility. Houses were often crowded with extended family, but there was always room for someone else. If someone had money it was expected that this would be shared with family. There was tremendous strength in these relationships, though to us it sometimes appeared to be dysfunctional. Abuse within a family was often not acknowledged, and family would often protect the abuser. (On reflection this is not so different in our own culture sometimes).

Of course we saw people who had difficulties with alcohol and saw some of the destructive consequences of that – violence, death, illness, poverty, broken homes, and children without functioning parents. We met people who were lacking confidence, angry, or depressed. There was sexual abuse and other dysfunctional behavior. I was largely unaware at the time of some of the reasons for these dysfunctional behaviours. I had not really heard of the abuses in residential schools, or the destructive effects that

many children experienced in being forced to attend residential schools. These children never learned good parenting skills from their own parents because they were away from home. It was also quite apparent to us that alcohol was a huge factor in the disintegration of life on the reserve. We did not understand why alcohol was such a scourge and attributed it to a particular susceptibility to alcohol addiction.

I can remember a young man telling me when I asked why he drank, saying that it was the only time he felt good. It was often the children who suffered most from parents drinking. I have since had the opportunity to talk to women about their own history of abuse and their determination that their own children would not experience this. I have met many indigenous people who do not drink alcohol and who provide good homes for their children. I recently was talking with a woman I have known for 30 years, and who worked in the Bella Coola hospital while I was there. She herself had a history of sexual abuse and alcohol abuse. Her children had some of the same difficulties as she did when young. Now her life centers around bringing up and housing her many grandchildren and I see some hope for the cycle of abuse breaking. I am impressed that this rather ordinary Indigenous woman has tremendous courage and strength.

M started up an informal girls group with girls around 10 to 12 years old. They would meet in our house and do crafts and talk. Because of the pervasiveness of alcohol abuse we did not drink in Bella Bella, but we were given a bottle of wine for Christmas by friends. It sat in our cupboard. One day one of the girls saw the bottle, and when she returned home she told her mom that the doctor was drunk. This got back to us and the realization was that in this girl's mind, if one drank alcohol at all, one became drunk. There was no in between.

We were lucky to have met up with an exceptional family in Bella Bella. (M provided some physiotherapy for the mother in the family). This family were successful fishermen with their own well maintained boats, and a beautiful home overlooking the water. They made us welcome, and often invited us out on the boat for clam digging or touring around. The father was obviously an exceptionally intelligent man who knew his family history and much of the cultural heritage. As we got to know them better we did hear stories about the pros and cons of residential schools and some of the interactions they had with white people. He was well respected by other fishermen, Native and non-

native alike, and very self-sufficient, and I think proud of who he was. Whenever I find myself thinking negative generalizations regarding Indigenous peoples I think of this family. It was apparent that there were many strong families in the town who were hard workers, and dependable, and contributed to the community. The dysfunction I have spent several paragraphs describing, was far from universal. Both Moira and I had occasion to visit patients in their homes, and more often than not these were cozy well-kept homes that may have housed the extended family. Many grandparents held things together for their grandchildren. I realized that many of these same grandparents had problems with alcohol when they were younger, and that there were actually a large number of individuals who as they approached forty managed to turn their lives around and maintain sobriety. This was a lesson to me when I felt like I was wasting my time looking after some of the town's incorrigible drinkers.

I think the essence of my approach to working with indigenous people has been to respect the person. I didn't always understand why people did what they did or reacted as they did, but the key to being an effective doctor was maintaining respect for the individual. I was practicing cross cultural medicine, and many times the patient's interpretation of symptoms, and what was happening to them was very different from my interpretation as a Western Medical practitioner. I had to learn to acknowledge alternate viewpoints and simply offer what I could. I have to admit that I came to some of this wisdom only after many missteps. *The community did a good job of training me!*

Over the years in both Bella Bella and Bella Coola I have been able to get to know many of the Indigenous people in the community. There would be occasions to sit together and talk, trade fruit for fish, share in special times of potlatches, memorials, and of course basketball. I remember walking in downtown Vancouver and meeting a Nuxhalk man I knew and greeting him – the only familiar face in the crowds on the street. He too seemed happy to see me and we spent some time talking about what he was doing in the city and how it was going. It struck me that we had more in common than I had with all those other people on the street. We could talk about people we knew, the fish, what was going on in Bella Coola and so on. Later I reflected that this felt normal, though I was quite aware that we were probably an oddity – a white man and a Native man on a downtown Vancouver Street greeting each other as friends.

I am very grateful for the chance we have had to live and work close to Indigenous communities, and to learn about ourselves, and these communities at the same time. I believe that our opportunity to know our Indigenous neighbours has allowed us to become appreciative and respectful of the Indigenous culture. Some years ago we were very honoured to be invited to a feast by an elder's council to recognize and thank us for the work we did over the years in Bella Coola. Both M and I were given Nuxhalk names.

## Appendix B

### **Collaborator 2: Active Witnessing as Community Engagement**

I do not know C2 personally. She is an older settler colonial female. She is outspoken, unafraid and willing to say what many will not.

**C2:** To be honest, your project puzzles me; probably something to do with jargon required of you but not making sense to someone outside ‘the loop’. The importance of ‘accessibility’ of language keeps hitting me.

I’ll just blather on until I stop and let you decide what is of value and what you can just skip. It’s actually a subject I’m finding increasingly interesting as I get older. I guess the sensible place to start is with some of my history – a way of putting things into context. If there’s something you would like to explore further, we can talk more on the phone. I was born in Prince Rupert in 1943 to Caucasian parents. Mom was born in Saskatchewan; Dad in what was then Port Simpson, now called Lax Qualams (my spelling is probably iffy!). There was a hospital there in those days; Dad’s parents lived on the reserve. It’s only in the last 10 years that I’ve come to realize that his early history probably coloured the way I see the world.

When I was about to enter grade three, we moved to Masset. My new school had one classroom with the first three grades. Most of my classmates had at least some Haida blood though everyone lived in ‘New’ Masset – the reserve Haida were still away in residential school. It wasn’t until grade four that they came home again, apparently the first to do so. (I never have understood how that ‘returning’ happened for different Nations over such a long period of time.) It was 1952.

In grade ten, I went to Gibsons for my last three years of school. My only contact with First Nations during that time was when I went home for the summer, and then for a year following school graduation when I worked at a store in Masset, aging until I could enter nursing at St. Paul’s in Vancouver. A year after graduating (nursing) I went to Australia to do midwifery prior to going to Papua New Guinea (PNG) - then a territory administered by Australia for the United Nations. That was where I first became aware of having a different approach to Indigenous people from some I saw modelled by others. That sometimes created conflict.

In 1979, Mom and I moved to Bella Coola. I worked in the local hospital for eight years before moving to Williams Lake. I had been having concerns about safety here, but after working there for two years, I realized the issues were not confined to Bella Coola but were part of the culture of the day. By that time, I had met and married G. I retired from nursing, and started casting about for some other work (as distinct from ‘a job’) which had meaning. When G retired, we moved back to the valley. So here we are, 29 years later. I can’t adequately express how much my worldview has been coloured by the seven years in Masset (plus the one year post-grad).

I was a kid. I didn’t understand about the politics around reserves, or anything about residential schools. I just had friends. But I grew to understand what it’s like to feel like the ‘other guy’ has it better. Our school was integrated, yes, but the ‘white’ kids were in the minority though at time the ‘non-status’ (in today’s jargon) kids were ‘disadvantaged’ too. The example that still sticks out is of ‘paint boxes’ (water colours). The reserve kids got their supplies from the Indian Agent and their paint boxes were high quality. Those whose parents had to buy supplies at the local stores purchased water colours which were decidedly watery! It was painful for a child.

But there were occasions when our colour didn’t stand in the way of our common feelings. Three times in those seven school years, we got teachers ‘fresh off the boat’ from England. There were occasional other ethnicities but none created the same level of dislike (there’s probably a stronger word I can’t think of at the moment) as the Brits. They reeked with an attitude of coming to ‘impart some culture to the colonies’ – add the sneer and the accent – and we hated them. (When one of the grade seven boys decided to have a fist fight with the principal (British), we weren’t disappointed that the student was the better fighter.) Years later I spent some time in England and started to understand the connection between ‘insula’ (I took Latin in high school) and insular/island.

Some years later – post New Guinea – I went back to the islands for a visit. I met my best friend’s mother on the street and we hugged. I suggested coming to visit while I was in town. G’s dad was at home when I got there. His first statement to me indicated that his wife had been surprised at my greeting. “Whites don’t talk to Indians anymore.” (Did I mention she was Haida; he was white?) I gather that an Anglican minister, living

on reserve, had his mother living with him. She was British, and her attitude had poisoned relationships between the communities.

One more story about Haida Gwaii. Just after G and I married, we vacationed on the islands. G had never seen tide-water before and it was great to watch someone discover what had been normal in my childhood. We explored some of the old homesteads I remembered. On one hike we met up with two Haida fellows cutting firewood near Tow Hill. We chatted. They had up-to-date info on the cabin we were looking for. On our way back, they were still there. G mentioned my growing up there and they wondered who I was. I mentioned Dad's name. "I remember DD," said one, "real hard worker." A pause, "Haven't seen him for a while." C2: "He died 22 years ago." Haida fellow, "Oh." It felt nice that we were remembered in a positive way. A similar feeling happened about 10 years later when Guujaaw (?sp) came here to speak at a town-hall meeting. I went over to say hi, and added that I thought it had been about 35 years since we'd seen each other and that we'd both had a name change in the interim. His response was warm, and he added that his family had recently been wondering about ours.

Neither of those interactions involved people who had been close friends. We were simply members of the same community that some might view as being two communities. I think the 'take-away' for me is that one doesn't have to be 'somebody'; we just need to treat each other with respect while we get on with our lives.

I don't remember much about indigenous people from my training days. 'Cultural awareness' wasn't 'in' yet. Instead, the phrase *All behaviour is meaningful* covered the concept that if someone wasn't acting 'normally', we should look for a reason. The best example I can think of happened here. I went into an elder's room one night and found his bed turned end for end. C2: "What's up?" Patient: "Head's turned wrong way." C2 "Let's move the bed slightly so your call-bell will reach." Apparently, some among the Nuxalk believe one should sleep with one's head pointing to the sunrise. Who knew? (It did mean, in later years when I was coroner, bodies were oriented that way in the morgue, just in case it mattered to someone.)

I do remember a patient just after I graduated. She was a young indigenous woman who had descended from the first floor window of a skid road room without the

benefit of stairs or elevator, fracturing her leg. A pin through her knee held the leg in traction. One evening a doctor, who had come in to remove the pin, came back out of her room and ordered pain medication because she was crying. I told him that the tears were because some of her roommates were talking about her. He made the mistake of saying, “Well, she’s just a slut!” Bad answer.

In 1979, Mom and I moved to the Bella Coola valley; I started working at the Bella Coola General Hospital (BCGH) a month later. The fifteen bed hospital did everything and there were times I was grateful for my third-world experience. On most shifts, the registered nurse (RN) covered that ‘everything’ with the assistance of one nurse aide – trained on the job with varying degrees of experience. A doctor was on-call. The nurse aides and most of the support staff (laundry, housekeeping, etc.) were Nuxalk. The professional staff and administration were not. At that point the hospital was run by the United Church. Over the next 39 years, staff capacity for surgery and maternity (as well as many acute services) has diminished, and health services are now under the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH). Ironically, there are now more staff (with more training), but surgery and maternity are no longer available. The focus is on emergency, short term acute care and long term care.

This next story is one that centers giving and gifting...I’m going to relate this ‘backwards’, as though you were the principal experiencing it. At one of the Augsburg Ladies’ Aid auctions, Lisa’s name was drawn as the winner of the group’s quilt raffle. I phoned her while the auction continued, told her the good news then added, “I’ve got a really strange request. Will you give the quilt back? I’ll call you when I get home to explain.” She hesitated only briefly, then said, “Of course.” She was curious by the time I phoned back and I explained. The quilt had been made by Mary. Shortly after Mary gave it to the club, she landed in hospital with a brain tumour. She and Tom asked me to make a quilt for the one grandchild, Jane who had yet to get one from Grandma. Quilts are probably something like button blankets – far more than decorated cloth – and I said, “Wouldn’t it be perfect if Jane won your quilt?” We agreed that if she didn’t and the winner was ‘someone I could talk to’, I would make a quilt for the winner to replace the original. The tickets sold out – everyone who knew bought them in Jane’s name. Because Lisa received with hands open, rather than clutching her win, she had input into

the design of her own quilt. I worked against time to finish the top then took it to Mary to see. She died two days later. When the quilt was fully finished, Tom and I took it to Lisa. Everybody ‘won’. But it took someone with a different understanding of ‘give’ to make that happen.

So, back to ‘reconcile’. It’s easy enough to list what we think it isn’t. Perhaps the problem is that concepts which are ‘spiritual’ don’t go into language easily. I went to the dictionary. *Reconcile – to restore to friendship or favour after estrangement*. How can something be ‘restored’ when it has never been? Friendship, to me, is something between equals. I searched further for something to explain what I think of as reconciliation. Two thoughts showed up. One was a phrase I heard years ago on a different matter: “**communicating at a level of pain**”. The other was a word in *Alhquh Ti Sputc*: “**interconnected**”. (The book showed up while I was wrestling with this!) Unlike ‘restored’, ‘interconnected’ allows room to connect what might not have been connected in the past – to ‘reach out’, to ‘build bridges’, and a host of other metaphors. To me, that seems more positive than official apologies, numbers bracketed by a dollar sign and a decimal point, and a continuing attitude of “you don’t count; this is in the national interest.” The more positive approach risks stepping on each other’s toes, trying to understand a different point of view, trying to identify common ground and ways to work for the good of all, including the land that sustains us.

For me, the next question was, “Where does reconciliation start?” As I peeled away the layers, this is what I came up with – the view from where I’m sitting. I think the starting place is within each of us. There have been times where my choices have pulled me away from the person I want to be. Reconciliation meant (means) deciding what steps I need(ed) to take to ‘connect’ within. Funny how we never seem to ‘get it together’ permanently! There have also been times when choices made by others, or just circumstances, have ‘torn me apart’ (I once described it as ‘the kind of pain that doesn’t go into words; it just feels like it will rip you open.’) There seems to be a need for others to support us as we choose how we deal with those ‘pain moments’ – not to tell us what to do, so much as to be a sounding board, or someone to help us regain our balance. That person might also be the one who steers us away from the slippery slope of retaliation, where the ‘victim’ becomes a victimizer. I’ve noticed too that healing happens in stages

– I remember a ten-year gap before leftover feelings started surfacing and needed to be addressed. I'm glad those occasions are less frequent but, like those teachers in Masset, they have the potential to sharpen understanding and, sometimes, help us bring healing to others. This is a significant statement in terms of how our experiences can shape our perceptions about both others and ourselves in relation to others.

I guess that leads into the subject of residential schools. We can probably agree: even if the schools were beautiful, comfortable, with caring staff and good meals, kidnapping a raft of kids to clone them into replicas of someone's bright idea is just plain [IGNORANCE]! And that doesn't begin to address the various levels of violence involved. I wonder how those involved felt after the 'official apology' and cheques were done. I would have felt empty. Yeah, those were nice, but they're almost a slap in the face if attitudes of government haven't changed. One of my friends lost her husband after he drank his cheque. My comment to her was, "I can't help but feel that the schools won." She agreed. The TRC provided a safe place for some to speak their truth and have it validated. For those who were at a point where they felt able to participate, it was probably one of the more positive events to have happened. But people don't heal at the same rate. Some years from now, will there be those who wish they had taken part, but just couldn't at the time? And for those who did take part, how do they feel now? At peace? Or somehow still empty? Where do they go from here?

You may want to don some steel-toed boots for this next bit. The way I see reconciliation is that the steps thus far help the person 'within'. That's good. But the process, growing within, needs to spread outside the individual in order for the community to heal – and that takes the 'communicating at the level of pain' I mentioned. That is really hard work, but for deep healing to happen, there is no shortcut. It's a big ask from people who have had the experiences many have had. It may be that the survivors in some cases have to leave the next level of healing for the next generations, but somewhere along the line it will need to happen. Being aware that there might be a 'next step' is more important than having it imposed by someone's artificial time-line.

And how does reconciliation look on a day-to-day basis? I think it has much to do with communication. Unfortunately, there is less of that between our communities than there used to be – having lost fishing and logging, we don't work together as much

as we used to – even the hospital staff seems to be more monochromatic. I found that it was at work that I picked up on ideas that I hadn't thought of before. I've heard of deep friendships that occurred between other workers during their day-to-day contact. Sometimes, it is just a brief contact that helps the connectedness grow. I think that's enough about reconciliation

The EWC has been a steep learning curve. One big lesson has been how uncomfortable it can be to be the 'outsider'. There have been times when I've been part of groups who wanted to include natives. Our CAC was one; our team leader tried for Indigenous representation frequently, but good people would come for one, maybe two, meetings and not come back. And that was in a well-run group. I've resisted the urge to rescue e.g. the secretarial role, and sat by while others... tried to fill it. I've resisted the defensiveness when an elder starts a tirade about the unfairness of the system. When I'm at my best, I shut up and listen.

On another occasion, several members of the Band Council attended a meeting. The topic was project proposals. It was a rousing discussion. I said little. Then the time seemed right for an observation. There had been a non-Nuxalk woman who had done many useful proposals, but I'd noticed she was always the facilitator for her own projects. So I said, "I've noticed J gets a lot of funding for some very good projects. But there's one thing that seems like a flaw. There's never an aspect of mentoring someone from the Nuxalk community to take over the program." There was a sense of relief in the resulting reaction – I had said what others were thinking.

At another group session, EWC was invited by the Band Council to a meeting with VCH representatives. At the beginning of the meeting, we were asked to introduce ourselves by name and role in the community. When it got to me, I knew my name, but didn't know what to say afterwards. The elder next to me said, "You're an elder." I settled for saying, 'an elder-by-invitation'. The first question the band had for VCH was, "When can we get maternity back?" We can't. But after the meeting, I went up to PD (our medical health officer I think is the title), to thank her for her approach – safety. Then I added something I'd only learned recently, "It's important for the Nuxalk to be born on Nuxalk territory." You could see the light bulb come on. "Is that why it's

always the first question we get?” There is still no solution on that subject. Mom’s still have to leave town for their last month of pregnancy and delivery.

The next section is relevant in terms of the meanings and forms of cultural appropriation and how art can speak things that words cannot. This is probably one of my favourite topics and I really appreciate C2’s contribution in terms of how she integrates her own experiences and engagement with Indigenous peoples, lands, cultures and community. And how this differs from appropriation.

The last topic I’d like to touch on is Art. I’m a quilter. I’ve done two wall hangings that touch on Nuxalk culture. I guess the subject bumps into aspects of ‘cultural appropriation’. Or does it? The first hanging came about while driving into town one day. We’d just had a new great-granddaughter. As I turned off the highway, I saw a small bonfire burning where the old United Church had been torn down. My mind immediately posed the question, “What is the Nuxalk story of resurrection?” I’ve noticed that each culture has its set of stories and, if one scratches their surface, they are the same stories in different clothing e.g. creation and flood stories. But what about resurrection? I asked around and got blank looks. Then it struck me: the salmon. Gift from a creator (by whatever name), given in abundance, gives life by dying. Perhaps I could do a wall hanging for the new church. That got shot down by the minister of the day: “The elders wouldn’t like that.” Well, sometimes ‘no’ means ‘never’; sometimes it means ‘not right now’. So I stored the idea away on a shelf in my brain.

Then D died. On Easter Sunday. [He was] Nuxalk. In his 40’s. The whole town closed for his funeral. Some days later, while I was visiting his Mom, I remembered my thought of the wall hanging and told her about it. She said, “Yes, you do it.” I asked if there was someone from the Nuxalk community who might help and she recommended D’s best friend. We presented it to the new church building. This hanging has remained untitled but is the one I think of as ‘Resurrection’. The ‘scales’ on the salmon are hollow. I’m having difficulty getting it placed in the document!

## Resurrection



**Figure 1**

The second hanging had a more convoluted history. I had been approached by a local business to do a wall hanging (I'm omitting identifiers). They weren't keen on my first idea. I rejected their next idea as violating copyright, and cast about for something that would work. The trail led to a quilting group and a couple who happened to be there one day. I asked if there was some kind of ceremony welcoming the salmon or ooligan back; the husband replied that the chiefs welcome the salmon back each year. "Why couldn't we do a hanging together?" They were enthusiastic. I wrote the proposal for the business and delivered it in person. The staffer read it and said, "They won't go for this, you know. It's too Indian."

A few days later, her boss phoned to explain why ‘too Indian’ was a problem and invited me to meet with them the following morning. I phoned the couple I’d discussed the idea with (he being a carver), said what had happened and invited them to the meeting. (As far as I’m concerned, once we had started to develop the idea, it belonged to us, not to me.) The staff were uncomfortable. I gave them an ‘out’ by suggesting a different local artist whose work would be appreciated. After we left the meeting, I asked the carver for his ‘take’. He replied, “Well, if they think something is ‘too Indian’, they have a problem.” “Yes. But I still feel we’re supposed to do this.” He agreed. It took us four years – time we wouldn’t have had if we’d accepted the commission. We just didn’t know where the finished hanging was supposed to go. Eventually, I wrote to a Haida artist I went to school with to get his advice. He phoned back. Did we want to sell it? I didn’t know – money’s always nice, but . . . He suggested, “Just leave it alone. It will tell you at the right time.”

Fast forward to two months ago. A local woman phoned to ask if I carried a particular product. During our conversation, I mentioned the wall hanging. The following morning, she and her husband came for the product she’d wanted. I asked if they wanted to see the hanging. As we viewed and discussed it, the husband reached out, stroked the fabric, and said, “This is my *Smyusta*, my story.” The hanging had spoken.

During the creation of both hangings, especially the second one, I was almost paranoid about possibly stepping on someone’s toes. Perhaps that’s why the second one took so long. For instance, the carver identified the totemic animals as eagle, raven, bear and seal. “And orca? Not in the river.” An elder countered, “Orca lives here.” I had to think about it for a while – how could orca be here without being here? And how would that look? I returned to the carver, “Would the salmon bring the memory of escaping the orca into the river? i.e. would he enter the river as a memory?” From the look on his face, I think I ‘got it’. Orca came in a second layer of organza, a shadow in the water. Here but not here.

That kind of question happened often enough that I asked, “What is more important in your culture – nature or the creatures in it?” Blank look. How to explain? “When a white guy takes a picture of a moose, it fills the frame, with perhaps a bit of brush so you know it isn’t in the Sahara. But when I put an animal in, it hides. Some people never see

it. For instance, most people miss the bear in this hanging. The Nuxalk spot it right away. Am I doing something by instinct that I don't realize?" He understood. "Each time we do the welcoming ceremony, the chiefs say to us, 'The land is sacred'" That became the title of the hanging. By the way, the chiefs don't welcome the salmon back. They witness twins welcoming the salmon back. There is a significant link between salmon and twins, but the story relating it, shared with me by an elder, was convoluted enough that it went over my head!

### The Land is Sacred



Figure 2

The theme that seems to run through each of these many topics is 'communication'. My view of 'indigenous' has never come from formal education in the topic; it seems to be more by a process of osmosis. That takes time, contact, and experiences (some good, some not-so-much). I don't think various communities (of whatever culture) can understand and appreciate each other's cultures without the 'reaching out' to allow those opportunities to happen.

That brings me to your project. Reading your proposal brought a sense of *déjà vu*. I think you might be caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, academia has its jargon that you now understand, and expects that you'll use those terms. On the other hand, (if I've interpreted your outline anywhere near accurately), you want the participation of Joe Q. Public, some of whom (like me) struggle to understand what you're talking about! I don't think that means 'dumbing down'. It's more a matter of using conversational English. Your research sounds like something which could be very valuable. Would it be possible to include a translation of your proposal as a necessary angle?

I've been thinking about this aspect a lot, during a hiatus from writing this. Sometimes a person feels 'hurt' because they haven't had a chance to contribute to something. That might be because no-one thought of them. Or because someone thought they 'wouldn't be interested'. Or maybe because someone thought they wouldn't have anything of value to say. Or because there wasn't a method of contact. Or . . . There is another method of preventing contact: language. I think the bureaucratic term is 'accessibility'. You mention "looking for the smaller (even unexpected) spaces of reconciliation". I don't think you'll find much variety among your current colleagues; you are trying to find to capture greater breadth by connecting with others. That means finding the language they (we) speak. I think that could also be an important point to make in your thesis.

A humorous example: Many years ago an elderly Ulkatcho gentleman, for whom English was a second language, was admitted to our hospital. I needed to get a urine specimen. I decided to skip the 'mid-stream' aspect of the request, went into his room with a container and said loudly (he was deaf), "Joe, piss in this." He looked startled, threw his head back, laughed loudly, and headed for the bathroom. I went out into the hall where a medical student was standing red-faced. I simply said to him, "You have to speak a language people understand." I think accessibility is vital for the credibility of your thesis and the sample of people contributing to it.

## Appendix C

### Collaborator 3: Active Witnessing as Embodiment

Co-researcher 3 (C3) is my close relative. She is my daughter. For this reason, I will do a bit of backgrounding to further elucidate on the concept of Active Witnessing as intergenerational. She identifies as having Indigenous (Mohawk), Scandinavian and Irish ancestry. C3 was not born into and does not live in any Indigenous community. Her Mohawk father was adopted during the 60s scoop and chose not to re-establish his own connections to the Six Nations of the Grand River. Later in life, he did reunite with his father, but eventually lost touch. Significantly, C3's non-indigenous mother (myself) grew up on a First Nation reserve. Her family leased the land from close family friends. This impacted the way in which C3 was raised and her perspective on Indigenous peoples and her own Indigenous identity, which she is still in the process of resurging in her own way.

**C3:** Basically, I identify as a Visual Artist, an Outsider Writer,<sup>761</sup> and as a student with disability. I do struggle to make sense of written words, which makes navigating average activities difficult. The settler world is highly reliant on literacy. There are a lot of people who have a low opinion of those who are either unable to be literate or are prevented from becoming literate. There's a lot of discrimination, harassment, shame and daily struggle in finding ways to adapt and get around filling out forms or reading ingredients in grocery stores or textbooks. One of the stereotypes I get is people assuming my level of understanding and comprehension equals my ability to read and write. It doesn't. too many times I encounter situations in where I'm expected to be able to perform at the capacity of a person who does not have Dyslexia. It's not a visible disability so it's often brushed aside, ignored and even denied.

I think of Dyslexia as a struggle and a gift. I think my brain functions in ways that differ from mainstream views of how a brain should work. I know I'm gifted spatially and I think my ability to do art has developed because that's my main way of

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<sup>761</sup> Outsider Writing is creative writing that is self-taught and produced without formal training.

communicating. Ever since I was a little kid I drew pictures and painted my work rather than reading or writing it. So I think Dyslexia helped my drawing, painting and other creative abilities in a deeper more meaningful way. I always put so much of myself into art as a way of sharing and expressing different thoughts, feeling and emotions.



After we learned our grandfather, my dad's dad, was Mohawk, my sisters once said this to me, "we have a white mother, who grew up on a reserve and an Indigenous father who fled his Indigenous identity." My father was put into an orphanage as part of the sixty scoop. He was only 4 years old and was severely abused in that orphanage. His father had survived residential school. When I was 12 years old my sisters and I were taken by the ministry of child protection services. Every child in that foster home was also Indigenous or a person of colour. Many of them including myself had disabilities. That's when I knew that what happened to my father and to my grandfather was still

happening to my generation. The lived experience of being in care was the most vulnerable, isolating, and damaging experience of my young life. It was also the first time I was sexually assaulted. By a young man who would prey on the girls in that home. Actually luring them into the woods. This experience left scars on the emerging woman I was becoming<sup>762</sup>.

When I finally escaped the foster home and reunited with you, my mother, we had to do a lot of healing work. You were an integral part of my recovery with your deeper understandings of the connection and between the land water, those stories of catching frogs. Bathing in the ocean tides and saving snakes from a group of cruel kids at school. My mother has guided my path that has led to the grounding of my identity as a mixed heritage person with disability, an artist and an Indigenous-woman. Though I still struggle every day, I now move through this path in life with these stories woven into the fabric of my being expressed by the way I love and the way I create art.

### ***Spherical Text as Life Writing***

So, to express story telling artistically I have been using a simple word cloud generator. While word cloud generators are used for visual emphasis, highlighting or promoting main themes. I put some of my journaling into one and really liked how it turned out and I especially liked the circular shape. It's aesthetic and removes idea of beginning and ending. I think this kind of appealed to me because the generator randomly scrambles words. They don't require grammar or complete sentences. All you have to do is copy and paste text, then click on 'apply'. I used this word cloud generator <https://www.wordclouds.com/> mainly because it is freely accessible and easy to use.

I used Comic Sans because it's a really readable font for Dyslexia. Even though a lot of people seem to dislike it. There are downloadable Dyslexia fonts available that are Excellent but I liked the look of this. At first I called this Word Balls. Now I'm calling it Spherical Text. But I might go back to Word Balls. I also edited repeating words for the first sphere. Within the sphere are small shared moments of memory. It's a scramble of words so you can't read it linearly. You have to kind of look around the sphere and allow

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<sup>762</sup> To better understand the effects of rape culture please see Appendix C.

the words to appear and be felt. The sphere is fluid amorphous and ambiguous. Just a cloud of text that emerges randomly. But the words themselves are not random. I think it offers an imaginative use of language that I feel can be a bit uncomfortable and frustrating, but that reflects my life as a Dyslexic and as a mixed urban Indigenous person.

I left all the repeats for second sphere. This one looked very different. The larger texts are visually prominent, almost physical. They kind of reveal the basic number of times a words was used. What I thought was interesting is that in between and riddled throughout there are the smaller words that are actually important but are also kind of hidden. They are necessary and underlie and hold up the moment.



Figure 3



### **Brief Commentary**

In my first draft of this dissertation I used my own commentary in describing C3's work. But I decided I would use her own words, as they definitely evoke much more meaning. Nonetheless, I do offer a commentary to this essay since this C3 is my close relative. For me, looking at this is visceral, felt and embodied. I do not have to know her story in any linear way to understand that it happened. In viewing her Life Writing we engage in Active Witnessing through holding this space as her truth. As a young Artist C3 felt the phenomenological apprehension of her Spherical Text actually "*spoke her story*" more than the act of writing grammatically correct tabulated text.

In viewing C3's work as Spherical Text I cannot really fully make sense of it, nor can I simply fill in what is missing or not linearly presented. Further, I cannot ascertain which words are more significant. Sometimes the words blend together and it is difficult to see them with any meaning. This leaves the viewer confused, uneasy, dissatisfied and unsettled. Which is great! To know each other means we need to remove our western Eurocentric linearity from our focus and control. To feel unbalanced, unsatisfied, awkward, uncomfortable, exasperated, troubled.

To wholly comprehend and empathize with the deeper meaning we have to spend some time looking and try bit harder to decipher the momentary shared experience we are presented with. And this further leads us to understand that the power of hegemonic western Eurocentric neoliberal capitalistic messages being declared via dominant languages can be undermined through shaking up the structure—and even removing it altogether—through the use of unconventional, alternative and creative imaginative action.

## Appendix D

### Collaborator 4: Active Witnessing as Every Day and Intergenerational

A Grandmother, is a mother, is a daughter. I end this section with C4, who is also my close relative. She is my Mor (mother). Because of this close relationship I do a bit of backgrounding for her as well, as a way of expressing the notion of intergenerationality. I end with my Mor to offer respect and to interact with her contribution in a way that can illustrate the deeper intergenerational facets of solidarity and decolonial practices.

#### A brief note of gratitude to Mormor (mother's mother)



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The above photograph (owned by Svend Erik Eriksen) Shows C4's Mor, Valborg as a child on the family farm in Denmark. Mormor was one of several children born into a Lutheran family in Denmark. As a child she wore handmade clothes and wooden shoes. As an adult she was resourceful and could make anything from just about nothing. Her name was Valborg which means 'fearless mountain' or 'a mountain that protects the valourous'. She had four children before getting married to Erik Hugo Eriksen (my

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<sup>763</sup> Photo owned by Svend Erik Eriksen, permission for use granted, 2017

maternal grandfather). In 1952, shortly after WW2 and Denmark's freedom from five years of Nazi occupation, they emigrated from Denmark to the Central West Coast of Canada, settling in a small cannery village called Namu. They subsequently converted to Catholicism and had two more children. Hugo was an ex-Merchant Marine covered in tattoos from around the world. I am told he suffered terribly from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after the war. Hugo died from an aortic aneurism about seven years after arriving in Canada. My mother was the one who found him, in his bed, saturated in blood. She was twelve years old.

Valborg moved all of her children to a new town [White Rock BC] and worked cleaning houses to support them. Seven years later C4 gave birth to me. She was young and unwed. In the 1960s that meant social services would generally take custody of the baby, especially if you were poor. Consequently, Valborg often took me in and looked after me for the first two years of my life. In 1968, she was killed in front of her fourteen year old son. I do not remember much about Valborg, just her hands, her cat-eye glasses and the rhythm of her voice. Nonetheless, I am grateful to Valborg and the love she shared with me as a small child. I think if were not for her, I might have had a very different life.

She emulated a way of living that emphasized deep respect for nature, for people, for her own rooted ancestry and for living on someone else's land. She came to understand that the land she had immigrated to was colonized and that Indigenous people were not being treated with equitable fairness. That behind Canada's benevolence was a settler colonial system of dominance and white privilege, privileges unattainable for an older immigrant single mother on social assistance suffering from depression and grief, and that this was a violent space. She understood all of these things without needing the words to describe them. And to resist and challenge these things, Valborg lived her everyday life according to her own values of reciprocity, paganism and embracing deep friendships with the most vulnerable.

Valborg was proud of her fierce and resourceful Viking/farming heritage. She gifted C4, with a sense of rich deep Norse culture she could root herself in and carry in her heart. And C4 passed this on to her children including myself. So while I can understand the western Eurocentric ontological logics of the world around me and the

categorical ways of thinking via academia, I am always looking at things from this rooted perspective. This allows me to embody the meaning of Norse culture, my ancestral teachings and the lands my ancestors come from. Academia informs me, but Norse oral histories spiritually guide me into a deeper embodied and interrelational experience of the world around me and within me. They inform my dreams.

And now that I am also a grandmother I feel a deeper connection both with C4 and with Valborg. A grandmother is a person. But grandmother is also a verb. Grandmothering is an act of love. Grandmothers hold a unique position. They embody the suffering, pain, grief as well as the enjoyment, abundance and beauty of their own parents and that of their children. They are, in many ways, an interstitial axis mundus, an in-between place of transition, translation and transformation. Their bodies are transforming from physical fertility towards a profound fertility of the mind and spirit. They have birthed their families into being and they continue a long succession of grandmothering. Of course, not all grandmothers are wise, or kind. They are people filled with not only insight and experience but also faults, mistakes and in some cases unfathomable pain. Some are gentle, some are fierce, some are neither and some are both.



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<sup>764</sup> Machenka and Mormor. Photo owned by Svend Erik Eriksen, permission for use granted, 2017

### **Intergenerational Memories As Active Witnessing**

**C4:** As I see it, I would consider myself an ally of the First Nations. I conscientiously decided to live the rest of my life in a place where the population consists of at least half First Nations and half settlers. This is my happy place [Bella Coola] reminding me of how I grew up after we emigrated from Lønstrup, Denmark to Namu BC Canada. Interestingly enough back then, Lønstrup was a tiny fishing village on the North Sea in the northern end of Denmark. Namu was also a tiny fishing village in the Central Coast of BC.

When we arrived we had no idea of what to expect. We couldn't speak the language [English] and things were quite different. This would be in 1952, probably spring. Our experience with the white kids was not good. In the 50's, everything was segregated and we didn't understand that. We were picked on, laughed at and had rocks and sticks thrown at us for being different. But the First Nations kids were not like that. They only wanted to play and it seems a lot of them also couldn't speak English, but we still managed to play and have a good time together. Even my mom didn't understand the intolerance there seemed to be concerning the First Nations. She quite enjoyed stopping and chatting with the ladies as she walked to the store. She thought they were very interesting people. The First Nations people were kind and tolerant with us, good natured and laughed with us. They helped us when we needed it and in return we helped them. To this day I feel closer to them than any of the other people I grew up with.

Once when I was maybe 8 or 9 years old (1955-1956), there was an event happening where some of the First Nations Elders were wearing regalia. I went up to one of the elders and he told me that when he was a young man there were so many fish in the river that you could scoop them in with your bare hands.... a full dugout canoe was sold for 25 cents.... I was amazed that they got so little but he was probably speaking of the early 1900's. Even then, though looking in the river to see the multitudes of spawning salmon, you thought there are so many! Not anymore.

I was the only white kid who invited First Nation kids to her Birthday parties... I wanted my friends A and C to come but they were shy and said they couldn't come because they had no money...so I said, I don't care about presents I just want you to come. They did come and somehow found enough money to buy barrettes for my hair.

When my younger sister was Maybe 3 or 4 her best friend was a sweet First Nations girl called B. B's parents lived on a float house and were so poor. I would go and visit them sometimes and lend B's dad my book on Greek and Roman mythology... he was an avid reader! When mom sewed dresses for my younger sister she would make dresses for B too, but she asked B's mom if that would be ok first.

This photo is of the First Nation section of Namu BC (photo by Svend Erik Eriksen)



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I also try to learn a little bit of Nuxalk, like *Yaw tis inacw*. Since living here [Bella Coola] I try to be part of the whole community. I cohosted with Nuhawhawta on the Nuxalk Radio station. We talked about the weather, the tides, and events around town, said an opening prayer, Nuhawhawta speaking Nuxalk and me translating and saying the odd word as I try to learn the language bit by bit, and that is what the radio station is promoting. *Stutwiniitscw*

As for residential schools, well up in Namu the First Nations kids were gone for parts of the year, and sometimes longer than that. I didn't know where they went, I was

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<sup>765</sup> Photo owned by Svend Erik Eriksen, permission for use granted, 2017

just a kid and all I knew was they were gone. But it's when they came back. They were different. They looked like the same person outside but it was their eyes. Something changed and it both puzzled and saddened me. And they never were the same. Some of the young girls, I mean they were teens, but they came back pregnant. I just didn't know anything about residential schools or what happened to Indigenous children and youth. It pains me. It pains my heart a lot.

When you were little about three or so [1969/1970 C4 would have been about 22-23 years old] I left you all in care with your dad and uncles and aunts (we all lived in the same house) while I went over to Vancouver Island with G, his pregnant wife, F, and their two children. Now G was going through something... getting his song and his spirit. He would erupt in song every so often and he stated he had no control... it needed to come out. His wife had arranged to go to the Big House on a reserve near Brentwood bay. Usually family comes along. She told me there would be a big ceremony with many singers and dancers from all over the place. She also told me that during this dance G and her brother would be "taken". We were greeted by many families and put up in the church manse for the duration of our stay. I suppose I stood out quite a lot as I am as white as can be, being of Danish heritage. But I was treated very well by all and followed around by groups of kids who wanted to know who I was. I explained that I was friends with G and F and here to help in any way I could. The night that the celebration (dance) was on was amazing, So many people were there drumming and singing. People would sing their song. All different... and in their regalia.

At some point a group of dancers came out with shakers and sticks wearing cedar outfits, moving around the floor in the big house till they came to where we were seated. They grabbed G and F's brother and lifted them over their heads as they danced around the floor again before disappearing out into an area curtained off from the rest of the room. The building was called the Big House and was where they held all the ceremonies. My job was to make sure that the elders who had come from other reserves to make the cedar outfits for G while he was confined were comfortable and to bring them tea and whatever they needed. Some of them only spoke their native language. But they were kind and sweet and showed me what they were doing. They sat in the Big House keeping warm by the wood fire in the centre of the room.

G and F's brother were confined to this room with a couple of "babysitters". This is what they called themselves. Nothing that had been used before could be worn or used or touched. It had to be brand-new; clothing, blankets, utensils, everything. They would stay in this room and treated like babies till they were ready to emerge. Every morning they ran up to a stream to wash. Lots of kids would join in drumming and chanting with cedar boughs tied around them. G was not allowed to speak. During this time his song and his spirit were fully revealed. G's spirit was a bear and he was a shaman. During his growth his family was expected to hold dinners for the community so I was busy helping with this.

I learned a lot during this time and gained even more respect for how community minded and caring the people I was staying with were. After about ten days and I did help babysit too as this was done 24/7, G and F's brother were finally ready to come out. During this time, they were brought up to be adults again (possibly in a way, reborn) and were introduced back with a huge celebration where once again people came from all over to join in. There were so many people there that night and watching G dance and sing his song was amazingly beautiful ... he had transformed in front of me and in his transformation he also changed me.

From the beginning, I knew the invitation was going to be a difficult journey. I gave my full time and energy to doing whatever was tasked of me including bringing Elders tea, helping Elders in making cedar outfits and sitting with G and his brother in-law, just whatever was needed. I always thought of this memory as a gift so I'm sharing it also in the spirit of gifting. G was my personal friend. He was the person who invited me to come live on the reserve, on Semihamoo land. I wanted to raise you on the reserve because of I wanted you to experience a relationship to Coast Salish peoples and lands like I did when I was little. I had so many good experiences and was friends with many of the families. I think being an immigrant and discriminated against made me see the difficulties Indigenous people have. We have a lot in common when I think about it, especially when I remember traditional Danish culture. I think being grounded in that helped me be a good ally<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>766</sup> Personal conversation with C4, August 21, 2018.



The above photo<sup>767</sup> is of me sitting beside my far (father) at home of the Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve, 1974. What really stands out for me is the rain forest, the land, the ocean, the animals and plants...the swamp and the river. Because you live with that too. Semiahmoo land, river, swamp and ocean. And of course the Semiahmoo kids and families. It was a most heart-breaking, wonderful and powerful way to grow up. This was my home. The longest I have ever lived anywhere. The place my dreams take me to and I can finally breathe. But it is not my homeland or territory. The land and waters of this land is Semiahmoo.

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