Our World to Come:

Decolonial Love as a Praxis of Dignity, Justice, and Resurgence

by Shantelle Andrea Moreno

BA, University of Victoria, 2009

BEd, University of Victoria, 2012

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Child and Youth Care

University of Victoria

Supervisory Committee

Our World to Come:

Decolonial Love as a Praxis of Dignity, Justice, and Resurgence

by

Shantelle Andrea Moreno

Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2009

Bachelor of Education, University of Victoria, 2012

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child & Youth Care
Supervisor

Dr. Mandeep Kaur Mucina, School of Child & Youth Care
Departmental Member

Abstract

In this thesis I explore the theoretical, ethical, and practice-based implications of doing research with Indigenous, racialized, and LGBT2SQ+ youth and young people. This research traces participant conceptualizations of decolonial love, through arts- and land-based methods, within the context of ongoing settler colonialism. Through an Indigenous-led and participatory research project called Sisters Rising, I engaged in intimate conversations and facilitated research workshops with young Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) who reflected on their understandings of decolonial love as related to their own experiences, knowledges, and teachings. Their conceptualizations of decolonial love as inextricably tied to land, sovereignty, and resurgence disrupt settler colonial narratives that attempt to violently displace and disenfranchise BIPOC communities and undermine Indigenous intellectual knowledges as inferior or simplistic, particularly in Euro-Western academia. Through this research BIPOC young people's understandings of decolonial love guide my praxis and ongoing learning as a frontline practitioner who is committed to cultivating and nurturing a politicized ethic of decolonial love in my child-, youth-, and family-centered praxis.

Keywords: BIPOC, decolonial love, praxis, Sisters Rising, colonialism

Acknowledgments

"Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto." – Violeta Parra

I would not have been able to engage in this re-search or share these stories without the generosity, graciousness, and brilliance of our Sisters Rising participants. I give my deepest thanks to each and every one of you for your words, your art, and your presence. It is because of all of you that I have been able to pursue my passion to nurture a deeper understanding of decolonial love, and I hope that this work holds you up as the examples of Indigenous excellence and BIPOC brilliance that you are.

To my most incredible and dedicated supervisory team, Dr. Sandrina de Finney and Dr. Mandeep Kaur Mucina—words are not enough to express my gratitude for all the ways that you have guided and cared for me over these last five years. My most heartfelt thanks go out to you both for the hours upon hours of conversations, pep talks, reading, editing, and gentle pushes, and for your unwavering belief in me. You have gone above and beyond as mentors, and I can only hope that I am able to pay it forward as I move through my career.

To my relations in Sisters Rising/Kinship Rising—Anna Chadwick, Chantal Adams, Shezell-Rae Sam, Keenan Andrew, Angela Scott, and Michaela Louie—you have made this journey so much more meaningful than I could have ever imagined. Thank you for the laughter, hugs, and tears, and most of all for your solidarity and friendship. This project is only as powerful as it is because each of you have humbly shared your knowledge, wisdom, and teachings. I look forward to the day we can all hug again!

To Brandy, my partner and soft place to land—thank you for your constant encouragement, for all the ways that you show your love, and for hanging in there with me

through this wild ride. You, Frankie, and Sam make it all worthwhile. I extend my deepest gratitude also to my big, supportive, loving family: my mom, in-laws, sister-cousins, aunties, uncle, and my Nani—your stories have laid the foundation for mine to flourish. Thank you for carving a path for me.

Most importantly, to the 2nd and 3rd gen kids, the ones who will inherit this earth and all of its blessings—Blaise, Khumalo, Nandi, Charlie, Remy, Nakoa, Nolan, Zadie—our decolonial love babies here on earth, (and to the ones still waiting in the stars) this is for you.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

"Love is the energy that removes the barriers that would otherwise separate us."

Darnell Moore

Tentative Beginnings

When I first started to seriously consider the possibility of researching and writing about love in an academic context, I was filled with a creeping sense of fear mixed with self-doubt. I remember wanting to delve into a topic that was critical, politicized, and heavily theorized. I desperately wanted to study something that was widely considered inextricable from the postcolonial, Indigenous, and critical race theories that informed my growth and development as a woman of colour, queer feminist, burgeoning counsellor, and politically engaged child and youth care (CYC) practitioner. Most of all I wanted to uphold knowledge from my own communities that would contribute to the rupturing/unpacking/dismantling of the overwhelmingly white, cisgender, heterosexual, male-dominated knowledge production that has been situated as foundational within Euro-Western academia.

I did not come to the specific topic of decolonial love on my own. In fact, I had caught myself up in a cycle of curiosity and refusal, which I wheeled around more times than I now care to admit. As with many of my academic pursuits, looking back I realize that I had been invited into this topic many times, by friends, colleagues, and fellow CYC students. I was also lovingly encouraged by one of my long-time mentors, professors, and now current thesis supervisor, Dr. Sandrina de Finney. While I have been an avid practitioner of ethical and politicized love in my work with children, youth, and families—often citing the vast body of work from one of my most beloved critical race feminists, bell hooks—the concept of researching decolonial love had

largely gone unexamined in my mind. As a second-generation, mixed-race child of immigrant parents, taking risks—even well calculated ones—is something that I have been coached to be averse to. I hold a deep knowing in my bones of the sacrifices and embodied hardships of my parents, grandparents, and ancestors; because of this, a culture of hard work and surety has presided over much of my decision making. This predisposition, coupled with my growing sense of imposter syndrome as a racialized graduate student, made the topic of decolonial love seem implausible. Yet, amidst my trepidation around researching love, I found myself increasingly drawn to the topic, spending my time researching and being inspired by what other Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) theorized about it. As I read Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (2013) book *Islands of Decolonial Love*, I began to meaningfully reflect on the power of writing about love as an ethical, political, and necessary force in our current context of ongoing colonial state violence against Indigenous and racialized peoples (Ferguson & Toye, 2017).

Situating Myself Within the Complexity

To better understand how and why I came to research decolonial love, it is imperative that I critically locate myself within the spaces, places, and people that have nurtured my body, mind, and spirit. I am a working-class, mixed-race, queer woman of colour living the tensions of occupying the unceded territories of the W̱SÁNEĆ, Esquimalt, and Songhees peoples. Many of these years as settler/occupier have been spent as a student at the University of Victoria, and with this experience I acknowledge the disproportionate privilege I hold as someone with access to postsecondary education. I lean into the friction of embodying this educational privilege, while also recognizing that my educational experiences—which form the theoretical and practice-based underpinnings of this thesis—have undoubtedly influenced my complex ethical becoming. My

university education has also led me to some of my biggest passions, including my career as a child and youth counsellor, my work as a research facilitator with Sisters Rising (sistersrising.uvic.ca), and my role as a teaching assistant in the School of Child and Youth Care.

I was born and raised on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories to young immigrant parents who left their homelands as a direct result of violent conflict and economic devastation. My father, who was born in Chile, is of mixed Spanish and Mapuche Indigenous ancestry. He immigrated to Canada in the early 1980s, fleeing U.S.-backed wars in both Chile and Argentina. My mother was born in Suva, Fiji, and is of Indian descent. Her family has lived in Fiji for generations as a result of British-initiated labour programs in which tens of thousands of Indians were forced to work as indentured servants and labourers, primarily on sugar cane plantations. Following India's independence, many Indo-Fijians remained in Fiji, having lost all familial ties to their homeland. My mother immigrated to western Canada as a young child in the 1960s with her family, who were brown-skinned practicing Hindus at a time when anti-immigrant sentiments were rife. I share these histories to highlight the reality that colonization and its many functions often cause deep-rooted cultural and geographic diasporas that span generations.

Although I was raised in a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse city, the omnipotent presence of white settler dominance was undeniable. Like many of my racialized peers, I grew up trying to blend into the mainstream Euro-white culture that wrote the rules we all played by. Despite this, my family continually attempted to instill traditions, language, and values in the ways they knew how—through food, music, literature, and teachings from their respective families—while also giving me the space and freedom to try and fit into the narrow western mold that was never meant for brown bodies like mine. By positioning myself in this

manner, I aim to contextualize and ground who I am and illuminate how I walk in the world and what led me to write this thesis.

As the daughter of immigrants to Turtle Island, the privileges of Canadian citizenship are afforded to me at the expense of sovereign Indigenous peoples and communities. Simultaneously, my ancestry as a mixed Indian-Fijian, Spanish, and Mapuche Indigenous woman has been undeniably impacted by ongoing colonial violence: war, diaspora, indentured labour, and displacement from ancestral lands, languages, and traditions. I grapple with what it means to participate in systems premised on the erasure of centuries of knowledge held by Indigenous and racialized peoples, especially as emphasized in my own involvement within Euro-Western academia. However, over the last decade, I have had the privilege of being exposed to a range of Indigenous and racialized scholarship, albeit through my own fraught engagement with academia. This scholarship has included feminist, postcolonial, critical race, and Indigenous literature that has required me to lean into the many ways of being in this world that are vastly different from my own. This scholarship has inspired me to deep reflexivity about the ways that Indigenous and racialized communities are reimagining and rewriting narratives of reclamation, resurgence, sovereignty, and love—and ultimately moved me into my own sense of risk-taking power to journey into sites of decolonial love that I previously did not know existed.

Journeying with Sisters Rising

Before delving into the methodologies that guided me through my research, it is crucial that I honour the opportunity that I have been given to work as a research assistant (RA) with Sisters Rising. My research work has been engaged with the supervision of principal researcher and associate professor in CYC, Dr. Sandrina de Finney, under the broader scope of Sisters Rising. In mentioning this, I offer gratitude and heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to work

alongside and be mentored by incredible researchers, fellow RAs, and various Indigenous and racialized communities. I have included as Appendix A the invitation to participate, created by the Sisters Rising team, that I used for my participant recruitment. Ethics approval for Sisters Rising was obtained by Dr. de Finney, with my graduate study encompassed under her larger project.

I am humbled by the gifts that Sisters Rising has brought into my life both personally and professionally, and I endeavour to illuminate the connections cultivated with Indigenous and racialized girls, young people of all genders, and communities through my community-engaged research. Framed by the concepts of body and land sovereignty (de Finney, 2018), my work with Sisters Rising situates Indigenous young people as vital and cherished members of sovereign Indigenous nations and seeks to recenter "cultural traditions that honour Indigenous girls and youth, highlighting dignity, respect and consent . . . [and] supporting community resurgence" (S. de Finney, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Additionally, I was granted the opportunity to incorporate participants who identified as racialized peoples within my thesis study—including Black people, people of colour, and mixed-race individuals. This piece allowed me to ground my own beliefs about solidarity and accomplice/allyship responsibilities of racialized settlers to the Indigenous lands that we occupy and opened up learning opportunities around the meaningful and historical connections between Indigenous and racialized communities.

This research has been undertaken in partnership with the Siem Smun'eem Indigenous Child Wellbeing Research Network and was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC). It is also part of an international project between Canada and South Africa called Networks 4 Change and Wellbeing: Girl-led 'From the Ground Up' Policy-making to

Address Sexual Violence in Canada and South Africa (de Finney, Moreno, et al., 2018). It is through these interconnections that this study on decolonial love is situated, requiring integrity and accountability first and foremost to my participants, to their communities, and to our Sisters Rising family, but also to the community partners who uphold, sustain, and support this project in all of its manifestations.

Feminist theorist bell hooks (2000) contends that "love is an action, never simply a feeling" (p. 6). Sisters Rising speaks to this ethic by illuminating the inherent power young people hold as truth tellers and knowledge producers. The well-being and thriving of Indigenous communities hinges upon upholding Indigenous ways of knowing, honouring girls, women, trans and 2-spirit voices, and prioritizing connection and protection of the land as central to culture, language, and life. Sisters Rising supports and sustains this sense of well-being for Indigenous youth by grounding land sovereignty and body sovereignty as inextricably interconnected.

My hope for the future of Indigenous and racialized young people is that they can continue to be held in dignity and capacity by the communities they are born into and the ones they intentionally create; that communities embrace them without judgment, honouring their spirits and holding them close as sacred gifts. My hope is that youth are deeply connected to their ancestral lands and to the lands where they have chosen to build their futures. That through their relationships with the land they are able to feel more wholly connected to all things and all beings. And ultimately, that through these connections, the healing power of decolonial love is able to take root and grow in their minds, bodies, and spirits.

Labour of Love: Community and Love-Based Methodologies

Community Action Research

No singular method or framework is sufficient to address the complexities, structural components, and diverse issues that are bound to arise within the research process. I utilized aspects of community action research (CAR) as an approach to participatory research, which encompasses communities' desires for social action and change, as it "has roots in attempts to understand and abolish persistent injustices" (Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003, p. 62). Though I did not hold the grandiose expectation of abolishing injustice, I had hoped and continue to hope that this research has made a small but meaningful contribution to anticolonial solidarity work between Indigenous and racialized communities. Borrowing from Coulthard and Simpson's (2016) conceptualization of solidarity, I wonder how my own critical feminist and anticolonial lenses impacted my engagement in CAR in navigating the ways in which "marginalized subjects and communities work across their micro-specificities to align more effectively against macro-structural barriers to freedom and self-determination" (p. 250). Social work scholars Brown and Reitsma-Street (2003) contextualize CAR by illuminating the complexity of community, asserting that nonidealized communities are permeable and in flux, with people belonging to several overlapping and interconnected communities simultaneously. I noted this multiple times in my workshops with participants, and thus I was challenged to reflexively unpack my own simplistic characterizations of identities and/or communities throughout this thesis research journey.

CAR is organized around four core principles: social justice, agency, community connectedness, and critical curiosity (Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003). I was most drawn to CAR due to its concept of social justice as an action-based engagement that not only scrutinizes our

current socio-political times but opens up possibilities for "new ways of thinking, organizing, visioning and acting" (Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003, p. 65). Further, Brown and Reitsma-Street hold a foundational belief in agency as integral to both individuals and communities, and they urge researchers to engage strengths by "look[ing] continually for opportunities to act, to engage others, to advocate, and to challenge oppression . . . at all stages of the research process" (Brown & Reitsma-Street, p. 66). As such, CAR required my active engagement as a researcher who holds a stance of critical curiosity and seeks to examine and ethically deconstruct structural dynamics of power and authority. Inevitably this included that I had to be willing to continually reflect on and question my methods and approaches, being mindful of how I might be unintentionally exploiting or silencing participants. I had (and continue to have) blind spots and preconceived notions about my research, and so I invite(d) feedback and engagement from participants and other BIPOC individuals who engage with this work.

Through these values and ethics, the larger questions of reliability, validity, and rigour may begin to be answered through ongoing consultation with individuals and communities involved in the research. It has been of utmost importance that I am explicit with participants that the aim of this study is to have the research (both process and product) be useful and valuable enough to warrant their desired participation. Therefore, I have embraced a stance of flexibility and openness to adjustments in terms of the where and how of this study. Being sensitive to the fact that decolonial love is a lofty, abstract, and even risky topic to examine with young people also necessitated an ability on my part to ethically witness, engage, and labour with participants (Laura, 2016).

Intimate Inquiry

Education scholar Crystal T. Laura's (2017) concept of intimate inquiry as a love-based approach to qualitative research by and for racialized researchers speaks to the heart of my values and beliefs as a researcher, practitioner, and individual. As a methodological approach, intimate inquiry requires transparency by openly establishing the researcher's positionality as "someone who is in connection with the people [they research with] . . . announc[ing] the way that intimate inquirers see the world and how they believe that we come to know [ourselves] and others within it" (p. 217). Situating myself as a researcher and practitioner with a deeply held ethical responsibility to the participants who share space and knowledge with me has compelled me to consider "how I connect what [I] know with what [I] do" (p. 217) throughout the research process. It was inevitable that I would have prior and/or current connections with some of the participants, as someone who is connected to the small, local queer and trans BIPOC community where discussions, art, poetry, and activism focusing on cultural resurgence, decolonization, and love have been (and continue to be) ongoing.

With this in mind, it was imperative that I explicitly examined the multiple relationships I held with participants, with a commitment to ethically navigate issues of authority, tension, and power through the intimate inquiry process. Ultimately, it required that I acknowledge and make visible the frictions of these complex relationships, while also highlighting the possibilities that they may illuminate within the process. I was personally and ethically responsible for upholding transparency around the reality that my insider/outsider positionality and the group nature of the study would pose limitations to both confidentiality and participant safety (in terms of unknown emotional, psychological, and community-level impacts). Throughout the research process, I actively worked to establish a safe-enough environment (Richardson & Reynolds, 2014) and

mitigated potential harm to participants through intentionally crafted questions, thoughtful group facilitation and activities, and assuring participants that they need not share any aspects of themselves or their experiences that they did not wish to. Given the sensitive nature of discussing decolonial love within the violent and oppressive context of ongoing settler colonialism, I also endeavoured to make community resources (i.e., crisis counselling and community service agencies) readily available to participants and to offer support to the best of my abilities as needed. As part of the ethics of working with Sisters Rising, it was our practice to also provide food, money, and art-based materials as a way to honour our participants' labour.

To support the care and ethical treatment of participants, Laura (2017) urges researchers to shift our conceptual thinking away from traditional qualitative methods that frame research on "subjects" instead of focusing on research as occurring with "[our] people—family members, neighbors, colleagues, students—and to treat research participants with the regard and reverence that we extend to our own kin" (p. 218). Through this simple yet powerful reframe, this work seeks to honour and uphold the stories, knowledges, and experiences shared by participants—treating them with the same care, respect, and support that I would endeavour to extend to my own kin relations. There are three key facets of this approach: *witnessing*, which includes "validat[ing] the existence of stories, and protect[ing] their place in the world" (p. 219), *engaging*, which requires "put[ting] people in dialogue" (p. 219) around the everyday, extraordinary, painful, and beautiful aspects of the stories they share while also necessitating that we hold a responsibility to action around the systemic forces that inhibit or quell participant empowerment, and finally, *labouring*, which includes the internalized intellectual work of the researcher in writing the stories shared, and that also values "the physical labor—the work of the hands and bodies—of sharing available resources" (p. 220). By upholding and embodying a

different set of values than are typically invoked through qualitative research methodologies, I willingly lean into the concept of generosity, that is, giving freely of myself, giving "love, vulnerability, authority, and abundant resources—in the research process . . . to share what it is that we can do, not as an imposition, but as service determined in conjunction with others" (p. 218). The nuanced power of intimate inquiry was engaged throughout this process, requiring me to constantly attune my ability to muddle through the unknown, collaboratively imagining ways I could be of service, embodying good spirit in my interactions with participants and community members, navigating the messy, complex positions of insider and outsider, grounding power with integrity and respect, and labouring alongside participants in deciding what should be shared and what was to be kept sacred.

Methods

Indigenous and Racialized Ways of Knowing and Doing

Traditional Euro-Western quantitative and qualitative methods are often cited as foundational in establishing validity and rigour in research. As such, working with Sisters Rising engaged me in a process of unlearning (as a racialized settler and colonially educated graduate student) and of learning instead that there are myriad ways to structure re-search[1] based on Indigenous and racialized ways of knowing and doing. Of significant importance to my research on decolonial love was learning and engaging in arts- and land-based methods that refuse the colonial diminishing of "local knowledge systems that reproduc[e] the message that Indigenous ways of being [are] "not good enough," unscientific, not rooted in evidence and so on" (de

[1] I prefer the term re-search to research because of its significance to Indigenous ways of knowing. The hyphenated term re-search means to "look again. To search from our own location and search again using our own ways" (Absolon, 2011, p. 20).

Finney, Chadwick, et al., 2020, p. 15). This is where a politicized approach to intimate inquiry and to "relational and intimate spaces of witnessing" (Clark, 2016, p. 56) in my research on decolonial love was able to take root.

I held workshops on the Coast Salish territories of the Esquimalt, Songhees, and W̱SÁNEĆ nations. These are the same territories that I have occupied as a racialized settler since 2004, which is a privilege that I do not take lightly. These lands have not only sustained me physically and emotionally as I have completed multiple postsecondary degrees, but they have been the spaces where I have built my life, pursued my passions, and had opportunities to grow my spirit in loving, nurturing relationships with others. I am forever grateful to these lands which provided all that was needed for these research workshops to take place. Participants were recruited by word of mouth through friends and acquaintances, though I did create a formal invitation that I distributed by email and through social media channels.

I hosted individual and group workshops with seven individuals who identified as Indigenous, racialized, people of colour, mixed race, and/or biracial. Each of these participants also self-identified as a girl, young woman, 2-spirit and/or LGBTQ+ individual. I organized and facilitated three sessions—two group and one individual—as well as follow-up sessions which took place in a variety of settings, including local beaches, participants' homes, and my home. Participants could choose to participate in a group workshop or to have one-on-one arts- and land-based sessions with me. Six participants chose group workshops, and one opted for an individual session. Sessions lasted between one and three hours, and food and cash honoraria were provided. Locations were chosen based on participant request and accessibility. All participants were given extensive information about the purpose of the research with Sisters Rising and how their stories, artwork, and knowledge might be shared (e.g., Sisters Rising

website, published articles). Participants had the opportunity to review photos and video taken during and after the conclusion of the research session and were asked for their ongoing consent in the use of their artwork, words, and images. All participants read and signed consent forms that included options to use all or part of their given names, a pseudonym or preferred name, age, their community/cultural associations, or to remain anonymous. One participant asked not to have their name or community association used but chose to have their LGBT2SQ+ identity shared. To honour the wishes of each individual participant, I chose not to share specific locations of workshop sessions because that might have led to other participant identifiers.

Arts- and Land-based Knowledge as Indigenous Excellence

Participants had access to art materials, including paint, paint pens, canvas, copper wire, twine, faux leather, cloth and fabrics, paper, collage materials, and glue. Land-based materials were also available, with outdoor sessions providing increased access and variety, including traditional medicines, rocks, beach driftwood, arbutus bark, seashells, seaweed, cedar, sage, flowers, and various bird feathers. Each session focused on the questions "What does decolonial love mean to you, as a racialized and/or Indigenous person living in an ongoing settler state?" and "In what ways does decolonial love connect to your ideas about resurgence, sovereignty, resistance, culture and/or the well-being of your communities?" Throughout my workshops I was guided by the Sisters Rising teachings of blanketing and honouring participants (de Finney, Chadwick, et al., 2020), upholding each person as a valuable knowledge holder and cherished member of their families, communities, and kinship connections.

It is also a part of my ethic of transparency to acknowledge that this thesis shares participants' artwork and stories, and that I am aware that my own ontologies, biases, preconceived notions, and beliefs necessarily filter through all facets of this work. In contrast to

Euro-Western academic perspectives that establish research as "provid[ing] recognition to the presumed voiceless, a recognition that is enamored with knowing through pain" (Tuck & Yang 2014, p. 227), I hold a deep-seated ethical responsibility to uphold this work as a collaborative effort of decolonial love that would be incomplete without the contributions of each and every participant. I humbly offer the articles that follow this chapter as an intentional effort toward honouring participants' knowledge, stories, and artwork as works of "Indigenous excellence" (Simpson, 2017, p. 31). I also feel moved to acknowledge that my research approaches are open to critique and constant revisiting, as they do not remediate the issues they seek to expose—namely the ongoing colonial nature of Euro-Western research practices and outcomes for BIPOC communities. Existing within the tensions of Euro-Western academia and BIPOC approaches to research confirms for me that further work on decolonial love by BIPOC researchers and scholars is crucial, in order to grow the body of literature that affirms and upholds the validity, rigour, and reliability of Indigenous and racialized research methods, practices, and analyses.

"The Land is a Way to Connect to Love": Land and Art Expression as Methods for Exploring Decolonial Love

There have been many driving factors in considering arts- and land-based based methods to carry out this research. Areas of promise for this form of eliciting stories and sharing experiences are encompassed in art's expansive possibilities for creative, imaginative, and intimate explorations of topics and in the land's immeasurable capacity for to nourish and provide for Indigenous peoples throughout time immemorial. These explorations do not demand expertise or clear-cut answers, but instead invite participants to engage in ways that feel authentic and meaningful for them. McNiff (2013) positions art as "a way of knowing, problem solving, healing, and transformation" (p. xiii) and goes on to advocate for arts-based research as

broad and open in encompassing all art forms, which supported my decision to engage diverse forms of arts- and land-based expression as a principal method of inquiry. The open-ended nature of arts- and land-based research is both its strength and area for critique—requiring open and transparent conversations with participants about issues such as expectations, limits of the study, having ownership over their work, and scope of the research.

Through the teachings of Sisters Rising, land-based materials were honoured as knowledge holders and catalysts for deeper unpacking of participants' notions of decolonial love. As Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) shares, the land is our greatest teacher:

> Plants were here first and have had a long time to figure things out. They live both above and below ground and hold the earth in place. Plants know how to make food from light and water. Not only do they feed themselves, but they make enough to sustain the lives of all the rest of us . . . and exemplify the value of generosity, always offering food. What if Western scientists saw plants as their teachers rather than their subjects? (pp. 346-347)

Through my time learning with Sisters Rising, I understood participants as cultural producers who embodied the role of "land-based, community-based intellectuals" (Simpson, 2017, p. 159) whom I came to learn were each deeply in love with their lands. Using the intersecting roles of knowledge holder and cultural producer as starting points, I invited participants to use art materials, found materials, and land-based materials that were collected by participants at workshops or beforehand. Each workshop provided a unique opportunity for visual art (e.g., painting, drawing, collage, textile art, and sculpture), body mapping, creative writing, and/or poetry. It is also important to note that I chose to participate in the process of art creation, which assisted in establishing a baseline of comfort for the group and nurtured a spirit

of group collaboration. McNiff (2013) contends that arts-based inquiry best unfolds when the researcher is directly involved in the creation and expression, rather than singularly focusing on facilitating the process for others. Through my participation I was able to engage one of the core tenets of intimate inquiry—specifically, considering that my participation may have been of service to some participants, which required acknowledgment that there is "a widespread resistance to creative expression that exists within society" (McNiff, 2013, p. 393). I also knew that participants might experience discomfort or feel a sense of insecurity with the creative process. McNiff suggests that arts-based researchers move away from prescriptive and/or overly explanatory language, focusing instead "on the body and other senses as ways of knowing" (p. 393), thereby inviting dynamic ways of being within the process that encourage creativity, risk taking, and deep emotional connection. Through engaging myself in the process, I was able to actively and mindfully participate in each workshop. One instance that stands out is an outdoor workshop on the beach where the group worked together to create images of decolonial love with art- and land-based materials arranged on a large fabric canvas (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Participant collaboration in artmaking.

This, as well as other experiences of working alongside participants through Sisters Rising, solidified my deep understanding that the research methods of honouring, blanketing, witnessing, and collaborating using arts- and land-based materials align with my own epistemologies and values as a person.

Ultimately, this arts- and land-based research was a generative process in which the end product was entirely unknown. Though there have been layered complexities and tensions to grapple with in engaging in these methods, I have been inspired by the immeasurable capacity that arts- and land-based research holds to illuminate the beauty of the unique and particular experiences of participants while also engendering possibilities to showcase complex ideas, knowledges, teachings, and dreams for the future of decolonial love across Indigenous and racialized communities.

Data Analysis

Rather than adhering to one specific way of analyzing the stories, images, and collective words of the participants, I chose to lean into the theories underlying the methods of intimate inquiry to support my analysis. I started by listening to each interview and group workshop to engage in a rewitnessing of participants' shared knowledges. I also was mindful of what my responses were to participants in the moment, focusing on how I was able to attend to their needs and how I observed what participants shared was most meaningful to them in the process (Laura, 2016). While I listened, I wrote out the words and phrases that stood out most or were most common among the participants. From there I was there I was able to create a map of participants' conceptualizations of decolonial love (see Figure 1.2).

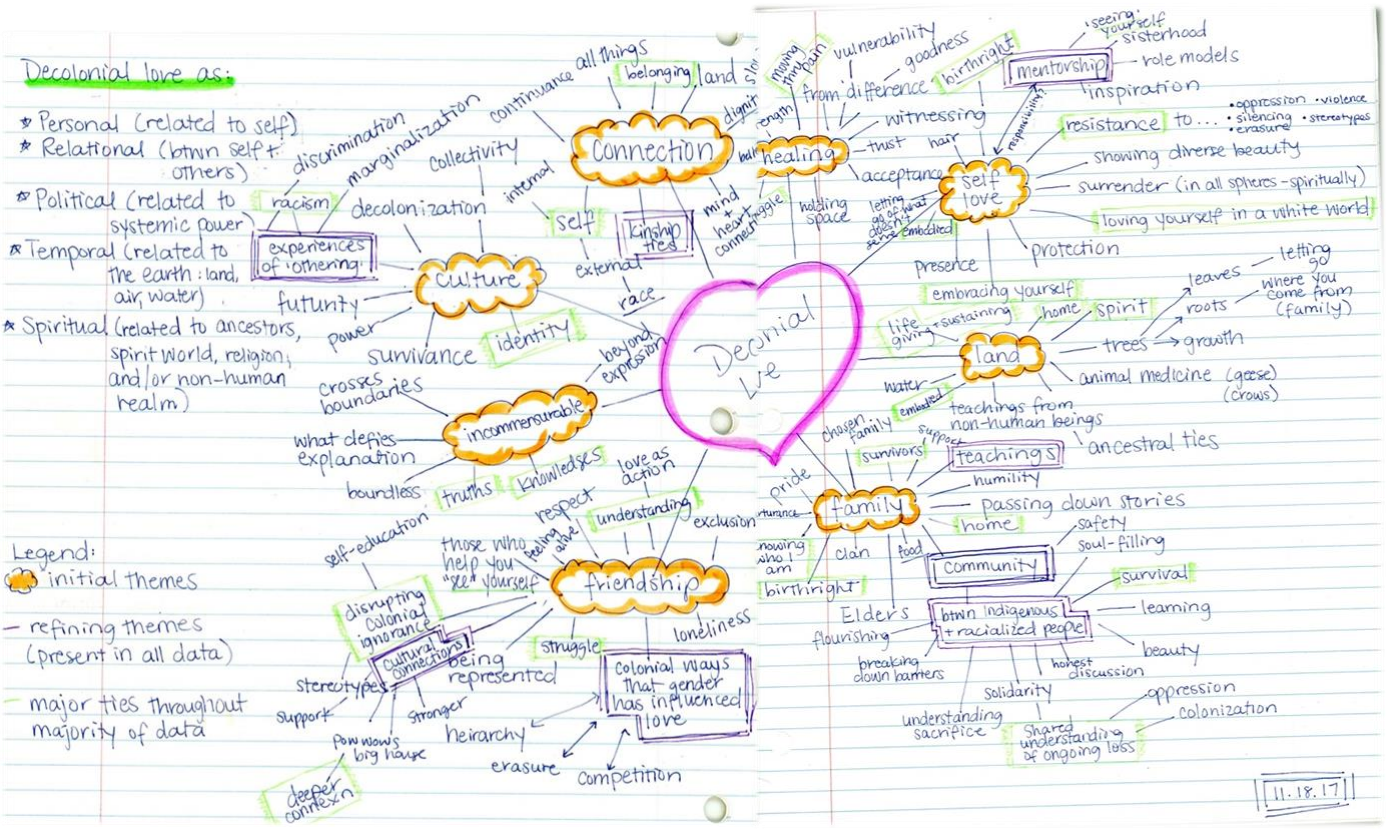

Figure 1.2. Handwritten thematic analysis.

Following this initial analysis, I listened again to each interview and workshop session to pay attention to all of the pauses, silences, and moments of vulnerability that also emerged. Speaking about experiences of decolonial love amid ongoing settler colonialism brought up many emotions in participants, and there were many long and thoughtful pauses in the interviews and workshops. I also reviewed all of the artwork created and considered each piece on its own and as part of the larger whole, as well as tied it to the scholarly literature. There were multiple instances of participants sharing intimate experiences of vulnerability that I chose not to include in this research, because these moments are to be honoured and kept sacred. In keeping with the spirit of intimate inquiry and embracing a politics of refusal around damage-centered Euro-

Western research, I chose not to analyze these moments because they were more about personal processing and intimate connection than about the research itself.

Once I had collected the data stories and artwork, I then created a larger digital thematic map to allow myself to explore possibilities of moving themes, ideas, and concepts around. The digital aspect of data analysis allowed fluidity and flexibility in how I was able to organize and conceptualize the information I had chosen for analysis (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Digital mind map of research data stories.

The digital thematic maps helped me to explore the major themes, subthemes, and artwork identified in my initial analyses and allowed me to identify the five themes that were most salient in participants' conceptualizations of decolonial love: decolonial love as personal,

relational, temporal, political, and spiritual. Each of these themes intersects with the others and the five are intricately interconnected. Though there were 5 themes, the nature of this thesis work and depth of each theme required me to select a few themes to examine in-depth, particularly the concepts of love as personal, relational, and temporal, with ties to the politicization of each. Through acts of intimate inquiry, witnessing, and re-searching, I followed a data analysis that was emergent, fluid, and motivated by my personal epistemologies, including teachings through Sisters Rising and from my own family and kinship connections.

Thesis Overview

This chapter has outlined my research project and contextualized it within the larger Sisters Rising project of which it was a part. I have located myself as researcher and described my theoretical framework and methods. The next two chapters are pieces that I wrote for publication; as a result, there is a certain level of redundancy in the information provided. Chapter 2 is an article written for the *Journal of Girlhood Studies* titled "Love as Resistance: Exploring Conceptualizations of Decolonial Love in Settler States." The article focuses mainly on the research themes and participants' critical knowledge sharing. Chapter 3 is written for an edited book in press called *Decolonial and Indigenizing Voices of Educational Leadership: Global Perspectives in Charting the Course.* My chapter is titled "The Praxis of Love: Love as Decolonial and Political in Human Service Work with BIPOC Children, Youth, Families, and Communities" and focuses on implications for human service practitioners working with BIPOC communities, informed by my research on decolonial love. A brief conclusion to the thesis follows these two chapters.

Chapter 2. Decolonial Love as Resistance: Exploring Conceptualizations of Decolonial Love in Settler States

Love in a Settler State: A Starting Conceptualization

"We would all love better if we used it as a verb."

bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*

This paper seeks to engage non-white settlers, particularly racialized lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, 2-spirit, queer (LGBT2SQ+) identified individuals, in an exploration of what a decolonial praxis looks like for people of colour (POC) who are not indigenous to the lands on which they have settled. In explicitly addressing settlers of colour, I hope to ground our ongoing responsibilities in upholding the experiences and knowledges of Indigenous young people growing up in settler states. Additionally, I carve out space for POC to develop critical understandings of race, identity, settler privilege, and our collective responsibilities to transformative praxis. In this paper, I reflect on insights into decolonial love shared in a community-rooted, arts- and land-based study involving self-identified Indigenous and racialized girls, young women, and LGBT2SQ+ young people between the ages of 18 and 30. My study was conducted in the summer of 2017 on the unceded homelands of Coast Salish nations (on the west coast of Turtle Island in British Columbia, Canada) as part of Sisters Rising[2]. Sisters Rising is an Indigenous-led research study employing youth-engaged, participatory and arts- and land-based methodologies to focus on "challenging the victim-blaming climate of racialized gender violence by re-centering Indigenous values and teachings and linking body sovereignty to questions of decolonization and land sovereignty" (de Finney et al., 2018, p. 24). My role as

[2] For more information about Sisters Rising, visit www.sistersrising.uvic.ca.

research facilitator with Sisters Rising included holding space and facilitating arts-based workshops with Indigenous and racialized youth of all genders.

To center the diverse knowledges of the young people I worked alongside, I begin this paper by troubling Euro-Western conceptions of research and situating my own experiences and ways of knowing as a queer woman of colour (QWOC) and diasporic settler within this process. I then highlight Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) scholars and community activists to relearn ethical ways of gathering knowledge that reflect my own family and community teachings. I offer up this research as a direct response to the devastating and multifaceted forms of violence that colonization imposes on Indigenous girls, women, and LGBT2SQ+ people, demonstrating that the "roots of sexual violence in Canada are as deep as colonialism itself" (Hunt, 2010, p. 27). I also make preliminary connections between experiences of colonization between racialized and Indigenous communities. Finally, I share knowledge from participants who offer their distinct beliefs and teachings on processes of decolonial love. By centering notions of love as including actions that are directly and overtly tied to projects of decolonization and social justice (Gilpin, 2018; hooks, 2000; L. Simpson, 2017), I consider participants' conceptualizations of decolonial love as vital and incommensurable components of futurity for Indigenous and racialized communities that also hold immense value for critical consideration by racialized, LGBT2SQ+, and other marginalized settler communities.

Grounding Myself: Answering To What Matters

My interest in working more justly with Indigenous and racialized young people comes from my years of experience as a QWOC front-line human services practitioner, community activist, and youth advocate. I have worked in a variety of contexts, including nonprofit agencies, childcare settings, shelters, and public schools, and have held various roles such as youth

facilitator, inclusion worker, and youth and family counsellor. I work and live in a small, predominantly Anglo urban centre dominated by white settler bodies, where whiteness remains the unquestioned status quo. This reality sets the stage for social services, where—like in many smaller North American urban centres and towns—the norm of whiteness and Euro-Western ways of knowing infiltrate all aspects of policy, protocol, and service provision across social institutions. Early in my career I began to notice I was one of very few QWOC practitioners in the human services agencies where I was located. It was then that I started to question the overt overrepresentation of Indigenous and racialized children, youth, and families in my service provision, and began to interrogate my own complacency within these colonial institutions.

Métis scholar Natalie Clark (2016) asks the simple yet profound question "Who are you and why do you care?" (p. 48), emphasizing the importance of grounding oneself and one's intentions when embarking on decolonial praxis. Anishinaabe scholar Kathleen Absolon's (2011) concept of "re-searching" (p. 20) provides a stark contrast to colonial methods of research, which often include "voyeurism, outsider interpretation, objectification of culture and reductionist analysis" (p. 20). By hyphenating re-search, Absolon overtly grounds Indigenous ways of seeking and gathering knowledge, describing re-search as meaning "to look again. To search from our own location and search again using our own ways" (p. 21). Embracing Absolon's understanding and heeding Clark's call to question, I situate myself and this research on the territories of the W̱SÁNEĆ, Songhees, and Esquimalt peoples of what is colonially known as Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

As a mixed-race Indian-Fijian, Spanish, and Mapuche woman of colour, I recognize and trouble my unearned settler privilege as someone with Indigenous roots who is not indigenous to Turtle Island. It is imperative to note that unlike white European settlers, racialized settlers face

the violence of colonial oppression through forced displacement from their homelands, migrant histories, slavery, indentured labour, and ongoing racial, linguistic, cultural, and religious marginalization in white occupier settings (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Walia, 2013). It is crucial to make connections between the experiences of Indigenous peoples and racialized peoples, who experience interconnected systems of colonization, oppression, and marginalization in settler states, although in distinctly different ways. In communities of colour these interconnections have led to poverty, immigration and deportation issues, chronic (mental) health challenges, high levels of incarceration, migrant labour abuse, and devastating cultural and linguistic loss (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; J. Simpson et al., 2011; Walia, 2013).

Critically unpacking the disproportionate intersecting racialized, gendered, and sexualized violence that Indigenous girls, women, and LGBT2SQ+ people experience is integral to decolonial theorizing. In situating myself within a settler state that itself is "predicated in the erasure of Indigenous worldview and emergent Nationhoods" (Gilpin. 2018, p. 49), I interrogate my location as a working-class, mixed-race, cisgender QWOC and diasporic settler on unceded Indigenous lands. I hold this knowledge deeply, not only as words to be expressed but as a means to inform the values and ethics of how I conduct myself on these Indigenous lands. I viscerally feel the tensions of wanting to do good work with racialized and Indigenous communities that contests the litany of academic literature pathologizing, victimizing, and/or romanticizing Indigenous and racialized peoples and knowledges, while also acknowledging the privileges I hold as a cisgender, able-bodied, working-class, and university-educated individual. I have grappled with these tensions throughout this study and continue to critically acknowledge my many personal and academic blind spots. Additionally, I continue to develop an understanding of how racialized, marked bodies like mine fit into conversations about decolonization, and of how

other racialized settlers might find themselves called to action within the existing literature on decolonial love.

Re-Search: Looking and Looking Again

For this research, I held workshops on the Coast Salish territories of the Lekwungen and SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples on the west coast of Turtle Island—in the same places and spaces I have occupied as a racialized settler over the last 15 years. I hosted individual and group workshops with seven individuals who identified as Indigenous, racialized, a person of colour, mixed-race, and/or biracial. Much of my own learning in queer, trans, and 2-spirit BIPOC (QT2SBIPOC) activist communities over the past decade has highlighted the essentiality of QT2SBIPOC perspectives in movements of dismantling colonial power and working toward Indigenous land and body sovereignty. As Wilson and Laing (2019) discuss,

> Indigenous women and two-spirit people bear the brunt of colonial hierarchies and processes and . . . also bear the brunt of whiplash that occurs when colonial frameworks invade our own cosmology and are presented as "natural," as something that has always been part of our traditional teachings. (p. 135)

I acknowledge that this exploration of decolonial love would be incomplete without the knowledge shared by QT2SBIPOC individuals and communities. This understanding played heavily into my participant recruitment, with several participants being acquaintances connected through local social circles of antiracist activist/advocacy groups. Some participants reached out via mutual friends and were interested in my research because it applied to their lives and studies as undergraduate students. Each of the seven participants self-identified as a girl, young woman, and/or an LGBT2SQ+ person.

Crystal T. Laura's (2016) concept of intimate inquiry as a love-based approach to qualitative research spoke to my values and beliefs as a QWOC and helped inform foundational aspects of my study. As a methodological approach, intimate inquiry required transparency, asking me to openly establish my positionality as "someone who [was] in connection with the people [they research with] . . . announc[ing] the way that intimate inquirers see the world and how they believe that we come to know [ourselves] and others within it" (p. 217). Situating myself as a researcher and practitioner with deeply held ethical responsibilities to the participants who shared space and knowledge with me compelled me to consider "how I connect what [I] *know* with what [I] *do*" (p. 217, emphasis added) throughout the research process. It was inevitable that I would have prior and/or current connections with some participants, as someone who is connected to the small local QT2SBIPOC community where discussions, art, and activism focusing on resurgence, decolonization, and love had been (and continue to be) ongoing.

With this in mind, it was imperative that I examine the multiple relationships that I held, with a commitment to ethically navigate issues of authority, tension, and power throughout the process. Ultimately, this required that I acknowledge and make visible the frictions of these complex relationships, while also highlighting the possibilities that these tensions could illuminate within the process. I was personally and ethically responsible for practicing transparency around the reality that my insider/outsider positionality and the group nature of the study inherently posed limitations to confidentiality and participant safety (in terms of unknown emotional, psychological, and/or community-level impacts).

I was able to organize and facilitate three sessions (two group and one individual), as well as follow-up sessions which took place in a variety of settings of participants' choice, including

local beaches, participants' homes, and my home. Participants were offered access to art materials such as paint, paint pens, canvasses, markers, copper wire, twine, cloth/fabrics, scissors, paper, collage materials, and glue. Land-based materials were also made available and were collected and used primarily in outdoor sessions. They included rocks, driftwood, arbutus bark, seashells, seaweed, cedar, sage, and various feathers. Conversations and artwork created during sessions were recorded using iPads and iPhones. Participants had the opportunity throughout and after their sessions to remain anonymous or be identified in any way they chose (their real name or a pseudonym) and to approve or delete all images and audio recordings they created. I transcribed individual and group interviews and connected participant art with their words, with a focus on content that addressed themes of colonialism, settler states, anticolonialism, antiracism, love, and care. Each person also had the option to include their work on the Sisters Rising website (www.sistersrising.uvic.ca) and to participate in a myriad of other Sisters Rising activities, including coauthorship, conference and workshop presentations, and additional training.

The words and images shared here are an intentional effort toward upholding each participant's unique ways of knowing and resistance to ongoing settler formations. In order to honour the land and waters that hosted us during our workshops, I overlaid participants' creations with photos that I captured of the land. This blending of imagery has created visual displays of decolonial love, as explained through the words of participants.

Inextricable Interconnections:

Indigenous Girls, Young Women, and LGBT2SQ+ Knowledges and Intelligence

Our Love is in the Land: Decolonial Love as Temporal

Figure 2.1. Community Feathers by Chantal Adams, edited by Shantelle Moreno.

"The land is a way we can connect to our love for ourselves."
– Chantal Adams, Haida participant with Sisters Rising

Many stories emerged through our exploration of love, but the most profound and tangible were the conversations and artwork expressing the deep connection of love as intimately and inextricably tied to land and water. Tuck and Yang (2012) assert that "Land is what is most valuable, contested, required" (p. 5) in both the colonial territorial project and for movement toward decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty. Throughout the sessions, Indigenous participants' intentional cultivation of a deep and enduring connection to land was repeatedly reinforced. Individuals expressed their connection to land as encompassing earth/land, waters, sky, and all organically occurring aspects of the natural world, including plants, trees, rocks, and

flowers. This also included conversations about land being a vital and necessary way to connect with more-than-human and kinship relations. Chantal Adams, a participant who identified as a young Haida woman who also had European ancestry, shared her beliefs and family teachings about the power of love and land, stating,

> I think the land is a way to connect to love. Like Leroy Little Bear said, the land is our mother and this is not a metaphor. . . My auntie has told me that the earth and the land is our mother and to call her Naanii Earth, so that it's like [our] grandmother. So, if you have a good connection with your grandmother or an aunt that feeling of love and care [exists] like a caretaker, in a way.

Chantal situated the authority of Indigenous women as vital contributors to love in their communities, and to deeply held Haida ethics of caretaking one another and the land. These concepts are in alignment with decolonizing scholarship that positions the sovereignty of diverse Indigenous knowledges and languages as rooted in the land and asserts that "our knowledge as a people (who relate to one another) comes from the land . . . [and] how we relate to the land, determines how we relate to one another. We know that our genealogy extends into the Land and in turn extends into one another" (Gilpin, 2018, p. 50).

Along a similar thread, racialized participant Emery Whitney discussed the notion of love as a fundamental component of racialized women's identity development. In her textile poetry piece titled "Birthright," Emery used black paint pen on white fabric to share her knowledge that "brown women are entitled to love." In discussion, she described her personal journey of love and self-acceptance as a biracial woman with Nigerian and British roots. She highlighted the struggles of experiencing the world as a woman and as a racialized marked body growing up in a white-dominated, small urban centre, Critical race scholar Carolyn Ureña (2017) writes

extensively about the differences between colonial and decolonial love, arguing that one of the most profound and continual impacts of colonization "has been the persistence of the colonial wound, which is recognized as the epistemic rupture enacted by the European encounter in the Americas, and which resulted in the devaluing of non-Western forms of embodied knowledge" (p. 88). This concept underscores the power of Emery's insistence of entitlement to love as a racialized body. She shares her intimate knowledge of the requirement of love—for herself and for other racialized women, in particular—in her growth and identity development as a mixed-race woman of colour. Indeed, many BIPOC scholars have asserted the necessity of upholding embodied ways of knowing, arguing, as Beth Brant (1994) does, that "who we are is written on our bodies, our hearts, our souls" (p. 74), forming an undeniable aspect of our identities. Laura (2016) asserts that "in each of us [BIPOC individuals] there is a desire to be known and felt. To be acknowledged and validated, and to have our histories confirmed—to be witnessed . . . [as] an act of love" (p. 219).

These assertions are profound, given the colonial state's continued efforts to diminish Indigenous and racialized women's knowledge and leadership roles, eroding self-governance and intergenerational caretaking practices across communities. One of the most significant ways this has been achieved in Indigenous communities is through attempted assimilation—what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) calls "cultural genocide" (p. 6) and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG; 2019) calls genocide specific to gender. Through the insertion of patriarchal beliefs, the colonial government imposed a Christian gender binary onto Indigenous communities and situated girls, women, queer, 2-spirit and nonbinary people as inferior to men, rendering women and gendered "others" as objects rather than sovereign subjects. Indeed, Damien Lee (2011) argues, "the

subjugation of Indigenous women and the subjugation of Indigenous territories are inseparable elements of colonialism. . . . Through their need to subjugate Indigenous lands, settlers in Canada colonize[d] Indigenous women's bodies through sexualized violence" (p. 15).

There continues to be a pressing need to reckon with the disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous girls, women, and LGBT2SQ+ peoples who experience intersecting forms of violence at the hands of the colonial state. Amnesty International's (2014) report *Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* found that Indigenous women are almost three times more likely to experience violence, whether by an intimate partner or a total stranger, than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Cherry Smiley (2013) discusses the circumstances underpinning the fact that "up to 75% of victims of sex crimes in Indigenous communities are females under 18 years of age, 50% of those are under 14, and almost 25% of those are younger than 7 years of age" (p. 2). For Indigenous LGBT2SQ+ individuals, an Ontario study of gender-diverse and 2-spirit Indigenous people found that "73% had experienced some form of violence due to transphobia, with 43% having experienced physical and/or sexual violence" (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, p. 56). The data that currently exists speaks to the fact that Indigenous LGBT2SQ+ peoples are disproportionately targeted for violence, based on their perceived race, gender, and sexuality (Saramo, 2016). These numbers highlight the staggering effects of colonization, racism, economic marginalization, misogyny, patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia that impact Indigenous girls, women, and LGBT2SQ+ peoples' daily lives in very real ways. Further, these facts engender the crucial importance of Indigenous sovereignty making as a form of decolonial action.

Over the time spent with participants exploring love, land, and ancestral ways of knowing, several young people shared their concerns about forced disconnection from their

homelands. Chantal described her longing to return to Haida Gwaii, holding a knowing that the relationship to her territories was crucial to her identity and knowledge formation as a young Indigenous person. Anishinaabe writer Damien Lee (2011) expands on the notion of returning home, stating that land "is key to Indigenous peoples' resurgences and decolonization. This relationship is the source of Indigenous knowledges, identities, languages, nationalisms, songs, and laws" (p. 3), and encompasses the developing "understanding [of] how energy or spirit within place operates" (p. 9). Chantal also asserted her powerful knowledge that "being connected to the land goes against colonial order," while troubling the fact that there are many Indigenous peoples "who don't have their land or whose land has been exploited, or where there is major resource extraction, or where a university is built upon their lands and they don't have that same access to their homelands." This concept of disconnection was salient for a few participants who shared that they did not feel they had opportunities to connect to the land, or who were displaced from their families and homelands through colonial intervention and/or urbanization.

The necessity of supporting Indigenous peoples' connections to their homelands bears on us as racialized settlers, urging us to work toward an unlearning of the white settler stories about Indigenous peoples that have formed the foundation of our educational experiences as Canadians. Many racialized newcomers and settlers continue to inherit the myth that Indigenous peoples are of the past and are explicitly taught Euro-Western history that legitimizes Canada as a benevolent settler nation rather than a colonial occupier state (Lawrence & Dua 2005, p. 153). It is crucial that we understand that the direct function of these stories is to justify setter collusion in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous communities from their lands, and thus from their sovereignty, in order to further the white settler nationalist agenda.

Heart Connections: Decolonial Love as Relational

Participants also framed decolonial love as relational, describing how love is expressed through connection to the land, waters, and sky. Many expressed love as a felt sense experienced between the self and non-human others. Participant Keisha Jones, who identified as W̱SÁNEĆ and Pacheedaht, noted, "When I think about love and connection, I think about how I feel at home when I'm out on the land and out on the water and out in the community in that area; it's just a huge part of love for me. *It's home*" (emphasis added). Her affirmation of home and belonging emphasizes complex understandings of the power of love and land—reinforcing the need to uphold Indigenous young people as valued knowledge holders across their homelands. Keisha went on to describe the significance of her art piece—a carefully twisted copper wire tree—explaining, "Our connection to land is love and growth. Trees really represent that for me." Her knowledge that land is a vital component not only of decolonial love, but also for growth as an individual and as part of a larger whole bolsters the notion that "everything [needed] to live a good life is in and from the earth" (Gilpin, 2018, p. 51).

Figure 2.2. Copper Tree by Keisha Jones, edited by Shantelle Moreno.

Several participants used trees to represent decolonial love, making ties to family, friendship, mentorship, intimacy, more-than-human connections, and the spirit world. Kathryn McLeod, a participant who identified as Nisga'a, Gitxsan, Tlingit, and Scottish, described her knowledge of trees, family, and decolonial love:

> [I make] sure my roots are a bit longer and more defined than the branches because roots are where you come from—your family. No matter what you're always going to have it, you can't grow without them. They're where you come from. . . . You can branch out but no matter how far you go, you'll always come home.

These stories form distinct ways of knowing that are passed down and expanded upon by each young person as a way of making meaning around their identity as Indigenous peoples, and they also work to cultivate an ongoing sense of belonging with their homelands. As Leanne Simpson (2017) points out, it is "the intense love of land, of family, and of our [Indigenous] nations that has always been the spine of Indigenous resistance" (p. 9). The concept of resistance began to emerge as conversations around decolonial futurity deepened, and as participants created artwork expressing nuanced understandings of love as a form of enacted kinship in their lives and communities.

Indigenous and Racialized Self-Love as Resistance

"The proof of your worth does not exist in only your ability to be desired or loved by white people. It is not your burden to translate yourself into a colonizer's language to fit their definition of "loveable." Your movement through this world is ceremony and your body is medicine."

Erica Violet Lee, "Land, Language, and Decolonial Love"

The theme of resistance persisted in conversations, particularly in those which focused on the cultivation of self-love as a profoundly decolonial process—one well beyond mainstream representations of self-love as a self-driven investment in individualized, neoliberal subject making. Participants shared sentiments including: self-love "is not selfish," "self-love is a form of Indigenous resistance," and "self-love is our birthright." Self-love served as a form of decolonial healing, as a practice of grounding, protection, and connection for participants. An LGBT2SQ+ identified participant who requested not to have their name or communities shared, described their felt sense of decolonial love, stating that it was like

> healing myself. Going into my heart energy. Good feelings in my heart. Calm feelings in my heart. . . . Letting love manifest from head to toe, in every inch of my body. . . . [It's] noticing where I came from in being in my head all the time to the experience of allowing myself to be present in that space and on the land. That to me is the power of self-love.

Self-love as a manifested state that is deliberately nurtured was also reflected by Emery, who noted that "one of the most important things to build love in communities of colour is that, I think, we have to be taught self-love." Many highlighted the notion that self-love was learned through explicit teaching and modelling by loved ones around them, centering the vital weight of intergenerational transmissions of decolonial memory. The importance of mentoring emphasized the significance of community connections, family, built family, and kinship ties as irreplaceable components of decolonial love.

Participants' conceptualizations of self-love frequently emerged around experiences of racism, xenophobia, social exclusion, and being seen as "other" by white settlers. Amadahy and Lawrence (2009) discuss connections between Black and Indigenous communities across Turtle

Island, acknowledging that "Black people and Native people have been subjected to different forms of racism and racial categorization by Europeans and their descendants, in the interests of exploiting both peoples" (p. 6). They describe how the white settler system has employed anti-Black racism to erase Black presence across Canada using justifications common to the Indian Act, which seeks to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their rights and identities as sovereign Nations (p. 6). Through participants' words it became clear that making connections between Indigenous sovereignty and antiracism efforts, specifically those that recognize Canada's anti-Blackness, are also essential components of politicized self-love. In immersing myself within this work, I acknowledge the powerfully interconnected experiences of racialized and Indigenous young people, while also troubling the white settler logics responsible for BIPOC experiences of racism and social exclusion. All racialized and Indigenous bodies are constantly—but differentially—subject to the spotlight of colonialism, contributing to the visceral fear of violence that is characteristic of the white colonial state.

These differential assaults contribute to a lack of solidarity and engagement among our various social justice and decolonial movements, furthering the interests of the settler state. According to Audra Simpson (2014), Indigenous bodies, including mixed-race ones, have consistently been devalued because they literally and figuratively represent "land, reproduction, kinship and governance, an alternative to heteronormative and Victorian rules of descent. . . . [Our] bodies carry a symbolic load because they have been conflated with the land and are thus contaminating to a white, settler social order" (p. 10). I continue to reflect on how we, as racialized settlers, can emotionally and materially contribute to experiences of self-love and self-respect alongside Indigenous communities. As racialized settlers, this call to action asks very specific, well-curated responses of us and of the institutions and communities in which we work.

These responses extend beyond the official settler state myth of neoliberal multicultural relations and investments in depoliticized self-improvement as primary forms of citizenship building.

Decolonial Love as Political

"Can love, as connection, be a tangible tool for dismantling colonial violence inside of our own hearts and in the world around us?"

Erynne Gilpin, "From a Place of Love"

More than ever, Turtle Island sits on the precipice of unprecedented change. From Prime Minister Trudeau and the Canadian government's decision to purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline at a whopping cost of 4.5 billion dollars (Meissner, 2018), to the RCMP's violent, militarized invasion of Wet'suwet'en lands at both Uni'sto'ten and Gidimt'en checkpoints, pushing forward pipeline construction for Coastal Gas Link (Yintah Access,2019), to the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) highlighting nothing short of genocide against Indigenous girls, women, and LGBT2SQ+ peoples, the colonial government's demonstrated lack of accountability to issues of reconciliation and decolonization, in favour of land entitlements, white settler control, resource extraction, capitalistic gain, and participation in ongoing Indigenous genocide, is unequivocally undeniable.

South of our imposed colonial borders in "Trump's America," it is estimated that over 15,000 migrant children (mostly from Indigenous backgrounds in Central and South America) fleeing extreme violence and poverty are actively being sought out and detained by the U.S. government in so-called tender age shelters. These children are being violently imprisoned for illegally crossing the U.S./Mexico border with their families (Chalabi, 2018). The migrant rights movement's slogan, "we didn't cross the borders, the borders crossed us," illuminates the lasting impacts of colonization and land dispossession on Indigenous peoples across the Americas

(D'Amato, 2006). These are only a few examples that illuminate the staggering uncertainty of the future—environmentally, economically, politically, and socially—and its adverse impacts on marginalized peoples living in settler states, particularly, poor, Indigenous, racialized, and undocumented populations.

Reflecting on Jennifer White's (2015) questions about what it means to live in times that are "marked by ongoing change, unpredictability, and uncertainty" (p. 499) and in particular how we cocreate meaning and engage in action-oriented ways with the "complexities that surround us" (p. 499), I circle back to the interrelated concepts of love, social justice, and resistance to colonial control. Feminist theorist bell hooks (2000) writes about love as both personal and political, cautioning us to "begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling" (p. 13) and going on to argue that "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic" (p. xix). This notion of love as action oriented and social justice driven lies at the crux of this research and of my responsibilities as a racialized person who is deeply committed to supporting Indigenous sovereignty.

Contrary to the current ways that love has been framed through Euro-Western lenses—including self-love and self-care as inherently individual, psychological processes that are tied to capitalism and investments in the white settler state—racialized and Indigenous participants propose concepts of decolonial love as vital "ethical, social, and political force[s]" (Ferguson & Toye, 2017, p. 5). Here, participants illuminate the capacity that decolonial love holds as a politicized, productive force that can be called upon to critique and decenter white settler colonial, patriarchal, and gendered notions of love and care. They refuse the individualized, psycho-medical, and neoliberal processes of investing and creating productive subjects that proliferate the dominance of the white settler state through "self-care" work rather than investing

in a total rupturing of colonial power and control. Many participants described love as extending to a larger kinship network that requires Indigenous sovereignty to remain intact. These participants' understandings lay the foundation for the framing of decolonial love as an ongoing political and ethical approach/action for the liberation of Indigenous and racialized peoples (Ureña, 2017)—a liberation that is staunchly situated in the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1).

Love and Futurity

"We must continuously build and rebuild Indigenous worlds. This work starts in motion, in decolonial love, in flight, in relationship, in biiskabiyang, in generosity, humility, and kindness."

Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*

From the expressions of the next generation of truth tellers and knowledge seekers, this re-search—this gift of looking and looking again alongside other Indigenous and racialized young people—disrupts colonial narratives of individualism and capitalism that have become defining characteristics of Westernized generations and contemporary Canadian society. By rejecting neoliberal, psycho-social conceptualizations of love and self-care as individualized, bio-medicalized processes that serve the self above all else, each participant spoke to the interconnectedness and relationality that is at the heart of decolonial love. My hope is that these conceptualizations of love from girls, young women, and LGBT2SQ+ people can meaningfully contribute to the groundwork being laid by Indigenous and racialized communities across Turtle Island. Through their words and art, these participants are carving paths that inform decolonial narratives which "[refuse] to reproduce the present and affirm alternative futures" (Flowers, 2015, p. 36), honouring their own ways of knowing and safeguarding the knowledge passed down to them.

Additionally, these understandings bear tangible and material obligations for racialized witnesses who are committed to decolonial love as an ethic of life in settler states. Our collective racialized settler responsibilities to ask difficult questions, listen with humility, cultivate meaningful relationships, and invest (emotionally and materially) in collaborative work across Indigenous and racialized communities must continue to develop as we imagine actionable possibilities for land and body sovereignty across Indigenous territories. In more definitive terms, these possibilities must necessarily include a commitment to Indigenous futures free of

settler colonial control (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 13) and to the development of "a settler political will [that is] willful, that is, willing to disobey a general will and [is] always working toward an alternative future" (Flowers, 2015, p. 36). In reflecting on participants words, it is evident that there is no decolonial will without a profound dedication to the dismantling of the settler state. In this way, racialized peoples must continue to expand our ways of knowing and collectively work to change our ways of doing, in order to nurture respectful, reciprocal relationships with the land, water, and all kinship relations. We are undoubtedly increasingly responsible for upholding the dignity, respect, consent, and safety of Indigenous girls, women, and LGBT2SQ+ peoples, and are required to consider decolonial love—in all of its manifestations—as a fundamental social, ethical, and political approach/process of abundant possibility for Indigenous and racialized futurities.

Chapter 3. The Praxis of Love: Love as a Decolonial and Political Practice in Human Service Work with BIPOC Children, Youth, and Families

Critical Thoughts on Love as Praxis: An Introduction

"We would all love better if we used it as a verb." (bell hooks, *All About Love*)

This chapter examines links between love, praxis, and concepts of decolonization and social justice within the human services. Specifically, I unpack the ways that love is conceptualized, constructed, and utilized in the human services, with special attention to the manner in which love is applied within notions of decolonization and politicized praxis (Clark, 2016; Gilpin, 2018; Loiselle et al., 2012; Moreno & Mucina, 2019; Simpson, 2017; White, 2015). I start by examining the scholarly literature on love in my field of study in child, youth, and family practice, focusing on the ways in which "emotions constitute important political forces that work to produce particular alignments with some individuals and against others" (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 32). I then unpack the question "How can practitioners center decolonial love as a social and political project within their praxis, and in what ways might the concept of politicized praxis illuminate resistance to systems of domination that marginalize diverse others?" My analysis of decolonial love builds on my graduate research conducted alongside BIPOC young people through Sisters Rising[3], a community-based, youth-engaged research project exploring connections between settler colonial violence and Indigenous forms of resistance, resurgence, and sovereignty building. Throughout the chapter, I make intentional moves to honour and uphold Indigenous and racialized knowledges that disrupt colonial, Euro-

[3] See sistersrising.uvic.ca and kinshiprising.uvic.ca

Western, and white supremacist modes of power and control that have informed conceptualizations of love and praxis within the human services.

Foundations: Situating Myself and Scholarship Across the Human Services

My intention in exploring love in the human services has emerged from my diverse experiences as a queer, working-class, cisgender woman of colour and graduate student, frontline practitioner, and school counsellor working with children, youth, and families. I was born to young immigrant parents who raised me and my younger sibling on Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh territories. My parents immigrated to Canada from their homelands as children, each eventually being brought up as a citizen during the implementation of the uniquely Canadian policies of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism. My Chilean father, who is of mixed Spanish and Mapuche Indigenous ancestry, fled U.S.-backed civil wars at the ages of 10 (in Chile) and 17 (in Argentina). He was sponsored to immigrate to Canada by his uncle, who had arrived a few years before during the Argentinean *Guerra Sucia* (Dirty War). My mother is of Indian descent and was born in Fiji as the second-born daughter of young parents. Her family has lived in Fiji for generations due to British labour programs in which tens of thousands of Indians were forced to leave the former British colony to work as indentured labourers and servants, primarily on sugar cane plantations. She immigrated to Vancouver during a time when there were only a few thousand South Asians living across the country.

Conversations around Indigenous peoples and stolen Indigenous land were not a part of my childhood. My parents' settler status, though complicated, was deeply entrenched in colonial concepts of immigration and citizenship. Teachings about the historical and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous communities did not occur for me until I moved to Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ territories to begin my undergraduate degree at the University of

Victoria. I share these aspects of who I am in order to frame why I care and to situate my ethical becoming (Clark, 2016) as a university student and a child, youth, and family practitioner.

I use the term human services here because it includes "child and youth care, social work, education, and women's and gender studies [and] . . . literature from related disciplines such as nursing, public health, and counselling psychology and in doing so, acknowledge[s] the interconnected nature of these fields" (Moreno & Mucina, 2019, p. 89). By including conceptualizations of love within the broader human services, I have been able to engage with more diverse scholarship, reflecting the multiplicities of knowledge from theorists who support children, youth, families, and communities in dynamic and informed ways. My first human services job was in childcare, and since then I have held many roles, including youth facilitator, special needs worker, youth and family practitioner, public school teacher, undergraduate teaching assistant, community-based researcher, and school counsellor. My work has included working with children, youth, and families who are in crisis, many of whom require care plans and specific mental health interventions to address a wide range of issues, including grief and loss, self-harm and suicidal ideation, (intergenerational) trauma, and complex experiences of depression and anxiety, all compounded by histories of intersectional discrimination, poverty, structural violence, and systemic barriers. This work has taken place in various settings, such as clinics, offices, community centres, and people's homes. I prefer to work in collaboration with other professionals and community agencies providing support for clients, in order to advocate for visibility and equity and to ensure high-quality wraparound services.

Many of the children, youth, and families I have had the honour of working with are forced to operate within social institutions—education, child welfare, youth justice, and health care, to name a few—that have been foundational in the upholding of white supremacy and

colonial attitudes toward BIPOC populations (Allooloo, 2014; de Finney, Dean, et al., 2011; de Leeuw et al., 2009). Within these colonial systems, BIPOC children and families in crisis face multiple intersecting forms of violence and erasure, and are often disciplined, policed, and criminalized when they attempt to self-advocate. As a politicized human services practitioner, I am frequently called upon to make critical decisions and provide support in highly imperfect conditions—crisis-driven spaces of chronic underfunding and high caseload counts with not enough hours in the day to do all that needs to be done. My relentless pursuit of a politicized praxis of decolonial love is often brushed off as too idealistic and/or not professional enough. However, within the fast-paced and interconnected structures of systemic racism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy, I do not have the luxury to sit back and construct perfect theoretical moves that can be explained ad nauseum to my non-BIPOC counterparts. Clients need advocacy and action-driven plans that work in the moment, and these are the conditions of human service work this chapter highlights. I seek to discuss the complexities of enacting decolonial love in the less-than-ideal situations we often find ourselves in, while acknowledging that perfection is not and has never been the aim of this work. This is about embodying a deep-seated commitment to decolonial love as praxis within the spaces that we inhabit and the places we find ourselves in our journey to support the BIPOC children, youth, and families we walk alongside.

Through my graduate studies, I have been moved into spaces of deeper thinking and meaningful self-reflexivity by the innovative and critical writings of BIPOC scholars whose work is being increasingly represented in human services literature (Amponsah & Stephen, 2020; Daniel & Jean-Pierre, 2020; de Finney, 2015; de Finney, Palacios, et al., 2018; Mowatt et al., 2020). As a mixed-race queer woman of colour, I have often found myself searching for

scholarship that highlights the experiences of Indigenous and racialized practitioners in an attempt to see my own and other BIPOC knowledges recognized and valued in what has proven to be a field dominated by the writings of white, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual men. As such, I seek to contribute to the emerging canon of scholarship that situates the epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies of BIPOC individuals and communities that have been devalued within academia for far too long.

Much of the literature exploring love in child-, youth-, and family-centered practice describes it as primarily relational and/or a sentimental connection that is often conflated with the concept of care and always bound by Euro-Western notions of professionalism (Artz, 2000; Garfat & Fulcher, 2012; Ranahan, 2007; Smith, 2006, 2011; Thumbadoo, 2011). The concept of decolonial love in child-, youth-, and family-centered practice has been all but absent. Borrowing from the work of critical educators Lanas and Zembylas (2014), this chapter will not offer static definitions of love, but rather seeks to explore tools for the conceptual framing of decolonial love as an approach for politicized praxis. This approach explores aspects of both love and decolonial love that warrant deeper thought and analysis and considers the sites necessary to situate oneself in practice. Critically joining the concept of decolonial love with politicized praxis (Loiselle et al., 2012; White, 2015) requires us to move away from interventions with Indigenous and racialized children, youth, and families that are highly individualized, pathologized, decontextualized, and apolitical (White, 2015). This chapter highlights the need for practitioners to consider love, particularly decolonial love, as an essential ingredient "for a collective becoming-different, that can help to inform alternate social imaginaries" (Davis & Sarlin, 2011, para. 1). As such, a politicized love ethic should ground itself in the "long-term process of *transforming power* in our institutions and everyday lives" (Chabot, 2008, p. 824, emphasis in

original). Love as an approach within human service praxis can act as a compass by which our own relational practice can be guided toward the greater projects of social justice and decolonization as enacted alongside BIPOC populations.

Sisters Rising and Sites of Decolonial Possibility

My conceptualization for enacting decolonial love as human service praxis is drawn from my graduate research with Sisters Rising, a participatory, youth-engaged, land- and art-based research project that includes youth of all genders. It is based on the west coast of Canada in a city colonially known as Victoria, BC, on the territories of the Lekwungen and SENĆOŦEN speaking Coast Salish peoples. Sisters Rising's vision is to "support young people's dignity, healing, and strengths in relation to historical and ongoing sexualized and gender-based violence" (de Finney, Chadwick, et al., 2020, p. 6) and its work includes building relationships with youth, communities, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. I have worked with Sisters Rising (now called Kinship Rising) for over five years as a research facilitator, and it has formed the heart centre of my decolonial praxis. Over the years, I have been involved in numerous Sisters Rising projects, knowledge sharing and network-building activities, including cofacilitating arts- and land-based workshops and research forums, speaking at conferences and workshops, coauthoring publications, creating multimedia resources, and presenting our research stories alongside the BIPOC youth we work with across British Columbia.

For my own graduate research as part of Sisters Rising, I invited self-identified Indigenous and racialized girls, young women, and LGBT2SQ+ young people between the ages of 18 and 30 to participate in land- and arts-based workshops. These workshops focused on "challenging the victim-blaming climate of racialised gender violence by re-centering Indigenous values and teachings and linking body sovereignty to questions of decolonization and land

sovereignty" (de Finney, Moreno, et al., 2018, p. 24), with a specific focus on their unique understandings and conceptualizations of decolonial love (Moreno, 2019). My research workshops took place outdoors and in people's homes. Together we shared in intimate conversations around the impacts of colonization on our bodies and in our families and communities; we created artwork on the land (some of it done collaboratively in small groups) in order to tell our BIPOC stories of resistance, reclamation, resurgence and decolonial love. I have presented the key themes and outcomes contributed by the participants elsewhere (see Moreno, 2019). For this chapter, I focus on how I have extended my learning from this project to my own frontline practice. Across the many conversations, stories, and artworks created through this project by the participants, two themes have most informed my conceptualization of decolonial love and my own frontline praxis. First is the interconnected violence committed against Indigenous children, youth, and families and to their lands through colonial systems that provide "human services," a link I explore later on. Second is the inextricable relationship between love and land, and of love as intimately connected to land, waters, and sky.

This reciprocal connection between love and land was discussed in depth at one of our outdoor arts- and land-based workshops. Haida participant Chantal Adams noted, "When I think of decolonial love, I think of belonging, connection, dignity and humour, and just overall connection to land, water, and all our relations." Chantal's statement highlights her teachings that relational processes are interdependent on intentional, nurturing relationships with the land, water, and all kinship connections (see Figure 3.1). This way of understanding decolonial love was the most common theme among participants. Michif, Filipina, and Celtic scholar Erynne Gilpin (2018) expanded on this notion with her assertion that

> our knowledge as a people (who relate to one another) comes from the land. How we relate to the land determines how we relate to one another. We know that our genealogy extends into the Land and in turn extends into one another. The land gives us our knowledge. The land gives us our Love. (p. 50)

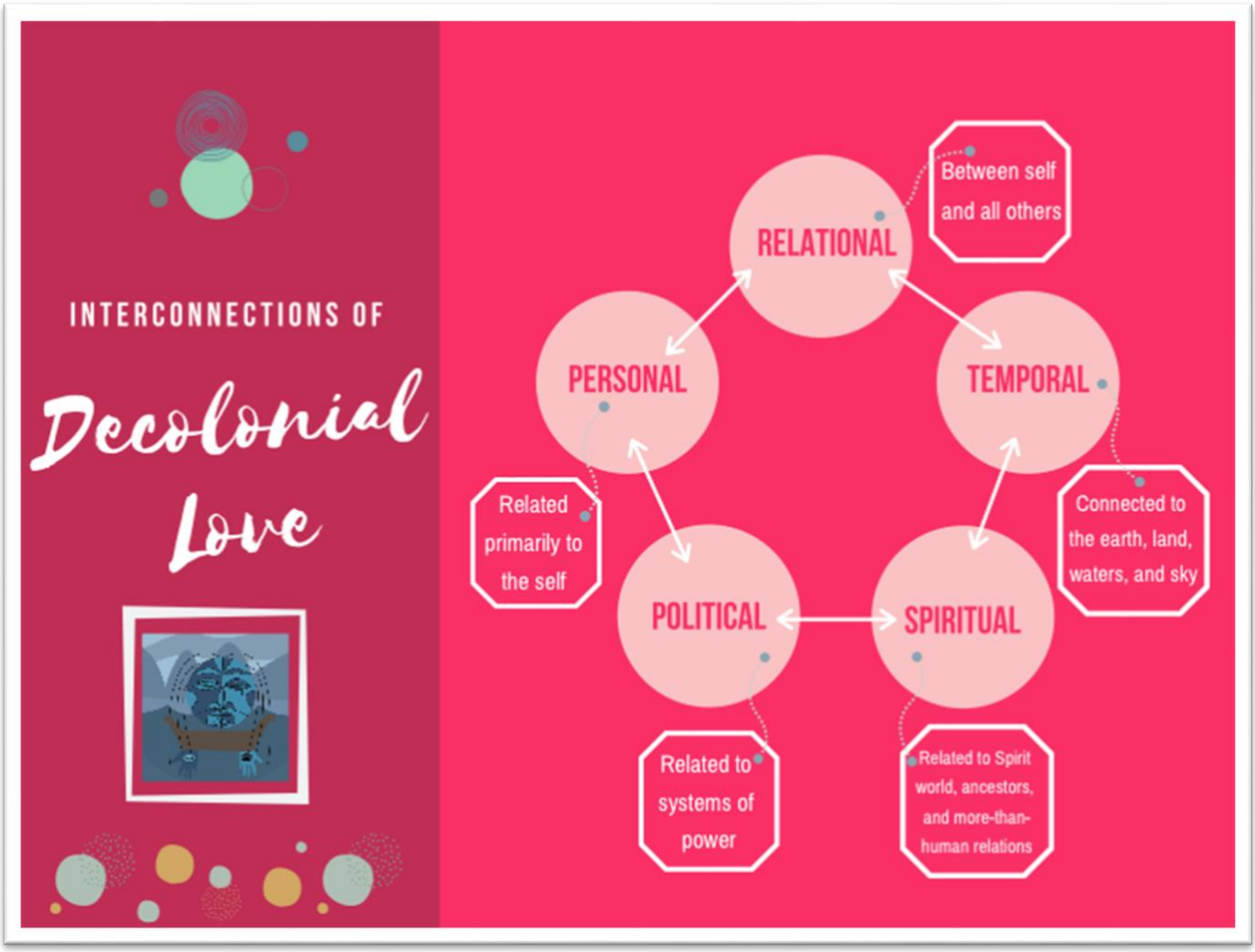

Figure 3.1. Participants' conceptualizations of the interconnections of decolonial love.

Adding to this, Keisha Jones, a self-identified W̱SANEĆ and Pacheedaht participant, expressed that "connection to the land is love and growth." Keisha delicately crafted a copper wire tree for her art piece, going on to say that "trees really represent that [decolonial love] for me."

For non-Indigenous settlers, conceptualizations of connection to land *as* decolonial love are not acknowledged in our efforts toward relationship building with one another, nor are they present in Western notions of environmental activism. These understandings exist in ways of knowing and being in interdependence with the land that are counter to the colonial avenues of capitalist ownership that pervade settler relationships with land and water. Similarly in the human services, neoliberal ideologies of individualism and apoliticism hold BIPOC people as individually responsible for their "problems" and for fixing them. Western concepts of therapy and mental health support do not involve land or discussions of colonial harm or Indigenous sovereignty. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017), like many Indigenous theorists before her, discusses the violent tactics used by the colonial state to remove Indigenous peoples from the land. She describes how this is "accomplished and is maintained through land theft as a result of unethical treaty making and the murdering, disappearing, assimilating and erasing of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg bodies and presence" (p. 41). The entire history of Canada as a colonial nation-state is premised on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their land and the erasure of Indigenous bodies in order to "[break] the intimate connection of [Indigenous] bodies (and minds and spirits) to each other and the practices and associated knowledges that connect us to land, because this is the base of our power" (L. Simpson, p. 41).

The relationship between land and decolonial love in the context of ongoing colonial rule was discussed by many participants as inherently political. Chantal was especially aware of this aspect of decolonial love, asserting that "being connected to the land goes against colonial order" and going on to explain that "recentering Indigenous ways of being" was a primary focus in her work within her own community. Gilpin (2018) echoes this in her writing, sharing that "decolonial love is the enactment of conscious relationships to self, others, spirit and the Land

and furthermore accountability to these relationships through patience, reciprocity and respect. We know that this process must first come from the Land" (p. 50). In discussing the nonconsensual old-growth deforestation and resource extraction occurring on Haida Gwaii, Chantal ended our conversation by asking, "How are we—as individuals, as communities and Nations—going to protect our sacred connections to our homelands?" (See Figure 3.2). Chantal's words continue to resonate for me as a racialized settler on unceded Indigenous lands, as I consider conceptualizations of decolonial love as "vital and incommensurable components of futurity for Indigenous and racialized communities that also hold immense value for consideration by racialized, LGBT2SQ+, and other marginalized settlers" (Moreno, 2019, p. 117). I continue to ask myself how my own decolonial love ethic can be a responsive and politicized form of practicing consensually and respectfully with the BIPOC children, youth, and families I work alongside, and with the land that I occupy.

Figure 3.2. "Decolonial love as protection of our lands and bodies" by Sisters Rising participant Chantal Adams.

Approaching with Love: Human Service Work Within BIPOC Communities

"*If love can propel us through the universe, it can certainly break through colonial histories of trauma, separation, and isolation."* – Erica Violet Lee, "Land, Language, and Decolonial Love"

In our understanding of human services work as complex, collaborative, and unpredictable, how can we make a compelling case for the necessity of love in praxis (White, 2007)? Graduate scholar Jennifer Vincent researched the role of love in the caring professions, with a specific focus on education. She concluded that, "in relational fields of work, where daily interactions, and in some cases formal role descriptions, include engaging in helping and supporting others in the context of a professional caring relationship, love is an essential element of practice" (Vincent, 2016, p. 19). In this way, there is much room within our fields for the conceptualization of a politicized love ethic that is both imperfect and outside the realm of total definition but that takes root in spaces of resistance and hope within marginalized populations.

Embracing the words of Rebecca Solnit (2015), I propose a politicized praxis that includes love that takes root in hope and resistance and involves

> broad perspectives with specific possibilities, ones that invite or demand that we act. It's also not a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse narrative. You could call it an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings. (p. 15)

Drawing from this idea, I propose love as an approach or orientation within praxis that necessarily defies complete definition and functions within the nuances of our work in order to leave space for the complexities and openings that will undoubtedly be uncovered as politicized and decolonial love is enacted. Left with such openness, the question becomes: If decolonial love

within politicized praxis is not bound by specific definition, then how do we practice from a place of love?

In order to bring the notion of love to life in our practice, we not only need to understand the foundational concepts and ethics of the human services, but we also must make concerted efforts to engage in curiosity and learning around the ways in which historical and contemporary political processes have contributed to the oppression and marginalization of diverse others—those who deviate from white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, typically functioning, widely accepted societal norms. Loiselle, de Finney, Khanna, and Corcoran (2012) examine the ways in which colonialism has been fundamental to the policies and social climate that shape the lived experiences of Indigenous populations, particularly the ways in which "colonial processes sustain a system of chronic poverty, social exclusion, and political and cultural disenfranchisement" (p. 181).

As emphasized by participants who took part in my graduate research, a conceptual approach to love in politicized praxis must include an ongoing consideration of the lasting impacts of past and current colonial policies that have been used to divide, discredit, alienate, and eradicate cultural practices, traditional languages, and entire Indigenous populations. Ideologies and legislation such as the Indian Act, reserve system (and subsequent state-sanctioned poverty), forced sterilization, racist child welfare laws, lack of access to mental health services, overrepresentation in the justice system, and state neglect of the growing epidemic of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls only begin to scratch the surface of the myriad ways that colonization has shaped the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Clark, 2016; Deer, 2015; Flowers, 2015; Hunt, 2010; Saramo, 2016; A. Simpson, 2014; L. Simpson, 2013, 2017).

Along a similar vein within racialized communities, interconnected systems of oppression and marginalization have led to poverty, immigration and deportation issues, chronic health and mental health challenges, disproportionate numbers of incarcerated people of colour, migrant labour abuse, higher than average levels of unemployment, lateral violence, and devastating cultural loss (Dhillon, 2016; Maynard, 2017; Walia, 2013). In her book *Undoing Border Imperialism*, South Asian activist Harsha Walia (2013) discusses racialization as a method that includes

> the social, political, economic, and historical processes that utilize essentialist and monolithic racial markings to construct diverse communities of color. Whiteness, as a dominant and dominating structure that is more than a fixed identity, is able to escape these markings of identity while determining the markings of its racial others. The enduring centrality of whiteness rests in white supremacy, which [is a] . . . historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege. (p. 53)

Given the complex and multiple intersecting ways in which colonization and white supremacy have been enacted and continue to shape the lives of BIPOC peoples, and considering the reality that humans services work often involves as clientele those who face systemic injustice, practitioners must begin to develop a praxis that attends to the wholeness, dignity, and perseverance of individuals and communities to "envision alternate theories of change, especially those that rely on desire and complexity rather than damage" (Tuck, 2009, p. 188). I believe that decolonial love in politicized praxis contributes to such theories of change, driving action

forward in defiance of ongoing oppression and ultimately toward transformative shifts for marginalized communities.

An important distinction must be made in constructing a case for a loving approach in politicized praxis, which is that conceptualizations of decolonial love, social justice, and change must come from BIPOC communities themselves. Reflecting on the words of social workers Richardson and Reynolds (2012), we must be "careful to not fetishize resistance . . . and certainly everything is not an act of resistance. Our hope is to transform our communities and society so that people can experience justice, not to witness acts of resistance for their own sake" (p. 8). By pushing our own settler will and political agendas for social change, we may unwittingly reproduce the models of oppression that we seek to dismantle. BIPOC practitioners must also acknowledge and situate their privilege(s) in the work they do and the power roles they hold as service providers, in an effort to mitigate these challenges and work in collaboration and solidarity with other Indigenous and racialized groups.

Choosing Decolonial Love: Considering Power and Supercomplexity

"The political will of decolonization refuses to reproduce the present and affirms alternative futures." – Rachel Flowers, "Refusal to Forgive"

The concept of decolonial love in politicized human services work requires that practitioners adopt an ideology of praxis that is "ethical, self-aware, responsive, and accountable to action" (White, 2007, p. 226) and that embraces decolonial love as an action-oriented, politically driven, and revolutionary force that is not tokenistic or sentimentalized. Most importantly, our praxis must "[situate] sovereignty, nationhood, and land as inextricable to the work of decolonization" (Moreno & Mucina, 2019, p. 88), which, for non-Indigenous settler

practitioners, requires a complete overhaul of our origin stories as "Canadians." It is imperative that we, as frontline practitioners, establish a nuanced understanding of decolonizing praxis with BIPOC children, youth, and families as

> a broader movement ensuring that Indigenous children and youth have meaningful connections with their bodies, spirits, communities, and ancestral lands, and that they understand there is another way to live in a settler state that does not include being a vessel for racialised colonial violence and resource extraction. (de Finney, Moreno, et al., 2018, p. 33)

These action-based commitments to decolonial and politicized human service work are inextricably interconnected with love. As critical love theory scholars Lanas and Zembylas (2014) offer, "love is as love *does.* It is both an intention and an action" (p. 39, emphasis in original) and, most importantly, it requires intention and effort on the part of the practitioner. Sociologist Sean Chabot (2008) expands on this notion by asserting that "revolutionary love requires consistent effort by everyone involved, and it does not become meaningful until we leave our comfort zone and exert ourselves for other people" (p. 812). In this sense, love requires effort toward discomfort, (re)visioning, and stretching in the direction of growth, for practitioners and for BIPOC children, youth, families, and communities.

Critiques of love in the helping professions include the idea that love is a practice reserved exclusively for intimate personal relationships, the notion that love is not enough to create real change in the lives of clients, and the fear that love in practice is inappropriate, especially as it perceived as unprofessional. The professional/client binary is arguably one of the hallmarks of human service ethics that stem from colonial ways of thinking, being, and doing. I argue that in order to engage in a praxis of decolonial love, the power dynamic initiated by the

professional/client binary must be acknowledged and critiqued by each practitioner in each of their helping relationships. This concept can be further explored in my previous work with Dr. Mandeep Kaur Mucina (Moreno & Mucina, 2019).

While the love discussed in this chapter is primarily decolonial—with crucial ties to love in our relational work—I believe that love in politicized praxis need not "be viewed as separate or outside of professional practice; it can 'co-exist' with professional [human service] work" (Thumbadoo, 2011, p. 197). Love and praxis coexist in the same way that we grapple with the many other supercomplexities that continually underscore our work.

I acknowledge that decolonial love is not the singular answer to address the complexities and inequities witnessed in our work with BIPOC children, youth, and communities. I also accept that some practitioners may not be compelled to embrace love as a social, political, or decolonial project within their careers. However, whether we acknowledge it or not, supercomplexity lays the foundation of our daily practice. We are increasingly faced with a scarcity model that permeates neoliberal human service frameworks, being asked to do more with less, continuing to have funding stripped from services for our most vulnerable clients, as the pendulum swings in the direction of white supremacist, capitalist modes of resource management and practice. These are the spaces where

> everything is contested, risks are difficult to quantify, and we are required to engage with multiple open-ended questions, ambiguity, and competing frameworks. [Where] the problems and challenges we confront are often unrecognizable to us and we do not even have language or concepts to name what is going on. (White, 2015, p. 505)

I argue that only something as messy, complicated, and incommensurable as a politicized and decolonial love ethic can serve as a trustworthy guide in the navigation of these supercomplex times.

Decolonial Love in Action

"*Can love, as connection, be a tangible tool for dismantling colonial violence inside of our own hearts and in the world around us?"* – Erynne Gilpin, "From a Place of Love"

As a queer, racialized, ciswoman graduate student, researcher, practitioner, and counsellor, I have found the most powerful arguments for love as decolonial love and politicized praxis in the musings on love from BIPOC authors, poets, and activists. These voices have inspired me to continue to work in the field despite (or perhaps because of) the supercomplexities present in racialized and Indigenous communities as a result of colonialism, neoliberalism, and white supremacy. In her master's thesis, Indigenous scholar Angela Scott (2016) shares a passage on love by Ojibway writer Richard Wagamese which reads, "It's being ripped from love that causes the wound in the first place and it's only love in the end that heals it" (p. 6). With Wagamese's words in mind, it is fitting to consider sites of resistance, resurgence, and decolonization that have persisted despite the exclusion and violent lovelessness that BIPOC people continue to face within the colonial state.

These realities show up in my everyday practice with children, youth, and families who are caught up in system upon system. I insist that there are alternative ways to hold space as a practitioner that position us as critical witnesses to what people experience within these systems. By naming colonialism, systemic racism, and white supremacy, by critically exposing the neoliberal narratives of individualism that blame BIPOC people for cycles of poverty, abuse, and

addiction, and by holding people up as experts in their own lives, I begin to be able to hold space as a witness and advocate to these truths. When colonial policies and protocols dictate that my first responsibility as a frontline worker is as a surveillance ally to the child welfare system rather than as a holistic support to the BIPOC families I work with, my ethic of decolonial love is called to action. I enact this ethic by critically questioning the rules and policies and put myself on the line to disrupt the apolitical narrative that frames child welfare as benevolent support rather than as an actor of the colonial state that has violently separated BIPOC children from their families since its inception. This is just one way that decolonial love shows up in frontline praxis. It first requires that we hear and believe the experiences of BIPOC people, and second that we honour and dignify these stories by critically questioning the settler colonial contexts in which they take place.

Of course, how decolonial love is enacted must remain emergent, cocreated, and context specific, and so the specific "how" of decolonial love as praxis is as variable and unique as the BIPOC children, youth, and families that we support. On a day-to-day basis, this praxis floats on the deep waters of the unknown guided by a strong dedication to anticolonial actions that are based in the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples, recognizing and disrupting the systemic barriers that BIPOC clients face, and anchoring itself in the knowledge that BIPOC children, youth, and families deserve to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect by the people working in the flawed systems they find themselves entangled within.

Throughout the learning curve I have faced in enacting a praxis of decolonial love, I am reminded of the words of Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence, who assert that "to fail to negotiate a mutually supportive relationship [between Indigenous and racialized peoples] is to risk truly becoming "settlers," complicit in the extermination of those whose lands they occupy"

(2009, p. 119). While my existence as a racialized settler on Lekwungen speaking land is fraught with complexity, I hold an ethical responsibility to lean into the discomfort of practicing within this ongoing colonial project called Canada and continue to commit to actively doing the lifelong work of positioning myself in solidarity and accomplice-ship with BIPOC communities (Moreno & Mucina, 2019, p. 86). Moreover, this work on decolonial love is an offering of shared investment toward sovereignty building and knowledge mobilization led by Indigenous young peoples and supported by their communities.

Considerations for the World to Come

Zapotec scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (2008) highlights the common threads in ways of being across Indigenous communities by stating,

> It is not colonial history that makes us different or similar; as Indigenous Peoples, we have always been different. What unites Hawai'ians with Zapotecs, what connects the Mohawks with Mayan activists or Inuit with Nahuatls and Mixtecs is neither colonial language nor their primordial attachments, but their long survival and resistance, and their will to continue to be who they are. (p. 183)

These words bring deeper understanding to the concepts of survivance and resistance as integral components of decolonial love. To make considerations for love, including aspects of decolonial love, in our praxis is by no means a simple or easy endeavour. However, through my own risking act of decolonial love, I invite other practitioners—in particular, others who experience ongoing marginalization—to begin the task of imagining love as an approach "in which [it] is seen as relational, political, and transformative" (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p. 35) within their own praxis.

I have taken comfort in times of intense doubt, fear, and despair from writings on love and resistance by fellow queer and BIPOC poets, writers, and dreamers. By sharing their words for other BIPOC practitioners, I humbly offer my deepest gratitude to the many brilliant minds, bodies, and spirits who have inspired me to continue to approach times of hatred and uncertainty with an openness of heart and hope for the mutual crafting of our world(s) to come. There have been many moments throughout my career in which loving, politicized praxis seemed impossible given the complicated nature of what we do in our day-to-day work. Even undertaking writing about decolonial love in human service praxis for this chapter seemed implausible. When such moments of self-doubt crept in, I turned to the words of other BIPOC people, being especially inspired by Black feminist poet Nayyirah Waheed (2013), who urges, "the thing you are most afraid to write/write that." By writing about decolonial love and continuing to build on an understanding of love in praxis as political, revolutionary, and, most importantly, as a necessity for the crafting of worlds to come, I hope to contribute to the continuation of BIPOC songs, traditions, languages, and cultural resistance. My goal in theorizing decolonial love is to bring increased attention to its power and the essentiality of its force within our praxis with Indigenous and racialized children, youth, and families. Echoing Lanas and Zembylas (2014), I hope to move towards a space and time where "love *is* praxis, because it transforms and transports, which makes studies of love as relational *and* political so deserving of more attention" (p. 39, emphasis in original). As we grow to embrace love and work from an increasingly politicized foundation, I hope to see more and more practitioners and frontline workers thinking about and developing their practice through an orientation of decolonial love.

Chapter 4. Conclusion

My experiences as a graduate student with Sisters Rising have grown and stretched my learning in ways I could not have imagined. I have been honoured to participate alongside brilliant young BIPOC minds and have been guided in good spirit and integrity by Dr. Sandrina de Finney and her team with the utmost respect, dignity, and decolonial love. Working within the ethics and frameworks of Sisters Rising, I was gifted teachings around re-search—meaning "to look again, to search from our own location and search again using our own ways" (Absolon, 2011, p. 21). These teachings not only counter the damage-centered narratives about Indigenous peoples that are characteristic of colonial Western research paradigms (Tuck, 2009, p. 413), but they emerge from people and place-specific epistemologies (Tuck & Yang, 2019, p. xi) that regenerate and nurture practices of Indigenous excellence (L. Simpson, 2017, p. 31). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) further describes Indigenous excellence as "our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits produc[ing] theory and knowledge on a daily basis without conforming to the conventions of the academy . . . [which] has not only sustained our peoples, but has propelled Indigenous intellectual rigor and propelled our resurgent practices" (p. 31).

I have had an abundance of opportunities to engage in the intellectual rigour and consensual practices that form the basis for Indigenous knowledge mobilization and decolonial research practices. From being invited to work with Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services (NIFCS) to hold research workshops in northern communities across BC, to collaborating with BIPOC youth to present at research forums in Victoria, BC, Montreal, QC, and Montebello, QC, to mural making with local BIPOC young people and artists, I have witnessed and learned (and continue to relearn) how to critically embody decolonial and

resurgent practices that have been spearheaded by BIPOC young people for the well-being and thriving of their own communities (see Appendix B).

The young people in Sisters Rising have persevered in their attempts to connect intimately with all aspects of decolonial love—temporal, personal, relational, spiritual, and political. All despite the fact that Indigenous and racialized peoples, particularly youth and LGBT2SQ+ identified folks, have historically had their knowledge and experiences devalued and continue to face disproportional violence at the hands of the settler state. Rachel Flowers (2015) highlights the truth that "colonization is intimately linked to patriarchy and capital" (p. 34), situating women and feminized persons, as well as trans, queer, and 2-spirit bodies, as direct targets for colonial eradication. Similarly, Audra Simpson's (2014) work establishes how Indigenous women's bodies have historically been rendered less valuable because of what they are taken to represent: land, reproduction, kinship, and governance, an alternative to heteronormative and Victorian rules of descent. "Their bodies carry a symbolic load," she argues, "because they have been conflated with the land and are thus contaminating to a white, settler social order" (p. 156). What I have come to know from working alongside BIPOC young people in Sisters Rising is that "being with the land and water reminds [us] that [our] accountabilities lie with our relations and the future generations, not with the colonial institutions where much of our work is contained" (Mowatt et al., 2020, p. 18). Our stories, songs, traditions, and knowledges are too vast and expansive to be solely held in the container of the white supremacist, colonial academy. They live in in the land, in the waters, in the trees, in our kinship relations, and within our bodies.

As someone who is not indigenous to the territories I occupy, I interpret these re-search teachings as gifts of knowledge sharing and knowledge mobilization. As Indigenous scholar

Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) suggests, “it is understood that gifts have a dual nature . . . a gift is also a responsibility” (p. 347). With this notion in mind, I humbly share the responsibility of upholding this re-search—the memories, stories, and land- and art-based retellings generously shared with me by the participants—as contributions to the growing body of Indigenous excellence that honours young people, particularly LGBT2SQ+ youth, as “our most precious theorists” (L. Simpson, 2017, p. 144). My hope is that that these participants’ knowledges will resonate for other BIPOC researchers who find themselves confined by the narrow western perspectives of academia, and that Indigenous and racialized ways of knowing, being and doing will continue to grow in abundance in our communities and beyond.

References

Chapter 1

Absolon, K. E. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know.* Fernwood.

Brown, L., & Reitsma-Street, M. (2003). The values of community action research. *Canadian Social Work Review, 20*(1), 61–78.

Clark, N. (2016). Red intersectionality and violence-informed witnessing praxis with Indigenous girls. *Girlhood Studies, 9*(2), 46–64.

Coulthard, G., & Simpson, L. (2016). Grounded normativity / place-based solidarity. *American Quarterly, 68*(2), 249–255.

de Finney, S., Chadwick, A., Adams, C., Moreno, S., Scott, A., & Sam, S-R. (2020). Being Indigenous is not a risk factor: A Sister's Rising story of resurgence and sovereignty. In K. Gharabaghi & G. Charles (Eds.), *Child & youth care across sectors: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 6–23). Canadian Scholars.

de Finney, S., Moreno, S., Chadwick, A., Adams, C., Sam, S-R., Scott, A., & Land, N. (2018). Sisters Rising: Shape shifting settler violence through art and land retellings. In C. Mitchell & R. Moletsane (Eds.), *Disrupting shameful legacies: Girls and young women speak back through the arts to address sexual violence* (pp. 21–46). Brill Sense.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants.* Milkweed Editions.

hooks, b. (2000). *All about love: New visions.* Harper Perennial.

Laura, C. T. (2017). Intimate inquiry: A love-based approach to qualitative research. *Critical Questions in Education, 7*(3), 215–231.

McNiff, S. (2013). Preface. In S. McNiff (Ed.), *Art as research: Opportunities and challenges.* (pp. xiii–xvi). Intellect Ltd.

Richardson, C., & Reynolds, V. (2014). Structuring safety in therapeutic work alongside Indigenous survivors of residential schools. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 34*, 147–164.

Simpson, L. B. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance.* University of Minnesota Press.

Simpson, L. B. (2013). *Islands of decolonial love: Stories and songs.* Arbeiter Ring.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 223–247). Book News Inc.

Chapter 2

Absolon, K. E. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know.* Fernwood.

Amadahy, Z., & Lawrence. B. (2009). Indigenous peoples and Black people in Canada: Settlers or allies? In A. Kempf (Ed.), *Breaching the colonial contract: Anti-colonialism in the US and Canada* (pp. 105–136). Springer.

Amnesty International. (2014). *Violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada: A summary of Amnesty International's concerns and calls to action.* Author.

Brant, B. (1994). *Writing as witness: Essay and talk.* Women's Press.

Chalabi, M.(2018). How many migrant children are detained in US custody? *The Guardian,* December 22. https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2018/dec/22/migrant-children-us-custody

Clark, N. (2016). Red intersectionality and violence-informed witnessing praxis with Indigenous girls. *Girlhood Studies, 9*(2), 46–64.

D'Amato, P. (2006). The meaning of Marxism: "The border crossed us." *Socialist Worker,* April 28. https://socialistworker.org/2006-1/586/586_13_Border.php

de Finney, S., Moreno, S., Chadwick, A., Adams, C., Sam, S.-R., Scott, A., & Land, N. (2018). Sisters Rising: Shape shifting settler violence through art and land retellings. In C. Mitchell & R. Moletsane (Eds.), *Disrupting shameful legacies: Girls and young women speak back through the arts to address sexual violence* (pp. 21–46). Brill Sense.

Ferguson, A., & Toye, M. E. (2017). Feminist love studies: Editor's introduction. *Hypatia, 32*(1), 5–18.

Flowers, R. (2015). Refusal to forgive: Indigenous women's love and rage. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society, 4*(2), 32–49.

Gilpin, E. M. (2018). From a place of love. In J. Corntassel, T. Alfred, N. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, N. K. Silva, H. Aiku, & D. Mucina (Eds.), *Everyday acts of resurgence: People, places, practices* (pp. 49–52). Daykeeper Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *All about love: New visions.* Harper Perennial.

Hunt, S. (2010). Colonial roots, contemporary risk factors: A cautionary exploration of the domestic trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls in British Columbia, Canada. *Alliance News, 33*, 27–31.

Laura, C. T. (2016). Intimate inquiry: A love-based approach to qualitative research. *Critical Questions in Education, 7*(3), 215–230.

Lawrence, B., & Dua, E. (2005). Decolonizing antiracism. *Social Justice / Global Options, 32*(4), 120–143.

Lee, D. (2011). Placing knowledge as resurgence. *InTensions Journal, 5*, 1–27.

Lee, E. V. (2011). Land, language, and decolonial love. *Red Rising Magazine*, November 7. https://www.redrising.ca/

Meissner, D. (2018). Trudeau defends decision to buy Trans Mountain pipeline at Vancouver Island event." *The Canadian Press,* August 4. https://globalnews.ca/news/4371887/trudeau-defends-government-buying-trans-mountain/

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/

Saramo, S. (2016). Unsettling spaces: Grassroots responses to Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women during the Harper government years. *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal, 14*(3–4), 204–220.

Simpson, A. (2014). *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the border of settler states.* Duke University Press.

Simpson, J. S., James, C. E., & Mack, J. (2011). Multiculturalism, colonialism and racialization: Conceptual starting points. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 33*(4), 285–305.

Simpson, L. B. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance.* University of Minnesota Press.

Smiley, C. (2013). *Indigenous girls and the Canadian state*. http://www.justiceforgirls.org/uploads/2/4/5/0/24509463/indigenous_girls_and_the_canadian_state.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). What we have learned: Principles of truth and reconciliation. http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles_English_Web.pdf

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society, 1*(1), 1–40.

Ureña, C. (2017). Loving from below: Of (de)colonial love and other demons. *Hypatia, 32*(1), 86–102.

Walia, H. (2013). *Undoing border imperialism.* AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies.

White, J. (2015). An ethos for the times: Difference, imagination, and the unknown future in child and youth care. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 6*(4), 498–515.

Wilson, A., & Laing, M. (2019). Queering Indigenous education. In L. T. Smith, E. Tuck, & K. W. Yang, *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view* (pp. 131–146). Routledge.

Yintah Access. (2019). Gidimt'en Yintah Access. https://www.yintahaccess.com (accessed 30 March 2019).

Chapter 3

Allooloo, S. (2014). Outrage to radical love: Will you stand with #ItEndsHere? http://rabble.ca/news/2014/03/outrage-to-radical-love-will-you-stand-itendshere

Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2008). The colonization and decolonization of indigenous diversity. In L. Simpson (Ed.), *Lighting the eighth fire: The liberation, resurgence, and protection of indigenous nations.* (pp. 175–186). Arbeiter Ring.

Amadahy, Z., & Lawrence, B. (2009). Indigenous peoples and Black people in Canada: Settlers or allies? In A. Kempf (Ed.), *Breaching the colonial contract: Anti-colonialism in the US and Canada* (pp. 105–136). Springer.

Amponsah, P., & Stephen, J. (2020). Developing a practice of African-centered solidarity in child and youth care. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, (11)*2, 6–24.

Artz, S. (2000). The meaning of love in the teaching and healing arts. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 29*(5), 293–298.

Chabot, S. (2008). Love and revolution. *Critical Sociology, 39*(6), 803–828.

Clark, N. (2016). Red intersectionality and violence-informed witnessing praxis with Indigenous girls. *Girlhood Studies, 9*(2), 46–64.

Daniel, B. J., & Jean-Pierre, J. (2020). Re-imagining child and youth care practice with African Canadian youth. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, (11)*2, 25–39.

Davis, H., & Sarlin, P. (2011). *No one is sovereign in love: A conversation between Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt.* Amour No. 18. http://nomorepotlucks.org/site/no-one-is-sovereign-in-love-a-conversation-between-lauren-berlant-and-michael-hardt

Deer, S. (2015). *The beginning and end of rape: Confronting sexual violence in native America.* University of Minnesota Press.

de Finney, S. (2015). Playing Indian and other settler stories: Disrupting western narratives of Indigenous girlhood. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, (21)*2, 169–181.

de Finney, S., Chadwick, A., Adams, C., Moreno, S., Scott, A., Sam, S. R. (2020). Being Indigenous is not a risk factor: A Sisters Rising story of resurgence and sovereignty. In K. Gharabaghi & G. Charles (Eds.), *Child and youth care across sectors: Canadian perspectives* (Vol 2; pp. 6–23). CSP Books Inc.

de Finney, S., Dean, M., Loiselle, E., & Saraceno, J. (2011). All children are equal, but some are more equal than others: Minoritization, structural inequities, and social justice praxis in residential care. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 2*(3/4), 361–384.

de Finney, S., Moreno, S., Chadwick, A., Adams, C., Sam, S. R., Scott, A., & Land, N. (2018). Sisters Rising: Shape shifting settler violence through art and land retellings. In C. Mitchell & R. Moletsane (Eds.), *Disrupting shameful legacies: Girls and young women speak back through the arts to address sexual violence.* (pp. 21–46). Brill Sense.

de Finney, S., Palacios, L., Mucina, M. K., Chadwick, A. (2018). Refusing band-aids: Unsettling "care" under the carceral settler state. *CYC-Online, 235,* 28–38.

de Leeuw, S., Greenwood, M., & Cameron, E. (2009). Deviant constructions: How governments preserve colonial narratives of addictions and poor mental health to intervene into the lives of Indigenous children and families in Canada. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 8*(2), 282–295.

Dhillon, J. K. (2015). Indigenous girls and the violence of settler colonial policing. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society, 4*(2), 1–31.

Ferguson, A., & Toye, M. E. (2017). Feminist love studies: Editor's introduction. *Hypatia, 32*(1), 5–18.

Flowers, R. (2015). Refusal to forgive: Indigenous women's love and rage. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 4*(2), 32–49.

Garfat, T., & Fulcher, L. (2012). Characteristics of a relational child and youth care approach. In T. Garfat & L. Fulcher (Eds.), *Child and youth care in practice,* (pp. 5–24). CYC-Net Press.

Gilpin, E. M. (2018). From a place of love. In J. Corntassel, T. Alfred, N. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, N. Silva, H. Aikau, & D. Mucina (Eds.), *Everyday acts of resurgence: People, places, practices* (pp. 49–52). Daykeeper Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *All about love: New visions.* Harper Perennial.

Hunt, S. (2010). Colonial roots, contemporary risk factors: A cautionary exploration of the domestic trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls in British Columbia, Canada. *Alliance News, 33*, 27–31.

Lanas, M., & Zembylas, M. (2014). Towards a transformational political concept of love in critical education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 34*, 31–44.

Lee, E. V. (2016, Nov 7). Land, language, and decolonial love. *Red Rising Magazine.* http://redrisingmagazine.ca/

Loiselle, E., de Finney, S., Khanna, N., & Corcoran, R. (2012). "We need to talk about it!": Doing CYC as politicized praxis. *Child & Youth Services, 33*(3–4), 178–205.

Maynard, R. (2017). *Policing Black lives: State violence in Canada from slavery to the present*. Fernwood.

Moreno, S. (2019). Love as resistance: Exploring conceptualizations of decolonial love in settler states. *Girlhood Studies, 12*(3), 116–133.

Moreno, S., & Mucina, M. K. (2019). Cultivating a racialized practitioner ethic: A guide for the human services. *Intersectionalities: A Global Journal of Social Work Analysis, Research, Policy, and Practice, 7*(1), 82–104.

Mowatt, M., de Finney, S., Wright Cardinal, S., Tenning, J., Haiyupis, P., Gilpin, E., Harris, D., MacLeod, A., Claxton, N. X. (2020). ȻENTOL TŦE TEN̲EW̲ (Together with the land):

Part 1: Indigenous land- and water-based pedagogies. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 11*(3), 12–33.

Ranahan, P. (2000). Reaching beyond caring to loving in child and youth care practice. *Journal of Child and Youth Care, 13*(4), 55–65.

Richardson, C., & Reynolds, V. (2012). "Here we are amazingly alive": Holding ourselves together with an ethic of social justice in community work. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 3*(1), 1–19.

Saramo, S. (2016) Unsettling spaces: Grassroots responses to Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women during the Harper government years. *Comparative American Studies*: *An International Journal*, *14*(3–4), 204–220.

Scott, A. (2016). *"We don't feel that love": Retrospective reflections on the experiences of removal, transitions, and trauma from former youth in care* (Master's thesis). https://dspace.library.uvic.ca//handle/1828/7492

Simpson, A. (2014). *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the border of settler states.* Duke University Press.

Simpson, L. B. (2013). *Islands of decolonial love: Stories and songs.* Arbeiter Ring.

Simpson, L. B. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance.* University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, M. (2006). Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice, 19*(4), 5–17.

Smith, M. (2011). Love and the child and youth care relationship. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice, 24(*1/2), 189–192.

Solnit, R. (2015). *Hope in the dark: Untold histories, wild possibilities* (3rd ed.). Haymarket Books.

Thumbadoo, Z. (2011). Isbindi: Love in caring with a child and youth care approach. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice 24*(1/2), 193–198.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(3), 409–427.

Vincent, J. (2016). *Teaching (with) love: Relational engagement in educational settings* (Master's thesis). https://dspace.library.uvic.ca//handle/1828/7299

Waheed, N. (2013). *Salt.* CreateSpace Independent Publishing.

Walia, H. (2013). *Undoing border imperialism.* AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies.

White, J. (2007). Knowing, doing, and being in context: A praxis-oriented approach to child and youth care. *Child and Youth Care Forum, 36*, 225–244.

White, J. (2015). An ethos for the times: Difference, imagination, and the unknown future in child and youth care. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 6*(4), 498–515.

Chapter 4

Absolon, K. E. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know.* Fernwood.

Flowers, R. (2015). Refusal to forgive: Indigenous women's love and rage. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 4*(2), 32–49.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants.* Milkweed Editions.

Mowatt, M., de Finney, S., Wright Cardinal, S., Tenning, J., Haiyupis, P., Gilpin, E., Harris, D., MacLeod, A., Claxton, N. X. (2020). ȻENTOL TŦE TEN̲EW̲ (Together with the land):

Part 1: Indigenous land- and water-based pedagogies. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 11*(3), 12–33.

Simpson, A. (2014). *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the border of settler states.* Duke University Press.

Simpson, L. B. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance.* University of Minnesota Press.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(3), 409–427.

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

SISTERS RISING

A Community Based Research Project

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in Sisters Rising, a research study to support Indigenous girls' and young people's safety, dignity, healing and strengths. Sisters Rising is focused on blanketing and honouring girls and youth from a strong First Nations perspective. Our project invites young people like you to use **artwork** to explore issues such as sexual health, safety, sovereignty, strong cultural teachings, and standing up against racism and violence.

Girls and young people are not often included in research–this is a chance to share your thoughts and make valuable connections with others!

Who can participate? All **self-identified Native** (Aboriginal, First Nations, Indigenous, Metis, mixed, Inuit, on and off reserve) and **self-identified racialized** (Black, Brown,

persons of colour (POC), mixed) young women and LBTQ+, 2-Spirit, non-binary folks (ages 18-30) are welcome.

You will receive a cash honoraria and certificate of participation

To sign up or for more information about this study, please contact us!

Shantelle Moreno, Research Assistant | shantellemoreno@gmail.com

Website: sistersrising.uvic.ca | Facebook: sistersrisingproject

Why is this study so important?[1]

- Indigenous young women make up 61 per cent of sexual-violence victims
- In BC, Indigenous girls in care are the victims of sexual violence more than twice as often as other girls in care. When girls are removed from their families and communities, they tend to move around a lot and may lose their connections with their mentors, cultures and homelands
- Girls with special needs may be more at risk due to isolation and gaps in care
- Young women transitioning out of care are particularly vulnerable due to lack of housing and employment, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and survival sex work
- Two spirit, gender fluid, queer and trans youth may also face additional isolation and stigmatization, and may have fewer supports from community and family
- Actual incidents are under-reported due to silencing, stigma and shame

Sexualized violence includes all forms of sexual threats, assault, abuse, and exploitation, in person and online, regardless of the relationship you hold with the person. Sexualized violence can lead to many other issues that impact young people's lives, including pain, shame, self-blame, isolation, mental health issues, and exposure to other forms of violence and exploitation.

Study goals

We acknowledge that sexualized violence is a difficult and sensitive topic. Participants will NOT be asked questions that invade their privacy expose or reveal stories that creates unsafe situations. Counselling referrals will be available if required.

- Honor the experiences of girls and young people of all genders regarding sexualized violence
- Document community resources and cultural practices that support girls' and young people's positive roles and leadership in their communities
- Use our website (sistersrising.uvic.ca) to produce youth-friendly materials and showcase participants' messages, artwork and creative ideas
- Produce concrete products in the form of a website, reports, and publications
- Share study findings with other girls, young people, communities, organizations, researchers, front-line workers, educators, community leaders and organizations

What will I do?

There are many ways to get involved! Research workshops are being held this summer in your community! You are invited to share your thoughts using arts-based methods such as artwork, pictures, painting, storytelling, poetry, blogs, video, crafts, beading, and much more. You can participate in drop-in groups with other girls and youth, chat with someone one on one, or submit your ideas on our website.

You might explore topics such as your own vision for your future and your community's future, cultural healing, being on the land, ideas about stopping violence against girls and youth, supporting your wellbeing and leadership, healthy relationships, consent, self care, engaging with youth of all genders about sexual violence, and understanding the historical roots of sexual violence.

Where will this be shown?

This study is hosted on a public website (sistersrising.uvic.ca). You will choose and post artwork and quotes that you would like to share with other youth and communities across Canada and the world. You can use your name or be totally anonymous (i.e., not identify your face, name or community in any way). Service providers, youth, Elders and community members will also be invited to participate.

Join the conversation! This same project is also happening in other First Nations communities in Canada and also in South Africa. You can learn more about the international project at

networks4change.org

Why does this matter?

Sexualized violence **is an issue that should concern everyone.** Indigenous and racialized young women experience high rates of sexualized violence because of systemic issues, NOT individual failings. At a national and international level, the roots of sexual violence lie in hundreds of years of colonialism. Systemic issues include colonial violence, poverty, sexism, racism, intergenerational trauma, isolation, and social stigma. As a result, there is a lack of culturally appropriate, community-level services to respond to and prevent sexualized violence. Indigenous girls' and young people's safety and wellbeing are jeopardized by an insufficient service, policy and jurisdictional landscape that creates too many loopholes and gaps.

Our project is focused on supporting community-generated approaches and recentering customary gender and sexuality teachings that honor youth's sacred gifts and that support land and body sovereignty.

To sign up or for more information about this study, please contact us!

sistersrising@uvic.ca Facebook: sistersrisingproject

Shantelle Moreno, Research Assistant & MA Candidate

email: shantellemoreno@gmail.com

You can also contact the principal researcher Dr. Sandrina de Finney

Associate Professor, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Siem Smun'eem Indigenous Child Wellbeing Research Network

sistersrising@uvic.ca

About this study

This study is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, in partnership with the Siem Smun'eem Indigenous Child Wellbeing Research Network. Funding is provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC).

[1]Byrne, T., W., Abbot and Knowledge and Information Services, BC Ministry of Citizen's Services (2011). *Stopping violence against Aboriginal women: A summary of root causes, vulnerabilities and recommendations from key literature.* Victoria, BC: Ministry of Citizen's Services; Representative for Children and Youth (2016). *Too many victims: Sexualized violence in the lives of children and youth in care.* Victoria, BC: British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth; Native Women's Association of Canada (2014). *Sexual exploitation and tracking of Aboriginal women and girls: Literature review and key informant interviews.* Akwesasne, ON: Native Women's Association of Canada

Appendix B: Workshop and Research Forum Images

Shantelle at a Sisters Rising mask making workshop

“Family Tree” by Sisters Rising participant Kathryn McLeod

“Tree of Love” by Sisters Rising participant Keisha Jones

"Layered" and "Birthright" by Sisters Rising participant Emery Whitney

"Heart Talk" a workshop conversation with Shantelle Moreno & Emery Whitney

Arts- and Land-Based Materials

“Four Birds” by 2-Spirit Sisters Rising participant

Workshop with NICFS in northern BC

Bodymapping workshop with youth on Lekwungen & W̱SÁNEĆ territory

“Our Love is in the Land” Shantelle in northern BC

Sisters Rising's International Research Forum

Some of the Sisters Rising Research Forum Team

Sisters Rising crew in Montebello, QC

“Junior and Senior” facilitating workshops on W̱SÁNEĆ and Lekwungen territories

“Kinship Love” Anna and Shantelle on the bus in Montreal, QC

“Labour of Love” Sisters Rising presentation