

From Xwelítem Ways Towards Practices of Ethical Being in Stó:lō Téméxw:
A Narrative Approach to Transforming Intergenerational White Settler Subjectivities

by

Robyn Heaslip

Master of Resource Management, Simon Fraser University, 2008
Bachelor of Science, University of Victoria, 2003

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Indigenous Governance

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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What must we transform in ourselves as white settlers to become open to the possibility of ethical, respectful, authentic relationships with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands? Situating this research in Stó:lō Téméxw (Stó:lō lands/world) and in relationships with Stó:lō people, this question has become an effort to understand what it means to be *xwelítem* and how white settlers might transform *xwelítem* ways of being towards more ethical ways of being. *Xwelítem* is a Halq'eméylem concept used by Stó:lō people which translates as the hungry, starving ones, and is often used to refer to ways of being many Stó:lō associate with white settler colonial society, past and present. Drawing on insights and wisdom of Stó:lō and settler mentors I consider three aspects of *xwelítem* ways of being. First, to be *xwelítem* is to erase Stó:lō presence, culture and nationhood, colonial history and contemporary colonial realities of Indigenous oppression and dispossession, and settler privilege. Second, being *xwelítem* means attempting to dominate, control, and repress those who are painted as “inferior” in dominant cultural narratives, it means plugging into racist colonial narratives and stereotypes. Third, being *xwelítem* is to be hungry and greedy, driven by consumption and lacking respect, reverence and reciprocity for the land. Guided by Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies, critical place inquiry, narrative therapy, and autoethnography, I shape three narratives that speak to each aspect of being *xwelítem*, looking back towards its roots and forward towards pathways of transformation. I draw on interviews and experiences with Stó:lō and settler mentors, personal narratives, family history, and literature from critical Indigenous studies, anti-colonial theory, settler colonial studies, analytic psychology, and critical race theory.

I aim to share what I have learned *from* rather than *about* Stó:lō culture, stories, teachings, and practices as these have been shared in relationships and as they have pushed me towards seeing anew myself and my family, communities, histories, and cultures. I have also walked this path as I have become a mom, and the co-alignment of these journeys has meant a focus on my role as a parent in recognizing and intervening with becoming/being xwelítem as it influences my daughter. I specifically center the space of intergenerational parent-child relationships and intimate family experiences as a deep influence on developing white settler subjectivities, and therefore also a relational space of profound transformative potential. I end with a call for settlers to offer our gifts towards the wellbeing of the land and Indigenous peoples through cycles of reciprocity as a basis for ethical relationships. Transforming white settler subjectivities is situated within the broader vision of participating in co-resistance, reparations and restitution, of bringing about justice and harmony, which inherently involves supporting the self-determination and resurgence of Indigenous peoples.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgments	vii
Glossary of Halq'eméylem Terms, Place Names and Xwelmexw Names.....	ix
<u>Part 1: Towards Centering Xwelítem Ways</u>	1
Chapter 1: Intergenerational Subjectivities, Family and Place – Two Narratives to Begin	2
Re-reading Family Stories Against the Canadian Peacemaker Mythology	7
Beginning to see Xwelítem ways	14
Learning <i>from</i> —an Ethical Space of Engagement.....	17
Introducing Three Narratives of Transformation	25
Summary.....	32
Chapter 2: Status on the Land, Social Locations and Subjectivity – From Politics of Identity towards Practices of Becoming	34
Settler Status: Occupiers of Indigenous lands	34
Social Locations and a Multidimensional Settler Colonialism	41
Subjectivity, Relationality and Consciousness: Being Xwelítem	44
Chapter 3: Guidance for Decolonizing White Settler Research and Action	50
Intervene with Contemporary Shape-Shifting Settler Colonialism.....	51
Co-resistance, Reparations and Restitution	59
See and Respect Indigenous Homelands	66
Turn the Lens on the White Settler Problem	78
Storytelling Methodologies and Relational Ethics	86
Summary.....	95
<u>Part 2: Narratives of Transformation</u>	99
Chapter 4: From Everyday Practices of Erasure to Colonial Exposure, Radical Imagination and the Centring of Difference	100
Colonial Exposure: the Makings of Yarrow in Ts'elxwéyeqw, Semá:th and Lexwsá:q Lands	105
Shape-shifting Erasure: Obscuring Indigenous–Settler Difference.....	122
Reclaiming my Place as a Link in a Chain.....	132

Radical Imaginings: A Personal Narrative of Early Canada	136
White Settler Indigenization in Canada: Erasure via Métis-ization	144
Towards Co-existence with Discomfort	151
Chapter 5: Releasing the Emotional Roots of White Settler Colonial Racism and Oppression.....	155
Unconscious Roots of Racism: from Ignorance to Neurosis.....	160
Stó:lō Women’s Wisdom: Centring Childhood, Families and Emotion	168
Fanon, White Settler Racism and Children’s Socialization in the Family	171
Bodies and Shadows: Pathways towards Emotional Transformation	209
Re-centring Indigenous Healing, Returning to Land and Spirit.....	216
Chapter 6: From Xwelitem Hunger Towards Respect, Reverence, Reciprocity.....	220
Being Xwelitem: Hunger, Greed and Spiritual Disconnect	220
Centring Pathways of Spiritual Reconnection.....	224
Indigenous Land-based Pedagogy and Mentorship.....	226
Looking Back to Ancestral Land-Connected Heritages	238
Returning to Stó:lō Wisdom — Gifting, Teachings, Land.....	264
Part 3: Closing Reflections.....	271
Chapter 7: Towards Ethical Being.....	272
Offering Ourselves to the Land and it’s People	275
Intergenerational Subjectivities and White Settler Colonial Parenting	278
Bibliography	284

Acknowledgments

I raise my hands in deep gratitude and thanks:

To my daughter, Fairsa, for coming to join us here, for sharing your wisdom, joy, love, and spirit, for teaching me everyday just by being who you are.

To my family, especially my parents, Rohn and Jackie Heaslip, and my partner, Atef Abdelkefi, for your loving support, encouragement and willingness to go on this path with me.

To Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láq – you have been a constant guide, companion, and inspiration, respected and loved friend, mentor and auntie. Yalh yexw kw’as hoy siyá:ye.

To the UVic Indigenous Governance program, and especially my supervisor Taiaiake Alfred and committee member Jeff Corntassel – for your courageous leadership in creating the space and the community that you have, for supporting your students to challenge ourselves to grow in all aspects of our being. To many of my IGov colleagues and to the Hawaiian scholars and students who welcomed us in the 2012 IGov-University of Hawaii Indigenous Politics exchange course, for the many conversations, and especially the transformative space shared together on the sacred island of Kaho’olawe.

To all the xwélmexw friends, mentors and colleagues, who have led me down this path with patience, respect, thoughtfulness and humour, and above all caring and friendship. To those who gave me a chance and continued to believe in and support me from Stó:lō Tribal Council: Kat Pennier, Tyrone McNeil, and Ernie Crey, and from the Stó:lō Research & Resource Management Center: Sonny McHalsie. To Otis Jasper and Frank Andrew, for each in your own way challenging me towards a deeper understanding of myself, sharing of yourselves and taking me seriously. To the many Stó:lō slhá:lí whose groundedness, commitment, and strength as women, mothers and grandmothers helped me to see the ways of being that were possible. To Wenona Victor for your ongoing belief in me, the work you have done which has carved a path for many, and your frank honesty when I needed it. To June Quipp, Melody Andrews, Denise Alexis, Patricia Kelly, Carrielynn Victor, Susan Johnny, Joanne Guterrez Hugh and Julie

Guitierrez – I am honoured you have shared parts of your life journeys with me as mentors and friends and deeply inspired by how you each carry yourselves in the world. To Sakej Ward for the energy, integrity and clarity with which you speak such deep truths. To Larry Commodore for your commitment to community organizing and building networks of solidarity. To Eddie Gardner and Ernie Victor for keeping Sth'óqwi and the waters of Stó:lō Temexw in focus, reminding me of the eagle's view.

To all the settler friends, colleagues and contributors to this work for your vulnerability, honesty, commitment and wisdom: Marion Robinson, Louise Mandell, David Champion, Sandra Shields, Bill Chu, Darryl Klassen and Dave Schaepe. Special thanks to Paulette Regan and Jim Tully for your on-going mentorship and for leading the way for this conversation in your writing, teaching and broader lives. To my dear friends Mali Bain and Metha Brown for our conversations and your willingness to read early drafts. To my sister, Ashley Heaslip, and friends, Amal Jnidi and Fawaz Zakaria, for sharing your homes for me to have quiet space to write. And to my distant relatives André Lefort, Gary Earl and Wayne Wickson for your tenacity and commitment in keeping and sharing our family histories. To many in the Yarrow Ecovillage community for the leadership you hold in living in a good way with the land, and especially to Michael and Suzanne Hale for the support and review of my work. To Dania Sheldon for your very helpful editing.

Finally, to the sacred spirit that flows through all beings; to Qoqó:lem, Lhílheqey, Stó:lō, Lhewá:lmel, and all the mountains, waterways and beings of xáxe Stó:lō Téméxw.

Glossary of Halq'eméylem Terms, Place Names and Xwelmeqw Names¹

Ch'iyáqtel, (Tzeachten,) a Ts'elxwéyeqw community on the upper reaches of the lower Chilliwack River, now Chilliwack Indian Reserve #13 near Sardis. Direct translation is “fish weir.”²

Chowéthel (Chawathil), Stó:lō community with a number of village sites/present day reserves around Hope. Associated with a large gravel bar that protrudes into the Fraser River.³

Halq'eméylem, dialect of Halkomelem spoken by the upriver Stó:lō, from Matsqui to Yale – this actual term is associated with Leq'á:mel (now known as Nicomen Island) near Deroche – was a place “where lots of people used to gather.”⁴

I:yem, translates as “strong, lucky place” in the Fraser canyon.⁵

Kw'ekw'e'í:qw, means “head sticking up or facing up” and refers to Sumas Mountain sticking up out of the water during the great flood. Later on, the name was also used in reference to the heads of sturgeon left exposed after the draining of Sumas Lake.⁶ Also the name of Sumas village or Kilgard.

Kw'eqwalith'a (Coqualeetza), Coqualeetza stream especially where it joins Luckakuck Creek. Later site of Coqualeetza residential school, then hospital, then Indian cultural center and Education Training center. Today the site of Stó:lō Nation and Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe offices.

Lexwsá:q (Nooksack), Indigenous tribe based in the watershed of the Nooksack River from the high mountain area surrounding Mt. Baker to the salt water at Bellingham Bay, and extended into Canada north of Lynden and in the Sumas area.⁷

¹ Explanations of Halq'eméylem terms and place names in this glossary are derived from Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. Any additional information provided is cited separately.

² Wee Lay Laq, *Up-River Halq'eméylem 101 Course Pack*. P. 84

³ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. P. 141

⁴ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination” P. xi.; Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. P. 223. Wenona has recently changed her name from Wenona Victor to Wenona Hall. Wherever I cite her previous work published as Wenona Victor I cite her using this name with Hall in brackets. Elsewhere throughout the text when referring to her, and not specifically her previously published work, I use Wenona Hall.

⁵ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. P. 142.

⁶ Carlson et al. P. 142

⁷ Richardson, “Nooksack Indian Tribe: History.”

Lhewá:lmel, an old course of the Chilliwack river, now Vedder river. The river that flowed from Chilliwack Lake to Sumas Lake – meaning of name is “left its course” as this river did on several occasions.⁸

Q'éyts'i (Katzie), Katzie village, translates as “moss – many colors”, “thick”, “packed”, “jammed.”⁹

Qoqó:lem, Vedder Mountain, translates as “drinking place.”¹⁰

Qw'ó:tl'el (Kwantlen), downriver people, translates as “river and salt water meet.”¹¹

Salí:ts or **Saneats**, a Semá:th village towards the eastern edge of Semá:th lake near present-day Yarrow. May have been on stilts to keep away from mosquitos.¹²

Semá:th (Sumas), a Stó:lō tribe based around Sumas lake and connected waterways and Kw'ekw'e'í:qw (Sumas mountain). The translation of Semá:th refers to the thick grass and reeds that grow along the edge of the river.¹³ Sometimes referred to as Kilgard.

Shxw'owhámél, Stó:lō community, also known as Ohamil Reserve or sometimes Laidlaw. Literally translates as “where the river levels and widens.”¹⁴

Siyá:m, leader, respected person.

Siyá:ye, friend, word used to describe a loved one, although not able to identify direct blood or ancestral tie.¹⁵

Siyolexwálh, elders past, deceased old people.

Sq'ewqéyl (Skowkale), Ts'elxwéyeqw community along the old Chilliwack River route. Translates as “a bend in the river.” Also the name of a spring-water stream south of the village.

Swí:lhcha, Ts'elxwéyeqw village site at Cultus Lake near Hatchery Creek. A Department of Fisheries and Oceans laboratory now sits near this site. In the *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*, Galloway also uses Swí:lhcha to refer to all of Cultus lake.¹⁶

⁸ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.”

⁹ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See Map C (p. 138) and Plate 45F (p. 145).

¹⁰ Carlson et al. P. 145

¹¹ Wee Lay Laq, *Up-River Halq'emeylem 101 Course Pack*. P. 83

¹² Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors* see p. 76-81; Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, see Map D (p. 139).

¹³ Wee Lay Laq, *Up-River Halq'emeylem 101 Course Pack*. P. 83

¹⁴ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. P.147

¹⁵ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. xiii.

¹⁶ Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. P. 134.

S'ólh Téméxw, often translated to mean “Our land/Our world.” In the words of Ethel Gardner, it is “not simply a representation of the physicality of the world, but a representation of a holistic concept that binds the people spiritually to the physical world, to each other, and to all our ancestors.”¹⁷

Stó:lō Téméxw, the lands and world of the Stó:lō people. While Stó:lō people refer to their lands/world as S'ólh Téméxw meaning “Our land/Our world,” my mentor and Halq'emeylem language teacher Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láy, suggested it is appropriate for non-Stó:lō people to refer to the physical and spiritual lands and world of the Stó:lō people as Stó:lō Téméxw.¹⁸ I choose to use S'ólh Téméxw in the text when I am directly referring to the comments of a Stó:lō mentor, otherwise I choose to use Stó:lō Téméxw.

St'áxem or *S'téxem*, low-status or worthless people who do not know their history and *Smelá:lh*, worthy people who know their history.¹⁹

Sth'ó:qwi, salmon.

Stó:lō, Fraser River, the people of the river.

Swí:we, eulachon or candlefish.

Sxexo:mes (singular: *sxó:mes*), gifts from the creator; gifts from our ancestors.²⁰

Sxótsaqel, Chilliwack Lake, translates as “sacred lake.”²¹

Sxwōxwiyám, ancient stories of importance to the Stó:lō, include transformations performed by *Xexá:ls* and speak to “teachings,” and Stó:lō laws.²²

Syuwá:lelh, words of Stó:lō ancestors – “*Syuwá:lelh* is not meant to be written down, at least not on paper. *Syuwá:lelh* is meant to be lived, written on our hearts so we can breathe life back into it.”²³

Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie), Ts'elxwéyeqw community and Indian Reserve near Vedder Crossing, also name of village where Sweltzer Creek met Chilliwack River. Translates literally as “melted or wasting away.”²⁴

¹⁷ Gardner (Stelomethet), “Tset Hikwstexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'emeylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People.”

¹⁸ Conversation with Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láy, Sept 29, 2017.

¹⁹ Gardner (Stelomethet), “Tset Hikwstexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'emeylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People.” P. 30.

²⁰ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. xv

²¹ Carlsh et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See Map A p. 137 and translation on p. 150.

²² Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. xv

²³ Victor. P. 305

Tómiyeqw, great, great, great, great grandchild/ren, great great great, great grandparent/s.

Ts'elxwéyeqw (Chilliwack), a Stó:lō tribe whose ancestral history connects to the head of Chilliwack Lake. Ts'elxwéyeqw territory starts between Cheam and Elk Mountains, includes the Chilliwack Lake and Chilliwack River areas, and extends south to Nooksack and west to where Sumas Lake used to be.²⁵ Literal translation means “going back upstream, backwater.”²⁶ Ts'elxwéyeqw ancestral village sites include: **Selóysi** (Selesse Creek), **Iy'oythel** (above Anderson flats), **Xéyles** and **Tháthem:als** (both approx. 1km upstream from Vedder Crossing), **Stitós** (at Vedder Crossing).²⁷

Xexá:ls, the four offspring of Red Headed Woodpecker and Black Bear who travelled S'ólh Téméxw making the world right.²⁸

Xwelítem; in linguist Brent Galloway's *Dictionary of UpRiver Halkomelem*, xwelítem refers to “white people,” with elders suggesting the root to be “**xwá**” meaning “starve, be starving, be famished, (be extremely hungry since the first Whites were often in this state when they arrived, always asking about food, etc).”²⁹ As put by Keith Carlson, “both folk etymologies and the work of professional linguists such as Brent Galloway state that Xwelítem is the Halq'eméylem term for someone who is ‘hungry to the point of starving.’”³⁰ In the book *You Are Asked to Witness: the Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History* published by Stó:lō Heritage Trust, xwelítem is used to refer to “mainstream Canadians of European descent,” with its literal translation being “‘hungry people,’ an expression with deep historical as well as metaphorical meaning.”³¹

Xwélmexw, “the “Nation” to which the Stó:lō belong can be defined by those who are Xwélmexw or “of the same people” and practice the ancient tradition of **milha** (spirit-dance, winter-dance).³² In contemporary use, xwélmexw is also a way to refer to Indigenous people more generally.

Xwelmexw Names

Eyem Shxweli Shláli, Melody Andrews, translates as “Strong Spirited Woman.”

²⁴ Wee Lay Laq, *Up-River Halq'emeylem 101 Course Pack*.

²⁵ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 146.

²⁶ Wee Lay Laq, *Up-River Halq'emeylem 101 Course Pack*. P. 85

²⁷ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See Map p. 137 and associated insets and tables.

²⁸ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” p. xvi

²⁹ Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. P. 925-926. Note: Galloway also indicates another elder suggested the word might be related to the Chinook Jargon word for bullet. Wenona Hall also mentioned she has heard xwelítem explained as meaning to do with being a visitor who stays to long.

³⁰ Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*. P. 317.

³¹ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. See P. i, ii, and P. 65.

³² Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” p. 137

Hiyolemtel, Clarence Pennier (Grand Chief)

Kw'itsel Tátel – Patricia Kelly, translates as “Mother grizzly bear.”

Lhó:kw'eláléxw, Siyolexwálh Dan Milo.

Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láy. Lumlamelut is the twin sister of the leader Wileleq the 6th of the Ts'elxweyqw people.³³

Naxaxalhts'i, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie

θe'łactən, Old Pierre from Q'éyts'i (Katzie). Also spelled Xa'xthelten³⁴ and Thelhatsstan³⁵ in Carlson 2010:135.

Q'um Q'um Xiim, Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald

Sioliya, June Quipp.

Squ:athom, Frank Andrew, name passed down through paternal grandfather August Andrew and means “no one can touch you by saying a bad word about you. No one can criticize you for what you do; let him be, he is doing good work”.

Stelómethet, Dr. Ethel Gardner

Ts'imalanoxw, Ernie Victor

Ts'qwelemót, Wenona Hall, also carries the name *Qwí:qwelstom* meaning “justice.”

T'úlémspá:th – Eddie Gardner, translates as “singing bear”

T'xwelátse, First Ancestor of the *Ts'elxwéyeqw*, current name carrier is Herb Joe and Simon Roberts.³⁶

Xwiyálemot – Joanne Guitierrez-Hugh, name passed on to her from Siyolexwálh Tillie Guitierrez, means “Very strong standing person.”

Sisaqiweltel – Ernie Crey

Xeyteleq – Ray Silver.

³³ Lerman, *Legends of the River People*. P. 11-15. Story shared with me by Lumlamelut (Laura Wee Láy Láy), June 16, 2013.

³⁴ Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*.

³⁵ Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*. P. 135

³⁶ Sto:lo Research & Resource Management Center, “Man Turned to Stone: T'xwelatse.” P. xix

Part 1: Towards Centering Xwelítem Ways

Chapter 1: Intergenerational Subjectivities, Family and Place – Two Narratives to Begin

When my daughter, Fairisa, wakes up, we begin each day looking out the window at the mountain that hovers over the Yarrow Ecovillage Community Farm and much of the town of Yarrow. On the far side of this mountain, to the east, is Cultus Lake and the far side to the south of this mountain crosses the Canada–US border into Washington State. On and off, I have lived in Chilliwack since I started working with Stó:lō organizations in 2008. Outside of my paternal grandfather’s meaningful, albeit brief, connection with this place during World War II, I do not have family history or ancestry here. I lived in rental units, shared spaces, transient habitations, always returning to the city and always moving. At the same time, I felt increasingly rooted in a relational sense—in the sense of having friends I saw regularly who had begun to feel like another family, and in the sense of having special spots by the river where I liked to go and sit. When I moved to the Yarrow Ecovillage, my relationship with this mountain began. I then met my partner, Atef, our daughter was born, and we chose to make our family home in this place. We later purchased a home in the Yarrow Ecovillage, and along with this came a sense of commitment to the community and the place; it began to feel like “home” in a more significant way than it had before. This was a transition ripe with uncomfortable, unsettling contradictions. On the one hand, having a long-term vision of being here with my family gives breadth, depth, and security to the relationship building I have already begun with many Stó:lō and non-Stó:lō friends and with the land itself. It heightens my sense of responsibility to this place and to these relationships. Yet, on the other hand, claiming a home for myself—in an emotional sense and in the sense of home ownership—on stolen Stó:lō land brings to the surface complicities in deepening the ongoing colonial injustice that is the dispossession of Stó:lō people.

As I began my relationship with this mountain I first learned its name to be Vedder Mountain. At its’ base, where a main hiking trail begins and follows along the Old Yale Wagon Road, is a panel of signs that tell one story of the history of the town of Yarrow and its founding pioneer family, the Vedders. The Vedder family name is spoken

in the daily interactions of neighbours and friends who travel Vedder Mountain Road to get to the nearest grocery stores and conveniences of Chilliwack, who wake up to see where the clouds are hanging over Vedder Mountain, and to hear about the fish runs and family forays along the trails that hug the edges of the Vedder River. What is the story of this name? What versions of this story are told and by whom, and what is the effect of these different tellings? I found myself asking this question as I stood at the base of Vedder mountain, with Fairsa in the stroller, reading the panels of an historical sign placed here by the local Yarrow historical society, the Rotary club, and the City of Chilliwack to provide one such story:

In 1862, Volkart Vedder pre-empted a vast tract of land that stretched along the mountain that took his name. Parts of his original farm eventually became the town of Yarrow.¹

In this narrative, history begins in 1862 with Vedder's vast tract of land, with the history of white people's presence in this place. It is also a story that begins with an image of the land as empty, ubiquitous—*vast*. Was there anyone here before Vedder? If so, who? And what did they make of Vedder and his pre-emption of a vast tract of land? These questions must be intentionally dug out from under this story, one that's tone is conclusive and complete: Vedder came, he built a farm, it became a town.

The first time I read this sign, my mind lingered on the word *pre-empted*. For a public educational sign, this word certainly seemed obscure. What exactly was it to “pre-empt” a vast tract of land? Who was it “pre-empted” from? According to the British Columbia Archives research guide:

Pre-emption was a method of acquiring provincial Crown land by claiming it for settlement and agricultural purposes. Although it was possible to pre-empt land and not live on it, all pre-emptions were intended solely for cultivation. The pre-emption process existed from as early as 1859 until 1970 when the *Land Act* was amended to eliminate this method of acquiring Crown land. Individuals, as well as companies and partnerships, could apply to settle and work (“improve”) the land.²

Pre-emption was a form of claiming land from the “Crown”—originally the monarch of England and his or her colonial representatives, and later the government of Canada and

¹ Yarrow Historical Cairn at Majuba Heritage Park, Wilson Rd and Majuba Hill Rd, Yarrow, BC

² British Columbia Archives, “British Columbia Archives Research Guide: Quick Guide to Pre-Emption and Homestead Records.”

the provinces. It is a claim predicated on a commitment to clearing and transforming the land. How and when did the Crown come to have these lands that Vedder was then able to pre-empt? The story does not say. The next panel tells part two of the narrative of settlement in Yarrow, under the title “Sumas Reclaimed Lands”:

After Sumas Lake was drained, the land became available for settlement. By 1928, the community of Yarrow was born when Mennonite families, who were uprooted from Russia, began settling on the newly created farmland.

The passive voice in this narrative stands out: a lake “was drained,” the land “became available”; it is a story without protagonists but containing rather deserving recipients of the “newly created farmland,” those who had been “uprooted.” Ironically, the Anglicized name of the Semá:th people (a tribe within the broader Stó:lō Nation), Sumas, is used as the name for the “reclaimed lands,” while the contemporary sign makes no mention of the Semá:th people, for whom the lake was a crucial part of their livelihoods and culture.³ Reclaimed from whom? By whom? While this transformation of Semá:th Lake and connecting rivers and creeks, such as the diversion of the Chilliwack River, led to new homes, farms communities, and livelihoods for white settlers, it destroyed livelihoods and transformed life for the Semá:th and T’selxwéyeqw (Chilliwack) peoples.³

Asian-American settler scholars in Hawai’i, Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, editors of the book *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai’i*, pose the question, “[H]ow are settlers educated not to see the colony and its colonial practices?”⁴ They refer to a settler “failure of vision,” a practice of not seeing that erases colonial history and contemporary realities, and the political differences between themselves as colonizers and Indigenous people as colonized. As Fairisa and I left the base of the mountain and walked back towards the Yarrow Ecovillage, I considered the everyday, intimate ways this failure of vision is enacted and nurtured in our families and communities. I thought about all she might learn and fail to learn as she engages with the colonial imaginary that surrounds us. I contemplated the relentless presence and consciousness required to intervene against what she will otherwise “soak in,” and the key role of caregivers, parents and otherwise,

³ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada’s Pacific Coast History* see p. 178; Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* see p. 104.

⁴ P. 197

in taking on such tasks. This work may look like day-to-day conversations in which we question, reframe, and expose our children to the hidden, displaced, erased truths, seeming mundane moments where we ask them (and ourselves): Who is left out of this story? What might their story be? Why have they been left out, and what are the effects of this exclusion? The consequences of this insidious socialization are significant. It is this socialized “failure of vision” that in turn creates a political, cultural, legal, and economic climate in which Canadian governments, corporations, and many diverse settler institutions, communities, and families can continue to perpetuate a settler colonial relationship that is based on the theft and control of Indigenous lands and resources.

In the contemporary moment in Stó:lō Téméxw (Stó:lō lands/world), this ongoing dispossession can be witnessed in the recent federal government approval of the Kinder Morgan pipeline twinning, despite strong Indigenous resistance.⁵ It can be witnessed as Stó:lō resist the extraction of 265 million litres of groundwater by the Swiss company Nestlé from near the community of Chowéthel (Chawathil), water that is bottled and sold for an inordinate profit.⁶ It can also be witnessed in the recent development of the new University of the Fraser Valley Chilliwack campus, along with a massive housing project called Garrison Crossing, on lands that were no longer needed by the federal Department of Defense after they closed down the Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack. Canada sold these former Department of Defense lands to developers, despite legal land claims and political negotiations by Stó:lō in which they outlined these lands as being part of the original reserves set aside for the Ts’elxwéyeqw people⁷. These are a few of the many contemporary conflicts in Stó:lō Téméxw that stem from the historical and ongoing imposition of power and control over lands and resources by settler governments. Yet these conflicts are framed and understood very differently by Stó:lō people and by the settler majority. For the former, they are situated in the colonial history of Stó:lō dispossession via British assertion of sovereignty and control over their lands, settler occupation and transformation of the landscape, and the devastating practices of oppression and assimilation used to attempt to maintain this control. For the latter, this

⁵ Morin, “Kinder Morgan Approval a ‘Call to Arms’ Says Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.”

⁶ Sinoski, “Nestlé’s Extraction of Groundwater near Hope Riles First Nations”; Commodore, “Whose Water? A First Nation’s Perspective.”

⁷ Henderson, “Settlement Possible for Stolo Claim to CFB Chilliwack Lands.”

historical and contemporary colonial context is erased, obscured, decentred, as we continue to tell stories that start with pioneers such as Vedder, vast empty lands reclaimed from the wild and passively made available for settler communities to grow and flourish. These stories erase Stó:lō historical and ongoing relationships with this land, Stó:lō resistance to the transfer of land control and transformation of the land itself, the devastation this has caused and the continuing contemporary struggles for justice, including respect for Stó:lō jurisdiction and the return and restoration of Stó:lō lands and waters.

Fairsa and I sit again by the window looking out at the morning sun emerging from behind the mountain that hovers over our home. I want her to know a different story. I begin by looking to find the Stó:lō name for this mountain: Qoqó:lem. Literally it translates as “drinking place.”⁸ Today, the springs at the top of this mountain are fenced off to protect one of the main water supply areas for the town of Yarrow. The untold story of settler privileges gained through Indigenous displacement and dispossession begins to unfold in this simple act of recentring a Stó:lō place name.

Nurturing, in everyday ways, this failure of vision facilitates and perpetuates further injustice, a deeper entrenchment of a relationship between our peoples that is founded on theft and broken promises, and maintained by violence, structural oppression, and erasure—a relationship that does harm to us both, and one that if left unaddressed is simply deepened and passed on to our children. Yet the story we tend to tell is not only one of erasure through imaginaries of empty land and hard-working settlers. When Indigenous people do come into this narrative, we often situate ourselves as benevolent peacemakers, an archetype deeply woven into the fabric of the white Canadian collective psyche, both consciously and unconsciously.⁹

Below, I turn to tell another story, one in which family narratives of my paternal grandfather infuse my own personal attachment to the Canadian peacemaker mythology. With these two stories, I begin to introduce the places, peoples, histories, and relationships that create the context of my writing. I also begin to centre my growing understanding of the importance of intergenerational and intimate familial stories, spaces,

⁸ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*—Map D on p. 139 shows the placename Qoqó:lem, which is described on p. 145.

⁹ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*.

practices and relationships in shaping white settler subjectivities. I endeavour to introduce a central theme throughout this work – that interrupting and transforming these intergenerational white settler subjectivities is central to redirecting ourselves towards the possibility of ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous homelands. Centered in the approaches of Indigenous and narrative methodologies, I also aim to introduce personal storytelling as a significant part of the methods that have come to shape this work.

This next story begins with the history of my paternal grandfather’s connections with this land and ends with my own story of how I have come to be living in Stó:lō Téméxw and in relationships with Stó:lō people, a journey that led me to want to understand what it means to be xwelítem. In linguist Brent Galloway’s *Dictionary of UpRiver Halkomelem*, xwelítem refers to “white people,” with elders suggesting the root to be “xwá” meaning “starve, be starving, be famished, (be extremely hungry since the first Whites were often in this state when they arrived, always asking about food, etc).”¹⁰ In the book *You Are Asked to Witness: the Stó:lō in Canada’s Pacific Coast History* published by Stó:lō Heritage Trust, xwelítem is used to refer to “mainstream Canadians of European descent,” with its literal translation being “‘hungry people,’ an expression with deep historical as well as metaphorical meaning.”¹¹ Xwelítem continues to be used by Stó:lō people to refer specifically to white people and more broadly to ways of being many Stó:lō associate with white settler colonial society, past and present. My intention in this work is to begin a journey of understanding what it means to be xwelítem, how these ways of being affect Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw, how this beingness is passed on through generations, and ultimately how I and others can begin to interrupt and transform our xwelítem ways towards nurturing in ourselves the possibility of ethical relationships with Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw.

Re-reading Family Stories Against the Canadian Peacemaker Mythology

The dusty volumes have been on my bookshelf for a few years now, tenuously parted with by my grandmother. The pages still seem crisp. His printing is immaculate and

¹⁰ Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. P. 925-926.

¹¹ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada’s Pacific Coast History*. See P. i, ii, and P. 65

reminds me of my father's—block letters made with dark, inky pens. Front and centre, the title reads “Royal Canadian Air Force: Pilot's Flying Log Book” in gold with a small “R. T. Heaslip” visible in the bottom right corner. Together the two logbooks meticulously record his career as a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) pilot, from 1941 to 1967. Each page names the date, type of aircraft and number, pilot and co-pilot, additional passengers, the purpose of the trip (or “duty”), and the numbers of hours logged. Total hours for 1942: 431:55. Total hours for 1943: 605:25.

Sea Island to Cultus Lake; Sea Island to Boundary Bay; Ucluelet to Tofino; Bella Bella to Estavan Island; Jericho Beach to Coal Harbour; Boundary Bay to Alert Bay; Cultus Lake to Sea Island; Chilliwack Lake to Pat Bay. Departure points and destinations named under the column “duty,” along with the occasional reference to “Local Camouflage” trips, with no locations noted. As a young, barely trained pilot, my paternal grandfather was sent to fly up and down the West Coast during World War II to monitor any potential activity on what was perceived to be a possible “western front.” The way he told the story, one shot was fired at a lighthouse on the west coast of Vancouver Island near Bamfield. The lighthouse family notified the Canadian Forces, and the shot was thought to be from a Japanese submarine. According to my grandfather, the submarine had just enough fuel to cross the ocean, fire the shot and immediately turn home to Japan. A western front did not materialize, and my grandfather spent the WWII years doing communications, surveillance, and search-and-rescue flights up and down the coast, landing in many remote coastal communities. The people and places he visited left a deep and lasting impression on him, and I grew up hearing some of his stories. He told one of circling around in thick fog, waiting for deer to move off the tiny, obscure runway up in Alert Bay. A story of an Indigenous chief who suffered a fishing accident – he was a large man, and they needed to remove a door from a house to use as a stretcher to get him on the plane. Cargo deliveries were left behind in order to transport those in immediate need. His stories were heroic, entertaining, and reflected my grandfather's obvious sense of captivation with the people and place. It was a lifelong dream for him to live on the West Coast. He never did make it, yet my father, inspired by his own father's passion, kept this dream alive, moving his family to Victoria, in Lekwungan and WSÁNEĆ homelands in 1999. I have been living on the West Coast, occupying the unceded

homelands of Coast Salish peoples, for the past 18 years. My grandfather's stories suggest to me the possibility for a history of relationship building, of respect for and connection to the people and the lands of the West Coast, including many places where I, two generations later, have also come to be connected.

I'm driving along the highway towards the Yarrow Ecovillage and take the exit towards Cultus Lake. I live 10 minutes from the lake, now a destination community of summer homes, campgrounds, and outdoor activities; it has exceeded its capacity for the impacts of these summer revellers and has a highly at-risk salmon population. Throughout his time on the West Coast, almost 70 years ago, my grandfather landed on Cultus Lake and the more distant Chilliwack Lake, both in the Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe territory of the Stó:lō people. I wonder what he saw, witnessed, experienced here? Who did he meet and what did they make of each other? Cultus Lake is known to Stó:lō as a place of strong spiritual potency, home to a number of Stl'áleqem – spiritual beings who inhabit places in Stó:lō Téméxw and are often connected to sacred stories, teachings and oral history.¹² Chilliwack Lake is named Sxótsaqel, which translates as 'sacred lake' or 'something that's sacred'¹³. Did he know anything of the Stó:lō meaning of these places, did he show respect for them, did he help any Stó:lō people as part of his search-and-rescue work? As I am driving, I watch the landscape and reflect on the nostalgic and idealizing tone of my thoughts and questions. I recognize my own hopeful attachment to my grandfather as a benevolent and well-intentioned man, and I witness my desire for him to be able to meaningfully connect to the land and respectfully relate to the Indigenous peoples of this place. I want his legacy to be part of my motivation, purpose, and potential in my work. Yet, I am also caught in the benevolent peacemaker myth.

As scholar Paulette Regan explores in her work *Unsettling the Settler Within*, white Canadians uphold a mythology of ourselves and our forefathers/foremothers as diplomatic peacemakers who brought reason, justice, and benevolence to their dealings with Indigenous peoples.¹⁴ Unlike the Americans, who fought "Indian wars" at home, we negotiated treaties, made agreements, and created respectful relations. This archetype of

¹² Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See Plate 2 (p. 8-9): "St'áleqem sites: spiritually potent places in S'olh Téméxw" by Albert (Sonny) McHalsie. Cultus Lake is home to *Hiqw apel* and *T'litego Spá:th* (underwater bear).

¹³ Carlson et al. See Map A, p. 137, and translation on p. 150.

¹⁴ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*.

the Canadian peacemaker—hard-working, innocent, fair, benevolent, and well-meaning—is placed in contrast to the stereotype of violent, backwards, lazy “Indians” in need of civilizing. The government bureaucrats who became the “Indian Experts” of the day emblemized and solidified the Canadian peacemaker myth in the Canadian psyche, emphasizing their own diplomatic skills coupled with ethnocentric, racist notions about the traits of Native people:

Their vision of a wise, paternal, and just government that would fulfill its treaty obligations by helping and elevating Indians toward civilization—a vision shared by their superiors, fellow bureaucrats, missionaries, North-West Mounted Police officers, and the Canadian public—became analogous with responsibility for solving the Indian problem.¹⁵

This narrative of the Canadian peacemaker is deeply seductive and reassuring and continues to permeate our psyches as white settlers. Yet, it is a misguided reading of our colonial history and present, obscuring the nature of our own and our ancestors relationship with Indigenous people, one characterized by colonial violence, dispossession, and dishonesty. It also, as Regan points out, appropriates the reality of the long-standing peacemaking traditions of many Indigenous nations that were offered as guidance in our early Indigenous-settler encounters, only to be disregarded and dismissed as the colonial settler project ramped up.¹⁶

I am pulled towards centring my grandfather’s good deeds as a search-and-rescue pilot—a focus that is intimately tied to a reinforcement of the Canadian peacemaker ideology. A March 26, 1946 article in the *Victoria Times Colonist* newspaper features my grandfather’s photograph and the headline “Mercy Air Service Boon to All Coast.”

Tucked away in the files of the RCAF Western Air Command is the operational set-up of one of the most unique services offered civilians by the armed forces... a mercy-rescue organization second to none in the world and it is available to any person in British Columbia in an emergency... Handling the communications and mercy flight crews is Flt.-Lt. R.T. “Bob” Heaslip, AFC. Heaslip has been flying the communications route since 1941, and has completed 15 mercy flights, a half dozen of which have been from the Queen Charlottes to Prince Rupert with injured men... Mercy flights are spectacular, but they are all in the day’s work of Heaslip and other pilots and crew members of the “compo flights”. Twice weekly mail is carried on routine flights to RCAF personnel in the Queen Charlottes and

¹⁵ Regan. P. 97

¹⁶ Regan.

the communications flight is responsible for transport of visiting dignitaries to the outposts of the service.¹⁷

For white settler communities back then, the article paints an image of white heroic benevolence and service among representatives of the Canadian state, such as my grandfather, and the same image carries forward into my own mythology, rooted in childhood stories, reified by historical artifacts such as this article.

Following the approach of Japanese-American settler scholar Eiko Kosasa, who writes in the context of Hawaii, reading photographs of early generations of Japanese “against” the pervasive American ideology of “a nation of immigrants,” I “read against” the “Canadian peacemaker” ideology in my own family history. Like the *Times Colonist* article, the glorification of my grandfather’s search-and-rescue missions serves to reinforce the peacemaker myth while obscuring all the other activities of the RCAF, various state enforcement agencies, and the Canadian state more broadly. Given that my grandfather was embedded in the military institutions of Canada as a white settler colonial nation state, I must not only consider my grandfather’s potential to have had a respectful relationship with the people and the land of this place, but also ask myself honestly how he might have participated in facilitating the colonial relationship between Indigenous people and white settlers and supported the colonial agenda of the Canadian state.

His years spent on the West Coast were a time of deep political frustration and suffering for Indigenous peoples, who were struggling to survive and resist an attempted genocide embedded in the very structures of the Canadian state.¹⁸ His arrival on the West Coast was only 20 years after the last major outbreak of epidemic diseases to affect Stó:lō communities, when the Stó:lō population reached an all-time low of 1,200 (c. 1920–1921).¹⁹ St. Mary’s residential school in Mission was in full operation, run by the Roman Catholic Church. School staff, backed by Canadian authorities such as the RCMP, forced

¹⁷ “Mercy Air Service Boon to All Coast.”

¹⁸ Woolford, “Ontological Destruction: Genocide and Canadian Aboriginal Peoples.” Woolford argues that modernist and Eurocentric understandings of genocide have prevented the full appreciation of the ways in which genocide, rather than “cultural genocide” is an appropriate concept to describe the colonial experience of Indigenous people in Canada: for a discussion of the ways in which genocide can be interpreted as a one-time event whereas Indigenous elimination is more akin to a structural genocide.

¹⁹ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. Plate 27D, p. 82.

Stó:lō children to attend the residential schools, separating them from their families and communities, and even from their siblings within the school. School staff punished children for speaking their ancestral Indigenous languages. Food was often too little and of poor nutritional value. Some children were murdered by school staff or died as a result of widespread staff physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect, conditions that also perpetuated the spread of deadly illnesses. The aim of the school was to convert Stó:lō into Christians and farmers and to break the intergenerational transmission of Stó:lō culture, including their connection to the land.²⁰

The forced removal of children from families to break the cultural transmission between generations is an act of genocide according to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.²¹ This act was at the heart of the collaboration between Church and state to remove Indigenous people from their lands, destroy the fabric of their nations, and in doing so free up the lands for colonial settlement and resource extraction. The fabric of Stó:lō nationhood was also impacted during this era, as it was the start of the decline in the Fraser River salmon fishery. When combined, the expansion of the commercial fishery and damage to salmon migration routes caused by the construction of the Canadian National Railway drastically impacted salmon populations. Stó:lō began to join the labour markets of the canneries and hop farms in part to compensate for this decline in their most important food source. The RCMP increasingly enforced the anti-potlatch law, which had been on the books since 1884, using it to target Stó:lō governance and spiritual practice. During this era, it was also illegal for Indigenous organizations to raise money or retain legal counsel to pursue land claims. The laws against organizing and hiring legal counsel, and against potlatching and other Indigenous ceremonies, were not lifted until after World War II, in the *Indian Act* amendments of 1951.

²⁰ Clark, “Saint Mary’s Mission, (Mission City, British Columbia) 1861 to 1900”; TRC Canada, “Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.”

²¹ See: *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. General Assembly Resolution 260A (III) Article 2.* ²¹ It is relevant to note that the recent Summary report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) chose to use the language ‘cultural genocide’ which is not referenced in the UN Convention, despite the evidence the commission gathered, and out of step with, for example, the Australian Government’s acknowledgement of genocide for the stolen generations of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

What was my grandfather's awareness of these colonial policies and actions and the effects on the Stó:lō and other Indigenous peoples up and down the coast? To what degree was his work aligned with the actions of a fellow enforcement agency, the RCMP, and their activities in suppressing Indigenous gatherings and ceremonies and enforcing residential school attendance? Was he doing "surveillance missions" in part to identify these activities? By bringing Canadian government "communications" and "dignitaries" to distant outposts, he was certainly facilitating the influx of white settlers and administrators with their colonial values, goals, and agendas. While my grandfather's legacies on the West Coast continue to create for me a sense of connection to the people and places here, rather than tell a romanticized story, I begin to ask: What responsibilities also flow from these legacies within my family history?

The lines recording duties in my grandfather's logbook take a dramatic and unexpected jump. September 25, 1965, R.T. Heaslip left Trenton Air Force Base in Ontario for Lahore, Pakistan. He had been posted to a UN peacekeeping mission—the RCAF would be surveilling the borders between the newly formed Pakistan and India. The Canadian peacemaking ideology is not only expressed in our actions toward Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island²²; we have for generations believed so deeply in our just and equitable society at home that we have exported our "peacekeeping" services to other parts of the world that require our "help," especially in predominantly dark-skinned and non-Christian nations. As white settlers in Canada, we continue to solidify our collective sense of superiority as we transport our colonial empathy abroad, imposing notions of liberal justice and Western secular representative democracy and in turn facilitating the expansion of global industrial capitalism and its devastating environmental and social consequences for local peoples and lands. I grew up with further stories of my grandfather's efforts abroad, and while some of his individual acts and deeds were indeed full of compassion and expressions of his humanity, the broader projects of which he was a part also often served to spread colonial-capitalist values, practices and ideologies and to reinforce the Eurocentric white superiority complex at home and abroad.

²² Turtle Island is part of the oral history of a number of Indigenous nations, telling the creation story of North America, and is often used as a way to refer to North America as a collective Indigenous homeland.

Beginning to see Xwelítem ways

I'm now driving towards the centre of Chilliwack, past the turns to Cultus Lake and Chilliwack Lake, and down Vedder Road. I'm on my way to the Coqualeetza grounds, a central site of Stó:lō government, administrative offices, and community services today, and a place that has long played a significant role in the lives of Stó:lō. Coqualeetza is an Anglicized version of the Halq'eméylem word Kw'eqwalith'a, meaning "beating of the blankets," a name drawn from the *sxwōxwiyám* associated with the place. *Sxwōxwiyám* are ancient stories of importance for the Stó:lō, speak to teachings and Stó:lō laws, and often tell of the transformations that set things right in the land of the Stó:lō people.²³ The *sxwōxwiyám* of Kw'eqwalith'a tells the story of husbands not sharing fish with their wives, and the wives in response beating their husbands' blankets, which contained residues of their husbands' spirit powers.²⁴ Early colonizers did not overlook the importance and centrality of Kw'eqwalith'a for the Stó:lō. It was chosen as the site of the Coqualeetza Industrial Institute, a Methodist residential school that officially opened in 1894. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs and representatives of Aboriginal nations attended the opening ceremonies. On the day of opening, Aboriginal leaders took advantage of the gathering to present a petition, read aloud by Principal Tate, calling on the government to uphold their fishing rights and stop the destruction of their fisheries.²⁵ In 1941, the year my grandfather began flying in the area, the Coqualeetza Residential School was closed and converted into a full-scale Indian tuberculosis hospital.²⁶ The conditions of malnutrition, abuse and neglect, directly created in the residential schools by school staff and officials, facilitated the rapid spread of tuberculosis among Indigenous peoples. This tuberculosis health crisis in the schools was part of a broader agenda of government policies that contributed to the undermining of Indigenous health by disrupting Indigenous food supplies, economies, and homes as Indigenous people were forced off their lands and placed in crowded, unsanitary housing

²³ For a meaningful discussion of the teachings and laws related to *sxwōxwiyám* See Victor, "Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination."

²⁴ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. Plate 26, P. 74.

²⁵ United Church of Canada, "Coqualeetza Industrial Institute." cites a newspaper article describing the opening entitled, "The Industrial Institute," *Chilliwack Progress*, May 2, 1894, RG10, vol. 6422, file 869-1, pt.1, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

²⁶ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. Plate 26, P. 74

conditions on reserves, with inadequate, and at times withheld, food rations. These policy decisions were intentionally used to create starvation and suffering and thereby weaken the Indigenous nations.²⁷ People not directly killed by these conditions were likely to succumb to infectious diseases. Some of the children and adults from many different Indigenous nations were sent to the Coqualeetza hospital, where many died.

In that very same building, the repurposed Coqualeetza Indian Tuberculosis Hospital and the residential school, I began my first job with the Stó:lō nearly seven decades later, in 2008. From 2008 to 2014, I worked for the Stó:lō Nation, the Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe on research, policy development, and community outreach. I supported the Stó:lō leadership in their efforts to understand how the Canadian government's and industry's proposed developments may affect their lands and their people, and supported their strategic planning and political work in response to these proposed developments. The Stó:lō mentorships and friendships that began during this time continue to shape, guide, and inspire my writing and life today and were very much the stimulus for beginning to consider my own position as a white settler within the work I was doing and within the broader Canadian settler colonial context.

This is where I first learned of the Halq'eméylem word *xwelítem*. It is used colloquially by the Stó:lō as a reference for white people. However, the translation most often given is “hungry,” “starving” and sometimes “greedy” people. The origins of the word are often traced to the white settlers from California who came to participate in the Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858. The people who arrived were both greedy for gold and hungry, as they did not know how to feed themselves in the wintertime.²⁸ I began to pay attention to when the word *xwelítem* was used, in reference to what kinds of behaviours and what ways of thinking. I began to question my own ways of thinking and being. When and how was I being *xwelítem*? How might my *xwelítem* ways problematically reinforce a colonial relationship between myself and my Stó:lō colleagues and friends?

I began my studies in the Indigenous Governance program at the University of Victoria (UVic) at a point where I had become critically aware of the past and ongoing

²⁷ TRC Canada, “Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.” See P. 90-99.

²⁸ See Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time* P. 161; Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History* P. 65.

injustices that define the relationship between Stó:lō peoples and the Canadian state, and the need for a serious transformation of this relationship. I was also beginning to critically reflect on myself, my family, and my culture in the context of understanding what it means to be xwelítem. Yet, I did not really know what voice I possessed to challenge the colonial reality, outside of my role working on behalf of Stó:lō organizations. The path I chose to follow in returning to study in the Indigenous Governance program and taking on this research was in part a pathway to find that voice.

My work is also shaped by attempting to deepen an understanding that there is a relationship between the stories we tell about the past, the history we choose to acknowledge, and our possibility for authentic and ethical action in the present, including how we relate to and what we share with our children. I have chosen to open this dissertation with two stories that contribute to situating myself and my family in place and specifically in relationship with Stó:lō peoples, Stó:lō homelands, and the story of colonization here. In beginning this way, my aim is to share at the outset the autoethnographic, narrative, Indigenous, decolonizing, and critical place methodologies that shape this work. Collectively these methodologies call me to research and write from a deeply personal and relational place, to share story as a way to attempt to reach the reader's humanity and to transform my own, to situate myself and this work in relationship with land and place, and to maintain a critical focus on how the research contributes to a decolonizing agenda. I discuss the methodologies that guide my approach to this research, and specifically how I relate to these methodologies from my own positionality in Chapter 3.

While at one time my grandfather's stories represented a family legacy of humanitarianism and a connection to this place through my own lineage, I reread them now against the Canadian mythology of a nation of peacemakers; I see in them a colonial empathy and superiority that continues to infuse my own narratives today, and I understand this as part of my xwelítem ways. My early idealizing of these stories also obscures the material relationship of privilege afforded particularly to white Canadians as we go along with, participate in, and benefit from the colonial status quo. While my grandfather escaped the likelihood of death during WWII by being sent to the West Coast, his survival also resulted in a rise to privilege and power within the RCAF, and

Canadian society more broadly upon the war's end. He became the commander of the Trenton Air Force Base, an elite position and one rewarded with economic and political privilege and power. My grandfather's history here on the coast and specifically in Stó:lō homelands nurtures in me a sense of connection, but rather than solely a nostalgic notion of belonging and an idealized legacy of peacemaking, I now also experience this connection in a way that stirs an unsettling, complicating sense of responsibility. Further, it highlights for me the depth of my own socialization into the Canadian peacemaker ideology. As Regan states:

In a new twist on the peacemaker myth, some settler Canadians now acknowledge that the actions of our ancestors were morally suspect but cast themselves as morally superior to them. Claiming to have already learned the hard lessons of history, they focus on improving the lives of Indigenous people.²⁹

I have at times fallen into this new iteration of the peacemaker myth. I have heard myself share how I am helping Indigenous peoples in my work, at an emotional and psychological level feeding my own need for a sense of self-worth and value rather than coming from a place of fullness, compassion, and understanding of the interdependency of our struggles for freedom. I have experienced myself advocating for Indigenous rights when I didn't really understand how I would speak to this on a personal level as a white settler rather than an employee of a Stó:lō organization. If I was in theory supporting Indigenous self-determination, how did I practice recognizing and honouring Stó:lō self-determination in the rest of my life? In what ways were the relationships I was growing with Stó:lō people changing me, and was I opening to these changes in an authentic, meaningful, and holistic sense?

Learning *from*—an Ethical Space of Engagement

This work is not a project specifically about telling Stó:lō history or describing contemporary Stó:lō realities and culture. Rather, I share Stó:lō and other Indigenous histories, cultural teachings, and practices as these have been shared with me in the context of relationships with friends, colleagues, and mentors. This sharing has been crucial to my shifts in thinking and being; it has given me the possibility of turning different eyes towards the white settler problem. Cree scholar Willie Ermine describes

²⁹ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*. P. 108

this process as an “ethical space of engagement” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. He likens this practice to a mirror, one that teaches “not really about the situation of Indigenous peoples in this country, but . . . about the mindset of a human community of people refusing to honour the rights of other human communities.”³⁰

Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred writes in his book *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, “the non-Indigenous will be shown a new path and offered the chance to join in a renewed relationship between the peoples and places of this land, which we occupy together.”³¹ Indigenous people in many different ways and places are offering us—as non-Indigenous people who have come to live on and occupy Indigenous lands—a new path, a new relationship. They are asking us to come into this ethical space of engagement. They are writing it in books, sharing it in stories, drumming it, singing it, living it. We—settlers—are, for the most part, not listening. We are, for the most part, not open to treading this path, to participating in these relationships, to entering this ethical space, one in which we must be open to changing ourselves. Yet the relationships that emerge in this ethical space are the basis of our co-resistance to ongoing contemporary colonialism, the enactment of our responsibilities to make reparations and restitution for historical wrongs and injustices; this is the space in which emerge the prefigurative possibilities of co-existing here on these lands in peaceful and sustainable ways. My work acknowledges this starting point and asks: What are the barriers for myself and other settlers? How can we become open to taking this new path when it is being offered to us? This is another way of saying: What must we transform in ourselves to become open to the possibility of ethical, respectful, authentic relationships with Indigenous people and with Indigenous homelands? My research is an exploration of these questions. I share what I have learned *from* rather than *about* Stó:lō culture, stories, teachings, and practices as these have been shared in such relationships and conversations, and as they have pushed me to turn more deeply towards seeing anew myself and my family, communities, histories, and cultures. While here I have begun speaking more generally about settler people, communities and culture, I explain in Chapter 2 how I have come to focus more directly on white settlers centering my own positionality and acknowledging the ways in

³⁰ Ermine, “The Ethical Space of Engagement.” P. 200

³¹ Alfred, *Wasase*. P. 35

which a simple Indigenous-settler binary can serve to erase the diverse and complex experiences of non-Indigenous people of color with a white supremacist and Eurocentric settler colonialism.

I chose to interview Stó:lō mentors first, asking them to identify some of the problematic ways of thinking and behaving that settlers bring to relationships with Stó:lō—in other words, their *xwel'tem* ways. I asked: What learning and unlearning do settlers need to do to work towards ethical relationships with Stó:lō people and the land? I also asked Stó:lō mentors to recommend any non-Indigenous people they felt had moved at least partway down a path of transforming these ways of being. If they were able to identify someone, I asked them what qualities these people had, or grew into, that made them able to be in ethical relationships with Stó:lō people and the land. In this way, my research centres Stó:lō knowledge about non-Indigenous people through their own relationships and cultural understandings.

I formally interviewed seven Stó:lō mentors: Sioliya (June Quipp), Denise Alexis, Naxaxalhts'i (Albert “Sonny” McHalsie), Sisaqiwel'tel (Ernie Crey), T'ítlémpá:th (Eddie Gardner), Squ:athom (Frank Andrew), Eyem Shxwelí Shlálí (Melody Andrews), as well as Sakej Ward, who is a member of the Mi'kmaq nation and married to Melody Andrews. Many of these interviews were revisited with additional informal conversations, follow-ups and visits. I also had informal conversations and visits with many other Stó:lō mentors, some frequently, and others only a few times during the research process including: Lumlamelut (Laura Wee Láy Láy), Ts'qwelemót (Wenona Hall), Hiyolemtel (Clarence “Kat” Pennier), Tyrone McNeil, Charles “Corky” Douglas, Ts'imalanoxw (Ernie Victor), Kw'itsel Tatel (Patricia Kelly), and Larry Commodore. I formally interviewed seven recommended settlers, all of whom were people embedded in long-term relationships with Stó:lō people: Marion Robinson, Dave Schaepe, Bill Chu, Sandra Shields, David Campion, Darryl Klassen and Louise Mandell. In choosing to approach Stó:lō mentors, I began with the existing relationships I had and in many cases sought out those who I already had begun different forms of mentorship with, those who had influenced my thinking and ways of being in the world in an everyday sense. In this sense, my approach to interviewing was deeply relational, drawing on the guidance of Indigenous methodologies, where as Cree scholar Shawn Wilson explains, “placing the

researcher within a circle of relations... in turn enforces the accountability of the researcher, as they are responsible not only to themselves but also to the circle of relations.³²” From the starting point of these existing relationships, additional Stó:lō mentors were recommended as well as settler interviewees, expanding the circle of relations in which I was embedded and accountable.³³ While not all mentors are directly quoted or referenced in this work, each influenced the project overall and contributed to shaping my understanding of xwelítem ways, practices of transformation and what ethical relationships might look like. Many continue to guide my journey from here.

From these conversations and in the context of this expanding relational circle I have begun to shape and articulate: First, what does it mean to be xwelítem, what characterizes xwelítem ways? Second, what ways of being do settlers who are able to exist in ethical relationships express? Third, what practices might support transforming xwelítem ways of being into ways of being that nurture the possibility of ethical relationships? Here, I will introduce how I have come to answer these questions for myself from within this relational circle, acknowledging this as a place I have come to along a limitless journey rather than a sort of final destination or conclusion. I start this introduction with the third question, about practices of transformation. I speak to more specific practices of transformation throughout each narrative—for example, practices of colonial exposure in Chapter 4 (narrative 1), and work with our own shadow and the release of repressed emotions in Chapter 5 (narrative 2). Yet here, I want to begin by introducing two overarching and interrelated teachings for transformation that guided the creation of these narratives overall and continue to guide my own journey. These teachings have come from my relationships and mentorships with Stó:lō and other Indigenous peoples, and my attempt to apply them in my life and in this work has shaped a kind of meta-level the other transformative practices I speak to. I share these teachings here and how they have led me to conceptualize my work through an exploration of the ways in which white settler colonial subjectivity is intergenerational, the ways in which it is passed on and shaped in the intimate family and especially parent–child relationships, and the ways in

³² Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*. P. 129.

³³ This approach to selecting interviewees could be referred to as a snowball or referral sampling methodology, but draws more from Indigenous approaches in that it begins with and continues to center the deepening of relationships as an important part of the research overall as a process of knowledge growth as described by Shawn Wilson.

which family spaces are important sites for intervening with the transmission of white settler colonial ways of being. In many ways, these teachings were shared early on by Stó:lō mentors; and yet, it has been in the process of living this research, and reflecting that living in the creative journey of writing, that I have come to see and appreciate them more clearly.

Teachings for Transformation: Intergenerational Focus

Two tightly interrelated teachings have been offered to me in relation to this journey and have led to a focus on family, parenting, and the ways in which our subjectivities are shaped through generations. Here I use subjectivity in the way that Hawaiian scholar Manulani Aluli Meyer does, as “a sense of being in relation to all other beings, through all of our senses, through our interconnected mind, body and spirit.”³⁴ It is this holistic sense of subjectivity, of beingness, of ways of being in relation to others, that I have focused on, and these teachings have provided guidance towards understanding how our subjectivities are formed and how we might transform them.

The first teaching is the guidance that in order to know where I’m going, I must know where I’ve come from. Looking back into our families’ histories, into the lineages and ancestries, the cultures and communities that have shaped me is a way to find my way forward. While I have heard versions of this teaching repeated in a number of Indigenous contexts, three stories stand out in how this teaching has been offered. The first time this teaching was shared with me I was in Alert Bay, where I was working on my master’s research with Kwakwaka’wakw clam diggers. I was sitting and talking with Arnie (Brian) Wadhams, fisherman, clam digger, and respected leader. He was sharing stories in response to my questions about Kwakwaka’wakw tribal history, when he interrupted our conversation, turned to me, and said, “Well, where are you from, who are your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and where did they come from; what is the history of your people?” He said it is important to know where you come from in order to know your responsibilities, where you are going, and the work you need to do.

³⁴ Meyer, “Changing the Culture of Research: An Introduction to the Triangulation of Meaning”; Meyer, “Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning.”

A number of years later, I was with a Stó:lō colleague and friend, Squ:athom, Frank Andrew, from Sq'ewqel (Seabird Island), with whom I had worked closely as part of the Rights and Title team at Stó:lō Tribal Council. We walked along the river together, and I talked about my intention to return to school to take on studies towards a PhD. When I shared my uncertainties about following this path, and the topics and questions I was hoping to explore, he offered this teaching again: You must know where you have come from to know where you are going. He shared from his own story of walking with this teaching in his life, centring his relationship with his mom, and how her political life and career shaped who he is today, how he understands the world, and where he needs to go for himself.

Most recently, in May 2016, this teaching came back to me in a strong way. I was asked by Ts'qwelemót, Wenona Hall, to help with a collaborative research project between Seabird Island, Stó:lō Nation, and the University of the Fraser Valley. Wenona is a friend, mentor, and Stó:lō advisor on my PhD committee. She is from the community of Sq'ewqéyl (Skowkale) of the Ts'elxwéyeqw tribe, a professor of Indigenous Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley, and mom to three children. As we began to work together on this project, she shared with me one of the guiding principles of a Stó:lō way of doing things to which the research team was adhering. This principle was: “Kw'okw'estswitsem tl'os lexw kw'ets kw'ets”—looking back is looking forward. The lessons are already there; we need to find and use them. Our future becomes clearer when we contemplate our past.³⁵ This looking back often begins with and is rooted in family and ancestral connections, and looking forward is always in relation to the children and generations who are to come. This project itself was focused on supporting and nurturing the well-being and resilience of Stó:lō youth, the team looking to support future generations by understanding more deeply the past they had come from, and pulling from the past the teachings, practices, knowledges, and ways of being that might support them.

As I was pregnant with Fairsa and sitting strongly with the transition to becoming a mom, bringing a new generation to this world of my own family, I began to understand this teaching about “looking back is looking forward” more intimately as a teaching

³⁵ See: Chan, “Building Land-Based Resilience in Fraser Valley First Nations Youth: Research Proposal Background and Objectives.”

about intergenerational connections. Looking back was not only seeking to find knowledge that had been repressed or forgotten, practices that might support us today, but also to understand the ways in which our lineages, our family relationships, experiences, cultures, and histories shape us and are at the core of our value systems, ethics, worldviews, and ways of being in the world. Looking back provides insight into our subjectivities in the broadest sense of how we understand and experience our very beingness. Looking back to understand ourselves is looking forward to see how we are shaping the world around us, most intimately our children.

The second deeply interrelated teaching came about as I was pregnant and studying the Stó:lō language, Halq'eméylem, with Lumlamelut (Laura Wee Láy Láy), who lives in the community of Ch'iyáqtel (Tzeachten). She is a powerful advocate for Indigenous languages and has been a teacher and mentor to many Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. She draws on her experience and passion as an artist working with clay and many other mediums to guide students in creative processes, which are always, at their heart, also journeys of self-understanding. She has become a close mentor and *siyá:ye* (friend) and has been a constant source of guidance and support as I have worked through this research and writing and as I became a mom to Fairsa. Often her lessons are grounded in the ways in which Stó:lō worldview is held in the Halq'eméylem language. For example, in one of her classes she shared that in Halq'eméylem, the same words are used to refer to great-grandparent as to great-grandchild (*sts'ólemeqw*), great-great-grandparent and great-great-grandchild (*th'ép'ayeqw*), great-great-great-grandparent/child (*ékwiyeqw*), and great-great-great-great grandparent/child (*Tómiyeqw*). She reflected on what this says about a Stó:lō understanding of time, and the deep, enduring, and cyclical linkages between generations. Nishnaabeg³⁶ scholar Leanne Simpson, drawing from knowledge of her elder Edna Manitowabi, also shares a similar understanding rooted in the Anishinaabemowin language: *Kobade* refers to great-grandparents and great-grandchildren and “means a link in a chain—a link in the chain

³⁶ As with many words, names of Indigenous communities, tribes and nations may change spellings depending on dialect. Throughout this work, I have attempted to follow the spellings used by those who are the authors of the work being referenced. For example, here I use *Nishnaabeg* to describe Leanne Simpson as this is the spelling she uses throughout her own work. Other spellings include *Anishinaabeg*, *Anishinaabek*, etc.

between generations, between nations, between states of being, between individuals.” In Simpson’s words: “I am a link in a chain. We are all links in a chain.”³⁷

Understanding how I have been shaped by my ancestors and considering the ways in which I influence the knowledges, values, emotional capacities, and spiritual life of my daughter, I am beginning to situate and accept myself as a link in a chain. Writing from this consciousness as a link in the chain means centring ways in which intergenerational family space, and parenting—the nurturing of children in family contexts and relationships—are at the core of the continuance of white settler colonial ways of being, and centring the possibilities for transforming these ways of being. In many ways, the challenge and intention of situating myself as a link in a chain holds together this work. I have begun to ask myself: In what ways is Fairisa already learning to be *xwelítem*? What does that learning look like in real time, in our day-to-day life as a family, in the context of the communities we walk within? How can I intervene and nurture alternate non-*xwelítem* ways of being? As I spend time with my young one in *Stó:lō* contexts and in the context of the mainly white settler community in which we live, I have begun to reflect on the differences, comparing experiences that have enlivened my interest in and questioning of how *xwelítem* ways are nurtured among white settler children, and I began to write about these in my research journaling.

The personal stories and reflections I share aim to connect a transformative practice of looking back—into my childhood, family histories, and ancestral influences—with the work of nurturing a future generation in ways that undermine white settler colonial subjectivities. In doing this, I am calling attention to and beginning to articulate and analyze what might be called, borrowing from Leanne Simpson, “white settler colonial parenting practices,” as well as ways in which we might, as white settler parents and caregivers of children, begin to intervene with these. In the final reflections of this dissertation, I also call for a furthering of linkages between the research, theories and practical work of child psychologists, family therapists, paediatricians, counsellors, social workers, educators and all those who carry a weight within the spaces where parenting guidance and early childhood development and education are discussed and debated, and the fields of critical Indigenous studies, settler colonial studies, and theories of

³⁷ Simpson, “Land and Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations.”

decolonization.

Introducing Three Narratives of Transformation

In many ways, these teachings – “looking back is looking forward” and understanding myself as a link in an intergenerational chain – informed what I chose to write about and how. They have become companions in the work of storytelling, shaping the interweaving of personal narratives and anecdotes with insights from literature, historical research and interviews. Stories transform us every day, and we also have the power to transform, create, make space for, enliven, nurture and grow stories that direct us towards justice and decolonization. As Stó:lō scholar Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Jo-anne Archibald, argues, storywork is about letting the power of the story “be the teacher,” finding ways to help people think, feel and “be” through the power of stories. She asks, “How can the story be portrayed so that its power to make one think, feel, and reflect on one’s actions is not lost?”³⁸ Stories have power, and storytelling is a transformative force in itself. Q’um Q’um Xiiem’s work focuses to a large degree on sacred stories shared in the oral tradition by Elders and the protocols around sharing these stories. Yet, personal storytelling is also emphasized by Indigenous scholars as an important way of situating oneself in the research. Cree scholar Shawn Wilson writes, “we cannot be separated from our work, nor should our writing be separated from ourselves.”³⁹ For example, Qwul’sih’yah’maht Robina Thomas in her dissertation about Indigenous women’s leadership weaves together her own stories, those of her grandmother and the stories of women leaders in her community creating and giving power to a collective narrative of Indigenous women’s strength and knowledges.

Cree scholar Onowa McIvor also centers personal storytelling in her work and writes of the ways in which Indigenous methodologies and narrative approaches such as autoethnography can complement and support each other. She names two synergies between an Indigenous research paradigm and autoethnography: the first is the centrality of the “self” in the work, without a sharp separation between the researcher and the subject, and the second is the shared modality and intentional use of storytelling as a

³⁸ Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*. P. 81.

³⁹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*.

method.⁴⁰ In a similar way, my research is inspired by Indigenous methodologies including personal storytelling and also finds resonance and guidance in the space of narrative methodologies including autoethnography, which use storytelling to describe and analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience.⁴¹

Another narrative approach, most common in family therapy, which has inspired the storytelling approach in my research comes from the theory and practice of narrative therapy. Narrative therapy suggests that our sense of identity/meaning is derived from the stories or narratives that we use to explain our experiences.⁴² Dominant, normalizing “truths” often shape the narratives that suggest who we are and how we should engage with the world. Narrative therapy is a practice of constructing, surfacing, and making space for alternative stories about who we are, through which we begin to see alternative pathways for our lives.⁴³ As we engage these pathways, we begin to relate in the world differently. I will further introduce the methodological choices that have shaped this work in Chapter 3, yet here I wanted to briefly situate some of the influences that have guided storytelling as a research method and as a method towards my own transformation of self and subjectivity.

I will now share an introduction to the three narrative of transformation which make up Part 2 of this dissertation. In each of the narratives I begin with Stó:lō insights about what it means to be xwelítəm. In this way, my aim is to begin with an alternative story of who I am surfacing an alternative understanding of self that guides me on uncharted storytelling journeys. In piecing together these stories, I draw on the interviews, conversations and experiences with Stó:lō and settler mentors, on everyday experiences centering on my role as a new mom, on historical research, family history research, and academic research. I see my storytelling as inspired by the practices of Indigenous

⁴⁰ McIvor, “I Am My Subject.”

⁴¹ Bochner and Ellis, *Ethnographically Speaking*.

⁴² White and Epston, *Narrative Means To Therapeutic Ends*; Madigan, *Narrative Therapy*.

⁴³ In considering the potential of narrative therapy as part of the methodological inspiration for this research, I attended the International Narrative Therapy conference “Therapeutic Conversations” in Vancouver in May 2012 and following this took a five-day workshop on narrative therapy approaches, led by Stephen Madigan of the Vancouver School for Narrative Therapy. A number of practicing narrative therapists took the time to discuss the potential of narrative therapy in relation to my research questions and approach, including Stephen Madigan, Hilda Nanning, Darien Thira and David Nylund. I am grateful for their insights and guidance. The theory of narrative therapy influenced my writing and thinking a great deal, while the actual practice of using narrative questioning in my interviews did not carry through to the research, as the interviews were far more exploratory than they were therapeutic.

storytelling, autoethnography and narrative therapy and aim for my writing to be a discursive intervention into the ways in which the dominant narratives of settler colonialism have shaped my own identity and subjectivity.

I have shaped these narratives around three characteristics of *xwelítém* ways shared with me by Stó:lō mentors in this work and the non-Indigenous people they recommended as interviewees. First, to be *xwelítém* is to erase Stó:lō presence, culture and nationhood, colonial history and contemporary colonial realities of Indigenous oppression and dispossession, and settler privilege. Second, being *xwelítém* means attempting to dominate, control, and repress those who are painted as “inferior” in dominant cultural narratives, it means plugging into racist colonial narratives and stereotypes. Third, being *xwelítém* is to be hungry and greedy, driven by consumption and lacking respect, reverence and reciprocity for the land. In each narrative I consider what one aspect of being *xwelítém* looks like in contemporary everyday practice, how we have come to be this way, and what might support a transformation of these aspects of being *xwelítém*. In this way the piecing together and writing of these stories is the thickening of potential alternative narratives about who I am as a white settler and where I need to be going.

These alternative stories also draw upon Stó:lō understandings of the kinds of qualities of ethical being that make it possible for meaningful relationships to develop between Stó:lō and non-Indigenous people. Where Stó:lō mentors recommended settlers who had walked at least part ways down a path towards respectful, ethical, and caring relations with Stó:lō people and the land, they also described characteristics of these people which allowed for these relationships to emerge. These qualities can be summarized as:

- They “get it,” acknowledge and accept the colonial history and present colonial reality. They know their own history and who they are.
- They are compassionate, sincere and can relate on a human-to-human level, know their boundaries and place; are humble, respectful, show reciprocity.
- They are spiritually open, in tune with their senses and body, connected with their surroundings; they take time to reflect and connect with their heart; they

are willing to be in ceremony with us, they respect our culture and actively learn from us.⁴⁴

From these understandings of being xwelítem, the characteristics of recommended settlers, and the teachings for transformation shared above, I began to piece together the starting points of the three narratives of xwelítem transformation. I attempted to breath life and depth into the emerging narratives by turning to many other literatures and resources that support my journeys of looking back and of understanding what this looking back means for moving forward, of situating myself as a link in a chain.

Narrative 1

In the first narrative (Chapter 4), I describe xwelítem everyday practices and narratives of erasure that we inherit from our white settler culture and our families through socialization, and that we recreate and renew in our contemporary lives. We erase from the landscape and from our consciousness colonial history, contemporary realities, and Indigenous nationhood. Our failure of vision allows us to escape the emotional and intellectual disorientation and disturbance arising from encounters with expressions of Indigenous nationhood and the ways in which Indigenous nationhood has been erased, denied, and oppressed to facilitate the establishment of our lives and privileges in these lands. How do we actively interrupt these “acts of erasure” in our everyday contemporary practices? Naming these acts of erasure and exposing ourselves to the colonial stories in which our historical and contemporary realities are contextualized becomes a starting point in pathways towards ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples.

I centre on my engagement with my own everyday environment as a new parent, attempting to consider with critical eyes what my young daughter might be ingesting from this environment that nurtures a failure of vision and a colonial way of imagining the world, and how I might begin to intervene with this process. I turn to the ways in which as a white settler child and youth I was socialized into a devaluing and depersonalizing of history, facilitating a kind of normalized colonial amnesia or

⁴⁴ In Irlbacher-Fox, “Traditional Knowledge, Co-Existence and Co-Resistance,” she suggests similar qualities that Indigenous people describe as being important for settler allies: compassionate, humble, non-interfering, grounded in themselves, able to listen deeply and respect others, spiritual. See p. 156.

ignorance. I also centre the shape-shifting practices of erasure in which we find ways to create “sameness” between ourselves and Indigenous peoples, erasing the interconnections of our own white settler experiences of privilege and Indigenous experiences of dispossession and oppression. These shape-shifting stories and practices of “sameness” include assimilating Indigenous people into identity categories and understandings that fit within liberal notions of a multicultural, tolerant, inclusive society. They also include subtle and overt narratives and practices of settler indigenization, where we attempt to associate ourselves with, centre, or even adopt aspects of Indigenous culture and identity, including the growing phenomenon of claiming Indigenous identity through the Métis-ization of Canada.

I interweave these examples of white settler practices and narratives of erasure with an intentional practice of colonial exposure, of contextualizing my existence within colonial history and present. I take on this colonial exposure by looking back at the history of the lands and waters that shape the daily life of my family and the predominantly white settler community of Yarrow. This re-narration centres Stó:lō relationships with these lands and waters, and the colonial occupation, theft, and lies that created the foundation for transforming the landscape towards white settler farming communities, in the process deeply disrupting Semá:th and Ts’elxwéyeqw lives. I also attempt to express what Taiaiake Alfred calls “radical imagination”⁴⁵ by looking back at the history of my ancestors, following my maternal grandfather’s Desormeaux family lineage back into the fur trading era in Haudenosaunee homelands around Montréal, and to their later occupation of Anishinaabeg Algonquin lands along the Kichisipi (Ottawa) river. Through these stories, my aim is to reveal how my own family’s and communities’ privileges, livelihoods, and very existence are linked with the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples, and from this to look forward to understanding and acting on the responsibilities that flow from these linkages.

Narrative 2

The second narrative (Chapter 5) considers the emotional roots of what Frantz Fanon calls a “white superiority neurosis” and Stó:lō mentor Ernie Crey describes as a

⁴⁵ Alfred, “What Is Radical Imagination?”

plug that drives xwelítem attachment to racist colonial stereotypes. The colonial narratives about Indigenous people and about white settlers that proliferate in our media, history, public education, and public discourse provide the avenues for us to play out a deeply rooted way of being in which we experience our own power, our own beingness, through experiencing our dominance or superiority over another. We might enact overt denigrating racism and oppression, or a more paternalistic, insidious, yet equally dehumanizing racism carried out as white saviours on missions to help others in need, psychologically affirming our own superiority and others' inferiority in the process.

Looking back to understand this white superiority neurosis as an aspect of being xwelítem becomes looking back at my own childhood and the childhoods of my parents, questioning the ways in which my ego and shadow have been shaped at a personal level in relationship to the stereotypes and moral understandings of good and bad characteristics that permeate the collective unconscious of mainstream white settler colonial society. How might I project this shadow onto others in order to maintain my ego sense of self, and how does this interlink with racist, oppressive practices I may enact towards Indigenous people? As a new mom, how might I pass on the conditions of this neurosis, this emotional plug, to my daughter, and in what ways do I witness this in the white settler parenting culture in which I am now immersed? Socialized away from an innate emotional literacy and embodied knowing, we lack crucial conditions for recognition of, and strength to resist, injustice and oppression via the ability to experience empathy for ourselves and for others. Our capacity for compassion is also distorted by the childhood inducement of a guilt or shame we feel in relation to any experience that names us as having done "wrong," inherently stunting our ability to engage emotionally with actual practices of restorative justice. Witnessing my own innate ways of parenting with my daughter, and the parenting practices present in mainstream white settler culture, stirs reflections on the normalization of emotional repression and the manipulative and fear-based practices of control, and on how these, in turn, relate to the emotional plug that drives our colonial racism.

Transforming the white superiority neurosis becomes not only about interrupting colonial stereotypes and narratives, but also about coming to terms with the dehumanizing and oppressive childhood experiences that nurture our need to keep others

in an inferior place in order to experience our own sense of beingness. It involves leaning into our own shadows, releasing repressed emotions, and developing compassion and empathy towards ourselves. In turn, this creates space and possibility for a renewed capacity for compassion towards others. As we take on this work as parents and caregivers, we interrupt the passing on of this psychic and emotional inheritance to our children.

Narrative 3

Finally, in the third narrative (Chapter 6), I consider the *xwelítém* hunger or greed that keep us in the grips of consumer-capitalist culture and institutions. This aspect of *xwelítém* subjectivity is a way of experiencing our meaning, our beingness, through consumption and materialism. In both indirect and direct ways, our *xwelítém* hunger creates deep barriers to ethical relationship building with Indigenous people and with the land. Indigenous and settler mentors alike describe this *xwelítém* hunger as having a spiritual root—a lack of spiritual experience and understanding of ourselves as inherently part of the cosmos, an ignorance and denial of our existence within interdependent and communicative relationships with the Earth.

In looking back, I turn to the history of my ancestors in Europe, tracing through the Scottish ancestry of my paternal grandmother I consider some of the political and cultural transitions that may have shaped their understanding of relationships with the land and their attachments to beliefs and values of progress and development as they arrived on Turtle Island. I ask: What are the possible avenues for white settler reconnection with land-based spirituality, ethics, and practices? For myself, and many white settlers I interviewed, spiritual experiences and teachings shared with us through relationships with Indigenous peoples have created the possibility for this spiritual reconnection. Where relationships of accountability, reciprocity, and respect exist, and Indigenous people want to offer this, we can be grateful and open to this learning. Yet, looking towards Indigenous people, expecting support for our own spiritual reconnection, is setting us up to be “takers” once again and places Indigenous people in the position of accepting all the potential risks of cultural theft, appropriation, and disrespect that come with cultural, and especially spiritual, sharing. I turn to consider the possibilities and hazards of looking towards our own ancestral traditions for guidance. As we become

spiritually full instead of hungry, we grow in our openness and desire to share what we have, to share of ourselves and our sacred gifts, passions, and talents. Through doing so, we create the possibility for reciprocal and interdependent relationships with Indigenous people and with the land.

Summary

In this introductory chapter, I began by sharing stories to situate myself and this work in place, centering Stó:lō homelands and the historical and contemporary experience of colonialism here. I jumped into the heart of the work, sharing insights from my conversations with Stó:lō and non-Indigenous people in which I asked: What defines xwelítem ways of being? And, importantly, if we transform ourselves away from these xwelítem ways, what are we transforming ourselves towards? What are the ways of being that promote the possibility of ethical relationships? And finally, what teachings and practices guide this transformation?

In the following two chapters, I step back to situate this research within the literature, Stó:lō guidance, and my own experiences that form the ground from which I am growing the three narratives of transformation I share in Part 2. In Chapter 2, I take a step back to look at identity and positionality, engaging in a conversation about the politics of identity that exists within academic, activist, and community spaces, a conversation about how we choose to identify ourselves, and what these choices suggest about how we situate and relate to contemporary colonialism. I consider identity as an intersecting positionality across multiple axes of difference that shape our access to privileges and our experiences of oppression, and the politics and practices of self-location that flow from this understanding. I highlight the problematic ways a blanket Indigenous-settler dichotomy erases the distinct positionality and experiences of non-Indigenous people of color in a white supremacist settler colonial state, and explain my choice to use “white settler” as a way to identify my own positionality and those of European heritages with white skin privilege. Finally, I turn to Indigenous understandings of identity as deeply relational, and consider how these encourage a shift from a focus on identity to a focus on subjectivity. I ground my thinking about white settler subjectivity in

Stó:lō homelands, drawing on the term *xwelítem* as a method of talking about ways of being that act as barriers to the possibility of ethical relationships with Stó:lō people and with Stó:lō Téméxw.

In Chapter 3, I step back again and look to the critical Indigenous literature, Stó:lō mentors, and my own experience to share four underlying starting points that guide the direction of my research towards a focus on transforming *xwelítem* ways in Stó:lō Téméxw, guide my choice of methodologies, and inform the ethics governing my research and relationships more broadly. If Chapter 2 is steered by the question: *Who am I in relation to Indigenous people and Indigenous lands?* Then, Chapter 3 is guided by the question: *How might I, as a white settler researcher, contribute to the work of justice here?* The starting points are also responses to this question, situating my research purpose and approach within a broadly decolonizing agenda.

Chapter 2: Status on the Land, Social Locations and Subjectivity – From Politics of Identity towards Practices of Becoming

[H]ow is this mythology of me the result of unequal circumstances and injustice; it is fundamentally, at once, about the politics of identity as well as the politics of imagining a future.¹

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity”

The writing and experience of living the research are cyclical and mutually strengthening—I continuously find myself returning to the same questions, the same starting points, yet with a deeper understanding. One of these questions is: How do I identify and understand myself as a non-Indigenous person living in Stó:lō Téméxw? This question is directly connected to my own self-location or positioning as the researcher and author of this work. It is also intimately connected to the language I am using in turning the lens on the “white settler problem” and attempting to understand and transform xwelítem ways of being. I share here a growing understanding of three aspects of identity—status on the land, social location, and subjectivity—as different but interconnected aspects of who I am, how I understand and identify myself, and who I am becoming.

Settler Status: Occupiers of Indigenous lands

Part of the relational ethics and accountability that guide my work involves ensuring that I continue to connect and communicate with Stó:lō mentors and non-Indigenous mentors, as well as Stó:lō people more broadly, to share how the research is unfolding and create space for reciprocal and ongoing conversations. This has involved the creation of a Stó:lō committee who have at different stages and capacities guided the research,² a Stó:lō scholar on my university committee (Wenona Hall), face-to-face visits, email updates and check-ins, connecting at social and political events, and a broader commitment for me to share the research process and outcomes where asked and appropriate. It also means being involved and contributing in reciprocal ways by

¹ Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity.” P. 53

² This idea was put forward by Tyrone McNeil of Seabird Island and Stó:lō Tribal Council.

supporting initiatives of my mentors and in some cases evolving into mutual care in our day-to-day lives.

One of these opportunities to share how the research was unfolding came about in the biannual Stó:lō People of the River Conference, in the spring of 2015. My intention was to share my continuing research in a way that made it possible to see the conversation it was contributing to developing. With this in mind, I invited some of my interviewees to present with me—specifically, Sandra Shields and David Champion, who are white settlers and artists who had shared their photography and writing skills towards documenting the significant Stó:lō work of bringing home a displaced stone ancestor of the Ts'elxwéyeqw people: T'xwelátse.³ The story of the return of Stone T'xwelátse is shared in a book, an exhibit at the Reach Gallery in Abbotsford (2011), and an ongoing online interactive exhibit.⁴ Sandra and David have gone on to work on another large scale multimedia exhibit entitled “Grand Theft Terra Firma,” which exposes the history of settler colonial land theft in Stó:lō homelands, using a video game framework as a template and format for expression. Sandra and David shared some of their own journey towards transforming their xwelítém ways to come to a place where they were actively creating and seeking relationships of respect and accountability with Stó:lō and other Indigenous people, and turning the lens onto their own work of telling colonial history as white settlers and artists.

I also asked Eyem Shxwélí Shlálí, Melody Andrews, and her husband Sakej Ward to join us and present in this session. The first time I met Melody, she had invited me and a colleague from the Stó:lō Tribal Council to her women's group in her community of Shxw'owhámél, where she is recognized as a Siyá:m (respected leader) and has a strong voice in protecting sacred relationships with the land. Sakej Ward, Melody's husband, is from the community of Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church First Nation, New Brunswick) of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Together they are nurturing five children. Sakej has a long history of protecting Indigenous inherent responsibilities and freedoms, combining his military training with education in political science and Indigenous governance. He is committed

³ Stone T'xwelátse contains the soul of a transformed man who came from the Ts'elxwéyeqw (Chilliwack) village of Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie) on the Chilliwack River. The man T'xwelátse was turned to stone by Xexá:ls (the Transformers), who travelled through the land in the distant past making the world right.

⁴ *Man Turned to Stone: T'xwelátse.*

to the resurgence of Indigenous teachings and practices, especially as these relate to warrior traditions and societies. Through our conversations and my knowledge of their practical involvement in Indigenous resurgence and decolonization, including where this contended with non-Indigenous “allies,” I knew Melody and Sakej had critical guidance, insights, and challenges to share. I was hoping to create the space for all of us to be in conversation about these topics.

As it happened, on the day of the conference session, there was a mix-up about the time, and Melody and Sakej could not make it. In the audience for the session was Larry Commodore from Th’ewá:lí (Soowahlie) and the Ts’elxwéyeqw tribe, a leader and activist in his community as well as someone who works with many grassroots activists in campaigns to resist pipeline projects, water extraction, and salmon habitat destruction, among many others. At the end of the session, Larry called on me to work with him to organize a larger gathering on this topic, to which we would specifically invite the local non-Indigenous activist communities, and where we would make a space for Melody and Sakej to speak. Larry and I took this on together and organized and hosted a gathering called “Decolonizing the Colonizer” early in the summer. We had a strong turnout, and the questions and discussion that followed revealed how deeply desired this conversation was and is, as well as how challenging, messy, and emotional. Melody shared the Stó:lō history and understanding of the word *xwelítem* as the “hungry, greedy, people,” and Sakej challenged us to pick up our responsibilities and situate ourselves as occupiers on these land. He also introduced the idea of “status on the land” as a way to talk about some of the different terminology non-Indigenous activists and scholars are using to self-identify. As Sakej puts it,

A lot of times you hear the term guests or newcomers. That is a nice way of putting it. Guests don’t invade your lands, guests don’t declare sovereignty, absolute control over your nation. Guests don’t come in with gunboats, armed personnel, and the first things they construct are forts. Guests don’t step on the land for the sake of gaining your resources and displacing you from your own territory. Guests don’t bring in their families, friends, and slaves to take over your lands and take those resources. Guests don’t disrupt and destabilize your society or your political institutions. Guests don’t forcibly change your religion. Guests don’t usurp your traditional government. Guests don’t replace you with a puppet regime. So I hope that is clear enough, that your status is not a guest.

The other term I hear, and you hear this a lot in academia and it bothers me, is settler. Oh, ok, I kinda get that – we are a colonial subject settling in Indigenous territories. The problem with settler is this: when we think of settler, it conjures up the image of a frontiersman, a person who is out on the land, it's kind of a romanticized image, the hard workers, adventurers, good work ethics, the image of an honest and straightforward, a bit rough around the edges, but a strong adventurous type. And you get the image of the frontiersman settler going out and carving a whole new life, builds a home, brings his family, has access to wide open expanses of free land. What does that word speak to? Really it leaves the Indigenous population out of the equation in that word. Settler does not speak to genocide, the term settler does not speak to ethnic cleansing, the term settler does not talk about the imposition of a reserve system as a way of controlling indigenous populations so they could take the rest of the land. The word settler is historically and politically sterile. It is quite safe for xwelítem to say the word settler. In my mind and those who have been around me, and we have discussed this, the more proper term or status is Occupier. When one comes in and invades a nation, usurps their government, displaces their society, takes their lands and replaces it with their own subjects, so they can extract the resources, there is no better description than occupier.⁵

I have also experienced the romanticization and sterilization of the term settler. In the small town of Yarrow, where I live, there are non-Indigenous groups dedicated to celebrating the legacy of the pioneers and settlers of Yarrow – pioneers understood as the first wave of European families who came here, and settlers those who followed shortly after.⁶ Both concepts, and the narratives that go with them, are shrouded with the romanticized ideas of hardworking, honest people who suffered and sacrificed a great deal and took on the wild, natural, “empty” landscape to carve out a better life for their families. That these narratives and the language that goes along with them have survived and are rife in the imagination of many is also reflected in the fact that the intentional community – Yarrow Ecovillage – of which my family and I have become part still uses the language of pioneers and settlers to talk with fondness and respect for those who came before and contributed a great deal of hard work and sacrifice to establish the community. The romanticization of the mythology of settlers and pioneers therefore not only is about Euro-Canadians who can trace their families' lineages to a certain duration of residence in a region, but also reflects a certain set of contemporary morals and ideas

⁵ Ward, “Decolonizing the Colonizer.”

⁶ “Yarrow Pioneers and Settlers.”

associated with pioneer traditions.⁷ The symbols, metaphors, and language of this pioneer/settler mythology are drawn on in a contemporary sense to define imagined collective histories and futures.⁸ Furthermore, “settler” is also associated with settlement, the idea of staying put, which is increasingly ironic, given the migratory nature of settler lives facilitated or demanded by the capitalism of our globalized age.⁹

What is an appropriate term to reflect non-Indigenous status on the land? Sakej Ward proposes the term “occupier,” naming the specific fact of our occupation of Indigenous lands, whether this is part of a long legacy of occupation by our ancestors or a recent migration. Our status on the land is also reflected in the practice that many critical activists and academics have adopted of naming the specific Indigenous nations whose homelands we are occupying. People not Indigenous to the specific homeland they are living in, no matter how they came to be there, are *occupying* those lands unless they have specific relationships through which other understandings of their status have become clear. The main possibility for this is to become family. Sakej Ward is an example, a Mi’kmaq man living in Stó:lō homelands with his wife and their children; he is not Stó:lō, but he is family.¹⁰

The starting point for an ethical relationship as non-Indigenous peoples living in a colonial context is a self-acknowledgment of our status on the land—for the vast majority in what is now called British Columbia, we are actively occupying unceded, Indigenous homelands. The term settler in some contexts does reflect this acknowledgement and is a call to responsibility, such as among some activist communities and theoretical spaces and disciplines within academia. While Sakej’s frustration with the terms guest and newcomer is clear, I have also experienced the unsettling potential of the term settler applied to contemporary non-Indigenous people, in that it serves to situate us in an ongoing contemporary phenomenon rather than an historical event. The field of settler colonial studies that has emerged recently and centers this terminology of settler, also centers the similarities and linkages between characteristics of settler colonial

⁷ The link between contemporary morals and ideas associated with pioneer traditions is a key theme in the work of Historian Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History*. See for example, P. 102.

⁸ Furniss.

⁹ Rasmussen, ““Non-Indigenous Culture”: Implications of a Historical Anomaly”; Chamberlin, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?* Both discuss the disjoint between the root of the word settler, being to settler, and the increasingly mobilized lifeways of contemporary non-Indigenous peoples.

¹⁰ See Ward, “Decolonizing the Colonizer.”

occupations of Indigenous lands in North America with other contexts such as the Israeli occupation of the Arab homelands of Palestine.¹¹ Highlighting these similarities has political and cultural significance in the work of naming contemporary colonialism in Canada, and unsettling and calling to account non-Indigenous communities. The field of Indigenous studies has also increasingly adopted the term settler. For these reasons, I have chosen to continue to use the term settler throughout this work; however, I aim to do so in a way that explicitly connects it to our status as occupiers rather than to the romanticized narratives of hardworking pioneers, and that centres the Indigenous nations on whose lands we are occupying. In practice, self-identifying statements such as “I am a white settler occupying Stó:lō lands” convey the realities of occupation and explicitly recognize the Indigenous nations of that land. I also remain open to using different terms—such as occupier—in spaces where the term “settler” is full of romantic nostalgia, or alternatively where people have become too complacent with the term or immobilized by it.¹²

Another problematic aspect of how “settler” has come to be used in activist discourse and in academia is its tendency to obscure the complicated ways in which many different people have come to occupy these lands, especially as this tends to erase the white supremacist histories of violence and repression towards many non-Indigenous people of colour through slavery, indentured servitude, head taxes, and internment. It also can serve to hide the ways in which white supremacy continues to shape experiences of structural oppression, discrimination, and interpersonal violence for non-Indigenous people of colour. As a white person using the term settler, I must be cautious about how this term can obscure historical and contemporary differences in access to power and privilege, and in experiences of oppression.¹³ White settler scholar Scott Morgensen, working at the intersection of queer theory/queer politics, critical Indigenous studies and settler colonial studies, shares some of his reflections in recognizing the ways in which the term settler may problematically reinforce white supremacy. He asks:

¹¹ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”

¹² Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Cornthassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism.” On P. 16-17 discuss the complacency associated with the term settler.

For instance, if white people self-define through an oppressor role with respect to Indigenous people, does our emphasis on this let us evade naming our oppressor roles with respect to peoples of color? Or, if we think that these latter roles are subsumed or explained by the term “settler,” do our analyses and actions then demonstrate how this is so? Furthermore, if we ever use the term “settler” to refer to people of color, does our initial definition of the term by reference to ourselves project whiteness as our basis for explaining our relations with people of color and their locations as arrivants? Notably, if white people ever assign “settler” identity to black people, how does this enact the white-supremacist violence of anti-blackness that we, as namers, already represent? In effect, if on identifying as “settlers” white people then apply the term uniformly to people of color, or school people of color in their capacity to oppress Indigenous people, how do these acts perform white supremacy, and the epistemic violence of whiteness as foundational to knowledge of the human?¹⁴

These questions help to further problematize the term settler and call me to a higher level of accountability and responsibility to the complexities by which settler colonialism plays out through the institutions and ideologies of white supremacy, and to the people of colour—activists, scholars, leaders—in the past and today who have been at the forefront of struggles against white supremacy, at times in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. For example, some Chinese people who migrated to Stó:lō homelands as indentured workers and under the repressive Chinese head tax married into Stó:lō families and/or had relationships of solidarity and friendship.¹⁵

Yet, I also acknowledge the challenge by Mi’kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence and South Asian scholar Enakshi Dua who in their article “Decolonizing Anti-racism” highlight the fact that “people of color live on land that is appropriated and contested, where Aboriginal peoples are denied nationhood and access to their own lands.”¹⁶ Furthermore, Hawaiian scholar Haunani Kay Trask argues the failure to identify immigrants in settler states as settlers makes possible the historical fantasy of settler states evolving into “multicultural nations.”¹⁷ Focusing singularly on the differences among non-Indigenous people can also evade the question of all of our obligations to Indigenous peoples.¹⁸

¹⁴ Morgensen, “White Settlers and Indigenous Solidarity.”

¹⁵ Hunter, “A Forgotten History.”

¹⁶ Lawrence and Dua, “Decolonizing Antiracism.” P. 134.

¹⁷ Trask, “Settlers of Color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals’ in Hawai’i.”

¹⁸ Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*. P. 9

Morgensen, drawing from the work of post-colonial feminist scholar Sherene Razack's use of "white settler state," makes the argument that using the language *white settler* is a way for "white people in Indigenous solidarity to challenge our desires to be central to decolonization; and to direct us towards the leadership of Indigenous and racialized people who challenge white supremacy and settler colonialism connectively while forming solidarities that displace whiteness."¹⁹ I use white settler throughout this work to indicate a dual responsibility to decentre whiteness in mixed spaces as well as centre whiteness as a site of critical inquiry and accountability in white spaces. While I situate myself as a white settler, it is for other communities to identify and articulate their responsibilities to Indigenous peoples, and not for me to name those relationships.²⁰

Social Locations and a Multidimensional Settler Colonialism

Many critical race, feminist, queer, Indigenous, and post-colonial theorists and activists have taken on the challenging and important work of demonstrating the interrelationships between and among the many hierarchical structures embedded in white settler colonial-capitalist society and the ways in which our identities and subjectivities, our privileges and oppressions, are constructed by and through the social locations these structures generate.²¹ Many of these scholars look to the concept of intersectionality or the idea of interlocking systems of oppression, or a multidimensional approach, as a means to interrogate the complex ways in which we are constantly shaped by multiple and interrelated hierarchies of power, privilege, and oppression. In a collaboration that itself represents varied and overlapping social positions, three scholars—Jeff Corntassel, a Cherokee man, Rita Dhamoon, a south Asian woman, and Corey Snelgrove, a white man—have written about and demonstrated in their scholarly collaboration the importance of a multidimensional approach to critiquing and transcending settler colonialism:

[O]ur understanding of settler colonialism is not one-dimensional; instead, we begin from the position that it is intrinsically shaped by and shaping interactive

¹⁹ Morgensen, "White Settlers and Indigenous Solidarity."

²⁰ See Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*. P. 6 make this point clearly and their articulation of it has helped me to clarify my own position.

²¹ For example, Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law*; Suzack et al., *Indigenous Women and Feminism*; Dhamoon, *Identity / Difference Politics*; hooks, *Feminist Theory*; Collins, "It's All in the Family."

relations of coloniality, racism, gender, class, sexuality and desire, capitalism, and ableism. This multidimensional understanding of settler colonialism enables specificity in the ways to which place, culture, and relations of power are approached; reflects the ways in which the State has governed subjects differently; and emphasizes that the disruption of settler colonialism necessitates the disruption of intersecting forces of power such as colonialism, heteropatriarchy and capitalism.²²

Identifying one's status on the land is only one aspect of self-identifying in a way that names the multidimensional forces of settler colonialism that shape our everyday lives, and of which we must be conscious in order to intentionally intervene against and dismantle them. It is this understanding of the multidimensional and intersecting forces of white settler colonialism that forms the theoretical basis for self-locating in one's research as well as in activist communities committed to anti-oppressive organizing.²³ This self-location is seen as part of a personal commitment to action that starts with changing the self and making visible who you are and your conceptual baggage; this includes your gender, social class, ethnicity, race, and ability and how these may limit your understanding of issues in your study.²⁴ I am writing as a white, middle-class, able-bodied, cis-gendered,²⁵ heterosexual woman with a high level of mainstream education. I believe the more privilege I have, the more responsibility I carry to leverage the weight of that privilege towards both theoretical and practical pursuits that support the work of Indigenous and racialized people, and other "Others."

I also acknowledge that because I am privileged in many ways, I do not hold the same degree of experiential knowledge of oppression and resistance; my privilege has protected me in many ways, and as a result I have blind spots in my view that prevent me from both seeing and acting in line with my values. I can attempt to overcome these but must remain honest and accountable to the fact that I will never understand the forces of oppression as clearly as those who have experienced them directly in embodied, everyday lived realities. My worldview, my set of knowledges, my very body has not been restricted, denigrated, and controlled by the same level of violent persistence. Nor have I

²² Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism." P. 2

²³ See for example: Potts and Brown, "Becoming an Anti-Oppressive Researcher."

²⁴ Potts and Brown.

²⁵ Someone is cis-gendered if their gender identity matches with their biological sex at birth; this is in contrast to trans-gendered people who do not hold cis-gendered privilege.

thus developed the same level of sophistication in the understanding of this violence or in the tools of resistance and resilience as have the spirits, minds, hearts, and bodies that have endured, survived, and resisted.

Within this self-locating practice rooted in intersectionality and anti-oppression lenses, Indigeneity could also be understood as a social location. This understanding connects one specifically with the experience of, and resistance to, colonial oppression and displacement, whether or not a person is presently living in their Indigenous homelands. There are approximately 350 million Indigenous peoples situated in some 70 countries around the world.²⁶ What these people share is the daily realities of having their lands, cultures, and governmental authorities simultaneously attacked, denied, and reconstructed by colonial societies and states.²⁷ Yet, as Alfred and Corntassel describe in their article “Being Indigenous,” Indigeneity is a site of its own being and knowing that predates and remains far more than a social location in relation to colonial power. They trace the efforts of Indigenous scholars to articulate what it means to be Indigenous, and they centre the concept of Peoplehood as described by Cherokee/Creek scholar Tom Holm, along with Diane Pearson and Ben Chavis. Peoplehood includes four interlocking, interdependent concepts: sacred history, ceremonial cycles, language, and ancestral homelands.²⁸ To this Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel add the importance of maintaining and renewing respectful relationships or kinship networks as a core of authentic Indigenous identity, with a holistic view of relationships that includes relationships with all of creation.²⁹

This culturally rooted and relational understanding of Indigenous identity or Indigenousness is more holistic than any notion of social location could possibly convey. It is in the practice of the culture, grounded in relationships, experienced through all one’s senses, that one becomes, one is, Cree, Stó:lō, Secwepmecw, Mi’kmaq, Nishnaabeg, or Haudenosaunee. Being/becoming is about a holistic understanding of a person in the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions situated in a cultural fabric. It is from this effort to relate to the plurality of ontologies and phenomenologies of

²⁶ Alfred and Corntassel, “Being Indigenous.” P. 599

²⁷ Alfred and Corntassel. P. 599

²⁸ Holm, Pearson, and Chavis, “Peoplehood.”

²⁹ Alfred and Corntassel, “Being Indigenous.”

Indigenusness as a practice, as a lived day-to-day “being” with mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that I began to consider who I am at a deeper level than my status on the land and social locations within the hierarchies of white settler colonial society. Specifically, the writing of Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson, sharing her understanding of the development of Nishnaabeg consciousness and self-awareness, what it means to live as, to be, Nishnaabeg,³⁰ served as a turning point in my own reflections on how I have been socialised into certain kinds of beingness through the fabric of white settler colonial culture. I began to ask: What are the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions and practices of being that make me xwelítém?

Subjectivity, Relationality and Consciousness: Being Xwelítém

A psychoanalytic theory of oppression must consider the role of subject position in subject formation, that is, the relationships between subject position and subjectivity.³¹

Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytical Social Theory of Oppression*

Kelly Oliver in her book *The Colonization of Psychic Space* articulates the distinction between subjectivity and what I have called social location (and she calls subject position). For her, *subject position* is one’s historical and social position in one’s cultural context, taking culture in a broad sense to include political, economic, and social realities. *Subjectivity*, on the other hand, is one’s sense of oneself as a self with agency, as an “I”; it is one’s sense of being—a being with meaning.³² These two concepts are inherently intertwined, and yet they are different. One’s sense of self as a subject is profoundly affected by one’s social positions, and yet subjectivity is not just a recognition of these social positions but a consideration of the ways in which relationships we are embedded in constitute our very sense of being, our ways of being, which inherently are ways of relating. As Oliver puts it, “We do not respond because we are subjects, it is responsiveness and relationality that make subjectivity and psychic life possible.”³³

³⁰ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*; Simpson, *Islands of Decolonial Love*; Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy.”

³¹ Oliver, *Colonization Of Psychic Space*. P. xvi

³² Oliver.

³³ Oliver. P. xviii

Métis scholar Frye Jean Graveline in her book *Circleworks: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness* describes subjectivity as including the unconscious and conscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world.³⁴ In this way, subjectivity is a holistic understanding of responsiveness, one that respects the emotional core of our mental or intellectual life, and the unconscious and conscious psychic processes that shape and interrelate with these emotions. While non-Indigenous scholars discussing subjectivity seem to more readily focus on human-to-human relationality as the primary interactions in which subjectivity is formed and transformed, many Indigenous scholars emphasize the ways in which our relationships with non-human beings, including animals, plants, waterways, mountains, ancestors, and spiritual beings, deeply influence the stories we tell about who we are and how we experience and understand our very beingness in the world.³⁵ Land, ancestors, and spiritual beings are relational and therefore have the capacity to reciprocate, and in so doing shape our sense of self-understanding and our sense of meaning and agency in the world. Hawaiian scholar Manulani Aluli Meyer speaks to and from a fully conscious or radical subjectivity—a sense of being in relation to all other beings, through all of our senses, through our interconnected mind, body, and spirit.³⁶

How might these Indigenous understandings of subjectivity and beingness provide guidance for understanding my own subjectivity, or perhaps more generally white settler subjectivity? It is here, grounding in Stó:lō homelands, that I am guided to the concept of *xwelítem*. In a sense, in engaging with the concept of “subjectivity” I am striving for an English word that conveys what the concept of *xwelítem* already acknowledges. The *xwelítem* are the hungry, starving ones, yet this hungry way of being is always *in relation to* the land, ancestors, spirits, and other humans. *Xwelítem* ways of being are nurtured through experiences of the world, and through the narratives of meaning that are told in the context of relationships around us. The responsiveness and relationality that create *xwelítem* are more intimately connected to certain subject

³⁴ Graveline, *Circle Works*. P. 40

³⁵ See for example: Meyer, *Ho’oulu*; Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*.

³⁶ Meyer, “Changing the Culture of Research: An Introduction to the Triangulation of Meaning”; Meyer, “Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning.”

locations and status on the land in the colonial cultural context: a white settler of European heritage occupying Indigenous lands. Yet, aspects of *xwelítem* subjectivity can grow, be nurtured and learned by those who do not fit neatly into the white settler identity. From the earliest conversations I had with Stó:lō mentors about this project, a few shared their concerns that some of their own people were “becoming *xwelítem*.”

My effort is to understand what constitutes this *xwelítem* subjectivity and what transforming it might look like. Yet, I intentionally situate myself as a white settler within this effort and share narratives about becoming/being *xwelítem* as rooted in my own experiences, my own process of looking back and looking forward, my own social locations and status on the land. It is my aim that these narratives will serve as a kind of intervention and contention with dominant narratives of white settlers who may read this work, and may provide inspiration towards transforming *xwelítem* ways for other white settlers. It is possible that aspects of my effort to understand what it means to become/be *xwelítem* may also be relevant to Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people of colour, may contribute to their own processes of transformation, healing, and decolonization. Yet, this is not my aim, nor do I see it as an appropriate goal for my research or place for me to intervene. If anything, I hope this work might support Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of colour who are often forced to contend with white settlers as we bring forward these ways of being in everyday relationships, organizing efforts, and work towards decolonization and justice.

Other non-Indigenous people have in some cases also taken up referring to themselves through the language and cultural lens of the Indigenous peoples on whose land they are living. Perhaps the most widely expressed is the use of “Pakeha” for white people in Aotearoa (New Zealand), “Wadjula” in Australia, and “Haole” in Hawai’i.³⁷ This in itself is an important way of rejecting the language and making of difference as prescribed by the colonial state and instead situating ourselves in a specifically interdependent relationship with the Indigenous peoples on whose lands we are occupying. In this way, this approach also resists the placelessness of colonial subjectivities, and it is potentially subversive in inverting the colonial prerogative to name, thereby providing “an impetus for decolonial transformation through a renewed

³⁷ See: Rohrer, *Haoles in Hawaii*; Tilbury, “What’s in a Name?”

community-centred approach.”³⁸ These are all important reasons why I have chosen to centre xwelítem.

Yet, many Indigenous words for settlers, such as the word xwelítem provide deeper insights into the history of the relationship between the peoples, characterized by violence, destructiveness, and greed, and are more descriptions of a mindset, belief system, or way of being than they are a way of describing skin colour. For example, Jeff Corntassel has collected a number of different Indigenous words for white settler: Yonega, the Tsalagi term for white settlers, connotes “foam of the water; moved by wind and without its own direction; clings to everything that’s solid.” Wasicu is a Dakota term for settlers that means “taker of fat,” and the word moniyawak in Cree means “worship of money.”³⁹ He also mentions the word hwunitum, meaning ‘hungry people’ is used in the Hul’qumi’num and SENÇOTEN languages, which have close ties to the Halq’eméylem language spoken among the Stó:lō.⁴⁰

These concepts help us to see the relationship we are embodying with the Indigenous nations on whose lands we are occupying and with the land itself. As Jeff Corntassel puts it:

[T]here is an urgent need for settlers to change their current relationships with the local Indigenous nations on whose territory they reside. If this is not the relationship one wants to embody, whether as yonega or hwunitum or any number of Indigenous terms for settler, then the impetus is on the settler to change the nature of the relationship by taking direction from Indigenous nations themselves.⁴¹

Rather than appropriate xwelítem as a new label to apply to myself as a white settler, I want to resist turning it into a label—a modern liberal impulse to contain and control. I want to remain cognizant of what Sarah Ahmed calls a “politics of admission,” wherein by claiming “I am xwelítem,” I or other white settlers might engage in a “fantasy of transcendence” in which to declare oneself as being something shows that one is not

³⁸ Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism.” P. 2

³⁹ Corntassel, “To Be Ungovernable.”

⁴⁰ Hul’qumi’num is often referred to as the island dialect of a shared language spoken from around Parksville to Saanich Inlet on Vancouver Island and on the mainland from the mouth of the Fraser eastward to Harrison Lake and the lower end of the Fraser Canyon. Linguists have given this shared language the name “Halkomelem” which is a blend of three dialects: Hul’q’umi’num’ (island dialect), Hənq̓əminəm’ (downriver dialect), and Halq’eméylem (upriver dialect).

⁴¹ Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism.” P. 16-17

the thing that one declares oneself to be.⁴² Rather than engage in another form of “admission,” or simply a new type of identity politics, my aim is to engage with an aspirational politics and practice of becoming, of transforming beingness, directed towards solidarity, grounded in place and responsibility. My intention is to begin a journey of understanding what it means to *be xwelítem*, and how my *xwelítem* ways affect Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw, and ultimately how it is I and others can begin to transform our *xwelítem* ways as part of creating the possibilities of ethical relationships.

This dissertation is my own journey, and I write it from my own voice, my own subjectivity, subject locations, and status on the land. I was raised in the hegemonic dominant culture’s mainstream white, middle-class, Canadian context, tied to the larger global, hegemonic, militarized, capitalist nationalism, with Christian cultural roots and capitalist patriarchal values implicitly part of day-to-day life. I grew up disconnected from my ancestry, heritage, and histories, including the histories of my family and ancestors upon coming to Turtle Island and our history in the parts of Europe where my ancestors came from. I was not nurtured in a spiritual understanding of my place or the place of humans within the broader cosmological order. I was also not aware of my subject positions and along with them my privilege as a middle-class, white, heterosexual, cis-gendered Canadian. The collective identity narratives that went along with this context were the narratives of Canadians as polite, peaceful/benevolent, hardworking people who enjoy the great outdoors. I am a daughter, granddaughter, sister, and friend. I am also a mother and a partner. I continue the relationships with many Stó:lō people that in large part inspired this journey and have begun many new ones. I have grown through this work many mutually supportive and caring relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who are walking a path of transforming the subjectivities that the settler colonial culture nurtures us in. I am the stories that I tell about myself and others tell about me, the relationships I exist within, and the sensory experiences of the world around me. That the stories I and others tell about who I am have changed, that I am existing within new relationships or have changed the way I am in old ones, are all a part of the expression of my own transforming subjectivity, one in which I aspire to recognize and resist *xwelítem* ways—emotionally, mentally, spiritually,

⁴² Ahmed, “Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism.”

and physically—and to become, to be, to exist in the space of uncertain, prefigurative possibility, in relationships of reciprocity with Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw.

How can I become open to being (re)made in and through my relationships with Indigenous peoples? And, remaining conscious of Manulani Aluli Meyer's description of a fully conscious subjectivity, to being (re)made in and through relationships with the land, ancestors, and cosmos? How can I also remain aware, critically self-reflexive, and accountable to the ways in which I contribute to the (re)making of others in our relationships? I feel these questions—so essential for participating in the messy, emergent, prefigurative work of decolonization, begin in Stó:lō homelands with an understanding of what it is to be xwelítem, how we are made/constructed into xwelítem, and what it might look like to undermine, to challenge and transform, our xwelítem ways of being.

Chapter 3: Guidance for Decolonizing White Settler Research and Action

Once again, before I turn to Part 2 of this dissertation, the bulk of the writing in which I share three narratives of transformation, I want to step back in a different way. In Chapter 2, I arrived at the focus on transforming *xwelítem* ways through a shift from a politics of identity to a politics of becoming, a politics that centres upon the everyday practices of making conscious the ways in which I have been and continue to be shaped into a white settler subjectivity, shaped into being *xwelítem*. If in Chapter 2 I started with the question *Who am I in relation to Stó:lō and Stó:ló Téméxw?* in Chapter 3 I begin with the question *How might I contribute to the work of justice here?* This question lies within the conversation in academic, activist and community spaces about the roles of non-Indigenous people in the work of decolonization. I look to the critical Indigenous literature, Stó:lō mentors and my own experience to share four underlying starting points that guide the direction of my research towards a focus on transforming *xwelítem* ways of being in Stó:lō Téméxw. These starting points also guide my choice of methodologies and inform the ethics that guide my research and relationships more broadly.

First, understand and accept that settler colonialism is not a historical phenomenon but is an ongoing part of contemporary life in what is now called Canada. To do critical research or practical work towards justice means to recognize and interrogate the ways in which white settler colonialism continues to change shape and evolve. Second, keep in focus the goal of shifting myself and other white settlers towards the work of collective co-resistance to contemporary colonialism, and making restitution and reparations for historical injustices towards Indigenous peoples. Third, root research and actions in place, grounded in an acknowledgement of particular colonial histories, present-day realities, and the resurgence of the Indigenous nations whose lands we are occupying. Fourth, accept and act on the recognition that settler colonialism will not be deeply challenged, nor will justice for Indigenous people be found without a profound transformation of the settler—and specifically the white settler—problem. We must turn

the lens on ourselves and recognize the depth of conditioning that maintains the unjust colonial relationship.

Each one of these starting points is a narrative in itself, an argument and perspective and understanding that has grown, and continues to grow, strengthen and deepen in the critical Indigenous literature and that reflects direct relationships with community and activist spaces. These understandings are crossing over and influencing other academic disciplines and will no doubt continue to be written about, debated, discussed and engaged with. Much important work continues to be done in strengthening these arguments through interacting in the intellectual spaces in which they are challenged or not yet present. My aim here is not so much to enter into debate but to share the research and experiences that have led me to accept these starting places, allowing them to be a platform from which to dive into the deeper work towards which their understanding points. I will briefly review the literature in relation to each of these points of guidance for white settlers as activists and as researchers, interspersed with Stó:lō voices, and some of my own experiences and reflections. While I have drawn out these starting points and share how I have come to them, they are of course not universally agreed on or uncontested within Indigenous communities, including Stó:lō. It is my responsibility to think through Indigenous guidance deeply, critically, self-reflexively, with attunement to my body and spirit, and with constant energy directed towards nurturing relationships of accountability and reciprocity.

Intervene with Contemporary Shape-Shifting Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is a form of colonization in which foreigners come to land inhabited by Indigenous peoples and claim it as their own new home. This foreigner migration and occupation takes place for many different reasons and under varying circumstances. At the heart of this migration is the need for space, land and resources, making settler colonialism distinct from what has been termed “exploitation colonialism,” a form of colonization and foreign domination focused more explicitly on exploitation of labour than on settlement of land.¹ Today, in what is now called British Columbia, lands that are recognized as Indigenous by Canadian governments, Canadian

¹ See Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*; and Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*.

colonial law, and white settler society are only 0.36% of the land base, whereas the settler share is the remaining 99.64%.² In the heart of Stó:lō Téméxw (named the Fraser Valley by settler colonial society), the Stó:lō continue to be marginalized or excluded from decisions regarding their lands. There is an ongoing influx of non-Indigenous people into Stó:lō Téméxw,³ legal and political assertion of control over Stó:lō lands by Canadian governments, and a continued exploitation of Stó:lō resources and lands by Canadian governments, third-party corporations, and settlers. Stó:lō and all Indigenous peoples across Canada continue to be subject to the paternalistic *Indian Act* as well as many other imposed laws that prohibit and restrict Indigenous ways of life.⁴ The structural relationship of domination and the colonial agenda of accessing land and resources remain at the heart of dealings with Stó:lō and other Indigenous nations.

Yet, in an era of postmodern imperialism, the form and approach of colonial policies and practices has, at times, changed. One of these new methods is what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard describes as the contemporary era of recognition politics. He argues that the expression of Indigenous anti-colonial nationalism that emerged following a number of watershed events forced colonial power to modify itself.⁵ These events included the Red Power Movement in resistance to the 1969 federal government White Paper, the Supreme Court of Canada *Calder Decision* on land title, and a multitude of Indigenous resistances, such as Métis, Dene, and Inuit resistance to the McKenzie Valley Pipeline project in the Northwest territories, and the resistance of the Cree of Northern Quebec to the massive James Bay hydroelectric project during the 1970s.⁶ Stó:lō people were involved in these anti-colonial movements and efforts across Turtle Island and at home. As Larry Commodore of Th'ewá:lí recently reminded me, he was jailed, along with many other Stó:lō leaders and elders, for occupying the Nurse's Residence at Kw'eqwalith'a in May 1976 to assert Stó:lō ownership of the Kw'eqwalith'a grounds, that today are the site of many Sto:lo organizations' offices.⁷

² Manuel, *Unsettling Canada*. P. 7

³ Henderson, "Chilliwack and Area Population among the Fastest Growing in B.C." reports, for example, the Chilliwack Census area grew 8.1% from 2011 to 2016.

⁴ Palmater, *Beyond Blood*.

⁵ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*.

⁶ Coulthard. See 'Introduction'

⁷ Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre, "Qw'oqw'elith'a: About Us—Did You Know?"

Coulthard writes that following this era of anti-colonial resistance and Indigenous organizing, colonial power in Canada shape-shifted from “a structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double, to the one that is now reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practice that emphasize our *recognition* and *accommodation*.”⁸ Perhaps the most significant signal of this shift has been the inclusion of Aboriginal rights in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution [1982]. This has led to an era of legal and political battles over the definition of these constitutionally protected rights—an “empty box” whose contents remain disputed. Many Indigenous leaders are arguing for full recognition of self-determination and Indigenous governance in their lands. Canadian governments and courts tend to minimize these rights, to subsume them within existing colonial governance institutional and power structures, often fighting against them explicitly in the courts, revealing the racist and colonial values, beliefs and assumptions that underlie Crown title and assertion of sovereignty.⁹ Critical Indigenous scholars and leaders argue that regardless of this modification in colonial policies, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state has not changed—the politics of recognition have failed to shift the bedrock of settler colonialism in Canada. As Coulthard puts it:

Colonial domination continues to be structurally committed to maintain—through force, fraud, and more recently, so-called “negotiations”—ongoing state access to the land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement and capitalist development, on the other.¹⁰

The turn towards “negotiations” in British Columbia has resulted in the BC Treaty Process, as well as a myriad of consultation and engagement processes led by provincial and local governments and corporations attempting to meet the legal requirements for consultation as outlined by recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions.¹¹ Critical

⁸ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*. P. 6. Emphasis in original.

⁹ See: Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown*; Mandell, “The Ghost Walks the Walk: The Illusive Recognition and Reconciliation Legislation.”

¹⁰ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*. P. 7.

¹¹ For example, requirements for consultation and accommodation are included in the Supreme Court of Canada decisions. The most frequently cited are the *Haida Nation v. British Columbia* (Minister of Forests), 2004 SCC 73 and *Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia* (Project Assessment Director), 2004 SCC 74.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars point to the fact that these processes are still fundamentally about reconciling Indigenous peoples with colonial agendas, institutions and worldviews, perpetuating hierarchies of power in which Canadian governments remain dominant over Indigenous nations, and creating the basis for the certainty necessary for capitalist resource development to continue unabated.¹² These shape-shifting colonial tactics create a more “inclusive” way of continuing a longstanding imperative to keep Indigenous peoples and nations out of the way of ongoing resource development and settlement, ensuring further Indigenous dispossession and disconnection from culture and homelands, and entrenching deeper dependency on the capitalist-colonial state.¹³ My own experience working for Stó:lō organizations that are engaging with these shape-shifting processes of consultation and negotiations resonates with this critical perspective. Although these “engagements” are an attempt to meet the legal obligations of consultation and accommodation, they tended to bypass meaningful conversations with Canadian government decision-makers. Rather than entering nation-to-nation conversations about land use, Canadian government decision-makers assess the quality of the corporation-led “consultation,” maintaining their superior position as ultimate decision-makers. These consultation/engagement processes are also often initiated long after key strategic decisions about land and resource use have already been made, and participation in corporate engagement processes can be manipulated to indicate consent to the project.¹⁴

These negotiation strategies are also insidious in their efforts to incorporate Indigenous people into capitalist resource extraction models and what Zapotec scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez calls “market citizenship.”¹⁵ By recognizing cultural difference, Altamirano-Jimenez argues that contemporary neoliberal rhetoric in the

¹² See: Blackburn, “Producing Legitimacy”; Blackburn, “Searching for Guarantees in the Midst of Uncertainty”; Woolford, *Between Justice and Certainty*; Alfred, “Deconstructing the British Columbia Treaty Process”; Schreiber, “First Nations, Consultation, and the Rule of Law.”

¹³ See: Alfred, “Colonialism and State Dependency.”

¹⁴ In my capacity as an employee of Stó:lō organizations, I participated in two “consultation” processes. First, through my work with the Sto:lo Tribal Council in 2009–2010, I worked as a researcher supporting Stó:lō leadership in responding to BC Hydro/BC Transmission Corporation’s plan to build an additional high-voltage transmission line through Stó:lō homelands. In 2010–2012, I also worked as a researcher to support Ts’elxweyeqw Tribe Management’s participation in the “engagement” efforts of the Texas-based company Kinder Morgan, which aims to twin an existing oil pipeline carrying bitumen and other fossil fuel products from the Alberta tar sands to the coast for export.

¹⁵ Altamirano-Jiménez, “North American First Peoples.”

Canadian colonial state makes space for Indigenous people to practice self-government, culture and identity as long as these practices remain separate from territory and do not challenge the colonial-capitalist economic model of resource extraction and property ownership.¹⁶ These market citizenship avenues give the impression to mainstream settler society that Canada has embarked on a more progressive relationship with Indigenous peoples. In practice, the relationship of domination remains the same, but Indigenous people are often more effectively integrated into and dependent on the market economy as laborers, consumers and potential shareholders and partners in resource extraction projects.

The continued colonial domination, and the disregard for Indigenous nationhood at the political level, is interwoven with the everyday experiences of Stó:lō people taking care of their families, practicing their culture and upholding their responsibilities within Stó:lō homelands, or in Halq'eméylem: S'ólh Téméxw. S'ólh Téméxw is often said to mean "Our world/Our land," yet it is a concept not easily translated into English and is understood best in the context of direct relationships and experiences with Stó:lō people and the land of this place. As put by Stó:lō scholar Stelomethet, Ethel Gardner, "S'ólh Téméxw is not just words, not simply a representation of the physicality of the world, but a representation of a holistic concept that binds the people spiritually to the physical world, to each other, and to all our ancestors."¹⁷ Through personal relationships with Stó:lō friends and colleagues, I have barely begun a journey to understand the spiritual relationships and responsibilities at the heart of S'ólh Téméxw. Through these relationships, I have also more directly witnessed the ongoing colonial repression and violence the state uses to ensure domination and disrupt Stó:lō relationships and responsibilities within S'ólh Téméxw.

One of the central aspects of S'ólh Téméxw is Stó:lō relationships with Sth'ó:qwi (salmon). The surveillance, restriction and criminalization of Stó:lō relationships with Sth'ó:qwi is also one of the most direct and obvious expressions of colonial domination of Stó:lō lives. Wenona Victor (Hall) speaks to the Stó:lō relationship with Sth'ó:qwi:

¹⁶ Altamirano-Jiménez; Altamirano-Jimenez, *Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism*.

¹⁷ Gardner (Stelomethet), "Tset Hikwstexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'emeylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People." P. 56

Sth'ó:qwi is the Halq'eméylem word for all of our salmon and is recognized as one of our most sacred “gifts.” It is therefore one of our inherent rights granted to us by ceremony. From time immemorial *Sth'ó:qwi* have figured prominently in all aspects of Stó:lō life, not only for the many different necessary nutrients so vital to a healthy and long Stó:lō life, but also spiritually as seen in sacred song, dance and ceremony that honor and respect its place within our society.¹⁸

If colonialism were a thing of the past, the inherent right of Stó:lō people to maintain their relationships with *Sth'ó:qwi* would be respected. Yet today, Stó:lō people continue to be criminalized for maintaining this relationship, an essential part of the physical, cultural, spiritual and social well-being of Stó:lō families, communities, tribes and as a nation.

Contemporary Colonialism in Stó:lō Téméxw: The Criminalization of Stó:lō Fishers

In 2008, when I began working for the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Kw'itsel Tátel (Patricia Kelly) and I were assigned to work together. Kw'itsel Tátel is from the Stó:lō community of Leq'ámel, with many other relatives extended throughout Coast Salish lands. She is the mother of two children and has been on the front lines of struggle against ongoing settler colonialism in many capacities. When we met, Kw'itsel Tátel had recently been charged by the RCMP for “illegal” fishing—in other words, fishing outside of the windows of time or the fishing strategies allowed by the Canadian federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. She refused to plead guilty and pay a penalty for this “crime” and instead chose to fight her charges in the Canadian courts. In doing so her intention was to assert her inherent right to fish as a Stó:lō woman with a long ancestral lineage and relationships and responsibilities within Stó:lō Téméxw, and to call the federal government to account to respect and implement Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution [1982] which recognizes and affirms Aboriginal rights. She was representing herself with the support of all those

¹⁸ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 190. Wenona has recently changed her name from Wenona Victor to Wenona Hall. Wherever I cite her previous work published as Wenona Victor I cite her using this name with Hall in brackets. Elsewhere throughout the text when referring to her, and not specifically her previously published work, I use Wenona Hall.

she could gather.¹⁹ She poured her own energy and resources, and those of her children and much of her extended family and friends, into this trial to stand up for her right to be Stó:lō, to feed her children and family, and to continue her relationship with Sth'ó:qwi. I attended a number of Kw'ítset Tátel's court hearings and each time was struck by the Eurocentrism of the courts, and at the same time the persistence and resilience of Kw'ítset Tátel and the many Stó:lō people fighting the criminalization of their inherent and ancient right and responsibility to an enduring relationship with Sth'ó:qwi in Stó:lō Téméxw. Recently, Stó:lō chief Robert Gladstone of Shxwhá:y Village was charged for fishing one salmon for the annual Stó:lō First Salmon Ceremony.²⁰ Stó:lō people continue to remain connected to Sth'ó:qwi as a spiritual practice and a means for their self-sufficiency, despite the persistent risks of jail, loss of their valuable fishing equipment, the emotional and financial burden of dealing with the courts, as well as the very real risk of physical attack and bodily harm by police and court sheriffs.

It was my own witnessing and experience of a direct physical attack on Kw'ítset Tátel and her son, Kwiss Hamilton, at the Chilliwack Courthouse in July 2012 that generated a more emotional and embodied awareness of the contemporary realities of white settler colonial domination and control, maintained at its core through the use of violence. Kw'ítset Tátel had planned to drum and sing a song as she and her supporters walked her evidence into the courtroom where her trial would be held. Yet before she could do so she was confronted by Court sheriffs who claimed that her drumstick was a potential weapon. She did not immediately give over her drum and drumstick, but rather began to explain the significance of her ceremonial entry. The sheriffs reacted to this with force, assaulting her and her son who came to her defense.²¹ As the assault escalated, I and other supporters were also removed from the scene. The assault ended in Kw'ítset Tátel and her son being separated and jailed for the better part of the day, and Kw'ítset Tátel experiencing humiliating bodily searches. Both were physically bruised,

¹⁹ Kw'ítset Tátel did not seek legal aid to support her in this case. She understood her case to be in the wrong level of court – provincial rather than federal, and that provincial legal aid would also inappropriately confine her case to provincial jurisdiction. Since legal aid lawyers are paid by the provincial government, she also felt they would be in a conflict of interest in arguing and bringing her case to higher courts.

²⁰ Henderson, “One Salmon Taken from the River by Chilliwack Chief Leads to ‘Sacriligious’ Charges by DFO.”

²¹ “Kwitsel Tatal Jailed for ‘resisting Assault.’”

emotionally distressed, angry, hurt and exhausted. Kw'ítsel Tátel, myself and other supporters attempted to instigate both a court review and an RCMP criminal investigation into the sheriffs' physical attack on Kw'ítsel Tátel and her son. Not only were our requests ignored; they were met with a threat to charge Kw'ítsel Tátel with assaulting an officer. How do you go to the same authorities who are harassing, threatening and criminalizing you and ask them to investigate their colleagues? If at an intellectual and political level I had begun to understand the injustice of ongoing white settler colonialism in Canada, at an emotional level, this experience shattered the psychological attachment I had, rooted in white privilege, to a belief in the benevolence of the Canadian state. I could never have imagined being physically attacked in a courthouse, due to no provocation of my own, by representatives of the state. In fact, I can flash through experiences of feeling safe going to RCMP and other police officers when needing assistance. When discussing this experience with Sioliya, June Quipp, a Stó:lō mentor, matriarch and leader from the community of Cheam (Xwchí:yò:m) and the Pilalt (Pelólhxw) Tribe²², shared with me how important she felt it was for white settlers to experience directly the regular state violence experienced by many Indigenous peoples, in order to come to a more personal and emotional understanding of colonial oppression and white privilege.²³ As a white settler, I can ignore and deny the violence of the state, which I am often personally protected from as a matter of white privilege. Yet, if I continue to believe in the mythology of Canada's benevolence and justice, I must also accept that I am legitimating and accepting the ongoing, everyday, intimate violence, as well as the structural violence, that maintains Canada's colonial power.

The colonial relationship is alive and well in Canada, continuing to repress Indigenous nationhood and shape the everyday realities of our lives as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. My purpose in this dissertation is not to rearticulate or deepen this argument, but rather to take it as a starting point for my work. I also start from the recognition that white settler colonialism in Canada is an "incomplete project, with internal contradictions, cracks and fissures through which Indigenous life and knowledge

²² I share the Halq'emeylem spellings of Cheam and Pilalt here as they are found in the Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem (Galloway 2009), but I do not continue to use them throughout as they are not commonly used, and were not used by those I interviewed.

²³ Interview with Sioliya, June Quipp, March 15, 2013.

have persisted and thrived despite settlement.”²⁴ Stó:lō people continue to uphold land-based spiritual and cultural practices, following in the footsteps of their ancestors and asserting and expressing Stó:lō nationhood and self-determination on Stó:lō terms. As was repeated by Stó:lō mentors interviewed for this work, beginning with and naming these truths is an essential starting point for developing ethical, authentic and meaningful relationships with Indigenous people. Without this basis of truth there can be no authentic understanding, compassion or solidarity. Yet, for many white settlers, mental, emotional and spiritual barriers block our openness to hearing, witnessing and accepting the truth of ongoing colonialism in Canada, as well as the truth of long-standing Indigenous resistance and continued attachment to Indigenous cultures and ways of life. While I write this as a starting point, as an ethical basis for myself as a researcher, it is also a point that I return to throughout the work. Coming to accept the truth of contemporary white settler colonialism, Indigenous dispossession, oppression and erasure—and our own infinite responsibilities to this truth—is intertwined with the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of transforming our xwelítem ways of being.

Co-resistance, Reparations and Restitution

Indigenous methodologies, like many post-structural, anti-oppressive, feminist, critical race, and narrative approaches, reject the positivist idea that the researcher is an objective, neutral observer, that there is one truth “out there” to be discovered, and that knowledge is developed only through a neutral, apolitical, scientific, empirical process. Rather, these various methodologies recognize that all knowledge is socially constructed and research is a political process that should be used towards transformation and change. These approaches are both critical and difference-centred, meaning they embrace multiple truths and perspectives and yet also highlight relations of power.²⁵ From a superficial perspective, these approaches all share an agenda of creating change or action towards greater social justice. Yet, what constitutes social justice? Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues Indigenous research must be decolonizing in that it interrogates

²⁴ Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*. P. 61

²⁵ See: Moosa-Mitha, “Situating Anti-Oppressive Theories within Critical and Difference-Centred Perspectives.”

imperialism and colonialism and contributes to Indigenous self-determination.²⁶ It recognizes that any critical and transformative efforts towards social justice must contend with and centre the dispossession of Indigenous lands. It must situate the broader Indigenous agenda in the research domain.²⁷ As a white settler researcher beginning by acknowledging the unbroken link between historical and contemporary white settler colonialism in Canada, this means asking: What is the work of white settlers in decolonization and in supporting Indigenous self-determination and resurgence?

Decolonization is not easily defined given the complexity and diversity of colonial histories, Indigenous resistance and resurgence, and the land itself. While colonialism attempts to label and confine, to create limits, boundaries and categories, and it packages itself as linear, inevitable “progress”; decolonization is inherently contingent, emergent, dynamic, relational and aspirational, moving in all directions without a definite future picture but with a prefigurative commitment to the messy work of everyday decolonizing practices.²⁸ On the inauguration of the new journal *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, editors Sium, Desiu and Ritskes highlighted that a decolonized future is and must be a “tangible unknown.”²⁹ Rather than a definitive picture of future political and economic relations and structures, it is

a constant (re)negotiating of power, place, identity and sovereignty. In these contestations, decolonization and Indigeneity are not merely reactionary nor in a binary relationship with colonial power. Decolonization is indeed oppositional to colonial ways of thinking and acting but demands an Indigenous starting point and an articulation of what decolonization means for Indigenous peoples around the globe.³⁰

What might white settler involvement in decolonization look like? How, as a white settler researcher-activist, do I engage in the dynamic, emergent and constant (re)negotiation of power, place, identity and sovereignty?

²⁶ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

²⁷ Ibid.; See also: Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*.

²⁸ Sium, Desai, and Ritskes, “Towards the ‘Tangible Unknown.’”

²⁹ Sium, Desai, and Ritskes.

³⁰ Sium, Desai, and Ritskes. P. I

Co-resistance

Part of the work of decolonization involves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people engaging in collective action to break down the institutions and hierarchical structures that maintain and perpetuate the colonial relationship. Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, a white settler scholar and activist connected with Dechinta Bush University, in Dene Homelands, has written that to achieve peaceful co-existence in the future, settlers need to engage in forms of co-resistance that challenge settler privilege in the present.³¹ This co-resistance requires building deep relationships of solidarity across many differences encoded in the hierarchical scaffolding of colonial society. Those of us in positions of privilege must intentionally connect and create the possibilities for these relationships, and within these relationships remain open to being fully transformed by and through them. Furthermore, this co-resistance is directed towards the ongoing industrial capitalist resource extraction that continues to destroy the health of the land, perpetuating Indigenous disconnection and dispossession and restricting the possibilities for Indigenous freedom to live according to their own cultures, values, practices and teachings.

Given the intimate linkages between Indigenous resistance to on-going colonial domination and resurgence of Indigenous ways of life, co-resistance can also look like direct support for Indigenous resurgence, including participating in land and waterway restoration efforts that create the possibility for renewal of Indigenous life ways. For example, I discussed above the central importance of Stó:lō relationships with Sth'ó:qwi for Stó:lō self-determination. We can contribute to co-resistance of colonial policies and laws that facilitate the decline of wild salmon populations such as the provincial regulatory regime facilitating the open-net pen salmon aquaculture industry. We can offer direct support for Stó:lō fishers who are fighting criminalization of their right to fish in the Canadian courts. We can also be involved in directly supporting the restoration of salmon habitat along creeks and waterways in Stó:lō Téméxw,

In taking up our roles as active and integral participants in decolonization, we must ensure our efforts at co-resistance reflect a specific commitment to centring Indigenous struggles and leadership. As put by South Asian migrant justice and Indigenous solidarity activist and writer Harsha Walia in her article “Decolonizing Solidarity,” we have to avoid forcing Indigenous people to fit within our existing groups and institutions as activists: “Indigenous struggle cannot simply be accommodated within other struggles; it demands solidarity on its own terms.”³² “Solidarity” has often been

³¹ Irlbacher-Fox, “Traditional Knowledge, Co-Existence and Co-Resistance.”

³² Walia, “Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity toward a Practice of Decolonization.” P. 242,

understood as creating strategic alliances with Indigenous people only when this serves our own interests and agendas.³³ Rather than strategic and interest-based alliances, co-resistance to contemporary colonialism, or a “decolonized solidarity,” requires long-term relationships of accountability with Indigenous peoples, a centring of our responsibility to colonial history and the colonial present.

Reparations, Restitution and Restoration

Land is the central focus of settler colonialism, and land and the return of land must remain at the centre of any efforts towards decolonization.³⁴ We must correct and make amends for past crimes committed by our ancestors. When many white settlers hear this, there is an immediate jump to a polemical place of fear, to the idea that this means that all white settlers will be forced to give up Canada and move away, return to lands in Europe that would be foreign to many of us now, or live oppressed under some kind of Indigenous dictatorship. This fear leads to evasion of our responsibility for the injustice of stolen lands. We claim that this theft was in the “past,” that we don’t need to be accountable for our ancestors’ actions (or the ways in which those very actions shape our privilege today), or that today things are different and Indigenous people are “included” in Canadian society. In fact, this polemical view evades Indigenous calls for justice by framing them as unrealistic and extreme. As put by the late Secwepmecw leader Art Manuel in his book *Unsettling Canada*:

When we speak about reclaiming a measure of control over our lands, we obviously do not mean throwing Canadians off it and sending them back to the countries they came from—that is the kind of *reductio ad absurdum* that some of those who refuse to acknowledge our title try to use against us. We know that for centuries Canadians have been here building their society, which, despite its failings, has become the envy of many in the world. All Canadians have acquired a basic human right to be here.³⁵

If we can move beyond these fears and evasions, what does the work of reparations and restitution involve? As Alfred puts it:

When I say “Give it back,” I am talking about settlers demonstrating respect for what we share—the land and its resources—and making things right by offering

³³ See Lee, “Windigo Faces,” for example of Indigenous-environmental group alliances in which the environmental groups only supported Indigenous struggles up to the point they aligned with their own interests.

³⁴ Alfred, “Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples”; Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”

³⁵ Manuel, *Unsettling Canada*. P. 11

us the dignity and freedom we are due and returning enough of our power and land for us to be self-sufficient.³⁶

How can we directly contribute to returning enough power and land for Indigenous peoples to be self-sufficient? Can we personally and collectively as families, communities and organizations return lands, monies, materials, understanding these actions deeply as reparations and solidarity rather than charity? In what ways can we also advocate for Canadian governments to return lands and power to Indigenous peoples? How can we offer and advocate for any support Indigenous communities and nations may request in their journeys towards self-sufficiency?

Returning lands is also about restoring lands, creating the possibility for healthy, self-sufficient livelihoods for Indigenous peoples. Jeff Corntassel points to the challenges and barriers Indigenous people face in efforts at resurgence, including renewing sustainable relationships with their homelands, in part through reconnecting with traditional foods and cultural land-based practices to gather, hunt, fish or harvest these foods. Corntassel asks:

What happens when the medicines, waters, and traditional foods that Indigenous peoples have relied on for millennia to sustain their communities become contaminated with toxins? What recourse do we have against those destructive forces and entities that have disconnected us from our longstanding relationships to our homelands, cultures and communities?³⁷

Our responsibilities include supporting the clean-up and restoration of the land so that it is possible for Indigenous peoples to reconnect with their homelands and through this reconnection create security and self-sufficiency for their nations. Furthermore, this work of restitution must acknowledge the deep damage done by colonial practices such as residential schools. Where land is the basis of culture and nationhood, participating in returning, restoring and making space for Indigenous relationships with land and Indigenous self-determination is also about supporting the mental, emotional, and physical health and well-being of Indigenous peoples.³⁸

³⁶ Alfred, "Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples." P. 182

³⁷ Corntassel, "Re-Envisioning Resurgence." P. 88

³⁸ See Alfred, "Colonialism and State Dependency"; and Chandler and Lalonde, "Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada's First Nations." for two separate approaches to arguing for the linkages between Indigenous well-being and support for and resurgence of Indigenous culture.

While the call for settlers to engage in co-resistance, restitution and reparations, including land restoration, remains clear, it is also clear there are many barriers, pitfalls and hesitations, often unconscious and emotionally driven, that prevent settlers from walking this path altogether, or create obstacles that knock us off this path. Our forays into this work may be short-lived and shallow, or, in the process of good intentions, we enact further oppression. When I began this research, my intention was to focus on the work of non-Indigenous people who were already “allies” to Indigenous people, hoping their work would provide lessons for other settlers engaged in Indigenous solidarity and decolonizing action. I recall one of my Indigenous colleagues saying in response to my research proposal presentation in the UVic Indigenous Governance department: “I get the idea, but really, how many of these white settler ‘allies’ are really engaged in decolonizing action, and what about addressing the vast population of white settlers who are nowhere near this place?” Stó:lō mentors also noted that while temporary alliances may emerge between Stó:lō and non-Indigenous people and organizations with regard to particular issues or projects of mutual interest, these relationships are unlikely to be founded on a deep understanding of colonial history and ongoing realities, Indigenous dispossession and corresponding settler privilege, and resulting settler responsibilities to Indigenous peoples and lands. The local emergence of the Idle No More movement in Stó:lō Téméxw, most pronounced during the winter of 2012-2013, also demonstrated how few non-Indigenous people saw the importance and meaning of standing with Stó:lō resistance and resurgence, outside of those who perceived the overlap with their own grievances against the federal government over the slashing of environmental legislation and oversight. My interviews again revealed just how small the potential community of existing non-Indigenous people engaged in ethical relationships and decolonizing solidarity was in Stó:lō Téméxw. Most often, Stó:lō interviewees struggled to identify settlers whom they could recommend who had in some measure begun walking down a path towards more ethical relationships. Taken together, this evidence suggests the community of non-Indigenous people doing the self-work necessary to begin building the relationships required to engage in the work of co-resistance and solidarity, reparations and restitution is small, perhaps especially in Stó:lō Téméxw.

Rather than walking this pathway, many of us settlers are contending with our tendencies to run from, erase and distort colonial truths by enacting what Unangan scholar Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang call various “moves to innocence.”³⁹ We are held back by our guilt and shame,⁴⁰ defenses and fears, the materialism and greed that prevents us from sharing what we have, and the individualistic mentalities that make it difficult for us to do our part in a collective responsibility without being overwhelmed and immobilized. It is also a leap of understanding and consciousness for us to do our part without expecting our efforts to be in exchange for our own personal security, emotionally or materially. As Tuck and Yang point out, contributing to the work of decolonization must be done with “no strings attached.” These strings include when settlers demand security for ourselves, our future, our “right” to call this land home. Rather, we need to come to a place where we engage in co-resistance, reparations and restitution because it is the right and honourable thing to do, and we negotiate what our future might look like on these lands when the time comes that Indigenous peoples hold their own power as self-sufficient, self-determining nations.⁴¹ In this research, I have chosen to focus on understanding and transforming these barriers and obstacles in myself, sharing insights from my conversations and experiences with Stó:lō and settler mentors, in the hope that sharing this journey will have meaning for others. I argue and hope to demonstrate that these barriers are intimately and tangibly also the barriers that prevent the possibility of ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples, the kind of relationships that turn the work of co-resistance, reparations and restitution into the prefigurative spaces of decolonizing futures. I now turn to another strong area of guidance from critical Indigenous scholars and Stó:lō mentors and a starting point for my work: decolonizing research and action must be grounded in place.

³⁹ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”

⁴⁰ While the anti-racism, settler colonial studies and Indigenous studies literature seems to use the term “guilt” and not the term shame, in the fields of psychology, social work, and psychotherapy there is at times a specific emphasis made on distinguishing between shame and guilt as emotional experiences. For example, social work researcher of vulnerability, empathy and shame, Brene Brown says shame is a focus on self – “I am bad” whereas guilt is a focus on behaviour “I did something bad.” While I have not addressed this distinction in this work and rather used both shame and guilt I think it is an important distinction to consider in further efforts to understand the link between emotions and racism. See: Brown, “Listening to Shame.”

⁴¹ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”

See and Respect Indigenous Homelands

Settler placelessness begins with the denial of colonial history and denial of responsibility to the Indigenous nations whose homelands we are occupying. Yet, neoliberalism, as a current form of capitalism and empire, has furthered our placelessness, as it generates detached, highly individualized subjects increasingly constructed as a self-regulating source of human capital.⁴² Global markets and globalized uniformity in labour regimes lead to human populations who are increasingly deterritorialized, decontextualized or placeless. Our relationships with land have in many ways been replaced with relationships to capital. As settlers, we can look back into our own histories of disconnection from the homelands in which our ancestors were embedded not only in interdependent relationships of sustenance with particular lands and waters but also in cultural and spiritual relationships that gave shape to the world and meaning to life.⁴³ Neoliberalism builds on this disconnect as it pushes us towards becoming more highly atomized and mobile subjects in globalized labour markets. In this way, neoliberalism can be linked to the longer-term generation of placeless subjects.

Aspiring to situate this work in Stó:lō Téméxw, is an act of resistance to settler colonialism and capitalism's push towards a placeless, deterritorialized existence. Situating my work in place also resonates with calls from anti-globalization activists and scholars who see the antidote to global industrial capitalism as decentralized, localized self-governance where diversity is valued and protected.⁴⁴ In a settler colonial context, what might be called "localized self-governance" must centre Indigenous rights to self-determination. It must also centre the required reparations and restorations necessary as part of settler responsibility for the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples and ways of life, and the ecological damage caused by industrial capitalism. As articulated by Unangan scholar Eve Tuck and non-Indigenous scholar Marcia McKenzie:

Settler societies are based on ongoing displacement and dispossession of people in relation to land. Theorizations of settler colonialism expose deep behaviours of ignorance toward land, water, environment, and sustainability, as evidenced in fuel extractions, agricultural practices, pollution and toxic dumping, hyper-

⁴² Türken et al., "Making Sense of Neoliberal Subjectivity"; Gershon, "Neoliberal Agency."

⁴³ See Ballantyne, "Dechinta Bush University." For discussion of settler colonial capitalism and settlers as deterritorialized subjects, see p. 81-82.

⁴⁴ See for example: Shiva, *Earth Democracy*.

development, and water use. Turning toward place necessitates acknowledgment and reparations based on these histories: of settler colonialism, capitalism, and of Cartesian and (post)modern separations of mind from body, body from land.⁴⁵

Settler colonialism has deeply disrupted the physical lands and cultural and spiritual life ways within Stó:lō Téméxw. Situating research in relationship to place therefore necessitates centring this displacement and dispossession and the possibilities for reparations, including the restoration of the integrity of the land itself. As Hiyolemtel, Grand Chief Clarence Pennier of Stó:lō Tribal Council, said to a largely non-Indigenous audience at an all-candidates debate for the last Canadian federal election, “Part of your responsibility in living here with us [Stó:lō] is to look after the lands and waters; you can’t look to your governments to do that.”⁴⁶

Placelessness is also a denial of our interconnectedness with the land itself and the forgotten or lost ability to communicate and be in relationship with the land and non-human beings. This placelessness includes a deep fear and distrust of nature and a loss of spiritual grounding that leads to materialism. As white settlers, we have become deeply disconnected from what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard calls a place-based ethics, ontology and imaginary. Drawing on the immense philosophical work of Dakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr., Coulthard describes the importance of a “place-based ethics” in resisting the colonial-capital project:

It has become apparent to numerous people within our communities that the organizational imperative of colonial-capital accumulation has signified an affront to this place-based understanding of what constitutes proper relations—relations between people, relations between humans and their environment, and relations between individuals and institutions of authority. Although this place-based ethics has been worn by decades of colonial displacement, for many it still serves as the radical imaginary guiding our visions of a just political and economic relationship with non-Indigenous people and communities based on principles of reciprocity and mutual obligation.⁴⁷

He goes on to describe this “place-based imaginary” as the ethical foundation from which dual colonial imperatives of state sovereignty and capitalist accumulation can be resisted.

⁴⁵ Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*. P. 3-4.

⁴⁶ Clarence Pennier, All-Candidates Debate, April 30, 2013, Sto:lo Nation Building 10, Hosted by WaterWealth

⁴⁷ Coulthard, “Place against Empire.”

What Stó:lō call S'ólh Téméxw could be seen as a representation of the specific and particular place-based imaginary of Stó:lō people living in relationship to their homelands. S'ólh Téméxw also translates in English as “Our land” and simultaneously “Our world.” This translation in itself expresses the deep connection between the physical lands and waters, and the cultural, spiritual and social relationships and worldview of Stó:lō people. What Coulthard calls “place-based imaginary” Tuck and McKenzie call Indigenous conceptualizations of “Land” (intentionally capitalized).⁴⁸ For Tuck and McKenzie, “Land” is about collectivity and sharing in relations to land that are the roots of ontological understandings of the world.⁴⁹ These land relations—like the place-based imaginary described by Coulthard—are inherently incommensurable with capitalist notions of ownership and property. Tuck and McKenzie choose to capitalize “Land” as a way of reflecting that it extends beyond a material fixed space: “Land is a spiritually infused place grounded in interconnected and interdependent relationships, cultural positioning and is highly contextualized.”⁵⁰ Culturally specific wisdom, teachings, ethics, stories, laws, are rooted in the land, situated in place—land is a teacher and a guide in the past and today.⁵¹ Situating research in Land is both recognizing and honouring this wisdom that sits in place, as well as the actual practice of engaging “in conversations with the land and on the land in a physical, social and spiritual sense.”⁵²

Tuck and McKenzie point out that centring research and/or education in place should also centre Indigenous languages as a necessary part of opening oneself to understanding and learning from Indigenous Land-based cosmologies. Stó:lō scholar lolehawk (Laura Buker) asks, “How much richer would education curriculum be in content and pedagogy if Halq'eméylem would be included in place-based learning?”⁵³

⁴⁸ While Coulthard uses the phrase “Place-based imaginary,” Tuck and McKenzie describe why they prefer the use of “Land” (capitalized intentionally) over the term “place”. Their contention is that “place” as a concept rooted in environmental education, has tended to remain attached to Eurocentric notions of land and nature, with place-based educators positioning themselves as politically neutral, representing indigenous peoples and knowledges as static and historical, and often reifying the romanticized original ecologist stereotype.

⁴⁹ Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*.

⁵⁰ Tuck and McKenzie. P. 300-301

⁵¹ For examples see: Deloria Jr and Wildcat, *Power and Place*; Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*; Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories*; Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*.

⁵² Wildcat et al., “Learning from the Land,” December 1, 2014. P. II

⁵³ Buker, “Walking Backwards into the Future with Our Stories: The Stō:lō Is a River of Knowledge, Halq'eméylem Is a River of Stories.” P. 58

Indigenous languages developed in relationship to land and water, providing direct guidance as to how to live in those particular lands and waters in a good way.⁵⁴ To meaningfully attempt to situate my work in Stó:lō Téméxw, to begin to understand and learn from the complex webs of spiritual, ancestral, intra-human and intra-species relationships that exist within and co-create what Stó:lō call S'ólh Téméxw, I must be engaged with learning Halq'eméylem. The connection between Halq'eméylem and S'ólh Téméxw is expressed in Stelomethet's (Ethel Gardener's) words:

Our Halq'eméylem language was born out of our interconnecting interrelationship with the River environment, which defined us, gave us our identity. The interconnecting relationships between River people and our River environment permeates our Halq'eméylem language, in our terms for world, S'ólh Téméxw, in origin stories, or sxwōxwiyám, in “time” terms, in “body” terms, in “house” terms, and in smestýexw, the shared power of vitality and thought which requires a protocol of respect in “all our relations.” And so it is, that for River People to speak our Halq'eméylem language is as natural as it is for the Robin to sing its own song.⁵⁵

Halq'eméylem is sxó:mes — a gift from the creator, gift from the ancestors — and should be respected as such. My knowledge of Halq'eméylem is small, and yet my experiences in learning the language and relationships that have formed from this journey so far have significantly opened my eyes to different ways of understanding and relating to myself, to others, and to the land.

Indigenous Methodologies, Critical Place Inquiry and Settler Research

Critical place inquiry means research that takes up critical questions and develops corresponding methodological approaches that are informed by the embeddedness of social life in and with places, and that seeks to be a form of action in responding to critical place issues such as those of globalization and neoliberalism, settler colonialism, and environmental degradation.⁵⁶

Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie, *Place in Research*

In articulating critical place inquiry as a research approach, Tuck and McKenzie attempt to bring into conversation the theories and methodologies within Indigenous and decolonizing

⁵⁴ Gardner (Stelomethet), “Tset Hikwtexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'eméylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People”; Rasmussen and Akulukjuk, “My Father Was Told to Talk to the Environment First Before Anything Else: Arctic Environmental Education in the Language of the Land.”

⁵⁵ Gardner (Stelomethet), “Tset Hikwtexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'eméylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People.” P. 109

⁵⁶ Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*. P. 74.

research and environmental research and education. In what ways have I attempted to situate this research in land and place—in a critical place inquiry? As a white settler researcher, I can engage in research that centres and interrogates white settler colonialism in its past and present manifestations in Stó:lō Téméxw. I also situate myself, as an intergenerational subject, within these histories and contemporary realities. Yet, as a white settler, can I do research that centres Stó:lō knowledges, practices, values, beliefs and teachings? Will this not take me down a path of cultural appropriation? How can I possibly imagine understanding Stó:lō knowledge and teachings enough to centre and apply them respectfully to my work and life, when I have not been deeply immersed in a Stó:lō cultural worldview? On the other hand, what does it mean to close myself off from the knowledge, teachings and practices that have been shared with me, to be immobilized by fear of mistakes or missteps, of unintentionally causing harm, to the point that I do not allow these gifts to shape how I am learning to see the world, who I am becoming? In the context of ongoing relationships of respect and accountability, where teachings have been intentionally shared to influence my life, how might this closing off affect these relationships? Might it keep me contained, and limited rather than open wholeheartedly to the ways in which these relationships are mutually shaping of each other?

White settler scholar Elizabeth Carlson asks similar questions as she struggles with the idea of white settler scholars engaging in Indigenous methodologies. Drawing on Margaret Kovach's work, she argues that it would be nearly impossible for white settlers to have the "situational appropriateness" required to engage with Indigenous methodologies. In Carlson's words,

My understanding of Indigenous knowledges is limited. These carry stories and meanings beyond my awareness. I do not believe I would understand and embody the values and practices of Indigenous methodologies in the ways Indigenous communities might. This is not to say that, as a resident on Indigenous lands and a Treaty partner, I am not responsible to learn local Indigenous protocols and to seek to understand Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, languages, and teachings. I clearly am. It is to say, however, that claiming an Indigenous research methodology does not feel like an ethical fit for me. Settler scholars like myself, therefore, require methodological options for conducting appropriate and decolonizing research that do not rely on attempting to implement Indigenous research methodologies.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Carlson, "Anti-Colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies." P. 3.

Carlson articulates an anti-colonial methodology for white settler scholars that resonates with the mixture of methodological guidance I am drawing on through critical place inquiry, Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies, and narrative and autoethnographic approaches.

My research is not “Indigenous research” in that I am not an Indigenous person who draws cultural authority from ancestral connections to land, place and history, cultural knowledge nurtured in family and community embeddedness, and direct experience with colonial repression.⁵⁸ Yet, Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies shape and influence my work; these methodologies have come to me through personal relationships and lineages of both community and academic knowledges. I attempt to orient my life and work towards this approach while remaining conscious of my colonial identity and cultural tendencies towards transactional, appropriative ways of being, *xwelítem* ways, while creating daily practices that root, habituate and direct my commitment to relationships of reciprocity and solidarity, both with Stó:lō and with the land itself. My efforts towards centring Stó:lō understanding of and guidance for non-Indigenous people through this work include centring *xwelítem* as a guiding concept for white settler self-understanding, and applying the teachings for transformation I have introduced in Chapter 1. I feel these lessons learned have guided me deeply. They also reflect limitations of my learning from Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw. They are as far as I have been able to travel down this path to date.

Yet, they represent my response to and respect for a call by Stó:lō mentors for all people living in Stó:lō Téméxw, Stó:lō or not, to come to see, respect and learn from Stó:lō teachings, laws and understandings rooted in a relationship with the land, and

⁵⁸White settler scholar Elizabeth Carlson asks similar questions as she struggles with the idea of white settler scholars engaging in Indigenous methodologies. Drawing on Margaret Kovach’s work, she argues that it would be nearly impossible for white settlers to have the “situational appropriateness” required to engage with Indigenous methodologies. As she states, “My understanding of Indigenous knowledges is limited. These carry stories and meanings beyond my awareness. I do not believe I would understand and embody the values and practices of Indigenous methodologies in the ways Indigenous communities might. This is not to say that, as a resident on Indigenous lands and a Treaty partner, I am not responsible to learn local Indigenous protocols and to seek to understand Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, languages, and teachings. I clearly am. It is to say, however, that claiming an Indigenous research methodology does not feel like an ethical fit for me. Settler scholars like myself, therefore, require methodological options for conducting appropriate and decolonizing research that do not rely on attempting to implement Indigenous research methodologies” (p. 3). Carlson articulates an anti-colonial methodology for white settler scholars that resonates with the mixture of methodological guidance I am drawing on through critical place inquiry, decolonizing methodologies, and narrative and autoethnographic approaches. Carlson.

shaped around the intention of living in this place in a good way. As Wenona Victor (Hall) states in her dissertation on Stó:lō good governance and self-determination:

Our greatest source of power is found in our natural world and throughout S'ólh Téméxw. Our “constitution” is ever present and available for all who now call S'ólh Téméxw home; it has been carefully laid out for us to follow. This is a form of Stó:lō governance.⁵⁹

And further,

Our laws are from the very territory that they govern, and remain universal and unchanging over time. These laws therefore are applicable to all people now living in S'ólh Téméxw and perhaps more importantly, they do not change over time.⁶⁰

The application of Stó:lō natural law in Stó:lō Téméxw, for all who are living here, is a vision of Stó:lō self-determination, and one that resonates with the calls of many critical Indigenous scholars for a resurgence of Indigenous law and its relevance for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.⁶¹

The idea that settlers must come to understand and follow Stó:lō law was shared by many other mentors in this work. Naḡaxalhts'i, Sonny McHalsie, Co-director of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, states:

I think they [settlers] need to understand and incorporate our beliefs and be able to respect them like when we tell them there is a sxwoxwiyám site there that can't be disturbed they gotta respect it.⁶²

Sakej Ward reflected on this responsibility as a Mi'kmaq coming to Stó:lō Téméxw:

Anytime outsiders come in they do need to learn the laws, the norms, the customs, the language. That is only beneficial and showing respect. And anything other than that is almost a very minor form of assimilation.⁶³

For perhaps the majority of white settlers, and perhaps many non-Indigenous people, the idea of learning Stó:lō laws might conjure up an idea of reading a written list of don'ts.

⁵⁹ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 310.

⁶⁰ Victor. P. 293.

⁶¹ See for example: Borrows, *Recovering Canada*; Stark, “Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal”; Napoleon, “Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders”; Atleo, *Tsawalk*.

⁶² Interview with Sonny McHalsie, November 29, 2012.

⁶³ Interview with Sakej Ward and Melody Andrews, November 16, 2012.

Yet, as Wenona Victor (Hall) puts it, codified laws tend to disconnect people from the “why,” diffuse responsibility and completely annihilate accountability.⁶⁴

Many Stó:lō laws, teachings and values are rooted in Sqwélqwel and Sxwōxwiyám—two different types of Stó:lō stories—that are often tied to specific places in S’ólh Téméxw.⁶⁵ Sqwélqwel are personal family stories used to teach, whereas Sxwōxwiyám are ancient stories of importance to the Stó:lō, including transformations performed by Xexá:ls. Xexá:ls are the four offspring of Red Headed Woodpecker and Black Bear, who travelled S’ólh Téméxw, making the world right. The wisdom and teachings of Xexá:ls are physically and narratively attached to the landscape through sites where Xexá:ls transformed people into stone. Stó:lō laws are also embedded in the Syuwá:lelh, or the words of Stó:lō ancestors. In the words of Wenona Victor (Hall) “*Syuwá:lelh* is not meant to be written down, at least not on paper. *Syuwá:lelh* is meant to be lived, written on our hearts so we can breathe life back into it.”⁶⁶ Coming to understand and respect Stó:lō law means coming to learn from Sqwélqwel, Sxwōxwiyám and from Syuwá:lelh to apply these teachings contextually as they relate to specific lived experiences and relationships.

A deep engagement with learning from, respecting and situating oneself within Stó:lō Téméxw (for Stó:lō, S’ólh Téméxw’) would inherently stimulate a deep transformation of xwelítem ways and create avenues for co-resistance, reparations and restitution. A number of my mentors reflected this understanding. For example, for Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láy, the theories and language of decolonization present another way of centring colonialism, potentially limiting the experiential power of relating to each other through a spiritual lens, grounded in the teachings and power of Stó:lō Téméxw, of the land itself.⁶⁷ Stó:lō mentors also emphasize that the teachings, practices and philosophies provide guidance for non-Stó:lō people about how to behave, live up to our responsibilities, and make up for wrong-doing. It is Stó:lō resurgence itself

⁶⁴ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 195.

⁶⁵ Victor.

⁶⁶ Victor. P. 305

⁶⁷ Shared by Lumlamelut (Laura Wee Láy Láy) in conversations about my use of the word ‘decolonization’ and shared in relation to her land-based learning initiative for children and parents named The’i:t te sqwa:l - The Truth speakers, referenced in e-mail from April 23, 2016.

that not only has the potential to confront settler society but in its full expression already articulates concepts and understandings about the work we need to do as outsiders and occupiers to demonstrate our understanding of our place in the Stó:lō social/political order, and to act with respect from this place. In this way, the language and theory of decolonization is in a sense a stepping stone to a greater understanding of this possibility. I attempt to walk towards this deeper understanding in this work by drawing on Stó:lō teachings and stories as these have been shared with me for the purpose of transforming my own life and as I have asked questions about pathways of transforming xwelítém ways.

Yet, to walk the path of this possibility requires the ability and openness for respectful relationships with Indigenous people. It is relationships that form the pathway to begin to situate oneself respectfully on Indigenous lands and in relation to Indigenous stories, teachings and laws. There is no way to open to this through simply reading Stó:lō laws in a book. Wenona Victor (Hall) shared this as one of the teachings from the Ts'elxwéyeqw ancestor T'xwelátse, who was turned to stone: you cannot govern someone or something with whom you do not have a relationship.⁶⁸ While on the one hand this may seem obvious, it is clear that this is a challenge for white settlers to comprehend, given our deep training towards objectification and abstraction of knowledge.

Squ:athom, Frank Andrew, shared a story with me that highlights this tendency for non-Indigenous people to attempt to extract and decontextualized Stó:lō knowledge, undermining the central importance of relationships in any meaningful learning *from* rather than *about* Stó:lō Téméxw. In his work in the Rights and Title department of the Stó:lō Tribal Council, Frank often went to meetings with various levels of Canadian government agencies and corporations, some of which reached out to the Stó:lō in an effort to meet their obligations (as outlined in a number of Supreme Court of Canada decisions) to consult with Indigenous peoples whose Aboriginal rights, title and interests could be affected by their proposed developments. These meetings also took place in the

⁶⁸ Victor, "Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination." P. 157.

context of many layers of political discussions about the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction and shared decision-making.⁶⁹

Frank went to meet with the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), which wanted to “engage” with Stó:lō communities about its regional development plans. In the meeting, the FVRD staff brought out a copy of the *Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. This is an incredible book published by Stó:lō Nation, a detailed collection of information about Stó:lō historical and contemporary lives and relationships with S’ólh Téméxw and how these have been affected by xwelítem settlement and colonization. The FVRD staff person proceeded to tell Frank that they were using this text to find out what they needed to know about Stó:lō land use and interests, and they would go forward with their Regional Growth Strategy by incorporating information from the book. Basically, the FVRD thought “engagement” with the Stó:lō meant referencing the Stó:lō Atlas book. Frank was frustrated and angry – as he put it – how could anyone “engage” with others without human-to-human relationship building? He spent his time at this meeting explaining that while the Stó:lō Atlas provided useful background information, “engagement” for him was less about the specific information shared and more about the relationship building that establishes the context for understanding, let alone respecting, anything about Stó:lō land use and cultural values.⁷⁰

My own direct learning about the risks of advocating that white settlers learn Stó:lō laws and situate themselves in Stó:lō Téméxw without emphasizing the context of relationships came about when I participated in a public panel presentation called “Building the 8th Fire,” at the University of the Fraser Valley.⁷¹ At that stage in my thinking, and during my presentation to a mainly non-Indigenous audience, I said one of the questions we (non-Indigenous people) needed to be asking ourselves was: How are we enacting respect for Stó:lō nationhood and governance? I advocated that we must learn Stó:lō laws, language, culture, teachings and values, and respect and honour these. Yet, after the presentation, one of the questions from a white settler man in the audience was: “Do you have any books to recommend where I can learn about Stó:lō laws? If I am

⁶⁹ For example, at this time the province of BC had developed a New Relationship policy and proposed ‘Recognition Legislation’ in collaboration with some First Nations leadership.

⁷⁰ Journal entry from visit with Frank Andrew, January 10, 2013.

⁷¹ Journal reflections following the panel presentation entitled “Building the 8th Fire”, Gathering place, University of the Fraser Valley, Chilliwack Campus, Feb 4th, 2013.

supposed to be respecting them, I need to learn what they are.” I felt in my stomach an uneasiness with his question, imagining another white settler reading books and beginning to assert his knowledge as an expert on Stó:lō people and culture, potentially objectifying, decontextualizing and misunderstanding the knowledge and displacing Stó:lō people in the process.

Re-centring Relationships

The work of coming to see, respect and inhabit Stó:lō Téméxw, in which Stó:lō nationhood and governance is situated, not only benefits from Stó:lō mentorship—it *must* be done in relationship with Stó:lō people. To attempt to do the work of learning to see, respect and situate oneself in Stó:lō Téméxw outside of the context of relationships with Stó:lō people would be both impossible and potentially disrespectful, as it has significant potential to perpetuate colonial tendencies to appropriate, remove knowledge from its context, and disregard the important practices that ascribe and respect cultural authority. The cautiousness I felt was confirmed by Stó:lō mentors who discussed the need for non-Indigenous people to begin to see, respect and situate themselves within Stó:lō Téméxw and specifically to respect Stó:lō laws. Each time this guidance was shared, it was also followed by a caveat that this idea was important and also unrealistic at present. As Eyem Shxwelí Shlálí, Melody Andrews, puts it:

I think it is pretty far-fetched for a settler to even start listening to Stó:lō teachings such as reverence, respect, reciprocity, for them to even identify those, the main aspects of what they need to be doing in our communities. It is pretty far-fetched to even imagine that – them to adhere to or even listen to.⁷²

In a collective sense, as settlers we are not at that place; there are far too many entrenched xwelítem ways of seeing, hearing and being in the way of our opening to the kind of humble, respectful, committed listening required to truly and deeply learn from and apply Stó:lō teachings, laws and understandings to our lives in relationships. This is not to say that there are not exceptions, including many of those who were recommended non-Indigenous interviewees for this work. It is an ideal to keep alive and name as an important place to strive towards, but it is not a realistic starting point for a work that intends to intervene in white settler communities as they are today. Furthermore, any

⁷² Interview with Melody Andrews and Sakej Ward, November 16, 2012.

effort to write about the laws or teachings of Stó:lō Téméxw also has the significant potential to remove this knowledge from the grounding in relationships it requires, and would begin to objectify and decontextualize it. Where I cautiously share the stories and teachings that have shaped my understandings, I do so with a focus on my own learnings and effort to understand and apply them, relating also the contexts and relationships in which they were shared. It is an effort to learn *from* rather than *about*.

This limited starting point in learning from Stó:lō Téméxw is also paralleled in my limited starting points in beginning to learn directly from and work to respectfully nurture the land itself. To begin from where we are in a collective sense as white settlers is to name and recognize the many barriers that prevent our ethical relationships with Stó:lō people, and the land itself, and to turn towards understanding the conditions within ourselves, our families, communities and culture that nurture these barriers— our xwelítem ways of being. Settler colonialism will not be deeply challenged nor justice for Indigenous people found without a profound transformation of settlers and settler colonial culture, what some have called turning to focus on the ‘settler problem.’⁷³ Turning to do our own work underlies and necessarily intermixes with the starting points for settler research and action I have discussed thus far: (1) recognizing and accepting that settler colonialism is an ongoing contemporary reality shaping the daily lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; (2) choosing to intervene with and co-resist contemporary colonialism and work towards reparations and restitution for historical injustices Indigenous peoples have endured; and (3) learning to see, respect and situate ourselves within Indigenous homelands, including respecting Indigenous laws. Walking a path that attempts to live out each of these guiding points in the work of decolonization means walking into the work of growing ethical relationships, and looking into ourselves at the barriers that hold us back from this journey. We must start from where we are at, and in many ways this is the work of turning inwards, of beginning to conceptualize and intervene with being xwelítem. I turn now to consider others who are making similar arguments and to situate my work in relation to theirs.

⁷³ See for example: Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*.

Turn the Lens on the White Settler Problem

Many non-Indigenous people do acknowledge that there remains an ongoing “problem” in Canada with regards to the social and economic conditions of life for many Indigenous people. In this framing, the “problem” becomes equated with Indigenous people—how to get them to a higher standard of living, how to improve housing conditions, job opportunities and Indigenous health, for example. Of course some of these efforts do support the immediate needs in Indigenous communities. Yet, in a relational sense, they also often continue to frame the “problem” as being *with* Indigenous people. In other words, Indigenous people must change, must be “fixed,” and we—the white settler and more broadly non-Indigenous population – must “help” to bring these changes about, with the ultimate goal of Indigenous people fitting into and succeeding within white settler colonial capitalist Canada. This framing of the colonial reality in Canada is perpetuating a paternalistic colonial relationship—one that is still embedded in a belief in the superiority of Euro-Canadian society. This belief leads us down a pathway of Indigenous erasure through assimilation. It is based on the idea that there is an “Indian Problem” to be solved, rather than looking to the roots of colonialism in our own cultures and, in effect, turning the lens towards the “Settler Problem.” Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith states most clearly the need for this turn towards the (white) settler problem when she asks, “Why do they always think by looking at us they will find the answers to our problems, why don’t they look at themselves?”⁷⁴

At the same time, critical Indigenous scholars and grassroots community leaders are increasingly calling for Indigenous people and nations to turn away from engaging with recognition politics, and away from the state altogether.⁷⁵ They are calling for this turn inwards to be a renewed focus on Indigenous individuals, families, communities and nations, centring upon a resurgence of land-based practices, cultural and philosophical teachings, languages, spiritual traditions and ceremonies.⁷⁶ While this approach is grounded in the leadership and way of life of many past and current Indigenous leaders,

⁷⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*. P, 198.

⁷⁵ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*; Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness*.

⁷⁶ See for example: Alfred, *Wasáse*; Alfred and Corntassel, “Being Indigenous”; Corntassel, “Re-Envisioning Resurgence”; Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*; Atleo, *Tsawalk*; Cote, *Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors*; Meyer, *Ho’oulu*.

activists, and community members, the intellectual articulation of this approach is increasingly framed as the Indigenous Resurgence paradigm. This growing Indigenous Resurgence paradigm includes Indigenous understandings about what knowledge is and how knowledge is created (Indigenous methodologies⁷⁷), how people are nurtured in holistic growth and learning (Indigenous pedagogies⁷⁸), how healing and balance are maintained and restored through Indigenous healing, medicine and therapeutic practices,⁷⁹ and also collectively in the practices of restorative justice, treaty-making, Indigenous diplomacy and governance.⁸⁰ It is about the restoring of sustainable life ways in relationship with Indigenous homelands through everyday acts of community and land restoration.⁸¹ Ultimately, Indigenous resurgence is the interweaving of all of these knowledges and practices that are about how to live a self-determining Indigenous way of life as Indigenous families, communities, peoples and nations, in a contemporary and everyday sense, one that inherently resists colonialism but is not centred solely around resistance.⁸²

Many Stó:lō people, following in the footsteps of their ancestors, are maintaining the practices and traditions that have sustained their families, tribes and nation for generations, and renewing practices that as a result of specific colonial actions were repressed and went underground, their transmission between generations severely interrupted. A few examples include the ongoing Stó:lō commitment to maintaining their relationships with Sth'ó:qwi, the renewal of the winter-dance ceremonies called mílha,⁸³ Halq'eméylem language renewal, and Stó:lō storytelling practices. A number of Stó:lō women have taken on the work of articulating aspects of Stó:lō resurgence as intellectuals in their communities and within academia. For example, Wenona Victor

⁷⁷ See: Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Meyer, “Changing the Culture of Research: An Introduction to the Triangulation of Meaning”; Wilson, *Remember This!*; Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*.

⁷⁸ See: Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*; Dorion, “Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Metis Children.”; Battiste, *Decolonizing Education*; Wildcat et al., “Learning from the Land,” December 1, 2014; Deloria Jr and Wildcat, *Power and Place*.

⁷⁹ See: Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*.

⁸⁰ See: Stark, “Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal”; Victor, “Indigenous Justice: Clearing Space and Place for Indigenous Epistemologies.”

⁸¹ Corntassel, “Re-Envisioning Resurgence”; Corntassel and Bryce, “Practicing Sustainable Self-Determination.”

⁸² See: Alfred, “The Psychic Landscape of Contemporary Colonialism.”

⁸³ Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. P. 1560.

(Hall) draws on *sxwōxwiyám*, *sqwélqwel* and *syuwaá:lelh* to understand what it means to be a good person from within a Stó:lō cultural worldview, and in turn what Stó:lō good governance and self-determination look like.⁸⁴ Stelomethet (Ethel Gardner) shares her story with Halq'eméylem language renewal and the river worldview that is nurtured from within the Stó:lō language.⁸⁵ Q'umQ'umXiiem (Jo-ann Archibald) has written of the place of storywork in Stó:lō pedagogy as a practice that educates the heart, mind, body and spirit. She shares her story of learning about Stó:lō story theory in order to learn how to be a storyteller and use this as part of her teaching.⁸⁶ Saylesh Wesley writes about the recognition and renewal of Stó:lō gender understandings in her family as she brings out the name Sts'iyóye smestíyexw slhá:li—twin spirit woman.⁸⁷ I have highlighted the writings of these Stó:lō scholars here but of course they do their work alongside and in relationship with the many Indigenous activists and leaders who are doing this work everyday but not writing about it in academic spaces; including many of the Stó:lō mentors referenced in this work.

These Stó:lō women scholars, like many Indigenous intellectuals writing from within an Indigenous resurgence paradigm, are focused on the resurgence of these practices and teachings for their own Indigenous healing, freedom and self-determination. Yet, their writing also points to the interconnectedness between Indigenous resurgence and the creation of a social movement capable of transforming settler colonial culture in Canadian society. Indigenous resurgence inherently and intentionally leads to confrontation with settler society; ultimately, this confrontation will force settlers into a decolonizing journey, as put by Taiaiake Alfred:—“a reckoning of who they are, what they have done, and what they have inherited; then they will be unable to function as colonials and begin instead to engage other peoples as respectful human beings.”⁸⁸

What will it take for white settlers—as individuals, families and communities—to reckon with our colonial past and present and begin to undertake our own decolonizing journey in the context of relationships of accountability and respect with Indigenous

⁸⁴ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.”

⁸⁵ Gardner (Stelomethet), “Tset Hikwstexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'emeylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People.”

⁸⁶ Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*.

⁸⁷ Wesley, “Twin-Spirited Woman Sts'iyóye Smestíyexw Slhá.”

⁸⁸ Alfred, “Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples.” P. 184.

peoples? The act of continuing to pathologize the “Indian” and not look inward to our own ways of being has been described by some scholars as an abusive relationship defined by the abuser’s refusal to change.⁸⁹ This refusal to change in a relationship while expecting the other to change everything reflects the same fundamentally superior colonial attitude. It also reflects the deep denial and avoidance of acknowledging our own need as settlers to decolonize and heal. As describe aptly by white settler scholar and Indigenous solidarity activist Richard Day:

Before white Man could colonize anyone else, he had to colonize himself. And so, before he can truly stand beside anyone else to confront the tasks of decolonization and resurgence, within, against, or outside of the dominant order, he must attend to his own decolonization at the level of both the individual and the community.⁹⁰

Are some white settlers open to being transformed by the Indigenous resurgence that is already taking place around us, by looking deeply into ourselves, our culture, values and history, reckoning with this, and beginning our own transformation away from relating in xwelítem ways and towards relating to other people as respectful human beings? How can we as white settlers support and nurture this effort amongst each other within our families and communities?

While focusing on the white settler problem became the direction for this work, this of course could mean many different things. The settler problem is institutional, political, cultural, economic, psychological and spiritual. Taiaiake Alfred argues that the challenge and place we are starting from is the need for mental and spiritual decolonization for both settlers and Indigenous peoples:

In the absence of mental and spiritual decolonization, any effort to theorize or implement a model of “new” Onkwehonwe-Settler relationship is counterproductive to the objectives of justice and the achievement of a long-term relationship of peaceful co-existence between our peoples.⁹¹

In taking up this guidance, my work does not specifically focus on the roles and possibilities for change in Canadian governments, organizations or institutions but rather focuses energy and analytic attention on individual settler transformations and the

⁸⁹ Alfred, *Wasáse*; Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*; Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*.

⁹⁰ Day, “Angry Indians, Settler Guilt, and the Challenges of Decolonization and Resurgence.” P. 268.

⁹¹ Alfred, *Wasáse*. P. 180.

grassroots, individual, family and community-based actions they engender in relation to the Indigenous nations of the homelands we are occupying. While colonial governments have a huge role and responsibility to play in restitution and reparations for historical and present day injustices, their structure, ideologies and legal bases for legitimacy are inherently embedded in colonial mentalities and power dynamics: “The imperial enterprise called ‘Canada’ that is operative in the guise of a liberal democratic state is, by design and culture, incapable of just and peaceful relations with Indigenous peoples.”⁹² These governments are also for the most part made up of leaders, advisors and civil servants who are deeply entrenched in settler colonial ways of thinking and being. As Alfred concludes, what we need is a broad-scale social and political movement at the community, grassroots level that begins with each of our own processes of mental and spiritual decolonization and translates into collective action.⁹³

This focus on mental and spiritual transformation is about coming to understand and transform the roots of what we are up against. As Alfred states, “the enemy is not the ‘white man’ in racial terms, it is a certain way of thinking with an imperialist’s mind.”⁹⁴ Dakota scholar Waziyatawin similarly states: “For non-Dakota people, it asks that you challenge, re-examine and reject the racist and colonialist programming to which you have grown accustomed. It also asks that you rethink the values of domination, consumption, and exploitation that have become a part of American society.”⁹⁵ This re-examination and rejection of our “colonial programming” and “imperialist’s mind” as white settlers is not simply a process of historical truth-telling; it requires a significant transformation of many deeply rooted aspects of ourselves, how we understand who we are, how we carry ourselves in the world and relate to others. Yet, taking on this work of transforming ourselves as white settlers must not be situated as a project or goal in and of itself, but rather situated with the intention of creating the conditions within ourselves, our families and our communities to respectfully and authentically engage in relationships that create the context of our participation in the work of decolonization, and in bringing about justice for Indigenous people. It is those relationships that will

⁹² Alfred, “Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples.” P. 184.

⁹³ Alfred, *Wasáse*.

⁹⁴ Alfred. P. 102.

⁹⁵ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?* P. 14.

guide white settler involvement in co-resistance, reparations and restitution; it is also those relationships that are difficult to create, blocked by the same barriers that prevent us from accepting the truth of colonial history and present understanding, enacting our responsibilities and acting from a place of justice and honour rather than charity and guilt. It is the naming and transforming of these barriers that I have focused on in this research: mental, emotional and spiritual barriers rooted in our very ways of being.

Accountability Check: Holding the Tension between Doing our own Work and Direct Support for Indigenous Peoples

That relationships with Stó:lō and other Indigenous people have been at the heart of my own transformative process is unquestionable. I am deeply grateful for the ways in which these relationships have shaped who I am becoming, and for the friendship, support and love. These relationships are throughout this writing—they *are* this writing in the sense that they have become a part of my being. It is also in this recognition of and gratitude for the gift of Indigenous mentorship that I feel in my gut a queasy discomfort. A course of study towards a doctorate degree creates the conditions for my own personal and individual benefit from this journey—and all of the Indigenous mentorship it has included—through access to jobs, recognition, status and title, potentially situating this journey within the white settler societal norms of exploitation and consumption for individual gain. How prepared am I to push back against and disrupt these values in my own life, to deeply understand what it means to have received and continue to receive this mentorship from Stó:lō and other Indigenous peoples? Can I conceptualize let alone enact the responsibility and reciprocity that such gifts call me towards? Within the frame of settler colonial ethics, I cannot.

Through my introductory understanding of Stó:lō ethics, I can see that this mentorship, this nurturing of gifts within me is intimately inseparable from the needs of the Stó:lō communities and nation. It is an honour for those who have received mentorship to share their gifts with the community, not a duty or responsibility but an honour and a privilege. Teachings and guidance are also shared in order for them to be lived, not collected, written down, objectified. To receive teachings with gratitude and respect is to be open to letting them shape who I am and how I carry myself, to walk in a

way that breaths further life and power into the teachings that have been shared, to let that power in turn influence all the relationships within which I exist. I may write these words, but I know that living up to them is a different challenge, one that each day requires questions about priorities, about how I direct my energy, time, resources and intentions.

It would also be naïve and self-centred of me to not also realize that mentoring non-Indigenous people is an unfortunate necessity for Stó:lō and other Indigenous peoples. From my own experience and many of the mainly white settlers I interviewed, it is clear that Indigenous relationships are very important in stimulating white settlers to turn the lens on ourselves and settler colonial culture, to begin to question and transform our xwelítem ways. I have no doubt that Indigenous mentors will continue to take on this intellectual, emotional and spiritual labour; to the degree that they interact with white settlers in their work and broader lives, they can scarcely avoid it. Yet, this is a significant burden on Indigenous people, one that takes away from directing their energies towards their own and their families and communities healing and resurgence. The result of this burden also bears itself out on their psyches and bodies at a real cost to their own lives. Non-Indigenous people who have been gifted with Indigenous mentorship can, situated in these relationships of accountability, begin to take a more reciprocal and fair share of this labour and with intention and commitment work within their own communities to support other non-Indigenous people in addressing their colonial mentalities and ways of being, bringing more people into the possibility of ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples, which are the foundation for decolonizing action.

My fear and anxiety in picking up this responsibility is that my efforts will become a problematic re-centring of white settler transformation in a way that is disconnected from the direct needs of Stó:lō and other Indigenous people. As Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach writes in the context of Indigenous research: “For those who are non-Indigenous, the questions perhaps are more challenging: Am I creating space or taking space?⁹⁶” While my aim is to make more space for Stó:lō people by taking on some of the burden of their work with white settlers, this is not an easy, clear or

⁹⁶ Kovach, “Emerging from the Margins: Indigenous Methodologies.” P. 26

comfortable direction. I am both cautious about re-centring white settlers and cognizant of my responsibilities and desire to honour and more directly support Stó:lō pathways of self-determination and resurgence. It is perhaps in experiencing this discomfiting tension that I try to find a way forward—with the intention not of absolving it but rather of keeping it alive and present.

This tension came about when, in the early days of my PhD coursework, I sat down with Wenona Hall, a friend, colleague, mentor and member on my academic supervisory committee, to talk about research ideas. As we caught up about life and the coursework I was taking in the Indigenous Governance program at UVic, I shared with her that I was increasingly interested in turning my research attention towards the colonial ways of thinking and being among white settlers, specifically communities of which I am a part, including people who are “working with or for” Indigenous organizations in what was sometimes known as the “Aboriginal industry.” From my journal recording that day:

Wenona’s immediate reaction was not what I had expected. She was not impressed. I recall her asking me: “So you are just going to write another book about white people for white people? There are libraries full of books about white people, why would you add to that?” I mentioned that the readings I was doing suggested white settlers should be making space for Indigenous people by getting out of the way and studying and intervening to change our own communities which are at the root of the problem. While Wenona agreed with this in theory, in reality, Stó:lō communities are in need of good help and I was good help (given I had already been worked on to some degree) and so I needed to be accountable to that.

Knowing my educational background she thought I should focus on understanding Stó:lō concepts of place and relationship to land. I told her I did want to continue my learning from Stó:lō but that perhaps studying Stó:lō culture should not be the centre of my research. She asked what would be the value of this research on white settler colonial mentalities to Stó:lō? I tried to explain that the value might not be an immediate outcome. One goal would be to have white settlers working with and for Stó:lō organizations and in partnership with Stó:lō become more self-reflective about the impacts of their presence, the colonial training they bring in and pass on. Yes, Wenona reflected on the degree to which white people in Stó:lō organizations are in influential positions with a great deal of decision-making authority and impact on those around them.

For my part, I had a deep reality check about the need for accountability, in the research specifically and on a personal level. Should I be directly centring a Stó:lō project or immediate goal in the research? I must continue to support, lend energy and contribute to Stó:lō efforts and needs through the many relationships I already have in Stó:lō communities—can I do this and turn the research lens back on myself and white settlers? As we left, I shared appreciation for the challenging

questions, grounding and call to accountability. Wenona shared appreciation for the depth with which I was attempting to think through these problems and my role. I went home not sure of much, but grateful for the relationship and the authentic communication. Later that week Wenona sent me an email with a number of names of potential settlers for me to interview.⁹⁷

I did go forward with a research focus on the “settler problem,” and more specifically directed my attention towards white settler colonial subjectivities. I also continue to support more directly the work of Stó:lō people through relationships. I began to recognize clearly that the more I walked down this pathway, the deeper the dual commitment became to share what I had been gifted to influence, educate and transform other white settlers, and to stand in and enact direct support, solidarity and co-resistance with Indigenous peoples. While this might be understood in terms of intentional acts of accountability and reciprocity, it is also a healthy and desirable way for being in relationships with people I care about, contributing to the heart’s work of many Stó:lō people I have come to love and respect. This is also a balance that I attempt to live up to beyond my research, through all intertwining aspects of my personal life, work, research and activism.

Storytelling Methodologies and Relational Ethics

I began to ask more specifically the following questions: What does it mean to be xwelítem and how did we, white settlers, become xwelítem? What are the possibilities for transforming our xwelítem ways of being? I realized these questions are part of a broad and long-standing questions about how humans transform ourselves, break free of long-standing ways of thinking and being, create openness and possibility, and ultimately change aspects of our very being. These questions are at the heart of what it means to be human, how we understand ethics, and how we transform ourselves as humans and societies from situations of oppression and injustice towards more ethical realities. These questions can be approached from many starting points, theoretical bases and practical experiences. Many critical Indigenous scholars have clearly centred the mental, emotional, spiritual and embodied dimensions of transformation in creating the conditions for ethical relationships, justice, harmony and peaceful co-existence to

⁹⁷ Journal Entry, January 4, 2012

emerge. In centring this, critical Indigenous scholars writing about revolution and transformation from the context of what is sometimes called the fourth—Indigenous—world⁹⁸ have to a degree set themselves apart from the theories of decolonization and post-colonialism rooted in the experiences and contexts of mainly African and Asian revolutions of independence from colonial rulers in the mid-20th century. A significant, though not singular, exception is the way in which both bodies of theory and understandings of transformation, revolution and decolonization have at times drawn on the work of preeminent anti-colonial scholar and psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon.⁹⁹ I draw on the writings of Fanon in Chapter 5, which is focused on the transformation of the emotional roots of colonial racism.

I recognize there are many pathways towards transformation for each of us; it is neither possible nor desirable to have a recipe. My intention is to provide inspiration and guidance, not a formula. In attempting to understand and enact practices of transformation in this work and in my own life, I have looked to mentorship from Stó:lō and critical Indigenous scholars, grounding my understanding in my own experiences and my interviews with Stó:lō and recommended settlers, and then branching out to other disciplines, theories and practices which in their own ways speak to the roots of the white settler problem, including critical race theories, feminist theories, settler colonial studies and analytic psychology.

In Chapter 1, I shared two interrelated teachings for transformation that have come to shape this work, emerging through relationships, conversations and experiences with Stó:lō and other mentors. These teachings are “looking back is looking forward”—I must understand where I have come from to know where I am going—and understanding myself as a link in an intergenerational chain. I also briefly introduced the methodologies which inspired a storytelling approach in my research, centering the transformative power of storytelling to shift how we understand ourselves and therefore how we engage with the world around us: Indigenous storytelling methodologies, narrative therapy and autoethnography. Here I share further on these sources of methodological inspiration and name some of the challenges and synergies in linking them in my work.

⁹⁸ Manuel, *The Fourth World*.

⁹⁹ For example, see Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*.

Narrative therapy was founded by family therapists Michael White and David Epston who are based in Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand), respectively.¹⁰⁰ Drawing on the philosophical writings of Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jerome Bruner and Clifford Geertz, among others, Narrative therapy suggests that our sense of identity/meaning is derived from the stories or narratives that we use to explain our experiences. Dominant, normalizing “truths” often shape the narratives that suggest who we are and how we should engage with the world. Narrative therapy can be a liberating, healing and transformative practice that explicitly seeks to free people from the subjugation of dominant narratives constructed within the specific socio-cultural, political and historical contexts of our lives, which are used to control our behavior and limit our possibilities. Examples of these subjugating and normalizing narratives include capitalism, communism, psychiatry/psychology, patriarchy, Christianity, heteronormativity and Eurocentricity, among many others. It is in the construction of alternative stories about who we are that we begin to see alternative pathways for our lives, and as we engage these pathways, we begin to relate in the world differently.¹⁰¹ Creating three stories of transformation in this research is a form of intervention into the ways in which the dominant narratives of white settler colonialism have shaped my own identity and subjectivity, the ways in which I am xwelítém. My re-storying aims to bring forward alternate possible understandings of who I am, where I have come from, and discursively reshapes the possibilities of where I might go from here.

While I believe a narrative therapy approach has transformative power, it is also limited in a number of ways that have become clear through the research. For example, narrative therapy theory tends to centre human relationships in re-storying identities, and has tended to underemphasize the power of re-storying ourselves through renewing

¹⁰⁰ White and Epston, *Narrative Means To Therapeutic Ends*; White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*.

¹⁰¹ In considering the potential of narrative therapy as part of the methodological inspiration for this research, I attended the International Narrative Therapy conference “Therapeutic Conversations” in Vancouver in May 2012 and following this took a five-day workshop on narrative therapy approaches, led by Stephen Madigan of the Vancouver School for Narrative Therapy. A number of practicing narrative therapists took the time to discuss the potential of narrative therapy in relation to my research questions and approach, including Stephen Madigan, Hilda Nanning, Darien Thira and David Nylund. I am grateful for their insights and guidance. The theory of narrative therapy influenced my writing and thinking a great deal, while the actual practice of using narrative questioning in my interviews did not carry through to the research, as the interviews were far more exploratory than they were therapeutic.

relational and spiritual connections with the land.¹⁰² Narrative therapy has also perhaps underemphasized other important avenues towards transforming the self that are less centered around story, for example, there is now an effort within the community of narrative therapy practitioners towards integrating more embodied understanding of healing and therapeutic practice by integrating meditation techniques, body awareness and mindfulness.¹⁰³ Further, while narrative therapy can potentially involve re-storying childhood experiences, unlike psychoanalysis or depth psychology it does not necessarily involve a direct engagement with the ways in which our psyche, including aspects of our unconscious, are deeply interwoven with childhood experiences that shape adult behaviours and emotional life. Analytic psychology has been influential in anti-colonial scholarship driven by the momentous works of anti-colonial theorist, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon. Furthermore, Indigenous therapists such as Eduardo and Bonnie Duran articulate the ways in which psychoanalysis—especially through the understandings of transference—has many parallels with powerful Indigenous healing practices and traditions.¹⁰⁴

My research could in one way be understood as a self-application of narrative therapy in which I intentionally aim to bring to the surface, make space for and thicken alternative narratives of who I am, narratives that in general have little space in the dominant mainstream narratives of white settler colonial society. I believe this re-narration of self has transformative power and potential, and it is also limited in many of the same ways discussed above and to the degree that this discursive writing practice stimulates further effort towards embodied transformation. In a sense, it is how we enact these alternative narratives, live them in our bodies, families and communities, that gives them life and power and nurtures a deeper transformation. Nuu-chah-nulth scholar Johnny Mack writes about the power of story in reorienting people, in his case calling on

¹⁰² Important exceptions to this are the work of Métis narrative therapy practitioner and scholar Cathy Richardson and members of the Just Therapy Team based in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese (Pacific islander), Warihi (Wally) Campbell (Maori), and Charles Waldegrave (Pakeha/white settler):

Waldegrave, *Just Therapy - a Journey*; Richardson, “Cultural Stories and the Creation of the Self.”; Richardson, “Witnessing Life Transitions with Ritual and Ceremony in Family Therapy: Three Examples from a Metis Therapist.”

¹⁰³ Winslade, “Mediation with a Focus on Discursive Positioning”; Percy, “Awareness and Authoring”; Rodríguez Vega et al., “Mindfulness-Based Narrative Therapy for Depression in Cancer Patients.”

¹⁰⁴ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*.

Nuu-chah-nulth people to attend to Nuu-chah-nulth stories, to undermine the disorientation caused as “imperialism and liberalism have reformed our subjectivities, changing the way we understand and respond to the world.”¹⁰⁵ Yet, what Mack points out, drawing on conversations with his elder Wickaninnish, is that restorying becomes alive when it is directed towards practice, for example, he states “Our challenge is to thicken our connection to our stories through sustaining simple practices of, for example feasting with our hawiih” (Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs). Mack’s approach to ‘storied practice’ suggests the transformative power of stories and re-storying identities is strengthened when the resurfaced stories guide us towards embodied practices that re-shape our day-to-day existence. In each of the three narratives of transformation I share in Part 2 of the dissertation I attempt to end with reflections on the ways in which re-storied understandings of self guides practices that may shift our subjectivities in a deeper, embodied sense. Extensions of this work could go much further in providing examples and insights into how the understandings revealed by the three narratives of transformation might guide daily practices towards transforming xwelítém subjectivities.

Narrative therapy, like Indigenous philosophies and storytelling practices, also points to the relationality of our identities and our stories of self, emphasizing the power of changing ourselves through sharing re-storied narratives in relation with others. What narrative therapists call “definitional ceremonies” are relational contexts and experiences wherein we share our alternative narratives of self, giving them more power to define who we are and how we walk in this world, undermining dominant narratives, and in the process creating community based on these alternatives stories of self. It is in the relational telling and retelling, the listening and re-listening, that alternative narratives become more alive, more powerful and more likely to shape not only how we think about ourselves, but also how we actually carry ourselves. My writing is one avenue for sharing this alternative re-storying of self. It is important to recognize that the power of this re-storying is also in the many relational contexts in which I share and receive responses about this re-storying: the academic, community and family milieus in which I share aspects of this work.

To construct the alternative narratives of transformation that make up Part 2 of

¹⁰⁵ Mack, “Hoquotist: Reorienting through Storied Practice.” P. 299.

this dissertation, I am inherently drawing upon personal and family stories, my own social, cultural and community experiences and context, placing this research within the space of autoethnography, and specifically drawing on the work of Autoethnographer Carolyn Ellis.¹⁰⁶ Autoethnography seeks to describe and analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience.¹⁰⁷ As with autoethnography, my work draws on interviews, field notes, journaling, personal stories and many kinds of cultural artefacts to discern cultural trends and share these understandings at least in part through storytelling.¹⁰⁸ Any life experiences that illuminate aspects of the research question can become part of the analysis and develop understanding, blurring any relevant divide between research and life itself. I relate my own autoethnographic stories and analysis to the broader scholarly literature as a source for understanding *xwelítém* ways and *xwelítém* transformation, and as a way of situating myself ethically and relationally, revealing my struggles and growth along with the many non-Indigenous and Stó:lō people who shared of themselves to support me in this journey. Indigenous researchers have also noted that autoethnography as a methodology works well with Indigenous approaches,¹⁰⁹ as have non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts and inspired by Indigenous methodologies. For example, non-Indigenous researcher Cindy Smithers Graeme writes that autoethnographic methods provide an opportunity to be mindful, respectful and accountable to communities the researcher works with, and can support increased space within academic and research communities for Indigenous knowledges and methodologies.

For autoethnographers, the most important questions are: How are those who read

¹⁰⁶ Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, “Autoethnography”; Ellis, *Investigating Subjectivity*; Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*; Ellis and Bochner, *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity*.

¹⁰⁷ Bochner and Ellis, *Ethnographically Speaking*; Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, “Autoethnography”; Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*.

¹⁰⁸ Through this process, I ended up with a large mass of textual material I had collected and created. Beginning to analyze and relate this to the literature I had been reading was an iterative process in which I created notes to capture key ideas, themes and narratives, sorted or “mind-mapped” these notes in an effort to understand how they spoke to each other, then returned to re-review my transcripts and journals with these themes in mind. While this process was a useful starting point, it was through the initial writing and re-writing, organizing and re-organizing that I began to more meaningfully scope the writing and understand its overall flow and intention, and the key conversations and insights that came during time away from the work and the writing. This analysis respects the many ways in which I have come to know, to understand, to make sense of what I have experienced, some of which are more conscious and intellectually driven while others are more embodied, spiritual and intuitive.

¹⁰⁹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, see p. 177; McIvor, “I Am My Subject.”

this work affected by it? How does it keep a conversation going?¹¹⁰ In situating autoethnography within a commitment to intervene in ongoing contemporary settler colonialism and to turn my own research lens on the “white settler problem,” I aim specifically for this work to keep a conversation going about xwelítém transformation and the intimate and personal work white settlers need to do to move towards ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous homelands. I do this in part through sharing my own everyday and intimate experiences in recognizing how colonialism shapes my identity and ways of being and how I can pass on or intervene with this in my own family. In this way my research also resonates with an area of literature within Indigenous resurgence and decolonization paradigms that centers the intimate and everyday ways Indigenous and settler lives are shaped by settler colonialism and how everyday decolonizing practices can and often do take place in personal and intimate interactions and relationships.¹¹¹ This “everydayness” literature also emphasizes the importance of practical daily efforts towards renewing cultural, ceremonial and land-based practices, reconnecting with place-based existences and often confronting and intervening with settler colonial power structures and ideologies in the process.¹¹² Chapter 6 (narrative 3) in this dissertation also centers the creation of respectful and reciprocal relationships with the land for settlers, through re-storying where we have come from, integrating everyday reciprocal practices, and ultimately beginning to understand our responsibilities within sacred homelands that are not our own.

That I situate and share my own everyday experiences, stories and relationships in this work heightens my responsibility to what Carolyn Ellis calls “relational ethics” and resonates with what Cree scholar Shawn Wilson calls “relational accountability.”¹¹³ In essence, the research relationships and research itself are embedded in my life, and the ethics of this research are tied to how I carry myself in a day-to-day sense in these relationships. My understanding of relational accountability or relational ethics has deepened through the research process. I end this section by sharing a story of my early attempts to engage with a Stó:lō ethics review of my proposed research, demonstrating

¹¹⁰ Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, “Autoethnography.”

¹¹¹ See for example: Hunt and Holmes, “Everyday Decolonization.”

¹¹² Cornassel, “Re-Envisioning Resurgence.”

¹¹³ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*.

my learning journey as well as the immense contrast between this understanding of ethics and the detached risk-assessment based ethics process prescribed by the university.

I had just returned to live in Chilliwack, in the centre of Stó:lō Téméxw, after having spent almost two years away doing coursework and my comprehensive exams, including the defense of my research proposal. As required, I had completed the University of Victoria's research ethic review process prior to coming to begin interviews and my research more broadly. This process involved filling out a series of long forms describing details of my committee and my research plan, and providing copies of my letter of introduction to participants, along with interview questions, consent forms and any required letters of support. I provided this package of papers to the UVic ethics committee to review and received a letter of approval to start my research. At the same time, I was already embedded in relationships with Stó:lō communities through previous work, and I had discussed my research ideas with a number of important Stó:lō mentors before going forward with the research proposal development and defense. However, given that the university ethics process required me to write out my interview questions, I felt it would be ethically important to have these reviewed by some of my Stó:lō advisors. What followed I recorded and reflected on in my journal from October, 2012:

I have tried twice now to have a meeting with Wenona about the interview questions that I put together for my Stó:lō interviews. I had to compose the questions for the university research ethics process and I felt it would be both ethically responsible and very helpful to review these with Wenona as my Stó:lō advisor. The day before we had planned to meet, Wenona contacted me to ask if I would like to join her and another Stó:lō woman, colleague and friend of hers, Laura Wee Lay Laq, on a trip to Vancouver to listen to Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson give a talk. I was grateful for the invitation and readily agreed. Wenona assured me that we could discuss my interview questions in the car on the way there.

In the morning we met at building 10 on the Coqualeetza grounds. I had copies of my interview questions in my bag. As we drove the hour and half to UBC the conversation was non-stop. Laura and Wenona reflected on what "Indigenizing the academy" means to each of them, the problems it presents, as well as their attempts to intervene and make the most of it. As the conversation turned away from the university, Laura spoke about creative process as a path to spiritual connectedness, and shared with us stories that reflected this path in her life. I listened, asking questions when there was space, and tried to share something of who I am, and how I've come to be here sharing this day with them. We drove to UBC, went to the talk, went out for lunch together and drove all the

way back. At no time did it feel appropriate to bring out the interview questions so I didn't and they weren't mentioned once.

The next day I sent Wenona a note and thanked her for including me in the day and expressed how much I enjoyed it. I asked if we should set up another time to meet to look at the questions. She responded yes, at her office, next week. The day arrived and I showed up at her office. We went to get ourselves a hot drink, and decided to find a quiet, cozy and bright place to sit. She suggested the Elder's lounge. We were sipping our tea and catching up in the Elder's Lounge for a few minutes when the UFV Stó:lō elder in residence T'ítlemspá:th, Eddie Gardner, came into the room. He said, oh, sorry, I'm interrupting and turned to leave, but Wenona urged him to stay, to join us and chat for a bit. We ended up talking for close to 2 hours. T'ítlemspá:th shared with us his thoughts on the pipeline proposal, mining expansions, climate change, fish farms and the links he sees between each of these, and the work he is doing—especially around protecting wild salmon. He sees these issues as being at the heart of Indigenous rights and title and long-term relationship to the land. The conversation flowed, and my interview questions remained in my bag.

We parted ways with T'ítlemspá:th and Wenona and I went back to her office. We both had other meetings to go to and I asked if we should try again to sit down and go over the questions. In response she said something along the lines of, “You know, if you aren't getting what you need about interview protocol and ways of being and talking to people from these interactions you've had with Eddie and Laura I don't know how to help you. What you experience indirectly in those interactions has far more to guide you, than anything I could tell you. You ask good questions and you listen respectfully and that's what matters. You're going to be fine.”

Written interview questions were far less important than the context of how I would relate to Stó:lō mentors, how I carry myself as a person, how I share, embody and enact my intentions and values. Ethics, in this sense, is a verb, and therefore must be seen in action. It is a way of being, not a series of boxes to be checked off. Not only did Wenona create these opportunities to witness my way of relating, by connecting me with two Stó:lō mentors, but she helped to deepen the relational ethics—the various relationships within Stó:lō Téméxw—to which I am accountable.

This experience also supported me to let go of an attachment to a set of specific interview questions and rather let the relationship guide the conversation. I began with the general question: What do settlers need to unlearn and learn to work towards ethical relationships with Sto:lo people and the land? The nature of the conversation was often shaped by our previous shared experiences and connections together. In some cases, it felt appropriate to ask additional pre-written questions and in other cases follow up

questions flowed completely from the direction the mentor had taken the conversation. As time went by I prepared for these conversations less by reviewing my notes and interview questions and more by grounding myself, taking time to be mindful, and preparing gifts or food to share.

Summary

I have come to this research focus and methodologies through multiple pathways, each of which are reflected in the chapters that have made up Part 1 of this dissertation. In Chapter 1, I jumped into sharing stories that situate myself as an intergenerational subject, a link in a chain, in the context of historical and contemporary colonialism in Stó:lō Téméxw. These stories reflect my growing attunement to the subtle and intentional ways in which a colonial subjectivity is shaped and passed on. In Chapter 2, I began with a question about how we identify ourselves as non-Indigenous people living in, occupying, Indigenous homelands. This question travels the space of identity politics and lands more deeply in Indigenous relational and holistic understandings of identity and subjectivity. These understandings have further directed my research towards a focus on transforming xwelítem ways of being, as an intergenerational, relationally constructed white settler subjectivity in Stó:lō Téméxw. In Chapter 3, I began again with a question, about how I can contribute to the work of justice in this place. From this question I have considered four starting points, four bases of understanding, that have shaped my research and the methodologies I have chosen to ground my research as a white settler scholar. These starting points are in brief: (1) recognize and interrogate shape-shifting contemporary settler colonialism; (2) keep in focus the work of co-resistance, reparations and restitution; (3) learn to see and respect Indigenous lands; and (4) turn the lens on the settler problem. For each of these starting points I have also looked to methodologies in the literature that support carrying out research from this base. As such, my approach has been shaped by insights from decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies, critical place inquiry, narrative therapy and autoethnography. In turning the lens on the settler problem, I turn it specifically on the barriers to ethical relationship building, barriers that are enmeshed with my white settler subjectivities, with being xwelítem.

In Part 2, I share three narratives, each beginning with a different aspect of being *xwelítem* as understood through my conversations with Stó:lō and non-Indigenous mentors, and my own experiences and reflections in the context of these relationships. Focusing on these three aspects of being *xwelítem*—the practices of erasure, the emotional roots of a superiority neurosis, and the spiritual roots of our *xwelítem* hunger and greed—is a reflection of the journey of this research and collectively those who contributed to it, interwoven with my own journey towards transformation. I do not claim this to be a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of *xwelítem* ways, white settler subjectivities or colonial mentalities. That is an enormous task, the collective work of many; my intention is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge and understanding that aims to describe and provide pathways for transformation. Critical Indigenous scholars, post-colonial theorists, critical race scholars and feminists, and theorists and practitioners of transformative learning are all taking on aspects of this work, as are many grassroots Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. My intention, rather than being to review these fields and contributions comprehensively, is to relate to them as I share and attempt to understand my own narratives and emerging understandings grounded in place, experience and relationships. I aim for my own narratives to centre on the emotional, psychological and spiritual dynamics that constitute being *xwelítem*, to focus on contemporary realities in place, and to be applied in their intention to provide ideas and inspiration for how to intervene with and undermine this *xwelítem* ways in an everyday sense.

These narratives also specifically focus on the ways in which being *xwelítem* has direct, everyday negative impacts for Indigenous peoples, and our responsibilities to those realities. However, many aspects of being *xwelítem* also negatively impact, albeit at times differently, those who are “Othered” as people who do not fit into the Eurocentric, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, cis-gendered norm. While I have named the importance of intersectional, multidimensional analyses of settler colonialism, my writing is limited in being able to meaningfully engage this complexity throughout the analysis and narratives, and in some ways it reinforces a white settler – Indigenous binary. This is in part a reflection of the mainly white settler and Indigenous relationships that are the context of the large majority of the experiences and conversations that have

shaped this work, and in part a reflection of the immense challenge of such an integrated, multidimensional analysis. It is also a reflection of where I am at in my understanding personally, one that has more recently been challenged towards interrupting the white settler–Indigenous binary as I explore and attempt to enact the work of decolonization and justice along with my partner and co-parent, Atef, a racialized non-Indigenous man of Arab and Muslim ancestry from Tunisia, in North Africa, whose own family history, identity and subjectivity are shaped by a history of colonialism.

Transforming the self involves the mind, heart, spirit and body. In my writing, I have not made explicit nor have I explored in depth the physical, embodied dimensions that are intertwined with any deep efforts towards transforming self, and this is certainly a limitation of the work. Indigenous scholars again provide guidance and insight, writing specifically about the place of decolonizing diet, medicines and physical daily practices. In what ways might the food we eat, medicines we take and physical activity/inactivity in our everyday lives affect or enhance our ability to be open to transformative pathways? How is our embodied awareness—a critical part of compassion and courage to speak and stand against injustice—shaped by the ways in which we relate to and experience our physical bodies? My work is limited in considering these important questions, yet their undercurrent is present throughout.

This is lifelong, generations-long, collective work, and what I share in this writing is simply, humbly a place I have come to on this pathway, one that is difficult to even pin down for a moment as it is constantly unfolding, reshaping in deeper directions. I feel alive with the momentum and movement of this journey, one that makes writing—a kind of freezing of the moment—a particular challenge. Rather than reaching a set of conclusions, in Part 3 I return to the teachings for transformation with which I ended Chapter 1, and I reflect on further work in both research and practice, building on the insights that creating these stories has engendered. I consider that the three narratives lead to what on the surface might appear to be similar ways of being—a reaching out and offering of ourselves, our gifts, talents and resources, not from a place of guilt or charity but from the co-aligning energies of recognizing the responsibilities that flow from our privilege, expressing a human-to-human compassion and living a spiritual generosity. The possibility for our sustained commitment and engagement with the broader work of

decolonization, within ourselves and with the collectives and societies in which we relate, is made much greater when we begin, even in small ways, to enact this offering from within these multiple dimensions of ourselves. Sharing, offering of ourselves and our resources as individuals, families, communities and organizations, is at the heart of forming ethical relationships; it is the practice of situating ourselves in mutually supportive cycles of reciprocity. Interrupting the process of becoming/being *xwelítəm* is a transformation towards actively accepting and participating in these cycles. Within the ethical space of engagement, the friendships that grow from these cycles, we can work towards co-resistance to contemporary colonialism and can also be guided in the work of reparations and restitution. In these relational spaces, we are also guided more deeply in our own journeys of transformation.

Part 2: Narratives of Transformation

Chapter 4: From Everyday Practices of Erasure to Colonial Exposure, Radical Imagination and the Centring of Difference

It's like it eases their conscience you know, it is better for them to feel that this is an empty country. That is why they proclaimed that it is a wide, empty land, so it *makes it sound like we aren't even here*, so if we're not here they don't have to deal with us.¹

Naxaxalhts'i, Sonny McHalsie

Naxaxalhts'i, Sonny McHalsie, Stó:lō knowledge keeper and co-director of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, sits at his desk behind mountains of papers and stacks of books. As Sonny works with the knowledge of his ancestors as well as the contemporary dynamics of Canadian governments and corporate interests in Stó:lō Téméxw, he is keenly aware of the ways in which xwelítem practices of erasure have shape-shifted from early colonial policies to everyday contemporary practices. He begins by naming the legal basis of Canadian claims to sovereignty that underscore xwelítem narratives of erasure: Canada is founded on an historical fiction – the concept of *terra nullius*, or no man's land, which traces back to the papal bulls. These papal bulls were documents issued by Pope Alexander VI starting in 1493, including the Doctrine of Discovery, in which Christian religious authorities proclaimed that if the land was empty, then it was legitimately free for the taking.² This religious doctrine bolstered a European imperial drive to find “empty lands,” as this was the easiest route to claiming them as their own. Historian Ted Chamberlin, in his book *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?*, sums up this imperialist story that was repeated from the Americas to Australia and across Africa:

In this story, the new worlds were empty places. *Terra nullius* was the name in Latin, the old language of empire. The maps of the time give a picture of the place: rivers and prairies, mountains and lakes... with nobody there. “It's nobody's home,” said the newcomers. “Therefore it's ours.”³

This story of “empty land” with “no-bodies” living there is at the heart of white

¹ Interview with Naxaxalhts'i (Sonny McHalsie), November 29, 2012.

² TRC Canada, “Canada's Residential Schools: Reconciliation.” See p. 29–33 for a thorough review of the doctrine of discovery, and contemporary repudiations.

³ Chamberlin, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?* P. 28

settler entitlement to ownership; it is the root of our sense of legitimacy in claiming “therefore it’s ours.” The Eurocentric view of this connection between empty land, entitlement and sovereignty remains within Canadian law today as the concept of Crown title:

According to the principles of both natural and international law at the time, occupation and settlement of “uninhabited” country brought into force the laws of the colonizing power, including property laws. The other ways of acquiring sovereignty and thereby land were by conquest, by sale or by cession (usually in the form of a treaty). Whatever the method, in terms of British settlement this meant that ultimate title to all lands in the colony became vested in the Crown from the moment sovereignty was proclaimed, and all property rights would subsequently be traceable to Crown grant. This is what is called underlying Crown title.⁴

As described above by Ted Chamberlin, the myth of Crown land and entitlement to land ownership through “settling” so-called empty, uninhabited land is a very useful and important story to believe as a white settler. It could accurately be described as our “creation” story. The pioneer narratives—centring on hardship and hard work—give character and depth to this story, yet the fact of actual hard work or hardship on the part of white settlers does nothing to change the underlying lie that this land was empty and available for taking.

This land was never empty; it was always and continues to be home for the Stó:lō, as Naḡaḡalhts’i makes abundantly clear by dedicating his life to telling the stories of his elders and ancestors, stories that map their footsteps all over Stó:lō Téméxw and deep into time immemorial. These stories reveal the long-standing relationships between Stó:lō and this place, the teachings embedded in the landscape, the songs and language that emerge from living here, the ways of making a life that are uniquely a response to the gifts these lands and waters have to share, and the ceremonial and spiritual practices that, in return, grew as the sacred gifts of Stó:lō. For Stó:lō, S’ólh Téméxw (Our land/world) includes the lands and waters upon which they ground their livelihoods and physical existence, and from which they derive belonging, culture, language, spirituality. The presence and acknowledgement not only of Stó:lō people, but of *S’ólh Téméxw*, the deep relationships with this place that form the basis of Stó:lō nationhood, call our

⁴ Chamberlin. P. 48

colonization/creation story into question every day. Stó:lō expressions of S'ólh Téméxw, of their world in relation to these lands and waters, become threatening to the ground upon which we base our existence here, our very sense of entitlement to home, belonging, community, and material and emotional attachments to place.

This psychological dynamic results in everyday acts and narratives of erasure that we inherit from our white settler culture and our own families through socialization, and that we recreate and renew in our contemporary lives. We will forever need to invest ourselves in these acts of erasure in new, creative and shape-shifting ways in order to maintain our creation story. As Japanese-settler scholar Karen Kosasa puts it in reference to settler colonialism in Hawai'i:

These “erasures” help to maintain the colonization of Native Hawaiians by creating a “settler imaginary” that continuously eliminates all references to colonialism. This process of erasure naturalizes the United States’ illegal presence in Hawai'i. It also creates a perplexing situation where many settlers are unaware of the existence of colonialism and their participation in it.⁵

How do we actively interrupt these “acts of erasure” in our everyday contemporary practices? Naming these acts and exposing ourselves to the colonial stories in which our historical and contemporary realities are contextualized, becomes a starting point in pathways towards ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples. This naming and exposing of acts of erasure is all the more relevant in contemporary settler colonialism. Liberal notions of multicultural tolerance and human rights have led to a decline in some of the more directly violent colonial practices attempting to eliminate Indigenous peoples, for example the end of the residential school era. However as argued by critical Indigenous scholars as well as many critical race feminist theorists, white settler colonial society has compensated for this by increasingly denying and erasing Indigeneity and Indigenous nationhood in legal, cultural, social and economic ways.⁶ As put by Taiiaki Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, “Contemporary Settlers follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefathers’ colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous peoples as human *bodies*, but by trying to eradicate their existence as

⁵ Kosasa, “Sites of Erasure: The Representation of Settler Culture in Hawai.” P. 196

⁶ Alfred and Corntassel, “Being Indigenous”; Razack, Smith, and Thobani, *States of Race*; Manuel, *Unsettling Canada*.

peoples."⁷

Yet, following Kosasa's lead, I want to ensure that my focus on everyday white settler practices of erasure does not trivialize or overlook the concrete realities of political subjugation at the hands of Canadian governments. Rather, my intention is to reveal, through analyzing cultural practices and narratives in my own everyday life, the ways in which whites settlers continue to nurture "a colonial way of imagining the world"⁸ that in turn facilitates ongoing state practices of dispossession and oppression. I centre on my engagement with my own everyday environment as a new parent, attempting to consider with critical eyes what my young daughter might be ingesting from this environment that nurtures a failure of vision, and a colonial way of imagining the world, and how I might begin to intervene in this process. I begin with the white settler historical narrative of the town of Yarrow that erases through omission, and through imagery, contemporary Stó:lō existence and nationhood, and the history and contemporary realities of Indigenous dispossession and corresponding settler privileges. I also centre shape-shifting stories and practices of "sameness," include assimilating Indigenous people into identity categories and understandings that fit within liberal notions of a multicultural, tolerant, inclusive society. These shape-shifting stories and practices of "sameness" also include subtle and overt narratives and practices of settler indigenization, where we attempt to associate ourselves with, centre or even adopt aspects of Indigenous culture and identity, including the growing phenomenon of white settlers claiming Indigenous identity through the Métis-ization of Canada.

I attempt to interweave these examples of white settler practices and narratives of erasure with my own intentional practice of colonial exposure, by contextualizing my contemporary existence within colonial history and present. I take on this colonial exposure by re-narrating the history of the lands and waters that shape the daily lives of my family and the predominantly white settler community of Yarrow. This re-narration centres Stó:lō relationships with these lands and waters, and the colonial occupation, theft and lies that created the foundation for transforming this landscape into white settler farming communities, destroying Semá:th and Ts'elxwéyeqw livelihoods in the process. I

⁷ Alfred and Corntassel, "Being Indigenous." P. 598

⁸ Kosasa, "Sites of Erasure: The Representation of Settler Culture in Hawai." P. 197

also attempt what Taiaiake Alfred calls “Radical Imagination”⁹ by telling the story of my ancestors, following my maternal grandfather’s Desormeaux family lineage back into the fur trading era in Haudenosaunee homelands around Montréal and to the family’s later occupation of Anishinaabeg Algonquin lands along the Kichisipi (Ottawa) river. Through these stories, my aim is to reveal and centre acts of erasure, and undermine these erasures through practices of colonial exposure, centring the linkages between my own family and communities’ privileges, livelihoods and very existence, and the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples.

By telling these stories in relation to my own contemporary life and ancestral lineages, I can position myself to share these narratives and the sense of responsibility they potentially ignite within white settler communities where I have relationships of meaning: with my own child and my extended family, and with the friends and neighbours who are a large part of my white settler community. There is a transformative possibility in this telling of alternative stories about who I am —one that could inspire and induce humility, compassion and a sense of responsibility as foundational for actively reaching towards building relationships with Indigenous peoples, relationships wherein lies the possibility of enacting responsibility to these truths. Yet, embracing this transformative possibility, allowing this re-narration to shift how I understand myself and in turn relate to Indigenous peoples, is not an easy, comfortable or necessarily welcome process. If in narrative therapy this re-narration of identity is generally meant to support a person in finding a preferred story of self, one that helps to overcome challenges that are holding them back from their goals and desires, then the re-narration proposed here for many white settlers, on a surface level at least, is not a preferred story. Rather, these alternative stories can be disturbing and anxiety-inducing and can bring to the surface emotions of guilt, shame, anger, fear and sadness. Yet, if I can understand that there is power in this place of discomfort and begin to name the ways in which I try to escape, I can challenge myself and other white settlers to explore the possibility this place of emotionally potent discomfort presents.

⁹ Alfred, “What Is Radical Imagination?”

Colonial Exposure: the Makings of Yarrow in Ts'elxwéyeqw, Semá:th and Lexwsá:q Lands

Fairsa and I are again sitting by the window, looking out at the morning sun emerging from behind the mountain that rests in the sky above our home. I want to tell her a story different from the one told to us by the historical sign commemorating the history of Yarrow at the base of this mountain, a localized *terra nullius* story. This is the story of Volkert Vedder in 1862 pre-empting a vast and empty tract of land stretching along the mountain that subsequently took his name. It is the story that is evoked, unconsciously or consciously, each time that Vedder Mountain, Vedder River, Vedder Road, Vedder School, are brought to our imagination through the daily way that a colonial consciousness names, and in doing so claims, the land. In this narrative, history begins in 1862 with Vedder's vast tract of land, with the history of white people's presence in this place. It is also a story that begins with an image of the land as empty, ubiquitous—*vast*. It is one story that erases Stó:lō history and obscures the ways in which the privileges of Vedder—and settlers who came in his footsteps, including my own community—were gained, often at the expense of Stó:lō people.

A different story is the story of Stó:lō history in this place and the colonization of these lands by white settlers. This story is written in a book put together by a collective of Stó:lō people and appropriately titled *You Are Asked to Witness*.¹⁰ The title comes from the expression Stó:lō speakers use when inviting respected guests to become witnesses at gatherings, requesting that they pay attention in a respectful manner.¹¹ In this book and many other writings and multimodal expressions by Stó:lō historians, researchers, storytellers and artists, and those who have worked closely with them, non-Indigenous people are being asked to bear witness to the story of our collective historical and contemporary relationship with Stó:lō and with Stó:lō Téméxw. We are also asked to witness, to hear these stories when Stó:lō people speak to this history at public forums and events, in their submissions to the courts, in the hearings and events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to journalists, in classrooms and art galleries, at public events, in the streets and malls as in Idle No More, and in everyday conversations if we

¹⁰ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*.

¹¹ *Ibid.* P. ii.

begin to listen.

Stó:lō ancestors occupied this land following the last ice age and so were witness to the birth of the Stó:lō (Fraser) river some 10,000 years ago.¹² Stó:lō Sxwōxwiyám describe the travels of Xexá:ls, three brothers and one sister, the offspring of Red-Headed Wood Pecker and Black Bear, who transformed the landscape, encoding teachings in the land as they went. Some people were transformed into valuable gifts, such as the cedar tree, mountain goat, sturgeon and beaver, many of which are the ancestors of the Stó:lō people.¹³ These stories tell us that the Stó:lō have a long-standing sacred relationship to their lands and the many creeks, rivers and lakes throughout their lands. The tribes whose homes, livelihoods and cultural understandings were based around where I now live, in the community of Yarrow, were the Semá:th, Ts'elxwéyeqw and Lexwsá:q (Nooksack) people.

The Semá:th people connect their history to a great flood in which many people found refuge on the top of Kw'ekw'e'í:qw (Sumas Mountain): they tied up canoes, found springs for water and food to eat, took refuge in the caves known as Thunderbird caves and waited for the waters to subside.¹⁴ After the flood, people left this mountain and travelled in canoes to make their homes in other places. The Semá:th remained with this sacred mountain and the massive Semá:th lake at its base.¹⁵ Passing Kw'ekw'e'í:qw if travelling up the Stó:lō River, one arrives next to Ts'elxwéyeqw (Chilliwack), meaning “as far as you can get up the river using a paddle,” after which people traveling in canoes would have used a long pole to pull themselves up river.¹⁶ As Wenona Victor (Hall), citing Wilfléq, Ken Malloway, describes: “Ts'elxwéyeqw territory starts between Cheam and Elk Mountains, includes the Chilliwack Lake and Chilliwack River areas, and

¹² Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination”; Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See p. 16-20.

¹³ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* See “Making the World Right through Transformations” P. 6; Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 92

¹⁴ Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors - Dan Milo refers to Sumas Mountain as Kw'ekw'e'iqw on p. 88.*; Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, Kw'ekw'e'í:qw appears in Map D, Plate 45C on p 139 and is described on p. 142.

¹⁵ “Our History - Sumas First Nation”; Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors* - this story of the people waiting out the flood on Kw'ekw'e'iqw is told by Dan Milo, p. 88.

¹⁶ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. P. 9 This meaning of Ts'elxweyeqw was shared by Siyemches te Yeqwyeqwi:ws (Chief Frank Malloway of Yakweakwioose) in 1996. Siyemches is recalling what he was told by the late Chief Louie.

extends south to Nooksack and west to where Sumas Lake used to be.”¹⁷ Ts’elxwéyeqw history tells the story of four brothers, leaders of the tribe, and their families, who lived close to Sxótsaqel (Ts’elxwéyeqw Lake).¹⁸ Over time, they moved further down the Ts’elxwéyeqw River valley, settling in different places, such as Selóysi (Selesse) Creek. When a landslide wiped out part of this village, they moved further down, settling for a time at Iy’oythel (above Anderson flats), and from there to Xéyles (1 km upstream from Vedder Crossing), Tháthem:als and Th’ewá:li (Soowahlie), with other nearby villages at Stító:s (Vedder Crossing) and Swí:lhcha. The people moved to the Stó:lō (Fraser) River each year to catch and dry salmon, and over time, as they moved down the valley, their language transformed from one more closely connected to Lexwsá:q (Nooksack) to a dialect of Halq’eméylem. Today, the Ts’elxwéyeqw and Semá:th widely understand themselves as part of a broader Stó:lō nation, the people of the river, with the Lexwsá:q people being close relatives yet distanced by the imposition of the Canada–US border following the 49th parallel north.

When European explorers first traveled down the Stó:lō river, the infectious disease smallpox had already reached the Stó:lō people via other Indigenous peoples with whom the Stó:lō had ceremonial, spiritual, family and trade relationships. The first and most devastating smallpox epidemic to reach Stó:lō and broader Coast Salish peoples is thought to have taken place in 1782. Estimates of how many people died range from two-thirds of the population to as high as 90–95%.¹⁹ Historians Cole Harris and Keith Carlson, in separate works, trace the oral history of the 1782 smallpox epidemic among Coast Salish, as well as drawing upon the journals and writings of early explorers who noted the many deserted village sites, scattered bones of smallpox victims and, at times,

¹⁷ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 145

¹⁸ Lerman, *Legends of the River People*; Miller, *Be of Good Mind*. In both these books, Bob Joe is the storyteller of the history of the Ts’elxwéyeqw people. Lumlamelut (Laura Wee Láy Láy) shared the story of the Wileleq/Wililuk/Wee Láy Láy/Wealick family taken from *Legends of the River People* with me in advance of being part of her naming ceremony held in August 2013. Wileleq/Wililuk/Wee Láy Láy (English -Wealick) is the name of the one of the four brothers of the Ts’elxwéyeqw Tribe. The name carried through at least 5 generations before Wileleq/Wililuk the 5th was born and considered to be a great leader for the now grown Ts’elxwéyeqw tribe that had come to live much further down the river valley. Wileleq/Wililuk the 5th was a twin and his twin sister was named Lumlamelut.

¹⁹ Harris, “Voices of Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia” suggests that the loss of life would be similar to that experienced for other Indigenous nations and suggests 90-95% is not unlikely (P.30); Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* suggest a two-thirds fatality rate (p. 77).

surviving people with smallpox-marked faces and bodies.²⁰ One of the Stó:lō stories of this time was told by Lhó:kw'eláléxw, Siyolexwálh (late elder) Dan Milo, and recorded by Oliver Wells, an historian and farmer and the grandson of early Chilliwack settler A.C. Wells. In the story Lhó:kw'eláléxw shares, he speaks of the village of Kilgard (Sumas) on the western edge of Semá:th Lake, and a village near the eastern edge of lake, today in the vicinity of the town of Yarrow:

Well, there was a boy from Kilgard. In them days they used to call that place Semáth. That means Sumas. Well, that one boy was left by himself. All his people died. So he went home. And the next morning he made up his mind to come over there and see who was living at Yarrow, where he saw that smoke was coming out of a big house where there was a lot of Indians living. When he came there, he went right into the house there. There was just that one girl left, after she had all the bodies put away. So that is the first time he ever saw this girl. So he got acquainted with her. So he got real acquainted, and they got married right there. So they stayed together.²¹

In Milo's story, the boy and girl join together and travel to Nicomen Island, home of the Leq'á:mél people, to find more survivors.²² The village near present day Yarrow may have been called Salí:ts or Saneats.²³ The people of this village and many others were killed by the spread of European infectious diseases, with emotional, psychological, cultural, political, economic and spiritual impacts the extent of which cannot possibly be understood, and ramifications passed on through generations. This widespread death among the Stó:lō is recorded in oral history, the observations of early European explorers and the land itself. Large burial grounds are found in places such as Lightning Rock, near Sumas/Kilgard as in many other places on the landscape. The Semá:th in the present day

²⁰ Harris, "Voices of Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia"; Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*.

²¹ Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors*. Story by Dan Milo in 1962, p. 40

²² Note that while Harris attributes Dan Milo's story to the smallpox epidemic, Carlson suggests it is from an earlier famine that took place.

²³ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* also shows a village at the eastern edge of Se:math lake on p. 25. Authors here refer to this site as a "hamlet" and describe it as associated with a resource use site typically owned by women.; Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors* Oliver Wells reproduced a map made by Chief William Sepass in 1918, that also names a village on the eastern edge of Sumas lake as "Saneats" and Ts'elxweyeqw elder Bob Joe tells Oliver Wells that this village belongs to the Se:math people. See p. 76-81.

have to defend this sacred place and burial grounds from further xwelítem encroachment and destruction.²⁴

The history of this land and the many tribes and families that make up the Stó:lō peoples is marked deeply by this catastrophic event, one that is a crucial part of the story of how the lands here have come to be under the control of white settlers, British colonial governments and, later, Canada and the provinces. As Cole Harris asks, “What does it mean that whites have lived for several generations alongside the Coast Salish without understanding—without apparently wanting to understand—that Native people had been decimated by smallpox before Vancouver and Galiano sailed into the Strait of Juan de Fuca?”²⁵ Is it far more comfortable for us to assume that the Indigenous population had always been small? What would it mean to lean into the discomfort of this historical truth and to consider how it further unsettles our sense of entitlement in claiming and occupying this land? As Cole Harris states:

The idea of disease-induced depopulation runs counter to the long-held conviction that Europeans brought enlightenment and civilization to savage peoples. It turns the story of the contact process away from the rhetorics of progress and salvation and towards the numbing recognition of catastrophe. Progress wrestled from the wilderness by hard, manly work and registered by expanding settlements and population is suddenly qualified by population losses. The rhetoric of development begins to pale. The Western idea of property, coupled with an expanding world economy, appears as an agent of destruction as much as of creation. A linear view of progress fails. It becomes harder to believe that European goods and a European God had rescued Native people from want and ignorance. Ideologies and values that trans-Atlantic expansion had so powerfully reinforced lose authority.²⁶

While the epidemic of 1782 was the largest and most devastating, additional regional epidemics continued to take place, including the most recent in 1862, a few years after Volkert Vedder and his sons occupied and began to clear and farm Ts’elxwéyeqw, Semá:th, and Lexwsá:q lands beneath the mountain I look out at each day and along the western edge of Semá:th lake. What became the expansive Vedder Ranch, and later the town of Yarrow, likely encompassed the same lands and waters where the people of the village named Salí:ts had lived and fed their families during much of the year, before the

²⁴ “How Aboriginal Gravesites Halted a \$40M Development in B.C.”

²⁵ Harris, “Voices of Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia.” P. 4

²⁶ Harris. P. 29

people died and a young sole survivor buried her kin and moved to find other survivors. As I began to look for the Halq'eméylem name of Vedder mountain, I found it was known to the Stó:lō people as Qoqó:lem, literally translating as “drinking place.”²⁷ Today, the top of this mountain is fenced off to protect one of the main water supply areas for the town of Yarrow; the community takes great pride in having its own water supply.

We can only imagine that during and immediately after the era of smallpox was a time of great suffering, sadness and loss, as well as profound adaptation, political instability, collective identity reorganization, and resilience. These adaptations and instabilities carried forward into the fur trade era, which in Stó:lō Téméxw was short-lived—the influence of a Hudson’s Bay Company fort established at Fort Langley in 1827 was largely diminished in the wake of the international gold rush into Stó:lō and Nlaka'pamux territories in the Fraser canyon, beginning in 1858.²⁸ In the space of a few short months approximately 30,000 gold miners and opportunists arrived in the lower Fraser Canyon, looking for instant wealth.²⁹ The Canyon is the heart of fishing activities for many Stó:lō and closely related Coast Salish families and tribes, who travelled annually to fishing sites in this unique location where they are able to preserve salmon for the winter months by wind-drying. For the gold miners, the Stó:lō were in the way of their visions of grand wealth, since Stó:lō villages, fishing sites and berry patches sat upon the most promising gold bars.³⁰ These white settlers were mainly from California and brought with them the “Indian as Savage” narrative and practices of, and experience with, white settler violence against Indigenous peoples. In California, the United States armed forces as well as independent groups of white settlers killed thousands of Indigenous peoples in raids and wars, and forcibly removed those who did survive to reservations and conditions of poverty.³¹

Volkert Vedder and his sons Adam and Albert arrived via California in 1856, two years before the Fraser Canyon gold rush, and were among the first white settlers to

²⁷ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas - Map D, Place 45C on p 139 shows the placenames Salí:ts and Qoqó:lem, which are described on p 146 and 145 respectively.*

²⁸ Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time.*

²⁹ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History.* P. 60.

³⁰ Carlson. P. 60

³¹ Forbes, *Native Americans of California and Nevada.*; Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival.*

occupy Stó:lō lands and establish a farm. The Vedders occupied and began to clear land even before the British assertion of sovereignty over Indigenous lands in what it called the colony of British Columbia and a number of years before the British colonial government create the *Land Ordinance Act* of 1860, authorizing the occupation of unsurveyed land. This act, known as “pre-emption legislation,” required settlers to occupy and improve the land for two years in order to qualify for a Crown land grant.³² Volkert Vedder initially pre-empted 160 acres. By 1871, records of alienated Crown land recorded Volkert Vedder as holding 640 acres (Lot No. 83), his son Adam Vedder holding 160 acres (Lot 449) and his other son Albert Vedder holding 160 acres.³³ The *Land Ordinance Act* was the beginning of colonial land policies that were the explicit means by which the control of land was transferred from Indigenous peoples to white settlers.³⁴ Land surveying and fencing became the tools of dispossession. Unlike during the fur trade era, when Indigenous people retained their freedom to live on their own lands, there were now “new owners who could identify trespassers, tell them to get off, and know that their commands would be backed, if need be, by the full apparatus of the state.”³⁵ Representing this power and apparatus of the state was an early military presence in the lands of Ts’elxwéyeqw, Semá:th, and Lexwsá:q peoples; beginning in 1858, the Royal Engineers set up camps in the area to support the Canada–United States Boundary Commission.³⁶

As the Vedder family was establishing their ranch and farm, and the Royal Engineers were establishing camps, Stó:lō families and tribes were being visited by representatives of James Douglas, former Hudson Bay Company official turned Governor of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. In 1863–64, Douglas instructed surveyors to make reserves as large as desired by the Indigenous people, intending, by some accounts, for the reserves to be a hold-over until appropriate treaty

³² Cook, “Early Settlement in the Chilliwack Valley” In 1861, the cost of land was 4 shillings and 2 pence per acre.

³³ Cook. Cited in Table VII: 1871 Record of Crown Land Alienated. p. 103. Albert Vedder’s land grant was registered as a Crown Granted 2-Post Mineral Claim[CG]

³⁴ Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*.

³⁵ Harris, “The Making of the Lower Mainland.” P. 101

³⁶ CFB Chilliwack Historical Society, “A Brief History of Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack”; Neufeldt, *Before We Were the Lands*. P. 70

negotiations could take place.³⁷ Fourteen Indian reserves were mapped out for the Stó:lō in the central part of their lands (present-day Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack).³⁸ Near the eastern edge of the pre-empted Vedder lands, Douglas set aside a 4,000-acre reserve for the Ts'elxwéyeqw people in 1864 at Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie). Douglas's reserve policy was based on his belief that "the only way that Stó:lō people could escape physical extinction was to embrace the notion of their own cultural extinction"—he wanted to see Indigenous people become farmers and adopt white settler culture.³⁹ The reserves he set aside were also the beginning of colonial policies attempting to bind Indigenous people to decidedly European notions of residence and governance, and created the basis for colonial surveillance and control, later structured into the *Indian Act*.⁴⁰

Douglas was navigating the proclamations of the British Crown that called for treaties in order to access Indigenous lands, his own existing Indigenous relationships as a Hudson Bay company official in the fur trade, as well as the insatiable land hunger and the racist attitudes among the newly arriving white settlers. Yet, his successor, Governor Frederick Seymour, and the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, Joseph Trutch, disregarded Douglas' vision, existing relationships and the promises that went along with those, ignored the calls from the British Crown for treaty-making, and instead further aligned the colonial agenda with the interests of land-greedy white settlers. The result, in 1867: all Stó:lō reserves were arbitrarily and unilaterally shrunk in size, a loss of 91% of the total Stó:lō land base set aside in the Douglas reserves.⁴¹ At the same time, Trutch officially recognized many of the vast tracts of unregistered and irregular pre-empted lands of white settlers in the area. Colonial land policies became the explicit means by which the control of land was transferred from one group of people to another.⁴² Further land dispossession for Stó:lō people meant that more land was sold to newly arriving white settlers; after the first rush from California, many were now coming from Eastern

³⁷ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. P. 66—71.

³⁸ Carlson. P. 71

³⁹ Carlson. P. 67

⁴⁰ Harris, "The Making of the Lower Mainland"; Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*.

⁴¹ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History* P. 74; See also, Harris, "The Making of the Lower Mainland."

⁴² Harris, "The Making of the Lower Mainland."

Canada, looking for cheaper land and more opportunity than Ontario afforded.⁴³ Stó:lō losses translated directly into white settler gains of new homes and greater economic opportunity.

Soowahlie Indian Reserve shrank from 4,000 acres to 1,619, making it a similar size to the Vedder family farm. Further reductions of Stó:lō reserves would take place over the years, with a total reduction from 39,900 acres in 1864 to 8,143 acres in 1996.⁴⁴ For Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie) and other Stó:lō communities, the reductions in reserves are a clear and present reminder of the lies and broken promises that characterize the relationship between British and later Canadian governments and Stó:lō peoples. Larry Commodore of Th'ewá:lí regularly opens events at the University of the Fraser Valley Chilliwack Campus at Vedder Crossing, centring the history of the land that the university sits on. He tells people that not only is this land in the heart of Ts'elxwéyeqw lands, but it also was part of the original Douglas reserve at Th'ewá:lí, set aside for the Ts'elxwéyeqw people living there. The University of the Fraser Valley benefited from a recent sale of these lands by the Canadian Department of Defense to real estate land developers and the university after the Canadian Forces Base in Chilliwack was shut down. This sale by the federal government ignored Th'ewá:lí leadership's political and legal demands for these lands to be returned to Ts'elxwéyeqw people, replicating and further entrenching the colonial theft of the land that took place a century and a half before.

By the early 1900s, Vedder and his sons would sell their land to American settlers Frank and John Lumsden, who would make the first attempt to dyke and drain Semá:th Lake. After this scheme failed, the Lumsdens sold their land to Joseph Knox and his wife, Irish settlers who were moving further west from Ontario.⁴⁵ Knox sold 1,000 acres of this land to Chauncey Eckert, who later subdivided, marketed and sold the land to mainly German-speaking Mennonite families, some moving from the prairies seeking escape from harsh winters and opportunities for better farming, and some coming directly from the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ But Eckert's subdivision scheme was only possible because of the

⁴³ Cook, "Early Settlement in the Chiliwack Valley."

⁴⁴ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. P. 74

⁴⁵ Neufeldt, *Before We Were the Lands*.

⁴⁶ Neufeldt. P. 65

successful dyking of Vedder River and draining of Semá:th Lake. The Vedder River hadn't always been a source of waters surging into Semá:th Lake. When Volkart and sons arrived, and likely for a century or more before, Vedder River was just a small creek, with the majority of the flow from the Ts'elxwéyeqw River heading north through what is now Sardis, directly into the Stó:lō (Fraser) River. However, as white settlers along the route of the Ts'elxwéyeqw River became frustrated with flooding, they damned the river, forcing the bulk of the water to go west at Vedder Creek and creating Vedder River, which drained into Semá:th Lake and caused its waters to rise.

The Chilliwack-Vedder River was known as Lhewá:lmel in the old language of the Ts'elxwéyeqw people, meaning “river that left its course,” as the river naturally changed its pattern of flow into the Stó:lō river from time to time.⁴⁷ The Ts'elxwéyeqw people adapted to these changes and moved with the changing course of the river. Yet, the change of the river course at the hands of white settlers this time took place after the establishment and often forced confinement of Ts'elxwéyeqw people on reserves, with devastating impact on the people and culture.

The names of many contemporary Ts'elxwéyeqw reserve communities signify the importance of the Ts'elxwéyeqw River for the community and why they chose to establish villages in these locations. For example, Ch'iyáqtel means “fish weir” and Sq'ewq'éyl means “a bend in the river.”⁴⁸ Today, instead of living along a river, people from Ch'iyáqtel, Sq'ewq'éyl and Yeqwyeqwí:ws (Yakweakwioose) live along Chilliwack River Road, without the ability to fish from their village and cut off from the river as a transportation route. These changes had a significant impact on the well-being of family and community social, cultural and spiritual life. Similarly the well-being of Semá:th people was devastatingly impacted by the draining and transformation of their Semá:th lake into farmland, today known as Sumas Prairie. For the Semá:th, in the words of Siyolexwálh Chief Ned, the draining of their lake meant starvation for the people.⁴⁹ In the words of Semá:th elder Xeyteleq, Ray Silver, “When they drained the lake, they

⁴⁷ Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*; Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” See P. 146-148.

⁴⁸ “Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe: Our Communities.”

⁴⁹ Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. See P. 178 where Chief Ned is quoted from the transcripts of the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission 1913-1916.

drained the heart out of our people.”⁵⁰ These waterways were transportation routes, sources of sustenance, livelihoods and sacred places.⁵¹ As Wenona Victor (Hall) puts it: “The draining of Sumas Lake by the colonizers, along with the ensuing manmade dyking system would forever alter not only the characteristics of the Chilliwack river but the Ts’elxwéyeqw people themselves.”⁵²

In direct contrast, the farmland that was created with the draining of Semá:th Lake and the dyking and channelling of waterways that feed into and out of it have provided and continue to provide homes and farming livelihoods for white settlers of Yarrow, Greendale, Barrowtown and Sumas. Many contemporary settlers are not aware of the draining of Semá:th Lake, despite the fact that some of their food almost certainly comes from the farms on Sumas Prairie, and they are likely to have driven across its once abundant waters along Highway 1, the most travelled transportation route in BC. The old bed of the Ts’elxwéyeqw River encompasses much of the corridor of the southern “Sardis” part of the city of Chilliwack, today the centre of further urbanization. Settlers further benefited from the diversion of the Ts’elxwéyeqw River away from many Ts’elxwéyeqw communities, in that “from 1926 onward, non-Aboriginal fishermen and recreationists came to feel that the reinvented, ‘man-made’ Chilliwack-Vedder river system was their exclusive domain—a sportsman’s paradise and a place of privileged leisure.”⁵³ I walk along this river several times a week, and almost year round see non-Indigenous fishers catching salmon, trout, Dolly Varden or steelhead, as it is one of the most popular sport fishing rivers in the Lower Mainland, now regulated by provincial and federal government laws and agencies. Stolen and alienated resources include more than land, and every day fish, forests, minerals, gravel and water continue to be stolen from Stó:lō Téméxw.

⁵⁰ *Man Turned to Stone: T’xwelátse.*

⁵¹ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See Sumas Lake Transformations p. 104, and Contested Spaces—the Chilliwack River Diversion p. 106.

⁵² Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 147

⁵³ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* See Rafter, “Contested Spaces: The Chilliwack River Diversion.” P. 106.

Making Colonial Inheritance Visible: Land Theft, Broken Promises, and Transformations of Stó:lō Téméxw

In 2002, the Yarrow Ecovillage Society bought a Mennonite dairy farm in the centre of the town of Yarrow, a subdivision of Volkert Vedder's original Lot No. 83 that was a portion of the first white settler occupation of Stó:lō lands in the Fraser Valley. Depending on the seasons and the water levels, were it not for dyking and draining, the land we now live and farm on would have been either on the edge of or underneath the shallow waters of Semá:th Lake. Neither the British colonial, Canadian federal or British Columbian provincial governments, the Vedder family, nor any of those who came after communicated with, compensated or entered into relationships of reciprocity with the Ts'elxwéyeqw and Semá:th people for the use of their lands. Nor is there recognition of this massive transformation of the waterways on the way of life of the people for generations to come.

Yet, the early colonial governors, Douglas and Seymour, did make promises that demonstrate British recognition of Indigenous self-determination and jurisdiction over their lands and resources. These promises, made on behalf of Queen Victoria, are remembered by the Stó:lō in oral history passed down through families and in the testimonies of leaders in the 1913–1916 McKenna-McBride Royal Commission. In 2001, the Stó:lō Nation Aboriginal Rights and Title Department completed a report collecting all the oral and written evidence for the promises.⁵⁴ They summarized the promises as follows:

- They were promised a share of revenues generated.
- They were promised compensation from alienated lands and resources.
- They were promised lasting support for Natives.
- They were promised the freedom to hunt and fish on unceded lands as they had in the past.⁵⁵

However it may be tempting to shape especially Douglas's policies and promises into the benevolent peacemaker mythology, the evidence suggests it is far more likely that Douglas's and later Seymour's promises were strategically navigating the tensions

⁵⁴ Woods, "The Crown's Promise."

⁵⁵ Woods. P. 37 Woods also states the share of revenues was variously remembered as 1/3 or 1/4.

between white settler land interests and the possibility of organized Indigenous resistance. Just as Seymour took over from Douglas in early 1864, this possibility became a reality as a group of Tsilhqot'in people, led by their leader Klatassin, attacked and killed colonial construction workers intending to build a road from Bute Inlet to the goldfields in the Cariboo region, with the intention of stopping further colonial encroachment on their lands. An Hudson's Bay Company pack train bringing supplies for the road crew at Bute Inlet was also attacked. These Tsilhqot'in were also responding to threats made by a road builder to spread the smallpox which had just the previous year devastated their people, and to the abuse of a number of women, including possibly the rape of Klatassin's teenage daughter.⁵⁶ Seymour organized and sent colonial forces to retaliate and capture Klatassin and his warriors yet were unable to. In the process, they burned Tsilhqot'in lodges and destroyed their winter supply of food. Six Tsilhqot'in warriors were eventually captured by tricking them to come into camp to discuss the terms of a peace agreement. Klatassin, his teenage son, and four others were convicted and hung after a hearing by Judge Begbie.⁵⁷ The colonial plans for the Bute Inlet road into Tsilhqot'in lands died with the road crew.⁵⁸ The Tsilhqot'in uprising was largely successful in keeping colonial settlement and transformation of the landscape out of their lands for another 100 years.

At the time of this war, according to Seymour's records, there were 60,000 Indians and 7,000 whites in the colony of British Columbia.⁵⁹ The possibility of an even larger coordinated resistance effort by Indigenous peoples was very present. What might be the reasons why a larger resistance effort did not unfold? Certainly, the ongoing regional smallpox epidemics, spread further by white settlers, were causing renewed waves of death and suffering among Indigenous nations. Furthermore, Seymour did not hesitate to publicly tell the "Indian population" what would happen to further "bad Indians" following the Tsilhqot'in uprising. His letters demonstrate how far he was willing to go to crush Indigenous resistance and eliminate Indigenous peoples. In 1864, he writes to the Colonial Office in London:

⁵⁶ Lutz, *Makuk*. See Pgs. 132-135.

⁵⁷ Lutz.

⁵⁸ Lutz. Chapter 5: The Tsilhqot'in. P. 119—161.

⁵⁹ Seymour to Col. Office London October 4, 1864. BCARS B-1434 dispatch #56 p. 298—305. As cited in Woods, "The Crown's Promise." P. 16.

Should a real war take place between the Indian population and the whites... I may find myself compelled to follow in the footsteps of the Governor of Colorado, whose Proclamation I forwarded in my dispatch no. 49 of the 24th of September and invite every white man to shoot each Indian he may meet. Such a proclamation would not be badly received here in case of emergency.⁶⁰

The mythology of Canadian “peaceful benevolence” in our history with Indigenous peoples is revealed, not only in Seymour’s declaration to the Colonial Office in London but also in his assessment that it “would not be badly received” by the majority of white settlers.

As Seymour took over from Douglas, and in the wake of the Tsilhqot’in war, he invited Indigenous peoples to a gathering in New Westminster on Queen Victoria’s birthday. On May 24, 1864, as many as 4,000 Indigenous peoples throughout BC traveled by canoe to the gathering, which would become an almost annual event for a decade. At this event and those that followed, Seymour repeated the Crown promises begun by Governor Douglas, assuring the Indigenous leaders and people that the Crown would live up to these promises; but to this day they remain unfulfilled.

In 2004, Hiyoletel, Grand Chief Clarence Pennier, called for a re-enactment of the 1864 gathering in New Westminster. This event, named the “Crown’s promise 1864 Cross Cultural Canoe Gathering,” marked 140 years since the original gathering with Governor Seymour. The intention was to remind both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of the history of these promises. The invitation to the gathering reads,

Today, as in the times of our ancestors, the Crown has made many promises regarding the protection of our Aboriginal Rights and Title. Many of the Crown’s promises remain unfulfilled. We come together to call on the Government to act in good faith on the promises that they have made to us.⁶¹

Among the key messages the leadership organizing this event intended to bring forward was that these Crown promises were understood, at least for some Indigenous people, including Stó:lō, as similar to a peace treaty.⁶² These promises were made to avoid war,

⁶⁰ Seymour to Col. Office London October 4, 1864. BCARS B-1434 dispatch #56 p. 298—305. As cited in Woods, “the Crown’s Promise” P. 16.

⁶¹ “The Crown’s Promise Gathering.” This material was shared with me by Lumlamleut, Laura Wee Láy Láy, who was asked to organize the gathering.

⁶² Among the other key messages for the event included a call for Indigenous leaders to “listen to our elders and respect our oral history” and “remember the future generations”. Five key messages were listed for the event in the materials prepared by Clarence Pennier and other leaders in advance. These materials were shared with me by Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láy, who acted as a coordinator for the event.

establish ongoing relationships and outline shared use of lands and resources.⁶³ The promises recognized Indigenous title to the land and pledged compensation as well as “lasting fruits,” an ongoing share from the revenues arising from the use of Indigenous lands by white settlers and colonial governments. None of these promises have been kept. We have inherited not only stolen lands but also a legacy of broken promises that facilitated the theft. To know and act from a place of understanding this is the legacy whereby we call this land home is the beginning of walking a path towards a respectful and ethical existence in this place.

As I sit with Fairisa on my lap, we now look out towards the mountain that hovers above our home and community and name it as Qoqó:lem, a drinking place for the Stó:lō people. I think of the ways in which I can tell her this story, the places we could go to be with the landscape, visualize and feel this history, and the ways in which it shapes our present-day realities. How can I share with her the sadness and horror of families and whole communities dying of smallpox in the village of Salí:ts, and a few generations later, those who survived watching their lake drained, no longer knowing where they would get food for their families? Even imagining telling her these truths feels hard, heavy, the passing on of a burden I do not want her to carry. I know I need to embrace feeling it, practice feeling it, speaking the truth in spite of, and because of, this discomfort. I also know that it is honest and just for her to grow up knowing this truth; I know that living with it and in taking responsibility for it is in part her own pathway towards living with freedom here.

Stó:lō Resistance and Colonial Repression

As Stó:lō and other Indigenous nations recognized the promises made by Douglas and Seymour were not going to be honoured, they organized to assert their rights and title, resist further dispossession, and protect their responsibilities and relationships with their lands. They began presenting petitions to successive governors, chief commissioners of lands and works, and Indian superintendents, making alliances, forming political organizations, and supporting a delegation of coast and interior Indigenous leaders to travel to England to directly petition King Edward VII. Many refused to stop fishing in

⁶³ Woods, “The Crown’s Promise.”

the family fishing sites up in the Fraser Canyon and continued to practice their seasonal rounds of harvesting throughout their lands. Many Stó:lō also adapted to the changing circumstances and ongoing need to provide for their families and communities by growing their own food, working in forestry and fisheries, canneries and sawmills, and on hop and berry farms.⁶⁴

Yet, Stó:lō efforts to continue to express and assert Indigenous rights and self-determination in Stó:lō Téméxw, and efforts to adapt to a changing reality, were repressed and curtailed by increasingly oppressive policies, legislation and practices instituted by Canadian governments. Children were forcibly incarcerated and abused in St. Mary's, Coqualeetza, and other residential schools, Indigenous fishing was criminalized in the *Fisheries Act*, spiritual practices and ceremonies perpetuating Indigenous systems of governance were criminalized, Indian agents were given power to control the movements of Indigenous peoples and settlers on and off reserve lands, and organizing and hiring lawyers to assert land claims was made illegal. Today, while many non-Indigenous people have heard of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the violence, abuse and forced assimilation of residential schools, many remain less aware, as put by Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson, that “residential schools were just one part of an ugly and ongoing strategy to destroy Indigenous nations that included policies such as the *Indian Act*, fraudulent treaty processes and land theft, the criminalization of Indigenous dissent and resistance, gender violence, and racism.”⁶⁵ Thus, residential schools and many of the assimilative, dehumanizing and oppressive policies that sought to destroy Indigenous cultural practices and ways of life were not just tied to Christian impulses to “kill the Indian in the child”⁶⁶ but were also attempts to continue to repress Indigenous resistance and ensure ongoing theft of land and resources.

As we purchase homes, establish businesses, take up jobs and become tax-paying citizens of cities, of the Province of British Columbia and of Canada, we are inheriting the legacy of original and ongoing land and resource theft, transformations of the

⁶⁴ Carlson et al., *A Sto:lo-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* - “Seasonal Rounds in an Industrial World” p. 64-65; Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History* - See Chapter 6.

⁶⁵ Simpson, “Land and Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations.”

⁶⁶ TRC Canada, “Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.” See references to this infamous phrase on the intention of the residential schools in the apology speeches of Canadian politicians in Appendix 4: Apologies.

landscape that undermine Indigenous relationships with the land and facilitate settler land use and control, and unmet promises and oppressive policies used to create the conditions by which this land transformation and theft were made possible. As put by Tuck and Yang: “In settler colonialism land is what is most valuable. Settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and in doing so disrupt the Indigenous relationships to land, creating a profound epistemic, ontological and cosmological violence that is reasserted each day of occupation.”⁶⁷ Colonial exposure means learning and centring the history and contemporary realities of Indigenous dispossession and the oppression that facilitates it, and how this is interwoven with our own lives. It means directly confronting the practice of erasure that supports our avoidance of these truths. Ultimately it guides us towards making space for and supporting Indigenous re-storying of the landscape, witnessing how the stories of and on the land call us towards a deeper responsibility to Indigenous peoples and homelands.

What would it look like to engage in a daily practice of our own personal refutation of the doctrine of discovery and *terra nullius*? This would entail, as we go about our lives, asking ourselves: What is the history of this river, of this land, where I live, eat, play, pray, work and recreate? What are the Indigenous relationships—historical and contemporary—to this place? How have these relationships been changed by the arrival of settlers and the imposition of colonial governments? What have Indigenous peoples lost? What have settlers, and often especially white settlers, gained? How is that legacy of white settler privilege passed along to me, my family, and the communities and institutions to which I belong? How do I/we continue to benefit?

As our lives become more deeply embedded in global capitalism facilitated by historic and contemporary imperialism and colonialism in many places around the world, our daily lives are also interwoven with the lives of Indigenous peoples in places far removed from where we live. Our work, monetary investments, travels and purchases may connect us to contemporary manifestations of similar kinds of displacement and dehumanization of Indigenous peoples that characterize our historic and contemporary relationships at “home.”

⁶⁷ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” P. 5.

Shape-shifting Erasure: Obscuring Indigenous–Settler Difference

The next day, I take Fairisa to the small city park and playground that is directly adjacent to the Yarrow Ecovillage. Named “Pioneer Park,” it has become an almost daily destination with a young toddler needing exercise and loving to swing. At the centre of the park is another historical sign about the town of Yarrow, sponsored by the City of Chilliwack, the Chilliwack Archives, the Rotary Club of Chilliwack, Farm Credit Canada, The McLean Foundation, the Chilliwack Lions Club, and local Yarrow historians.⁶⁸ This sign, unlike the one at the base of Qoqó:lem (Vedder Mountain) mentioned in Chapter 1, begins with an acknowledgement of the Indigenous people connected with these lands. Yet, it does so in a way that historicizes their existence. The sign begins with the statement:

Historically, people of the Sumas (Sum-Aht) and Chilliwack (Ch.ilh-kway-uhk, Chilikweyuk) tribes of the Sto:lo, Salish First Nations resided in the region around Sumas Lake. The Chilliwack traded and affiliated with the Salish tribes on the Nooksack River of Washington State by way of the Old Nooksack trail meandering between Vedder Mountain and Sumas Lake, and by way of Columbia Valley and Cultus Lake.

From this starting point, the narrative and pictures jump to a brief listing of the major events that shaped settlement in the area (Hudson’s Bay trading, Gold Rush (1858), Colony BC joining Canada (1871), the incorporation of the City of Chilliwack (1871), the completion of the railroad from New Westminster to Chilliwack (1910), the Sumas Lake Reclamation Project (1924) and Mennonite immigration to Yarrow (1928). From here, the pictures and descriptions focus on white settler life in Yarrow: winning baseball tournaments, building an elementary school, listening to the Yarrow Brass Band, annually celebrating the agricultural activities of the town during Yarrow Days: the growing and processing of hops, raspberries, strawberries and tobacco. Stó:lō tribes are never mentioned again; they appear to be placed safely in the past. The continued existence of the Semá:th, Ts’elxwéqeqw, and Lexwsá:q peoples is erased, along with the many ways that the transformations that led to white settler life in Yarrow corresponded with Stó:lō displacement, poverty and later dependency on the federal Canadian

⁶⁸ See website: “Yarrow Pioneers and Settlers.”

government. As Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox points out, the historicizing of Indigenous peoples not only erases contemporary Indigenous peoples; it is also deeply connected to the preoccupation with historicizing colonial injustice itself.⁶⁹ If Indigenous people are no longer here, then any injustices instituted and perpetuated by colonial governments and white settlers were also done in the past and are not ongoing contemporary realities that direct and shape Indigenous and settler lives in the present.

Fairsa and I leave Pioneer Park and make the short walk to the local Yarrow Community school for “family place”—a weekly Chilliwack community services activity organized for toddlers and preschoolers and run by volunteers. I’m still thinking about the signs that shape the white settler community narrative of Yarrow when we enter the main school doors and immediately run into Julie Gutierrez, a Stó:lō woman and mom who grew up in Yarrow. I met Julie through Idle No More a few years ago. She was a regular at Stó:lo Idle No More events, many of which were organized by her sister, Joanne Gutierrez-Hugh, who also coordinates a Stó:lō women’s empowerment group. As Julie and I said hello and she shared some smiles with Fairsa, I looked up to notice that the prominent words above the main reception desk as you enter the school are in Halq’eméylem: “éy kwesé e’mi.” In smaller print underneath is the English translation: “It is good that you are here (welcome).”

As we went into the family place room, Fairsa checking out the other kids and new toys, I sat and considered the bizarre juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory white settler narratives and practices. On the one hand, prominent community signs either omit Indigenous people altogether or create an historical narrative that situates the Semá:th, Ts’elxwéyeqw, and Lexwsá:q tribes of this area in the distant past. On the other hand, the community school down the street from these signs has the Halq’eméylem language front and centre on display, and contemporary Stó:lō people are attending and working at the school. Who are the Indigenous people who are here today, who we see in schools, stores, offices, community centres, walking down the sidewalk, as well as in the spotlight as artists, singers, actors, academics and politicians? Whose language and art is being centred? Who are they if they are not of the same peoples/nations who are historicized and erased in the colonial imaginary?

⁶⁹ Irlbacher-Fox, *Finding Dahshaa*. P. 34

Indigenous scholars such as Vine Deloria, Jr. have pointed out that historicizing Indigeneity, telling a story of “Indian as past,” is a convenient narrative for settlers. Not only does it erase the ongoing contemporary colonial injustice and settler privileges this injustice supports, but it also suggests that we understand contemporary descendants of these past “Indians” as “not real Indians.”⁷⁰ What stories do we tell ourselves and how do we relate to Indigenous people in ways that shape, in our minds and hearts, contemporary Indigenous peoples as “not real Indians.”? As Fairisa and I are leaving the school, I overhear a teacher talking about the school’s “Aboriginal support worker.” I pause for moment and realize she is talking about Julie.

I know Julie Gutierrez to be a granddaughter of Siyolexwálh Xwiyálemot Matilda “Tillie” Gutierrez, from the community of Chowéthel near the town of Hope. Elder, knowledge holder and storyteller, Tillie Gutierrez was deeply involved in, and respected for, her work in the resurgence of Stó:lō culture and stories and the Halq’eméylem language, and for nurturing the links between this cultural resurgence and political assertions of Stó:lō nationhood. She survived residential school and reconnected with her knowledge of Halq’eméylem, remembered stories, teachings and practices that she then passed on, many of which she had learned during childhood summers spent at her family’s fishing site known as I:yem in the lower Fraser Canyon. I:yem is also the name of a broader area around this fishing site, which includes other family fishing sites, ancient burial grounds and a memorial erected in 1938 in memory and honour of Stó:lō ancestors and the long-standing ancestral relationships between Stó:lō people and the Fraser Canyon family fishing sites.⁷¹ When interviewed as an elder, Tillie remembered being present as a young person when a group of Stó:lō leaders met at I:yem. Tillie recalled that the phrase “S’ólh Téméxw te íkw’élò. Xólhmet te mekw’ stám ít” was stated at this meeting. It translates to: “This is our land. We have to look after everything that belongs to us.”⁷² This phrase has been taken by many Stó:lō as both an oral record of Stó:lō title to the land and a reminder of their deep connection and responsibility to the land. Tillie’s work and her ability in remembering, carrying and passing on cultural

⁷⁰ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*.

⁷¹ Fehr, “Relationships: A Study of Memory, Change, and Identity at a Place Called I:yem.”

⁷² Bedard, “Becoming Xwiyalemot: Traditional Knowledge and Colonial Experiences in the Life of a Sto:lo Elder.” See p. 28

knowledge and teachings has strengthened Stó:lō assertions of self-determination and the confidence and cultural knowledge of many Stó:lō people.

Julie's sister Joanne is now carrying the ancestral name of her grandmother, Xwiyálemot, which means "very strong standing person."⁷³ It was passed down to her by her grandmother, who watched her as a young woman and saw the way she spoke and how she carried herself with elders. Joanne has already identified her niece and Julie's daughter, Gracie Gutierrez, as the next Xwiyálemot. Both Joanne and Julie are strong Indigenous women, connected deeply with their ancestors and Stó:lō Téméxw, and part of a long legacy of Stó:lō resistance, cultural resurgence and self-determination. I recall attending a Stó:lō women's empowerment gathering in which Joanne and Julie shared their Stó:lō lineage and connections to Stó:lō Téméxw, as did many of the Stó:lō women in the circle. I was the odd one out, fumbling for words as to who I am, where I am from, how I have come to be here and what my responsibilities and connections are to this place. I thought of how none of these women identified themselves as "Aboriginal."

In an everyday sense, how do the ways in which we narrate our understanding of, and relate to, Indigenous peoples' identities shape what it means to be respectful and how we might participate in creating ethical relationships? If we tell ourselves a story and relate to Indigenous people as "Aboriginal Canadians," do respect and justice get framed as adequately including Aboriginal people in Canadian society? On the other hand, what does respect look like if we begin to understand contemporary Indigenous people as members of tribes and nations, families and ancestral lineages, deeply connected to specific places, lands and waters, places that have been and continue to be fenced off, guarded, gated, dyked, drained, blasted, extracted, paved and emptied in the process of creating and expanding comfort and wealth for the families and communities that have come to settle, to occupy, Stó:lō Téméxw? What if the Yarrow school community understood Julie as the granddaughter of Xwiyálemot and the mother of the next Xwiyálemot, and all that she represents as a woman standing strong for her families', communities' and nations' rights and responsibilities within these sacred lands, within S'ólh Téméxw? In which framing of Indigenous identity, in which version of respect and justice, is our white settler privilege more likely to be kept intact and our discomfort

⁷³ Bedard.

easily avoided? In which framing of Indigenous identity are we challenged to consider our place here and learn our responsibilities within colonial history and present-day realities?

In the context of these two alternate narratives of Indigenous identity, what is meant by the Yarrow Community School's choice to centre Halq'eméylem, using it to welcome people to the school? Is this an effort towards Aboriginal inclusion, a form of cultural "respect" in the motif of Canadian liberal multiculturalism? What is the intention, and what is the effect? Much of this hinges on what else the school is doing, or not doing, to address its situation as a primary educator of mainly non-Indigenous students. Is the school teaching the students about the spread of smallpox by Europeans and the widespread death of Stó:lō people, including those in the nearby village of Salí:ts? Do students learn about the subsequent white settler occupation of these lands, broken Crown promises, the transformations of the waterways that facilitated settler farming, homes and towns, all the while deeply disrupting Stó:lō livelihoods, cultural practices and nationhood? The school, like the Yarrow Ecovillage, sits on the lands first occupied by Vedder and his sons. The dykes stand a block away from the school, the river a place of recreation and place-based education, an extension of the learning environment. The same mountain Fairisa and I wake to in the morning, Qoqó:lem, dominates the view from the school to the south. Is this mountain a monument to Vedder and the history of white settlement here, or is it Qoqó:lem, a drinking place for the Ts'elxwéyeqw and Semá:th peoples, a drinking place that now supplies water to the school and the community of Yarrow?

What if non-Indigenous students are sitting next to Stó:lō students learning some phrases in Halq'eméylem? For these students, learning Halq'eméylem is perhaps a requirement, perhaps fun or perhaps "a good thing to do." Meanwhile, Stó:lō students are learning the language in the context of the intergenerational effects of residential schools and the embodied knowing of ancestors punished brutally for speaking their language as children, as well as in the context of ancestral responsibilities, family efforts to reclaim culture and identity, and the connections between resurgence of language, culture and self-determination. What if a non-Indigenous student or teacher takes this experience further and feels they are "a bit more Indigenous" because they can speak

Halq'eméylem? In Hawai'i, where public schools and immersion programs have been a major force in Hawaiian language resurgence, some non-Indigenous people are now calling themselves Hawaiians because they can speak the Hawaiian language.⁷⁴ Through appropriating and separating the language from its culture and people, some are going as far as to link their Hawaiian language skills with a claim to Hawai'i as a nation.⁷⁵

As I think through the complexities of this, I wonder at my own intentions to share Halq'eméylem with Fairisa, and my hope of giving her opportunities to experience aspects of Stó:lō culture. Like many parents and teachers, I want to nurture culturally respectful kids. But what does “respect” mean? If I share with her Stó:lō stories in books, songs and language while at the same time not exposing her to the colonial history here and the ways in which that has shaped the contemporary lives of Stó:lō people and our own settler family and communities, am I not teaching her a kind of cultural appreciation rather than the basis for a true respect? Perhaps my own and other non-Indigenous parents' and teachers' tendencies towards emphasizing cultural learning and experiences while continuing to obscure, deny or minimize colonial injustice and white settler privilege could be seen as a misidentification of cultural appreciation as authentic cultural respect. Yet, this explanation, fails to consider the emotional and psychological security and comfort of this tendency for especially white settlers, one in which we regain not only a sense of ourselves as “good whites” but perhaps, like the non-Indigenous people speaking Hawaiian and claiming they are native, a sense of being more legitimately from this place and therefore entitled to it. The learning about and perhaps even appropriation of aspects of Stó:lō, and more broadly Indigenous, cultures, disconnected from a recognition of and responsibility towards Stó:lō nationhood in this place, has the potential to reinforce a settler sense of belonging, all the while leaving colonial injustice and settler privilege, especially white settler privilege, unaddressed.

Indigenous and settler colonial theorists have noted a dualistic, almost contradictory character of settler narratives and practices of erasure—at once trying to eliminate Indigenous nationhood and culture *and* trying to indigenize the settler through Indigenous appropriations. The typical settler narrative, write settler colonial studies

⁷⁴ Warner, “Kuleana.”

⁷⁵ Warner. See P. 76.

scholars Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, has a double goal: acting out the suppression or effacement of the indigene and performing the concomitant indigenization of the settler.⁷⁶ Or, as Lorenzo Veracini puts it, “Indigenization is driven by the crucial need to transform an historical tie ‘we came here’ into a natural one ‘the land made us.’”⁷⁷ This apparent contradictory nature can result in multiple simultaneous and conflicting messages about Indigenous people and settlers. For Tuck and Yang, some of these messages include that “all Indians are dead, located in faraway reservations, contemporary Indigenous people are less Indigenous than prior generations and that all Americans are a ‘little bit Indian.’”⁷⁸

Many similar messages exist in subtle and not so subtle ways as I walk about the town of Yarrow and its community spaces with my daughter. While it may appear that these approaches to escaping our discomfort and continuing to erase Indigenous nationhood are contradictory—the omission, historicization and assimilation of Indigenous peoples and the apparent adoption and celebration of Indigeneity by the settler—they are at their heart both about erasing difference. Both also “deny a particular ontological connection linking indigenous peoples to their land.”⁷⁹ Halq’eméylem is used to welcome people to the school, alongside community historical signs that either erase Stó:lō people or write them into the past. Stó:lō art is at times celebrated, while Stó:lō people may be conceptualized as “Aboriginal Canadians” denying the particular and deep connections of Stó:lō families to places and to the experience of colonialism here, one that is intimately connected to how we, as white settlers, came to occupy these lands. If difference is recognized, it becomes of “cultural” rather than “political” significance.

In subtle and overt ways, white settlers also tend to erase difference through narratives and practices in which we understand ourselves as colour-blind, emphasizing a shared humanity rather than our different status in relation to the land and our experiences with colonialism. I witnessed this narrative of “colour-blindness” weave its way through a sharing circle organized by Marion Robinson then of the Fraser Basin Council (FBC) for its directors to reflect on Indigenous–non-Indigenous relationship

⁷⁶ Anna Johnston and Lawson, “Settler Colonies.” P. 27

⁷⁷ Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*. P. 22

⁷⁸ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” P. 9

⁷⁹ Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*. P. 43

building. FBC is a non-profit organization dedicated to sustainability in the Fraser Basin and includes among its directors representatives from federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations governments. I interviewed Marion, a recommended settler and staff of the FBC, as part of this research, and she invited me to participate in the circle. In this sharing circle, one of the non-Indigenous FBC directors spoke passionately to his experience of growing up “colour-blind,” seeing everyone for their hard work and neighbourliness, and emphasizing this was the best strategy to “get beyond us and them.”⁸⁰ These declarations of colour-blindness came after Stó:lō leadership shared the ways in which colonial land dispossession, transformation and racism has created much suffering and struggle in their communities. This settler narrative of sameness blocked the hearing of Indigenous truth-telling, erasing Indigenous peoples as unique nations in these lands, as well as the differences in our experiences with white settler colonialism (one of dispossession and oppression, the other of privilege). Instead of authentic understanding and communication, settler anxieties were kept at bay and settler goodness restored.

Another way we erase Indigenous–settler difference is through centring the sameness of our struggles. For settlers seeking to be part of, and to express a progressive politics of solidarity with, Indigenous people, the Idle No More movement that emerged in the winter of 2012–2013 created a space to build relationships and demonstrate solidarity.⁸¹ Yet, like any efforts towards settler solidarity, our xwelítem ways of being have the potential to interfere with our perhaps conscious intentions. About a dozen people were invited to help organize a local event for one of many Global Days of Action, the majority Stó:lō with a handful of white settler activists. It wasn’t long before the conversation shifted towards how to frame the event to appeal “to the broader

⁸⁰ I recorded detailed notes and reflections on the FBC sharing circle in my journal reflections dated June 6, 2012.

⁸¹ The Idle No More movement emerged in 2012–2013 and began with a rejection of the proposed Conservative government’s omnibus budget law, Bill C-45. This bill changed a number of pieces of environmental legislation as well as the *Indian Act* and introduced a number of problematic bills, such as the *First Nations Education Act*, *First Nations Property Ownership Act* and *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act*. There were many different visions and intentions for this emergent movement that went far beyond Bill C-45 and linked this movement to the long history of Indigenous resistance to colonialism across Turtle Island, and to many contemporary global Indigenous struggles. For example, some Indigenous leaders renamed Idle No More the Indigenous Nationhood Movement to articulate a broader vision than resisting Canadian policy, a reassertion and resurgence of Indigenous governance, culture and nationhood.

Canadian public.” Representatives of a local settler environmental organization began pitching the idea of focusing on the ways that Bill C-45 would affect water, since clean water is “important for everyone.” This proposal seemed to be getting some traction in the group before a Stó:lō activist called out that this sweeping aside of Indigenous issues and agendas was undermining the whole intention of the Idle No More movement, which was building upon 500 years of Indigenous resistance to colonialism. An agenda that “appeals to all” can result in a re-centring of settler issues and agendas, co-opting the Indigenous movement in the process and erasing the central difference between Indigenous people and white settlers: our status in relation to the land and our contrasting experiences of white settler colonialism. By shifting away from Indigenous agendas of self-determination, nationhood and resurgence, our white settler anxiety and discomfort induced by a recognition of these differences is pushed aside as well. As a result, white settlers regain not only an equilibrium undisturbed by Indigenous assertions of nationhood, and colonial truth-telling, but also potential control and leadership within movements, reasserting settler privilege.⁸²

As I reflected on these experiences, I began to become more conscious of and attentive to the effects of telling stories that focus on our commonalities. Does a story or way of relating that emphasizes our “sameness” undermine the status of Indigenous peoples as unique nations on these lands? Does it minimize or deflect Indigenous experiences with and struggles against colonialism? Does it deflect an acknowledgement of white settler privilege? Thinking through these questions intellectually was helpful, alongside an attunement to my own embodied messages of discomfort. In what situations am I more comfortable—when focusing on and creating conditions in which we are all understood as “equal,” or when the differences are centred? Tuning in to the discomfort of difference becomes an entry point to a self-understanding of our culturally rooted and deeply socialized tendency to find comfort in sameness.

Indigenous scholars have pointed out that a colonial worldview is one that assumes there is one right path to knowledge and understanding, one truth.⁸³ The underpinnings of this belief are a monotheistic religiosity that demands a belief in only

⁸² Journal entry, January 9, 2013.

⁸³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Alfred, *Wasáse*.

one God and claims to hold the one true path to salvation. From this belief system, unity becomes equivalent to sameness, and difference becomes intolerable. As Oneida legal scholar Robert Williams explains, “Normative divergence from the Church’s vision of truth and knowledge signified, not the incomplete nature of all interpretations, but intolerable demonic delusion.”⁸⁴ This belief re-emerges in the epistemological assumptions of contemporary liberal theorists, who assume that knowledge can uncover universal laws or “norms” by which nature and social relationships function. As a result of this assumption, sameness tends to be valorized and “difference” is considered a problem or deviation.⁸⁵ As put by Taiaiake Alfred, “the imperative to assimilate all difference is, in fact, an inherent feature of liberal democracy.”⁸⁶

The culture of my own family of origin often reflects this liberal tendency towards erasing difference in the day-to-day realities of life. I grew up with a way of relating to inter-racial or cross-cultural friendships and relationships that pointed out the ways in which these non-white friends were “just like any other (white) Canadian kid.” We actively chose to centre what we understood as our common ground—an interest in sports, a shared like of certain mainstream music, movies and hobbies, seeing these as ways to “connect.” Yet, to what degree does this “connection” rest on a deeper avoidance of the uncomfortable recognition of the differences in power and privilege that shape our lives in a white Eurocentric society? If we actively avoid or never intentionally make space for these differences to be seen and named, what level of connection is really possible? How is authentic connection limited by the barriers we keep safely in place that protect us from seeing our own privileges in relation to others’ as white Euro-Canadians in a white supremacist and Eurocentric society, and as settlers in the context of settler colonialism? Our focus on connecting by leaning into what we have in common, to the exclusion of our differences, is one such barrier. If this barrier is deeply fortified, it can become awkward, uncomfortable, even unacceptable to talk about difference. Intervening with this requires an active, intentional intervention with ourselves, an ability to ask in the moment: Am I centring the ways in which we are the same? What is being erased by

⁸⁴ Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*. P. 26

⁸⁵ See for example: Moosa-Mitha, “Situating Anti-Oppressive Theories within Critical and Difference-Centered Perspectives.” P. 44-45.

⁸⁶ Alfred, “Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples.” P. 184

this narrative of sameness? How might I actively bring difference into this space, or actively hear it when it is being offered?

How is it that we learn to respectfully centre difference not in ways that make it impossible for us to acknowledge things we share, but in a way that allows for the difference to shape more honest, meaningful and respectful relationships? There is a powerful truth in this space of listening to and attempting to understand these differences, however discomfoting. As Wenona Victor (Hall) states:

First, it does not take a genius let alone a consultant to see that the Stó:lō, much like Indigenous peoples worldwide, are different. Different from what? Different from all the people who now call *S'ólh Téméxw* home, but whose original ancestors are not from here. In other words the Stó:lō are different from the non-Indigenous people currently residing in our territory. That is not to say there are no similarities, or that by acknowledging difference we are making value judgments. On some levels we are the same: we all cry, hurt, laugh, and love; we are all humans after all. But our cultures embedded within our worldviews are distinctly different and often times even diametrically opposed. I believe there are answers within these differences, and that these answers will guide us out of this colonial existence of disempowerment, disconnection, alienation and disease.⁸⁷

Victor's words emphasize that "there are answers within these differences," and we must lean into difference, and the discomfort it brings, in everyday practical ways to begin to understand and engage with some of these answers. This involves both consciously checking our tendency towards erasing difference, and tuning into our embodied messages of discomfort, both of which are opening places for us to intervene with and interrupt our own practices of erasure.

Reclaiming my Place as a Link in a Chain

In the spring of 2016, Atef, Fairisa and I traveled to Ontario and Québec to visit our respective families. Atef's parents, who live in Tunisia, were visiting his sister's family in Montréal, affording us an opportunity to see them all in one place. Much of my extended family on both paternal and maternal sides lives in and around the Toronto area and the surrounding cities around Lake Ontario—Mississauga, Cobourg, Kingston. None

⁸⁷ Victor, "Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination." P. 36-37. In this quotation, Victor also cites Taiaiake Alfred's work in relation to the description of a colonial existence of disempowerment, disconnection, alienation and disease. See Alfred: Colonialism and State Dependency 2005

of this family had yet met Fairisa, including my only living grandparent, my paternal grandmother, Jean Heaslip. It turned out this trip was the only chance for the two to meet, as Jean passed away the following fall. As we travelled to visit different relatives, the guidance of Stó:lō mentors and the teaching “you have to know where you come from to know where you are going” were present in my mind.

How did I come to be an adult, now a parent, and supposedly a well-educated person, with so little personal knowledge about my family, ancestry and history, let alone an understanding of how this was interconnected with Indigenous peoples’ histories and contemporary realities, not to mention the land itself? On my mother’s side, I did know that my grandfather, Armond Desormeaux, was French Canadian, and on my father’s side my grandmother occasionally said in a teasing half-joke, “You have strong Scottish blood you know.” These were the tenuous threads with which, as a young person, I might have made a personal connection to my family as migrants to these lands rather than as Canadians living on our “home and native land.” Yet, I did not ask further questions, and beyond family stories of my grandparents during World War II and my parents’ life growing up on Canadian Airforce bases, stories that looked back into the lives of our ancestors were rarely offered. My family culture, supported by the mainstream white settler culture in which we existed, did not promote or value learning about or situating my understanding of self in relation to our history and ancestors, let alone place much value in the knowledge and experiences of our living elders.

Am I and my family unique in this set of values and experiences? I think of my white settler friends, mentors, teachers and recognize how little I know about their histories, how shallow and fleeting the moments have been where a sense of self understood in the context of history and ancestry might be shared. I think of the lessons about history I grew up with in public education social studies classes, recalling tedious lists of historical dates memorized for exams. When I have met white settlers interested in history, it often seems to be somebody else’s, not their own. People who do trace their family history are often seen as having a quirky hobby, a curiosity, rather than carrying something of substantive importance to their families. How does this nurturing of an everyday disconnection from ancestry and history in relation to our understanding of ourselves serve to perpetuate the status quo of contemporary colonialism? Is it in this

nurturance that historical denial and ignorance become easy, almost natural states to inhabit?

These questions and reflections emerged in the context of witnessing and learning from the value that Stó:lō people attach to knowing their ancestral histories, woven within the history of the lands and waters to which they are connected. In Halq'eméylem, there is specific name for those who have lost their history: st'áxem (or s'téxem), meaning low-status or worthless people who have lost or forgotten their history. This is contrasted to the word for high-status people, who are smelá:lh—worthy people who know their history.⁸⁸ In my conversations with Eyem Shxwelí Shlálí, Melody Andrews, and her Mi'kmaq husband, Sakej Ward, they suggested that to be xwelítem is to also be st'áxem, to have forgotten who we are—both our cultural traditions erased through generations of assimilation into white mainstream settler society and our family histories in relation to the story of colonization in Canada.⁸⁹

Yet, although we could be understood as st'áxem in a personal family and ancestral sense, we remain surrounded and permeated by the collective historical Canadian narrative that emphasizes empty lands and pioneers' hard work, sacrifice and peaceful benevolence. As historian Elizabeth Furniss remarks in her study of white settlers in Williams Lake, “Although the average resident of Williams Lake may profess a lack of interest in history, his or her everyday world is permeated by the values and identities of a selective historical tradition that celebrates European expansion, settlement, and industry.”⁹⁰ This selective historical tradition is on display in the Yarrow historical signs, as it is across many monuments, museums and history texts of Canada. It fills, at times like a slow yet continuous drip, the space wherein we might feel called to search for a deeper and more personal historical and ancestral understanding of who we are as families, and how our family paths are intimately interconnected with Indigenous peoples and with the land itself. Interrupting the permeation of myself, my child, my

⁸⁸ For discussion of st'áxem and smelá:lh see: Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time* p. 49; Gardner (Stelomethet), “Tset Hikwtexw Te Sqwelteltset, We Hold Our Language High: The Meaning of Halq'emeylem Language Renewal in the Everyday Lives of Sto:lo People” p. 30; Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History* p. 90. I have chosen to follow the spelling used by Ethel Gardner, *st'áxem*, while Keith Carlson uses a different spelling, *s'téxem*.

⁸⁹ Interview with Melody Andrews and Sakej Ward, November 16, 2012.

⁹⁰ Furniss, *The Burden of History*. P. 53

family and communities with the stories, values and identities of this selective Canadian historical tradition is more than stopping the continuous drip; it is filling the space, it is owning my place as a link in the chain. I want my daughter to grow up knowing much more about who she is and where she comes from, to walk into her adulthood with less room for the slow drip to take over. My intention and hope is that she will both understand her responsibility to the history of our family connections to this land and its first peoples, and the history of our cultural heritage and the gifts of her ancestors, which have long been forgotten in our own assimilation and acquiescence into white settler culture in exchange for white privileges.⁹¹

Having introduced Fairsa to much of my extended family in what felt like a whirlwind of visiting, late nights and overwhelmed toddler senses and emotions, we boarded the train to Montréal to visit Atef's family. On the train between Toronto and Montréal, the colonial transformation of the land and the dispossession of Anishinaabeg, Huron and Haudenosaunee peoples came alive in my reimagining of the cultural and physical landscape we travelled across. I had recently begun to research my own ancestral lineages, situating them in relation to the colonial history of early Canada. I began this chapter "looking back" at the history of the land I currently live on in Stó:lō Téméxw, attempting the work of colonial exposure by situating my own contemporary everyday life within the context of colonial histories of the lands and waters I relate to today. I turn now to exposing the ways in which the story of my ancestors is interwoven with the colonization of Canada. I share the story of my maternal grandfather's family lineage, tracing my mom's maiden name of Desormeaux. I have chosen to share this story for two reasons. First, it is the furthest I have travelled so far in my efforts to live up to being a "link in the chain," in great part due to connecting with the immense efforts of a distant cousin of my mom to gather family history information and trace the Desormeaux lineages. I also share this story and the connection with my distant relative as these became a space of learning and reflection on the ways in which settler

⁹¹ I turn to considering the possibility and importance of reconnecting with our own land-based cultural heritages in narrative 3, in connection with our spiritual grounding and as part of a rejection of the cultural ties, sense of self and community derived from whiteness.

indigenization—and specifically in Canada Métis-ization⁹²—serves as a renewed, contemporary practice of erasure.

Radical Imaginings: A Personal Narrative of Early Canada

The island of Montréal is known to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people as Kawennote Tiohtiá:ke, meaning “island where the people divide,” and Ville Marie (later Montréal) was built upon the abandoned Indigenous village of Hochelaga on this island, which has a long history of occupation by many Indigenous nations.⁹³ It sits at the confluence of two great rivers. The Mohawks of the broader Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy had for almost a century actively fought back French settlement in the area of Montréal, protecting the northern hunting territories of their homelands, called Kanienke. The Mohawks were allies of the Dutch and English colonists further south, who were in competition with the French.⁹⁴ They were also involved in wars, raiding and intermittent peace agreements with the Iroquois-speaking Hurons and the Nippissing and Algonquin Annishinabeg peoples to the west.⁹⁵

My distant ancestor Pierre Monciau, whose family name was in a generation reconfigured to “Desormeaux,” left the town of Boulay-les-Barres in south central France and arrived in what to him would have been known as Ville Marie in Nouvelle-France in 1714. When he arrived, France, the Mohawk nation, other nations within the Haudenosaunee confederacy, the Hurons, as well as the Algonquins, Nippissing and other Annishnabeg peoples had entered into a multinational peace treaty, one that recognized the independence and self-determination of all the parties.⁹⁶ Following this treaty, Mohawk settlements were established in and around Montréal, influenced by the influx of Christian missionaries and the ongoing fur trade, in which the Mohawks held a strategic position as intermediaries in the Albany-Montréal trade route.⁹⁷

Pierre Monciau married Marie Marguerite Auger at Nôtre-Dame de Montréal in

⁹² In using this term, “Métis-ization,” I am drawing on the work of Adam Gaudry, “The Métis-Ization of Canada.”

⁹³ Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*.

⁹⁴ Alfred.

⁹⁵ Morrison, “Algonquin History in the Ottawa River Watershed.”

⁹⁶ Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701*.

⁹⁷ Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*. P. 44

1716, and they had three children. The most common categories of male French settlers during this era were former indentured labourers and discharged soldiers, followed by merchants, officers and ecclesiastics.⁹⁸ French women who came to the colony were brought specifically to be wives to French men, in early efforts to restrict intermarriage between Indigenous women and French men, and to keep French men from returning home to have families, encouraging them to settle in the colony instead.⁹⁹ Many French settlers were involved in diverse pursuits, most profitably the fur trade, along with clearing land, farming, fishing, hunting, milling wood, building furniture, and various trades.¹⁰⁰ Selling and acquiring rotures (or leases) in the French feudal land system that had been transplanted along with French colonial officials was fairly easy, as seigneurs (landowners) were actively looking for settlers to work their lands, competition was low, and many French men were more interested in the profits and freedom of illegal participation in the fur trade than in agricultural settlement.¹⁰¹

French settlers and colonial officials depended on Indigenous knowledge of the land, skill in obtaining furs, control of trade routes, ability as warriors, and diplomatic traditions to guide much of their existence and successes. In turn, the French provided access to new trade opportunities, markets in Europe, and different goods and supplies. These interdependent relationships were forged, strengthened and renewed through alliances and treaties, based largely in the practices of Indigenous nations such as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples referred to this era as a time of “Contact and Cooperation,”¹⁰² and political philosopher James Tully describes it as a time during which Indigenous peoples and white settlers recognized and related to each other as “equal, coexisting and self-governing nations” and “govern[ed] their relationships with each other by negotiations, based on the procedures of reciprocity and consent that lead to agreements that are then recorded in treaties or treaty-like

⁹⁸ Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Montreal* p. 18; See also Harris, *The Seigniorial System in Early Canada*. P.110-111

⁹⁹ Stasiulis and Jhappan, “The Fractious Politics of a Settler Society: Canada.” See p. 104-105.

¹⁰⁰ Harris, *The Seigniorial System in Early Canada*. See p. 165—167.

¹⁰¹ Harris.

¹⁰² RCAP, “Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, Volume 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back.”

accords.”¹⁰³

Indigenous nations and colonial powers continued to recognize each other as self-determining nations and potential allies or adversaries as Britain and France fought for colonial power in North America in the Seven Years War (1756–63). While a number of Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous nations fought alongside the French in the early parts of this war, Britain intentionally sought out France’s Indigenous allies and made treaties that would protect their lands and rights in exchange for their neutrality in the war. It was after this war that King George III, in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, officially claimed British territory in North America. His proclamation explicitly stated that Indigenous title to the land had existed and continued to exist, and that all land would be considered Indigenous land until ceded by treaties made directly with the Crown.¹⁰⁴

When my ancestor Pierre Monciau died in Laval in 1778, the American Revolution was underway, and during the fall and winter of 1775–76, the Americans occupied Montréal abandoning it in the spring after being defeated in Québec City.¹⁰⁵ The negotiations between the American revolutionaries and Britain resulted in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which determined the border between British Canada and the Americas. Though Indigenous lands were at the core of these negotiations, and Britain had recognized Indigenous self-determination in its alliance building and treaty making, as well as in the Indigenous titles and rights in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, Indigenous nations were left out of these negotiations. Britain agreed to give the United States large areas of land previously reserved for Indigenous peoples, breaking many earlier treaties, alliances and promises.

The last of the violent disputes between colonizing European nations and their factions was the War of 1812. The Mohawk nation made a strategic political decision to ally with the British to help fight off the American invaders in numerous engagements around Montréal.¹⁰⁶ The result of this win was a firm British hold on colonial power and the end of an era in which European powers sought political alliances with Indigenous nations in order to defeat their competitors. This was one of several factors that

¹⁰³ Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*. P. 226

¹⁰⁴ RCAP, “Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: People to People, Nation to Nation - Highlights.”

¹⁰⁵ Sprague, “American Revolution - Invasion of Canada.”

¹⁰⁶ Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*. P. 50

dramatically changed the relationships between Britain, settlers and Indigenous nations in the early 1800s in much of what would become eastern and central Canada.¹⁰⁷ The population mix was also shifting in favour of the settlers: more settlers were arriving with the intention of making these lands their new home. During this time European infectious diseases also continued to devastate Indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁸ The fur trade was in decline, and a new economy was emerging, one that required land—for timber, minerals and agriculture—rather than labour and land-based knowledge from Indigenous peoples. Along with these shifts, the ideology of European superiority was becoming more widespread and deeply embedded and provided the rationale for a widespread shift towards British and, later, Canadian policies of domination and assimilation, rather than alliance and partnership.¹⁰⁹ This rising narrative of European superiority and Indigenous inferiority corresponded to settlers’ and English colonial administrators’ increasing tendency “to see the Indians as an obstacle, blocking the growth of burgeoning farming communities.”¹¹⁰

Pierre Monciau’s grandchild, my ancestor Antoine Desormeaux, was born in 1781 and lived his adult life in the context of these changing political, economic and cultural dynamics. In a reflection of both the shift in settler livelihoods towards agriculture and forestry and the increasing settler population, his son Ambroise Desormeaux moved from the Montréal-Laval area to join the beginnings of farming and logging in the seigneurie of La Petite-Nation, what later became known as the towns of Papineau and Montebello, along the north side of the Ottawa River. This river is known as Kichisipi (“big river”) to the Algonquin peoples of the Anishnaabeg, whose homelands run the length of Kichisipi, from its headwaters in north-central Québec to its outlet near Montréal, and the many lakes and rivers that feed into it.¹¹¹ The Anishinaabeg Algonquin sacred stories, like those of the Stó:lō *S̓xwōxwíyam*, are rooted in and inseparable from the landscape of the land, such as the widely known story about the trickster-transformer *wiskedjak* pursuing a

¹⁰⁷ RCAP, “Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: People to People, Nation to Nation - Highlights.”

¹⁰⁸ RCAP.

¹⁰⁹ RCAP.

¹¹⁰ Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Montreal*. P. 34

¹¹¹ Morrison, “Algonquin History in the Ottawa River Watershed.”

beaver.¹¹² This story can be read for the many spiritual and moral teachings it offers, as a national history of the Algonquin nation and as a record of the natural history of the Great Lakes basin and Kichisipi River in the aftermath of the last great ice age.¹¹³

Ambroise Desormeaux was moving to join other settlers in the project of transforming this part of Anishinaabeg Algonquin lands, an area of the Wawaskarini tribe, also known as the People of the Deer. An early recognition by the French that these lands belonged to the Wawaskarini tribe is evidenced in their name for the seigneurie, “La Petite Nation,” which is the French translation for the Wawaskarini whose traditional lands are along the Rouge, Petite-Nation and Lievre Rivers immediately west of Montréal.¹¹⁴ The name “La Petite-Nation” was given to the seigneurie as early as 1674, when the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Québec, Francois de Laval, was granted this seigneurie under the King of France, Louis XIV. The land grant for the La Petite-Nation seigneurie covered 635 km², five leagues (~25km) along the Kichisipi (Ottawa) River shore and five leagues (~25km) inland. Seigneurs such as Laval were influential colonists and often military officials, leading merchants, senior government officials, religious orders or wealthy men in France.¹¹⁵ Although granting this seigneurie, the king later prohibited settlement as too risky, too difficult to defend, with settlement potentially interfering with the Indigenous alliances that facilitated fur trade along the Kichisipi.¹¹⁶

In 1803, Joseph Papineau, a notary and politician, became the new seigneur of La Petite-Nation, built a manor house and began to encourage white settlers—known as habitants or censitaires under the French feudal system—to come build homes, farm and settle on this land, and pay him the required taxes and fees in return.¹¹⁷ In 1817, when the seigneurie transferred to Joseph’s son, Louis-Joseph Papineau, the population of this seigneurie was 300, and by 1850 it was 3,289.¹¹⁸ Ambroise Desormeaux and Angelique Chalifoux married in 1845 in Papineau and were likely among those occupying the land, building homes, farming and helping to establish a sawmill. Together they had seven

¹¹² Also spelled Wisakedjak, and also called Nenabojo or Nanabush, as well as other spellings.

¹¹³ Morrison, “Algonquin History in the Ottawa River Watershed.” p. 3-6

¹¹⁴ Morrison. P. 14

¹¹⁵ Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada*.

¹¹⁶ “Manoir-Papineau National Historic Site of Canada: The Seigneurie of La Petite-Nation.”

¹¹⁷ Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada*. P. 63-77. payments for use of the land, fishing rights, wood and grain milling rights, among others taxes and payments.

¹¹⁸ “Manoir-Papineau National Historic Site of Canada: The Seigneurie of La Petite-Nation.”

children, one of whom is my great-great-grandfather, Napoleon Desormeaux, born 1851. A number of their children made their lives and grew their families in the Papineau/Montebello area. When the seigneurial system was formally abolished by the *Seigneurial Act of 1854* in the legislative assembly of the Province of Canada, tenants were permitted to claim rights to the land.¹¹⁹ Land ownership rights were spread among the settler population, likely including some of my Desormeaux ancestors, through this abolishment of the seigneurial system and the implementation of a new township system to open additional lands for colonization. At the same time, in 1857 the *Gradual Civilization Act* (followed by the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* [1869] and later consolidated into the *Indian Act* [1876]) came into force, legislating a paternalistic, racist and sexist assimilative agenda that sought to destroy Indigenous nationhood through restricting and criminalizing Indigenous cultural, spiritual, economic and political practices, establishing and moving Indigenous peoples onto reserves, defining who qualified as an Indian in the form of Indian status, and imposing foreign band council government systems.

As some of my Desormeaux family ancestors were likely gaining land rights, making a livelihood, growing their families and communities, and coming to understand Papineau as “home,” Anishinaabeg Algonquins were facing the imposition of repressive and racist laws that sought to control, assimilate and ultimately destroy their culture and nationhood. Today, there are ten federally recognized Algonquin First Nations/Indian Act bands, with a total population of approximately 8,000–10,000. Two of the largest, the Algonquins of Pitwakangan (at Golden Lake) and the Kitigan Zibi (River Desert) First Nations, are known to be the descendants of the Algonquin tribes that lived along the lower Kichisipi River drainage, who were forced to move to more northern Indian reserves in the mid 1800s as a result of displacement by European settler encroachments along the Kichisipi.¹²⁰ By the 1820s, settlers encroached more intensely on Kichisipi valley, farming and logging operations were established and expanded, and the Anishinaabeg Algonquins were increasingly treated by settlers and local authorities as

¹¹⁹ Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada*.

¹²⁰ Morrison, “Algonquin History in the Ottawa River Watershed.” P. 2

“squatters on their own land.”¹²¹ They resisted this encroachment and racist treatment, petitioning the Indian Department and in some cases requiring local settlers to make rental payments for their occupation of Algonquin lands.¹²² Many of the children of the displaced Algonquins now living at Pitwakangan were also taken to a federally funded Catholic residential school, where they suffered physical and sexual abuse and were punished for speaking Anishinaabemowin, poorly treated and fed, and cut off from family, community and culture.¹²³ These children would be the first of generations of Algonquins suffering from the intergenerational effects of emotional and physical abuse, with much of their language and cultural knowledge violently repressed and its intergenerational transmission severely interrupted. As Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson writes:

Residential schools were a strategy used by Canada to break the connection between Indigenous peoples and our lands, so the state could access the land for settlement and for natural resources. By taking our children and holding them hostage, the federal government truncated what Indigenous parents were willing to do to resist the most devastating aspects of colonialism. By breaking the intimate connection between children and their families, their culture, their language and their land, the state was attempting to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian society and eliminate barriers to natural resources and land. By removing children from Indigenous education systems, the state was hoping to eliminate Indigenous forms of governance and leadership.¹²⁴

These were the policies of assimilation and elimination that enabled my own white settler family and many others to established their homes, communities and livelihoods in the Kichisipi valley. To this day, the Anishinaabeg Algonquins have never signed a land treaty for the Kichisipi watershed or the remainder of their traditional territories.¹²⁵ The Anishinaabeg Algonquins continue to demand recognition of their rights and to assert their responsibilities within their homelands, engaging in language, cultural and political resurgence, including the long-standing blockade of mining and forestry by the Algonquins of Barrier Lake.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Morrison.

¹²² Morrison.

¹²³ “Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation Culture and History.”

¹²⁴ Simpson, “Land and Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations.”

¹²⁵ Morrison, “Algonquin History in the Ottawa River Watershed.” P. 36

¹²⁶ See Pasternak, “Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake Against the Federal Land Claims Policy”; “Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council.”

As in many Indigenous nations, this resistance and resurgence is mounted in spite of and, in response to, widespread social suffering—a testament to Indigenous resilience in the face of the intergenerational and ongoing effects of settler colonial policies used to establish control, occupy land and steal resources. A 2011 Assembly of First Nations “well-being factsheet” paints the picture with a few comparison statistics: one in four children in Indigenous communities live in poverty, almost double the Canadian national average; suicide rates among First Nations youths are five to seven times higher; life expectancy of First Nations people is five to seven years less; infant mortality is 1.5 times higher; tuberculosis rates on reserves are 31 times the national average; and First Nations youths are more likely to end up in jail than to graduate high school.¹²⁷ These inequalities are experienced intimately; they are embodied realities that affect day-to-day life for Indigenous families. These disparities in well-being, the differences in daily realities between Indigenous people and settlers, are traceable to the racist and genocidal legislation, policies and practices beginning in the mid to late 1800s. The contemporary result is widespread social suffering, poverty and disease among Indigenous peoples, in comparison to widespread wealth, well-being and opportunities among white settlers.

As Taiaiake Alfred argues, part of the radical imagination settlers need to engage with involves finding our own place and that of our families in the story of North American colonization. In his words, “This will tell you what you need to do to make amends for that history and point the way to grounding yourself as a true person of this place.”¹²⁸ This is part of my family’s place, my place, in the story of colonization in North America. Today, while none of my immediate or extended family live in the Papineau area, most continue to occupy and make their homes and lives in Anishinaabeg lands. What are the ways in which I can bring this story to my family, support them to sit in the discomfort it evokes, and ask ourselves, as individuals and families: What are our responsibilities to be part of movements to stop ongoing injustice and to address these historical wrongs through reparations and restitution? Can I, and we, begin to shape a next chapter in our family story, and in the story of Canada, that would enact the belief and self-understanding that we are compassionate, honourable and generous people?

¹²⁷ Adelson, “The Embodiment of Inequity: Health Disparities in Aboriginal Canada”; Wilson and Macdonald, “The Income Gap Between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada.”

¹²⁸ Alfred, “What Is Radical Imagination?” P. 8

These questions and the pathways they lead towards derive from a specifically radical telling of our family history, one committed to colonial exposure. Yet, many versions of history can be told, including the ways in which we narrate our own family histories. It is not only a personal historical consciousness we need to nurture in ourselves, but one that actively situates our historical narratives in relation to the narratives of Indigenous dispossession, displacement and oppression. Without this critical approach, there are many ways in which reconnections with our histories can become new pathways towards settler practices of erasure.

White Settler Indigenization in Canada: Erasure via Métis-ization

“Why are you interested in this family history?” my mom’s distant cousin asks as we speak for the first time on the phone. Not sure where to begin or how far to go, I tell him I am studying the relationships between Indigenous peoples and white settlers. He replies excitedly, “Well you will want to know about your native ancestry then.” He tells me that our shared ancestor Ambroise Desormeaux married Angelique Chalifoux, “our native,” in 1845, and together they had several children, including a son, Napoleon, born in 1851, who was my great-great-grandfather. He had learned about Angelique’s identity from another distant relative, who had shared a photo of Ambroise and Angelique along with the story that she was Algonquin. He decided to take this photo to an anthropologist¹²⁹ to have her identity “verified,” and has since received a letter from this anthropologist to confirm the Indian ancestry and “spread the news” with the family:

I did communicate with your mother, I think she is like you—she loves nature, probably because of our ancestry eh? I come from northern Ontario and they all want to have their Métis cards there—but I don't think I want it, because I don't really need the extra money.

With one photo in hand, another distant relative’s recollections and an anthropologist’s approval, my relative’s narrative of a distant Algonquin ancestor in the family tree is translated into evidence of our family’s contemporary Indigenous identity. With no connections to community, language, culture and the responsibilities that these evoke, my relative’s appropriation of identity is based on racist concepts of blood as the measure of

¹²⁹ The anthropologist was identified as Serge Bouchard.

belonging. His narrative also evokes the stereotypes of the ecological Indian—“she loves nature, probably because of our ancestry”—and the lazy Indian who lives off the system (“I don’t really need the extra money”), at the same time appropriating an ancestral connection to land. In this story we are at once of the mythical, and long disappeared “real Indians” – noble and nature loving – and yet remain superior to the contemporary “Indians” defined by their dependency on government hand-outs. Beyond the stereotypes, the basic story of discovering a long-lost Indigenous ancestor and feeling—and perhaps claiming—Indigeneity for oneself is perhaps the starkest, most definitive example of a contemporary practice of erasure through settler indigenization.

So prolific is this settler claiming of native identity through a long-lost ancestor that Lakota scholar, Vine Deloria, Jr., named it the “native grandmother complex” and wondered about the psychological needs of the settler that are being met through this practice:

While a real Indian grandmother is probably the nicest thing that could happen to a child, why is a remote Indian princess grandmother so necessary for many whites? Is it because they are afraid of being classed as foreigners? Do they need some blood tie with the frontier and its dangers in order to experience what it means to be an American? Or is it an attempt to avoid facing the guilt they bear for the treatment of the Indian?¹³⁰

What Deloria called the native grandmother complex Tuck and Yang have named “settler nativism”—one of a number of potential “moves to innocence” in which “Indian blood” is used as a way for settlers to mark ourselves as blameless in the attempted eradication of Indigenous people. In doing so, we deflect our settler identity while continuing to enjoy settler privilege and occupy stolen land.

Among white settlers in Canada, one significant pathway towards settler Indigenization is through what Métis scholar Adam Gaudry calls the Métis-ization of Canada. On the one hand, this involves an assimilation of Métis history, politics, leadership and culture into Canadianness.¹³¹ In this case, white settlers tell a broader narrative in which the whole of Canada is founded on the “mixing” of the cultures, traditions, customs and laws of Indigenous and European peoples. Prominent public

¹³⁰ Deloria Jr, *Custer Died for Your Sins*. P. 3

¹³¹ Gaudry, “The Métis-Ization of Canada.”

figure and philosophical writer John Raulston Saul in his recent book *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* invites Canadians to “reimagine ourselves” as a Métis nation that is not only made up of many people of “mixed” ancestry but also the Aboriginal ideas of egalitarianism, a proper balance between individual and group, and a partiality for negotiation.¹³² In fact, Saul argues that we are far more Aboriginal than we are European, and our lack of recognition of this truth is keeping us from becoming a self-confident and progressive nation. This book received a great deal of media attention and public interest, in part due to Saul’s prominence but also potentially due to the seductive nature of the Métis narrative for the collective Canadian consciousness. Adam Gaudry has deconstructed Saul’s writing and the broader discourse on “Canadian Métisness” as a founding myth of Canada, arguing this colonial discourse distances Canada and Canadians from past attempts to assimilate Indigenous people, and instead calls for the assimilation of Canadians into a pan-Indigenous identity. By inverting the typical colonial impulse to Indigenous elimination through assimilation, the “we are you” narratives of settler indigenization achieve the same goal—erasure of unique Indigenous nationhood, self-determination and rights to land, as well as the very real colonial context in which Canadians and Indigenous peoples live. Gaudry also argues that this narrative subverts the already existing set of nation-to-nation treaty relationships that preserve the political independence and cultural integrity of both peoples.¹³³

In addition to this collective narrative of Canadian Métisness, Métis-ization also takes place by the direct claiming of Métis status by white settlers, drawing upon distant Indigenous ancestry, often upholding racialized notions of identity in the process. Claiming Métis status through distant Indigenous ancestry has gained momentum in recent decades as Métis gain political strength and recognition through advocacy and legal strategies, which have resulted in major Supreme Court of Canada decisions such as *R. vs. Powley [2003]* and *R. vs. Daniels [2016]*. In turn, these decisions have created speculation about federal government roles and responsibilities in recognizing and funding Métis organizations, leading to an on-the-ground increase in Métis memberships,

¹³² Saul, *A Fair Country*.

¹³³ Gaudry, “The Métis-ization of Canada.” P. 67

perhaps in part because of the perceived potential for rights and financial “benefits.”¹³⁴ These decisions have further complicated and undermined Métis concepts of identity by upholding the idea of “mixedness” as the criteria for Métis identity. Métis scholar Chris Anderson has argued that this commonly understood notion that Métis are “mixed blood” people with some Indian and some European ancestry is a “racialized misrecognition of the Métis” that undermines Métis nationhood.¹³⁵ This racialization “has been part of a larger set of colonial projects through which administrators have attempted to usurp all the Indigenous territories upon which settler colonial states such as Canada have been produced and legitimated and Indigenous peoples displaced and dispossessed.”¹³⁶ The defining of who is and isn’t a “status Indian” under the *Indian Act* is also at the centre of a Canadian racialization process that defines Indigenous identity based on blood quantum. Mi’kmaq scholars Pam Palmater and Bonita Lawrence, among other Indigenous scholars and political leaders, have argued extensively against this racist notion of identity and demonstrated its destructive effects on Indigenous nations, individuals and families.¹³⁷ Palmater’s analysis in her book *Beyond Blood* shows how the *Indian Act*’s status criteria contain descent-based rules akin to blood quantum that will lead to the extinguishment of First Nations as legal and constitutional entities, and are particularly discriminatory against women and their descendants.¹³⁸

Yet now as before, this colonial racialization of identity has the potential to further advantage white settlers in new ways by obscuring our benefits from historical and ongoing Indigenous dispossession and oppression, facilitating the continuation of an unjust colonial structure by making claims to Indigenous rights and lands, and by undermining Indigenous understandings of identity, nationhood and belonging. In practice, this takes place through white settlers, such as my relatives, claiming Métis identity through tenuous, distant Indigenous ancestry rather than practical or meaningful connection to community, culture, language and lands. New groups have emerged to serve these white settlers, claiming to represent Métis or non-status Indians. These groups

¹³⁴ Gaudry and Andersen, “Daniels v. Canada: Racialized Legacies, Settler Self-Indigenization and the Denial of Indigenous Peoplehood”; See for example: Purdy, “Officials Expect Flood of Metis Applications.”

¹³⁵ Andersen, *Metis*.

¹³⁶ Andersen. P. 11

¹³⁷ Palmater, *Beyond Blood*; Lawrence, “Real” Indians and Others.

¹³⁸ Palmater, *Beyond Blood*.

are fast gaining membership, as their criteria are such that no connection with a particular Indigenous community or nation is required—for example, the Red River Métis or Algonquin Anishinaabeg—but rather some genealogical evidence of any unspecified Indigenous ancestor.¹³⁹ These groups recruit people who have lacked a connection to an Indigenous community for many generations, in some cases reaching as far back as the 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁴⁰ As put by Gaudry and Andersen, “these new groups have clasped onto an idea of Indigenous identity largely at odds with Indigenous peoples’ self-understanding—that is, as particular peoples with a particular history and a self-determining capacity to govern, including the power to decide who is (and who is not) part of the people.”¹⁴¹

For Anderson, Métis is defined through “connection to a ‘national core’ historically located in Red River and in the shared memories of the territory, leaders, events, and culture that sustain the Métis people today.” Like Anderson’s understanding of Métis identity, critical Indigenous scholars have turned to a concept of peoplehood that centres around sacred histories and close relationships with ancestral lands and sacred sites, distinct ceremonial cycles, kinship networks, continuously evolving cultural traditions, and Indigenous languages.¹⁴² In my own contemporary extended Desormeaux family, any claim of Métis status based on a distant Algonquin ancestor undermines both Métis nationhood and the nationhood of the contemporary Algonquin Anishinaabeg peoples. As Gaudry and Andersen put it, if Canadians are serious about reconciliation, then “they also need to confront the many reimaginings-as-Indigenous” that put at risk what is “the most fundamental of Indigenous peoples’ rights: the right to determine who we are.”¹⁴³

The degree to which white settler narratives and practices of self-indigenization are also connected to a reassertion of the racialized superiority of white settlers and

¹³⁹ Gaudry and Andersen, “Daniels v. Canada: Racialized Legacies, Settler Self-Indigenization and the Denial of Indigenous Peoplehood.” For examples see Metis Federation of Canada and Mikinak de Montérégie

¹⁴⁰ Gaudry and Andersen.

¹⁴¹ Gaudry and Andersen. P. 25

¹⁴² Corntassel, “Who Is Indigenous? ‘Peoplehood’ and Ethnonationalist Approaches to Rearticulating Indigenous Identity”; Holm, Pearson, and Chavis, “Peoplehood”; Alfred and Corntassel, “Being Indigenous.”

¹⁴³ P. 29

legitimation of the theft and occupation of Indigenous lands comes further into focus when you consider the history of “mixing” and intermarriage between people of colour and Indigenous peoples. At the recommendation of Stó:lō historian Nax̱alhts’i, Sonny McHalsie, I interviewed Bill Chu, the founder of an organization called Canadians for Reconciliation based in Vancouver, which works among diverse non-Indigenous communities to educate people about historical and ongoing colonialism. Part of this historical education includes supporting research and public awareness about the early presence of Chinese people in Coast Salish lands and the large degree of cultural sharing, economic ties and intermarriage of these early Chinese immigrants with Indigenous peoples. Chinese people first arrived in 1778, a century before the railroad was built and before many European settlers arrived. As explained by Chinese-Canadian historian Henry Yu:

The irony is that the Chinese built the very means of transportation that allowed large numbers of migrants from the Atlantic coast to come to British Columbia and to begin displacing them and First Nations peoples. It is no coincidence that the 1885 Chinese head tax, designed to curb Chinese immigration to Canada, was passed at exactly the moment that the Chinese finished building the transcontinental railroad that brought workers in large numbers from the east coast. What these newly arriving Atlantic migrants in the late 19th and early 20th century saw when they stepped off the train in Vancouver was a province that already had Chinese migrants engaging in marriage alliances and trade relations all across British Columbia.¹⁴⁴

Bill Chu and Sonny McHalsie were interviewed for a *Globe and Mail* article on their joint work and further shared this history of alliances and intermarriages between Chinese and Stó:lō families. In McHalsie’s words,

A lot of Stó:lō families here have Chinese ancestry...My dad told me after the gold rush, the Chinese remained. They extracted gold off the river. The First Nations drove off white gold miners in what is known as the Fraser Canyon War, but the Chinese, based on their respectful relationship, carried on mining. The settlements of the Nlaka’pamux people and the Chinese miners are also intermingled. The architecture of their traditional pit houses seem to be mimicked in some of the Chinese settlements.¹⁴⁵

Bill Chu’s work is an example of continued contemporary relationship building between Indigenous peoples and Chinese-Canadian communities. For example, in 1996 Bill began

¹⁴⁴ Yu, “Global Migrants and the New Pacific Canada.” P. 1015

¹⁴⁵ Hunter, “A Forgotten History.”

receiving Indigenous students from Lil'wat First Nation to watch the Vancouver Chinese New Year Parade. After three years he obtained permission to invite Indigenous friends to participate as part of the parade. For 17 years it became an annual event which honors the dignity of Indigenous people publicly - not a rehearsed performance but a genuine celebration of another year of journeying with Indigenous Peoples. Bill Chu and his organization also hosted an historic banquet in 2004 to celebrate shared Chinese-Indigenous histories and relations.

While there is a long history of intermarriage and cultural sharing between Chinese and Indigenous peoples, there is no movement to recognize the descendants of these people as Métis or in any way Indigenous. With this comparison in mind, we must ask ourselves as white settlers: What is our motivation and drive for this claiming of Métis or “mixed” identity, and what is the outcome? Do our narratives and practices of identity support circumventing the need to build ethical and respectful relationships with the people whose lands we are occupying and those our ancestors occupied? This is not to say that we should deny naming distant Indigenous ancestors, but rather that we should ask ourselves: What is the motivation and effort of centring this in our re-narrations and practices of identity and belonging? Other practices of settler indigenization include settler adoption fantasies, the phenomenon of native wannabes, “playing Indian,” and appropriating Indigenous culture.¹⁴⁶ In each case, through becoming “a little bit more native,” we must challenge ourselves to ask what is driving us? Are we distancing ourselves from the reality of our past and ongoing participation in and benefit from the continued occupation and theft of Indigenous lands and resources? At an emotional level, are we escaping guilt, shame, and discomfort that may emerge in witnessing the suffering of Indigenous peoples as a result of colonial oppression and dispossession and our own corresponding attainment of white settler privilege?¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ See Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*; Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor”; Deloria, *Playing Indian* for discussions of settler indigenization practices.

¹⁴⁷ We may also enact practices of settler indigenization as a means by which to attempt to address the cultural and spiritual emptiness within mainstream white settler colonial culture, as I will speak more to in Chapter 6 (Narrative 3).

Towards Co-existence with Discomfort

Practices of colonial exposure, contextualizing our lives and those of our ancestors within historical and ongoing white settler colonialism, point us towards opportunities for intervention and transformation as individuals, families and communities.¹⁴⁸ They also point us in the direction of relationship building with Indigenous peoples with whom our contemporary lives and historical ancestral lineages are interwoven. These relationships are the basis of solidarity, of co-resistance to ongoing contemporary colonialism, of enacting our responsibilities to make reparations and restitution for historical wrongs and injustices. They are also the spaces in which emerge the prefigurative possibilities of co-existing here on these lands in peaceful and sustainable ways. The more I expose my personal, family and community embeddedness in colonialism and check my own tendencies towards erasing settler–Indigenous differences, the more difficult it is to go about daily life without a sense of discomfort and unease. I recognize my existence is deeply shaped by another’s suffering and loss, a fact of my reality, identity and existence that is profoundly disorienting. My sense of not only my own but also my families’ and communities’ home and belonging, my sense of goodness, the values I claim to hold, is called into question. As put by Tuck and Yang, “Directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is a difficult reality for settlers to accept. The weight of this reality is uncomfortable; the misery of guilt makes one hurry toward any reprieve.”¹⁴⁹ This discomfort creates a desire for escape, a “move to innocence,” where I might re-emerge as good and well-intentioned. These escapes avoid the work of looking deeply at and intervening with my own white settler colonial practices and those of my families and communities and escaping the challenging work of reaching out to Indigenous peoples from a place of understanding how much of our lives have been shaped by their losses.

Even my desire and impulse to act, to “make things right” can also be an escape from the difficult work of existing in this discomfort. As critical race, feminist and queer theory scholar Sarah Ahmed articulates, the impulse to “do something” to address injustice can be at times a way of escaping discomfort and therefore blocking the

¹⁴⁸ Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*. P. 13

¹⁴⁹ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” P. 9

necessary and transformative power of witnessing.¹⁵⁰ In the context of white people learning about racism and colonialism, she points out that there is often an immediate response of “What are white people to do?” Not only does this potentially re-centre on white agency, but it also potentially blocks a deeper transformative listening, one in which the white subject sees how they are implicated in the spaces they currently inhabit, in the unfinished present. By moving quickly from present to future, this “place(s) the white subject ‘outside’ that critique in the present of the hearing. In other words, the desire to act, to move, or even to move on, can stop the message ‘getting through.’”¹⁵¹

When we seek reprieve, finding ways to escape or move on, not only does this message not “get through” at a deeper level, but we remove ourselves from the transformative power of this discomfort, for the messages of these emotions and anxieties are the pathways back to our humanity. Can we find the strength to lean into the disorienting anxieties, guilt, anger, fear, shame and sadness? As we find ways to coexist with these emotional disturbances, can they be a place from which we may become uncertain, humble, haunted and therefore open to seeing the world and ourselves differently—and, in turn, relating differently? As Ahmed argues, “the work of exposure requires that white subjects inhabit the critique, *with its lengthy duration*, and to recognise the world that is re-described by the critique as one in which they live.”¹⁵² Post-colonial feminist theorist Chandra Mohanry also speaks to a non-colonizing solidarity based on an “unsettled relationality,”¹⁵³ and Eve Tuck in a collaboration with artist C. Ree entitled “The Glossary of Haunting” calls us to stay present with the haunting, to come to co-exist with the “relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society’s assurances of innocence and reconciliation.”¹⁵⁴ From this place of discomfort induced and re-induced by relentless remembering, witnessing and hearing, and by persistently contextualizing our lives within historical and contemporary colonialism, can we come to and exist within relationships with Indigenous peoples, and be open to living up to our infinite responsibility to this truth?

¹⁵⁰ Ahmed, “Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism.”

¹⁵¹ Ahmed.

¹⁵² Ahmed.

¹⁵³ Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anti-Capitalist Struggles.”

¹⁵⁴ Tuck and Ree, “A Glossary of Haunting.” P. 642

Yet, staying present with this discomfort, this haunting, remaining in and returning to exposure in its lengthy duration, and walking towards, even nurturing relationships of discomfort, an unsettled relationality, does not come easily. Why? For one, we are socially conditioned in mainstream white settler society to avoid discomfort. We are conditioned to seek happiness and pleasure, and to bring happiness and pleasure to our families and friends, failing to see the deep ways that personal growth and transformation are often brought about through discomfort. My own recognition of how deeply this avoidance of discomfort is valued and preached in mainstream culture came through the cultural mythology and teachings around childbirth. The general approach of the mainstream medical community is *Why suffer?*, not considering the question of how the discomfort and pain might actually guide a woman's body during birth. Embracing the pain and sensations in my own body during childbirth allowed me to remain deeply connected with where I was at, how I needed to move, and what my body needed to do to open. This experience later became a touchstone for the power of discomfort as a guide to my own deepest truths, those that will liberate me.

Discomfort can be powerfully revealing, and learning to inhabit this discomfort, to coexist with it, is itself a transformative pathway towards other ways of being. This is a lesson I struggle with deeply when it comes to sharing these practices and narratives of colonial exposure with white settler communities—something I know is a crucial intervention into everyday practices that nurture and perpetuate the colonial relationship. I also know this exposure has the potential to support their own liberation. Yet, I feel anxious about how my relatives will feel reading this, about how my neighbours and friends might react when I present to them the history of the lands we live on; I imagine their discomfort and emotional reactions. I feel uncomfortable with the feelings my own daughter may express as I attempt to walk with her in the world in a way that lives up to our responsibilities and to this truth. Further, as a woman socialized into a patriarchal and sexist culture that often vilifies women for speaking truth, I have been deeply trained into both silence and practices that attempt to please others, to bring them comfort. What is the work I need to do to face my own fear and discomfort in speaking truths that not only trouble me but unsettle and disturb others?

This question is deeply connected to the broader question of what we need to transform in ourselves to work towards ethical relationships with Indigenous people and the land. Engaging in continuous colonial exposure as individuals and among our families and communities requires emotional and spiritual strength and maturity, as does developing relationships across difference, especially in the context of histories and contemporary realities of violence, oppression and entrenched modes of domination and exploitation. We cannot do the deep and ongoing work of colonial exposure, witnessing, and accepting our responsibilities to this truth in the day-to-day reality of relationships, without attending to the state of our emotional and spiritual selves. Learning to co-exist with discomfort is tied to the work of learning to relate in human-to-human ways with humility and compassion, and to undermining, through spiritual growth, our attachment to the materialism that inhibits our sharing and generosity.

Chapter 5: Releasing the Emotional Roots of White Settler Colonial Racism and Oppression

Contemporary Colonial Racism: Barriers to Human-to-Human Relationships

On a gloomy, grey afternoon, Sisaqiweltel, Ernie Crey, and I sat down and shared lunch in my home. I had the chance to work in the same office as Ernie for the Stó:lō Tribal Council a few years back and see how he approaches his work with a big picture, strategic and pragmatic view. Tribal Chief and current elected leader of Cheam, his work spans many areas, including protecting Stó:lō fishing rights and working towards justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women. He is also co-author of a book on the historical and contemporary abduction of Indigenous children by the Canadian state.¹ When we last met, he filled me in on his master's thesis work in conflict resolution, focusing on fisheries battles on the Stó:lō River, using the ideas of transactional psychology. He often speaks to non-Indigenous groups about colonialism and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. I knew he would have a lot to share about understanding and transforming xwelítem ways among white settlers. I shared with him one of my guiding research questions: What do settlers need to learn and unlearn to work towards ethical relationships with Stó:lō people?

EC: This is how I think I'll approach it. There is, if I mentioned, a Canadian Narrative, a Canadian story, and yeah it is captured in the popular literature, in the past it was captured in social studies courses, in other words in a formal education setting. Captured in books and movies and this is what I mean about popular culture. I mean including movies and books and comic books and the like would reflect back to Canadians what Aboriginal people are all about. The popular narrative was, and although it is changing slightly, it is still largely one that Aboriginal people were sort of Paleolithic folk, sort of semi-nomadic if not nomadic, and unscientific people, a superstitious people, hunters-gatherers, people who chipped rocks, made spear points and arrow heads. If it were the prairies you would be living in a teepee and out here you would be living in a kwickwillie (pithouse) or a longhouse. But these were people caught in another age all together, the stone age. I think that is a big part of the Canadian narrative and it's part of the story that is very much alive and well at a deep psychological, emotional level in Canadians. Even in those that are considered to be kind and understanding, I think it is very much in there and present within even those folks.

¹ Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from Our Embrace*.

People that we have befriended and people with a lot of formal education. I think that is just part of who they are because that is how they were raised. That is not an invitation for them to feel ashamed of it or guilty about it, it's just to acknowledge it and then maybe they can do something about it. I am never one to play therapist to the larger society. I'm not interested in that.

RH: Do you think there is a need for therapy for the larger society though? I mean, not for you to do but just in general?

EC: There is. And if I'm wrong, and this is what I put to non-Aboriginal people... I can be invited to speak for social clubs in Chilliwack, anywhere in the valley, or province, professional organizations of different types, teachers, mental health specialists, social workers. I've spoke to conferences of psychiatrists, on this type of thing, you know. I'm going into my 43rd year of working in this field, they're all guided by this narrative, this perception of Aboriginal people and at times some people have denied that this is their perception, that it has ever been their perception, and I always call them on it. It is very much alive, it is very much there, and I get down to, as it were, face to face with these folks. For instance, their attitudes are betrayed in this way. I'll say to them, when is the last time you've had an Aboriginal person over for dinner at your place? When is the last time you have included, let's say a Stó:lō person, over for dinner at your place? When have you included a Stó:lō in your social circle? When has your family gone on a holiday with a Stó:lō family, camping, hiking? When was the last time that happened? Has it ever happened? Do you really have a relationship with Stó:lō people? And if you don't, why not? Well, don't give me the statistical stuff like there are only 7000 of you and not enough to go around.

RH: Do people say that?

EC: Yeah, if I only knew one I would [laughing]. This is a good measure of where things are really at. And, if you are not having them over for dinner, why not? Does this not betray an attitude, you're going to tell me you just hadn't thought of it, it didn't occur to you? And, even if that were the case that tells me something too. But why have you not included them in your social circle? Yeah, sure maybe you met them at a town hall meeting, or Steven Point or somebody; Some notable Stó:lō came and gave a talk and you shook his or her hand. Now there are some non-Aboriginal people who have done it but the vast majority of people in Chilliwack living right here in the heart of Stó:lō country where there's 15 local bands, sometimes these non-Aboriginal suburbs abut a reserve, non-Aboriginal towns, parts of Chilliwack abut a reserve.

RH: They are neighbors really.

EC: You can see their kids going to and from school. Have you ever wondered why your children haven't had a Stó:lō child over after school to play video games, go to the PNE together, do something social together? Why is it anytime

we try to improve this relationship in the communities there has to be like a Stó:lō day to which you are invited, and through that kind of arrangement this relationship is mediated. While it is not a relationship, you don't have a relationship with Stó:lō people, you don't. They are around and some of the things that they have, like the reserves, you can't avoid bumping into them, or knowing that the communities they live in and the special relationship they have with the federal government, living on reserves and the Indian Act, and all these rights that they say they have and so forth, you are aware of these things but beyond that kind of stuff you really don't know the Stó:lō people, you don't.

RH: So what would you call this?

EC: They don't accept Stó:lō people socially. The narrative that I spoke about is still there very much alive. To put a really fine point and a really blunt point on it, and it's not because I'm a negative person either, is that if I'm at a workshop or a conference and ask white people to tell me what they believe the stereotypes about Aboriginal people are. Why do you suppose they know the stereotypes? If I ask you what the stereotypes are about Stó:lō people or Aboriginal people, what do you think they are?

RH: The lazy stereotype, the violent stereotype, the backwards, stuck in the past, the drinking.

EC: They drink, their lazy, they can't hold down a job, you can't rely on them, their superstitious, their dirty, yep, this is what I'm talking about. And I'm not saying that every white person...

RH: It's like a soup we're living in.

EC: It's there and it's programmed in. That's what's underneath this absence of a real relationship between the white community in this town and Aboriginal people. And I told you a story earlier about guys active in the sport fishery will come up to me and shake my hand and smile and say what a wonderful guy I am and the job I'm doing and glad of this and glad of that. But, when they don't think I'm in ear shot they are talking about this image of Aboriginal people... "who's that chief guy, Chief somebody or whoever it was, can you imagine them, we all know they are nothing but a bunch of thieving, poaching guys and DFO [Department of Fisheries and Oceans] could catch them if they went out there any Saturday. We all know this and these people show up at our door trying to sell us fish, everybody knows that they're poachers, and you know we know they don't work and they are all on welfare, they don't look after their kids, and I know a social worker who takes their kids every weekend, and blah blah blah"... These are all the things that they talk about. Why else do I know this? Because I grew up in their home, right. I don't have to imagine it. Again it is not that each and every non-Aboriginal person and family is like that but broadly speaking they are that way, and that's the way. And so, that is what is underneath and sort of

guides and informs the interactions between the Stó:lō community and the white community, it's that narrative.²

Crey's emphasis on the endurance of what he calls the "Canadian narrative" of racist stereotypes, and the denigration, dehumanization and social distancing that white settlers enact towards Stó:lō as a result, was emphasized by other Stó:lō mentors I spoke with. It corresponds with research that reveals the extent of ongoing contemporary racism against Indigenous peoples across Canada³ and specifically in British Columbia,⁴ racism that at its heart relies on anti-Indigenous stereotypes that simplistically characterize Indigenous people according to inferior qualities within the moral code of white settler colonial society. Many of these stereotypes have endured from early colonial times to the present. In their endurance, however, the understanding or justification proposed for these characteristics has shifted from a rationale about the biological inferiority of Indigenous peoples to one about cultural inferiority. For example, historian Elizabeth Furniss has studied the contemporary everyday relations between Euro-Canadian townspeople and people of the Secwepemc and Dakelh (Carrier) nations in the town of Williams Lake and found that racial stereotypes are increasingly, though not always, reframed as "cultural" characteristics. She writes that it is not uncommon for white settlers in Williams Lake to equate the culture of Aboriginal peoples with the culture of poverty, substance abuse, and dependence and to characterize Indigenous people accordingly.⁵ Rather than understand occurrences of alcoholism, abuse or poverty as manifestations of social crisis and suffering caused by intergenerational residential school trauma, structural oppression and colonialism, they characterize them as inherent parts of Aboriginal culture since before European arrival.⁶

Critical race feminist scholar Sherene Razack has named how this shift towards explicitly cultural characterizations of the "inferiority" of racialized peoples "thrives in a social climate that is officially pluralist," such as multiculturalism in Canada. In this

² Interview with Ernie Crey, October 13, 2012

³ Loppie, Reading, and de Leeuw, "Aboriginal Experiences with Racism and Its Impacts"; Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye*; Razack, Smith, and Thobani, *States of Race*.

⁴ Harding, "Historical Representations of Aboriginal People in the Canadian News Media"; Furniss, *The Burden of History*.

⁵ Furniss, *The Burden of History*. P. 108

⁶ Furniss.

climate, “we speak more of cultural and ethnic differences and less of race and class exploitation and oppression.”⁷ This is a context wherein many white settlers believe and understand themselves to be not racist, while at the same time continuing to relate to Indigenous peoples, as well as people of colour more broadly, through racist stereotypes and narratives. An enduring white settler self-narrative of reason and fairness in itself requires that settler culture deny its own racism. Invoking reason—especially in the legal context—implies equality before the law, and therefore the system itself cannot be racist since it purports to recognize no differences among the individuals who stand before it. It is a denial of racism, couched in terms of tolerance and equality.⁸

Later in our conversation, Ernie Crey compared the Canadian narrative, the basic constellation of stereotypes about Indigenous people, to “a streaming video” that white settlers plug in to. In Ernie’s words, if you don’t begin to loosen this plug, “you just live in the narrative, it’s just streaming through your mind and then to follow it along a bit when you see an ‘Indian’ the narrative trips in and starts flowing.” This racism shapes the colonial relationship—and resulting social separation—of Indigenous and white settler people. We cannot form the kinds of ethical, human-to-human relationships that prefigure and create the possibilities for the work of co-resistance, restitution and reparations while plugged into this constantly streaming video. Rather, our psychological and emotional attachment to this narrative directly harms Indigenous people every day as they experience interpersonal racism and the institutional discrimination and oppression that this narrative and way of being among white settlers creates, supports and upholds. Experiencing and resisting this racism has tangible direct effects on all aspects of Indigenous individual, family and community life and well-being.⁹ Here, I attempt to explore and share the ways in which our attachment to dehumanizing racist narratives also causes our own pain and limits our own abilities to relate with authenticity and compassion.

For Indigenous people there is a great risk in opening up to the possibility of social relationships with white settlers, given not only the broader colonial context of lies

⁷ Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye*. P. 60.

⁸ Harding, “Historical Representations of Aboriginal People in the Canadian News Media.” P. 229

⁹ Loppie, Reading, and de Leeuw, “Aboriginal Experiences with Racism and Its Impacts”; Adelson, “The Embodiment of Inequity: Health Disparities in Aboriginal Canada”; Reading and Wien, “Health Inequalities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal People’s Health.”

and breaking of trust, the lineage and inheritance white settlers carry with us, but also and perhaps more immediately and intimately the daily realities of interpersonal racism. Our attachment to racist narratives and oppressive behaviours towards Indigenous people as white settlers is, like our lack of knowledge about colonial history and the ways in which this has shaped our privileges, a significant barrier to any kind of authentic ethical and mutual relationships. As put by Sakej Ward,

I am not going to be in a relationship with anybody that insists they are superior to me, that insists that they have the right to control, they have sovereignty over me, they insist because of our race they have the right to take away my nation, my land, my kids, the only relationship we are going to have is a hostile one. So we have to think about how does that change?¹⁰

Ernie Crey's message is clear: white settlers need to reject this racist "Canadian narrative" and transform the emotional and psychological aspects of our being that drive our tendency to "plug" into this narrative if we are to learn to relate in authentic ways with Stó:lō people, to be able to form meaningful human-to-human social relationships. Ernie Crey is also asking that we accept, as white settlers generally, that we are all to some extent attached to racist narratives. From this opening place of acceptance rather than denial, can we put aside feelings of shame and guilt long enough to ask ourselves why, to become curious, to consider what it is that keeps us deeply attached? What is the emotional and psychological plug, and how might we intervene with this plug?

Unconscious Roots of Racism: from Ignorance to Neurosis

For the Ts'elxéyeqw people, Cultus Lake is a spiritually potent and sacred place, sometimes also known by the same name as an old Ts'elxweyeqw village at north end of the lake called Swí:lhcha.¹¹ Many of the mountains, forests and creeks surrounding the lake are also places of significance culturally, economically and politically for Ts'elxweyeqw people. The contemporary Ts'elxweyeqw community of Th'ewá:lí is situated between the Ts'elxweyeqw River and the north shores of the lake. This north shore of the lake is also the area that has been most heavily developed by white settlers

¹⁰ Interview with Sakej Ward and Melody Andrews, November 16, 2012.

¹¹ Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. P. 639-640 describes Swí:lhcha as both the name of Cultus Lake and the village at Cultus Lake near Hatchery Creek. However, in the Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas Swí:lhcha is only used to refer to the settlement and no other name is given for Cultus Lake – See Plate 45C (p. 139).

into the Village of Cultus Lake and various recreational facilities and beaches. To the vast majority of settlers, Cultus Lake is perceived as a large playground for outdoor recreational activities, a backyard adventure land for those who live locally, and only a short drive from many places in the Lower Mainland for those looking for a quick escape. Some of these recreationists feel that it is their right to drive, and often speed, through the community of Th'ewá:lí as a shorter or alternate route to the lake. As they take their short-cut to the lake, they are trespassing on contemporary reserve lands, lands that are a shrunken piece of the much larger lands set aside by Governor James Douglas, and lands where in original agreements, Stó:lō were assured they would be free from disturbance by settlers.¹² In 2014, the Th'ewá:lí community decided to put up a gate to prevent this unwanted traffic through their community, closing it only on weekends. As a result, they faced a barrage of angry, racist comments from inconvenienced recreationists and beachgoers reasserting their sense of entitlement, their assumed rights and privileges to get to “their” lake however they want.¹³

This was a blatant, public and obvious expression of anti-Indigenous racism, the kind of racism that many progressive settlers condemn, as did the journalist who wrote about it in the local *Chilliwack Times*.¹⁴ It is this kind of racism that often gets blamed on ignorance. Certainly a portion of the racist reaction of these recreationists could be attributed to ignorance about colonial history, a lack of knowledge of the injustice at the roots of how non-Indigenous people (especially white settlers) came to hold the privileges we do, the promises that were made, many of which were broken, to create the possibility of our existence here. Ignorance about colonial history might explain their denial of the rights of Th'ewá:lí people to determine who can and cannot enter their community. An aspect of this racism could also be attributed to ignorance about the many complex, unique and diverse characteristics that make up individual Indigenous people and widely varying Indigenous communities, nations and cultures. Gaining this knowledge and exposure reveals stereotypes as deeply simplistic, objectifying and

¹² Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. See chapter 4: “A Legacy of Broken Promises” P. 53-86.

¹³ Henderson, “Opinion: Some Visitors to Cultus Feel Entitled to Trespass”; Feinberg, “Tempers Flare as Drivers Look for Alternate Route out of Cultus Lake”; Feinberg, “Locked Gate near Cultus Lake Needed to Keep the Peace on Soowahlie Road.”

¹⁴ Henderson, “Opinion: Some Visitors to Cultus Feel Entitled to Trespass.”

erroneous narratives, dehumanizing caricatures that diminish the depth and breadth of the person, community or nation.

When ignorance is named as the root of this anti-Indigenous racism, we look to education as the key to addressing it. This education includes learning about Stó:lō history, colonial history and the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, about white settler privileges gained through dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples. This education also makes space for and shares the diverse, unique and complex stories and experiences that express the humanity of Indigenous people, countering simplistic, denigrating stereotypes. These are immensely important interventions into colonialism, and colonial racism specifically, interventions that many Indigenous people and organizations are leading, whether in more formal, coordinated efforts, or in day-to-day interactions with non-Indigenous people.¹⁵ The previous chapter (4), on colonial exposure, is a reflection of my own efforts to contribute to this education by educating myself about the colonial history of the lands I live on and the lands connected with my own family histories, exposing the ways in which white settler privilege is interwoven with the realities of dispossession, oppression and forced dependency in Indigenous communities and the resulting social suffering. Sharing throughout my writing what I have come to learn from Stó:lō people throughout our relationships is also a way of witnessing and honouring the value of diverse, unique and complex Stó:lō humanities. Contributing to this work as a white settler involves educating oneself and other settlers, and supporting the creation of spaces in which Indigenous people can share and express this history and who they are. This education is a critical intervention undermining the

¹⁵ A few contemporary examples that have been a part of my own learning and experience include: The work of activists such as Larry Commodore to organize and speak at public events sharing the history of S'ólh Téméxw and the history of relationships between Stó:lō and white settler colonial governments. The work of Wenona Hall, Laura Wee Láy Láq, Shirley Hardman, Gwen Point and others educating in and out of their classrooms at the University of the Fraser Valley, truth-telling about history, and breaking down stereotypes as Indigenous woman in and beyond the spaces of academia. The work of Ernie Crey presenting to non-Indigenous professional organizations, churches and charitable groups, and intervening with mainstream media by educating journalists and journalism students about the colonial context in which they are reporting. Stó:lō Nation Tourism department has also for the past number of years hosted regular events called the "Cultural Experience Series" in which the public is invited to come learn about and experience aspects of Stó:lō culture. This work includes the committed passion of Stó:lō artists, singers, and performers, for example, Carrielynn Victor, Inez Point, Laura Wee Láy Láq, Darwin and Francine Douglas, and the many children who participate in the Semoya Dance Company to share the many aspects of Stó:lō culture and humanity.

colonial stereotypes and exposing people to the truth about colonial history, contemporary realities and Indigenous humanities.

Yet importantly, this education is only as powerful as our ability to listen—to truly open ourselves in all aspects of our being, to hear and be transformed by this truth-telling and sharing of Indigenous humanity. To the extent that white settlers experience this education, formally or informally, as an intellectual process of unlearning, it only partially addresses what Ernie Crey describes as the deep emotional and psychological attachment to the Canadian narrative. If education is the route away from racism, why do well-educated people—those Ernie Crey describes as kind and sympathetic do-gooders who know at least some aspects of the colonial history, understand the causes of social suffering present in Indigenous communities, and have been exposed to experiences and narratives that reveal the humanity and complexity of Indigenous people—continue to plug into the Canadian narrative?

Critical race, feminist and queer theory scholar Sarah Ahmed writes about the elitism/classism that drives a presumption, inherent to the discourse of tolerance, that racism is all about ignorance, and education is the answer.¹⁶ This assumption allows racism to be understood as what the working classes (or other less literate others) do, allowing those more privileged in their access to education to in turn assume themselves to be less likely to be racist. I began to ask myself, as a white, middle-class, educated woman: In what ways has this implicit “racism as ignorance” assumption allowed me to escape deeply questioning and bringing into focus the racism within my own daily thoughts, expression and behaviours? Further, mainstream European-derived forms of education tend to favor intellectual rather than spiritual and emotional learning and growth. Therefore, an assumption that education is the answer among white settlers likely contains within it an implicit focus on intellectual learning. I begin to wonder to what extent my own understanding and journey of unlearning racism has been a predominantly intellectual one.

My conversation with Ernie Crey was humbling; he was speaking to me as a well-meaning, well-educated white settler, calling me to deeply listen to his words from a personal place and offering me a starting point. His starting point is one in which I accept

¹⁶ Ahmed, “Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism.”

the deep emotional and psychological roots that grip me and all white settlers in an unconscious and irrational attachment to what he calls the Canadian narrative. As Crey puts it,

I think that [the stereotypes and narrative of Indigenous inferiority] is a big part of the Canadian narrative and its part of the story that is very much alive and well at a deep psychological, emotional level in Canadians. Even in those that are considered to be kind and understanding, I think it is very much in there and present within even those folks. People that we have befriended and people with a lot of formal education. I think that is just part of who they are because that is how they were raised. That is not an invitation for them to feel ashamed of it or guilty about it, it's just to acknowledge it and then maybe they can do something about it.

If I begin from the place Ernie Crey has offered and try to sit with the discomfort of any guilt or shame that arises with this acceptance, can I bear witness to it, unravel even a piece of it, and perhaps “do something about it”? Beginning with the assumption that at times I plug into this Canadian narrative, can I become curious about what is going on emotionally and psychologically when I do? How has this tendency towards “plugging in” been socialized as much as the narrative itself? What is it that makes the plug so hard to pull out and keep out?

In this questioning, I am moving further into a self-acceptance that my shaping into a white settler subjectivity in the Canadian colonial context is as much about the shaping of my conscious as it is about unconscious thoughts, processes, feelings and desires and the behaviours they nurture. As put by Kelly Oliver in her recent work *The Colonization of Psychic Space*, we must “critically examine not only our conscious motives and reasons for our actions and values but also our unconscious drives and affects that affect, even govern if not determine, those very actions and values.”¹⁷ The task I take on becomes one of attempting to understand and release even a piece of these unconscious drives and affects that shape the psychic dynamics of my expressions of racism and oppression, while at the same time nurturing a deep humility in recognizing that I can never fully know or completely transform. How can I become aware of the unconscious drivers of my values, actions and ways of relating? What are the clues to our unconscious?

¹⁷ Oliver, *Colonization Of Psychic Space*. P. xxiii

The development of our unconscious is deeply interwoven with our experiences in childhood, and traditions in analytic psychology and various offshoots (often brought together under the term depth psychology) attempt to understand and engage with the unconscious processes that guide our ways of being. The late anti-colonial theorist, psychiatrist and writer Frantz Fanon, born in Martinique, later worked with the Algerian National Movement during the French occupation and colonization of Algeria. He wrote what is still considered the founding text on the psychoanalysis of the colonial relationship, *Black Skin, White Mask*, originally published in 1952.¹⁸ In this work, he focused on describing colonialism as it shapes and interrelates with the unconscious emotional states, beliefs, needs and pain of the psyche of both the colonizer and the colonized, or what has been described as the “psychic life of the colonial encounter.”¹⁹ Fanon describes colonial racism as a neurosis, an irrational and to a degree unconscious behavioural pattern rooted in childhood psychic development, and his work remains central in understanding colonialism, racism and oppression from a psychological and emotional vantage point. Fanon challenged the racism and universalism of many of the white European founders of psychoanalytical theory and practice, such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Alfred Adler, by situating their ideas in and applying them to specific cultural and political contexts. He retained the psychoanalytical focus on the family and early childhood as deeply impactful on the psychic development of the child and later adult. Yet, he argued that this family context was not separate from but intimately interwoven with the values, beliefs and practices of a specific cultural group in a certain socio-political and historical context. For Fanon, if our adult racism as white settlers can be understood to some degree as an unconscious neurotic behaviour – what he calls the white superiority neurosis – then there is an analogy in the psychic conflicts and structure born in the culturally embedded family environment.²⁰

In this chapter, I have chosen to engage with Fanon and to an extent other theorists in analytic and depth psychology in an attempt to apply their theories to understand my own inherent racism and oppressive subjectivity and to explore its roots in childhood socialization in the white settler family context. I link this with the insights of

¹⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

¹⁹ Hook, “Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, ‘Psychopolitics’ and Critical Psychology.”

²⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. P. 120

Indigenous women, grounding myself in conversations with Stó:lō women and branching to others who have written about the importance of childhood emotional development in relation to decolonization. There are many potential models and theories that could shape an analysis that attempts to explore these roots. Continuing to rest my work in a practice of narrative therapy, I share this journey of understanding not as an objective or ultimate truth, but rather as one potential story, one way of naming, thickening and giving space to alternative narratives about white settler childhood and psychic development, which I feel has the power to reshape our sense of ourselves, our ways of being and therefore the way we walk in the world in relation to Indigenous people, other “Others” and perhaps the land itself. This story has already profoundly influenced my own ways of being in this world, and its value lies in this transformative potential.

Yet, there are also many critiques that could be brought forward to argue against giving theoretical space to analytic psychology in a pathway towards transforming the emotional roots of white settler subjectivity. For one, the practice of analytic psychology, often named psychoanalysis, has been critiqued for continuing to reinforce an underlying unconscious drive to the binary view of the world, what Indigenous and post-colonial psychologists Eduardo and Bonnie Duran diagnose as “chronic and/or acute Cartesian anxiety disorder.”²¹ While analytic theory reveals this binary dynamic, ironically psychoanalysis can also be critiqued as replicating this Eurocentric assumption within its therapeutic practice. For example, psychoanalysis maintains in the therapeutic process the binary divisions of “normal” and “deviant,” “conscious” and “unconscious” that underpin most of modernist psychology. Specifically, the binary of “normal” and “deviant” is directly implicit in racialized thinking.²² Psychoanalysis has also been critiqued by post-modernists as creating a “totalizing” and “historical” perspective of the human psyche, where the key repressed memories are just waiting to be discovered, brought into consciousness, and all other “distorted” representations of an event can be replaced forever.²³ Further, post-modernists bring forward concerns about the analyst’s power

²¹ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. P. 7

²² Young (1996, 240) describes how the norm/deviance model helped construct racialized thinking, and how the “unconscious” was linked with notions of childlike primitivism.

²³ Leffert, “A Contemporary Integration of Modern and Postmodern Trends in Psychoanalysis.” P. 183

wielded through his or her disciplinary expertise.²⁴ Finally, while theories of psychoanalysis are regularly applied outside of the therapeutic context, its practice is generally not, another critique made by Fanon, who argued that we need a more community-based psychology.

In the final sections of this narrative, I turn to considering the pathways and practices that may support the transformation of the emotional roots of white settler superiority neuroses, moving towards a psychic wholeness that nurtures the possibility of compassionate human-to-human ways of being. I share an example of an anti-racism group therapy process for white women that is rooted in psychoanalytical practice and that creates spaces and possibilities for emotional release and for gaining deeper insights into the ways our unconscious shapes our behaviours. However, by no means do I intend to suggest that psychoanalysis is a required aspect of a white settler pathway towards emotional maturity or that it is the most radical. I also name the possibilities of teatrotherapy, dance and movement approaches, meditation and Indigenous healing practices. There is no one particular path, and my purpose here is not to articulate, compare or direct these pathways, which are inherently diverse and unique. Rather, I humbly aim for this story—the interweaving of analytical insights with my own personal storytelling and reflections stimulated in the space of ethical relationship with Indigenous women—to support others down their own unique journey of unraveling, releasing and transforming the emotional roots of their own attachments to racist narratives. I believe, following the calls by Ernie Crey and Frantz Fanon, that a community-based psychology is essential and that we are capable of taking this on, within the context of our everyday lives, families and communities and with the goal of nurturing our own emotional maturity and literacy. As I share here, I believe the space of parenting and the relationships with our children have profound potential to be catalysts for taking on this journey, as the way we parent and what we witness in our children’s responses to our parenting reveal much about our own childhood socialization and emotional development.

The story I share here is also limited, like the work overall, by the challenge of speaking to the ways in which becoming/being *xwelítem* and the transformation of

²⁴ Leffert.

subjectivity are raveled and unraveled holistically in the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and embodied aspects of our being. I end this narrative with re-centring the power of land and situating ourselves within the consciousness of the earth through ceremonies and healing traditions as transformative practices. I turn to this more fully in the following narrative on the transformation of xwelitem hunger (Chapter 6). Yet here, I acknowledge the ways in which I have not sufficiently reflected on and articulated the intimate and inherent relationship between emotional and spiritual journeys of transformation, a limitation I own as a mirror of my own process of growth and understanding. I turn now to the guidance of Stò:lō women's wisdom to point me further down the path that Ernie Crey has initiated, centring more directly the importance of focusing on white settler childhood in order to understand the attachment to, and endurance of, colonial racism.

Stò:lō Women's Wisdom: Centring Childhood, Families and Emotion

Ernie Crey's call was a challenge to consider the unconscious, emotional and psychological roots of my own racism, and Frantz Fanon's work pointed to childhood experiences and the family environment as pivotal to understanding these roots. At the same time as this focus began to take shape in my thinking, a number of Stò:lō women I spoke with in conversations emphasized a connection between decolonization and the need to transform the ways we relate to each other as families, in white settler families and Indigenous families. These women centred the importance of adult (and especially parent) relationships with children in guiding the development of emotional capacities and ways of being that either facilitate or undermine the colonial relationship. These insights resonate with the writings of Indigenous women scholars centering the linkages between decolonization, healing and transformation of family and intimate relationships, and the resurgence of Indigenous understandings of gender, womanhood, family, and parenting.²⁵

When Denise Alexis, a mother and researcher from the community of Cheam and the Pilalt tribe became a mom, she began to think deeply about what kinds of values and ways of being she was going to pass onto her children through her parenting, her intimate

²⁵ See for example: Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*; Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*; Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women*; Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization"; TallBear, *Native American DNA*.

ways of relating to her children in a day-to-day sense. She shared her commitment to “try and raise my kids in more Native-style parenting with Native values and Native ways of being.”²⁶ Yet she realized, as a result of the residential school experience, mainstream public education, and many other colonial influences, that if she didn’t actively search for support and guidance on how to parent in an Indigenous way, she might unconsciously parent in ways that pass on a colonial worldview, values and ways of being. Denise’s personal journey around becoming a mother was a major impetus for her self-reflection and her search for guidance. In turn, her efforts to transform her ways of being in relation to her children meant a transformed possibility for who and how her children could be.

Sioliya, June Quipp, is also from Cheam and the Pilalt tribe, a matriarch of her large extended family, and a long-time leader in her community. She advocates for the rights of Stó:lō children and families along with her work in defending Stó:lō responsibilities to Sth’ó:qwi and to their relationships within Pilalt and Stó:lō Téméxw more broadly. Sioliya also has a particular understanding of the struggles of white settlers to transform our xwelítem ways of being, as she has directly mentored many white settler students as part of their studies in the University of Victoria’s Indigenous Governance master’s program. In my conversations with Sioliya, she spoke about the coldness with which some white settlers relate within even our own families, and the conditional love that at times seems to define our relationships. She made a direct link between the lack of compassion and emotional openness within white settler families, the lack of compassion we have for the social suffering of Indigenous peoples, and the lack of respect for the significance of family for Stó:lō. June shared with me a personal story of mentoring a young white settler man that brought out the deep and emotional connections between family relationships, childhood conditioning, and colonial racism and oppression.

In the early 2000s, Cheam established a camp blocking the proposed development of a ski hill on Elk mountain, in Pilalt homelands. Some non-Indigenous people supported the land defenders and became regularly present at the camp. One was a young white settler man who began a mentorship with Sioliya and other leaders at the camp. In Sioliya’s words: “He was really learning a lot from us, he was learning the colonial

²⁶ Interview with Denise Alexis, January 11, 2013

history and was very open to our culture and teachings.²⁷” The young man shared with Sioliya how his own father was very racist towards Indigenous people, and that he wanted to actively challenge these beliefs in himself. Cheam was successful in stopping the ski hill development, and time passed in which Sioliya did not hear from the young man. Some time later, he called her on the phone and shared that his father had died. During their conversation, rather than engaging with his previous openness, curiosity and self-reflection, the young man launched a verbal racist attack against Sioliya, angrily yelling at her over the phone. She wondered about the connection between the death of this young man’s father and his verbal attack towards her, such a contrary interaction to all that she knew he had learned consciously. She wondered whether his father’s death might have triggered a sense of guilt for disobeying his father’s racist values and beliefs by supporting her and the community of Cheam. Sioliya clearly recognized the young man was acting from an unconscious emotional place in his racist attack, one that was deeply interwoven with his relationship with his father.

My conversations with Denise, Sioliya and others took place before I became pregnant and gave birth to Fairsa, beginning my own journey as a parent. When Fairsa came into this world, they took on a personal significance in a new way. As Frantz Fanon states, “we need to become a child again to understand certain psychic realities,”²⁸ and becoming a mother and witnessing Fairsa grow and our relationship develop became a profound insight into my own childhood self, and into my relationship with my parents. I had also developed friendships with a number of Stó:lō mothers and experienced and talked with them about their ways of being with their children—and, like Denise Alexis, their articulation of the ways in which they actively tried to decolonize their parenting through what they talked to their children about, exposed their children to, and, importantly, how they related to them.²⁹ The insights and intentions of Denise, Sioliya and a number of other Stó:lō mothers and women resonated profoundly with the writings of a number of Indigenous women from different nations, including Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson, who writes that if we are truly interested in decolonizing, we must

²⁷ Interview with Sioliya (June Quipp), March 15, 2013

²⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. P. 166

²⁹ Additional Stó:lō moms who influenced my thinking in this way include Susan Johnny, Carrielynn Victor, Wenona Hall, and Melody Andrews.

critically evaluate how we are parenting the next generation.³⁰ I began to develop a more conscious awareness of how I was relating to Fairisa, to reflect intentionally on how I had been parented, and to pay close attention to how other parents around me related to their children. It is with these practical experiences and the intimate and immediate motivation of becoming a mom that I have sought to more deeply understand analytic psychology and theorists such as Frantz Fanon who offer an understanding of the links between childhood family relationships, socialization, emotional and psychological development, and the perpetuation of oppressive political contexts such as white settler colonialism.

Fanon, White Settler Racism and Children's Socialization in the Family

Both the black man, slave to his inferiority, and the white man, slave to his superiority, behave along neurotic lines.³¹

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Frantz Fanon, drawing on and transforming the work of analytic psychologist Carl Jung, characterized white colonizers' psychic and emotional life as being shaped by a superiority neurosis, a neurosis being the conflict between unconscious urges and desires, and the need to keep these urges outside of the conscious mind—in other words, to keep them repressed. In Carl Jung's theory of the psyche, our personal unconscious arises from the interaction between the collective unconscious and one's personal growth:

Everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things which are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness; all this is the content of the unconscious... Besides these we must include all more or less intentional repressions of painful thought and feelings. I call the sum of these contents the "personal unconscious."³²

Our shadow, a part of our personal unconscious, is particular to our personal growth—unique life experiences, family context and parental relationships—but also inherently dependent on the collective unconscious.

³⁰ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*. P. 127.

³¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. P. 41-42

³² Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. P. 185

Yet, Fanon transforms Jung's concept of a universal and hereditary collective unconscious and suggests instead that both this collective and personal unconscious and their intimate relationship are culturally derived and unique to particular groups in a particular socio-historical and political context. Fanon understands the collective unconscious as the result of the family imposition of culture and is the sum of the prejudices, myths and collective attitudes and behaviours of a given group. Fanon also critiques Freud's focus on insular dynamics within the family and the universalization of his theories of family dynamics such as the Oedipal complex, in which childhood repression is the result of the infant's incestuous fantasies. Rather than universal fantasies being the sources of childhood trauma, childhood repression is for Fanon the result of real, lived experiences of trauma in specific cultural, social and family contexts.³³ Fanon points out that the psychological theories of Freud, Adler, Jung and others all take the white subject as normative and fail to understand or consider the psyche of the Black man, or the realities of black family life and childhood. These European psychoanalysts normalized white childhoods and adult neuroses that may in fact be particular to the patriarchal and authoritarian European family culture, failing to see that "neurosis is not a basic component of human reality."³⁴ Following Fanon's argument, I can begin to turn attention to considering the white settler collective ego, our conscious preferred understanding of self, and the collective unconscious shadow in the contemporary context of white settler colonialism in Canada.

Understanding our own racism involves considering when and how we are taught the stereotypes that define particular people, particular "Others," or ourselves. Research has demonstrated that young children who are just developing their understanding of the world are strongly susceptible to learning simplistic racial stereotypes.³⁵ Young children are immensely capable of picking up on adult racial anxieties and quickly develop complex social capabilities, becoming not only absorbers of racial narratives but

³³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Swiss psychotherapist Alice Miller also critiques Freud and Jung in a number of their concepts including Freud's Oedipus complex and drive theory. She argues the Oedipal complex, far from being normal—is in reality a way of narrating (and covering up) the trauma caused by childhood sexual and physical abuse and violence in childrearing—widespread in Europe at the time, and something Freud—and other psychoanalysts—were unwilling to fully look at. See: Miller, *For Your Own Good*; Miller and deMause, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*.

³⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. P. 130

³⁵ Derman-Sparks, "Stages in Children's Development of Racial/Cultural Identity & Attitudes."

“producers of racial-ethnic meanings.”³⁶ Fanon’s analysis of racism points to the importance of this more explicit learning of racialized stereotypes, but also, perhaps more insidiously, to the implicit ways in which those of us raised in cultures rooted in binary moral codes are shaped emotionally and psychologically to understand the world through a lens of good and bad, based on what our cultural group considers “superior” and “inferior” ways of being, emotions and desires.

In cultures that emphasize an ontology and value system with rigid notions of good and bad, we come to know as children who our parents (and other adults) prefer us to be, and what we need to repress in ourselves to become that. Our shadow reflects internal, repressed parts of the unconscious self, that are in conflict with the ego. However, this internal “Other” is both a particular construct of the individual and their environment and a representative construct of the stereotypes and archetypes within the collective unconscious of an entire cultural group.³⁷ A psychoanalytical understanding of racism recognizes:

The Other is already a part of the psyche, the unconscious that remained unacceptable and uncanny because it is other to the ego and is not centred in a determinate self, amounting rather to the disturbing effect of the self dislocated, as it were into the third person.³⁸

Dislocating the undesirable part of the self and casting it (as though a shadow) onto the other is a defense mechanism for the guilt or shame one feels about this repressed aspect of the self. The “Other” carries all that one knows to be reprehensible and is therefore the representation of inferiority, leaving the conscious self to be the representation of superiority. For Fanon, these dynamics in the colonial context lead to a neurotic state, the white superiority neurosis, whereby the white colonizer projects their own unconscious repressed shadow onto the “Other” as a way of avoiding the guilt, shame and fear in recognizing the unwanted parts of oneself—emotions, characteristics, desires, ways of being—that one has learned are inferior³⁹. In this projection, the ego of the white

³⁶ Ausdale and Feagin, *The First R*. See P. 179

³⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. P. 62

³⁸ Young, *Torn Halves*. P. 249

³⁹ While I have chosen here to center Fanon’s work and the psychoanalytic language and approach to discussing the defense of the Ego through shadow projection, it is useful to note that there are of course other ways that this is discussed coming from different traditions and schools of thought. For example, Marion Robinson also spoke of the emotional drive behind racism and oppression using the language “toxic

colonizer then sees all that they hate or fear in themselves in the other, shaping the other into their own narrative of an inferior person, ensuring their own emotional equilibrium and protection of the ego, the preferred understanding and experience of oneself. Yet, the cost of maintaining this preferred experience of self is the objectification and dehumanization of the external “Other.” In this explanation, racism is essentially a kind of defense reaction for the ego. How might this neurosis express itself within the white settler colonial culture of Canada? What makes up our collective unconscious—our collective shadow and ego?

Exploring the White Canadian Collective Unconscious as it relates to Indigenous Peoples

As Ernie Crey has articulated, there remains a pervasive “Canadian narrative” containing the main stereotypes that white settlers hold about Indigenous people, those that define Indigenous people as inferior: on the one hand, violent, dangerous and threatening, and on the other hand, dependent, lazy, irresponsible, weak, vulnerable and emotional. This mythology provides the basis upon which we not only enact racism towards Indigenous people but also collectively reassure ourselves of our preferred Canadian self-image, one that emphasizes independence, hard work, courage, determination, as well as our kind, well-meaning self-sacrifice and benevolence demonstrated by dutifully helping those in need.

Paulette Regan in her work *Unsettling the Settler Within* describes the “benevolent peace-maker” archetype as a central affirming idea within the collective ego of Euro-Canadian society.⁴⁰ Similarly, Elizabeth Furniss in her study of everyday relations among Euro-Canadians and Secwepemc and Dekelh (Carrier) people writes that this stereotype is captured in a dominant heroic figure in Canada, the Mountie—who embodies the Canadian colonial narrative of “conquest through benevolence.”⁴¹ Both consider how the unconscious collective shadow archetype to the benevolent peace-maker is the “violent warrior,” readily projected onto Indigenous peoples by mainstream

shame” rather than repressed aspects of the self. Here I have not considered how these different theories or languages interrelate. See for example: Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame That Binds You*; Brown, “Listening to Shame.”

⁴⁰ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*.

⁴¹ Furniss, *The Burden of History*. P. 63.

white Canadian culture. In this projection, we attempt to escape the collective guilt induced by the truth of our own colonial violence towards Indigenous people, ensuring our own collective ego is protected as the benevolent peacemaker archetype, yet dehumanizing Indigenous people into the violent warrior stereotype in the process.

The work of media analyst Robert Harding also reveals these same enduring stereotypes that are used to characterize Indigenous people as “inferior,” while white settler Canadians are characterized as holding the opposite “superior” qualities. By analyzing white settler news articles in both the 1860s and the 1990s, Harding demonstrates the persistence and repetition of news frames in which Indigenous people are presented as violent and threatening, as well as immoral, weak, vulnerable and childlike. In contrast, white settlers are presented as not only peaceful, morally righteous and law-abiding, but also heroic, humanitarian and taking on great sacrifice and hard work to fulfill their Christian moral obligation to help and assimilate the Indigenous people:

The notion that “saving” aboriginal people is difficult, dangerous and selfless work is asserted through word choice and considerable repetition and exaggeration. The labor of these “devoted” white men, usually missionaries, is variously described as “great and noble work”, “earnest labor”, “earnest and persevering efforts”, and “the praiseworthy task of benefiting the Indians.”⁴²

He reveals contemporary news reporting that relates the same narrative, of a hard-working, self-sacrificing white saviour/helper who remains situated, in contrast to the image of a weak, vulnerable and yet noble savage deserving of “civilization,” and the manifest destiny ideology—a synthesis between racial and religious paternalism building on the 1800s Protestant ethic. Harding further reveals in colonial news media an oppositional dichotomy between Indigenous people as dominated by emotions and Euro-Canadians as governed by reason, and an enduring news frame in which reason triumphs over emotion.⁴³ For example, in his analysis of the lexical choices made by journalists in constructing news headlines, Aboriginal people tend to dream, argue, cry, vow to fight

⁴² Harding, “Historical Representations of Aboriginal People in the Canadian News Media.” P. 210

⁴³ Harding. P. 217

and threaten “confrontation,” while non-Aboriginal people judge, rule, offer insight, and make decisions based on common sense and the firm interpretation of the rule of law.⁴⁴

Elizabeth Furniss’ work further points to the ways in which the stereotypes characterizing Indigenous people as “lazy” and receiving “free” payments or services from the federal government are expressed in part to hold up the Euro-Canadian preferred sense of self as hardworking, industrious, entrepreneurial—the self-made man. The racist stereotype of the “lazy Indian” is expressed in misconceptions that Indigenous people enjoy a “tax-free” status, they are given “free” houses and “free” university education, and they enjoy a wealth of government payments that flow into reserve communities. What Furniss reveals is that these kinds of commentaries not only represent lacking and limited information on the part of Euro-Canadians, but more deeply are a way of using portrayals of Indigenous people to express an ideal adherence to a set of values and morals tied to the capitalist work ethic and myth of the self-made man. In her words,

Aboriginal people are seen as the epitome of those who “live off the system” and thus undermine the central values of personal responsibility, thrift, materialism, equality, hard work and self-sacrifice. These casual remarks and the humorous frame in which they are frequently communicated are vicious expressions that deny the human dignity and individuality of Aboriginal people, that naturalize social problems and violence in a chilling fashion, and that perpetuate assumptions of the special treatment of reserve communities by government that only furthers Euro-Canadian antagonism.⁴⁵

Furniss further points out that these conceptions are expressed in open interviews by many middle-class Euro-Canadians who hold respected positions in local society, and remarks on the “widespread and supposedly uncontroversial status of these assumed truths of difference.”⁴⁶

Bringing together Ernie Crey, Paulette Regan, Robert Harding and Elizabeth Furniss’ descriptions, an enduring story in the white settler mind emerges: We, white settlers, are benevolent, peaceful people, who through our independence, determination, hard work, self-sacrifice and logical, rational approach have helped/saved and continue to help/save the generally violent, immoral, simplistic, backwards, lazy, vulnerable, weak and emotional Indigenous people. As each of their works point towards, this story

⁴⁴ Harding.

⁴⁵ Furniss, *The Burden of History*. P. 113.

⁴⁶ Furniss. P. 133.

underlies the plethora of everyday acts of racism—from everyday verbal abuse and paternalism, to the institutionalized racism that perpetuates these myths in health care, education, the criminal justice system and at all levels of Canadian government and politics. A more generic version of this story leads to the deep undercurrent of Eurocentrism in all aspects of settler society: white settlers and mainstream settler culture are superior, in other words: more complex, civilized, heterogeneous, advanced, progressive—than Indigenous people and culture, which are seen as simplistic, homogenous, backwards, stuck in the past, primitive and childlike.

My aim here remains not to focus on and intervene with the sources of this particular narrative (although as previously noted, this is very important), but rather to attempt to understand the emotional root—or unconscious plug—that creates a neurotic attachment to this narrative. This plug is derived from the collective cultural unconscious and our own personal unconscious and is intimately shaped in the family environment. The clues to each of our plugs are in the specific stereotypes and ways in which we objectify and dehumanize “Others,” and in our own emotional and psychological development shaped by our parents’ and other caregivers’ or teachers’ consciously and unconsciously expressed ideals of who we should and should not be, what is good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral. Take, for example, the collective white guilt we feel in response to the violence of Canadian residential schools. Fanon’s analysis suggests linkages between this collective and individual guilt and shame. In what ways might the unconscious drive to escape the guilt of recognizing our collective violence be tied to personal childhood experiences of oppression as we were punished or shamed for expressing a “bad” or “inferior” aggressive aspect of our own natures, or perhaps manipulated into being “peaceful”? How and in what ways might we be socialized as white children into understanding benevolence and peacemaking as good ways of being, that we are “good” when we express them and in contrast “bad” when we do not? If this socialization is deeply rooted in and attached to our innate desire for love, affection and acknowledgment from our parents and families, in what ways might our personal experience of guilt and shame, and the defense of our ego be tied to the repression of aspects of our innate nature, such as innate feelings of aggression, often defined in

mainstream psychology as undesirable and anti-social?⁴⁷ How might this intertwining of our collective and personal guilt and shame block our abilities to respond with compassion to the intergenerational trauma and suffering of Indigenous peoples?

A Clue to my Personal Plug

I had known Otis Jasper, from the Ts'elxwéyeqw community of Th'ewá:lí, for a couple of years. In the previous year, we had worked together closely on the Stó:lō Tribal Council's efforts to address a proposed twinning of a high-voltage transmission line that would cross through Stó:lō Téméxw, specifically passing through a number of Stó:lō communities and running adjacent to Stó:lō homes. One of the questions we heard repeatedly from Stó:lō people living in communities adjacent to the transmission lines was: What are the levels of electro-magnetic fields (EMFs) we are exposed to from these transmission lines, and how might these levels change if new lines are build adjacent to old ones? These concerns led us to apply for funding to do a community-based environmental health project on this topic. I was deeply involved in this project, and along with a number of Stó:lō researchers learned a great deal about how to measure EMF exposure, and what the existing research states about connections between EMF exposure and human health.

Towards the end of the project, Otis asked whether we could meet in a coffee shop to talk. He was studying business management at the time and often had ideas about business development projects. He asked whether I might consider supporting the development of a Stó:lō business that would measure EMFs in people's homes, as this was the knowledge gained through the community-based research project. The business might also create some jobs. I was taken by surprise, and as my initial response to his proposal, I said something along the lines of, "Well, I guess Indigenous people need help with business development and jobs, right?" It was a thoughtless response in which I had plugged into the Canadian narrative, homogenizing and objectified Stó:lō and broadly Indigenous people in the process. As Fanon points out, any behaviour that suggests a determination to objectify, confine, imprison, harden is a racialization; phrases such as "I

⁴⁷ For example see: Serketich and Dumas, "The Effectiveness of Behavioural Parent Training to Modify Antisocial Behaviour in Children: A Meta-Analysis"; Pearl, "Parent Management Training for Reducing Oppositional and Aggressive Behaviour in Preschoolers."

know them” or “that’s the way they are” show this maximum objectification successfully achieved. Yet, phrases that say this covertly through a kind of paternalism also suggest this objectifying tendency of the colonizer-racist.⁴⁸ Had I just turned a request for partnership and collaboration into a narrative in which my involvement was contingent on a self-understanding of myself as a benevolent helper/saviour, a self-understanding that in turn was contingent on my objectification of Indigenous people into those in need of “help/saving”? While I didn’t have the conscious awareness let alone the words to understand my racism in the moment, I did feel a sense of discomfort and anxious energy in my body and experienced the emotional distance it created between Otis and myself. It is this sensation and recognition of discomfort that has caused the experience to stay with me. In retrospect, in the moment, I could have apologized and named the statement as a racialization. Finding the courage to be vulnerable would also have renewed the possibility for authentic human-to-human connection in the moment, and for my own humble learning.

In sharing this story, I want to avoid a kind of confessional declaration, one that’s intention would be to release me from the guilt, shame and discomfort of this recognition, or perhaps a confession that in itself attempts to declare myself no longer racist due to my greater degree of self-awareness. I want to actively reject these tendencies and instead challenge myself, as Ernie Crey did, to see this witnessing and acceptance of my own racism as a chance to ask why, to try to understand the emotional, perhaps unconscious roots that drove my own plug into the Canadian narrative in that moment and in others. What in my personal unconscious, drawn from the collective unconscious of white settler colonial society, led me to protect or reify a sense of myself as a hardworking, self-sacrificing helper, as one in the position to “help” others? Was I unconsciously protecting my ego, escaping a guilt or shame I might have felt at not helping, at not being what I had been intimately socialized to understand was a “good” and therefore lovable person, perhaps especially as a woman? Perhaps I was feeling weak, vulnerable, or in need of help myself, but rather than name that, did I unconsciously project it onto others?

When I look back, I was exhausted from carrying out the project and struggling in my personal life. I was also emotionally struggling with the reality of the social suffering

⁴⁸ Fanon and Maspero, *Toward the African Revolution*. P. 35

within Stó:lō communities, shared intimately with me by some of my colleagues who were becoming friends; I was emotionally unprepared, undeveloped and lacking in the strength and ability to be able to remain present with, to know how to witness, hold presence for and yet not hold on to. I was also not drawn to the work of business development—it did not resonate with my own passions, gifts and desires. Given time and space for these honest reflections, and present with my own embodied knowing, I could return to the conversation and relationship, expressing myself authentically rather than unconsciously plugging into the racist Canadian narrative. This is the work of critical self-reflection we can all take home from these experiences when we allow ourselves to be with the discomfort and challenge ourselves to see it as a guide to our own understanding and the release of our own shadows.

Analytic Psychology, Parenting and Childhood Experiences of Oppression

Marion Robinson was recommended as a settler interviewee by my Stó:lō colleague and friend Otis Jasper and introduced in the previous chapter in connection with her work for the Fraser Basin Council.⁴⁹ Marion was born in Vancouver to refugee parents from East Prussia, and identifies her ancestral heritage as descending from the Skalvian people of the Baltic tribes living around what today are parts of Lithuania and Russia. She brings an understanding of trauma, human emotional development and well-being, and the importance of family, relationships and healthy parent and adult attachments to her work promoting salmon and watershed well-being in Stó:lō Téméxw. When I sat down to talk with Marion about what settlers need to do to work towards ethical relationships with Stó:lō people and the land, she immediately centred our conversation around the needs of children, saying, “It comes with meeting the needs of the infant first. If you want to decolonize, you meet the needs of the babies.”⁵⁰ From Marion’s perspective the emotional roots of violence and oppression—whether this is violence towards the land or violence towards other humans—is connected to our childhood experiences within our own families. In our conversations, her research and writing, and her recommendations of other writers and theorists I could engage with, I

⁴⁹ See Chapter 4, “Shape-Shifting Erasure: Narratives and Practices that Obscure Indigenous-Settler Difference” p. 121.

⁵⁰ Interview with Marion Robinson, November 17, 2012.

began to find my own pathway towards applying Fanon's insights to my own family and communities and white settler colonial culture more broadly.

Fanon points directly at childhood and the white family, saying, "the child leaving the family environment finds the same laws, the same principles and the same values... the characteristics of the family environment are projected onto the social environment," and the white family is the "education and training ground" for entry as a colonizer in colonial society.⁵¹ Yet, Fanon's work does not delve into the specifics of this education and training. Marion Robinson directed me to the work of Alice Miller, a Swiss analytic psychologist, as I began to consider how this training takes place in the intimate spaces of the family home and specifically in the context of parent-child relationships and the emotional needs of young children. Miller studied the ways in which children learn to adapt to survive family contexts in which the parent/caregiver's needs dominate the relationship with the child. These survival mechanisms become rooted in the psyche of the child, preventing their emotional maturity and ability to express their authentic self. While the mechanisms of oppression vary, at the core of the survival of the child is an ability to disconnect from their emotions, to learn not to feel. What Miller points out is that both consciously and unconsciously, this practice of controlling the child in order to meet parental needs, of breaking or repressing the child's spirit or authentic self, is endemic in the parenting practices of European rooted cultures, derived at least in part from Judeo-Christian teachings and beliefs about children and the parent-child relationship.

How do parents enact practices of control in order to meet the parents' needs and in turn repress the child's spirit? Alice Miller considers the specific methods of parental coercion and control used, from direct physical abuse and corporal punishment, to methods of "laying traps, lying, duplicity, subterfuge, manipulation, 'scare' tactics, withdrawal of love, isolation, distrust, humiliating and disgracing the child, scorn, ridicule and coercion,"⁵² as well as the use of facial expression and tone of voice.⁵³ Through the enactment of these practices, the child grows in a situation of subordination to the parents, who enact these controlling measures in order to ensure the child's

⁵¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. p. 121 and 127

⁵² Miller, *For Your Own Good*. P. 59

⁵³ Miller. P. 37

behaviour and will are moulded to their expectations and desires, at times consciously and at other times unconsciously, passing forward what was done to them as children. Miller uncovers these patterns and their detrimental effects on adults, who unless they begin to recognize their own oppression as children will perpetuate this on their own children and on others in society, who are cast as scapegoats through narratives of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and others.

Her analysis is drawn from her own patients in her psychotherapy practice, as well as analysis of the childhoods of political leaders, writers, artists and therapists themselves, and critical reviews of child-rearing guidebooks.⁵⁴ She names the emotional splitting off and projecting onto others that is characteristic in adults raised in controlling family environments. She also looks at how the practices of parenting teach children specific oppressive practices that they later accept, carry out and perpetuate in society. Her analyses reveal that we learn to oppress others, denying their full humanity, complexity and spirit, in the same ways in which we ourselves were oppressed as children. For Miller, *poisonous pedagogy* includes all types of parenting behaviour that are intended to manipulate children's characters through force or deception.

Miller's work led me to the work of Jewish South African psychoanalyst Margaret Green, who specifically applies analytical psychology to the work of unlearning anti-black racism among white women in England. She facilitates workshops with groups of white women from the perspective that their own attachment to racist narratives and practices is tied to their experiences of oppression as children. In some cases this childhood oppression is directly tied to teachings about race. She begins with the understanding that many oppressive attitudes and behaviours are rooted in the unconscious and cannot simply be eradicated by rational argument. Racial awareness training is typically not wholly successful at addressing the emotional aspects of racism because it does "not allow space for the oppression people experience in relation to learning and perceiving reality"—in other words, the oppression we experience in the process of our "conditioning" into accepting certain realities and learning certain

⁵⁴ In her well-known work, *For Their Own Good: the Hidden Cruelties of Child-Rearing* focuses on the rise of Nazism in Germany, anti-Semitism and the scapegoating of the Jewish people that led to the Holocaust. She links the growth and perpetuation of this political reality to what she calls the "poisonous pedagogy" of Christian rooted child-rearing practices in Germany families leading up to this era, studying popular child-rearing books of the era and linking to the childhoods of high ranking Nazis, including Hitler himself.

behaviours. There are often painful emotional experiences attached to learning about the racist narratives and ways of being into which we are conditioned. As put by Green, “the roots of this pain are largely repressed and unconscious; they lie in the confusions that result from having been lied to and misinformed by people we trusted and in the pain of having tried unsuccessfully to resist the ‘learning’ of racism.”⁵⁵ For example, Green describes the way that children are often put down or silenced when they notice or ask questions about racialized differences. Children absorbing this adult anxiety about race come to feel it is bad to ask why people are different, and learn to believe that somehow they “should already know.” Green writes:

From the emotional work done in these [workshops], it becomes evident that experiences of oppression in early childhood provide the fertile ground in which the unconscious roots of racism develop and are allowed to flourish. The common factor linking the many and varied experiences of oppression is the conscious and unconscious abuse of power in relation to children.⁵⁶

The work of both Alice Miller and Margaret Green falls within a tradition of “psychopolitics,” an explicit politicization of the psychological in a similar tradition to Fanon’s, in which they demonstrate the linkages between human psychology, dynamics of oppression, and sociopolitical and historical forces.⁵⁷ Like Fanon, they both name and demonstrate examples of the ways in which racism is enacted through the projection of unwanted emotions and characteristics of self onto others. Yet, for my understanding, Miller and Green add a very practical aspect of situating this specifically in intimate, everyday experiences in the family and specifically the parent–child relationship. They emphasize that the very specific ways in which we experienced oppression, the methods

⁵⁵ Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.” P. 184

⁵⁶ Harding, “Historical Representations of Aboriginal People in the Canadian News Media.”

⁵⁷ In Hook, “Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, ‘Psychopolitics’ and Critical Psychology” Derek Hook provides a definition of psychopolitics, rooted in the work of Frantz Fanon. Psychopolitics can take on at least three forms: “It may refer to the critical process by which we place a series of ostensibly psychological concerns and concepts within the register of the political and thereby show up the extent to which human psychology is intimately linked to, and in some ways conditioned or limited by, the sociopolitical and historical forces of its situation. Similarly, such a politicisation may refer to the critical process by which we employ psychological concepts, explanations and even modes of experience to describe and illustrate the workings of power. The hope in this respect is that by being able to analyse the political in such a psychological way, we may be able to think strategically about how we should intervene in ‘the life of power.’ Extending this idea (thirdly), it might be argued that we can put certain forms of psychology to actual political work, that we can use both the concepts and the understandings of psychology, and the actual terms of psychological experience, as a means of consolidating resistances to power.” P. 85.

by which our parents sought to shape and control us as children, are often the ways we learn to dehumanize and oppress others as adults and accept the institutionalization of these oppressive practices in society at large.

Both Miller and Green also emphasize that whether or not these oppressive childhood experiences become a source of neurosis—creating the psychic drive to project onto others—is directly related to the degree to which the child is able to express the anger, frustration, sadness and strong emotions they experienced at this oppression. As put by Green, if emotions are not allowed, they are

repressed, stored and internalized until such a time as it has some outlet, such as the socially sanctioned forms of hatred such as racism, classism, anti-semitism and misogyny. If one has the opportunity to find oneself in a position of greater social power than others, the hatred may be actually lived out. The form of the abuse, mistreatment or violence is often perpetrated in exactly the way it was originally experienced.⁵⁸

From Miller and Green's analyses, I begin to see in clearer detail the ways in which the emotional roots of racism, the psychological "plug" that keeps people attached to racist narratives and learned practices of oppression, may be rooted to some degree in our own childhood experiences of oppression. Yet, Miller and Green are writing from different cultural and historical contexts. How might their analyses relate to research on parenting in Canada among white settler families, and specifically the relationship between parental control and childhood emotional maturity?

While analytic psychology provides a set of theoretical understandings and methodologies derived from in-depth case studies of individuals and families, psychologists working with social learning theory and socialization theories of emotional development also highlight linkages between parenting practices and children's development of emotional insight and empathy.⁵⁹ The methods used by these psychologists fall within a positivist approach and tend to under-theorize the socio-cultural, historical and political contexts within which families and parenting are constructed. Nonetheless, some of these studies share similar insights to the work of analytic psychologists. For example, in a recent study of 50 families coming from

⁵⁸ Green, "Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism." P. 207

⁵⁹ Denham, *Emotional Development in Young Children*; Barnett et al., "Antecedents of Empathy"; Barnett et al., "Empathy in Young Children."

predominantly white, middle-class backgrounds in a metropolitan area in western Canada, researchers Janet Strayer and William Roberts highlighted a relationship between children's experience of parental control and emotional insight:

Children's perceptions of greater physical discipline and rejection and parents' reports of lower levels of warmth were both associated with lower levels of child insight (that is, with greater [emotional] denial by children and lower levels of congruence between their facially expressed and verbally reported emotions).⁶⁰

They also found that empathetic parents were less controlling, typically meaning fathers were less authoritarian and mothers made less use of anxiety and guilt control. Children with less controlling, more empathetic parents were less angry overall yet also more able to express their anger.⁶¹ While I have chosen to centre in this chapter the insights of analytic psychologists, Indigenous women and my own critical personal narrative, I also name this body of work in psychology as potentially contributing, albeit through different epistemological and ontological bases, to similar understandings. While the above cited study considers the links between parental practices and childhood emotional insight, empathy and anger, it does not share directly how widespread controlling parenting practices were among the white middle-class study participants. I turn now to consider what evidence exists to suggest that controlling parenting practices are, to differing degrees across contexts and families, an intergenerational and culturally widespread practice within mainstream white settler culture in Canada. I look to my own lived experiences as a new parent in white settler community spaces, my childhood experiences, and the political, legal and historical contexts and evidence for the physical punishment of children in Canada.

White Settler Families, Controlling Parenting, and Learning to Oppress

When Fairisa was one and a half, we visited the home of our new neighbours, a mom and her young toddler, similar in age to Fairisa. The mom and I watched as the two little ones began to play. Soon, the mom decided to read them a story. After a few minutes of interest, her daughter began to lose focus on the story and wandered towards her toys. Anger immediately filled the mom's face, and she gave her daughter a stern

⁶⁰ Strayer and Roberts, "Children's Anger, Emotional Expressiveness, and Empathy." P. 247.

⁶¹ Strayer and Roberts. P. 245 -246.

look of disapproval. As the daughter turned to break eye connection with her mom and look again towards her toys, her mom grabbed her by the arm, pulled the child's body towards her and said, "Do I need to remind you I am bigger than you?" The girl stood still, lowered her head, and listened to the rest of the story. Once finished, her daughter returned to her toys and the mom proceeded to strike up a conversation with me as though nothing had happened.

Is this an unusual anomaly, a representation of a very tough day for this mom? I want to believe this, and feel cautious about judging the mom, vulnerable as I am myself to being judged as a new mom. Yet, I cannot deny what I feel in my body, a sinking sadness and fear for this little one, who must repress her being, her will, her self-expression in order to meet her mom's need for control and to meet her own need to be accepted by the person she looks to most for love. As further time passed in my new life as a mom, and I engaged in many mainly white settler community spaces with young children, I began to realize that this parental response to a child's self-expression is far from unusual. It became a regular and expected occurrence to witness parents and other caregivers attempt to control children via yelling, put-downs, and threats, along with bribes, deceptions and manipulations.

Research on the use of various parenting practices in Canada has, with some exceptions, to a large degree focused on physical punishment and child abuse.⁶² Data collected in the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey estimates 32% of adults in Canada have experienced child abuse, which is likely an underestimate of actual rates due to surveying and reporting challenges.⁶³ Estimates of the proportion of Canadian parents who have spanked their children have been as high as 88%.⁶⁴ Researchers argue that child abuse is often directly connected to physical punishment or confused with child discipline,⁶⁵ and is often enacted by a parent whose sense of control is threatened by a

⁶² Exceptions include studies comparing parenting styles across countries, but often with little attention to cultural diversity within. For example see: Claes et al., "Parental Practices in Late Adolescence, a Comparison of Three Countries"; Chuang and Su, "Do We See Eye to Eye?"; Areepattamannil, "Parenting Practices, Parenting Style, and Children's School Achievement."

⁶³ Afifi et al., "Child Abuse and Mental Disorders in Canada." Note that in the Canadian Mental Health Survey data used in this study, child abuse is defined as physical abuse, sexual abuse, or exposure to intimate partner violence.

⁶⁴ Rhonda, "Techniques of Child Discipline and Abuse by Parents."

⁶⁵ Afifi et al., "Physical Punishment, Childhood Abuse and Psychiatric Disorders"; "Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth."

child's behaviour.⁶⁶ Researchers have also demonstrated that physical punishment is a form of childhood adversity that shows an association with adult mental health challenges similar to more severe childhood adversities.⁶⁷ Yet, physical punishment as a form of child discipline remains legally protected in Canada, a protection of adult violence and power to forcibly "correct children" that was originally introduced in the *Criminal Code* in 1892.⁶⁸ While the initial tendency might be to regard this law as an anachronistic relic from Canada's past that will soon be repealed, in fact, in 2004, Section 43 of the Criminal Code was subject to a judicial interpretation by the Supreme Court of Canada, a majority of which upheld the provision.⁶⁹ Six of nine justices concluded that the provision does not violate the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as it does not infringe upon a child's rights to security of the person or a child's right to equality, and it does not constitute cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.⁷⁰ Canada has adhered to this law despite calls by the United Nations for countries to ban all laws that sanction corporal punishment of children, as they are a violation of international human rights.⁷¹

What might this legal protection, and the ongoing significant levels of child physical punishment and abuse, reveal about mainstream Canadian cultural beliefs concerning the relationship between adults and children and the role of parents? Family psychologists and researchers of child abuse suggest legal judgments regulating the physical punishment of children are a window into culturally shaped perspectives on what it means to be a parent.⁷² Given the dominance of white settlers as actors and agents within the Canadian political and legal systems, in which the original "spanking law" was passed and in which this law has been upheld, the creation and upholding of this law

⁶⁶ "Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth."

⁶⁷ Afifi et al., "Physical Punishment, Childhood Abuse and Psychiatric Disorders"; Kessler et al., "Childhood Adversities and Adult Psychopathology in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys"; Fergusson and Lynskey, "Physical Punishment/Maltreatment during Childhood and Adjustment in Young Adulthood."

⁶⁸ Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada reads as follows, "Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances."

⁶⁹ On 30 January 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in the case of *Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law v. Canada (Attorney General)*.

⁷⁰ Barnett, "The 'Spanking' Law: Section 43 of the Criminal Code."

⁷¹ Gershoff and Bitensky, "The Case against Corporal Punishment of Children."

⁷² Durrant, Rose-Krasnor, and Broberg, "Physical Punishment and Maternal Beliefs in Sweden and Canada."

sheds light particularly on white settler culture in Canada and collective beliefs about the nature of the relationship between adults and children.

If physical violence remains legal and to an extent culturally accepted in mainstream white settler Canada, what does this say about the level of acceptance of practices of parental control that do not involve physical violence? What are the more subtle methods by which parents and adults may assert their dominance and remind children that they exist in a hierarchy in which they are subordinate to adults? One of the ways I have regularly witnessed this more subtle assertion of domination, along with disrespect for the child's integrity and being, is through everyday commentary between parents about their children, even while the children are present. As a child plays, the parent stands nearby chatting with another parent: "Oh, he is being so bad lately, really acting up and causing us problems," "She's being a spoiled brat today," "He's always so aggressive", "She just has this bitchy side to her," or more patronizingly, "We all laughed when he tried to show us how he could put his shirt on; it was so cute and funny." These types of comments, and parents engaging in such conversations, are so normalized that it almost seems as though parents create a sense of connection with each other through labeling and putting down their own children. Similar practices in which adults specifically discuss young children in front of them, behaving as though they are unaware of the dialogue, have been documented in studies of childcare centers.⁷³ The act of talking about the child in front of them as though they were not there, especially when the content is derogatory or patronizing, is an inherently oppressive assertion of adult dominance.

Another example of this kind of less overt parental domination is via looks, tone of voice and body language.⁷⁴ I have witnessed myself directing a sharp, stern look towards my daughter when I disagree with something she is doing, a look that I learned well from my own mom and a look I also recognize on many other parents' faces. It is a look that says, "Stop what you're doing and do what I want now," a look that intends to convey silently and effortlessly that I, the adult, am in control, and I expect you, the child, to obey. As Alice Miller states, "facial expressions and tone of voice are very popular and often

⁷³ Ausdale and Feagin, *The First R*. Through ethnographic analysis of multiethnic daycare centers describes similar practices where adults specifically discuss young children in front of them, behaving as though they are unaware of the dialogue. In this study they describe this as one way that children pick up specific ideas about race and ethnicity from adults. See p. 174

⁷⁴ Miller, *For Your Own Good*.

unconsciously used methods,” quoting child-rearing texts that explain how the eye is more powerful than the mouth when it comes to control, and silence can have more force than words.⁷⁵ As I have become conscious of it, I recognize that these “controlling looks” prevent authentic communication with my daughter about what is going on for her in the moment, about her needs and mine. For this look to “work” also depends on my child being afraid of me directly, or afraid that I will withdraw my love and regard for her if she does not behave as I want her to. It demonstrates a conditional love and acceptance of who she is, even if verbally I say otherwise.

What do children experiencing these everyday, normalized forms of oppression and domination learn? From the perspective of analytic psychology, they are being actively shaped into repressing certain parts of themselves that they experience to be disliked and unwanted by and unlovable to their parents, on whose love they depend so wholeheartedly. This in turn contributes to the psychic conditions creating a “plug” into societal narratives that provide the scapegoats for their needed projection. Yet, these children are also learning subtle tactics to attempt to control and dominate others—for example, older siblings might learn to enact similar practices of domination towards their younger siblings or other kids. As children grow up, might there be a link between these childhood experiences and adult behaviours applied within the context of the hierarchies of domination that uphold white settler society, such as heteropatriarchy and racism?

Elizabeth Furniss describes frequent everyday forms of racism she calls “status domination” as revealed in her study of Euro-Canadian and Indigenous relations in Williams Lake:

Status domination operates through the shaming, the humiliation, and the denial of worth communicated in a variety of subtle and habitual practices: sharp glances, passing remarks, turned backs, verbal insults. These interpersonal modes of power and violence, when practiced over a long term against a population already made vulnerable through other modes of domination, have a profoundly demoralizing impact.⁷⁶

Her description of “subtle and habitual practices” points to the ways in which these forms of domination are rooted in the unconscious and in childhood socialization. Perhaps these white adults as children directly witnessed their parents relating to Indigenous peoples

⁷⁵ Miller. P. 37

⁷⁶ Furniss, *The Burden of History*. P. 132

through these habitual practices of status domination.⁷⁷ Yet, in addition, the insights of Fanon, Miller and Green suggest that perhaps the deeper emotional learning may come from their own direct experience with these practices of domination via their parents and other significant adults in their life in the intimate spaces of the family environment. The power to shape unconscious habitual behaviour lies in its early childhood imprinting, and the ability to enact it without recognizing its violence and harm lies in the reality that children remain attached to and loving of their parents even as they experience this dehumanization and oppression.

Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson in her journey to decolonize her own mothering specifically names the difference between Nishnaabeg parenting philosophies and practices, which emphasize gentleness, non-interference and parental modelling, and contemporary settler colonial parenting strategies, which emphasize control, domination and hierarchy.⁷⁸ One example she highlights is the widely recommended settler colonial parenting technique of offering children choices only when they don't matter, so they "feel" they have some power and control over their lives. She describes trying this with her children, asking them, "Would you like to wear your red pajamas or your blue ones?" and notes, "both my children immediately detected the manipulative and non-authentic nature of this 'choice' and of course chose to sleep naked, or wear all of their pajamas to bed."⁷⁹ "I grew up with the former parenting technique, and it was one recommended to me as I became a new parent. I found it slipping into my way of relating to my child easily, almost unconsciously. Before reading Simpson's work, I had never perceived of this parenting "technique" as manipulative; rather, I believed it was empowering for a child to be offered choices. I did not question the difference between offering authentic choices without an agenda, or offering choices to distract my daughter away from her desires or feelings, to get her to do what I wanted, or to let her "feel in control"—in other words, the difference between an authentic or a manipulative intention. In the specifics of this example from Simpson, I could recognize my own normalization of manipulation as a way to control a child, inherent to the many distraction/redirection techniques taught in

⁷⁷ Ausdale and Feagin, *The First R*. Describe through ethnographic study the ways in which from an early age, children are immersed in informal systems of racism that through their daily interactions they acquire techniques of relating with members of other racial and ethnic groups.

⁷⁸ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*. See p. 127—135.

⁷⁹ Simpson. P. 133

mainstream settler parenting practices. These practices rest on a kind of deception whereby we keep from children our true agenda, intention or desire and instead “trick” them into compliance or acceptance. It is an insidious kind of inauthentic communication.⁸⁰

I can see in myself that part of my tendency towards this is a desire to avoid the strong feelings of anger, frustration or sadness that may emerge from Fairsa if I tell her directly and authentically what my needs and limits are, and accept the fallout of her frustration because my needs and limits may not allow for her desires to be realized. Letting go of my fear of her emotions and reconnecting with my own authentic emotions, needs and boundaries is therefore a necessity to grow beyond an attachment to controlling pedagogical rules or parenting techniques.⁸¹ I am curious about the ways in which this letting go of fear and reconnecting with my own emotions supports the creation of a family environment in which we practice and experience a contextual and relational ethics, rather than the imposition of an external moral code of predetermined good/bad behaviours, qualities, or ways of being. In other words, when I stop focusing on directing my child away from bad ways of being and towards good, but rather focus on working with all those involved in any relational context to find the best possible situation of harmony based on all our needs, desires, limitations, boundaries, and so on, what does this mean, in an embodied, deeply embedded sense, for her developing worldview, including expectations and understandings of power and justice? If we learn first and foremost about ethics and justice in intimate relational family spaces, then how might we become more conscious, thoughtful and intentional about what is being passed on?

Culture of Emotion Repression, Emotional Maturity and Empathy

If part of the survival mechanism developed by children experiencing controlling and

⁸⁰ Gordon, *Roots of Empathy*. This inauthentic and deceptive communication also finds its way into the many false questions children are asked by parents, question in which the parent already knows the answer. See for example, Gordon’s discussion about authentic communication p. 129-137.

⁸¹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*. As Miller puts it: Parents who never learned as children to be aware of their own needs or to defend their own interests because this right was never granted to them will be uncertain in this regard for the rest of their life and consequently will become dependent on firm pedagogical rules. (p. 98).

oppressive parenting is to split off from parts of themselves in order to be accepted and loved, to disconnect from their emotional selves, then this disconnection is furthered by the many direct everyday messages by which children in mainstream white settler culture are told that their emotions are bad or unwanted. Until Fairisa was born, I had no idea how difficult it would be for me to be present with her crying, to listen to and accept her strong displays of emotions, her anger, frustration and sadness. I had trouble seeing her vulnerability; I wanted to soothe her or distract her from these feelings, and it was as though my success as a mother depended upon it. When I spoke with other white settler parents, this was not an uncommon experience. I tried to figure out what she needed and comfort her in every way I could, yet, even when I had done all I could to meet her needs, it was incredibly difficult to just let her be with those strong feelings, to remain present, without anxiety and fear but with acceptance. What was she learning in these earliest moments? How is she being shaped by my conscious or unconscious embodied messages that her emotions are something to be feared, something that causes anxiety in me, to whom she looks for love and acceptance? Why is it so difficult to be present with her strong emotions?

As I became conscious of my own tendency towards attempting to suppress “negative emotions,” and through talking with and witnessing the reactions of parents and caregivers, I began to realize how prolific and insidious this emotional suppression is within white settler society. When I took Fairisa to a local daycare a couple of mornings a week, she was visibly upset, angry and sad at my leaving her and no doubt felt powerless in the situation. I let the caregiver know I would rather she comfort Fairisa and allow her to express her emotions of sadness at my leaving, yet no matter how many times I had this conversation, the caregiver invariably reverted to: “Don’t cry, don’t cry, here, look at this!” waving a flashy toy. Whether in the harsh tones of a “tough love approach” or in the constant lulls of an anxious parent, babies and young children are constantly hearing the words “don’t cry,” “there’s no need to cry” or “you’re okay, you’re okay” when clearly they are not.⁸² Parents often further model their discomfort, fear and anxiety of

⁸² Gordon, *Roots of Empathy*. Gordon also specifically describes experiences with contemporary parenting practices in Canada where children’s ability to express themselves through crying is repressed, and parents directly or indirectly teach the child that this kind of emotional expression is bad, or undesirable as it causes anger, frustration or anxiety in the parent. See p 184–185.

strong emotions by never crying or expressing their sadness in front of children. Rather, the assumption is that children will feel insecure or afraid if they witness their parents' "weakness," when in reality we are teaching through example that emotional expression and vulnerability—so called "weakness"—is something to be avoided or hidden.⁸³

This tendency to suppress children's "negative" emotions evolves as children grow and they are, at times, taught to repress their need to verbally share unwanted feelings. For example, the teaching "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all" is a common refrain from parents and teachers in mainstream white settler culture, and something I heard as a child.⁸⁴ While for many the conscious intention of this teaching is to encourage kindness towards others, it is also a direct message to the child that being nice and polite is more important than authentic expression, and it guides the child to suppress rather than find healthy expression and outlet for anger, aggression, frustration, hatred and other "not nice" emotions and desires. As put by Miller, an "[a]ppropriate form of aggression is unattainable for many people who have grown up with the absurd belief that a person can have nothing but kind, good and meek thoughts and at the same time be honest and authentic."⁸⁵

How does this denial of babies' and young children's emotions, and the lack of modeling of authentic emotional expression, affect their developing emotional maturity and literacy, their ability to recognize, experience and respect their own emotional and embodied knowledge? How does this, in turn, affect their ability to nurture empathy for themselves and others? Here I define empathy as the capacity to feel not just for oneself, but to feel with and for others.⁸⁶ Empathy researcher Brené Brown says being empathic is to dig deep into our own emotional experiences as a way of connecting with what the other person is feeling and then express that back.⁸⁷ This understanding of empathy indicates that we have to be in touch with our own feelings in order to be able to understand and feel with others; we can only create real connection if we are brave enough to sit with our own vulnerability. I center this basic emotional capacity as a

⁸³ Gordon. See p. 133

⁸⁴ This teaching is sometimes attributed to the bible in Ephesians 4:29.

⁸⁵ Miller, *For Your Own Good*. P. 265

⁸⁶ For discussion of definitions see: McCollough, "Truth and Ethics in School Reform"; Gordon, *Roots of Empathy* (Chapter 2).

⁸⁷ Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me (but It Isn't)*.

starting point in working towards what educational researcher Thomas McCollough calls moral imagination: the capacity to empathize with others and to discern creative possibilities for ethical action. This is in contrast to what Paulette Regan in her book *Unsettling the Settler Within* has called ‘colonial empathy.’ Regan explains colonial empathy to be a kind of sympathetic listening on the part of settlers, a short lived-empathy which serves only “to confirm their own humanitarianism” while “failing to generate a sense of moral responsibility” that would lead to material change.⁸⁸ Settlers’ colonial empathy leads to a continued fixation with solving the “Indian problem” rather than looking within ourselves and asking: what is it we might need to change? Colonial empathy is focused more on escaping settler guilt and shame rather than truly feeling with and desiring the well-being of another. As settlers we must ask, what are the roots of this strong power of guilt and shame over our emotional lives? What are the roots of a capacity to truly feel-with and for others?

Mary Gordon, an educator, child advocate and parenting researcher, based on her experience with parents and children in Canadian public schools developed a program for classrooms called *Roots of Empathy*. She recognized early on in her research and work with children that the relationship between the child and the parent is the most powerful teaching relationship there is. When children do not experience empathy in this relationship but rather learn from it that their needs don’t matter, that adults cannot really be trusted and that emotional expressiveness is to be feared, then they will develop a disconnect from their own emotions and voice that reverberates in all their relationships. In Gordon’s words, “This failure of empathy at best leads to complicity and apathy; at worst, it leads to cruelty and violence.”⁸⁹ Gordon defines emotional literacy as “the ability to recognize, understand, cope with and express our emotions in appropriate ways.”⁹⁰ This emotional literacy is essential to the development of empathy, the ability to find the humanity in ourselves and in others, something children can only develop if they’ve had real and repeated experiences of empathy in their daily lives. Empathy is not taught by telling children to be nice or to respect others, but rather in the day-to-day moments in which parents have the patience to listen to children and children’s feelings

⁸⁸ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*. P. 46

⁸⁹ Gordon, *Roots of Empathy*. P. 31

⁹⁰ Gordon. P. 177

rather than repress these feelings through various methods, ranging from threats and humiliation to distraction and manipulation. Recognizing how widespread the experience of limited emotional freedom and empathy is for children in mainstream Canadian culture, Mary Gordon's Roots of Empathy program was created to address the resulting emotional illiteracy among school-aged children. The Roots of Empathy program brings babies and their caregivers into the classroom so children can witness, relate to and learn directly to interpret the baby's free expression of their feelings and needs, and a caregiver's loving, empathic response. Through doing so, the child has the chance to reconnect with and begin to understand their own emotional reactions and, in turn, those of others.

Gordon suggests a connection between empathy and the ability to practice an ethics of altruism or peace.⁹¹ Cree scholar Willie Ermine also makes a direct link between empathy and ethics. In fact, his definition of ethics is "the capacity to know what harms or enhances the well-being of sentient creatures."⁹² How can we know what harms or enhances another's well-being unless we are able to be present with another's emotional, verbal and embodied expressions, messages that share with others their needs in relation to their own well-being? Importantly, Ermine also points out that this capacity is essential to ethical relationships not only with other humans, but with all sentient beings. Emotional literacy is a step towards this empathic capacity required for ethical relationships, and yet, unless we are able to express ourselves emotionally, our own literacy is stunted.

Why is emotional repression pervasively passed on between generations in white settler culture? As Alice Miller states: "The results of this struggle against strong emotions are so disastrous because the suppression begins in infancy, i.e. before the child's self has had a chance to develop."⁹³ I witness in my own natural/unconscious ways of parenting, and in my parents' ways of relating to their granddaughter, the normalized and habitual ways in which I was distracted away from my emotions, or anxiously "saved" in my vulnerability as a young baby and child. In many subtle ways, I was taught I was most loveable—and least emotionally threatening—when happy. If my own strong

⁹¹ Gordon. P. vxi

⁹² Ermine, "The Ethical Space of Engagement." P. 195

⁹³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*. P. 27

emotions and vulnerability created anxiety in my parents, it followed I would want to rid myself of these feelings, to secure a loving and emotionally safe parental relationship. To some degree, I also lacked modeling of authentic emotional expression without guilt or shame, and I continue to struggle to connect with my own inner knowing, including emotions, needs, boundaries and intuition. This shaping of my intimate emotional and psychic self through socialization in an emotionally repressive culture has led to an adult reality in which I continue to experience guilt, shame, anxiety and fear when strong emotions arise and I cannot “get myself under control.” To what extent do I unconsciously project this culturally labeled “weakness”, my own vulnerability and emotionality, onto “others”? Fairisa, as a child, becomes a potential object for projection, and each time I unconsciously do this to her, I am passing on this psychic inheritance. Being the one who comforts, who takes away the pain, who “fixes problems” can also be a form of control. A parent controlling a child in this way perhaps even manipulates their children’s vulnerability to meet their own need to feel powerful. If children are one possible scapegoat for this projection and oppression, so too are those whom dominant cultural narratives have characterized as vulnerable, weak, emotional and childlike.

Gender and the Feedback between our Neuroses and Institutional Oppression

How might gender add another layer to this understanding? As feminists have long pointed out, the opposition between reason and emotion, thought and feeling, mind and body, rationality and irrationality is consistently applied as a polarizing stereotype between men and women, and associating the feminine with feeling is used as a way to dismiss women. Women are therefore at once the potential objects of men’s projection of an unwanted emotionality, yet also potentially raised in the same emotionally repressive culture, especially as young children. Girls tend to be encouraged to express their emotions more than boys, but they are also expected to be rational, logical and unemotional if they are to be recognized and respected in the patriarchal institutions that organize white settler society. It is well recognized that boys in mainstream culture in North America receive powerful training in dominant masculinities, expectations and

ideas about manhood that remain attached to the idea that men should not be emotional.⁹⁴ For example, in *Real Boys: Rescuing our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, researchers William Pollack and Mary Pipher demonstrate the ways mainstream contemporary parents are encouraged to treat boys as little men and raise them through a toughening process that drives their true emotions underground.⁹⁵ Similarly, Calvin Sandborn, a journalist and environmental lawyer, has written *Becoming the Kind Father*, in which he looks at the “boy code” in mainstream culture. This boy code teaches not only that boys need to keep their emotions in check and reject all that is “feminine,” but also that violence is an acceptable response to emotional upset.⁹⁶ The lessons of the boy code suggest that when boys project the unwanted repressed emotional self onto the “other,” they may be more likely than girls/women to repress this other through aggressive physical or verbal violence.

In what ways does gender socialization for girls in settler colonial culture influence the practices of oppression that we may enact as adults in a white supremacist society? Cindy Blackstock, Gitksan activist for child welfare and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, has written about the patronizing philosophies that pervade social service professions and practices and how these negatively impact Indigenous children. She explains that social workers tend to bring to their work an assumption of “pious motivation and effect” and a “desire to improve others.” These assumptions are harmful in that they prevent an ability to see the negative outcomes resulting directly or indirectly from social work practice with Indigenous children and families.⁹⁷ Women dominate social work as a profession, like many of the professions often called “helping professions.” For some, perhaps especially white women, might the draw of social work and other social service or “helping” professions be connected to the unconscious need for avenues to project vulnerability onto “Others”? Might focusing on helping “Others” also be an escape from facing the

⁹⁴ Sandborn, *Becoming the Kind Father*; Kindlon and Thompson, *Raising Cain*; Pollack and Pipher, *Real Boys*.

⁹⁵ Pollack and Pipher, *Real Boys*.

⁹⁶ Sandborn, *Becoming the Kind Father*.

⁹⁷ Blackstock, “The Occasional Evil of Angels.”

fear of addressing the oppressive narratives and practices, such as sexism and patriarchy, that shape our own intimate relationships, families and communities?

Gender socialization in white settler families influences the aspects of ourselves that we have learned to repress, the “Others” whom we tend to objectify, the methods by which we learn to oppress, and how we escape and avoid our own fears, guilt and shame. These are embedded in the broader white settler cultural narratives about what is good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral, constructing our very personalities, preferences, tendencies, habitual practices and ways of being. As put by Margaret Green:

It is the internalization of our personal experiences of oppression which perhaps cause us to feel inadequate, ugly, ridiculous, invalidated, objectified, fearful or terrified. If these experiences remain unresolved, we then project on to the external world. Who or what we perceive as embodying a threat to our existence, be it personal, social or economic, is very much determined by institutionalized prejudice and prevailing myths and stereotypes which serve to manipulate and fuel our fears.⁹⁸

How has each of our unique plugs into the institutionalized dominant prejudices and prevailing myths and stereotypes of our culture developed? What do we need to understand about our own childhood, family cultures and experiences, and the collective unconscious and its dominant narratives, stereotypes and moral codes, to gain insight into our plug, perhaps thereby weakening it?

Understanding the unconscious, irrational and emotional roots of racism and oppression also means recognizing that racism has a compulsive quality to it. Racism as a neurotic defense of the ego requires that the racist response be compulsively repeated, even against all will and reason.⁹⁹ Why? Well, because each of these racist projections provides a means of defending against my own lack, my own insecurity.¹⁰⁰ The deeper this lack and insecurity, the more energy and attention required, the more compulsive is the drive to find external “Others” to project onto, repressing in them what we fear to look at in ourselves. Elizabeth Furniss describes the ways in which Euro-Canadians subject Indigenous people to surveillance and scrutiny in bizarre ways, in which the most

⁹⁸ Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.” P. 196

⁹⁹ See Jung, *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious* P. 102 for a discussion of the paranoia or compulsiveness involved in neurosis, and Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination”; Thomas, “Protecting the Sacred Cycle: Xwulmuxw Slhunlheni and Leadership”; Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*.

¹⁰⁰ Hook, “Fanon and the Psychoanalysis of Racism.” P. 134

mundane acts are transformed into highly meaningful events constituting proof of Euro-Canadian assumptions about Indigenous people.¹⁰¹ This surveillance and scrutiny could be understood as a compulsive unconscious search to find that which the Euro-Canadian wants to project out of themselves and onto the Indigenous person as an external “Other.” Might some white settler colonial institutions, created and grown in the context of a powerful Canadian narrative of Indigenous inferiority and white settler superiority, provide avenues in which neurotic drives can be carried out, ways in which we can “legitimately” enact a compulsive need to observe and scrutinize Indigenous people or other Others? As put by Green, “Our neuroses feed the institutions, and the way oppression is institutionalized feeds our neuroses.”¹⁰²

Yet, even if our own neuroses are not being directly fed by these institutionalizations of oppression, we may struggle to stand up against institutionalized injustice if we inherently accept and normalize many of the institutionalized practices of oppression that mirror the practices of oppression we experienced as children, and if we remain cut off from the emotional, embodied knowing that guides us in the compassion required for ourselves and others to recognize the impacts of this injustice. Rational analyses of these dynamics may create intellectual understanding of institutionalized oppression. However, to speak out about and intentionally act against these injustices requires that we not only understand them intellectually but also have the emotional strength, self-confidence and courage to go against strong societal pressures to conform, to act in accordance with the behavioural expectations of mainstream social norms. Low self-esteem and lack of inner emotional independence, a result of childhood survival mechanisms of splitting off and separating from our authentic selves, become ripe ground for ideological attachment, submission to hierarchies of authority and cultural dominance, rather than the development of relationships in which people are understood and related to in context, through direct experience, relationships and authentic communication.

The emotional roots of our racism are tied to the particularities of our childhood experiences of oppression, characteristics, emotions and desires that we have learned are unwanted parts of ourselves, and the interweaving of this shaping of our psyche with

¹⁰¹ Furniss, *The Burden of History*. P. 108-109.

¹⁰² Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.” P. 197

broader dominant cultural narratives. If Fanon's work guides us towards understanding how our personal ego and shadow are linked with the collective unconscious of white settler culture, then the insights of women, such as a number of my Stó:lō and settlers mentors, scholars such as Leanne Simpson, analytic psychologists such as Alice Miller and Margaret Green, and educators such as Mary Gordon, among others, have helped me to situate this emotional and psychological development of the child specifically in the immense influence of parent-child or caregiver-child relationships. The cultural beliefs and philosophies we carry about the innate nature of babies/children and the roles of children and parents in the family in turn shape these everyday parent-child relationships. If we are to begin to question these beliefs, they first need to become visible. For myself, these beliefs became visible as I began to compare white settler beliefs about children and parenting with the beliefs shared with me by Stó:lō women in my life, and in the writings of Indigenous women about motherhood and parenting.

Stó:lō Teachings, Christianity, and Contemporary White Settler Cultural Beliefs about Children and Parenting

Children come into this world with gifts from the other side. These gifts are precious and the children are our treasure. The guardianship of our treasure demands that we are directed by their spirit and their spirits intention. It is therefore our responsibility to enable them to reach their fullest sentient being potential.¹⁰³

Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láq

I began to grow a friendship and mentorship relationship with Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láq, as I attended her Halq'eméylem language classes starting in the fall of 2012. In addition to her passion for Indigenous languages, and for teaching, she is an established and talented artist, a creator of beautiful clay vessels and sculptures, and through these avenues also a guide for students of creative process. She shared the above words with me as part of her vision to create and support land and Halq'eméylem based learning experiences for parents and children. For her, babies are sacred; they are closer to the spiritual world than adults and carry sacred gifts, s̓xo:mes – gifts from our ancestors. Her beliefs are echoed in writings of Indigenous women scholars such as Robina Thomas

¹⁰³ Shared by Lumlamelut (Laura Wee Láy Láq) in e-mail about her land-based learning initiative for children and parents named The'i:t te sqwa:l - The Truth speakers, April 23, 2016.

Wenona Hall, and Leanne Simpson and are shared implicitly and explicitly in my relationships with a number of Stó:lō mothers and friends.¹⁰⁴ As put by Simpson:

In pre-colonial Nishnaabeg nation, children were highly respected *people*, valued for their insights, their humour, and their contributions to families and communities at each stage of their lives. Children were seen as Gifts, and parenting was an honour. Coming from the spirit-world at birth, children were closer to that world than their adult counterparts, and were therefore considered to have greater spiritual power—a kind of power highly respected amongst the Nishnaabeg. Adults had a lot to learn from these small teachers.¹⁰⁵

As I listened to these insights from Indigenous women about the nature of children and the role of parents, I began to ask myself in an everyday sense in relation to Fairsa: Am I living a responsibility to enable her to reach her fullest expression of her being? Am I bearing witness to her gifts? To her as a gift? Just asking these questions called me to a different state of being as a mom, and a different acknowledgement of what I inherently tend towards as a new parent. I was called to a place of greater presence, mindfulness, sensitivity and emotional awareness. I said less, became more consciously observant and began to reflect more on my own behaviours, intentions and emotions, rather than on what she should or should not be doing.

Why did this feel different, perhaps even awkward, unnatural and challenging? What are the deeply socialized cultural beliefs, values and philosophies that I carry about how to relate to children that make it feel different to try to act on a belief in the child as a sacred gift, and parenting as an honour and responsibility to nurture their spirit? Where do the cultural beliefs I am challenging with this questioning stem from? Alice Miller writes about the influence of Christian beliefs and teachings on what she calls “poisonous pedagogy” as a parenting philosophy and practice. At the core of this poisonous pedagogy is the belief that adults/parents are inherently superior to children, and their duty and responsibility is to shape children into good Christian people. This implies an assumption that the baby/child arrives in this world with a deficit, a lack, or perhaps even more strongly an inherent sinfulness needing correcting, shaping, control and repression.

¹⁰⁴ Victor, “X̱ex̱a:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination. See for example, Victor’s discussion of the autonomy afforded to individuals in Stó:lō culture including in parenting practices (p. 289).; Thomas, “Protecting the Sacred Cycle: Xwulmuxw Shunlheni and Leadership” See P. 88; Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*.

¹⁰⁵ Victor, “X̱ex̱a:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 123

Children are expected to obey and respect their parents and to accept that whatever is done to them by their parents is “for their own good.”¹⁰⁶

Alice Miller points to Christian teachings in the Bible that share these basic beliefs about children and parenting. Proverbs 13:24 is perhaps the most often cited Bible verse that relates to Christian beliefs about the role of parents in relation to children. The King James Bible version states, “Thou shalt beat him [the child] with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell,” while the Common English Bible version states, “Those who withhold the rod hate their children, but the one who loves them applies discipline.” Not only does this endorse physical punishment as an appropriate way to control and shape a child’s character, but it also contains an underlying assumption that the child’s character is inherently flawed, sinful, that his soul must be delivered from hell and the parents have a crucial role to play in this delivery. Some interpretations, such as Proverbs 3:12, directly link parental love with discipline and control. In this belief system, those who control and discipline their children are parents who care for them. Parenting *is* control, correction and discipline. Proverbs 3:12 states: “For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth.” In the hierarchical and patriarchal family home, the parents, and especially the father, are guided to correct children as an expression of their love.

These Christian beliefs about the appropriate roles of, and relationships between, children and parents, when applied to Indigenous families led to, and continues at times to lead to, white settler interpretations that Indigenous parents are not caring for their children because they parent from a different belief system. As put by Simpson:

Colonizers mistakenly interpreted (and continue to interpret) Nishnaabeg parenting philosophies as “a lack of parenting” because of the absence of punishment, coercion, manipulation, criticism, authoritarian power and hierarchy.¹⁰⁷

Christian beliefs about children and the “right” roles of parents/adult caregivers were part of the Eurocentric belief system that led to the theft, incarceration, abuse and murder of Indigenous children in Church-run, government-funded Indian residential schools. Of course, the theft of children and harshness, abuse and violence within Indian residential

¹⁰⁶Miller, *For Your Own Good*. Miller summarizes the main beliefs driving what she calls “poisonous pedagogy” on p. 58-61 after reviewing Child-rearing guidebooks rooted in Christian beliefs and teachings.

¹⁰⁷Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*. P. 123

schools was driven not only by Christian beliefs about the right way to relate to children in order to “deliver their souls from hell” but also by racist narratives of Indigenous inferiority, and the conscious colonial purposes of cultural genocide and land dispossession. This makes any direct comparison between the experiences of violence and oppression of white Christian children by their own parents in their own family homes and Indigenous children in residential schools offensive and inappropriate. My aim is not to compare on the whole, but rather to ask what we might come to understand about ourselves as white settlers in considering that the Christian cultural beliefs about children and parenting that in part shaped the institutionalized violence of residential schools remain present, and to differing degrees influential, in contemporary white settler culture.

Social justice educator Anne Bishop in her book *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People*, points to the similarities between residential schools and boarding schools for elite white boys, identifying, like Margaret Green, that childhood experiences of oppression prepare children to function in their “place” within the societal hierarchies of power. As Bishop explains:

Abuse is sometimes used deliberately to teach children to fit into the system of oppression when they become adults. Two examples of this are boarding schools for upper-class young men and Indian residential schools. In the case of boarding schools for upper-class young men, the boys are separated from their families, particularly from their mothers, at a very young age. The lessons of repressed emotion, hierarchy, competition, and obedience are reinforced constantly. Above all, in many of these schools there is a tradition of “hazing,” or the “fag” system as it is called in the U.K. Older students are encouraged to torment and abuse younger students. In school, then, young boys first experience oppression, then later are in a position to oppress others. This is excellent training for young men who will some day hold power in industry, government, the justice system, and the education system. They are being trained to wield power and authority in the very institutions that maintain the oppressive status quo... The second example, Indian residential schools, is one of child abuse being used to force a people to internalize what their conquerors thought to be their rightful place in a racist, sexist, class-stratified society.¹⁰⁸

Many Indigenous parents today are healing from and shedding the influence of these toxic beliefs and practices and resurging their own Indigenous philosophies about

¹⁰⁸ Bishop, *Becoming an Ally*. P. 34

children and the role of parents and adults in relation to children. For example, Leanne Simpson has written about pre-colonial Nishnaabeg nation practices and philosophies in relation to children, highlighting the importance of parental non-interference, encouraging children to have control over their lives and freedom of choice. She points out that raising children in a context where their consent, physically and intellectually, is not just required but valued goes a long way toward undoing the replication of colonial gender violence.¹⁰⁹ Yet, she also acknowledges that in contemporary mainstream settler culture, allowing children to have freedom of choice in what is typically a detached, individualistic, adult environment can put children in danger. Decolonizing parenting isn't simply a matter of changing the behaviours and beliefs of parents but also requires nurturing environments where children are highly connected and attached to their emotionally available parents and extended family, and the culture is inherently child friendly.¹¹⁰

While Indigenous people, perhaps especially Indigenous women, are leading the work of decolonizing parenting practices and family cultures introduced through residential schools, to what extent do some of these same beliefs and practices about children and parenting that shaped residential schools remain within our contemporary white settler communities? As white settlers, turning the lens on ourselves and learning from the truth-telling of Indigenous survivors of residential schools means looking deeply at the ways some of the roots of the belief systems that governed residential schools remain alive and well in our families and communities, in our beliefs and relationships towards children. Writers, researchers and advocates, some from within Christian communities, are beginning to name the way the Bible's teachings, especially when literally interpreted, can lead to abusive environments for children, and the detrimental effects this has on the children as adults.¹¹¹ Of course, the degree to which and in what ways these teachings are adhered to, understood and applied varies among Christian community and families, including those who are non-practicing but retain culturally a Christian heritage. In Stó:lō homelands there is a large Christian community with a strong

¹⁰⁹ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*. P. 123

¹¹⁰ Simpson. P. 133

¹¹¹ Greven Jr., *Spare the Child*; Heimlich, *Breaking Their Will*; Capps, *The Child's Song*; Nelsen and Krociczak, "Parental Use of the Threat 'God Will Punish.'"

political and cultural influence, including a growing evangelical Christian movement, which to a large degree advocates literal interpretations of scripture.¹¹² For example, Northview Church in Abbotsford, part of the mega-church movement, in their public statement of faith on their website writes both that “we value living in obedience to the authority of Scripture” and “Christian parents should nurture their children through exemplary living, prayer, worship, instruction in God’s Word, and godly discipline,” citing the relevant scripture.¹¹³

There are also many white settlers who are non-practicing or non-believers who have, like myself, left behind an active Christian religious practice in recent generations or in our own lifetime. Alice Miller’s description of poisonous pedagogy aptly describes my maternal grandfather, who was raised in and attached to the Catholic Church; he believed in his authority and hierarchy over children and the acceptable use of physical punishment and threats of violence to control his children’s behaviour. A generation later, my parents, having left behind any explicit Christian religious practice or commitment to Christian-based community in their own lives chose to allow me and my siblings to find our own spiritual path in life. This has often led me to separate myself from Christian communities and Christian belief systems. Yet, a myth of having been raised in a “secular” family is a simplistic view of the deep and enduring ways in which the Christian religion is embedded mainstream white settler culture in Canada.

Christian teachings, practices and community life have shaped the very psyche, subjectivity and ways of being of my ancestors, and this psychic and emotional inheritance is passed on implicitly whether or not a conscious attachment to Christianity remains. Both my parents were raised in Christian homes—my mother’s a more overtly Roman Catholic Christian practice as part of her father’s French Canadian traditions, while my father’s family kept up a façade of Christianity for political reasons within the Canadian Air Force. A generation before that on my father’s side, my great-grandfather was a Baptist preacher. Furthermore, although my parents did not identify as Christians, I

¹¹² Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*.

¹¹³ Northview Community Church, “Mission Core Values—Northview Community Church.” Core values state, “Christian parents should nurture their children through exemplary living, prayer, worship, instruction in God’s Word, and godly discipline.” Scripture passages cited: *Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-24; Prov. 5:18-19; Mal. 2:13-16; Mt. 5:31-32; 19:4-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:22-23; 6:4; Heb. 13:4; Rom 1:18-32*

attended Christian schools, as my parents believed these schools were of better quality academically. Not only in these explicit ways, but also in the many subtle ways that Christian thinking and epistemology shapes my worldview, I remain strongly influenced by Christianity culturally. I now recognize the belief in my own secularization as a barrier to understanding how Christian beliefs and cultural practices and the Christian worldview influence my most intimate ways of being. Accepting the depth of these Christian roots to my socialization is a rejection of the white liberal belief in individualism, a belief in the limitless ability to be a rational, free, self-determining agent—an ability that as white settlers we tend to hold dear and yet often deny for others.

Just as I naively and simplistically understood myself to be secularized and non-Christian, the potential exists for secular scientific theories to retain underlying assumptions and methods that in fact remain rooted in Christian beliefs. For example, one of the most prevalent theories of mainstream psychology to influence parenting and education in North America is the theory of behaviourism.¹¹⁴ Behaviourism remains a profoundly influential theory reflected in parenting guidebooks, educational theories and teaching practices. In its popular understanding it is a belief that an effective approach to conditioning or training children and adults is to reward desired behaviours and punish undesired behaviours.¹¹⁵ Parental positive reinforcement is considered the cornerstone of contemporary approaches wherein the child is rewarded with verbal praise or affection (e.g., “good job” or “good girl”) or something they desire (e.g., sticker, candy, other reward) for complying with a parent’s desires, such as using the potty, helping, staying quiet, sitting still or answering a question correctly. Aversive conditioners, such as ignoring the child, reprimands and timeouts, are also considered necessary to reduce undesirable behaviour, such as disruptions, aggression and non-compliance. While debate exists in the fields of education, psychology and parent coaching about whether this is an effective long-term behavioural management technique, it remains a dominant and widespread approach in parenting and in childhood education. Yet, what underlying assumptions about the parent–child relationship and about children does this theory contain?

¹¹⁴ Troutman, *Integrating Behaviourism and Attachment Theory in Parent Coaching*. See p. 6

¹¹⁵ Troutman.

Analogous to the Christian teachings pointed to by Alice Miller, in behaviourism the parents/teachers are assumed to be superior to the child and have the right, if not the duty and moral responsibility, to shape children into what they have determined are “good” ways of being and discourage them from engaging in undesired or “bad” behaviours and ways of being. Children are told that if you do the right things, display the correct behaviours, you will be rewarded and avoid punishment. Parents are told to manipulate children through the calculated use of praise and rewards on the one hand, and the withdrawal of love, affection and acknowledgment—and at times the use of more direct punishment—on the other. These roles and expectations for parents and children are paralleled in many Christian understandings of the relationship between God and his people. Educational theorist Andrew Johnson points out the relationship between behaviourism and Christian beliefs and practice:

If you believe the right things and display the correct behaviours you will be rewarded with delicious metaphorical pellets which include: feelings of piety, social acceptance, special divine favor and the prospect of going to heaven when you die. If you don’t believe the right things and display behaviours that are outside of the defined norm, you’re in store for a goodly set of aversive conditioners in the form of guilt, shunning or social distancing, divine punishment and the prospect of going directly to the fiery pits of hell when you die.¹¹⁶

He continues: “It’s not a question of whether this behaviouristic element is present in traditional Christian perspectives; rather, it is a matter of the degree to which it is present.¹¹⁷” Native American post-colonial psychologists Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran have also highlighted the inherited Christian assumptions and beliefs that are present within contemporary mainstream psychology, writing that “mainstream psychology is the enforcement branch of the secularized Judeo-Christian myth.”¹¹⁸

To what degree has this secularized Judeo-Christian myth, translated through mainstream psychology, remained central to the ideas of mainstream white settler culture and specifically parenting—and in turn, what impact do these beliefs and practices have on the emotional and psychological development of children? How does this emotional and psychological development then shape our relationships with others as we become

¹¹⁶ Johnson, *Drinking From the Empty Cup*. (p ?)

¹¹⁷ Johnson.

¹¹⁸ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. P. 7

adults? If compassion and an ability to relate on a human-to-human level, rather than in a hierarchical or dominance relationship over others, are critical to ethical relationships of solidarity across difference, do these Christian cultural beliefs about children and parent-child relationships nurture the possibility for these qualities or undermine them?

Rather than scapegoat Christianity, mainstream psychology and behaviourism, or the parenting of previous generations, my aim in sharing this narrative is to seek an understanding of myself through understanding the culture that I was born into and remain deeply steeped in. There are of course many ways that white settlers parents and communities, whether they understand themselves to be Christian or not, relate to these Biblical teachings, to behaviourism, and to a basic disposition towards a belief that parenting is about correcting and shaping children. There is no monolithic Christianity or white settler parenting culture. Some examples of significant influential alternatives within white settler culture include the theories of attachment parenting,¹¹⁹ the practices of those following the philosophy of Resources for Infant Educators, based on the writings of paediatrician Magda Gerber,¹²⁰ Mary Gordon's work in the Roots of Empathy program,¹²¹ and the influential writings of educational and parenting theorist Alfie Kohn, who argues for and articulates what an unconditional practice of love in parenting can look like.¹²² To differing degrees these alternative approaches and theories also make linkages between our parenting and cultures in our families and the ways in which oppressive structures are upheld and perpetuated in society at large.

I can see in my parents their efforts to challenge the conditions of their own childhoods and create a family environment where their children were relatively safer to emotionally express themselves and be witnessed and appreciated for their unique being—a compassionate environment that contributed to the possibility of me walking this path today. I can both honour this truth and overturn a simplistic, idealistic story of a “good” childhood thereby refusing to minimize the effects of a culture of hierarchical and dominating adult-child relationships on my emotional development, and in turn my own capacity to relate in humanizing, compassionate ways to others and my own daughter.

¹¹⁹ Sears and Sears, *The Attachment Parenting Book*.

¹²⁰ Gerber and Johnson, *Your Self-Confident Baby*.

¹²¹ Gordon, *Roots of Empathy*.

¹²² Kohn, *Unconditional Parenting*.

What does making space for and thickening this alternative narrative of my own childhood and white settler childhoods more generally suggest about the possibility of where we might go from here?

Bodies and Shadows: Pathways towards Emotional Transformation

At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child. It is through self-consciousness and renunciation, through a permanent tension of his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world. Superiority? Inferiority? Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?¹²³

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Fanon's psychological understanding of colonial racism suggests we struggle to relate authentically in human-to-human ways with others if we do not experience ourselves as whole, if we have developed our emotional and psychological capacities, our very subjectivities and personalities such that we are not fully capable of relating to another without projecting pieces of ourselves onto them. To achieve wholeness and to release the affective energy at the root of neurotic behaviours involves taking the risk to look at, to bring into consciousness, our internalized "Other," our personal shadow, which is inherently both uniquely ours and interwoven with the collective shadow of our cultural group in our specific historical-political context. We must engage in a process of historical honesty—the histories of our families, communities and cultures in relation to the colonial history of Canada, but also the personal history of our own oppression and experiences in childhood, reconnecting with the parts of ourselves that we denied expression, releasing the emotions that we have repressed, and developing our own capacity for compassion towards ourselves and, in turn, towards others. A serious barrier to this process is the idealization of one's own childhood and one's own parents, and the guilt induced in going to this place.

Looking towards these emotional roots requires beginning with an assumption that oppressive behaviours are in part rooted in the unconscious and cannot be wholly eradicated by rational arguments. Further, it requires accepting that our socialization into an oppressor/colonizer role in white settler colonial society has emotionally painful and

¹²³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. P. 206

deeply limiting implications for how we can be in the world. Working towards our own freedom from this pain, and freedom from the relational limits and barriers it creates both within our own families and communities and with Indigenous people and “other Others,” is a healthy source of motivation for undertaking this work. Becoming a mom, and nurturing my relationship with my daughter, has also stimulated an exposure to my own neuroses, anxieties and fears, a direct witnessing and participation in the perpetuation of a cultural inheritance as it transfers not only in my intellect, in what I have been explicitly taught, but in my embodied emotions, developing my unconscious and habitual character, personality and subjectivity. In learning to practice a non-dominating relationship with my daughter, in choosing to look into myself when I am drawn into controlling her, I am also freeing myself to relate more authentically in a human-to-human way with all others in my life. I am freeing myself by holding a mirror to my neuroses, weakening their power over me.

In what spaces and through what practices can white settler individuals and collectives feel safe to reflect on the childhood roots of our own pain and oppression, and our own experiences of oppressing others, thereby releasing the emotions associated with this pain? How might these spaces and practices be created and integrated into intentional decolonizing education efforts for white settlers? How might parenting and our parent/caregiver–child relationships be a place of focus in this work? Given typical mainstream white settler repression of emotional expression and vulnerability, these spaces are difficult to create. Margaret Green’s work provides an example through her group sessions for white women exploring the roots of their oppressor role in upholding and enacting racism. For these sessions, she chooses a space in which emotional sharing is more naturally perceived to be on the agenda, such as in her case a therapy centre. Green also advocates that where this emotional piece of transforming the systemic roots of racism and oppression is the focus, the group should be made up of only those from the oppressor group—in other words a “white only” group. In Green’s cases, she worked specifically with white women, a decision that allowed safety for the women to explore their racism and oppressor roles towards people of colour and their own experiences of oppression as girls in childhood and as women in a patriarchal society. As Green states:

Emotional work is done in groups of white people for reasons of safety. Even in a

different context, for example mixed (black/white) work groups, I would present mainly a theoretical understanding of what's going on to the whole group, as opposed to working emotionally with them. As we have learned with men and women, it reinforces the oppression to re-create a situation in which the people targeted by the oppression are forced to be supportive or to listen to non-target people.¹²⁴

Similar to Green, in *Accountability and White Anti-Racist Organizing*, a collection of writings about white anti-racism work, activists argue that white-specific spaces allow for a focus on white culture, breaking the unarticulated “rules of whiteness,” including not speaking about white people as a group but rather focusing on people of colour and their particular needs and difficulties.¹²⁵ These authors argue that when white people take on an assumption that they are inherently untrustworthy, this often translates to people believing that spending time in white spaces reinforces racism. Rather, the result of this belief is that it can limit white people's ability to facilitate their own self-inquiry.¹²⁶

As I write this, I hear my own objections to the idea of white-only spaces, a voice that says, “As white settlers we need to feel uncomfortable, to be unsettled; how can this take place in a white-only group?” Yet, I now recognize this concern stems from a simplistic understanding of the processes of transformation that white settlers must undertake. We need to create many different types of spaces and experiences that call upon the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of transforming our white settler colonial subjectivities and the culture that reproduces them. Facing our own oppressor means facing our own oppression and inherently involves the expression of this pain and the repressed emotions—anger, sadness, shame—that went along with these experiences. “Unlearning” racism therefore involves the expression of this repressed pain. In Green's workshops, for example, women release this pain through talking, laughing, crying, trembling and storming about.¹²⁷

In a white settler culture deeply uncomfortable with the expression of strong emotions, understanding how to create these spaces and possibilities for emotional release for ourselves and among ourselves is crucial. Green also begins her workshops with white women by communicating a starting point assumption that no one would ever

¹²⁴ Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.” P. 191

¹²⁵ Cushing, *Accountability and White Anti-Racist Organizing*. P. 110-111.

¹²⁶ Cushing, p. 202

¹²⁷ Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.” P. 185

willingly choose to take on the oppressor role if they themselves had not been systematically oppressed.¹²⁸ In this way, white participants can let go of guilt and shame, which often act to block a deeper emotional understanding of our actions. As Green puts it, “You may disagree with this belief but its importance as a working assumption has been proved over and over again as people cease feeling so culpable, stop rehearsing their guilt and are freed to explore their underlying feelings.”¹²⁹ These underlying feelings emerge from the unconscious and unexplored links between their own oppression and the oppression of others. Green’s questions and exercises are designed for each person to focus on her own feelings and experiences. The role of the group is to listen respectfully and with acceptance as these links emerge. What she argues is that in white-only spaces, what might be seen as “denial” can be fruitfully explored as the roots of the learned oppressor role. This approach serves to weaken the dynamics of oppression at a psychological level rather than focusing on the role of the oppressor or the oppressed. Green describes this as working on the fulcrum of oppression: if one imagines a person on a see-saw, alternating between the two possibilities of oppressor and victim, then emotional work on either role undermines the fulcrum, and eventually the whole structure will collapse.¹³⁰

Green’s practical insights into creating space for uprooting the emotional dimensions of a learned racism and oppression are valuable. How can we support the creation of these spaces and experiences and recognize that they are pieces of a longer, unique journey each of us must travel? In my own experience, strong, trusting, long-term friendships of mutual support, whether these exist among other white settler women or across relationships of difference, have been safe spaces for the emotional work of looking at my own shadow, releasing repressed emotions, and exploring the roots of my own oppression and learned oppressor role. Can we attempt to deepen relationships in which we already exist, choosing to support each other in intentionally reflecting on our childhood oppression and adult experiences as oppressors, with openness and vulnerability? Can we intentionally engage in practices that support emotional release and attunement with our bodies? Can we challenge ourselves to acknowledge and nurture

¹²⁸ Green; Bishop, *Becoming an Ally*.

¹²⁹ Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.”

¹³⁰ Green. p. 195

a relationship with the parts of ourselves that we fear or deny?

As releasing our emotions is an embodied experience, reconnecting with and becoming attuned to our bodies' messages is a direct pathway to our authentic, spontaneous feelings. Practices that support our reconnection with our bodies in turn support our ability to sense the anxiety, fear, guilt and shame that drive us when we are unconsciously objectifying and projecting onto others. As theorists of transformative learning argue, meditative experiences and practices that attune ourselves to our bodies have the significant potential to shift people emotionally and free them to reconnect with their authentic selves.¹³¹ Crucial aspects of transformation can often take place nonverbally, in our bodies, without our necessarily consciously naming and analyzing each experience.¹³² Embodied release of emotions and reconnection and attunement with our authentic feelings can also be brought about through art, dance and movement therapy¹³³ or theatrical techniques, what are sometimes called teatrotherapy, psychodrama, drama therapy, theatre of the oppressed and forum theatre.¹³⁴

Through my conversations with settlers about the transformative processes that influenced them and other settlers, Marion Robinson came forward as strong advocate for theatrical approaches as a form of emotionally focused group therapy. She coordinated a forum theatre workshop and public performance among men who were serving life sentences in federal prison, who also self-identified as former and sometimes extreme rowdies (recreationalists who destroy watersheds and fish habitat).¹³⁵ The forum theatre workshop and performance explored the question: Why do people go out and destroy natural places? The intention of the theatre process was to nurture emotional intelligence by using a symbolic language to investigate alternative approaches for hard-to-talk-about issues. This inherently involves connection with the body and the ways in which this embodied expression stimulates the non-verbal and unconscious parts of our brains. In Marion Robinson's words:

Little children understand the spoken language long before they can speak, and a baby has memory through the fetal stage and forward into its life. This memory is

¹³¹ O'Sullivan, Morrell, and O'Connor, *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning*.

¹³² O'Sullivan, Morrell, and O'Connor.

¹³³ Chodorow, *Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology*.

¹³⁴ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*; Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, *Playing Boal*.

¹³⁵ Robinson, "Gaining Insight: Talking to Rowdies."

not accessible through the language centers of the brain, and it is referred to as implicit memory and non-verbal self. During the theatre exercises, we consciously used this knowledge to gain insight into both verbal and non-verbal information. For example, in one exercise, participants were asked to “take on a shape” of a feeling or expression, and others could react with other “shapes” in the body language. This act of showing rather than telling is more powerful than just talking about something. On some level, the brain and the body react to the expression as if it were real. Feelings are felt and brought into consciousness.¹³⁶

Theatrotherapy processes create the possibility for expressing emotions and sharing vulnerabilities when the space created is compassionate, safe and confidential.

While I must be cautious not to appropriate Indigenous practices, it would also be an erasure to not name and acknowledge the power of Indigenous healing traditions and ceremony for supporting people in accessing their unconscious, connecting with their shadows and releasing repressed emotions. Indigenous scholar Michael Yellowbird’s research powerfully brings together Indigenous healing practices—ceremony, prayer, meditation, land-based and embodied experiences—and neuroscience about the plasticity and healing potential of the brain.¹³⁷ His work, while directly connecting with brain research, echoes the work of many Indigenous writers who share the transformative power of Indigenous healing practices, such as the work of post-colonial Native American psychologists Eduardo and Bonnie Duran.¹³⁸ From my experience as a white settler, it is a gift to be invited into Indigenous spaces of healing and ceremony, or offered guidance by Indigenous mentors in the context of relationships of respect and accountability. To refuse the invitation or offerings out of fear of appropriation is also to disrespect and undermine the agency of those inviting you to determine your capability to exist respectfully in these spaces and relationships.¹³⁹ Yet, being invited into an experience is far different from being given the cultural authority to share those

¹³⁶ Robinson. P. 9

¹³⁷ Yellowbird, “Concepts of Traditional Mindfulness and Neurodecolonization of the Mind and Body.”

¹³⁸ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*; Duran, *Buddha in Redface*; Duran, *Healing the Soul Wound*.

¹³⁹ I have most directly learned this lesson through the experience of participating in a collaborative Indigenous land-based course with Hawaiian students and professors through the University of Hawaii at Manoa Department of Political Science, and Indigenous students and professors from the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria. Hawaiian professors invited us to participate in ceremony as part of a collective sacred journey to the island of Kaho’olawe. When some of the non-Hawaiian students said it would be inappropriate to participate in Hawaiian ceremony, our Hawaiian leaders made it clear that it was insulting for us to not respect their cultural authority in determining what is appropriate to share and include non-Hawaiians in.

experiences and teachings with others.

We might also look towards the spiritual and healing traditions in our own cultural heritages that provide guidance to support our own journeys of transformation. In the following narrative (Chapter 6), I begin a journey looking back at the teachings, beliefs and practices of land-connected cultures in my own European heritages as sources of guidance. Yet, in this chapter I have also looked at the European-rooted traditions of analytic psychology for insight into emotional transformation and healing. Duran and Duran have written about some of the shared connections and insights into psychological and emotional healing between especially Jungian analytic psychology and Indigenous practices of healing and shamanism. For example, both recognize the power of dreams in accessing the symbolic language of the unconscious, asserting that dreams are a connection to the transformative images that emerge from our own inner healing power.¹⁴⁰ Both also recognize the importance of emotional arousal and release as therapeutic: “Shamans use dancing, drumming and chanting to accomplish this arousal, whereas Western therapists use guided imagery.”¹⁴¹ Duran and Duran also point out the parallels between Indigenous understandings of the importance of the unconscious or spirit of the healer and the ideas of countertransference in western psychotherapy, as well as the shared recognition of the symbolic power of the death-rebirth mythology in supporting transformative healing rituals, including therapy itself as ritual.¹⁴²

My own journey towards a deeper relationship with my shadow, an understanding of childhood oppressions and the release of repressed emotions—a journey on which I am only beginning—is not attributable to one specific experience but rather to a collection of experiences, strung together through ongoing reflection, creative expression and embodied reconnection. Experiences participating in Indigenous ceremony have at times stimulated significant emotional release. Experiences with the land, relationships I have nurtured with places, in part through the guidance of Stó:lō mentors and friends, have also guided a growing strength and openness towards vulnerability. The experience of pregnancy and the birth of my daughter were profoundly impactful for immersing myself in, even rejoicing in, the power and knowing of my body. Becoming a parent

¹⁴⁰ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. P. 180

¹⁴¹ Duran and Duran. P. 60

¹⁴² Duran and Duran. P. 60-68.

brings us closer to our own childhoods, and the parent–child relationship reveals many of the ways in which we are conditioned into an oppressor role through our own oppression. Love for my own child is a powerful motivating force in the difficult work of coming to my own psychological honesty.¹⁴³

My writing, especially the personal storytelling, has also been a source of creative expression and reflection, and a number of close friendships and family relationships have been spaces wherein the emotions arising from this reflection could be witnessed and released. Each of our childhood experiences, and the unconscious shadow, the psychic dynamics of our socialization as oppressors, are unique and yet are collective and culturally embedded. Similarly, each of our journeys towards reaching out and touching the internal other, releasing the emotions attached to our own oppression, and creating an ongoing relationship and dialogue with our shadow is uniquely ours. However, we can learn from the many wisdoms, teachings and practices grown through long traditions of understanding in the creation of emotionally transformative spaces and experiences. The point is to intentionally recognize the importance of this path, to actively seek ways to pull out the deep emotional roots, recognizing this is a crucial piece of a journey towards unlearning colonial racism, transforming the oppressor in ourselves and in turn being more free to engage in authentic, humanizing and compassionate relationships with others.

Re-centring Indigenous Healing, Returning to Land and Spirit

I want to end this chapter with a reflection on the risks and cautions involved in naming, describing and advocating for the significance of the emotional transformation of white settler subjectivities in order to nurture the possibility of ethical relationships with Indigenous people. Is this not what Tuck and Yang might describe as both a colonial equivocation (everything becomes decolonizing) and a repetition of the call to “decolonize our minds and the rest will follow”¹⁴⁴? How am I mitigating against the logics of erasure? Am I not claiming that we all have been oppressed and thereby learned

¹⁴³ Aldort, *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*. A key message in this work is the ways in which the parent-child relationships is a space full of healing and transformative potential towards our own emotional maturity as adults and in the creation of an emotional safe and nurturing environment for our children.

¹⁴⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”

to be oppressors, and in doing so centring a narrative that erases Indigenous oppression? In what ways does recognizing childhood oppression within white settler families potentially erase or obscure the experiences of Indigenous children through the residential school system and the child welfare system, and the ongoing challenges of the intergenerational effects in Indigenous families?

If I advocate for the importance of white settler emotional transformation without situating this effort within the broader context in which the white settler work of co-resistance, reparations and restitution are centred, this effort can become a “move towards innocence,” an escapism that avoids white settler responsibility and accountability. At worst it could become a kind of navel-gazing and naïve idealism characteristic of some radical New Agers who eschew all political activism in favour of emotional and spiritual self-fulfillment.¹⁴⁵ This navel-gazing has the potential to also become a manifestation of the self-control and perfectionism that white supremacy demands. A radical ethics as defined by Kelly Oliver in her book *The Colonization of Psychic Space* is one in which we recognize our infinite responsibility to not just our conscious intentions but our unconscious drives, fears, anxieties and projections.¹⁴⁶ Yet, we must also accept that we will never fully make the unconscious realizable to ourselves, will never fully decolonize our minds or rid ourselves of racism, sexism, classism or heteropatriarchy. Believing this is possible is an illusion of privileged white subjects, one that is “dangerous insofar as it can lead to a sense of entitlement and privilege that comes from the confidence of one’s own boundaries, a confidence that covers over the fears and ambiguities that haunt those boundaries, fears and ambiguities that are disavowed to maintain the illusion of self-control.”¹⁴⁷

How can I stay attuned to the depth of my emotional conditioning through white settler colonial culture, be relentless in my attempts to make this conditioning conscious, and also not let the impossibility of this full consciousness immobilize me or act as an escape from taking emotional, intellectual and personal risks to nurture relationships across difference and offer myself, my inherent gifts and capacities in the broader struggle for justice and freedom? We must take on the emotional work within ourselves

¹⁴⁵ O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor, *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning*. P. 19

¹⁴⁶ Oliver, *Colonization Of Psychic Space*.

¹⁴⁷ Oliver. xxii

and our white settler families and communities with a constant recognition of the need to support healing among Indigenous people as a direct result of historical and ongoing colonialism. While this healing work is for Indigenous peoples to do themselves, part of our accountability and responsibility in doing our own healing work is to support the conditions that allow for the resurgence of Indigenous pathways to healing. Land is central to Indigenous healing practices, and decolonization is at its heart about land.¹⁴⁸ Yet, within white settler culture we collectively struggle to recognize and acknowledge, let alone support and respect, Indigenous relationships with land, central to not only Indigenous healing but Indigenous self-determination.

There is a deep link between our emotional wholeness and our ability to respect the integrity not only of another human, but also of the land itself. As Marion Robinson points to in her work with recreationists who destroy watersheds, “Each watershed destruction story we explored had at its core demonstrated anger and violence rooted in hurt, pain, and abandonment. We could begin to see how human emotion and consciousness affects human behaviour in a watershed.”¹⁴⁹ The emotional and spiritual aspects of being xwelitem, our superiority neurosis and our hungry greedy spirit are deeply interrelated, as is their transformation. Duran and Duran point out that in Carl Jung’s writings, he to some degree recognizes that earth forces are interacting within the psyche, revealing the connection between the spiritual and psychological/emotional aspects of self, the harmonious relationship between human psyche and the earth’s consciousness. Yet, even though Jung demonstrates this understanding, this notion is not woven into the basic theories of his work, nor is it typically of analytic psychology as a healing practice.¹⁵⁰ Becoming whole in a Jungian sense and also in a Fanonian sense is about becoming a whole human but speaks less to the relationship between the human being and the earth itself. Western psychotherapy in fact, as Duran suggests, is influenced by Hegelian dialectics and the belief in an “antagonistic relationship between the conscious psyche and the unconscious/spirit world.”¹⁵¹ In contrast, Duran argues that Native American cultures encourage a relationship between the conscious psyche and the

¹⁴⁸ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.”

¹⁴⁹ Robinson, “Gaining Insight: Talking to Rowdies.” P. 5

¹⁵⁰ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. P. 77

¹⁵¹ Duran, “Medicine Wheel, Mandala and Jung.” P. 2

unconscious/spirit world.¹⁵² The psyche is understood as an integral part of the actual life that holds the earth itself as an organism:

The Earth spirit gives the person an instant reality or sensation, which allows for the emergence of what the Westerner knows as intuition. According to a Native American way of interpretation, the individual is actually in synchronization with Earth forces that already have the awareness of all things. The individual has merely placed him/herself in a place in which s/he can be permeated by that awareness.¹⁵³

I turn in the next chapter to a narrative of transformation that attempts to focus in on xwelítem hunger and greed, linking this characteristic of being xwelítem to the white settler cultural repression of an ability and intention to place ourselves so that we can be – as Eduardo Duran puts it – permeated by an awareness born of the synchronization between Earth forces and our own psyche or spirit. This repression has sometimes been characterized as a spiritual sickness, one that, along with our emotional neuroses, creates the basis for our xwelítem hunger and greed to thrive, and in turn prevents us from walking a path towards ethical relationships with Indigenous people and the land itself.

¹⁵² Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*; Linklater, *Decolonizing Trauma Work*.

¹⁵³ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. P. 76

Chapter 6: From Xwelítem Hunger Towards Respect, Reverence, Reciprocity

Being Xwelítem: Hunger, Greed and Spiritual Disconnect

Eyem Shxweli Shlálí, Melody Andrews, acknowledges the teachings of Siyolexwálh Xwiyálemot, Matilda “Tillie” Gutierrez of Chowéthel, when she shares her understanding of being xwelítem:

Being xwelítem means “the hungry people” it refers to being greedy. It implies that the xwelítem are materialistic. It implies that the xwelítem don’t understand their place in the natural world or understand spiritualism from a natural point of view. It implies that the xwelítem haven’t been taught about revering and respecting the natural world or giving back to it. It means the xwelítem have forgot the teachings of reverence, respect and reciprocity.¹

In this way of describing being xwelítem, she makes the direct link between materialism and greed on the one hand, and lack of spiritual understanding “from a natural point of view” on the other. Muscogee scholar Daniel Wildcat describes this as a loss of respect for the relationships and relatives that constituted the complex web of life, and our inalienable responsibilities as members of the planet’s complex life system, naming it our “ecological amnesia.”² This lack of spiritual understanding, or our ecological amnesia, drives xwelítem hunger in that we in turn try to satiate with substitute fulfillments—for example, widespread addictions to money and consumer goods. Yet, these substitutes in turn often perpetuate our own spiritual disconnect and have impacts on the earth, our health and our relationships, including the possibility of authentic and ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Other Indigenous languages also have concepts used to describe excessive selfish consumption and greed as a way of being that is inherently out of balance, dysfunctional and harmful, and at times attribute these concepts to the greedy ways of white people and the white supremacist, capitalist, colonial culture and state. Wiindigo³ is a large, monster-

¹ Melody Andrews sent an email including these thoughts following our interview together, December 11, 2012.

² Wildcat, *Red Alert!* P. 9

³ Alternate spellings include: Wiindigoo, Wendigo, Windego, Wiindgoo, Wentiko, among others.

like, cannibalistic creature. In the Nishnaabeg worldview it embodies imbalance and unhealthy relationships.⁴ As described by Leanne Simpson:

The Wiindigo concept also warns against greed, excesses, and engaging in relationships in which indulgence leads to even more indulgences (various forms of addiction), creating realities based on imbalance. Being greedy and doing greedy things is counter to the promotion of life.⁵

Windiigo ultimately destroys itself. The addictions to materialism, consumerism, work and power within the capitalist system are Wiindigo psychoses in that “when one harms the earth, one harms oneself because we are part of that whole.”⁶ A similar concept, Wetiko, exists in Cree languages, and in Wintiko in Powhatan.⁷ As mentioned in Chapter 1, the concept of a *xwelítem* state of being was first applied by Stó:lō to describe white settlers who came from California in the 1850s during the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, and this *xwelítem* description has stuck, not only out of habit, but because in many ways settlers occupying Stó:lō Téméxw continue to live up to the description. Our *xwelítem* ways of being have, in large part, accelerated and deepened. As put by mentor Marion Robinson, “We are all *xwelítem*, we have all arrived at that place because we can’t tell when we can’t keep eating up the earth that sustains us.”⁸

In this seeking for material gratification, in enacting our *xwelítem* hunger and greed, we engage in what Indian scholar Vandana Shiva calls “resource-destructive lifestyles”—we participate in both consumption and production patterns in which we take more than we need and in doing so engage in violence towards other people and other species.⁹ Dakota scholar Waziyatawin calls this “the culture of exploitation and consumption in the dominant society” and argues that this culture, through its desecration of the environment, prevents Indigenous peoples from living their own ways of life and inhibits Indigenous rights to livelihoods derived through close interrelationship with their homelands.¹⁰ For Tsalagi scholar Jeff Corntassel, this culture of exploitation and

⁴ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*. P. 70

⁵ Simpson. P. 70

⁶ Simpson. P. 70

⁷ Levy and Fitts, *Dispelling Wetiko*.

⁸ Interview with Marion Robinson, November 17, 2012

⁹ Shiva, *Earth Democracy*. See p. 57 and p. 116

¹⁰ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?*

consumption and its corresponding environmental desecration limits the possibility for “sustainable self-determination” for Indigenous peoples:

Without the ability of community members to continuously renew their relationships with the natural world (i.e. gathering medicines, hunting and fishing, basket-making, etc.) Indigenous languages, traditional teachings, family structures, and livelihoods of that community are all jeopardized.¹¹

When we participate in and facilitate, rather than intervene with and confront, this culture of exploitation and consumption in ourselves and our families, communities, governments and institutions, we are directly or indirectly perpetuating cultural harm and limiting the possibilities for Indigenous resurgence, healing and self-determination. Our xwelítem material hunger and greed are key contributors to the ongoing colonization and transformation of the land, in turn limiting the possibilities of existence for Indigenous peoples as unique nations and cultures.

Applying this understanding within Stó:lō Téméxw, we might focus on the central importance of the Sth’ó:qwi for the continuance and sustainability of Stó:lō sustainable self-determination. In walking towards living ethically within Stó:lō Téméxw and in relationship with Stó:lō people, we must then ask ourselves: What aspects of our lifestyles are potentially contributing to the multiple stressors that are affecting Sth’ó:qwi survival?¹² Are we supporting the salmon aquaculture industry and it’s link to marine pollution and diseases that are transferred onto ocean-migrating wild salmon? Do the agricultural practices used to produce our food release chemicals and fertilizers, or contribute to erosion and habitat destruction that affect Sth’ó:qwi health? In what ways do the forestry and mining practices that produce goods we consume contribute to water pollution and habitat destruction that negatively affect Sth’ó:qwi survival? How does our water use and extraction from groundwater sources affect Sth’ó:qwi well-being? How

¹¹ Cornassel, “Toward Sustainable Self-Determination.” P. 118

¹² Cohen, “The Uncertain Future of Fraser River Sockeye. Volume 3: Recommendations—Summary—Process.” The recent Cohen commission summarized the state of knowledge on what is affecting the health and well-being of Sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. The Commission made several final recommendations related to managing and limiting the salmon aquaculture industry especially in areas alongside wild salmon migration routes, acknowledging the links between Wild salmon survival and salmon farming practices. See Recommendations 3, 14- 20. As well, the Commission made recommendations that acknowledge the risk of agricultural practices for Sockeye health (See Recommendations 53&54), risk of forestry practices and habitat destruction (See 48 & 54), groundwater extraction (See 7), toxins in municipal waste water (See 55 & 56), and climate change (See 74).

does what we add to our municipal wastewater—including pharmaceuticals, personal care products and other toxins—affect Sth'ó:qwi well-being? Do our recreational activities create greater stressors on Sth'ó:qwi? How do our actions in our work and home lives contribute to climate change and in turn the warming of waters that is affecting Sth'ó:qwi survival? In what ways do our daily lives harm the relationship between Stó:lō and Sth'ó:qwi, a relationship that is of central importance to Stó:lō sustainable self-determination? How can we not only reduce the behaviours that contribute to this harming of the relationship between Stó:lō and Sth'ó:qwi but also direct our energies towards addressing their impacts and improving the survival chances for Sth'ó:qwi? Understanding and accepting how we are each implicated, and reorienting our existence towards the thriving of Sth'ó:qwi rather than contributing to the stressors causing their struggle for survival means, for most of us, shifting much about our lifestyles and worldview, our very values and ways of being and how we meet our needs in the world.

Our ongoing attachment to resource-destructive lifestyles and livelihoods and a culture of materialism and consumption, our attachments to xwelítem ways of being, are barriers to Indigenous self-determination and in turn to our ethical existence here. It is not for us, as white settlers, to determine what pathways towards Indigenous self-determination look like, or whether these visions fall within what Jeff Corntassel calls sustainable self-determination. Rather, working towards ethical relationships includes transforming our own lifestyles and ways of being so that we are not limiting the possible pathways of self-determination for the peoples whose lands we are occupying. The recent summary report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, drawing on the wisdom of many Indigenous elders who spoke to and advised the commission from their experience and knowledge of their own spiritual beliefs and sacred laws, centres land and our relationships with the land in the journey of healing and reconciliation from the devastating harm of residential schools:

Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, from an Aboriginal perspective, also requires reconciliation with the natural world. If human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete. It is a perspective that we as Commissioners have repeatedly heard: that reconciliation will never occur

unless we are also reconciled with the earth. Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous laws stress that humans must journey through life in conversation and negotiation with all creation. Reciprocity and mutual respect help sustain our survival. It is this kind of healing and survival that is needed in moving forward from the residential school experience.¹³

Our disharmonious relationship with the earth is threatening Indigenous physical and cultural survival and limiting the potential for healing, where healing is made possible through relationships, conversation and negotiation with the earth itself, with all creation, and ourselves as part of this creation. Perhaps Taiaiake Alfred poses the question most directly to white settlers when he asks, “Would it be possible for people cultured in the North American mainstream to reimagine themselves in relation to the land and others and start to see this place as a real, sacred homeland, instead of an encountered commodity...?”¹⁴ What might pathways towards our reconciliation with the earth look like? How do we intervene with our xwelítem hunger? What are the possible stories, practices and teachings that might support us in understanding the places where we are living as real, sacred homelands?

Centring Pathways of Spiritual Reconnection

The narratives of transformation I have been shaping in Part 2 of this dissertation are guided by Stó:lō mentors who shared their understandings of xwelítem ways and of the characteristics of settlers who have demonstrated an ability to walk away from being xwelítem, towards ethical relationships with Stó:lō people. These mentors emphasized that ethical relationships require that settlers understand colonial history, contemporary colonial realities and how these shape differences between us as Indigenous people and white settlers. Ethical relationships also grow with those who are able to be compassionate, sincere and relate on human-to-human levels, unplugging from racist colonial narratives. Finally, they described the significant space for communication and understanding that emerges with settlers who are able to be spiritually open, are in tune with their senses and body, are connected with their surroundings, are able to take time to reflect, and who connect with their heart and spirit. This spiritual openness, if situated

¹³ TRC Canada, “Canada’s Residential Schools: Reconciliation.” P. 13

¹⁴ Alfred, “What Is Radical Imagination?” P. 5

within Indigenous understandings of spirituality and natural law, could be described as a being present on “a journey through life in conversation and negotiation with all creation.”¹⁵ Our basis for understanding and respecting Indigenous laws, and for supporting and engaging in processes to restore balance and harmony as expressed in these laws, is rooted in our ability to understand ourselves and all life as part of creation, as part of an interwoven cosmology of the universe that inherently, and for the basis of our survival, requires and deserves our respect, reverence and reciprocity—an understanding that brings alive the meaning of sacred lands, *xáxa téméxw*.

Perhaps transforming our own *xwelítem* hunger starts with the acknowledgement that many of us as settlers are disconnected from this kind of journey through life, and the cultural teachings, practices, ceremonies and ways of being that nurture and support this journey. We have become increasingly hungry as this disconnection has deepened, as we and our ancestors have reluctantly or willingly accepted the privileges of whiteness in a white supremacist, settler-colonial, capitalist culture, and as we have increasingly immersed our lives, identities and values in a relentlessly expanding consumerist way of life. As put by settler scholar Erin Freeland Ballantyne connected with the Dechinta Bush University:

Settler colonial capitalism feeds off of people’s disconnection from their territory. The settler is the ultimate signifier of the deterritorialized being. We do not, for the most part, know our own languages, ceremonies or practices. We have become so far removed from our own territories we often don’t even know where we come from. Our relationships with land were replaced with our relationship to capital. Our bodies colonized by capitalism, we wander, hungry ghosts on the lands of others, frantically feeding to fill the void.¹⁶

Our deterritorialization has been a process of moving further and further away from the context of land-connected communities, cultural practices, belief systems and ethics. We have become disconnected from the cultural practices which ensure that our sustenance and livelihood are linked through interdependent relationships with each other and with the land, and from the practices and teachings that ensure a recognition of the ways in which humans are embedded in the natural cosmos.

¹⁵ TRC Canada, “Canada’s Residential Schools: Reconciliation.” P. 13

¹⁶ Ballantyne, “Dechinta Bush University.” P. 81

The opposite of a deterritorialized settler state of being is what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard refers to as a “place-based imaginary”:

Ethico political norms which stress among other things the importance of sharing, egalitarianism, respecting the freedom and autonomy of both individuals and groups, and recognizing the obligations that one has not only to other people, but to the natural world as a whole. It is this place-based imaginary that serves as the ethical foundation from which many Indigenous peoples and communities continue to resist and critique the dual imperatives of state sovereignty and capitalist accumulation that constitute our colonial present.¹⁷

Vandana Shiva calls this a “living culture,” where living cultures are characterized by three principles: diversity; self-organization, self-regulation and self-renewal; and reciprocity between systems.¹⁸ In Shiva’s words:

Living cultures evolve from our connectedness with all life. Living cultures are cultures of life, based on reverence for all life, reverence for life is based on compassion and caring for the other, recognition of the autonomy and subjecthood of the other, and the awareness that we are mutually dependent on each other for substance, for peace, for joy.¹⁹

To differing degrees, we are deeply disconnected from and participating in systems that actively eliminate, the practices, beliefs, teachings, rituals and institutions of a living culture and the ways of being these promote. When we have few reference points for a place-based imaginary, where do we turn to begin a journey of transforming our xwelítem hunger? If our xwelítem hunger is at least in part a spiritual sickness, how do we begin to find the unique pathways and journeys that are our spiritual remedies? How do we follow these pathways while remaining present to the ways in which our xwelítem practices of erasure and superiority neurosis might intervene with, interrupt and set back these journeys? How do we also remain accountable to the very real need for pathways of spiritual reconnection to support Indigenous healing, well-being and self-determination?

Indigenous Land-based Pedagogy and Mentorship

The three of us stood at the shores of the Stó:lō river. We stood in silence, feet near the edge of the water. Lumlamelut handed us each the remains of the Sth’ó:qwi we had been with all day, in the intimate sense of smelling, touching,

¹⁷ Coulthard, “Place against Empire.” P. 82

¹⁸ Shiva, *Earth Democracy*. P. 117

¹⁹ Shiva. P. 142

tasting, feeling. With care and intention, a state of good mind, Lumlamelut placed the Sth'ó:qwi bones on the branches of Xpá:yelph (red cedar); the cedar a floating cradle, the bones of a salmon to be reborn. Lumlamelut then placed a cradle in each of her student's hands. I held it and watched. She bent down gently and rested hers on the surface of the river. Her current, her shxweli (life force), began to carry it. She looked toward her students and we each did as she had done. We held our hands high and open with reverence and gratitude, and watched together as the river carried off what remained of day—the closure of a naming ceremony for the Wileleq²⁰ (Wealick) family. It was also a place of reflection for me on the spiritual journey that I had travelled thus far with the tremendous support of Stó:lō mentors and friends.

As I watched the Salmon float away, I thought of my time with Frank Andrew and his family, at their family fish camp in the canyon earlier in the summer. They had shared the ancient practices of how to cut and hang Sth'ó:qwi for drying in the wind. His family had gifted me with some Slhíts'es (wind dried salmon), a cherished treasure, and I had in turn gifted these to Lumlamelut to contribute to the feast for her ceremony. I had seen these fish come out of the water and my own hands, however feebly, had cut their flesh and hung them over the dry rack. I had watched them in the wind as Frank shared about the sacred gift of the Sth'ó:qwi, and the gift of the canyon and the winds, that allowed for the preservation of the salmon that for generations sustained Stó:lō through the winter months. I felt honoured and proud as I shared this gift with Lumlamelut and her family for this ceremony. I had learned it was a gift born of the sacred stories, teachings, practices and traditions of Stó:lō since time immemorial, since Xe:xáls had transformed the landscape, and the people had prayed for a healthy, light food to feed their families.²¹

Lumlamelut asked a number of her Halq'eméylem students if we would help with cooking, with feeding the people to prepare for the work that would be done for the naming ceremony. She shared with us that respecting the sacredness of the food, and of the people who would eat it, meant being in a state of good mind, a presence and mindfulness, as we prepared for the day, and as we cooked and served the food. The day unfolded with feeding the people, teachings about the history of the names, honouring those who would carry the names, preparing the fire and feeding the ancestors, and calling witnesses to the work. Towards the end of the ceremony, all those who helped in some way were called to be honoured for their contributions. I stood with the other cooks on bows of Xpá:yelhp as members of the Wileleq family and other witnesses came up to gift us for our work. I stood there, humbled by the respect shown to each and every person's contribution, the way that gifting is met with gifting, and communities of mutual support, nurturance and care emerge. After this honouring, I returned to the kitchen to help with cleaning and filling containers for people to take food

²⁰ There are a number of different spellings for this ancestral family name. Wileleq is the spelling used in the Brent Galloway orthography whereas Wee Láy Láq is the spelling used in the Oliver Wells orthography, and Wililuk is used by Norman Lerman in the book *Legends of the River People*. Wealick is the English spelling.

²¹ Victor, "Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination." See the Sto:lo sacred stories about salmon in Chapter 7 "Sth'ó:qwi and Sxexo:mes."

*home. No one would leave hungry. We gathered up the bones and cedar bows, on our way to visit Stó:lō, to feed the waters that had fed us.*²²

From my own experience and from the stories shared by settler interviewees, many have come to walk towards a spiritual reconnection with the land and an understanding of ourselves, through relationships with Stó:lō and other Indigenous people. In our collective experiences, Stó:lō people have been deeply generous and open to including us in ceremony, in land-based practices, and in growing everyday relationships in which we are offered a context in which to learn from within a Stó:lō-centred perspective. These relationships have shaped us in subtle and significant ways, sharing love, friendship and mutual support. There is no one moment, teaching or experience; rather, through relationships, we come to participate in the sacredness of life, in actions of respect, reciprocity and reverence with the land and with each other.

Recommended white settler interviewee and archaeologist Dave Schaepe, who has worked with and for Stó:lō Nation and in deep partnership with his colleague Stó:lō knowledge keeper Naxaxalhts'i, Sonny McHalsie, among others, describes this as an informal education process and mentorship that is Stó:lō based. A big part of this process is to “get out there and experience things directly and [be] on the land to connect through a different way of perception and understanding.”²³ These learning experiences unfold in mentorships and friendships that emerge from as many possible avenues of life connection as one could imagine. In my interviews, some mentorships emerged when settlers worked for or with Stó:lō people. In other cases, they connected through their children's relationships, or through social justice and environmental activism, or as a result of intentional efforts to build relationships between settler and Indigenous communities. What Dave Schaepe describes as his informal, Stó:lō, land-based education process falls within what has been conceptualized in Indigenous theory as Indigenous land-based pedagogy.

Métis scholar Matt Wildcat, Dene scholars Mande McDonald and Glen Coulthard, and settler scholar Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, in editing a recent issue of the journal *Decolonization: Indigeniety, Education and Society* focused on Indigenous land-

²² Journal entry, August 29th, 2013.

²³ Dave Schaepe interview, March 19th, 2013.

based pedagogy, write that decolonization “must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that arise from the land.”²⁴ The issue describes different contexts for, experiences of and perspectives on, Indigenous land-based pedagogy that reveal these practices to be “a catalyst for regeneration of Indigenous social, spiritual and physical land-connection.”²⁵ The collection of pieces rightly focuses on Indigenous people learning from Indigenous land-based pedagogy and the connection of these experiences with Indigenous well-being, resurgence and self-determination. Often, Indigenous land-based learning is directed towards Indigenous children, youth and young adults in an effort to restore the pathways of cultural transmission between generations and build resilience among the young. In the public health literature on well-being and resilience among Indigenous youths, this has in part been described by the concept of “cultural continuity,”²⁶ where culture is intimately connected to land, and the renewal of cultural continuity and youth resilience is supported by land-based pedagogy.²⁷

In Stó:lō Téméxw, a diverse group of elders, youth workers, youth, researchers and public health workers are together creating land-based learning opportunities for Stó:lō as a key strategy in building resilience against suicide among Indigenous youth.²⁸ This understanding is also the basis of the Indigenous Life School of which Sakej Ward and Melody Andrews are key members. It is a family-based educational program, which “consists of parents and children staying together and learning the traditional systems of Indigenous knowledge.”²⁹ They centre their work on teaching the sacred responsibilities to nature and the responsibilities we have to take care of our land for the next seven generations. Indigenous people, and especially Indigenous children and youth, are and should be prioritized in informal and formal experiences in learning from the land

²⁴ Wildcat et al., “Learning from the Land,” December 1, 2014.

²⁵ Wildcat et al. P. IV

²⁶ Chandler and Lalonde, “Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada’s First Nations”; Chandler and Lalonde, “Cultural Continuity as a Moderator of Suicide Risk among Canada’s First Nations.”

²⁷ Big-Canoe and Richmond, “Anishinabe Youth Perceptions about Community Health”; Tobias and Richmond, ““That Land Means Everything to Us as Anishinaabe. . . .””

²⁸ Chan, “Building Land-Based Resilience in Fraser Valley First Nations Youth: Research Proposal Background and Objectives.”

²⁹ Ward, “Winter Life School Gathering.”

through Indigenous pedagogy, rooted in land-based practices, spiritual teachings and ceremony, and woven within daily life.

Yet, settlers are also, at times and in varying degrees of inclusion, invited into these learning relationships, contexts and experiences. Indigenous scholars and leaders, such as Muscogee scholar Daniel Wildcat in his book *Red Alert: Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge*, call directly for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to look to and engage in practical learning from Indigenous people's knowledge as a means to address the environmental and cultural crises of contemporary times. Wildcat asserts that all must learn from Indigenous tribal knowledges to gain "insights into how humankind might not merely survive this global crisis, but thrive in indigenously inspired cultures of life enhancement."³⁰ Similarly, Nuu-chah-nulth hereditary chief Umeek, Richard Atleo, provides a framework for responding to global environmental and political crises through the teachings and practices of a Nuu-chah-nulth way of life in his book *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crises*.³¹ These books are written examples of what many Indigenous leaders and grassroots Indigenous people in communities across Turtle Island have been attempting to share with settlers—that Indigenous knowledges, technologies and governance practices, grounded in Indigenous spiritual teachings and practices, have much to offer all of us in our transformation towards a more socially just and environmentally sustainable way of life. The spiritual basis for this way of life is a key part of this message. Many of the settlers I interviewed had been part of land and community-based cultural and spiritual learning with Indigenous mentors, and they shared how these experiences changed who they are and how they relate to the world around them.

Louise Mandell is a Jewish Canadian lawyer with long-time relationships working with Indigenous nations, including Stó:lō, on political and legal battles to protect Aboriginal rights and title. She began working in this field as a young lawyer hired by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. In this role she was mentored by many, especially a woman named MaryLou Andrew. It was MaryLou's son, Frank Andrew, who recommended Louise as a settler interviewee for this research. As we sat in a café across from her

³⁰ Wildcat, *Red Alert!* P. 29

³¹ Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk*.

office, Louise shared the deep impact of this long-term, ongoing mentorship by her Indigenous clients and friends on her sense of self, reconnection with land and spiritual openness:

I discovered relatively accidentally after 30 years of having missed this problem that I was really needing to better understand my own ego because this idea that somehow I believed I was separate, that in my separateness I had fears and anxieties, and judgments about myself and expectations about myself and the future and all that ego structure was really defied the basic truth that we are all connected. I had to really work, I had to go way beyond my own ego and learn my connections to people and to all living things and I came from a society or a culture that hadn't owned land for how many generations. It was illegal for Jewish people to own land so I was largely disconnected from my own sense of place. I felt ungrounded in the sense that I belonged anywhere in terms of land and my relationship to all of this was very truncated because of it. And here I was working with people who didn't have this trip wire at all, they were infinitely connected to land and infinitely connected to spirit and really understood that this egoic structure had become a cultural distain and was actually embedded in the doctrine of discovery and colonization and a lot of what we are fighting against is our culture's ego framework which is opposed to the spirit and therefore the connections and what Indigenous people have to teach.

Louise Mandell also connects her own learning and spiritual journey with being able to understand Indigenous legal orders:

The whole adversarial way of thinking is opposite to Indigenous legal orders and the way in which solutions emerge out of consensus, out of finding the points of commonality, out of believing that we are all one and that we are all meant to be together and meant to be in this problem together and mean to solve this problem together. That the creator has a role in bringing us all together and through faith and through humility as well as intelligence we are going to be able to find a solution that works for everybody, including everybody, not one person wins and one person loses.³²

Her story highlights that shifts towards the possibility of opening ourselves to another worldview often come from a very personal place of growth and transformation, one that is grounded in relational experiences. As she puts it, “There is nothing that elevates your consciousness except by being around people that are like that, they just kind of automatically vibrate in a different level and respond in a different way that allows you to respond in a different way.”

Stó:lō mentors have also shared their recognition of the power of Stó:lō

³² Interview with Louise Mandell, June 12, 2013

pedagogy, enacted through everyday mentorship, land-based experiences, and ceremony, in creating spaces of spiritual and personal transformation for settlers. In another example, Sioliya, June Quipp, shared with me her experience when a young Catholic priest, Father Gary, first came to the community of Cheam. He was invited to the longhouse to participate in Stó:lō ceremonies. In Sioliya's words, he really began to adapt to the culture, even in some of his services. His initial willingness to be open and respectful led to a strong relationship and ability to work together in compassionate ways for community members. When Sioliya's son passed away, Father Gary agreed to do a funeral service for him, even though he hadn't been baptized into the Catholic Church. This left a lasting impression on Sioliya, one that has led her to want to invite non-Indigenous people into the longhouse, suggesting: "It is the easiest way to allow people to understand some of the culture and the spirituality we have."³³

For some, like Sioliya, openness towards and willing participation in Stó:lō spiritual life is a sign of respect. Of course, there are different perspectives within and between Indigenous nations, tribes, communities, families and individuals regarding cultural sharing with non-Indigenous peoples—what can be shared and with whom, and what are the safeguards to protect knowledge and practices, especially when it comes to ceremony and spiritual teachings. At the basis of this are both internal discussions about cultural authority—regarding who has the expertise, knowledge, lineage and practical experience to share with those outside the culture—and discussions about how to safeguard cultural knowledge and practices from appropriation, misrepresentation and generally disrespectful and hurtful ways of relating to this knowledge and to knowledge holders. Who can be trusted, and what are the relational conditions for trust? What is the expected reciprocity from outsiders who, steeped in mainstream consumer capitalist culture, might take without recognizing the responsibilities attached to learning?

While these dynamics create significant challenges for both Indigenous people and settlers to navigate, the transformative potential of Indigenous experiential, spiritually grounded and often land-based pedagogy is clear. In addition to opening towards understandings of oneself as being in interdependent relationships and conversations with all of creation, and learning to practice reciprocity within these

³³ Interview with Sioliya, June Quipp, March 15, 2013

relationships, these mentorships and experiences also inherently lead to an overturning of the power dynamics that shape white mainstream settler colonial culture. They hold significant potential to undermine the settler superiority neurosis and its emotional roots. Settler scholar Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox has also written of the transformative experience of learning the many stages of the Dene moosehide-tanning process from Dene elders and alongside other Dene learners.³⁴

Settlers placed in Indigenous land-based education contexts are forced to understand themselves in relation to the limits of their knowledge contrasted with superior capabilities possessed by Indigenous Elders and land-based knowledge holders: I don't know how to make fire; I cannot filet a fish; I cannot skin a moose; I cannot read the land; I do not know the cultural rules; I cannot understand the language; I do not know the history of the place... Meanwhile, Indigenous Elders and land-based knowledge holders possess expert skills and knowledge in all of these areas. Transitioning from a position of dominance to one of dependence constitutes an important moment of "unsettling": reaching a place of potentially transformative discomfort. An often completely new and deeper understanding of Indigenous peoples' cultural practices then begins to fill what was once a space of ignorance and privilege, replacing erroneous beliefs with appreciation and understanding. Unsettling thus becomes a basis for transforming settler's self-understanding, and also the understanding of Indigenous peoples and the injustice and privilege shaping Indigenous-settler power dynamics.³⁵

Paulette Regan in her book *Unsettling the Settler Within* also describes the power of a pedagogy of discomfort when settlers are placed in Indigenous spaces, relating her own powerful and humbling experience as she contributed to hosting a Gitx̱san Feast Ceremony for Indian residential school survivors from the Gitx̱san nation.³⁶

The power of Indigenous pedagogies—grounded in experiential learning, mentorships, land-based practices and ceremony—as a transformative force for settlers deserves acknowledgement and respect. These spaces have the potential to intervene with all three aspects of being xwelítem I have focused on in this work. They inevitably re-centre Indigenous knowledges, histories and lifeways in Indigenous homelands and in doing so greatly limit the possibility of white settler practices of erasure. They disturb the white settler superiority neurosis by flipping the relations of dominance on their head. They also lead to the possibility of opening settlers to the teachings, practices and ways of being that emerge from reciprocal spiritual relationships with the living world, and in

³⁴ Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk*.

³⁵ Irlbacher-Fox, "Traditional Knowledge, Co-Existence and Co-Resistance." P. 155

³⁶ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*. See reflections pg. 194—196

doing so, hold the potential to fill up and override our xwelítem hunger.

Challenges and Cautions in White Settlers' Learning from Indigenous Peoples, Culture and Spirituality

However, acknowledging the power of Indigenous pedagogies and mentorship does not mean white settlers should solely look to or depend on Indigenous people to support our own transformative processes away from xwelítem ways of being. This would mean placing a burden on Indigenous communities and potentially taking space away from Indigenous learners. At worst, an expectation of being taught or mentored would be another assertion of white entitlement. We must actively reach out in creating relationships with Indigenous people, accept with gratitude and humility when and where Indigenous individuals, families, communities, tribes or organizations decide to share with us aspects of who they are, and recognize this sharing as the basis of a relationship of mutual support and reciprocity. Yet, in our reaching out, how can we also remain conscious and questioning of how our presence may be affecting Indigenous mentors and learners? How can we be attuned, check in, acknowledge and accept when it is not our place to be present, or when we might need to adapt how we are engaging, to step back? How can we become more aware of the ways in which our xwelítem ways might manifest in these learning experiences and how this jeopardizes the growth of respectful relationships?

Furthermore, how can we take responsibility for our own pathways towards spiritual reconnection to walk alongside the pathways of the mentorship we may receive from Indigenous peoples? We must do our own work to address all aspects of being xwelítem that are barriers to ethical relationships with Indigenous people, including our xwelítem hunger. What might complementary paths towards our own spiritual openness look like—towards understanding our place in the universe and the actions and ways of being that flow from this understanding: respect, reverence and reciprocity? As I will discuss further, one of these pathways, unique for each of us, is beginning to reconnect with our own ancestral land-connected heritages and spiritual teachings, a journey that also supports our grounded sense of self, one that undermines the xwelítem tendencies to appropriate Indigenous culture. Before turning to this, though, I want to take some time to focus on the ways that xwelítem ways can manifest as we engage in Indigenous spaces

as learners.

Xwelítem Returns in Indigenous Learning Spaces: A Personal Story

I recall a class in the Indigenous Governance (IGov) program at the University of Victoria where we talked about Anishinaabe scholar and activist Lynn Gehl’s “Ally Bill of Responsibilities.” One of the responsibilities she identifies for allies is to “understand that they are secondary to the Indigenous people that they are working with and that they seek to serve. They and their needs must take a back seat.”³⁷ We talked about how this should apply to the IGov program, how settler students should keep this in mind as we are learning along with Indigenous students in the program. I remember feeling I agreed with this in relation to the on-the-ground work I was doing with Stó:lō organizations and people, and yet I had an emotional reaction of frustration when we discussed how this guideline should also apply in this formal educational context. I had come to the IGov program in part because I didn’t want to further burden Stó:lō people and I knew I had learning to do; I felt like coming to IGov was in part doing my own work. Yet, here I was, in a different Indigenous context, also needing to be conscious of taking space. Instead, I was emotionally reacting from an ego-centred place of entitlement. I was falling back on all of the ideologies of white privilege that uphold this sense of entitlement. Individualism—but should we all be treated like individuals in this educational setting? Meritocracy—but hadn’t I “earned” my “right” to be here and therefore to have the same access to supports as others? It was a reaction steeped in the ideology and expectations of white privilege I had been socialized into, where privilege is “a legitimization of one’s entitlement to resources.”³⁸

I left the class with confused emotions. As I stayed in these emotions and asked myself why I felt this way, I began to realize more deeply the tight linkages between my sense of self-value, worth and identity (my desired ego), the idea and experience of being educated and knowledgeable, and the practices of self-improvement. Did my urge to assert my entitlement to “be educated” come from a place of protecting my ego, escaping an aspect of my shadow that fears not knowing, fears being ignorant, getting it wrong? Recognizing this emotional root shifted my being, allowed me to release this defensive

³⁷ Gehl, “Ally Bill of Responsibilities.” Responsibility #2.

³⁸ DiAngelo, “White Fragility.” P. 144.

response and instead ask: How would I respond coming from a compassionate and intellectually reasoned place?

When situating the Indigenous Governance program in the context of the broader institutional, political and historical realities of colonialism, it is both just and compassionate that I should situate myself as secondary to Indigenous students. Indigenous practices of learning and passing on knowledge have been explicitly and violently disrupted by the Canadian state and Christian churches, as part of a broader agenda to dispossess Indigenous people and make way for white settlement. Centring and prioritizing Indigenous learning is a small step towards acknowledging the intergenerational effects of this history. How might my reaction also have reflected a tendency towards the commodification of knowledge that has seeped deeply into the contemporary mainstream practices of education, which tend towards prioritizing efficiency and student (customer) satisfaction while treating education itself as a commercial transaction?³⁹ How does this consumerist attitude towards learning shape the potential for authentic, ethical relationship building through these experiences? As I began to sit with these self-reflections, I also became more fully aware of the tremendous gifts I had already received from mentorship and guidance through my work experiences with Stó:lō organizations and communities. I had been given so much already, and here I was still in a mode of taking – a hungry, greedy, *xwelítem* way of being. Was this hunger for knowledge and understanding perhaps also a representation of my *xwelítem* hunger, an emptiness at another level that I was trying to fill not only by consuming material goods, but by also consuming knowledge and culture?

Xwelítem hunger, Identity, Cultural Consumption and Appropriation

Our identities are ever more entwined with our practices and existence as consumers and workers in the neo-liberal capitalist economy, rather than as family members, community members, members of cultural groups, and citizens, let alone relatives within the interdependent web of natural life on this planet and in specific homelands. In the space of this narrowing of identities and deepening individualism,

³⁹ See: Schwartzman, “Consequences of Commodifying Education”; Naidoo and Jamieson, “Empowering Participants or Corroding Learning?” for discussions of the increasing commodification of mainstream education.

community economies scholar, writer and activist John Restakis writes that the capitalist market has increasingly become a place for identity creation and manipulation; in fact, this is the chief preoccupation of advanced capitalism.⁴⁰ We are hungry not only for material goods, but for a sense of identity, a sense of ourselves, and this becomes an easy target for capitalists, who manipulate this sense of alienation always with the goal of getting us to consume more—material goods and consumer experiences branded around lifestyle and identity marketing.⁴¹ The appropriation and commodification of Indigenous cultures, identities and spirituality becomes one avenue for identity appropriation, manipulation and consumption. “Tribal” patterned clothing and accessories, performance artists wearing headdresses, and the use of Indigenous names for sports teams and cars quickly come to mind as examples. Yet, so too does the rampant theft, misrepresentation and commodification of Indigenous spiritual and healing knowledge and practices by white settlers pretending to be shamans, charging for weekend workshops, spiritual retreats and experiences, writing and selling books, and peddling other products.⁴²

As I have considered to some extent in Narrative 1, cultural appropriation can be seen as a manifestation of the white settler practices of erasure, attempting to erase the difference between us (Indigenous persons and white settlers) so that we no longer have to account for the very real differences in privilege and oppression that shape our realities. Yet, this appropriation can also be understood as driven by the very real spiritual and cultural hunger that has left many white people empty and grasping for a meaningful sense of identity.⁴³ This grasping for Indigenous knowledge, culture and spirituality causes significant harm to Indigenous people, creates barriers to ethical relationship building and in fact further alienates us as white settlers from ourselves.⁴⁴ As Eduardo and Bonnie Duran explain:

The amount of pain and discomfort that our community experiences due to the modern desecration of tradition is adding salt to the soul wound that these same disrespectful people inflicted in the first place. The conquering European has taken and raped the land and is now seeking to take and destroy the spirit of the

⁴⁰ Restakis, *Humanizing the Economy*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; See for example: Saviolo and Marazza, *Lifestyle Brands*.

⁴² Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*; Aldred, “Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances”; “New Age Frauds and Plastic Shamans: Who We Are and Our Purpose.”

⁴³ Aldred, “Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances.”

⁴⁴ Aldred; Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*.

land. The conqueror should realize that the tradition belongs to the Creator, and as Native Americans we are merely the protectors of the tradition. Spirituality cannot be stolen, and the more effort the white population expends in pretending to own Native American spirituality the deeper will be the white person's emptiness and alienation from his/her own God become.⁴⁵

How might subtle and overt cultural appropriation and consumption come into play even as we intentionally seek out or are invited to Indigenous spaces or into mentorship relationships, or even in Indigenous-led learning experiences through public schools and universities? How do we guard ourselves against this, recognizing the noxious mix of our hunger for identity, for cultural and spiritual meaning, our socialization into consumerist models of education, and cultural values that might shape our ego attachments to being knowers?

Relating to Indigenous knowledge in any way, subtle or overt, from a place of *xwelítem* hunger, from a place of consumption rather than mutual sharing and reciprocity, is a barrier to the creation of ethical relationships. At its worst, it functions as cultural and spiritual appropriation, assertions of white privilege, and a “wannabe syndrome” that undermines Indigenous people's efforts.⁴⁶ Perhaps more subtly, though, it can be an insidious barrier to the deepening of connections, of relationships of mutual support, that rest on an interdependent reciprocity, on the ability and openness to feed each other in physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual senses. Ultimately, filling our own *xwelítem* hunger must also come from our own journeys to reconnect with spiritual and cultural meaning, rooted in our own ancestries and traditions.

Looking Back to Ancestral Land-Connected Heritages

I return to the teaching: you must know where you come from to know where you are going. How might this teaching relate to work of addressing *xwelítem* hunger and shifting our consciousness and our ways of being towards those that relate with respect, reverence and reciprocity with the earth and with each other as part of an interconnected ecological and human community? What might it look like to find our own pathways towards filling up this *xwelítem* hunger in ourselves, our families and our communities,

⁴⁵ Duran and Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. P. 206

⁴⁶ Gehl, “Ally Bill of Responsibilities.”

alongside our learning from Indigenous peoples? These questions seemed potent in a new way as I became a mom. I began to ask: In what ways am I supporting or undermining the growth of xwelitem hunger in my daughter? Is she learning to be grounded in a relationship with the land, with ancestors, with culture, with the sacredness of life? If I wanted to do more than just offer her a critique of mainstream consumer-capitalist white settler culture, what did that mean for the journey I needed to be on, what directions did I have to look towards?

As white settlers, in addition to looking to Indigenous cultures and spirituality as pathways towards transforming our xwelitem hunger, we may also look towards the ancestral cultures, traditions and spirituality of non-Indigenous people of colour as sources of guidance, for example, the widespread interest in various traditions of Buddhism or Yoga. Perhaps we do this in the context of reciprocal relationships and a sense of responsibility to the communities, cultures and peoples that these traditions are embedded within and derive from. Yet, if we do not, we may instead be enacting the same kind of cultural appropriation that goes on with Indigenous peoples. However, even if we walk this path in the context of relationships of accountability, our own lack of cultural and historical self-understanding may create barriers to deepening healthy and mutually supportive relationships. I return to the insights of Margaret Green, working as a psychotherapist with white women unlearning racism, who writes,

A sense of one's own rich roots is however essential if one is to meet on an equal level with a person from a different background. Perhaps this is self-evident, but anything short of it allows for a situation which can be filled with humiliation, envy, contempt and denigration.⁴⁷

Lynn Ghel also writes in her Ally Bill of Responsibilities that allies are responsible to be “fully grounded in their own ancestral history and culture. Effective allies must sit in this knowledge with confidence and pride.”⁴⁸

These considerations come forward in the most intimate spaces of my life, with my partner, Atef, as we consider how to support our daughter's growth within communities, cultures, traditions and spiritual beliefs that undermine and take space from the overwhelming pressures of the mainstream white settler colonial capitalist-consumer

⁴⁷ Green, “Women in the Oppressor Role: White Racism.” P. 196

⁴⁸ Gehl, “Ally Bill of Responsibilities.”

culture. We both want to ensure she builds connection with her roots in Tunisian Arab culture. We also both want to support her learning from and connecting with the traditions, teachings and culture of Stó:lō people that spiritually rise from the land we are living with and occupying, and as are shared in friendships with Stó:lō people whom we hold dear. While these pathways are deeply important, as Margaret Green and Lynn Ghel call out – to be in respectful relationships as I walk with my family along these pathways also demands of me a responsibility to become grounded in my own ancestral culture. If I do not take on understanding how I have been shaped by, and what is of value, in my own ancestral cultures am I not still situating myself as a kind of observer, arbiter, or consumer of culture and reinforcing the idea that culture is something that “others” do and whiteness is an acultural “norm”? Am I not offloading my responsibility to engage in the work of transforming and healing the pathways that my ancestors had walked and that I inherited? How could I truly be on “equal footing” in the sense of equally on a journey, a journey of spiritual growth and understanding unique to each of us and deeply interwoven with knowing who we are and where we come from? I would also need to begin a path of figuring out what I as her mom had to offer her from my own cultural heritage and spiritual traditions, outside of the mainstream white, consumer-capitalist, Canadian culture into which I have been deeply socialized. Yet, what roots do I look towards? Where and how far back do I look? What guides us in this journey, and what are our intentions along the way?

Here I want to reintroduce Mi’kmaq warrior Sakej Ward, who, along with his wife, Eyem Shxwelí Shlálí, Melody Andrews, do an immense amount of grassroots work within their own families and community of Shxw’owhámél, among Stó:lō people, and in broader networks of Indigenous nations, especially along the west coast. Sakej and Melody increasingly focus their energy on working with Indigenous youth, teaching land-based skills, leadership and decolonizing theory in part through the Indigenous Life School previously mentioned. Sakej also often speaks with activists, sharing from his experience with warrior societies on the East and West coasts. In Chapter 2 I drew on Sakej Ward’s thoughts on how we identify ourselves as non-Indigenous people, thoughts he shared at a forum entitled “Decolonizing the Colonizer” organized by myself and Larry Commodore of Th’ewáí. In this forum Sakej Ward also called upon xwelítem to

find within our own ancestries and traditions the pathways that nurture values, ways of being and a worldview that understand and enact respect, reverence and reciprocity for the earth. The potential of this journey lies in creating a spiritual foundation for ethical relationships with Indigenous people. In Sakej Wards's words:

I've thought about this for a while because my work has always been about decolonizing my people and a good friend of mine was at a talk one time and I had an occupier ask me can you come and teach our children, meaning non-Indigenous children about this? I was stunned. Why am I going to teach them? And my friend stood up and she answered for me she said that is not our responsibility, that is not our responsibility to teach your children about what you have done. We have already 500 years of colonialism to undo, that is our work. So I have been thinking about that so on that note, there is something about decolonizing the colonizer, there is some kind of set of instructions, teachings, thinking that have to take place because we can't have a relationship if you insist on being the colonizer. We can't have a relationship if you are still going to be occupiers, that part of the identity has to be acknowledged and there has to be work to change that. I am not going to be in a relationship with anybody that insists they are superior to me, that insists that they have the right to control, they have sovereignty over me, they insist because of our race they have the right to take away my nation, my land, my kids, the only relationship we are going to have is a hostile one. So we have to think about how does that change?

I would never have put any thought to this before, but really as xwelítem you have your own Indigenous identity. You have your own. You have to go back further than us to find it. You have to go back to pre-Roman imperialism, pre-Christian imperialism, and you can find your ethnic identity whether it be Pict, Celt, Scots, Goth, Gaels, Nordic, whatever your ethnic identity is you had an Indigenous identity prior to the conquest of Roman imperialism. It was this imperialism that erased your identities, your true authentic identities. And I imagine, because I can't speak for your personal ethnic identity, but I imagine that you had Indigenous like teachings, I know enough about the Celts and the Picts to say that they had Indigenous like teachings. They understand the concepts like interconnectedness they understood concepts of respect, reverence and reciprocity for the land. It was built into their teachings. So there is something there that tells me if xwelítem will go back to their Indigenous identities maybe that is the basis where we can define relationships, we can find that common ground to speak on, we will find that place where we can say "you understand the world in a certain way, I understand it in a certain way" and it doesn't look anything like this imperial project that we are seeing now. It doesn't look anything like that. We all more than likely have a really good understanding of how to relate to our worlds, our homelands, and how to do it in a healthy way. For the xwelítem I think it is really important to come to understand that identity and that becomes your decolonization work.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ward, "Decolonizing the Colonizer."

As I listened to Sakej's words and looked around the room, I could see the engrossment of his audience—he had definitely struck a chord. I felt it too. And almost as quickly, I felt the rising critic inside me, just waiting to determine all the ways this was problematic and unrealistic. I heard a voice saying, “I don't in any way feel connected to the Irish, Scottish, English and French cultures I mainly descend from. My grandparents barely spoke of their heritages, let alone the cultures of the ancient ancestors of these contemporary heritages who may have lived in more life-nurturing relationships with the earth. Even if I could reconnect with the early writings of Romans and Greeks describing the ancient Celts, Gauls and Picts⁵⁰ possibly connected with my own ancestral lineages, or the archaeological and ethnographic reconstructions of these cultures, how would I know what was authentic, and how could I find meaning and value in what is known about these ancient cultures without any relationships, mentorship and real-life sense of connection?” Hadn't this knowledge, these ways of life, been deeply repressed over thousands of years? Was anything really held onto that I could connect with in a meaningful sense? I think of centuries of Christianization, colonizing Romans and Normans, religious reformations, witch hunts, enclosures of common lands, capitalism, industrialization, scientism, the Enlightenment, not to mention the severing of connections with ancestral homelands as people moved vast distances, and the repression of cultural heritage in order to create and solidify white community and culture. I also visualize white New Age types declaring, “We are all Indigenous to somewhere,” and with this statement enacting erasures of colonial history as vast as their statement is empty.

Yet running from this guidance and sitting in critique doesn't feel right either. In a way, it is the easier path, one that protects my ego, stays safely in a place of superiority, a place ready to critique those who are braver than I, who walk onto the shifting ground of

⁵⁰ There are many debates and discussions about who were and are the Celts, drawing from archaeological evidence, linguistic evidence, and writings of ancient Greek and Roman scholars. Most believe the ancient Celts were once spread across much of mainland Europe and are connected linguistically by their related celtic-languages. Gaulish is the ancient celtic language of the Gauls, whose lands were in areas of present day Belgium, France, parts of Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The Picts were an ancient peoples of Eastern and Northern Scotland, who some believe were also ethno-linguistically Celtic. They later merged with the Gaelic speaking Celtic peoples who came to Scotland from Ireland. There is also a contemporary use of the term 'Celtic peoples' which refers to those who speak and or recently spoke the modern Celtic languages: Welsh, Breton, Cornish, Irish and Scottish Gaelic and Manx. See Chapman, “Who Are the Celts?”; Clarkson, *The Picts*.

a spiritual journey that is anything but certain and is fraught with the potential for xwelítem practices of erasure and superiority neuroses to thrive. Perhaps my resistance also reveals another aspect of my collectively and personally created shadow, one in which I have internalized the story that ancestral cultures of Europe and their “pagan” ways of the past were and remain backwards, superstitious, bad, evil or, in more contemporary terms, phoney or flakey. Leaning into my shadow, into a sense of wholeness in myself, includes facing this resistance, asking why it exists, and wading through the intermingling of rational arguments and emotionally charged defenses that keep me in the same place. Fortunately, there are white settlers taking up the kind of guidance Sakej Ward has offered, resurfacing and reconnecting with their own ancestral cultures and spiritual teachings and providing inspiration for others.

Within movements and communities created in relation to the philosophies and pedagogies of ecofeminism, transformative learning, sacred, deep and radical human ecologies, permaculture, neo-pagan and earth-based spirituality movements⁵¹ there are threads of people who in their own unique and overlapping ways have found meaning and direction through reconnecting with and renewing the ancestral teachings and practices of their own cultural heritages as transformative forces within their own lives. Where they are white settlers in Turtle Island, this means looking back towards land-connected ancestral cultures in Europe. Many of these movements centre earth and women-based spiritualities, ethics of care and practices of gifting to each other and to the land as a foundation for meeting our needs, building community, and nurturing and sustaining life. This may involve looking back to renew ancient stories, teachings and ceremonial practices, traditional farming, fishing and other land-based subsistence practices, modes of community organization and leadership, or teachings and practices around health and well-being. At best, this work is being done in conversations, relationships, and reciprocities with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands. Yet, especially for white settlers as we continue to occupy Indigenous lands, this work is challenging. As with the pathways of learning from Indigenous people in Indigenous

⁵¹ For examples see (1) Ecofeminism: Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*; Vaughan, *Women and the Gift Economy*; (2) Transformative learning: O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor, *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning*; (3) Radical Ecologies: Merchant, *Radical Ecology*; Williams, Roberts, and McIntosh, *Radical Human Ecology*; (4) Permaculture: Mollison and Slay, *Permaculture*; (5) Neo-pagan spirituality: Starhawk, *Spiral Dance, The - 20th Anniversary*.

spaces, this pathway has many hazards, potentials for xwelítem ways of being to trip up our intentions. Before sharing the start of my own journey of looking back, I first want to name some of these hazards.

Xwelítem Returns in White Settler Journeys towards Ancestral Cultural Reconnection

“We are all Indigenous to somewhere.”

“Our ancestors were oppressed and colonized too.”

I have heard both these statements, multiple times, often in spaces where spiritual growth and healing is the intention. The words are often meant to be unifying, to find places of common ground and shared understanding, and, when spoken by Indigenous people, perhaps to encourage non-Indigenous people down our own pathways of healing and reconnection to the ceremonies, cultural practices, sacred histories and languages of the lands of our ancestors, to a sense of peoplehood with a place. Yet, in the space of deep white settler tendencies towards Indigenous erasure, these statements, as the beginnings of our stories of self, can become a move to innocence. White settler permaculturist Jesse Watson reflects on the effects of this kind of narrative, especially when it is spoken to white people without direct relationships of Indigenous accountability:

Once, during a presentation I said, “Permaculture allows us to remember how to be indigenous to a place.” It was a meme I had seen elsewhere, but I instantly felt skeezy after repeating it and vowed to never say it again. In the sense of some kinds of strict land management and home economics, it’s kind of true. But I realized that saying that sentence, especially to a room full of (mostly) white people, has the effect of erasing the lived experience of contemporary indigenous North American people. The tragedy is that such thinking offers permaculturist white people the opportunity to replace those indigenes and complete the project of settler colonialism, without those permies realizing that they’re doing so.⁵²

Without a context—a grounding in and the relentless presence of the story of our ancestors and our own participation in the ongoing oppression and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, along with the benefits and privileges we have received and continue to receive from the imposed white settler, colonial, capitalist order—we risk a renewed

⁵² Watson, “Decolonizing Permaculture.”

erasure and oppression of the very people with whom we are often trying to connect and find common ground. As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel share in their understanding of Indigenous identity, “Indigenesness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism.”⁵³ To call ourselves or practices we are trying to renew or reconnect with in our ancestral cultures “Indigenous” is to erase and deny these power dynamics, which shape in the most direct and significant ways our contemporary realities here, our status as occupiers of the land, and our deep socialization into white settler mainstream culture. Further, if we are serious about reconnecting with our ancestries and land-connected practices, we must begin to see and respect that these are diverse, tied to specific peoples, homelands and languages. As put by a group known as Celts Against Oppression, Racism and Neo-Nazism, in their statement on Indigenous identity: “We already have terminology, in our own languages, for our ancestral, earth-honouring ways; we don’t need to steal terms and identities from brown people.”⁵⁴ This group, similar to permaculturalist Jesse Watson cited above, has chosen explicitly and intentionally not to use the term “Indigenous” in reference to themselves and their efforts to reconnect with earth-honouring ways of life and cultural, ancestral practices.

White settlers may also re-enact white supremacy, privilege and entitlement by claiming an Indigenous identity or by claiming to have also experienced cultural oppression. Perhaps the most potent example is provided by the neo-Nazi and white supremacist organizations in North America that have also appropriated the term “Indigenous” to refer to themselves as Indigenous Europeans. Significant neo-Nazi groups such as the National Alliance have made attempts to spread their white supremacist agenda and recruit whites into their movement to reinforce white power by staging “European” festivals in an effort to draw in white settlers of Nordic, Scottish, Irish and other heritages.⁵⁵ White supremacists further make claims to their own “oppression” by arguing how few European Americans understand their heritage.

While white settlers in earth-based spiritual communities are not using the term Indigenous as part of an explicit agenda of asserting white supremacy or claiming

⁵³ Wildcat, *Red Alert!* P. 597

⁵⁴ CAORN Council, “On Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Identity.”

⁵⁵ Potok, “Neo-Nazi Groups Use Traditional Folk Music Festivals to Recruit Radicals.”

resources, power and attention based on their “cultural oppression,” actions based on their narration of themselves as “Indigenous” may also have the potential to cause harm through erasure and displacement. For example, white settlers may claim participation in Indigenous councils or groups based on their self-understanding as “Indigenous European” or even lead and pretend to speak for real Indigenous people.⁵⁶ This does nothing but enact a further erasure of Indigenous people, one that harmfully perpetuates a relationship of domination and holds us further from what might be our conscious goals of transforming. Feminist writer Jamie Utt describes the tension we must hold in this journey:

We must get in touch with our cultural heritage to understand our stake in ending White Supremacy through a connection to what we lost, but we also have to understand and remain accountable to the privileges that Whiteness affords us every day of our lives.⁵⁷

When we take on our own work of ancestral reconnection in ways that lose sight of the everyday realities of our white privilege, we ironically risk reinforcing a culture of white supremacy in the process.

White settler practices of erasure and assertions of white entitlement may also resurface when we continue to appropriate Indigenous knowledge yet claim, repackage or reposition it within our own traditions and communities. For example, New Age or neo-pagan communities claiming to be practicing European pagan traditions may in fact be appropriating and twisting Indigenous spiritual practices and teachings and representing these as European practices. Like the fake white shamans and medicine people selling books on Native American spirituality, there is also a similar trend among New Age and neo-pagan writers to appropriate and misrepresent pagan European cultural practices, perhaps especially “Celtic” beliefs, teachings and practices, for their financial gain by exploiting a hungry white settler market. This kind of cultural appropriation may also take place more subtly, where Indigenous knowledges are brought into white settler spaces without relationship building and accountability.

We recently hosted a permaculture workshop at the Yarrow Ecovillage, attended in large majority by white settlers. The white settler leading the workshop informed the

⁵⁶ CAORN Council, “On Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Identity.”

⁵⁷ Utt, “Holding the Tension: Whiteness vs. European Cultural Identity.”

group that his favourite book is Nancy Turner's *Food Plants of Coastal First Peoples*.⁵⁸ He advocated that every permaculturist should own and refer to this book. Throughout his talk, he mentioned various European mentors and elders who had inspired the permaculture movement and with whom he had studied, but not once did he name an Indigenous person from the lands he occupies. Yet, his own permaculture practice was based on thousands of years of knowledge of the plants, medicines and ecology of coastal Indigenous peoples. Appropriation is the taking of cultural knowledge outside of relationships of respect, reciprocity and accountability, and without acknowledging the sources of this knowledge. The work of ethno-botanist Nancy Turner is often held up as an example of deep learning in the context of reciprocity and respect and is grounded in long-standing relationships with many Indigenous interior and coastal peoples. Yet, what is the effect when white settlers use the work of Nancy Turner to advance their own permaculture practice, out of the context of their own relationships with Indigenous peoples or at the very least their own respectful acknowledgement of the true sources of this knowledge?

Settler scholar Celia Haig-Brown writes about the dynamics and differences between cultural appropriation and deep learning by non-Indigenous people from Indigenous peoples, and specifically reflects on her experiences learning from Maori people. She writes: "It is one thing for me to take the idea out of the context in which Maori teachers had carefully guided me to some understanding of it, very likely based in some demonstration of 'deep learning' related to Indigenous knowledge, but what are the ramifications when someone who has never seen or heard the idea in its original context decides to 'run with it'?"⁵⁹ What are the ramifications of a failure not only to acknowledge the true sources of this knowledge, but also a failure to acknowledge the colonial repression of this knowledge, and the resilience of Indigenous people in resisting this repression? Queer white settler ethnographer and historian Scott Morgensen names these challenges within alternative land-based and often spiritually motivated predominantly white settler movements, stating:

Decolonization does not follow if settlers simply study and emulate the lives of

⁵⁸ Turner, *Food Plants of Coastal First Peoples*.

⁵⁹ Haig-Brown, "Indigenous Thought, Appropriation, and Non-Aboriginal People." P. 943.

Indigenous people on Indigenous land ... [this] is relevant in particular to those for whom anarchism links them to communalism and counterculturalism, such as in rural communes, permaculture, squatting, hoboing, foraging, and neo-pagan, earth-based, and New Age spirituality. These “alternative” settler cultures formed by occupying and traversing stolen Indigenous land and often by practicing cultural and spiritual appropriation ... They must ask, then, if their interest to support Indigenous people arose not from an investment in decolonization, but in recolonization.⁶⁰

Are we invested in decolonization or recolonization? Whether or not we are specifically appropriating Indigenous knowledge and practices, are the communities that might emerge from our efforts towards our own land and spiritual reconnection disconnected from explicit goals of working towards ethical relationships with the Indigenous peoples and nations in whose lands we are occupiers? In what ways are we creating, in our minds, hearts and everyday practices, visions of a settler future without relationship and responsibility to the Indigenous peoples of this place?

Unangan scholar Eve Tuck and non-Indigenous scholar Marcia McKenzie address the link specifically between settler stories and the risks of what they call “replacement,” in their writing on decolonizing place in research and education:

Replacement is invested in settler futurity; in our use, futurity is more than the future, it is how human narratives and perceptions of the past, future, and present inform current practices and framings in a way that (over)determines what registers as the (possible) future.⁶¹

Looking towards and learning from our own ancestral cultures, traditions and practices must hold with it the intention, as Sakej Ward puts it, to “find that common ground to speak on,” to nurture a worldview and ways of being that see and relate to these lands as sacred homelands, while continuing to recognize that they are not *our* sacred homelands. Our white settler ancestral cultures did not emerge from relationships with the lands we are now occupying. Stó:lō culture in Stó:lō Téméxw is emergent from the land itself and in this way holds the wisdom and knowledge of how to relate respectfully, sustainably here, in this place, and how the specific relationships of reciprocity with the land are to be respected and renewed.⁶² It doesn’t mean that our own traditions, teachings, practices,

⁶⁰ Morgensen, “Un-Settling Settler Desires.”

⁶¹ Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*. P. 69-70.

⁶² Wildcat, *Red Alert!* While many Indigenous leaders and scholars have made this point alongside political and social justice based arguments for reentering Indigenous knowledge, Daniel Wildcat’s main argument

technologies and visions for the future are not potentially of value—but, like our own learning, they must come second. This means respecting and renewing Indigenous access to and decision-making authority regarding lands and waters in their homelands. Here, the spiritual understanding of sacred lands comes full circle to the political realities of Indigenous self-determination and resurgence.

For myself, keeping in mind the hazards of a journey to reconnect with pieces of my own ancestral land-connected cultures requires remaining focused on the value of the story, not in its objective truth, nor in its clarity of vision for settler futures, but rather in its power and potential to help guide me into ethical, respectful relationships with Indigenous people and the land itself, in the homelands I am occupying, in the here and now.

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Ancestors, Homelands and Stories

I call my grandmother, who lives in Nishnaabeg homelands, in the city of Thornhill, just outside of Toronto. She is now 92 years old and this, as far as I can remember, will be the first time I intentionally ask her about her ancestors and our heritage. I had heard stories of her parents from my father: Grandma Campbell (Mary Fischer) was a “battle-axe” who liked to talk politics and ran a rooming house in Cobourg for many years after her husband, Charlie Campbell, died. Charlie was a dairy farmer in the days of milk home deliveries, and he was known for his kindness and generosity, often giving milk to those in need, forgiving the debts of those who could not pay. I knew of their Scottish heritage from my Grandma’s fondness for say, “You have strong Scottish blood, you know.” I asked my Grandma, Jean Heaslip (Campbell), about her grandparents, where they had come from in Scotland and what their heritage meant to her parents and grandparents. She wished I had asked earlier; her mind was not the same as it had been. She had been suffering from dementia for some time and could not remember. I felt the sadness and weight of our conversation, of both our regret. Before we said goodbye, she said, “I’m happy you are looking into our history; it’s important that you

throughout his book *Red Alert!* is the power of Indigenous cultures emergent from their environments (which he calls the nature-culture nexus) for teaching all of us how to relate to the land and live in sustainable and life nourishing ways.

know and tell your daughter.” She has since passed away, and that was one of the last times we spoke. I hold her words now as a call to the value of this journey.

My dad connected me with a cousin of his, a nephew of my grandma, who has taken an interest in the Campbell family history. Through this cousin and another distant relative, I am guided on a journey back from Harwood, a small town outside of Cobourg, on the shores of Rice Lake in Nishnaabeg homelands, to a farm named Cairntradlin in the area of Kinnellar, outside the city of Aberdeen in northeast Scotland, between the River Dee and the River Don. According to church and Scottish census records, my ancestors had been connected to this place since at least the late 17th century. In 1843, two sons and one daughter of Sylvester Campbell and Helen Masson left their home in Kinnellar, Aberdeenshire, travelling with another family from their parish to what would become the small town of Harwood. One of the sons was Adam Corbett Campbell, my grandma’s great grandfather. By 1848, Adam owned 100 acres of land known as “Concession 9, lot 32 in Haldimand Township, Northumberland County, Ontario, Canada,” made up entirely of forested lands. This land was governed by Rice Lake Treaty 20, what is known as one of the Williams Treaties, negotiated between William Claus, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and Nishnaabeg leaders in 1818. While the Canadian government saw these treaties as land cessation agreements, Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson shares a Nishnaabe understanding of what her ancestors were negotiating for in the Williams treaties:

Nishnaabe freedom, protection for the land and the environment, a space—an intellectual, political, spiritual, artistic, creative, and physical space where we could live as Nishnaabe and where our *Kobade* could do the same. This is what my Ancestors wanted for me, for us. They wanted for our generation to practice Nishnaabe governance over our homeland, to partner with other governments over shared lands, to have the ability to make decisions about how the gifts of our mother would be used for the benefit of our people and in a manner to promote her sanctity for coming generations. I believe my ancestors expected the settler state to recognize my nation, our lands and the political and cultural norms in our territory.⁶³

The evidence of how the white settler colonial state has carried out their interpretation of these treaties since this time proves deeply that the state and the white settlers bound by

⁶³ Simpson, “Land and Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations.” Leanne Simpson shares that this word, *Kobade*, refers to both great grandchildren and great grandparents.

these treaties—such as my Campbell ancestors in Rice Lake—failed to understand and/or intentionally ignored the political and cultural norms of Anishinaabe treaty-making that guided this process.

Today, Nishnaabeg leaders and scholars continue to bring forward the Nishnaabe understandings of the treaties and their ancestors' intentions, and to educate the settler state and population. This is expressed as Nishnaabeg renew their land-based practices, and the ceremonies, family ways of being and philosophies that go along with these practices, such as Manoominikewi, the gathering of wild rice.⁶⁴ Contemporary Nishnaabeg face harassment and demonization from settlers for enacting this right and responsibility to gather wild rice within their lands.⁶⁵ To protect Nishnaabe lifeways in the face of this settler entitlement and harassment, leaders also look to the Canadian courts as places for basic protection of some of their rights. Nishnaabeg scholars such as Leanne Simpson, John Burrows and Heidi Stark are further working to share Nishnaabeg understandings of treaty-making philosophy, practice and protocols. For example, Heidi Stark begins writing about Anishinaabe⁶⁶ treaty-making with a story of *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*. From this story, Stark draws Anishinaabe principles of treaty-making such as mutual respect between parties, responsibility to one another through relationships of cooperation predicated on trust, and the principle of renewal—parties must carry on the principles of respect and responsibility for the treaty to remain continually in effect.⁶⁷ My Scottish ancestors came to these lands a short time after the Williams treaties were negotiated. What likelihood did they have of being aware of or understanding Anishinaabe treaty concepts? What kinds of attitudes, beliefs and values might they have brought with them, and how would these have affected their ability to engage with Anishinaabe treaty principles, even if they had been exposed to them through relationships with Anishinaabeg?

Increasing privatization of lands along with trends towards displacement of small-scale farmers for the expanding sheep and cattle industries in northeast Scotland may

⁶⁴ Yerxa, "Gii-Kaapizigemin Manoomin Neyaashing"; Kapyrka, "For the Love of Manoominikewin."

⁶⁵ Kapyrka, "For the Love of Manoominikewin."

⁶⁶ I have switched to using the spelling Anishinaabe rather than Nishnaabe as this is the spelling used by Heidi Stark in her work. See previous footnote on pg. 23 regarding different dialects and spellings within Indigenous languages.

⁶⁷ Stark, "Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal."

have been pressures that encouraged the departure of part of my Campbell family ancestors from their homelands to Anishinaabe lands. This was certainly the case for families displaced during the many evictions of small tenant farmers in the Scottish Highlands during the Highland Clearances in the 18th and 19th centuries.⁶⁸ These clearances to a smaller extent did affect other parts of the country and had spin-off effects as people moved to the lowland areas in search of work and alternative livelihoods, putting pressure on local economies.⁶⁹ It is also possible that difficult years of drought and bad harvests during this era contributed to emigration. Yet, alongside these is the likely influence of Canadian advertising about the availability of cheap lands, along with my ancestors' increasing immersion in the surging of values and ethics that guided personal and family pursuits of "progress" across Europe in this era, that instilled the idea that we must all—individually and as families and communities—strive towards improvement.⁷⁰ Sylvester, the father of Adam Corbet Campbell, stayed on in Scotland at the family farm, becoming a member of the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland in 1858, a decade after three of his seven children emigrated. The 1885 report of the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland provides a detailed summary of how ancient systems of farming have been transformed, documenting and celebrating what is referred to as the "spirit of improvement" in agriculture. In the section dedicated to the Kincardine area of Aberdeenshire, in which my ancestor's farm is located, the language of the report reflects how Enlightenment values were applied to transforming farming practices and the landscape itself:

Coming to speak of more recent times, we are happy to be able to state that the spirit of improvement aroused in the last century has never been allowed to lie dormant. True, during the last twenty-five years, a smaller extent of land has been reclaimed than during either the last twenty-five years of the eighteenth century or the first twenty-five of the present, but that has not been due to any flagging in the spirit of improvement, but simply to the fact that only a limited area of suitable land remained for the proprietors and tenants of the past twenty-five years to bring under cultivation. There has been less done lately, simply because there has been less to do.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Richards, *The Highland Clearances*.

⁶⁹ Richards.

⁷⁰ Withers, *Gaelic Scotland*.

⁷¹ Menzies, "Transactions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland." P. 75

This belief system nurtured the idea that young people should expand and find their own lands to “improve” and “reclaim,” contributing to “progress.” Upon arriving in Nishnaabe homelands, my ancestors likely held this value about “improving” the land and making it produce to its maximum potential for humans, and they likely understood those who saw this differently as backwards.

Along with this pressure towards improvements and progress within Enlightenment values, my ancestors were also affected by the earlier Protestant Reformation, which spread across Europe and was imposed in Scotland in the late 16th century, rising to greater dominance in the mid-17th century with the ascendancy of the Calvinist Covenanters.⁷² Along with this religious reformation came the philosophy that hard work, discipline and frugality were honourable and would lead to divine grace, promoting a kind of work ethic that found further space for expression in the later ideologies of the Enlightenment era and its striving for progress. The Protestant Reformation also led to a significant repression of “folk” traditions that were rooted in the practices of pre-Christian times, and which, at least in Scotland and Ireland, to a degree carried on alongside and in a religious syncretism with the teachings of early generations of Catholic Christian monks and monasteries. The Reformed Church of Scotland, more explicitly than previous religious authorities, attempted to repress seasonal ceremonial rounds such as the fire ceremonies associated with Beltaine and Samhain, pilgrimages to sacred sites, visits to healing wells, folk medicine, music and many other “folk” practices.⁷³ These practices were demonized as backwards and superstitious by church authorities who with varying degrees of success attempted to abolish them from their parishes.⁷⁴

The Reformation influenced the leadership of Scotland significantly and also did much to support the repression of the Gaelic language, which was viewed as closely related to ignorance, superstition and incivility. Schools were established in every parish to teach English, at the same time as, paradoxically, Gaelic bibles and religious instruction were expanded to further the efforts towards Protestant conversion.⁷⁵ These

⁷² Hood, “Folk Culture in North East Scotland: An Overview.”

⁷³ Hood; Jackson, *The Parish of Drumoak*.

⁷⁴ Hood, “Folk Culture in North East Scotland: An Overview”; Jackson, *The Parish of Drumoak*.

⁷⁵ Withers, *Gaelic Scotland*.

repressions of culture, spirituality and language were resisted in many places across Scotland, including in Aberdeenshire.⁷⁶ Yet, they also successfully influenced the attitudes of the people towards many of their own belief systems, practices and traditions that had carried on for generations before them. A tangible example that connects this repression of Scots/Gaelic cultural and spiritual practices and beliefs to a transformation of relationships with the land is the concept of the “Goodman’s Ground” or “Guidman’s Croft.” Goodman’s Ground was an area of land that families and communities left uncultivated and ungrazed in an acknowledgement of the forces of nature, often with ceremonies to dedicate the land.⁷⁷ It was believed that cultivation of this land would bring misfortune; sometimes this land may also have protected a sacred site or burial mound. Yet, Church authorities considered Goodman’s Ground a dedication of land to the Devil, and they worked hard to eliminate it through fines and through connecting it to prohibited practices of witchcraft.⁷⁸

Alongside this cultural shift towards Enlightenment values of progress and improvement, and under the influence of the Protestant Reformation, was a tremendous shift in the roles of and respect for women in European society—including women’s roles as spiritual leaders, healers and midwives—and respect for women’s powers of reproduction. The violence of the witchhunts of the 16th to early 18th centuries across Europe were part of a broader pattern towards the criminalization and oppression of women for what were deemed “moral offenses” during the Protestant Reformation.⁷⁹ The University of Edinburgh Survey of Scottish Witchcraft estimates that nearly 4,000 people were accused under the Scottish Witchcraft Act, 84% of them women and the majority in the Scottish lowlands. Many of the spiritual beliefs and practices associated with witchcraft were also associated with folk healing, practices that called upon knowledge of specific medicines and plants as well as the ability to communicate with and relate to non-human realms—for example, through belief in the Celtic Faerie-faith.⁸⁰ The witchhunts were part of a Church-led attack on women, folk healing and what they

⁷⁶ Hood, “Folk Culture in North East Scotland: An Overview.”

⁷⁷ Hood. Other names for Goodman’s Ground were: Halyman’s Rig, the Goodman’s Fauld, the Gi’en Rig, the Deevil’s Craft, Clootie’s Craft, the Black Faulie and Given Ground

⁷⁸ Hood.

⁷⁹ Goodare, “Women and the Witch-hunt in Scotland.”

⁸⁰ Goodare; Hall, “Getting Shot of Elves: Healing, Witchcraft and Fairies in the Scottish Witchcraft Trials”; MacCulloch, “The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scotland.”

perceived as superstitious and immoral practices. When men were accused of witchcraft, they were often closely associated with women folk healers.⁸¹

Italian feminist Marxist scholar Sylvia Federici has argued that the witchhunts were also a crucial part of the transition to a capitalist order in Europe.⁸² Not only were women terrorized into submission, leaving behind their previous roles, responsibilities, knowledges and practices, but the witchhunt propaganda successfully divided women from men, making women available as scapegoats for the disaffected and oppressed male workers in the new capitalist order. Federici points out that part of the turn towards a capitalist and industrial economic structure also required a deep disciplining of the body to regulate one's existence according to an imposed timetable. The witchhunts were a violent and gendered aspect of this "disciplining of the body," one that at its heart changed the cultural understanding of and respect for women's powers associated with reproduction, sexuality, magic and healing. In Federici's words,

the witch-hunt destroyed a whole world of female practices, collective relations, and systems of knowledge that had been the foundation of women's power in pre-capitalist Europe.⁸³

This repression and demonization of the relationship between women, healing, life-giving powers and spirituality also had a significant influence on the beliefs and psyche of the people of Europe as many left their homelands to colonize and occupy Indigenous land across Turtle Island.

How might this have contributed to the ways in which they misunderstood or disrespected Indigenous treaties? How does the passing on of this same repression through generations continue to inhibit our ability to respect, understand and seriously embrace Indigenous understandings of treaty-making today? For example, in Heidi Stark's explanation of Anishinaabe treaty-making through an Anishnaabe story, it is a woman's relationship, wherein she marries and has children with a beaver, that creates the basis for the treaty of respect, a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between the Anishinaabe and the beavers. In Leanne Simpson's work, she also shares the central role of women's gifts—such as carrying children, birthing and nourishing through

⁸¹ Goodare, "Women and the Witch-hunt in Scotland." P. 303

⁸² Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*. P. 184

⁸³ Federici. P. 112-13.

breastfeeding—in teaching about Nishnaabe treaty-making, based as it is in relationships of respect and balance. In Nishnaabe creation story, Wenonah, a female spirit whose name means “the first breast feeder,” came to the Earth and created humans, the Nishnaabeg people being her descendants, and breastfeeding being at the heart of creation. Nishnaabe teachings about pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding, shared with Simpson by Elder and Grandmother Edna Manitowabi, and her experiences of breastfeeding her own children, helped her to understand breastfeeding as the very first Treaty. In her words:

Edna explained to me that breastfeeding is where our children learn about treaties, the relationships they encode and how to maintain good treaty relationships... When my first child Nishna came along, I started to understand. Nursing is ultimately about a relationship. Treaties are ultimately about a relationship. One is a relationship based on sharing between a mother and a child and the other based on sharing between two sovereign nations. Breastfeeding benefits both the other and the child in terms of health and in terms of their relationship to each other. And treaties must benefit both sovereign independent nations to be successful.⁸⁴

A specific demonization and repression of women’s powers as givers and nurturers of life characterized a significant part of the cultural shift in consciousness in the generations leading up to my ancestors’ migration to and occupation of Nishnaabe homelands. How might this, along with the cultural values, beliefs and practices of Enlightenment thinking and the Protestant work ethic, have prevented the possibility of my ancestors understanding and respecting Nishnaabe treaty protocols, let alone developing ethical relationships with Nishnaabeg?

This story speaks to the transition towards beliefs and values that created a significant barrier for my ancestors to understand the principles of Nishnaabe treaty-making as they arrived in Nishnaabe homelands. These beliefs and values, and the consciousness and ways of being they nurture, in many ways have carried on, passed down in families along with the march of settler colonialism and capitalism, colluding with the ideologies of white supremacy, individualism and private ownership. They point to the very worldview that I must disrupt in this chain of inheritance if I am to walk towards another way of being in the world, one that is open to understanding the spiritual

⁸⁴ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*. P. 106-107.

grounding, and the practices of reverence, respect and reciprocity, in which Indigenous law and principles of treaty rest.

Yet, what additional stories of our pasts, what efforts towards “looking back in order to look forward” could be told alongside this story? What stories of our past might also support our transformation away from xwelítem hunger towards spiritually open and land-connected ways of being? Researching family and ancestral history illuminates deeply how where we choose to start a story powerfully shapes what story emerges. Each of us could tell many stories. The choice of where to begin, what pathways to follow, is shaped by our intentions, and in the telling influences how we understand who we are, and potentially who we can become. Along any of these ancestral pathways are potential places for reconnection and inspiration—we could look to our living relatives, the lineages of any of our ancestors, history books, archaeology, ancient texts and place names.⁸⁵

My grandmother Jean Heaslip (Campbell) was the only one of my grandparents who in small ways related to and remembered her Scottish heritage with pride, and this in itself has guided me towards centring this part of my ancestry. Furthermore, choosing to focus this initial “look back” on my connection with Gaelic Scots ancestry also reflects that this is my closest connection to an ancestral culture and language that has to a significant degree remained living. It is an ancestral connection that has the greatest potential for sharing inspiration and guidance—not only from stories in books and the interpretations of archaeologists, but from living and recent practices, ways of life, languages and experiential knowledge. There are communities of people in Scotland and in places across Turtle Island leading the way towards a spiritual and cultural Gaelic, and more broadly Celtic, revival of language, practiced customs, ceremony, and spirituality that they and their ancestors have held onto despite the many influences and efforts to repress these “pagan” beliefs and cultures. Scotland, like Ireland, was never conquered by the Romans, and the development of Christianity, via the early Celtic Christian monks from Ireland, took its own path, one that was influenced deeply by the Gaelic Scots’ and

⁸⁵ For example, for the area of Aberdeenshire see: Noble and Sveinbjarnarson, “The Northern Picts Project”; Noble, “A Very Royal Place: Rhynie and the Picts”; Coles, “Report on Stone Circles in Aberdeenshire with Measured Plans and Drawings, Obtained under the Gunning Fellowship”; Watson, *The Place Names of Upper Deeside*; Book of Deer Project, “The Book of Deer.”

Picts' spiritual beliefs and practices. Human ecologist and Scottish Highlander Alistair McIntosh refers to this as an Irish-Scots Celtic monasticism, resting on a Druidic "Celtic Old Testament" base, and argues that it embodied a rich nature spirituality.⁸⁶

In the parish where my ancestor Adam Corbet Campbell and his siblings attended church before leaving for Canada in 1843, the records of church authorities reveal the challenges the minister faced in preventing the local people from continuing to practicing ancient spiritual traditions, despite the Reformed Church of Scotland's official prohibition of these practices, such as pilgrimages to sacred springs and ceremonial rounds. For example, most parishes still have a holy well or sacred spring nearby, suggesting perhaps that the early monks had chosen the locations of their monasteries based on the location of sacred wells. The Drumoak parish of my ancestors has Saint Maik's or Mayoca's well, close to the northern bank of the River Dee. People would go to these wells for their healing powers, for drinking, for washing their bodies, and for healing stones that lay around the well. A gift to the well was left as an offering to the spirit inhabiting the water. The final act was to walk three times around the well, following the course of the sun (sunwise).⁸⁷ Church records suggest that these practices co-existed with Christian beliefs right up into the 19th century.⁸⁸ The minister of the church was often in a difficult position when it came to enforcing prohibitions, since on some occasions the elders involved in these traditions were also elders of the church council.⁸⁹ These traditions and ceremonies organized and gave meaning to rural life, and their repression was resisted. Where and when they were left behind is not only connected with Church repression but significantly linked to political and economic changes that tended to take people further from seasonal rounds and the practices of land-based community life.⁹⁰ For example, despite Church repression, the last fields dedicated to "Goodman's Ground" were not ploughed until the early 19th century, most likely as a result of economic changes and pressures during an era of land reforms and clearances, privatization, enclosures and increasingly powerful capitalist relations.⁹¹

⁸⁶ McIntosh, "Scotland—Historical Context of Nature Religion."

⁸⁷ Jackson, *The Parish of Drumoak*. P. 12

⁸⁸ Jackson; Hood, "Folk Culture in North East Scotland: An Overview."

⁸⁹ Jackson, *The Parish of Drumoak*.

⁹⁰ Hood, "Folk Culture in North East Scotland: An Overview."

⁹¹ Hood.

Religious repression, Enlightenment thinking, rationalization, progress, the Protestant work ethic, and the significant ways in which the intimate realities of daily life changed with increased privatization, enclosures and the transformation of rural, farming community life doubtless influenced my ancestors—those who remained in Scotland and those who traveled to become settlers occupying Nishnaabe homelands. Yet, this story is also too simple. It negates the very human ways in which we can hold complex worldviews, navigate change, resist and adapt. The power and reverence for natural springs and for lands dedicated to natural forces, the honouring of relationships of reciprocity, and seasonal ceremonial rounds bringing together community on the land are examples of the land-based spiritual beliefs and traditions that people held onto. A story of the effort to resist the repression of these ways of life and the worldview that underpins them exists as well. If these traditions and beliefs did not carry on in the hearts and lives of my direct ancestors, especially as they uprooted from the homelands in which these practices were embedded in the landscape, they did not completely disappear from the Scots Gaelic and broader Celtic cultural landscape. Many people of various Celtic ancestries migrated and became white settlers occupying Indigenous lands across Turtle Island, and the descendants of these people are now widespread. Not only in their homelands but also in the communities they established across Turtle Island remain bits of knowledge, practices, stories—and in the case of Gaelic, an alternative worldview held in language.⁹² What might be each of our pathways to what Gaelic scholar and human ecologist Iain MacKinnon calls a pedagogy of connecting and reconnecting?⁹³ What is the power and potential of this movement, perhaps especially for the many white settlers across Turtle Island who have Celtic heritages, in guiding us towards a renewed spiritual openness connected with our ancestry, guiding us towards practices and teachings that nurture a reconciliation with the earth? What is the potential of this path for opening us to understanding and respecting the ways in which Stó:lō and other Indigenous people continue to revere, respect and give gratitude to the spirits of creation, life, birth and

⁹² See for example: Newton, *Seanchaidh Na Coille / The Memory-Keeper of the Forest*; Newton, “Scottish Gaels of the Pacific Northwest”; Newton, “Beyond the Single Narrative: The Scottish Gaelic Legacy in Canada”; For contemporary communities continuing to uphold and renew traditions and language see: Gaelic College, “Colaisde Na Gaidhlig: The Gaelic College”; Gaelic Society of Vancouver, “Commun Gaidhlig Bhancoubhair—the Gaelic Society of Vancouver.”

⁹³ MacKinnon, “Education for Life: Human Ecology Pedagogy as a Bridge to Indigenous Knowing.” P. 156

transformation as they are understood within their own stories, traditions, teachings and sacred ancestors? How might this reconnection nurture the creative and unique gifts we each have to offer the sacred Indigenous lands we are now living in relationship with, to support ethical relationships with the land and with each other?

Grounding in Practice: Responsibly Reciprocating in the Complex Web of Life

Muscogee Nation scholar Daniel Wildcat describes what his elder Kawagley calls “the Spiritual Person of the universe” and writes that this person is:

[p]romoted through custom, habit, ceremony, and language, not words or arguments from a book. Then and now, the best source for understanding creation and the Creator is embodied in the experiential features of our actions: the deepest insights are gained in our doing.⁹⁴

What is the doing that Daniel Wildcat refers to? – The direct experience of responsibly reciprocating in the complex web of life. While this looking back into our ancestral histories and culture may provide inspiration, guidance, and grounding it is the doing that we have the potential of becoming a spiritual person of the universe. We see and learn this through being present, through tangible practices that keep us connected to the land, create the possibilities for what Wildcat calls “Respectful Attentiveness.”⁹⁵ If we are respectfully attentive, the land, and relationships with the land can provide the guidance to support our development of appropriate/sustainable technologies, as well as ways of living together, practices of governance, diplomacy and treaty-making.⁹⁶ The living out, the doing of these practices in family, community and intergenerational linkages nurtures relationships of respect, reverence and reciprocity with the land, potentially undermining the capitalist relations and materialism that fuel our xwelítem hunger. Political philosopher James Tully writes about these practices of acting differently in the world as the basis of the great ‘reconnection’ and an essential part of two interconnected processes of reconciliation – reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with each

⁹⁴ Wildcat, *Red Alert!* P. 58

⁹⁵ Wildcat. P. 21

⁹⁶ See for example, Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy” - Leanne Simpson shares an Nishnaabeg story of a young girl, Kwezens, who observes a squirrel and through doing so learns how to tap the sugarbush, and the ways in which this experience is woven with the learning of Nishnaabeg values and ways of being.; See Irlbacher-Fox, *Finding Dahshaa* for an example of the connections between the cultural process of moose-hide tanning and Dene governance.

other, and reconciliation of us all with the living earth, with more-than-human living beings. In his words, acting differently,

“involves freeing ourselves to some extent from the ways of acting that reproduce the unsustainable system and its ways of perceiving the world, and then beginning to act as plain, participatory members and citizens in and of the damaged and endangered symbiotic ecosystems and informal social systems we inhabit. As people act in participatory, interdependent and mutually sustainable ways in more and more relationships of their lives, the *way* that the world is perceived and disclosed to them begins to change accordingly.”⁹⁷

On a cloudy and still June morning, Atef, Fairsa and I organize some tools to walk out to the orchard we have recently taken on stewarding as part of the community-managed Yarrow Ecovillage organic farm. The orchard has existing pear and apple trees. Planted a number of years ago, they have not been well cared for, and most are stooped over and overwhelmed by the invasive Reed Canary grass that was likely once planted here as forage for cows. We have added some hazelnut trees to the orchard and look forward to harvesting and sharing the delicious, protein-rich nuts these trees will bear in a few years’ time. Hazelnuts are native to these lands and the lands where many of my ancestors came from, and they have a particular connection to my ancestry. My family name, drawn from my father’s paternal lineage, is Heaslip. It derives from the Old English words *haesel*, meaning hazel tree, and *hop*, meaning a valley or hollow between two hills. Taken together, the name Heaslip has the meaning “dwellers in the hazel valley.”⁹⁸ Some trace this name back to a small valley along the Ayr river in what is today the county of Ayrshire in southwest Scotland. Some Heaslips, including my ancestors, later left this area and settled in County Cavan, Ireland, as part of the Ulster Plantations in the 17th century. Some, including my ancestors, later migrated again to occupy Nishnaabe homelands.

Planting and growing hazelnuts and other trees as part of a family effort to care for and restore this land and grow food to eat and share is in part a way of sharing with my daughter this ancestral history and connection to land. For our own ancestors, the places they lived and how they lived from and in relationship with the land were at one time so essential that our identities as extended families—our names—often reflected

⁹⁷ Tully, “Reconciliation Here on Earth.”

⁹⁸ Titford, *The Penguin Dictionary of British Surnames*. P. 229.

this. Hazelnuts are also a revered and respected tree in ancient and contemporary Celtic teachings and stories. Witnessing the growth and seasonal cycles of these trees, and developing a relationship with them, creates a context and pathway by which I can share these stories and the teachings they offer with Fairsa, as a point of connection to this heritage in our family. Yet perhaps most significantly, tending this orchard brings us together, present with the land, supporting the possibility of our respectful attentiveness towards witnessing and participating in relationships with the complex web of life. We are learning how planting shrubs and trees that fix nitrogen mixed in with the apple, pear and hazelnut trees, nurtures the soil, creates habitat for wild animals and nourishes the trees that produce food for us to eat. Planting wildflowers brings pollinators, who do the work of ensuring the cycles of growth and renewal happen each year.

Alongside the orchard and crossing through the middle of the Yarrow Ecovillage farm is a small, salmon-bearing creek. The Yarrow Ecovillage community, in partnership with the Fraser Valley Watershed Coalition, has been involved in restoring this creek, with the intention of improving habitat for wild salmon.⁹⁹ Collectively, this has included establishing riparian buffers by removing blackberries and planting native species, using wattle fencing to control streambed erosion and establishing a canopy of willows and alders to shade out invasive plants and create a cool, shaded area for salmon habitat. We have also as a community created a constructed wetland in lieu of a septic field to reduce our environmental impact and restore aquatic habitat. The wetland plants, such as cattails, clean the waters and create habitat for many birds. Walking by this wetland on the way to the orchard, we listen to the calls of red-winged blackbirds and ducks. These are very important steps in creating a sense of connection based in relationships of presence and reciprocity with the land, and a sense of enacting our inalienable responsibilities as members of the earth's complex life system. I am proud of this work and believe it is part of a pathway of creating the desire and ability to, as Wildcat says, "cooperatively and sustainably live with a place as opposed to at an address."¹⁰⁰ I know these are steps in the right direction, and I also sense their limits.

⁹⁹ "Yarrow Ecovillage."

¹⁰⁰ Wildcat, *Red Alert!* P. 17

I wonder deeply whether children in our community will grow up with a lived sense of and value in practicing a reverence, respect and reciprocity with the land. We struggle, as I believe many predominantly white settler communities do, with the challenges of lacking the cultural and spiritual teachings, practices, skills and leadership that foster and promote intergenerational communities of place, a sense of connection and responsibility, the kinds of communities that could form long-term relationships with the land, with each other in our intergenerational families, and with Stó:lō families and tribes whose sacred lands we are occupying. Capitalist, market-based relations, materialism, consumerism and the xwelítém hunger these promote have a deep and insidious hold on our own ways of relating to each other and the land. We struggle to nurture the very real skills and capacities needed to live together and care for each other as humans, let alone nurture a spiritual sense of belonging to place, not from a perspective of ownership, rights and entitlements but from a place of responsibility and an understanding of what it means to live in relationship with a sacred homeland.

Reorienting ourselves to our ancestral lands, histories and cultures, even if our connections feel distant, may remind us of the bonds between power and place, ancestry, identity and spirit. Importantly, reorienting ourselves to our ancestral homelands also reminds us that the homelands we are now living in are not our own. We must acknowledge these pathways of our own ancestral reconnections, and recognize that spiritual, land-based and community renewals are not goals in themselves. No matter how grounded they are in respectful relationship with the land, to consider them such would still constitute a settler act of replacement, erasure, recolonization. Rather, walking this pathway can and must remain focused on the intention of re-centring Indigenous leadership, knowledges, practices and visions of the future of the people whose homeland we are living in, including the need to restore and return land for Indigenous peoples to ensure their own sustainable pathways of self-determination. To live respectfully here in Stó:lō Téméxw, necessarily involves creating relationships of reciprocity, mutual care, and ongoing renewal with Stó:lō people, families and communities.

Returning to Stó:lō Wisdom — Gifting, Teachings, Land

Ts'imalanoxw, Ernie Victor, is Stó:lō, from the community of Cheam, a village of the Pilalt tribe, and actively, along with many others, involved in the work of protecting the relationships between Stó:lō and sth'ó:qwi, as well all the fish and other creatures inhabiting the waterways that flow into and out of Stó:lō Téméxw. Through work and friendships, Ernie and I have crossed paths many times. While I did not formally interview Ernie for this research, we had the chance to talk about it on a number of occasions. I shared with him one of my guiding research questions: What did settlers need to do, what did we need to learn and unlearn, to be able to exist in ethical relationships with Stó:lō people? In response, he told me a segment of the story of how the swí:we (eulachon or candlefish) came to live in the waters near the village of Q'éyts'i (Katzie) and became an important source of food for many Stó:lō people. In his telling, a great leader Swaneset wanted to marry and went to the sky people to find a wife. When this woman came to live among the Q'éyts'i people, she brought with her a box. Inside the box was a gift for the good of the people— swí:we, which would from then on appear in the river every spring and feed the people after the long winter. Along with this offering she brought teachings about how to make rakes to catch the swí:we, when to harvest them, how to dry them and how to respect them.

Ernie Victor shared this brief segment of the story of the swí:we, casually mixing it into the flow of conversation. I didn't think about it too deeply until later when I got home. I decided that next time we met up, I would ask Ernie to tell me more about the story and what he meant in sharing it. A month or so later, I went to a Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance meeting that Ernie had invited me to. He was hoping I could meet and talk to a couple of the white biologists who worked for the organization. We chatted outside for a bit during the lunch break, and just as I was reminding myself to ask him about the story, he began to tell it again. This time I was more aware that he offered no explanation after telling the story. There was not much time to chat further, as the meeting was starting up, and I went home thinking further about the story, wondering what its message was for me and, more specifically, in response to my research question.

The woman from the sky people had come from her home in the sky to live on the land with Stó:lō people. She of course, unlike white settlers, was not a perpetrator or

beneficiary of a colonial history and contemporary reality that works towards the dispossession of Indigenous people. Yet, she was new to the land and the people, and in wanting to build good relations, she made an offering. Perhaps Ernie's telling of the story, in specific response to my research question, was meant to guide me towards thinking about offering as a part of creating respectful relationships – what might I bring to offer, what might help to feed and nourish, to support and bring well-being to the Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw? What did it mean that this woman from the sky brought teachings along with her offering? What might it mean that it was a woman making this offering? From time to time, I tried to remind myself to connect with Ernie again, and to ask him more about this story and what he hoped I would understand from it. I also looked up the stories of ʔε' ɬæctən (or Xa'xthelten), Peter Pierre or Old Pierre of Q'áyts'i, which were recorded by Diamond Jenness in the mid-1930s, to see whether I could learn more about this story by reading an older recorded version of it.¹⁰¹

At the same time, I began to read a book by respected Stó:lō scholar and educator Q'um Q'um Xiem (Jo-ann Archibald) entitled *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit*. In it she writes that traditional story approaches to learning (story pedagogy) include contextual listening, purposeful repetition, presenting stories in segments, and allowing story meaning to arise from individual thinking and connection.¹⁰² Sharing a direct explanation of the story takes the work away from the listener, preventing them from understanding their own meaning in context. In the words of Siyolexwálh Xwiyálemot, Tillie Guterrez, quoted by Q'um Q'um Xiem,

You are helping them [children] seek out meaning and reason that lies within all things, to sense their own power and to develop the will to do what is right. If a young person has a problem, often times the elder gives them a story. The story does not give them all the answers. It shows them the way.¹⁰³

I realized that in asking Ernie to explain how he thought the story related to my question, I probably would not get an “answer” but instead another telling of the story. Perhaps he was trying to teach me individual responsibility for my own learning, asking me to make

¹⁰¹ Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*.

¹⁰² Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*. P. 126

¹⁰³ Archibald. Tillie Guterrez is cited on p. 126 from a quote taken from the Law Courts Education Society (LCES) First Nations journeys of Justice: A curriculum for kindergarden to grade seven. Vancouver: Law Courts Education Society. 1994. p. 8.

meaning of the story in relation to my own questions, to how I was seeking to grow and what I needed to understand to take that leap.

I also began to understand more clearly through the writing of Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Joanne Archibald, that there was no one meaning of any given story, that the meaning was derived from the context of its telling. Ernie had chosen to share this portion of this particular story in the moment, in the context of our relationship and in response to my question. What he understood me to be seeking was a part of the story's meaning. As Q'um Q'um Xiiem explains it, this power derives from synergy between the story, the context of telling, the way the story is told and how one listens. This also means that my sharing of the way this small segment of the swí:we story was told to me and how I have reflected on it should in no way be understood as a culturally sanctioned meaning of the story. I have no cultural authority to suggest so, nor a deep understanding of the ancestral lineages and community relationships to which this story is rooted and passed on. Rather, my effort is to share my own reflections on how I might learn from what was offered to me as guidance, in context of my relationship with Ernie Victor, for whom this story has held significance for his own reasons and understandings.

What might this telling of the story be revealing to me? How is it showing me the way? If I identify as a person coming from another place to live in Stó:lō lands, to grow relationships and make a life here, the story might suggest the need to show respect through offering gifts, offering of myself in ways that will support the well-being of the Stó:lō and Stó:lō Téméxw. From a Stó:lō perspective, every individual has a “gift, talent or power,” families have sacred ceremonies as gifts to offer the people, and all of the relatives—the two-legged, the four-legged, the winged, the finned and the rooted—are Gifts of the Creator.¹⁰⁴ That gifts were and continue to be the basis for Indigenous formation and renewal of relationships with others is evidenced in the historical record of treaties and the teachings of many Indigenous people about treaty relationships, such as those shared with Leanne Simpson and Heidi Stark. Yet, perhaps more directly for myself, this practice of offering oneself and one's gifts in the service of another's well-being permeates my experiences in relationships with Stó:lō and other Indigenous people.

¹⁰⁴ Victor, “Xexa:ls and The Power of Transformation: The Stó:lō, Good Governance and Self-Determination.” P. 300-301

Whether these offerings are tangible things such as food or material goods, or are skills, teachings, stories, songs or conversations, or respect, recognition, affection or affirmation—offering of oneself creates relationships. They are the basis for mutual support and respect, and they begin or continue a cycle of reciprocity and relational renewal.

What might it mean, in the context of the telling and in my question, that this woman from the sky brought and shared teachings along with her offering? There are many possible considerations in response to this question and what I reflect on here is only my own nascent contemplation in the context of my journey. The sky woman shared the knowledge of how to care for the swí:we, and in this sharing demonstrated that she had a respectful and reciprocal relationship with the swí:we. Her offering was a gift born of these respectful relationships. When considering my own gifts to offer, Ernie's sharing of this segment of the swí:we story guides me to ask: Is that which I am offering created in respectful relationships with the land?

If I look at this story in another layer, I wonder specifically about Ernie's choice of sharing with me about swí:we, whose communities have severely declined in the waterways of Stó:lō Téméxw. How does the reality that the swí:we are almost extinct in Stó:lō Téméxw relate to the message of this story in the context in which it was shared with me? In what ways might each of our gifts be brought forward to support the return of the swí:we to Stó:lō Téméxw, to support in a broader sense the return of healthy relationships with especially the waterways and fish that are a central part of Stó:lō self-determination?

Finally, I want to consider what it might mean that it is a woman that brings the gift of the swí:we and its teachings. I have returned again in this narrative to the ways in which mothering has been a space where I have reflected on and challenged myself towards transforming xwelítem ways of being. I experienced pregnancy, birthing and especially the early months of breastfeeding Fairisa with a spiritual awe of my body and my being—the incredible way in which I was capable of bearing and nurturing life. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Leanne Simpson in her work centres breastfeeding as an original treaty relationship, and she sees the experience of breastfeeding and nurturing her children as a deep, embodied teaching of what it means to give within

relationships.¹⁰⁵ Like Simpson, feminist scholar Genevieve Vaughan looks to mothering and the mother–child bond as the roots of learning gifting as a basis of relationships.¹⁰⁶ In a dominant, mainstream culture that centres the values and practices of commodification, exchange and consumerism, mothering, especially of young children, remains a space in which gifting is often the predominant experience of relationality.

How can I, and all—women, men and all of the gender variations between and within—who have experienced or been close to the experience of birth, breastfeeding and the most intimate nurturing of a young baby, draw on and share this way of being as a spiritually rooted ethics of relationality, one that finds meaning, purpose and value in giving of ourselves to support and nurture the well-being of others? Again, this centres family and intergenerational relationships as significant spaces of learning and transformation. In calling for this renewed power of the gifting-giving model and way of being in the most intimate spaces of mothering, I also want to be cautious about this narrative falling under misinterpreting eyes, in which it may be seen as a renewed glorification of female self-sacrifice, a patriarchal mythology of motherhood, one that feminist scholar Paola Melchiori calls “enforced mothering.”¹⁰⁷ The power of the experience of gift giving in mother–child relationships I am speaking to is one derived from and embraced by free women who can speak and live for themselves as well.

Ernie Victor’s telling of a segment of the swí:we story, in the context of my research question, has me thinking deeply about the power of offering ourselves and our gifts, grounded in teachings of respect for all living beings, towards the well-being of Stó:lō and S’ólh Téméxw. It has also reminded me again of the experiential and embodied knowledge and teachings embedded in the nurturing and life-giving gifts of women. Yet, in the practical and lived experience of this way of being, my family has learned from and shared most deeply in this cycle of reciprocity with our friend, mentor, teacher and auntie, Lumlamelut, Laura Wee Láy Láy. Through her way of being, and through her teachings, Lumlamelut shares an understanding of life as a spiritual journey in which we are meant to offer our sacred gifts to the world. For her, our gifts are linked to our passions and our purpose. Giving of ourselves is therefore not simply an act to

¹⁰⁵ Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back*.

¹⁰⁶ Vaughan, *Women and the Gift Economy*.

¹⁰⁷ See: Melchiori, “From Forced Gifts to Free Gifts.”

support another's well-being, to nurture and grow a relationship; from a spiritual perspective, it is also a unique expression of our connection with the creative and transformative energy of the universe. This expression is a necessary part of our own well-being and spiritual growth. Lumlamelut's relationship with spirit expresses through her work with the earth, as she creates clay vessels and paints, as she works with plants, as she teaches and shares Halq'eméylem, and as she mentors many in nurturing their own grounding in and relationship with spirit and the surrendering to creativity in oneself that spirit evokes. She embodies an understanding that the power of knowing your gifts and placing them in the service of others is at the heart of a rich spiritual life, one that counteracts our xwelítem ways. Lumlamelut's wisdom resonates with the words of Potawatomi botanist and writer Robin Wall Kimmerer who writes, "we are showered everyday with gifts, but they are not meant for us to keep. Their life is in their movement, the inhale and the exhale of our shared breath. Our work and our joy is to pass along the gift and to trust that what we put out into the universe will always come back."¹⁰⁸

The type of offering I am coming to understand through Lumlamelut's embodied teachings, is an offering grounded not only in teachings of respect with the earth but also in a true alignment with our own spirit. This kind of spiritually grounded offering is counter to the type of gifting done in order to "get" a certain outcome—for example, the "giving" of donations to Indigenous communities by resource extraction companies. This "giving" is not grounded in teachings of respect, reverence and reciprocity with the land, and it is corrupted by the agenda of achieving a certain outcome defined unilaterally by the giver. This spiritually grounded offering is also counter to charity as a type of "gifting," one in which the moral superiority of the giver is dependent on the act of giving. Rather, the giving I hope to share an understanding of here is different in a number of ways. It is intentionally grounded in respectful relationships with the land, it derives from within our own spiritual rooted creativity, passions and talents, and it comes from an intention of well-being for those for whom it is intended. This way of being, of offering ourselves in line with our spiritual purpose, gifts and passions, is about coming into touch with and directing our creative processes towards the nurturing of relationships and the well-being of others. Directing this towards Stó:lō people and Stó:lō Téméxw is

¹⁰⁸ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. P. 104.

not just about a responsibility based on colonial history and contemporary realities, or expressions of compassion and recognitions of Stó:lō humanity, it is also beginning to understand ourselves as spiritual beings in interdependent relationships with ancient and sacred lands, and an ancient and sacred universe.

Part 3: Closing Reflections

Chapter 7: Towards Ethical Being

I have focused on transforming xwelítem ways of being, undertaking an exploration of white settler subjectivity grounded in decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies, critical place inquiry and an autoethnographic, narrative approach. This journey has been driven by the question: What must we transform in ourselves as white settlers to become open to the possibility of ethical relationships with Indigenous people and with Indigenous homelands? I have attempted to share what I have learned *from* rather than *about* Stó:lō culture, stories, teachings, practices and perspectives as these have been shared in the context of relationships and have pushed me to turn deeper towards seeing anew myself and my family, communities, histories and cultures. This learning *from* has given me the possibility of having different eyes with which to turn my own research lens on the white settler problem, and to conceptualize this problem as being xwelítem and passing this beingness on through generations. In this way, I have attempted to nurture in this work and in the relationships that hold it up what Willie Ermine describes as an “ethical space of engagement.”¹

Within this ethical space of engagement, within the context of relationships and conversations with Stó:lō and non-Indigenous mentors recommended by Stó:lō, I began to piece together understandings in response to these questions: First, what does it mean to be xwelítem; what characterizes xwelítem ways? Second, what ways of being do settlers who are able to exist in ethical relationships express? Third, what practices might support transforming xwelítem ways of being towards ways of being that nurture the possibility of ethical relationships? The responses to these questions guided and shaped the creation of three narratives, shared in Part 2, that weave together these insights with my attempts to apply them in my own life, in an everyday sense and in re-narrating the stories I tell and understand about who I am and where I have come from. I have walked this path, asking these questions, as I have become a mom, and the co-alignment of these journeys has also meant throughout a focus on my role as a parent in recognizing and intervening with becoming/being xwelítem as it influences my daughter. I have reflected

¹ Ermine, “The Ethical Space of Engagement.”

on my attempts to nurture the possibility within our parent-child relationship, and the ways we interact with, narrate and navigate the world around us, more ethical ways of being. This goes beyond considering the information and knowledge to which she is exposed, to the very intimate and everyday ways that I, in the powerful space of our parent-child relationship, influence the emotional and spiritual aspects of how she experiences herself in the world and in her relationships to others, including non-human beings and the land itself.

In the first narrative (Chapter 4), I considered *xwelítem* practices of erasure that deny, on the one hand, colonial and Indigenous histories, and on the other, in the shape-shifting of multicultural liberalism obscure the differences between Indigenous and white settler people shaped by these histories and by ongoing contemporary colonial realities. Shifting away from practices of erasure means shifting towards ways of being that actively and intentionally contextualize and expose ourselves and our lives in relation to the histories and contemporary realities of colonialism. These histories and contemporary realities shape our privileges as white settlers and in turn continue to hold up the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples. Strategies of colonial exposure involve continuously and repeatedly asking ourselves: What is the history of this land? How have colonial governments and white settlers transformed the land? How did my ancestors benefit from this? How do I, my family, and the communities and organizations I am a part of continue to benefit today? What has been and continues to be the impact on Indigenous peoples? When am I telling stories that erase our differences (as Indigenous people and white settlers) and what are the effects of this erasure? Coming to understand the Indigenous experience of collective dispossession, oppression, and social suffering as it is specifically tied to our own personal family histories and our own contemporary lives creates a tangible link between the trajectory of our existences, and in turn begins to make clear how we can pick up our pieces of responsibility towards justice.

In the second narrative (Chapter 5), I looked to the emotional and psychological roots of becoming/being *xwelítem*, our ongoing attachment to dehumanizing stereotypes and racist narratives of Indigenous inferiority and white settler superiority, and the practices of oppression that go along with the enactment and upholding of these narratives. I focused on our unconscious emotional “plug” into these narratives, what

Frantz Fanon calls our white superiority neurosis, and it's roots in white settler childhood socialization and psychic and emotional growth. This process of looking back revealed that pathways towards transformation include releasing repressed emotions connected with our own experiences of oppression, and intentionally leaning in to a relationship with our own shadows—our internalized “Others.” It also suggests that as white settler parents and adult caregivers of young children, we must look deeply at the values and beliefs that guide, perhaps unconsciously, our ways of relating to children, and ask ourselves: Are these values and beliefs supporting the growth of our children as emotionally attuned and literate persons, providing the conditions for their growth into compassionate adults who have the potential to reach out, recognize and respect the humanity in each and every one of us? Through the telling of this narrative, I aim to also reveal the value and necessity of engaging in a psychopolitics, an active and intentional probing of the linkages between human psychology, dynamics of oppression, and sociopolitical and historical forces, as these linkages manifest in our intimate and more public lives.

In the third narrative (Chapter 6), I looked at *xwelítem* as a hungry, greedy way of being, one immersed in and deepened by the capitalist, consumer, materialist culture that shapes how we understand ourselves as meaningful and worthy beings, and one that deeply impacts the possibilities for Indigenous sustainable self-determination and the maintaining of long-standing spiritual relationships of interdependence between Indigenous peoples and their homelands. Transforming this hunger is a spiritual path, one which Indigenous ways of life, cultural practices and spiritual teachings have much to teach us. Yet, looking to Indigenous peoples and cultures for our spiritual growth and maturity is fraught with challenges, notably the ways in which *xwelítem* practices of erasure and our superiority neuroses resurface as we enter these spaces and relationships of learning. This is not to say that we cannot and should not look towards this guidance, but that we must be aware of the ways in which *xwelítem* manifests, and embrace the humility, uncertainty and cautiousness that this awareness creates.

How can we find ways to also take on this work for ourselves, our families and communities? One of these pathways is through reconnection with our ancestral land-connected cultures by looking towards teachings, practices and ways of being that nurture

respect, reverence and reciprocity with the earth. We can learn the histories by which our cultural heritages have shifted and transformed in the lives of our ancestors, from land-connected communities with cultures and spiritual practices tied to place to those deterritorialized and saturated with hetero-patriarchal capitalist relations and white supremacist, consumerist culture. We can acknowledge the ways in which these ancestral cultures were repressed and this repression was resisted, and also the ways in which our ancestors accepted, participated in, promoted and benefited from this dispossession and oppression. In embracing land-connected spiritual pathways in our lives, we may grow in our understanding and expression of ourselves as beings living within sacred lands and a sacred world. We can begin to transform our xwelítem ways towards ethical ways of being grounded in offering ourselves, our gifts, talents and passions, towards nurturing and sustaining relationships with this sacred land/world and it's Indigenous peoples.

Offering Ourselves to the Land and it's People

These three narratives, each in their own way, reflect a transformation towards a way of being that on the surface might appear similar. This way of being is an active reaching out and offering of ourselves, a sharing of our gifts, talents and resources with Indigenous people and in support of the well-being of Indigenous lands and worlds. In this openness and offering, we support the creation of relational space with Indigenous people, an ethical space in which we might contribute to the work of co-resistance, reparations and restitution, and in which we might see and experience ourselves anew, and from this place further transform our ways of being. Yet, each of the narratives focuses on a dimensionality to this way of being, a different root.

In the first narrative, from a conscious and relentless contextualizing of our existence within the colonial context, we come to intellectually understand our responsibilities to Indigenous people. In the second narrative, from an unplugging of our unconscious emotional attachments to racist colonial narratives and stereotypes, we reconnect with our own capacity for compassion, our human-to-human ability to experience and respond to each other's emotions that innately drives us to offer ourselves and our gifts, strengths and resources to those who are suffering, those whose humanity is being denied and denigrated. In the third narrative, a spiritual journey of reconnection has the potential to

shape a way of being that finds meaning, purpose, value and insight in giving of ourselves, in sharing our unique gifts from the universe. This spiritual offering of ourselves works at the crux of our own inherent need for creative self-expression, and the needs of the communities within which we are interwoven and interdependent. We begin to find our sense of fullness, fill our hunger, in deepening relationships with humans and more-than-human beings, relationships that are brought about and continuously renewed by offering ourselves and participating fully in reciprocal relationships of caring, mutual support and respect.

Each in their own way, these pathways of transformation call us to share what we have— offering of ourselves and our resources, not from a place of guilt or charity but from these co-aligning practices: recognizing the responsibilities that flow from our colonial privilege, expressing a human-to-human compassion and living a spiritual expression of our gifts in the service of the wellbeing of the interdependent communities we exist with. Sharing, offering of ourselves and our resources as individuals, families, communities, organizations, is at the heart of forming ethical relationships, situating ourselves in mutually supportive cycles of reciprocity.

This call to offer of ourselves and embrace cycles of reciprocity is also a pathway towards creating the relationships by which we are held accountable, by which we ensure that the goal of “doing our own work” as white people does not become an end in itself. This work must be situated within the broader vision of participating in co-resistance, reparations and restitution, of bringing about justice and harmony, which inherently involves supporting the self-determination and resurgence of Indigenous peoples. Accountability itself is about nurturing trustful, authentic, compassionate and ongoing relationships with Indigenous people where we live. As put by white anti-racist organizer Gillian Burlingham, “Accountability is a heart connection first, a head connection or philosophy second. The relationship, the love, the human connection are primary.”² We need to create accountability to situate our own transformative work within the context of a decolonizing agenda, and yet we must be psychologically and emotionally capable to generate the potential for this relational accountability with Indigenous peoples. This dual challenge is significant, and I have attempted to face it, recognizing and acknowledging

² Burlingham, “Burning Deep Inside: Anti-Racist Accountability in a Faith Community.” P. 87

my limitations, leaning towards the guidance of others who have walked further down this path. Furthermore, I have attempted to demonstrate a balance between respecting Indigenous leadership and yet not creating an unhealthy dependence on, or deference to, Indigenous peoples to define our work as white settlers.³

Walking this path in all the different aspects I have shared here—mental, emotional, and spiritual—leads towards this place of offering. Yet, what do we offer? As I considered in the third narrative, rooting this way of being not only in a sense of responsibility, and in the expression of human-to-human compassion, but also in the living of a spiritually grounded understanding of our interdependence means that our offerings must be rooted in teachings of respect, reverence and reciprocity with the land itself. Offering gifts, talents or resources that are generated through, or expressions of, unsustainable, destructive or exploitative relationships with land and people, while perhaps opening up a space of engagement does not open an *ethical* space if the creation of this relationship remains woven within practices and ways of being that in their destruction of the land ultimately limit Indigenous pathways to freedom and self-determination. For many of us entering into these cycles of reciprocity and friendship, having something to offer, means reconsidering how we make our way in the world and whether we are directing our inherent talents and gifts, and our resources, towards generating that which is life-nurturing or life-destroying.

When we reach out and share of ourselves, we are actually responding to cycles of reciprocity that many Indigenous people, families, communities and nations continue to try to invite us into, ones we have most often refused. Interrupting xwelitem ways of being is a transformation towards actively accepting and participating in these cycles. Within the ethical space of engagement, the friendships that grow from these cycles, we can work towards co-resistance, undermining contemporary white settler colonialism that continues to dispossess and oppress Indigenous people and nations and to damage the ecological fabric that sustains all of our lives. Within these relationships, we can also be guided towards the work of reparations and restitution, what Taiaiake Alfred describes as “making things right by offering us the dignity and freedom we are due and returning

³ Cushing, *Accountability and White Anti-Racist Organizing*.

enough of our power and land for us to be self-sufficient.”⁴ In what ways can we as individuals, families, communities, and organizations, return lands, monies, resources, power to Indigenous people, families, communities, organizations and nations? In what ways can we also pressure Canadian governments to return lands and power to Indigenous peoples? How can we honour, every day, in the here and now, the promises made by our ancestors and forbearers, to create our existence here? These questions are not to be answered on our own but rather through the spaces of ethical relationships with Indigenous people, with other non-Indigenous people walking a similar path, and with the land itself. In these spaces we can begin to understand what justice might look like and contribute to enacting these visions. These relationships are created, renewed, challenged, restored, sustained through offering ourselves in cycles of reciprocity.

Intergenerational Subjectivities and White Settler Colonial Parenting

In closing this final chapter, I want to pull together and reflect on this work overall by returning to the teachings towards transformation I introduced in the first chapter. These teachings were the value and importance of knowing where I have come from to know where I am going, of looking back in order to look forward, and the interwoven teaching to understand and situate myself as a link in an intergenerational chain. These teachings shared in the context of relationships with Stó:lō friends and mentors took on deeper significance when I began a journey through pregnancy and became a new mom. They guided me to centring family and the ways in which we pass on xwelitem ways of being through generations and in the intimate spaces of parent–child relationships. Here I will briefly reflect on what the three narratives of transformation shared in Part 2 point towards with regards to initial attempts to understand, interrupt and transform white settler colonial parenting practices and nurture an anti-colonial parenting practice. I will also share further questions that have grown from these reflections.

In Narrative 1 (Chapter 4), I considered what my daughter might absorb from living in a settler colonial context that nurtures a colonial imaginary dependent on the erasure of Indigenous people and nationhood, Indigenous and colonial history, and contemporary realities. My own reflections and questions aim to highlight the ways in

⁴ Alfred, “Restitution Is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples.” P. 182

which practices and narratives of erasure are enacted and displayed in family and community spaces, spaces where white settler children and parents live and often visit—playgrounds, community parks, and schools. Transforming our practices of erasure as parents means actively and intentionally educating ourselves and our children about the history of the lands and waters we are connected to—both the histories of colonization and the deeper Indigenous histories, including Indigenous stories and place-names. Parenting that also seeks to undermine the colonial depersonalization of history actively researches and remembers family histories in relation to colonial history and shares these family histories with our children.

Yet, colonial practices of erasure have also shape-shifted, and today's liberal approaches to multiculturalism add new layers to the ways in which we may erase Indigenous people as nations and obscure the difference that shape our and our children's access to power and privilege. White settler colonial parenting today includes parenting practices that attempt to share cultural diversity with our children in ways that separate learning about culture from learning about colonial history and the ongoing power dynamics of the relationship between our peoples and our nations. Intervening with this means actively complementing experiences that aim to share "culture" with experiences that bring to light colonial history, drawing lines between this history and contemporary realities. Going to places on the land where these histories unfolded might ground these understandings, providing a landscape reference for the truths that we hope they will carry with them. I have only begun this work with my daughter, in talking about, renaming and re-storying the mountain we look out upon, and the story of the lands where we immediately live.

In the second narrative (Chapter 5), I considered the ways in which the parent-child relationship has a tremendous influence on the emotional growth of a child, and in turn how this relates to our adult capacities for human-to-human relationships grounded in compassion, creating the authentic relationships required to enact justice and solidarity. In this respect, white settler colonial parenting practices might include practices that restrict or repress our children's emotional expression, and practices of domination that assert our power over children based on a belief that as adults we are inherently superior and therefore have this right. Undermining these practices is looking

to their roots in ourselves as parents, how we have been trained into these forms of control, and the aspects of our own shadows we may in fact be projecting onto our children. Further research might ask: What might we be able to learn from the parenting philosophies, practices and family environments wherein children grow to express a capacity for compassion and solidarity? What might we respectfully learn from the parenting beliefs and practices of cultures where these qualities of compassion and solidarity among children and adults are widespread?

The third narrative (Chapter 6) calls me to consider the ways in which intergenerational teachings, parent–child relationships and intimate family spaces influence children’s understanding of and relationship with the earth, and our place within and responsibilities towards Indigenous homelands. In this regard, settler colonial parenting practices might include the ways in which we subtly or overtly socialize our children to repress their spiritual intuition. In what ways do we model and teach our children about traditions and practices that prioritize human control over the environment for human gain? Naming and interrupting these practices is one step. Going further than this means for many of us beginning and continuing to ask ourselves regularly, “How can I give back to the land? In what ways can I live a reciprocal practice with the earth?” What communities, traditions, relationships might support this? How can I respectfully include and share this with my child?

Settler colonial parenting practices that pass on *xwelítem* hunger through generations might also include the ways in which we socialize our children into market, exchange-based relations between us as parents and children and among our families, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and people whom we do not know. The vast majority of us function within these relations in an everyday sense, given the dominance of our participation in capitalist economic systems. Yet, how might we undermine this dominance by creating more space for, and modeling, gift-giving modes of being in relation to and as witnessed by our children? As Leanne Simpson and feminist scholars have pointed to, breastfeeding and the nurturing of babies is an intimate space wherein the first learning about gift-giving as a primary mode of relations is profoundly present. What are the conditions wherein parents are most able to give to their infant children? How can these conditions be supported? Further, as part of nurturing our children

towards gift-giving ways of being, how might we support our children's innate expression of their gifts, to give space for them to find and embrace their passions and talents in ways that fulfill them? What might we as white settlers respectfully learn from cultures, including our own ancestral heritages, which hold deep and enduring practices and teachings that relate to honouring, nurturing and celebrating children and children's gifts as honourable contributions to community?

Here I have briefly attempted to share some of the ways that this work contributes to beginning to understand and intervene with what Leanne Simpson has named "settler colonial parenting practices," and some of the questions and further directions this has provoked. In a more general sense my work points towards the need for research and practical community-based efforts to focus on this topic, asking ourselves: What characterizes white settler colonial parenting? What does anti-colonial parenting look like in a holistic sense, where mind, body, spirit and emotions are considered? What are the conditions wherein parents are most able to take on aspects of an anti-colonial parenting and how can these conditions be supported?

These are questions for each one of us to consider, as we are all in some way or another involved in children's lives. Yet, they also call for a furthering of linkages between the research, theories and practical work of child psychologists, family therapists, paediatricians, counsellors, social workers, educators and all those who carry a weight within the spaces where parenting guidance and early childhood development and education are discussed and debated, and the fields of critical Indigenous studies, settler colonial studies, and theories of decolonization. Examples of work making this linkage include the recent edited by Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Affrica Taylor entitled *Unsettling the Colonial Places and Spaces of Early Childhood Education*, as well as other works on unsettling children's literature and place.⁵ These works focus on children's interaction with place and stories through colonial or unsettled lenses, and pedagogies and practices that reshape children's relationships with land. This conversation might grow from an intentional effort to connect this work with research on the psychic development and emotional literacy of children and the ways in which

⁵ Bradford, *Unsettling Narratives*; Cutter-Mackenzie, Payne, and Reid, *Experiencing Environment and Place Through Children's Literature*.

empathy and compassion are crucial conditions for the enactment of justice, as well as critical race perspectives on the learning of racism by children. It might be both deepened and broadened by focusing on the informal, intimate relational spaces within family homes, intergenerational relationships and day-to-day lives. This focus would also mean not only considering pre-school and school-aged children's socialization but also the ways in which the earliest experiences of relationality in our lives, as babies and toddlers, have a profound impact on our psychic and emotional inheritance, and in turn are significant spaces and relationships of consideration in the work of interrupting intergenerational white settler subjectivities. This would necessarily involve considering the relationship between settler colonial parenting practices and the hetero-patriarchal norm of a nuclear family structure, calling into question what constitutes family and what parenting beliefs and practices are supported or undermined by family and community structures and the state. Scholars writing at the intersections of critical Indigenous theory, queer theory and feminism have much to offer in this such as for example Kim TallBear, Sarah Hunt, Cindy Holmes and Scott Morgensen.⁶

I hope this work will be met as a call for white settlers, and for all those for whom some of these narratives resonated, to come together and support each other in our work of transforming xwelítém ways of being and intervening with settler colonial parenting beliefs and practices. How can we in our families and communities work towards nurturing generations of children who are more capable in their minds, hearts, bodies and spirits to walk into the kinds of ethical relationships that make justice and peaceful co-existence possible? I also hope this work has demonstrated the need for this call, this turning toward ourselves and addressing the settler problem, to be situated within the broader aim of actively contributing to struggles for justice and freedom for Indigenous peoples in their lands. This is not work to be done alone, but inherently is a path towards a deepening awareness of our interconnectedness, of our relationality. We are the stories we, and others, tell about ourselves. We are also the relationships that we have been shaped by and we exist within. Transforming ourselves *is* transforming our relationships

⁶ See for example the work of: TallBear, *Native American DNA*; TallBear, "Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human"; Morgensen, "Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction"; Hunt and Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization."

and our stories. I walk forward from here with the stories that have grown from this journey to share, in all the relational spaces in which I exist and in those in which I have yet to connect. I walk forward from here with the relationships created, deepened, transformed, and nurtured in this journey holding me up; I raise my hands, with love, reciprocity and respect to all of you, I hold you up. I walk forward from here committed and grounded in my mind, heart, body and spirit, to offer myself, to contribute to the growth of these relational spaces of truth, justice, love and friendship we are creating, to allow the energy of their being to flourish, to resonate, to guide.

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