

**Restorying Indigenous–Settler Relations in Canada:
Taking a Decolonial Turn Toward a Settler Theology of Liberation**

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores some theological implications of restorying relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada. In response to the call of the Seven Fires Prophecy, this work proposes that it is imperative that settler people seek and cultivate a new way to be in relationship with Indigenous peoples. Part of the aim of restorying is to overcome the social, cultural, political, and ecclesial erasure of Indigenous peoples. I construct a hybrid concept of settler coloniality to explore the logics of elimination and assimilation. I apply this methodological lens to key moments in modern Canadian hi/story, and the development of the All Native Circle Conference in The United Church of Canada. Employing autoethnographic tools, my research develops a transdisciplinary theological approach that is liberationist and seeks healing of wounded relations in Canada.

The theological decolonial turn emerges out of the experience of a United Church community's efforts toward right relations with Indigenous peoples on unceded Algonquin land. I weave together this community's experience with key themes of Indigenous theologies and peace-building theory to construct a settler approach to decolonial healing. This liberationist theological approach points to an embodied metanoia, or transformation, of settler peoples. Such transformation can be experienced in relational spaces that risk both sides of story-telling: speaking or voice-ing and listening or hearing. The resurgence of *oral* traditions of Indigenous peoples create unsettling vibrations in the intimate *aural* spaces where settlers witness to and engage in a transformative decolonial healing praxis with Indigenous peoples.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANCC	All Native Circle Conference
E&SS	Board of Evangelism and Social Services
IEC	Indian Ecumenical Conference
INM	Idle No More
IRS	Indian Residential Schools
MMIW	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
RRN	Right Relations Network
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCC	The United Church of Canada
WMS	Women's Mission Society

Introduction – Restorying Indigenous and Settler Relations

The challenge, Aküm [Longchari] would often express, lies in how, in the present, interdependent peoples “restory,” that is, begin the process of providing space for the story to take its place and begin the weaving of a legitimate and community-determined place among others’ stories. Aküm essentially was pushing for a long view of a living history. Narrative has the capacity to create, even heal, but it has had its voice taken. A return to giving narrative a place and a voice was needed.

~ John Paul Lederach¹

The Seven Fires Prophecy begins with the first three prophets telling the story of the rising of the Anishinaabeg people’s sacred teachings and their establishment in the land where food grows on water, said to be wild rice.² In the fourth fire, the prophet foretells the arrival of the “Light-skinned Race” who may come in a spirit of sharing and expanding knowledge, or in a spirit of death with weapons and greed for the goods of these lands. The prophets of the fifth and sixth fires tell of a long period of struggles for the Anishinaabeg people, including how the Elders would go to sleep and how the children would be taken away from the traditional teachings. It is a time painfully described as one in which “the cup of life will almost become the cup of grief.”³

It is in the time of the Seventh Fire that the Elders would begin to reawaken, and the ‘Light-skinned Race’ would have a choice to make between the good road to the Eighth Fire of eternal peace or the road of destruction (a decision said to be between technology or materialism and that of spirituality).⁴ The latter continues the destruction of the Earth, and

¹ John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140.

² Leanne Simpson writes often of the importance of wild rice for her people and community; see Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Land & Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations,” *Electric City Magazine*, January 7, 2016, <http://www.electriccitymagazine.ca/2016/01/land-reconciliation/>.

³ Alf Dumont and Roger Hutchinson, “United Church Mission Goals and First Nations Peoples,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 226.

⁴ Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book* (Hayward, WI: Indian Country Communications, 1988), 89-93.

the former is a slower road that has potential for sustainability and unity of all peoples.⁵

Retelling this story is important. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) describes stories as the echoes of the ancestors who continue to teach, echoes that reverberate and multiply so there are more stories to tell and so more echoes enter into the present.⁶ She explains how, after hearing a story, it can take years to truly understand “that story in one’s heart,” and so for a teaching to become “heart-knowledge.” In Anishinaabemowin, heart is the root of the word truth. In many Indigenous traditions, story-telling is central to forming understanding and worldview; the learning is constituted by turning the story, reading, or insight into one of lived relational “heart-knowledge.”⁷

The Seven Fires Prophecy is a significant story for understanding Indigenous–settler relations.⁸ I recognize in it the chronology of contact in Canadian hi/story, with at first the potential for good relationship rooted in friendship and mutual benefit, but the opportunity squandered.⁹ I see the painful reality of Christian mission efforts to convert communities and then children taken to residential schools run by Christian churches. I feel hope in the Elders and their stories and teachings going underground (not being destroyed) until a new era, a new fire—the Eighth Fire—is lit, with the potential for growth and just

⁵ See http://www.wabanaki.com/seven_fires_prophecy.htm (Online accessed September 16, 2015)

⁶ Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Pub, 2011), 105.

⁷ Simpson, 105.

⁸ In this dissertation, I use the term “Indigenous peoples” to speak of the *Original Peoples* of the lands in what is now called Canada, and I use “settler peoples” to speak of those who have come after. The use of capital “I” and lower case “s” are intentional to visually disrupt and un/settle the relations. The use of the plural points to the differences within these diverse communities. It also allows for the recognition of the collective experience of colonialism and resistance among Indigenous peoples within Canada and globally. In referencing specific Indigenous scholars, I will name their particular nation. In referencing scholars from the global South, I will specify their country of origin.

⁹ As a tool of disruption, throughout this dissertation, I will break down the word “history” and the presumed power of that type of formal, (often) Eurocentric narrativity, whilst also recognizing the power of “story” by writing the term as “hi/story.”

relations. But the potential for these relations lies in the choices of settler peoples. For settler peoples, the Seven Fires Prophecy is a blunt challenge to re-examine our approaches to and ways of being in the world. If we are to engage with the opportunity and the “heart knowledge” offered in this time of the Seventh Fire, then we as settler peoples must listen carefully to the voices, stories, and teachings of Indigenous peoples.

I.1 A Territorial Acknowledgement: Restorying as a Settler Christian

One of the challenges made by Indigenous peoples to settler peoples is to recognize where we come from and to know on whose territory we live. I am grateful to Carmen Lansdowne (Heilstuk) for challenging me in 2011 to explore this embodied decolonial turn. The grounded acknowledgement below is a personal restorying inspired by the relational introduction of Indigenous peoples and recognizes the fluidity of my own positioning as a settler. Further, within liberation theologies, the subjectivity of the theologian matters to the stories that she will tell, and so naming my position invites the reader into a relationship with me, the work, and the spaces (land and water¹⁰) from which I write.

My name is Joëlle Máirín Morgan. I am a settler and descendent of settlers from different parts of Western Europe, primarily Ireland. My people have come to Canada at different moments throughout its colonial hi/story. My parents were raised on the Burrard Inlet, by the Pacific Ocean in Coast Salish territory. I grew up at the confluence of the Humber River and Emery Creek in Mississauga-Wendat-Haudenosaunee territories. I now live on the eastern shore of the Rideau River near the confluence with the Ottawa River in

¹⁰ Locating self through multiple positionalities and identities that are “framed geographically, politically and genealogically” and to which I would add spiritually, is an important part of the restorying and delinking process. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London; New York: Zed Books; Dunedin, NZ, 1999), 126.

Algonquin Territory. I recognize these are the settler-Canadian names for these waterways and that the naming of traditional territories is complicated by settler coloniality. My extended family now lives ocean to ocean, and north to south on many different territories and waterways across Turtle Island. I acknowledge that my doctoral journey of learning, reading, researching, writing, and relating has taken place on unceded Algonquin territories.

I.2 Restorying Relations: A Decolonial Turn in Theology

The call of the Seven Fires Prophecy is to one of just and right relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in these lands. It is a call that is social and political but also moral and spiritual. As such, it demands a theological response. An essential element of liberation theologies is the understanding that we are liberated *from* something to be liberated *for* something, and we are liberated *with* someone.¹¹ I contend in this dissertation that for a decolonial turn in theology, settler peoples in the Canadian contact zone¹² must be liberated *from* settler coloniality¹³ to be liberated *for* just and right relations *with* Indigenous peoples in Canada. Recognizing the churches' roles in the colonial project in Canada and the influence of Euro-Christian epistemologies in settler coloniality, many contemporary church communities desire a transformation of the power relations between settler and

¹¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, SCM Classics (London: SCM Press, 2010), 269–70; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: New Revised 20th-Anniversary Edition* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 30, 158.

¹² A contact zone is one wherein peoples who were once geographically divided come to live in the same space in ongoing relations of severe inequality and intractable conflict. As in Laura E. Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," in *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology*, ed. Pui-Lan Kwok (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 139.

¹³ Settler coloniality is a hybrid notion I use in this dissertation to analyze the ongoing impacts of the colonial legacy on settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada. It points to the ongoing dynamics of colonialism (including social, cultural, spiritual, racial, economic, political, geographic, territorial, etc.) that continue to be embodied in the relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples. It points to the hierarchization of peoples and the obfuscation of Indigenous peoples' epistemologies emerging from the matrix of colonial power relations. I further explain my use of the theoretical approaches of settler colonialism and (de)coloniality in chapter 3.

Indigenous peoples.¹⁴ What then are the directions and possibilities for settler metanoia (understood as a journey of conscientization toward social and relational transformation) in the Canadian colonial difference (understood as the epistemological zone of recognizing the ontological realities of settler coloniality in Canada)? Liberation theologies are contextual and rooted in experience; as such, I ground my theological restorying in the praxis of a United Church congregation that has embarked on a decolonial journey.

John Paul Lederach explores the potentials of “restorying” for collective healing and building justice among people divided by conflict situations.¹⁵ He sees the process of restorying as the expansion of narrative spaces in order to link past events with future potential, thus creating meaning in present life and ongoing relationships.¹⁶ Restorying involves finding voice, place, and story¹⁷ and then restoring that story to living memory in the dialogical spaces of actual relationships and communities.¹⁸ “Conscientização,” which is the term Brazilian educator Paulo Freire coined and is translated as conscientization, requires “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.”¹⁹ As he writes, this praxis requires reflection and action. For him, they occur simultaneously because critical reflection is also

¹⁴ The responses of various denominations to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is one of this desire. CTA #48 constituted a specific call to the churches to respond by March 31, 2016. I attended an ecumenical gathering and a celebration feast at Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa, Canada on March 30, 2016 after eight church representatives reiterated their churches commitment to reconciliation and to a transformation of the relations between settler and Indigenous peoples. The following blog has an ad hoc collection of various statements made by Canadian churches in response to the TRC: <http://blog.faithtoday.ca/church-responses-to-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-report/> (accessed August 29th, 2017).

¹⁵ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 146.

¹⁶ Lederach, 146, 148.

¹⁷ Lederach, 143.

¹⁸ Lederach, 145.

¹⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, FN 1, 17.

a kind of action; he sees it as a move from naïve knowledge of reality to being able to perceive the causes and effects operative within reality.²⁰

The development of a critical consciousness committed to an un/settling praxis is rooted in the uncertainty of transformation. It requires fully entering reality, to see, listen, learn, and confront the “world unveiled.”²¹ Restorying involves a process of conscientization, of making visible those people who have been marginalized in hi/story and of hearing the stories that were previously ignored, erased, and silenced; as such it is part of a decolonial turn. Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Puerto Rico) writes that “the decolonial turn is about making visible the invisible and about analyzing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility or distorted visibility in light of a large stock of ideas that must necessarily include the critical reflections of the ‘invisible’ people themselves.”²²

Given the complex social, cultural, political, economic, ecclesial, and spiritual relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada, restorying is a long, complex and, I suggest, imperative process toward healing for both Indigenous peoples and settler peoples. Restorying and living into or toward a new relationship rooted in heart-knowledge only becomes possible if we know the stories of all parties living in the contact zone of Canada. Given the reality of Eurocentrism and settler coloniality that informs all systems within Canada, most settler peoples do not know, much less have heart-knowledge of, Indigenous peoples and their stories. There remains a power dynamic whereby settler

²⁰ Freire, 108.

²¹ Freire, 21.

²² Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept,” in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, 1. publ (London: Routledge, 2010), 116.

peoples avoid recognizing the ongoing impacts and lived experiences of colonialism.

Settler Canadians live in willful ignorance.

Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Chippewa) offers that one way to begin to overcome this dynamic for settler peoples is to *see*²³ our neighbour; I suggest further that we must also learn to *see* the settler coloniality around us. The reality of marginalization means that those in the dominant culture do not see those in the liminal zones of our society, nor do they see their own participation in the settler-colonial systems that create and maintain this marginalization. As Sherene Razack sharply points out, there is a body at the end of our theorizing; further, in her research on deaths of Indigenous peoples in police custody in Canada, she unearths the dead bodies that settler society must see and come to recognize as part of the settler coloniality dynamic that affects us all.²⁴

The movement toward recognition requires heart-knowledge learning and “deep listening.”²⁵ This is central to conscientization such that the seeing can move us to an awakening, a transformation of consciousness and embodiment, and thus a turning toward a decolonial way of being together on these lands. It is a spiritual, material or physical, mental, emotional, and political process.²⁶ It involves a realization that settler coloniality

²³ Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, “Doctrine of Discovery Event” (Journey in Faith, The United Church of Canada, Espanola, ON, August 27, 2015).

²⁴ Sherene Razack, “Unmapping Canada: Starting with Bodies and Repressed Truths,” in *Critical Inquiries: A Reader in Studies of Canada*, ed. Lynn Caldwell, Darryl Leroux, and Carrienne K. Y. Leung (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), 198–99; Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Winnipeg, MB; Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2015), 84–89.

²⁵ Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 190–92; Laura Brearley, “Deep Listening and Leadership: An Indigenous Model of Leadership and Community Development in Australia,” in *Restorying Indigenous Leadership: Wise Practices in Community Development*, ed. Cora Jane Voyageur, Laura Brearley, and Brian Calliou (Banff, AB: Banff Centre Press, 2014), 91–127.

²⁶ Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), 63.

has impacted everything in the social, political, economic, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual lives of Indigenous peoples. It has shifted and still defines all the relational realities within communities (from governance to storytelling and more) and often between Indigenous peoples. As Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehá:ka) writes, coloniality has “decultured” communities and individuals, changing their senses of self and place within broader society as well.²⁷

The seeing or the recognition to which settler peoples are called is not simply a noticing of “the social ills that plague ‘poor Indigenous peoples’”.²⁸ That would be merely reinforcing racist presumptions and stereotypes about those who have been marginalized and traumatized by settler coloniality. It is, rather, to see each person in a new way, as Maldonado-Torres suggests, drawing on the wisdom of Emmanuel Lévinas, to see the face of the person before us.²⁹ In Anishinaabemowin, recognition “is a process of seeing another being’s core essence, it is a series of relationships. It is reciprocal, continual and a way of generating society.”³⁰ I suggest, then, that *seeing* requires a much deeper knowing of the story of the person before us. It requires a seeing that is conscious of the lens of settler coloniality and can engage or seek to understand the interconnectedness of one’s experiences with those of this “other,” this *neighbour* who is Indigenous.

²⁷ Alfred, 83–84.

²⁸ Leanne Simpson, “The Misery of Settler Colonialism: Roundtable on Glen Coulthard’s ‘Red Skin, White Masks’ and Audra Simpson’s ‘Mohawk Interruptus,’” accessed May 31, 2016, <http://leannesimpson.ca/the-misery-of-settler-colonialism-roundtable-on-glen-coulthards-red-skin-white-masks-and-audra-simpsons-mohawk-interruptus/>.

²⁹ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept,” 95.

³⁰ Simpson, “The Misery of Settler Colonialism.”

I.3 Restorying Relations: A Settler-Christian Response to the Call of the Eighth Fire

Since part of the difficulty in Canadian contexts is the willful ignorance of settler peoples about the past and present conflictual relationships with Indigenous peoples, part of the project of this dissertation is to bring to settler consciousness an understanding of settler coloniality and, how it is part of Canadian socio-political and ecclesial hi/story. This restorying process creates a narrative space that takes “a long view of a living history”³¹ and contributes to a healing process between settler and Indigenous peoples.

In making my central argument, I not only present the idea of restorying, but I also demonstrate it structurally through the practice of hermeneutical encircling. Hermeneutical encircling constitutes a methodological shift, drawing on the work of Shaun Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree), by moving to a cyclical or iterative research process that is rooted in relationality.³² The multiple circles of contextualization deepen the understanding of settler-Indigenous relations in Canada and in turn thicken the experience of restorying. As such, each section takes up the contextualization process: from the personal to the communal, national to local, stretching this long view of a living hi/story from prophecy to the socio-political, ecclesial, and theological. It is part of a decolonial praxis that is foundational to understanding the potential for just and liberating relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada.

³¹ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 140, 146–47.

³² My methodological shift draws on Indigenous wisdom and methodologies. In the data validation process, it is a shift away from the language and conceptualization of “triangulation.” This “encircling” moves to a cyclical validation process that is ongoing and engaged in a growing relational dynamic. Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 101.

To articulate a theology of liberation in a Canadian context, I open three hermeneutical circles and divide the restorying in this dissertation into three parts. In the first circle, I elaborate the interdisciplinary methodological approach and tools (Chapter 1). The encircling begins with the theological journey into liberation theologies, wherein I present a challenge from the literature of published Indigenous theologies toward a decolonial turn in Canadian contexts (Chapter 2). I draw on the scholarship of liberation theologians who focus on Indigenous peoples' experiences such as George Tink Tinker (Wazhazhe/Osage), Robert Warrior (Osage), and Andrea Smith as key to understanding a North American liberationist theology rooted in dialogue between settler and Indigenous peoples.³³ I also draw on the essential praxis of church-based organizations in Canada that are engaged in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, and I raise up liberationist voices of various Canadian Christians engaged in similar solidarity work.³⁴

For the purposes of more deeply understanding Indigenous–settler relations, and in order to find appropriate critical language to discuss the ongoing legacy of colonialism, I explore subaltern studies through the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (M/C/D) Research Collective, and through Indigenous and settler studies. Chapter 3 constructs a

³³ Andrea Smith is an Indigenous studies scholar and theologian who has had her Indigenous ancestry questioned by the Cherokee nation, and she has been asked to cease identifying as Indigenous. See “Open Letter From Indigenous Women Scholars Regarding Discussions of Andrea Smith,” *Indian Country Media Network* (blog), July 7, 2015, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/opinions/open-letter-from-indigenous-women-scholars-regarding-discussions-of-andrea-smith/>; and Samantha Allen, “Tribes Blast ‘Wannabe’ Native American Professor,” *Daily Beast*, July 11, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/tribes-blast-wannabe-native-american-professor>. Smith’s research, however, is still accepted by many other Indigenous scholars, such as Carmen Rae Lansdowne, “Bearing Witness: Wearing a Broken Indigene Heart on the Sleeve of the Missio Dei” (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2016), xiii. Smith continues to highlight Indigeneity in her research, see Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, eds., *Theorizing Native Studies* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2014).

³⁴ See for example Steve Heinrichs, ed., *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2013).

hybrid framework of settler coloniality as a useful way to contextualize coloniality in Canada given the specific experiences of Indigenous peoples and deterritorialization within settler colonial Canada.

Secondly, I encircle the restorying of settler and Indigenous peoples' relations in Canada with a focus on key events in national hi/story; I provide a national ecclesial hi/story, after which I bring the restorying into the local context with a specific church's story. In Chapter 4, I direct the lens of settler coloniality to the socio-political hi/story, focusing on Indigenous peoples' experiences since the 1969 "White Paper" era in Canada.

Chapter 5 begins encircling the context of The United Church of Canada and its relational journey between settler Christians and Indigenous peoples (some of whom are Christian and members of the United Church). At various times over the past thirty years, the United Church has been actively engaged in a process of conscientization toward more just relations with Indigenous peoples through, for example, critical dialogue with its membership (settler and Indigenous), the issuing of apologies, and active involvement in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This national ecclesial story is key to my analysis and the broader contextualization of the third hermeneutical circle.

Chapter 6 then recounts the specific story of the Right Relations Team at First United Church in Ottawa, Canada. It is a story of individual and communal conscientization to the legacy of settler coloniality and the importance of building relationships in a good way between settler Christians with Indigenous peoples.³⁵ By

³⁵ The six "Principles in the Search for Right Relationships" of The United Church of Canada were laid out in a document presented to General Council 38 in 2003; they are 1) Anti-racism and Decolonization, 2) Holistic Approach, 3) Full Participation of Aboriginal People, 4) Whole Community Involvement, 5) Healing and Education, 6) Building Right Relations (through mutual respect and understanding which

narrating one local case study story, and positioning it within a broader context of connected critical moments, I suggest that my analytical approach offers support for social movements and solidarity networks that are developing in Canada and are already in the process of reworking relations and are seeking an adequate theology within which to root their work. This work thus contributes to a restorying of relations between settler and Indigenous peoples by opening spaces for critical exploration of some of the dynamics of the relations. This work also allows for elaboration of a praxis of aurality in which conscientized or liberated settler peoples actively engage for just relations with all peoples who live in the contact zones of settler coloniality on Indigenous lands.

The third circle represents the centre of the encircling in which I articulate a liberationist theological framework for restorying the relations between settler and Indigenous peoples through a praxis of aurality (Chapter 7). This theological approach requires settler Christians' engaged commitment to an embodied transformational listening and a metanoia into a new depth of relationship through aurality. It responds to the call of the Eighth Fire to awaken and reach out to Indigenous peoples of these lands, to engage in a mutual decolonial turn toward healing.

enhances our ability to see, hear and value others). Residential Schools Steering Committee, "Building Toward Right Relations: A Vision for Reconciliation" (United Church of Canada; GC38, August 10, 2003), 6–9.

Chapter One – Methodological Means for a Decolonial Turn in Theology

Privileging particularity, rather than the more traditional effort to achieve universal or at least generalizable norms in making claims regarding the Christian life, echoes the most fundamental insight of the Christian tradition – that God is known most fully in Jesus of Nazareth. Echoing this “scandal of particularity” at the heart of the Christian tradition, theologians and ethicists involved in ethnographic research draw on the particular to seek out answers to core questions of their discipline.

~ Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen ³⁶

When a personal story, without being presumptuous, opens itself towards the transpersonal, then sharing of one’s own spiritual development, one’s own religious history, one’s own theological questions, one’s own ethical commitments, has long seemed to me an honest way of *beginning* theological conversation.

~ Carter Heyward ³⁷

The somewhat atypical methodological approaches of this theology dissertation arise out of the current and historical complexities of restorying relations between settler and Indigenous peoples, and the attendant challenge to listen deeply to the voices of Indigenous peoples. Further, the methodological approaches have afforded me an opportunity, as a settler-academic who is Christian, to learn from their epistemologies without (mis)appropriation. However, because Christian theology tends to revolve around textual analysis, often “theology does not hear directly, if it does at all, those people who do not write.”³⁸ This has historically been true in the Canadian context with respect to Indigenous peoples’ voices, stories, and experiences. Within qualitative research generally, and within the ethnographic turn in theology, there winds a thread of concern for social

³⁶ Christian Batalden Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, eds., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), 28.

³⁷ Carter Heyward, “Breaking Points: Shaping a Relational Theology,” in *Through Us, With Us, In Us: Relational Theologies in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lisa Isherwood and Elaine Bellchambers (London: SCM Press, 2010), 11.

³⁸ Todd Whitmore, “Whiteness Made Visible: A Theo-Critical Ethnography in Acoliland,” in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, ed. Christian Batalden Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), 185.

justice and for using methods suited to inclusion of those who are typically unheard and unseen, thus “to transform [...] oppressive power relations.”³⁹ The transformation of power relations between settler and Indigenous peoples is at the root of this research, which is meant to be one contribution to a much larger effort, both within and beyond theology, to more fully restory Indigenous–settler relations.

My primary approach is qualitative, allowing for integrated analysis of published literature and case study data gained through primary interview data and examination of grey literature. Because of my own position as both participant and researcher, and because of the conceptual challenges and requirements of restorying as a settler, I have relied significantly on tools commonly used in autoethnographic research, such as structured self-reflection on lived experiences, testing that reflection with other participants, and cross-analyzing personal and participant reflections and stories with the literature. Challenges to self-knowledge as a settler and a critical approach to personal awareness as a theologian have been essential to this research and are at the root of the choices I have made regarding methodology.

After presenting the research questions (1.1), this chapter begins with a personal background to the initiation of this research in the community at First United (1.2). A similar process of contextualization is also used within liberation theologies, rooting the work in context and providing a clear articulation of the position of the

³⁹ Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 21; some theologians use ethnographic and autoethnographic methodological tools to explore race/racism and white privilege. See Whitmore, “Whiteness Made Visible: A Theo-Critical Ethnography in Acoliland”; and Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

researcher/theologian.⁴⁰ Then I focus the methodological lenses with a contextualization in theology (1.3) and the turn to autoethnography (1.4) to restory in this work, grounding it in an Indigenous understanding of relationality (1.5), and pointing to an expansive trialogical relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers, and among settler peoples (1.6). I close with an explanation of the tools and processes needed to root this work in a local settler-Christian community context (1.7).

1.1 A Qualitative Tale to Tell: Research Questions

The initial literature review for this dissertation included an identification of key relevant pieces of writing within the fields of liberation theologies, Indigenous epistemologies, (de)coloniality research, and settler studies. Based on this review, I formulated my initial research questions. Some nuancing of the question took place during the research process; however, the core concern to restory has remained consistent.

- What theological insights can be gleaned through conscientization to settler coloniality, and through a restorying of relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canadian contact zones using an integrative analysis of relevant literature and of case study data?
- What are the further theological implications of restorying these relations within The United Church of Canada, nationally and locally, for settler metanoia (understood as just interpersonal and social transformation)?

1.2 Restorying Grounded in Experience

Theology from the underside of hi/story is theology that is crucial to me because it

⁴⁰ See examples of this in Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds., *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

challenges systems of oppression and empire. I understand this challenge as a Christian calling that emerges from the words and works of Jesus in his ministry, from the passion of his teachings and his overturning of tables. Over the years, I have tried to unpack and understand what theology means in my context, and from the underside of Canadian hi/story. I formally studied global liberation theologies. Then I researched syncretism and inculturation of Indigenous and Christian traditions in Mexico and Canada to understand my experiences of them in my Nahua brother-in-law and nephew's village in Morelos, Mexico, and with the Student Christian Movement and Stan McKay (Cree elder and former moderator of The United Church of Canada). Through key relationships, and the research they fostered, I have come to two conclusions: that studying the ways Indigenous peoples live their Christianity left me with the uneasy feeling that I am justifying the impacts of the colonial legacy and, further, that despite noted lacunas in the liberation theologies literature in Canada, it is neither my task nor my right as a Euro-Canadian settler Christian to write an Indigenous liberation theology!

Through my doctoral research, I started to understand the story I can tell is positioned from, for, and among settler peoples and in relationship with Indigenous peoples. It has led me into a body of decolonial and settler research from which I can unpack, explore, and articulate a theology as a queer settler woman, and in particular as a Euro-Christian settler who lives on Indigenous peoples' land. Further, upon entering the painful stories of brokenness in relations between settler and Indigenous peoples, it became abundantly clear to me that I needed a community of support and prayer.

My partner and I searched for an affirming, social-justice oriented church and visited a few, but after only one Sunday at First United, we knew we had found our

community. I was especially attracted to the community by the Right Relations group that was listed among their ministries on the church website. Once we committed to attend in early 2011, I became an active member of the Right Relations group: participating in meetings and events, working at the information tables as part of the community's education and outreach into the broader community, and helping to plan and organize a Lenten Series. After becoming parents in 2012, life became fuller; this meant including our baby in many of our church activities. We brought him on the bus to the 2013 TRC gathering in Montréal, for example, and we took him to a Refl'Action evening at First United where he was scooped up into the amauti of one of the Inuit students from Nunavut Sivuniksavut to demonstrate that traditional way of carrying babies. During my comprehensive exam preparation in 2013/2014, I participated in the first book-study group of *Unsettling the Settler Within* by Paulette Regan with members of the church and the burgeoning Right Relations Network (RRN).

This community of people facing the underside of Canadian hi/story, growing together, deepening their consciousness of themselves as settler people and as a church community in their space on unceded Algonquin Territory in the Westboro neighbourhood of Ottawa, is a powerful story of living, unlearning, and deepening conscientization. Because of the importance of contextualizing within my own experience and not (mis)appropriating the gift of Indigenous peoples' theories, epistemologies, and theologies, I decided early in 2014 to root my project in the local community work of First United. I realized that this is a story worth telling, of a contextual theology lived into with a hope for justice and liberation for all peoples.

In sharing my work with the congregation in a sermon in June 2014, in the process

of doing this research (2014-2016), and particularly in carrying out the interviews (2015), I have felt a deepened sense of belonging within the community. The risk-taking involved has deepened our relational connectivity as I share ideas and struggles with the Right Relations Team members, and as they share their very personal life stories as well as the praxis of their activist commitments. For me, part of the risk inherent in the insider/outsider status of autoethnographic processes is that, at times, I feel separate from the group, aware of my position as a researcher as well as participant. Members have shared so deeply with me, but in moments I feel that this intimacy creates, counter-intuitively, a distance in my relationship with individuals and the group.

It has been unsettling to be directly accountable to a community of people for the words I choose to describe and the perspective I give on the gifts they have granted me in sharing their stories through the interviews. It has drawn out of me a care and appreciation for the journey of each of these people, and deepened my awe and respect for their engagement collectively and their passions individually. It has required clear intention, strong motivation, and sustained analytical effort to sift through the raw material and then weave together my account of how one small group of people are learning together, acting together, being together, and engaging in right relations as settlers and Christians in the particular space moment of Ottawa, Canada, during the process of the TRC and in consideration of my own presence as researcher/participant.

In the listening/coding process, the early members of the Right Relations Team became my daily companions. They and their stories are my research partners, and together

through our collective journey we co-create theological knowledge.⁴¹ In the organic practice of listening and learning together, in meetings and conversations, they became my co-researchers. Through the practice of the interviews, we co-constructed the story by remembering and together parsing the events and learnings that were key to the communal movement into right relations at First United.

I am not only an academic doing this work. Indeed, it is out of my faith experience and the faith experiences of this particular group of Christians that I offer an analysis that I hope and anticipate will engage the opportunity to restory our theologies and our approaches to social, political, and historical stories, and thus, as people of faith, to help restore or reconstitute just and right relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada.

1.3 Methodological Grounding in Theological Literature

Theology opens a space to explore ideas rooted in faith-based paradigms. It provides a context for research that allows the spiritual to inform the intellectual, physical, and emotional. Gustavo Gutiérrez (Quechua of Peru) suggests “our methodology is our spirituality,” which is similarly reflected in Indigenous methodological principles where, as Shaun Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) offers, spirituality is the way in the world.⁴² Theological discourse, after much critique in the late 20th century from many on the margins of Western heteropatriarchal frames of academia and the churches, has evolved a spectrum of

⁴¹ Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology: An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 174.

⁴² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, 20th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2003), 136; Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 86.

approaches to the conversation about God, faith, and justice in the world.

Liberation theologies, drawing for example on the *mujerista* tradition articulated by Ada María Isasi-Díaz, open spaces to bring personal experiences and *lo cotidiano* (the realities of daily living) into the academic.⁴³ A critical-reflective approach, it is rooted in an understanding of solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, which in turn demands theologians ground their work in the daily realities of praxis.⁴⁴ In this context, praxis is a way of articulating the importance of our ideas about God and/in the world, while ourselves being rooted in a practice of social justice lived in the world. Praxis engages in the transformation of the world, aligning and realigning itself with the way of life witnessed by Jesus Christ.

Engaged methodology rooted in justice praxis demands an examination of the ways that we as Christians, as settlers, and as theologians fail in this task. The story of Christianity is entwined within Canadian hi/story and has led to the harsh reality of marginalization for Indigenous peoples caused by ongoing settler coloniality. In this context then, not only does this examination reveal who are the marginalized, but it further points to the ways that dominant Euro-Christian tradition can be transformed as engaged theologians are also transformed by praxis. Thus, theological reflection is essential to a deep dialogical process with Indigenous peoples and their epistemologies so as to move toward a space of right and just relations. Key components of my engaged approach to

⁴³ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 66–73.

⁴⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, trans. Judith Condor, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27–29; on praxis, see Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 32.

theology have moved through critical engagement with the ongoing work of Indigenous and decolonial scholars as one stream of informative dialogue, leading to autoethnographic enquiry into my own perspectives and experience as participant/researcher, and working with interviewees as research partners who helped develop and articulate a settler theological reflection.

1.4 Relationally Speaking Through the Autoethnographic

Developing a theology of liberation from a settler perspective requires the researcher to be in a constant process of cross-checking her intentions, processes, and agenda in the research. As one privileged by dominant systems, am I perpetuating colonial power dynamics and facilitating settler coloniality by the research choices I am making? It requires a conscientization to one's positionality in terms of social power dynamics while aware and grounded in experience, and of the contexts from which and into which the work is being created. In the articulation of this research, an autoethnographic approach has been invaluable in this theological research. As Shaun Wilson insists, a good heart and good motives are essential to restorying relations.⁴⁵

Todd Whitmore is among those theologians who make strong theological arguments for using ethnographic tools, particularly in the context of liberation theologies.⁴⁶ In his research in Uganda, Whitmore has found it essential to include the voices of the peoples

⁴⁵ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 60.

⁴⁶ Todd David Whitmore, "If They Kill Us at Least the Others Will Have More Time to Get Away': The Ethics of Risk in Ethnographic Practice," *Practical Matters*, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 13–18. Nathalie Wigg-Stevenson takes these methodological proposals into a deeper self-reflexive theological ethnography in Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology*; and later autoethnographic theology in Wigg-Stevenson, "You Don't Look Like a Baptist Minister: An Autoethnographic Retrieval of 'Women's Experience' as an Analytic Category for Feminist Theology," *Feminist Theology* 25, no. 2 (2017): 182–197. See also the many theologians in Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*.

with whom he has engaged and from whom he has learned much. As a theologian from the Global North, and so from the dominant colonial context, he argues that it is essential to live into and to speak from a lived ethic of solidarity. He speaks from his own experiences in the stories that he tells, drawing the reader into a deeper understanding of the matter he is sharing. Although he does not specifically identify his work as autoethnographic, his intimate sharing of his fieldwork experiences brings together the research process and personal storytelling, and places both in relationship with the cultural, the social, and the political. It reflects a dynamic that Carolyn Ellis names as the autoethnographic process.⁴⁷

Autoethnography can activate multiple levels of consciousness (embodied, emotional, mental, and—I would add—spiritual), incorporating the personal and the cultural into the data collection. Further, there are a multiplicity of levels of engagement on the continuum of autoethnography. Faith Wambura Ngunjiri, Kathy-Ann C. Hernandez, and Heewon Chang visually show the fluidity of emphasis on the *auto*, *ethno*, or *graphy* (the self, culture, and research process); further, each autoethnographic approach will have an element of “artistic representation [writing for example], scientific inquiry, self-narration and ethnography.”⁴⁸ For example, *evocative autoethnography*, such as co-created by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, emphasizes the emotional experience of the researcher and uses artistic expression as the research process. On the other hand, *analytic autoethnography* recognizes the self in context of the research setting as a member of the research study with analytic reflexivity, in dialogue with other informants, and with a

⁴⁷ As in Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 211.

⁴⁸ Faith Wambura Ngunjiri, Kathy-Ann C. Hernandez, and Heewon Chang, “Living Autoethnography: Connecting Life and Research,” *Journal of Research Practice* 6, no. 1 (August 23, 2010): in part 2 and Figure 1.

“commitment to [reporting their] theoretical analysis,” even while keeping the “narrative visibility of the researcher’s self.”⁴⁹

In this research project, there are multiple reasons for the use of autoethnographic processes. The tradition of liberation theologies calls for narrative that grounds research in the context of the people living out the theologies as well as in the context of those articulating the theologies. Risk-taking that is an ineluctable element of the relationships that emerge from projects like this one, be it in the lived realities shared between researcher with fellow settler peoples and Indigenous peoples, or in the writing shared between researcher and readers.⁵⁰ Sharing the voices of my interviewees allows their own voices to contribute to the intellectual conscientization of the reader, thus enriching intellectual and relational growth. The use of polyphonic narrative and episodic storytelling brings the reader along with those of us who have been on this research-relational journey.⁵¹ Further, because I have been an active member of the Right Relations Team at First United and some with the city-wide network, incorporating my voice and stories functions to ground the work in local and personal contexts.⁵² It allows, as Carolyn Ellis suggests, for a

⁴⁹ Leon Anderson, “Analytic Autoethnography,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (August 2006): 378. It is important to note that these approaches are not mutually exclusive; see Barbara Tedlock, “Introduction: Braiding Evocative with Analytic Autoethnography,” in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacy Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis, Research Methods / Cultural Studies (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 358–62.

⁵⁰ Vulnerability is an important element of ethnographic research and writing; see Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 16.

⁵¹ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 146–47; Kathryn Church, “Hard Road Home: Toward a Polyphonic Narrative of Mother-Daughter Relationship,” in *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetics*, ed. Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, Ethnographic Alternatives Book Series; v. 9 (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press/Rowman & Littlefield Pub, 2002), 256.

⁵² Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014); Stacy Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis, eds., *Handbook of Autoethnography*, Research Methods / Cultural Studies (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013); Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, eds., *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Los Angeles: Sage,

“complex portrayal and interpretation of the communities we study, including our place in them.”⁵³

1.5 Listening and Learning from Indigenous Relationality

Shaun Wilson names relational accountability as central to an Indigenous worldview and epistemologies that include the research paradigm.⁵⁴ The relational research paradigm is deepened by a sense of respect and reciprocity that must also guide the research.⁵⁵ Reciprocity entails deep relational accountability that is rooted in respect for the people sharing and knowledge being shared. The research must be designed, implemented, and communicated with a rootedness and a sense of responsibility and accountability to a specific community, with a view to serve that community.⁵⁶

Wilson and his co-learners in Indigenous research methods suggest that the lifelong experiences of researchers inform their work, providing researchers important insights into their community relationships and knowledge systems. They can build on lived experiences and thus share the ones that not only nurture relationships between people but also with the ideas themselves.⁵⁷ As such, Wilson suggests that Indigenous people are best suited to do Indigenous research. In the same spirit, settler academics must direct the fruit of their research toward settler peoples to shed light on the dynamics of coloniality and to share the wisdom gained “from putting form to a knowledge of relations that were previously

2008); Sandra L. Kirby, Lorraine Greaves, and Colleen Reid, eds., *Experience Research Social Change: Methods Beyond the Mainstream*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006).

⁵³ Carolyn Ellis, *Revision: Autoethnographic Reflections on Life and Work* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009), 342.

⁵⁴ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 77.

⁵⁵ Wilson, 58.

⁵⁶ Wilson, 102, 105–6. I shared the story of my rootedness in the First United community in the “Restorying Grounded in Experience” section of this chapter.

⁵⁷ Wilson, 122.

invisible” or ignored.⁵⁸ It is part of the logic that leads me to seek to develop a settler theology that upholds as central just and right relationships with Indigenous peoples and their epistemologies.

In her seminal work on decolonizing research methodologies, Maori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests that one aspect of the decolonization process is critical engagement with the colonial dynamics that continue to inform research practices. She acknowledges that an important effort is to “decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity.”⁵⁹ However, there is a danger in these efforts to decolonize; Eve Tuck (Unangax-Aleut) and K. Wayne Yang point out the many ways that efforts to decolonize academia end up re-entangling rather than transforming the relations. There is a real danger that settler peoples will absorb Indigenous ways of thinking into their own and not engage in transformative and transformational praxis. They suggest a tension between efforts to decolonize the mind while not decolonizing from the land.⁶⁰ I would argue that there is important value in the learning and engaging in decolonization processes that allow settler people to risk the moves toward deepening relationality between our ideas and our ideals, and among ourselves.

1.6 Relationally Speaking Beyond Dualism: Complicating “Settler” and “Indigenous”

As I deepened my critical consciousness within this frame of relational accountability, I came to realize through various dialogues and discussions that there is an

⁵⁸ Wilson, 111.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 20, 23.

⁶⁰ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (September 8, 2012): 5–6.

important distinction between conscientization and the dialogical spaces we create. A problematic dualism exists in both Freirean frameworks and early liberationist work in theology in the use of oppressor/oppressed.⁶¹ This dualism can be teased out in many directions. Of note here is the way that dualism plays out in the language and power imbalance in the settler/Indigenous paradigm.

The realities of diversity among the peoples and of their experiences in relation to the questions of privilege and power are important to hold in our consciousness. In an intimate conversation at a national United Church event with racialized-settler people, we concluded that the duality of settler/Indigenous is not rich enough to open the transformative spaces I/we are seeking in this relational work. We spoke of the importance of recognizing that important conversations must happen among Indigenous peoples themselves, that other conversations and conscientization processes must take place among “White or Euro-settler” people, and still different conversations are to be had among racialized-settler peoples. Each of these groups of people has different experiences that must be raised up, examined, addressed, and transformed. Important dialogues must happen to address some of the realities of the ways that various people experience the economic and racial injustices of the legacy of colonialism. Indigenous and racialized-settler peoples will necessarily engage in particular dialogues when white/Euro-settler peoples are not present; specific dialogues are also necessary between Indigenous and white/Euro-settler peoples as well as between racialized-settler and white/Euro-settler. Each of these dialogues will potentially foster expanded perspectives among participants, allowing the shared

⁶¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 17, 26.

raising of critical consciousness to cultivate ever-deepening and enriching spaces for “trialogue” among all three groups of peoples.⁶²

Conscientization is not an isolated act in time, but is part of continuing dialogical/trialogical processes rooted in liberating action.⁶³ It is an ongoing process and praxis that is essential to our collective decolonial turn in mind, body, emotion, and spirit. It demands ongoing efforts to engage fully in relations with the Other (be we settler, racialized, White, or Indigenous), to listen ever more deeply, to contextualize what we hear, and to tell, re-tell, and re-member our stories in a *good way* with critical awareness.

1.7 Relationally Speaking and Listening with Right Relations Team

I am grounding this settler theology of liberation in the story of a local, primarily white, settler congregation located on unceded Algonquin/Anishnaabeg territory (in the Ottawa Presbytery of The United Church of Canada).⁶⁴ This congregation is a small group of committed Christians who have been engaged in a liberating praxis toward just relations with Indigenous peoples through their process of conscientization and action. The restorying of this praxis progressed from the inception of the Right Relations Team (circa

⁶² I developed the term “trialogue” in conversation with Adele Halliday (of the General Council offices of the United Church), in order to express some of the complexity of the relations among settler peoples who come from white/European type backgrounds and from a multiplicity of global backgrounds. It should be noted that the latter share the experience of racialization with Indigenous peoples, even while themselves being settlers on contested lands. The “trialogical” space is that conversational space where all three groups interact and discuss. I use an image of a three-circle Venn diagram with the triologue being the centre where all three circles overlap.

⁶³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 120. My development of trialogical frameworks expands Freire’s dialogical approach to conscientization.

⁶⁴ This is part of a territorial acknowledgement that is published in the congregation’s bulletin (since 2012) and spoken at the opening of each service (since 2016). When she speaks, Claudette Comanda (Algonquin/Anishnaabe from Kitigan Zibi) explains how this land, the capital of Canada, has no treaty, is part of a contested land claims process and is thus unceded and unsundered. I heard her speak many times, including at the *Citizens for Public Justice* Annual General Meeting, June 3rd, 2016, at Dominion Chalmers Church, Ottawa.

2009) through a turning point when the activities moved city-wide in 2013, with a resurgence of the work occurring with the participation of the team and church in the June 2015 TRC's closing events in Ottawa. My preliminary framework for a settler theology of liberation is critically informed by grounding my analysis in this one set of specific lived experiences.

One of the documented benefits of single case studies is that they can produce an original body of data that raises pertinent questions and extends current thinking.⁶⁵ The extent to which it is possible to draw key concepts and theoretical positions from a single case study is, of necessity, limited.⁶⁶ Given the central role of experience in liberation theologies, the exploratory nature of this research, and the rapidly changing social, political, and spiritual context of Indigenous-settler relations, inclusion of the case study seemed not only warranted but necessary to contextualize the research in lived experience. One important means of addressing the limitations of single case studies is through incorporation of an iterative dimension into the research process, requiring the researcher to continually return "to the literature to provide context for new findings."⁶⁷ In this project, steps in the analytical process included several opportunities to review and revise coding frames and emergent analytical categories and concepts based on formative development of the research process.

⁶⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5th Ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014); Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011).

⁶⁶ A case study is by nature limited; in using a variety of data collection tools (for example interviews and review of grey literature, i.e., unpublished material), it is an in-depth study over a sustained period of time of a particular programme, event or process. See John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd Ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 15.

⁶⁷ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 44.

To allow space for an in-depth understanding of this specific church community's process and the meaning that some of the members give to this kind of relational work, I drew on a purposefully-selected sample of members of the church.⁶⁸ The minister identified seven of the earliest members of the Right Relations Team that formed in the early days of the TRC in 2008/09. The list was confirmed as authentic from data collected from eight interviews and from First United Church's archives.⁶⁹ The internal validity of the data was affirmed as interview and archival data revealed a consistent story of the process of the team's work, even while individual members' personal stories offered unique and powerful witness to the shared journey toward just and right relations.

I have been a member of this group since 2011; as argued earlier, the tools of autoethnography have been useful for recording this story from my perspective as a member/researcher. Because I have been active with the group, and have established relationships of trust and common language with its members, I was able to benefit from my *insider* status.⁷⁰ I suggest that my established relationships with the group members offered more benefits than drawbacks, and that I have drawn out quality data from the interview process with this small sample. These relationships allowed me to send a friendly email of invitation to participate to each of the interviewees (as per the Ethics Review Process⁷¹) without need for an intermediary from the church.

⁶⁸ Creswell, *Research Design*, 185; Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 230.

⁶⁹ One of the original members (as noted in Church Council minutes from April 2010) who had been inactive for some time was not identified in the initial sampling process and thus was not included as a potential interviewee.

⁷⁰ Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis, "Introduction: Coming to Know Autoethnography as More than a Method," in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacy Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis, Research Methods / Cultural Studies (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 33–34.

⁷¹ Research Ethics Board File # 1360.5/14 R1 (see Appendix 1).

During the sharing circle where we discussed my research, we sat comfortably and shared a communal meal. I note, however, that my insider/outsider status (as both member and researcher recording the community's process) has created a tension within me. At times, I felt that my growing expertise in Indigenous and settler studies triggered in me an impatient and somewhat dismissive response to a community event or speaker. Mostly, though, as I felt the energy of theories being lived out, in, and around me, my attention was riveted on the presenters and by the efforts of the community.

I was a member of the Right Relations Team before I sought permission to record the story; we had been learning and growing together for three years. In this sense, they are my co-learners, and my awareness of this relationship deepened after doing the interviews. I feel entrusted with such intimate stories and such a deep sharing that the experience has left me relationally disoriented at times on a Sunday morning. I might have spent a week in the depths of the stories they shared through the recordings, but the next time I saw them at church, I realized that they had gone about an ordinary, routine week.

I had been living with their voices reverberating in my ears and the drama of their stories echoing in my consciousness, embodied through my typing fingers, and before my eyes on the screen in the multi-coloured markings of my intense data-coding process. What had been an hour-long interview in each of their lives had become years of transformative work in my own life. It is not all one-sided, however, as many of them have expressly come to me during the Passing of the Peace (a moment of greeting during the service), for example, to warmly offer and receive a hug. Nathalie Wigg-Stevenson writes that

ethnographers develop intimate relations with their informant/partners.⁷² The intimacy of this process changed me and how I relate to these people who have gifted me with so much. It puts me, as an ethnographic theologian, in a strange liminal space of neither fully inside nor completely outside the team and the church.

In the hermeneutical encircling of this project, I have drawn on the literature in liberation theologies, coloniality research, and Indigenous and settler studies to refine my methodological approach and to appropriately develop my background in existing literature. This was followed by three rounds of data collection and analysis with respect to the case story:

- *Round One* involved a series of *appreciative interviews* with seven participants; I used open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to allow the personal experiences of the participants to be foregrounded in a rich or thick description process.⁷³ These interviews were scheduled over a few months based on the availability of the participants. The interviews occurred in settings of their choosing (their homes, a coffee shop, or a work conference room) at a time that was convenient for the participant. I listened and re-listened to each interview and then transcribed it. One of the challenges of the process was leaving enough time between interviews for this task, without stretching it out over too much time. The interviews happened between March and June of 2015; because of this timing, the closing events of the June 2015 TRC in Ottawa played a significant role in the

⁷² Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, “Faith in My Bones: An Exercise in Ethnographic Theology” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011), 258, 267–69.

⁷³ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 95, 102.

interviews.

- *Round Two* involved coding the transcriptions for key terms, concepts, ideas, and themes that emerged from the participants' stories. The record of these interviews emerged as a written restorying of the community's ongoing process and commitment toward right relations. The data were verified through examination of First United's weekly liturgical bulletins (from 2006–2015), the *First Glance* newsletters (2011–2015), and the minutes of Church Council (2007–2014). The data were verified further through a key informant interview with First United Church's minister (of over a decade). The significance of his presence and importance of his support for the work of right relations became evident during the interviews.

- *Round Three* involved sharing some of the Right Relations Team's story (using pseudonyms to protect confidentiality) and my findings with members of my research support network (including dissertation committee and key leaders in ecumenical and Indigenous solidarity networks) for feedback and refining of the framework. This approach to communicative validity was realized through individual conversations and correspondence and in workshops and conference paper presentations (both professional and among young academics/students), primarily with settler peoples, but in some mixed groups including Indigenous scholars, students, and church leaders. Ultimately, this work was encircled through an important *sharing circle*⁷⁴ with original interview participants.

This methodological process afforded me the opportunity to record the story of this

⁷⁴ The sharing circle was an opportunity to gather all together to discuss my interpretation of the group's work. We discussed some of the theological insights that emerged out of the interviews and in the research process.

group's praxis and be informed by my findings as I further drew out the implications for a settler theology of liberation (as in the final chapter). In this chapter, I introduced the methodological encircling that informs the restorying work of this dissertation. In the next two chapters, I delve into the first and second hermeneutical circles that ground my work in a liberationist theological tradition and deepen this work by incorporating the lens of settler coloniality to my approach.

Chapter Two – Liberation Theologies: Listening and Seeing in Contact Zones

Paulo Freire used to oppose the term ‘education for liberation’. He thought that if education did not liberate it was not education. Why should we conceive a different name for ‘the real thing’? In a similar way, if theology is not for liberation, that is, to take us away from the ideological sexual and political constraints [*sic*] of its constructions and if it is not rooted in our experience and does not become transformative, it is not theology.

~ Marcella Althaus-Reid ⁷⁵

The theological roots of the theology being developed in this thesis can be found in the liberationist tradition. This section surveys some of the theological literature that informs the transverse ways that I approach theology. As I presented in the section on methodology, this is the soil that nurtured my theological understandings and from which my theological approach has flourished. The chapter begins with an overview of key principles of liberation theologies, then presents foundational notions in Indigenous theologies from Turtle Island, such as balance and harmony in relationality, including with creation. Finally, this chapter introduces the decolonial turn in theology.

2.1 Liberation Theologies: Voices from the Margins

The eruption of concern for the poor on the theological landscape in Latin America shifted the theological parameters for the development of Christian theology. Shifting from the traditional *from above* vantage point of the educated (and hence privileged) theologian, a recognition of the presence of God among all people prompted the emergence of a so-called *theology from below*. By the early 1970s, Gustavo Gutiérrez (Quechua of Peru) had formulated a rich theology as it is lived out in base communities, that is, grassroots

⁷⁵ Marcella Althaus-Reid, “From the Goddess to Queer Theology: The State We Are In Now,” *Feminist Theology* 13, no. 2 (2005): 271.

communities that were developing in Latin America at that time.⁷⁶ In his theology, liberation was construed not only as liberation *from* oppression, sin, and selfishness, but also as a liberation *for* transformation. Poverty as theologized by Gutiérrez is a concrete material poverty that needs to be overcome. As such, the holistic needs, including physical, of the poor are placed at the centre of this theological articulation, and the spiritual life is firmly rooted in solidarity with those on the margins of society.

In 1979, Latin American Catholic bishops gathered in Puebla (Mexico) and coined a phrase that became central to the understanding of liberation theology: they articulated a *preferential option for the poor*. With the word *preferential*, they spoke of the will of God; with *option*, they underlined the choice for commitment and solidarity; and with *poor*, they indicated their understanding that the wellbeing of the poor and marginalized were central to God's concern and will. The bishops suggested that these three key words point to an understanding of God's role in the hi/story of the poor, but most essentially of God's solidarity with the poor and thus the call for all Christians to act in the same solidarity.⁷⁷

As rich a matrix for theological theory and praxis that the formulation preferential option of the poor may offer, others critique the language. For example, postcolonial theologian Joerg Rieger challenges what he sees as the inherent implication that when one is working *for* the other, one needn't change oneself. He insists that the preferential option for the poor must be further nuanced for there to be a true and deep solidarity.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (London: SCM, 2001).

⁷⁷ Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 27.

⁷⁸ Joerg Rieger, "Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 209–11.

Fundamental awareness of colonialism and imperialism is at the centre of the critical formulation of postcolonial theology and theory.⁷⁹ Rieger points out how, in traditional theology, God had largely been envisioned as being on the side of the colonizer or on the side of the oppressor. As such, liberation theologians are called to a deeper accountability if they are to place the oppressed or the poor at the centre of their theologies.

In another example of hermeneutical suspicion about the language from the Puebla gathering, Wazhazhe/Osage theologian George Tink Tinker argues that although Indigenous peoples are among the poorest in North America, they do not identify with the term *the poor*. Indigenous peoples seek recognition as peoples with unique cultural, spiritual, social, political, and linguistic ways of being. The socio-politico-economic presumptions inherent in the category of *poor* do not correspond with their search for liberation and healing from the “colonial settler hordes who have surrounded us, murdered our ancestors, stolen our property, forced their education on our peoples, and made every attempt to deny us the cultural continuity of language and community solidarity.”⁸⁰ Andrea Smith suggests that the very notion of the poor carries the risk of romanticization and epistemological commodification of communities living in poverty. She suggests that the idea of *God standing against oppression*⁸¹ offers an important and more appropriate formulation for the development of liberation theologies in North America and, in particular, in relation to Indigenous communities.

⁷⁹ R. S. Sugirtharajah, “Complacencies and Cul-de-Sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 22.

⁸⁰ Tink Tinker, “American Indian Liberation: Paddling a Canoe Upstream,” in *The Reemergence of Liberation Theologies: Models for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Thia Cooper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 63.

⁸¹ Andrea Smith, “Decolonizing Theology,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 59, no. 1–2 (Spring 2005): 73.

Liberation theologies in North America emerge from the experience of oppression as marginalization due to socio-cultural identity,⁸² and from awareness of the need to correct attendant imbalances in political and economic power relations in society. An example can be found in the emergence of Black theology from the 1970s civil rights movement in the United States. Anthony B. Pinn writes that Black theology takes seriously the notion of *imago dei* and the understanding of oneself as being the image of God and thus empowered to confront systems of oppression.⁸³

The primacy of experience is a concept that is woven throughout all liberation theologies. The idea that one's daily life experiences are essential to one's theological theory and praxis is articulated perhaps most clearly in a *mujerista* theology of *lo cotidiano*.⁸⁴ According to this theology, which emerged from the daily life of people in the barrios, their experiences of violence and suffering matter to God, and therefore should also matter to the broader Christian community. Latin@⁸⁵ liberation theology is particularly interesting in its rootedness in the culture of the people. For Indigenous theologies of liberation, the rootedness in culture is also central, as the essence of the peoples' cultural experiences and of their spiritual expressions is grounded in the land.⁸⁶

⁸² Timothy K. Snyder, "Theological Ethnography: Embodied," *The Other Journal*, May 27, 2014, <https://theotherjournal.com/2014/05/27/theological-ethnography-embodied/>, (accessed September 15, 2017).

⁸³ Anthony B. Pinn, "Black Theology," in *Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 21.

⁸⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*.

⁸⁵ Latin@ is a gender-neutral term that includes the "o" and "a" of Latino/Latina. See for example Néstor Medina, "Tongue Twisters and Shibboleths: On Decolonial Gestures in Latin@ Theology," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 18, no. 2 (June 2013): 3–18, or Patrick B. Reyes, "The River Beneath: A Decolonial Latin@ Practical Theology" (PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2015).

⁸⁶ Dave Dievert, "White Christian Settlers, the Bible, and (De)Colonization," in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*, ed. Steve Heinrichs (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2013), 127–37.

2.2 Indigenous Liberation Theologies in North America

Some North American Indigenous writers, including William Baldrige (Cherokee), Robert Warrior (Osage), and Andrea Smith identify a basic problem in constructing Indigenous liberation theologies: theology is simply not a very “Indian thing to do.”⁸⁷ Baldrige points to the limitations of trying to own a particular version of the Gospels, which distracts Christians from the work of transforming society and its structures.⁸⁸ Smith argues that if one is to articulate a theology, it must be a theology of “onto-praxy,”⁸⁹ that is, a theology emerging from the struggles of Indigenous communities. Like other North American liberation theologians, Smith engages in the reality of Indigenous women’s activism as a source for theologizing. These women root praxis, their activism, and the importance of their liberation in the vision they have of the world that they seek to co-create with others and with the Creator.⁹⁰

Still other liberationist theologians argue that the problematic relationship of Christianity and Indigenous peoples is so irreconcilable that there cannot be a clear and healthy Christian theology, much less an Indigenous Christian theology of liberation.

⁸⁷ Andrea Smith, “Dismantling the Master’s House with the Master’s Tools: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies,” in *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women’s Theology*, ed. Pui-Lan Kwok (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 73.

⁸⁸ William Baldrige, “Reclaiming Our Histories,” in *Native and Christian Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 89.

⁸⁹ Drawing on the work of Justine Smith that roots theology in relationality and praxis. Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), xiv.

⁹⁰ Smith, “Dismantling the Master’s House with the Master’s Tools: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies,” 76; Andrea Smith, “Native Feminist Theology,” in *Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction*, ed. Anthony B. Pinn and Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 150. As Lansdowne argues, oral tradition and storytelling is political and rooted in praxis, see Carmen Lansdowne, “ORiginAL Voices: Eradicating the ‘Fearful Asymmetry’ or Power Imbalance between Indigenous and Western Thought in History and Theology,” in *Theology and the Crisis of Engagement: Essays on the Relationship between Theology and the Social Sciences in Honor of Lee Cormie*, ed. Jeff Nowers and Néstor Medina (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 93–109.

Tinker, among others, points out that Indigenous peoples have rarely made a free choice for Christianity because they have always been constrained by colonial realities.⁹¹ Some of the earliest converts did so at a time when they realized that their healing ceremonies could no longer address the needs of communities dying in epidemics. They converted to Christianity in the hopes that Christianity was the panacea for healing. Even highly critical Indigenous writers, such as Vine Deloria (Sioux) or Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehá:ka), point out that Christianity has a rich tradition among Indigenous peoples, and that their problem is less with Jesus and more with the participation of Christianity in the imperial and colonial reality of the conquest of North America.⁹²

Warrior, in his famous and often quoted article *Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians* argues that because liberation theology draws so heavily on the idea of the liberating God found in the Exodus story, it is not a liberative tradition for Indigenous peoples in North America. He argues that in that story, the Israelites are liberated into a Promised Land that was not *terra nullius* but was inhabited by Canaanites, thus the God who liberates the Israelites is also the God who encourages the conquest of the Canaanites. Given the hi/story of the arrival of Europeans in North America, he identifies with the Canaanites in the story and so cannot find liberation in this particular vision of God. He argues that those who were liberated, that is, those peoples who were once oppressed in Egypt, become the oppressors

⁹¹ George E Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 50.

⁹² Vine Deloria, "Vision and Community: A Native American Voice," in *Native and Christian Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 106; Alfred, *Wasáse*, 108–9; see also "Traditional Respect for Jesus" in Paul Schultz and George Tinker, "Rivers of Life: Native Spirituality for Native Churches," in *Native and Christian Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 61.

in the new land. Accordingly, the lesson from the story of the Exodus for Indigenous peoples is that the God of liberation is also the God of conquest.⁹³

Smith points out the importance of an ongoing engagement with the Canaanite perspective when *doing* theology.⁹⁴ The importance lies in paying attention to the dynamics between oppressor and oppressed; the importance lies also in searching for Canaanite or Indigenous voices in the liminal spaces in the stories. Cherokee scholar Laura Donaldson names this way of doing theology as a *contact perspective*: an articulation of a theology in the contact zone.

The contact zone, she says, is a space within which those who were geographically and politically divided come together in a long-term and often conflictual relationship.⁹⁵ As in the Canaanite perspective, she points to the importance of the subject status of the characters in the narratives, and of noticing alternative or marginalized voices in a story. She implements a unique and challenging analysis of the story of the outsider: the Canaanite women Ruth and Orpah.⁹⁶ Diverging from conventional exegesis of the text, she points out how the story of Ruth is one of oppressive silencing of this Canaanite woman and is thus oppressive to Indigenous women. Once Ruth gives birth to Obed, she disappears from the story and her baby is named as the child of Naomi.

For Donaldson, the more liberative story in this narrative is that of Orpah who leaves Naomi and Ruth to return to her own people. This requires a hermeneutical shift when

⁹³ Robert Allen Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today," in *Native and Christian Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 93–104.

⁹⁴ Smith, "Decolonizing Theology," 65.

⁹⁵ Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," 138–39.

⁹⁶ See the book of Ruth in Hebrew Scriptures.

engaging with the story through Canaanite eyes. She draws on an understanding of sin as broken relationship, which she says is how it was translated by some early missionaries, and so liberation or salvation becomes the return to right relations with one's kin. As such, Orpah's interstitial story of return to original traditions is in fact the liberating space for Indigenous peoples and the development of their unique theological voices.⁹⁷

2.3 Creation: A Theological Framework from Indigenous Experience

Cree Elder, United Church minister and former moderator Stan McKay suggests that Indigenous peoples are beginning to take the risk, even in writing, of sharing their perspectives on theological ideas because they see such sharing as essential for all of creation. McKay points out that Indigenous people have a very deep experience of their relational responsibility and understanding of creation. They hear in the teachings of Jesus the cry of creation such that "even the stones cry out."⁹⁸ Indigenous peoples' relational epistemologies offer a rich theological opportunity through their understanding of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus.

As Tinker says, the starting point for theology from an Indigenous perspective is not in sin but in creation.⁹⁹ He—along with Clara Sue Kidwell (Choctaw Chippewa) and Homer Noley (Choctaw)—articulate some of the unique categories of a Native American theology.¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, it is a theology rooted in a deep understanding of relationship and

⁹⁷ Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," 144–49.

⁹⁸ Stan McKay, "Aboriginal Christian Perspective on the Integrity of Creation," in *Native and Christian Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 52.

⁹⁹ George E Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 36–56; see also Schultz and Tinker, "Rivers of Life: Native Spirituality for Native Churches," 58–59.

¹⁰⁰ Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

the responsibility to maintain harmony and balance in creation. They argue that Indigenous perspectives include the understanding of creation as ongoing and that many of their ceremonies are performed to ensure that the duties of reciprocity are met. In the preparation for the Sundance, for example, the tree that is offered as the centre pole is cut down so carefully that it is caught in the arms of the people who will use it, as a sign of deep respect and reverence for the sacrifice being made. As Jace Weaver's (Cherokee) seminal text proclaims: ceremony is done "that the people might live."¹⁰¹

This relational understanding has much to offer the Western worldview, which is rooted in a narrative of linear progress according to which life is always improving and hi/story is ever evolving toward some future goal.¹⁰² Against such a grounding story, there is not necessarily much attention directed to the space and time in which one lives because one is always looking to a future time. Alfred contends that such a framework is destructive because it is based in a lie, and it leads to indifference and disengagement from the world in which we live.¹⁰³ Conversely, a perspective of reciprocity keeps one grounded in and oriented toward one's concrete experience in one's own time and place.

Tinker develops a spatial re-interpretation of the Reign of God, turning to the gospel images of it as "drawing near" (Mark 1:15) and being "in our midst" (Luke 17:21).¹⁰⁴ Traditionally, Christian theology has focused on the Reign of God within a temporal framework, construing it as coming at some future time. But Tinker reclaims the idea of a

¹⁰¹ Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997).

¹⁰² I will say more about the myth of progress in the chapter on settler coloniality.

¹⁰³ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 105.

¹⁰⁴ Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance*, 96–98.

spatial *basileia*.¹⁰⁵ Further, drawing on an explicitly Indigenous worldview, he maintains that if God is to reign somewhere, it would be within a Realm that God created; as such the *basileia* takes place (literally) in creation as we know it. Tinker suggests that the idea of original sin is destructive for Indigenous communities that have been so devastated by colonialism and for people who already have wounded self-esteem. By making the idea of creation central, and therefore understanding that all of creation is sacred, a person who is kin to all creation is also sacred and considered a gift of God.¹⁰⁶ Such an empowering and enriching idea and image has profound potential for healing both Indigenous peoples and settler peoples who live in this contact zone on traditional Indigenous lands.¹⁰⁷

Tinker develops a further healing image by digging into the etymologies of the word salvation and the name of Jesus.¹⁰⁸ He points out that the Latin root of the word salvation, *salve*, in fact refers to healing. He understands Jesus' name as being derived from two words: *Ja* and *Shua*, which he translates as "God heals."¹⁰⁹ From these word sources, he argues that the unique ministry of salvation brought by Jesus is one of healing. Tinker's work and Donaldson's notion of salvation as the return to Indigenous frameworks and spiritual ways of life are rich examples of how Indigenous peoples' understandings of their relationship with God have much to offer Euro-Western theology. But for this potential to be realized, there must be spaces for reclaiming Indigenous stories and epistemological

¹⁰⁵ *Basileia tou theo* is the greek phrase for the Reign of God. Tinker using that analysis to envision the *basileia* in space is unique here. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 2008, 52.

¹⁰⁶ See also Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, *A Native American Theology*, Chapter 2 on "Creation".

¹⁰⁷ Randy Woodley (Keetowah) supports this concept in developing the idea of the "community of creation" in Randy Woodley, "Early Dialogue in the Community of Creation," in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*, ed. Steve Heinrichs (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2013), 94.

¹⁰⁸ Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 2008, 102.

¹⁰⁹ Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, *A Native American Theology*, 75.

perspectives.

Tinker recognizes that within the Christian tradition abundant theological opportunity is afforded by Jesus in his question to the disciples: Who do you say that I am? It is a liberating question because it is an invitation to those navigating the Christian tradition as Indigenous believers to name Jesus from their own experiences and to live their faith life in their own unique fashion as Indigenous peoples. But it also requires of Christianity an opening to the possibilities of being transformed by the rich dialectic Indigenous response to the question. Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker suggest that such an encounter might—indeed must—transform the conventional thought systems of Christianity so that Christians, like the resurrected Christ, might not be immediately recognizable.¹¹⁰

2.4 Toward A Decolonial Turn: Interrupting Settler Coloniality

Lina Sunseri (Oneida) suggests that decolonization is ultimately about *interrupting* the colonial relations and *building* new relations.¹¹¹ She writes "that there must be a commitment to removing the systemic oppression of Indigenous peoples that still exists."¹¹² It is a challenge that must be addressed differently in each community: for Indigenous peoples, it means healing from the colonial legacy in what Alfred calls a process of regeneration and what Leanne Simpson elucidates as Indigenous resurgence.¹¹³ The decolonial challenge and opportunity for settler peoples is to be ethical witnesses, to

¹¹⁰ Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 165.

¹¹¹ Lina Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 93; to further complicate this argument, see Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press: Durham ; London, Duke University Press, 2014).

¹¹² Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind*, 94.

¹¹³ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 86, 150; see also Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*.

remember the actualities of violence and injustice, and to recognize the colonial roots in both the patterns of hi/story and the structures of contemporary thinking, attitudes, and actions toward Indigenous people.¹¹⁴ It involves what Walter Mignolo (Argentina) calls engaging in “epistemic disobedience” or what Paulette Regan calls acts of “insurgent remembrance.”¹¹⁵ Settler healing comes through admitting the complicity of our ancestors, our churches, and our past and present governments in the settler-colonial matrix of power.¹¹⁶ The process includes naming ongoing problematic power relations to be ready to create new and just relations with Indigenous peoples.

The next chapter will survey key literature in coloniality and settler colonialism as part of the healing decolonial turn being set out in this dissertation. Such a survey offers a necessary point of departure for the conscientization by settlers of Indigenous peoples’ experiences and for their engaging in a process of unlearning and contesting colonial ignorance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ See Diewert, “White Christian Settlers, the Bible, and (De)Colonization.”

¹¹⁵ Walter Mignolo, “Decolonizing Western Epistemology/Building Decolonial Epistemologies,” in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, 1st Ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 36; Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 49.

¹¹⁶ The idea of decolonial healing will be explored in Chapter 7.

¹¹⁷ Adam Barker, “From Adversaries to Allies: Forging Respectful Alliances between Indigenous and Settler Peoples,” in *Alliances Re/Envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynne Davis and Heather Yanique Shpuniarski (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 319.

Chapter Three – Settler Coloniality: Reframing Social and Economic Understanding

Such people increasingly regarded the presence of the Indians as simply an obstacle to their realization of dreams of material wealth. As a member of the Alberta attorney general's office put it [in 1908], Albertans "with whom I have spoken are not, I would gather, very much in sympathy with the Indian, nor with the efforts to better his condition. They look upon him as a sort of a pest which should be exterminated."

~ *Alberta Attorney General's office, 1908* ¹¹⁸

Conscious of the mandate of the 37th General Council to combat the ideology of racism it will be important that we discern the racism implicit in the colonization of aboriginal peoples and the racism which lies at the root of resistance to participation in de-colonization in general and with regard to the residential schools experience in particular.

~ *The United Church of Canada, 2003* ¹¹⁹

For theology to be liberative in the 21st century, it must be contextual, which in Canada means being accountable to the ongoing experience of colonialism. (De)coloniality research, from the liberationist inspired work of the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality Collective (M/C/D) encompasses a rich analytic understanding of the axes of racialization and economics in the ongoing colonial dynamics in the Americas. This collective of scholars argue that these axes are rooted in Euro-Western epistemologies and the dynamics of modernity, both of which hinge on the hierarchization of peoples. Decolonial analysis has much to offer to the understanding of the ongoing colonial legacies that manifest in Indigenous—settler relations in Canada. Further, because these relations are rooted in systemic racism of the "logic of elimination" and assimilation¹²⁰ prevalent in Canadian

¹¹⁸ As in J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, Rev. ed. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 212.

¹¹⁹ Residential Schools Steering Committee, "Building Toward Right Relations," 5.

¹²⁰ Patrick Wolfe coined the phrase in thinking about colonial systems in Australia, New Zealand, Israel and the United States; and Sherene Razack uses it extensively in her analysis of Canadian contexts. It will be explored later in the chapter.

contexts, settler colonialism constitutes a valuable analytic approach for framing settler power and privilege.

In this chapter, I open a liminal space for “border epistemology and decolonial thinking” between disciplines¹²¹ to develop a hybrid framework. Settler coloniality is hinted at by numerous authors, but is neither explicitly defined nor clearly articulated.¹²² To probe the possibilities for this hybridization, I draw on key themes in the literature as they contend with physical, epistemic, and spiritual hierarchization of humanity and creation, the racialization of Indigenous peoples, and exploitation of land. The concept of settler coloniality identifies and names the ongoing and wounding power imbalances in the relationships between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada. The colonial wound is “embedded and embodied in actors, institutions, languages that regulate and manage the world.”¹²³ It infiltrates all levels of society and is supported by “the pillars of Eurocentric knowing, sensing and believing”: patriarchy and racism. It “operates through making people feel inferior” and marginalized in body, mind, and spirit.¹²⁴ Conscientization of its

¹²¹ Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonial Options and Artistic/AestheSic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter D. Mignolo,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014): 199.

¹²² In both Sherene Razack and Scott Lauria Morgensen’s work, I found the odd use of the term coloniality but with no contextualization for the word. Glen Sean Coulthard uses it the most extensively – switching to “settler coloniality” language in chapter 4 of *Red Skin, White Masks* – though he does not explain the language choice or development, and does not cite Walter D. Mignolo or other decolonial authors explicitly; in personal correspondence (email correspondence April 24, 2016) he recognizes that the coloniality thinkers are useful in this analysis but that few are using their work in Indigenous-settler analysis in Canada. Also in personal correspondence, Eva Mackey expressed interest in using the decolonial thinkers, but has chosen not to develop settler coloniality in her research at this time (email correspondence March 16, 2016) nor use it in her 2016 book, *Unsettled Expectations*. Consonant with my work, Mignolo presented research at the OISE “Decolonizing Conference” in November 2016 that explores Indigenous scholars and liberation theologians such as Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg and a member of Alderville First Nation) and George Tink Tinker (Wazhazhe/Osage) in conjunction with coloniality concepts.

¹²³ Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonial Options and Artistic/AestheSic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter D. Mignolo,” 207.

¹²⁴ Gaztambide-Fernández, 206. See also Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind*, 82.

wounding power can un/settle and begin the movement toward liminal spaces within which settler and Indigenous peoples can work together to name and overcome settler coloniality in Canada.

In this chapter, I explore key concepts within coloniality and settler colonialism. This overview of the literature concentrates on: first, the coloniality of power and being; second, the problem of postcolonial language and analysis; third, settler colonialism and the logics of elimination and assimilation; fourth, racialization and systemic racism; and lastly conscientization, epistemic disobedience, and the decolonial turn.

3.1 Coloniality: Racialization, Economies, Epistemologies, and Ontologies

The rich literature of the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (M/C/D) Collective roots the subaltern conversation in Latin American contexts and historical realities, and articulates an epistemological approach to colonial legacies that is appropriate for the Americas.¹²⁵ The M/C/D Collective offers an alternative way of thinking about colonial systems and nests its approaches at “the borders of systems of thought and reaches toward the possibility of non-eurocentric [*sic*] modes of thinking.”¹²⁶ Arturo Escobar (Colombian-American) traces the genealogy of this work, which is derived from Latin American liberation theology and dependency theory, to the important work of Enrique Dussel (Argentine-Mexican) on liberation philosophy and autonomous social sciences, as well as the important work of the Latin American Subaltern Studies group (based in the United

¹²⁵ See the 2007 issue of *Cultural Studies* 21 (2).

¹²⁶ Arturo Escobar, “Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program,” in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 34.

States).¹²⁷ He sees their work as, although influenced by these academic movements, offers a new paradigm that emerges from an analysis of the interplay of Eurocentric modernity with its attendant 15th century colonial expansionism.

Aníbal Quijano (Peru) coined the term coloniality in the early 1990s.¹²⁸ He argues that colonialism is not the same thing as coloniality. Colonialism refers to an historic period, which from a Latin American perspective launched from Spain in 1492 and in which an external imperial system of governance placed a new colony under the authority of its colonizing power.¹²⁹ To feed the economic systems of colonialism, Europeans needed to control the labour and lands of those whom they wished to exploit for the economic benefit of their own empire and colonial power.

Within coloniality analysis, there is an understanding that the industrial and social developments of the past 525 years in Europe were possible as a result of the North Atlantic trade.¹³⁰ The extraction of goods for trade was made possible by two factors: the control of labour and the racial hierarchization of human persons.¹³¹ The control of labour constituted

¹²⁷ Escobar, 33–34.

¹²⁸ Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” trans. Michael Ennis, *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533.

¹²⁹ This Eurocentrism manifested in a belief in a right to own and control any territory that Europeans thought they discovered. Expansion began in the late 15th century with the Spanish move west and was supported very quickly by “*Inter Caetera*,” a papal bull of 1493, which articulated the Doctrine of Discovery and supported Spain’s “right” to any land they considered “terra nullius.” Significant to the North American context, by the early 18th century, the centre of colonial power and expansion had shifted to France, England and Holland but was informed by the same epistemological and doctrinal world views.

¹³⁰ See Santiago Castro-Gómez, “The Missing Chapter of Empire: Postmodern Reorganization of Coloniality and Post-Fordist Capitalism,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2007): 428–48. He presents a critical analysis of the post-empire/post-colonial work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. They argue that we are in a post-colonial time because the globalized capitalist system no longer needs the nation-state and its colonial system to access capital. However, deploying decolonial thinking, Castro-Gómez argues that the epistemic understanding of modernity points to the ways that coloniality and the attendant globalized economic systems are fed by attitudes of Occidentalism, epistemic hierarchy, and racism.

¹³¹ Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 533–34. See also Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3

the economic dynamics of colonialism; it was manifested in the use of slaves and control of Indigenous populations for European economic enrichment. This blatantly exploitative use of other human beings required an ideological justification that took form in the notion of “race.” Although social systems built on ethnicity and ethnocentrism existed previously in Europe, the hierarchization of humans based on a biological construct of race developed within the colonial endeavour. Racialization originated in a Eurocentric hierarchic presumption of the superiority of some and the inferiority of others.¹³² Initially the biological construct of race developed through a narrow classification of the “Other” who were encountered by Europeans in their colonial projects.

First, they created social identities using phenotypic or physiognomic traits such as olive, negro, white, Indian, and so on. Thereafter, they constructed geo-cultural identities: American, European, Asian, African, etc.¹³³ Although racialization emerged with colonialism and slavery, racism continues with concrete consequences in current geopolitical, socio-cultural, and ecclesial realities.¹³⁴

Coloniality of power is an analytic framework for the power dynamics that existed and still endure in world financial economies as well as in knowledge economies. Coloniality points to a matrix of hierarchical power structures affecting the economy, the systems of social authority, and understandings of gender and sexuality, as well as

(March 1, 2007): 211–23, and Walter D. Mignolo, “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2007): 449–514.

¹³² I will speak to this again later in this chapter, using Plains Cree Métis poet, writer and academic Dr. Emma Larocque’s “civ/sav” paradigm of analysis.

¹³³ Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 536–37; Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2007): 176.

¹³⁴ Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 533; the latter will be explored in Chapter 5 in the context of The United Church of Canada.

epistemological systems with race and racism, patriarchy and sexism, as organizing principles.¹³⁵ Coloniality recognizes that European modernity emerged at the same time as colonial movements for global economic expansion. It names modernity as the other side of coloniality.¹³⁶ Drawing from the Eurocentric epistemological framework of modernity, the colonizing Europeans developed the articulation of the racialized, inferior, and exploitable Other. Further, Europeans suppressed the knowledge systems of the peoples they encountered and imposed their own epistemologies: social, cultural, economic, and spiritual. This process is what the M/C/D Collective researchers identify as the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being; it centres on the epistemological control of the Other, identifying culture, language, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production with European ways of being.¹³⁷

Coloniality remains the dominant epistemological force in academia today, where modernist Eurocentric understandings of the world and knowledge production are posited as universal. Walter Mignolo (Argentina) points to the obfuscation of one's geopolitical positioning as an essential aspect of coloniality. Within the M/C/D Collective, drawing on Dussel, many describe the Latin American experience as being based on the concept of *ego conquistus* ('I conquer therefore I am').¹³⁸ The *ego cogito* becomes conscious of itself in

¹³⁵ Summary of Quijano in Walter D. Mignolo, "Introduction: Coloniality of Power and De-Colonial Thinking," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (London: Routledge, 2010), 3; Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, 71; Maria Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, 369–90; Breny Mendoza, "Coloniality of Gender and Power," *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, February 1, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.6>.

¹³⁶ As in Grosfoguel, "Epistemic Decolonial Turn"; see Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹³⁷ Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," 96–97.

¹³⁸ Grosfoguel, "Epistemic Decolonial Turn," 215; see also Santiago Castro-Gómez, "(Post)Coloniality for Dummies: Latin American Perspectives on Modernity, Coloniality, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge," in

the *ego conquistus* or *ego conquiro*; in the conquering of the other, the European-self becomes conscious of itself. Further, through that conquest and the modernist Cartesian dualisms, the European-self located itself at the centre of “truthful knowledge” and of the world it had already conquered and colonized.¹³⁹ Ramón Grosfoguel (Puerto Rico) calls this the Western privilege of the ego-politics of knowledge; it is a “non-situated, universal, God-eyed view of knowledge.”¹⁴⁰ Mignolo adds that the ““rhetoric of universality” of the theo- and ego-politics of knowledge...occludes...[the specificity of] their own geopolitical location”¹⁴¹; he identifies this rhetoric within Western, Eurocentric, and Christian (as well as Marxist and Liberal) thinking. The epistemological presumptions of what Santiago Castro Gomez (Colombia) named the “hubris of zero degrees”¹⁴² are what permit this obscuring. The zero to which he is referring is the 0° meridian that runs through the centre of England. The naming of this point as centre or the zero mark is arbitrary except in the Eurocentric space/time presumption of coloniality. England becomes the centre from which all move out in to the world and is the centre from whence the power matrix of coloniality can exploit and dominate economically, racially, and epistemically. This zero-point logic obfuscates specific local perspectives and knowledge systems in favour of the presumed general universality of Eurocentric epistemologies.

In addition to the coloniality of race and knowledge, a *coloniality of gender* can also

Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate, ed. Mabel Moraña, Enrique D. Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 272–73.

¹³⁹ Drawing on Dussel in Grosfoguel, “Epistemic Decolonial Turn,” 215.

¹⁴⁰ Grosfoguel, 214.

¹⁴¹ Walter D. Mignolo, “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, The Logic of Coloniality and The Grammar of De-Coloniality,” in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (London: Routledge, 2010), 317.

¹⁴² Castro-Gómez, “(Post)Coloniality for Dummies,” 278.

be identified within the Eurocentric hierarchical matrix. María Lugones (Argentina) coined the term to name the intersectionality of racialization, coloniality, and capitalism with that of patriarchy, heterosexism, and the particular experience of racialized women. Within the coloniality of gender, women are ranked on the Eurocentric civilizational spectrum such that a simple dichotomous analysis does not suffice. The European man is considered human. The European or “bourgeois woman... reproduces race and capital...[which] is tightly bound to her sexual purity, passivity, home-boundedness.”¹⁴³ In contrast, the colonized or racialized are “judged as bestial, of animals...are nongendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, sinful.”¹⁴⁴ Lugones points out that the coloniality of gender is not passively accepted, but that those subjected to its realities are engaged in a relationship of resistance. She symbolizes this dynamic praxis in her writing as “oppressing → ← resisting,” which illustrates the active and confrontational nature of the resistance within the colonial difference.¹⁴⁵

The colonial difference as first elaborated by Mignolo is important to the capacity of resistance to coloniality.¹⁴⁶ The colonial difference is a space in which the hubris of zero-point is challenged: it can be identified in the *exteriority of modernity* in which non-dominant/non-universalist modes of thinking, those that Janet Conway calls “worlds

¹⁴³ María Lugones, “Methodological Notes toward a Decolonial Feminism,” in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, 1st Ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 73.

¹⁴⁴ Lugones, 73.

¹⁴⁵ Lugones, 76. A similar resistance is in evidence, and will be discussed later, in Indigenous peoples’ writings and experiences of “resurgence” in Canadian “colonial difference” spaces.

¹⁴⁶ As in Lugones, 81–82.

otherwise,” become possible.¹⁴⁷ Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Puerto Rico) goes on to make a distinction between epistemic and ontological colonial difference. The former allows one to “perceive the contours of the coloniality of knowledge, and an ontological colonial difference...reveals the presence of the coloniality of being.”¹⁴⁸ He links ego-politics to body-politics; when the Euro-ego/self thinks and therefore is (*cogito ergo sum* or *ego cogito*), it carries with it the inherent presumption that the Other does not think and therefore is not. The presumed absence of rationality implies an absence of being.¹⁴⁹ For example, he identifies a sign of the hierarchization of humanity in the 16th century debate about the humanity of Indigenous peoples and whether they have souls. Embedded in that debate is the developing racialization that supplements the points of reference for *ego conquiro*.¹⁵⁰ The normalization of coloniality’s violence places racialized peoples’ bodies into violent spaces and ignores their ontological realities; these acts of dehumanization and invisibility are foundational to the coloniality of being.¹⁵¹

Maldonado-Torres draws on Lévinas in his claim that the ontological priority of the ego/self, or the *anonymous being* from the Eurocentric hubris of zero, negates the essential self/Other relation. It constitutes a forgetting or a willful ignorance that in turn leads to the renunciation of responsibility and justice.¹⁵² The colonial difference is a liminal space in which simultaneously the coloniality of power, gender, and being becomes visible and the opportunity for critique from the particularity of the subaltern experiences of coloniality

¹⁴⁷ Janet M Conway, *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and Its “Others”* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 23.

¹⁴⁸ Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept,” 108.

¹⁴⁹ Maldonado-Torres, 99, 106–7.

¹⁵⁰ Maldonado-Torres, 98–99.

¹⁵¹ Maldonado-Torres, 111.

¹⁵² Maldonado-Torres, 112.

becomes possible. The very act of naming the systems of coloniality lays the seeds of recognition of the Other, which in turn lays a foundation for a shift in the theoretical attitudes of the knower/colonizer/*ego conquiro*. This process of conscientization to the matrix of the coloniality of power generates hope from within the spaces of the colonial difference.

3.2 Past the Postcolonial: An Ongoing Geopolitical Reality

Postcolonial theory is critiqued by many Indigenous writers because of the “time” implications of the language of “post.”¹⁵³ For those in a Southeast Asian or African context, the distinct moment of throwing out the colonial powers shifted dynamics and frames of reference. Ample research and articulation of these postcolonial contexts exist in the literature.¹⁵⁴ However, the “post” in post-colonial theory is especially problematic in the context of the Americas, where the central discussion and points of reference remain colonial. Thomas King (Cherokee/Greek-American) explains how such language presumes a triumvirate of the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial that still puts European existence at the centre. The prefix *pre* in precolonial for instance, casts the life and stories of Indigenous peoples before the arrival of Europeans as meaningful: not in themselves, but in

¹⁵³ See for example Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Allen Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Marie Ann Battiste, ed., *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2000); Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Second edition, Sightlines (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 37–46, 423.

¹⁵⁴ Homi Bhaba, Gayatra Spivak, and Edward Said are sometimes referred to as the trinity of post-colonial research. Their work derives from the colonial experiences in South-East Asia. Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon are important anti-colonial authors whose work is often referenced by Indigenous scholars and in settler colonial scholarship. Although important and interesting, exploration of their work is beyond the capacity of this dissertation.

relation to the coming colonial era.¹⁵⁵

As the prefix *post* means after, Jace Weaver (Cherokee) argues that “for the indigenes of the Anglo-colonial settler colonies that time has not yet come.”¹⁵⁶ Rather, he suggests the prefix *peri* which “is defined as ‘around,’ ‘through,’ ‘beyond,’ ‘having an intensive force.’” *Pericolonialism* acknowledges the thorough, pervading nature of settler colonialism and marks it as something that, for indigenes, must be gotten around, under, or through.¹⁵⁷ Although it leaves colonialism at the centre linguistically, this term offers a glimpse into the reality that many Indigenous peoples continue to face. Colonialism has not ended for them as they continue to deal with a shredded social fabric, dramatic poverty, high levels of unemployment, alcoholism and suicide, and the repression of their calls for self-determination and autonomy.¹⁵⁸ Although an interesting concept, the use of pericolonialism has not become widespread in the literature.

In geopolitical North America, the colonial stories of Canada and the United States are in some respects similar, in others quite different, and remain deeply interconnected. The story of dominant or settler United States has been articulated as postcolonial by some; the thirteen colonies overthrew the British colonizer in the American Revolution, but the United States developed its own imperial attitude and continues to dominate globally as an economic superpower and distributor of its cultural goods.¹⁵⁹ The colonial stories of

¹⁵⁵ Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Postcolonial,” in *Unhomely States: Theorizing English Canadian Postcolonialism*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), 184–85.

¹⁵⁶ Weaver, Womack, and Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, 39.

¹⁵⁷ Weaver, Womack, and Warrior, 39.

¹⁵⁸ General Assembly United Nations, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya: On the Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada” (New York: United Nations, July 4, 2014), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/075/08/PDF/G1407508.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹⁵⁹ Rieger, “Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins,” 205–7.

Indigenous peoples within the United States resemble those in Canada in many details.

Emma Larocque (Plains Cree Métis) points out that Canadian historiography is not benign, and that the way we tell our hi/stories matters.¹⁶⁰ Europeans initially came into what has become Canada as fur traders, then as missionaries and farmers. The early relations were built on wampum treaties that created alliances among various Indigenous nations and colonizing nations, and were used or abused by the colonizers to perpetuate the power wars of Europe.¹⁶¹ Lina Sunseri (Oneida) points out that the 16th century relations with the French were economic and based on trade, primarily of fish and fur.

Although initial encounters were not as brutal as contact with the Spanish, the French and later British colonial mindsets revealed their thirst for power.¹⁶² Relations with the French and British colonists were destabilizing in terms of internal politics among and within Indigenous nations, affecting trade, peace agreements, and treaties. Further, the economic relations were ecologically destabilizing as they began to change the relationship of Indigenous communities with the land and the creatures of creation, which shifted from one of subsistence to one engaged primarily for trade purposes.¹⁶³ The early impact of coloniality meant that the functioning of Indigenous peoples' labour and skills for the communal good also shifted toward a capitalist model wherein service of the empire and

¹⁶⁰ Emma LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 60.

¹⁶¹ See Richard Hill, "Linking Arms: The Haudenosaunee Context of the Covenant Chain," in *Mamow Be-Mo-Tay-Tah: Let Us Walk Together*, ed. José Zárate and Norah McMurtry (Toronto: Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network, 2009). Ashley Sisco develops a methodological approach based on the original spirit of the Kaswénta/Two-Row Wampum relations. She briefly describes the wampum in Ashley Sisco, "Honouring the Kaswénta (Two Row Wampum): A Framework For Consultation with Indigenous Communities in Canada and Australia" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 2015), 45–46.

¹⁶² Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind*, 75–76.

¹⁶³ Sunseri, 76–79.

the economic power of the elite/colonizer became primary.¹⁶⁴

The relationship between the colonial powers in Canada and Indigenous peoples—despite agreements, treaties, proclamations (such as 1763 Royal Proclamation) and wampum ceremonies—devolved from that in early encounters of “cooperation” to later “coercion.”¹⁶⁵ The implementation of colonial policy, first by colonizing authorities and then by Canadian governments, led to the development of systems such as reserves and residential schools. The relationship has continued to degenerate through ongoing denigration and denial of Indigenous peoples’ culture;¹⁶⁶ the TRC identified this process as “cultural genocide.”¹⁶⁷ In spite of token tolerance of certain remnants of Indigenous traditions paternalistically afforded in “multicultural” Canada, Indigenous peoples’ experiences do not point to postcolonial conditions.¹⁶⁸ Rather, they stand as witness to an ongoing coloniality that has, in effect, settled in to stay.¹⁶⁹

3.3 Settler Colonialism: Experiencing the Logics of Elimination/Assimilation

...the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.

~ Patrick Wolfe¹⁷⁰

The concept of settler colonialism has emerged in the past twenty years to treat

¹⁶⁴ Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 539; See critique of capitalism from an Indigenous perspective in Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

¹⁶⁵ See Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 1991.

¹⁶⁶ There are many literary and Hollywood examples in LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*.

¹⁶⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol. 1 (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2015), 1.

¹⁶⁸ Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind*, 82.

¹⁶⁹ Examples of this ongoing colonial experience will be explored in Chapter 4.

¹⁷⁰ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388.

experiences of ongoing colonial relations in contexts such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Many authors point to the seminal work of Patrick Wolfe and his coining of the term *settler colonialism* as distinct from “franchise colonialism.”¹⁷¹ In the case of franchise colonialism, the colonial powers arrived and exploited resources, but never became the dominant population; that is, they never overpowered and displaced the Indigenous peoples of the territories. In many franchise colonial states in parts of Asia and Africa, for example, the European colonial powers were overthrown through revolts and wars, and in some cases the colonial population left the territories and official colonial power ceased.¹⁷²

On the other hand, in settler colonial contexts, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, the settler populations never left and have become the dominant demographic. Settler colonialism marginalizes Indigenous peoples politically, socially, economically, culturally, and territorially. Wolfe points out how the establishment of settler colonial democracies required more and more territories to expand their capitalist economies and satisfy the land-owning aspirations of new immigrants. Ever-increasing territorial expansion and settlement, in turn, led to the permanent displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples.¹⁷³

The dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and, as Glen Sean Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) adds, from their self-determining authority, is a central

¹⁷¹ Patrick Wolfe, “The Settler Complex: An Introduction,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 10.

¹⁷² Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” 168. An interesting exploration of settler colonialism in a Japanese context in Tomonori Sugimoto, “The Yellow Man’s Burden: The Politics of Settler Colonialism in Hokkaido and Taiwan” (MA thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2013).

¹⁷³ Wolfe, “The Settler Complex,” 3.

element of the hierarchical power relations of settler colonialism.¹⁷⁴ Wolfe frames settler colonialism not as a singular or even collection of events, but as a permanent and insidiously invisible structure.¹⁷⁵ The logic of settler state structure ensures ongoing possession of the land by settlers. It engenders a relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples whereby the former intends total control over the latter, even though the ongoing suppression is always incomplete.¹⁷⁶ It creates a dynamic, as Eva Mackey writes, in which settlers presume their entitlement to the land, but are in a constant state of uncertainty caused by the presence of Indigenous peoples.¹⁷⁷

In her research on the deaths of Indigenous people in police custody, Sherene Razack argues that dispossession rooted in the logic of elimination continues, securing settler certainty on these territories.¹⁷⁸ The logic of elimination is fundamental to settler colonialism: the removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples/bodies such that settler society need not see them—physically, psychically, emotionally, or spiritually—and thus can lay claim to the land.¹⁷⁹ The logic of elimination manifests in a criminalization of Indigenous bodies, in particular those on the streets, necessitating their removal from public spaces, relegating them to the prison industrial complex or to physically remote reserves that, are highly restrictive and policed spaces.¹⁸⁰ It is a logic that depends on the myth of the dying

¹⁷⁴ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.

¹⁷⁶ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 51.

¹⁷⁷ Eva Mackey, “Unsettling Expectations: (Un)certainly, Settler States of Feeling, Law, and Decolonization,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 29, no. 2 (2014): 235–252.

¹⁷⁸ Razack, “Unmapping Canada: Starting with Bodies and Repressed Truths,” 200.

¹⁷⁹ Sherene Razack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 110–11. See the development of this logic in Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”

¹⁸⁰ Razack, *Dying from Improvement*, 39.

and disappearing Indian, which serves to justify the settler's dehumanizing behaviours, attitudes, and presence.

The logic of elimination also engenders the need for policies of assimilation. In Canada, the logic of elimination/assimilation is manifested in different approaches over the centuries from violent dispossession, to legislative erasure in the "sexist and racist provisions of the 1867 Indian Act,"¹⁸¹ and to land claims negotiations that continue to be informed by frames of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*, culminating in the narrative, legal, and structural erasure of Indigenous peoples.¹⁸² For example, under the Indian Act, the blood quantum definition of the purity of Indigeneity ensures the disappearance of mixed-blood Indigenous peoples as any amount of non-Indigenous ancestry reduces Indigeneity before the courts.¹⁸³

In a twist of logic, for enslaved Black people the "one-drop" rule meant that any person with any Black ancestors would be considered Black and a slave. As Wolfe points out, the enslavability of Black people increased the wealth of the slave owner, whereas the increase in the Indigenous population obstructs access to land, and so impedes the primary goal of settler colonialism. Accordingly, the logics of the settler colonial state develop the boundaries of subject identities and determine who has access to and is beneficiary of the

¹⁸¹ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 125.

¹⁸² The Doctrine of Discovery and the role of it in land claims processes are treated extensively by Anishnaabeg-Chippewa lawyer John Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

¹⁸³ Bonita Lawrence, *Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004). In chapter 3, Lawrence addresses the particular dynamics affecting women and thus Indigenous futurity, as the state defines who may continue to be identified as "Indian" and have access to resources, services and land. The various subjectivity/identity provisions of the Indian Act have had conflictual and multi-generational trauma impacts in communities. See also Pamela D. Palmater, *Indigenous Nationhood: Empowering Grassroots Citizens* (Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing, 2015).

land and the settler colonial system, that is, who is a settler and who is Indigenous.¹⁸⁴

The complexity of subject identities is explored in the literature where there is debate about the usefulness of the Indigenous–settler binary. I discuss a trialogical engagement that acknowledges the diversity in Indigenous and settler populations as a way to expand the conversation provided earlier in the section on methodology. Denise Nadeau points to ways that she invites Indigenous, white-settler, and racialized-settler students to engage material in her class, each from their own particular positionality and learning space.¹⁸⁵ Scott Lauria Morgensen speaks of the relationship as a triad that recognizes the particular experiences of and relationship within settler colonialism of non-European and non-Indigenous peoples. He argues that the relationship, for example, between Indigenous and African diasporic peoples intersects variably with settler coloniality: “as Native peoples rejected, or practiced, African enslavement; as free blacks participated in settler conquest or joined Natives in resisting; and as Native and Black peoples had to debate their ancestral relationships in relation to the hegemony of white-supremacist color line.”¹⁸⁶ Wolfe, among other settler colonial scholars, further makes the interconnection of Black plantation slavery with Indigenous dispossession, drawing on specific examples from U.S. plantation stories in the Deep South.¹⁸⁷ Thus the logic of enslavement is ineluctably entwined with the logic of dispossession and elimination/assimilation.

The interconnectivity of these relationships within the settler state is what Andrea

¹⁸⁴ Wolfe, “The Settler Complex,” 3.

¹⁸⁵ Denise Nadeau, “Decolonizing Religious Encounter? Teaching ‘Indigenous Traditions, Women, and Colonialism,’” in *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, ed. Justin Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver, BC; Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 2016), 166–67.

¹⁸⁶ Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 19.

¹⁸⁷ Ronald Takaki in Wolfe, “The Settler Complex,” 4; Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 391–92.

Smith examines and names as the *logics of white supremacy*.¹⁸⁸ She argues that attention needs to be paid to a matrix of dynamics within the relations at the intersection of race, racialization, and racial discrimination within settler colonialism; I would add, within decolonial frameworks. Smith names three pillars or three logics of white supremacy that affect different subaltern peoples differently but interconnectedly. The first is slavery/anti-Black racism, which she suggests anchors capitalism; within the capitalist system, which commodifies most bodies, the logic of slavery erects a racial hierarchy with Black bodies on the bottom rung.

The second logic is that of genocide, which anchors colonialism. Colonialism enacts genocidal policies to ensure the continued disappearance of Indigenous peoples so that the non-Indigenous can “become inheritors of all that was indigenous resources: land, resources, indigenous spirituality, and culture.”¹⁸⁹

The third logic or pillar anchors militarism in the logic of orientalism, which “marks certain peoples or nations as inferior and deems them to be a constant threat to the wellbeing of the empire.”¹⁹⁰ This logic is seen in anti-immigrant and—especially in the U.S. context—provides justification for endless warring with perceived enemies. The prospect of being able to enter, what I would name (with Quijano), the colonial matrix of power as a power broker, is part of the seduction of these logics:

...non-Native peoples are promised the ability to join in the colonial project of settling indigenous lands. All non-Black peoples are promised that if they conform, they will not be at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. And Black and Native peoples

¹⁸⁸ Andrea Smith, “Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy,” *Global Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (2010): 1–3.

¹⁸⁹ Smith, 2.

¹⁹⁰ Smith, 2.

are promised they will advance economically and politically if they join US wars to spread 'democracy.'¹⁹¹

The intersectionality that exists within the “logics of white supremacy” points to the usefulness of the term *settler coloniality*, the hybrid critical analysis that is explicitly racial, spatial, economic, socio-political within and beyond geopolitical borders, and colonial. Such analysis is also relational and spiritual, and thus might facilitate a healing of the colonial wounding within the coloniality of our beings.

3.4 Racism and the Matrix of Settler Coloniality in Canadian Contact Zone(s)

Recognizing the ways in which settler society's epistemological and power matrices are embedded in racialized and oppressive systems is unsettling, and therefore crucial for settler populations. Naming the matrix of power within coloniality is essential. As Grosfoguel summarizes:

[The] coloniality of power [is...] an entanglement...or intersectionality of multiple and heterogenous global hierarchies ('heterarchies') of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide [that is the settler/Indigenous divide] transversally reconfigures all of the other global [and I would add, national and local,] power structure.¹⁹²

The racialization of humanity creates the power systems from within which all other hierarchies exist and emerge. As such, Quijano points out that racism has had the most lasting and persistent impact in modern contexts through the racism experienced by Indigenous peoples (and other marginalized peoples). The ongoing realities of racism in settler colonial Canada can be detected in both political and economic decisions, in social

¹⁹¹ Smith, 3.

¹⁹² Grosfoguel, “Epistemic Decolonial Turn,” 217.

frames, as well as in ways that continue to impact settler and Indigenous epistemological frameworks.

Larocque identifies ways in which the assumptions of Europeans who arrived in what is now Canada continue to have an effect within the national culture. She addresses the dynamic of racism operating in the ideology of “civ/sav” (civilized/savage).¹⁹³ Civ/sav ideology is deeply embedded in the Eurocentric myth/presumption of “progress,” according to which peoples, societies, economies, and the planet itself are all on an evolutionary trajectory from wild or savage to ordered and civilized. The Europeans considered themselves civilized and the Indigenous peoples that they encountered to be savages.

Larocque cites historian Olive Patricia Dickason (Métis) to summarily lay out the attitudes:

The French, for all their policy of *douceur* toward Amerindians, never officially accepted that they were anything other than ‘sans roy, sans loy, sans foy.’[...] denizens of the New World [...] that could be brought under control only by... transformation into the spiritual and cultural conformity that Europeans acknowledged as the condition of being civilized.¹⁹⁴

The civilizing presence of the European colonizer was thus needed to support the “savage” and bring her/him/them into a “civilized” way of being according to Euro-Enlightened cultural norms and religious traditions. The ideology was constructed and enacted through religion, education, and the negation of self-sufficiency or sovereignty.¹⁹⁵ Within this myth of progress, hi/story is understood as moving from primitive to civilized, from the savage to the rational, from pre-capital to capitalist. Within this logic, Europe is the most advanced and brings all those under its authority to some higher state of being.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*, 9, 15.

¹⁹⁴ As cited in LaRocque, 5.

¹⁹⁵ LaRocque, 42.

¹⁹⁶ Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” 176.

The same racialized framework continues to manifest in the ways that Indigenous peoples are considered and treated as lesser beings in modern Canadian society.

Shahganash is the Anishinaabemowin term for "someone who does not understand the Aboriginal perspective of the world and fully believes him/herself to be superior to, and to know what is best for, Aboriginal people."¹⁹⁷ The racist paternalism in the settler colonial systems that control Indigenous peoples' lives reflects *shahganash*. The assumptions that suicide rates on reserves can be resolved by yet another displacement of the communities,¹⁹⁸ or the oft-cited fact that there are more Indigenous children in the care of the welfare system today than at the height of the era of residential schools,¹⁹⁹ are signs of settler coloniality and racism at work.

Joyce Green (English, Ktunaxa and Cree-Scots Métis) addresses the issues of racism and colonialism in Canada directly. She makes a pointed link between racist ideology in Canada and the link between *Aboriginal trauma* and *white privilege*, realities that most beneficiaries are not aware of or do not recognize when encountered.²⁰⁰ Most settlers believe that systems such as the residential schools or the Indian Act are parts of historic relations, what the Canadian government's 2008 apology for residential schools

¹⁹⁷ Kevin Fitzmaurice, "Are White People Obsolete? Indigenous Knowledge and the Colonizing Ally in Canada," in *Alliances Re/envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynne Davis and Heather Yanique Shpuniarski (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 354.

¹⁹⁸ Jean Chrétien statement in a scrum after Attawapiskat youth suicide crisis declared a state of emergency in April 2016. Jorge Barrera, "Former PM Chretien on Attawapiskat: 'People Have to Move Sometimes,'" April 13, 2016, <http://aptnnews.ca/2016/04/13/former-pm-chretien-on-attawapiskat-people-have-to-move-sometimes/> (accessed October 23, 2017).

¹⁹⁹ Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 43. For further analysis and in-depth discussion of these issues, see Rupert Ross, *Dancing with a Ghost* (Toronto, ON: Penguin Canada, 1992) and Jean-Guy Goulet, *Ways of Knowing*, (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1998).

²⁰⁰ See Joyce Green, "From Stonechild to Social Cohesion: Anti-Racist Challenges for Saskatchewan," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 39, no. 3 (September 2006): 512.

named as a “sad chapter” in the historical relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada.²⁰¹ On the contrary, these historic markers are endemic of actualities lived by Indigenous peoples even today, throughout these lands of Canada.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) heard many Indigenous participants reflect on their experiences of racism on personal and systemic levels: “You experience racism every day in the stores and everywhere else on the street. All the other groups discriminate against you.”²⁰² Green points out a social conundrum around the issue of racism: the dominant culture condemns individual acts of racism even while acts of racism continue to be experienced. In part because there is a presumption that historic acts of racism are just that—historic and no longer experienced as impactful because they are replaced by “newer understandings and ‘renewed relations’”—there is no agreement or “consensus on the existence and nature” of systemic racism in Canada.²⁰³ Because systemic racism implicates all members of the broader settler community, there is little will to name it.

Racism has come to be understood among many settler people, and particularly by those who experience white privilege, as an individual and malicious act that is an aberration and, as such, not normative. As Green points out, it is difficult to challenge the status quo and to name the norms of society as not “simply the products of social and

²⁰¹ See Eva Mackey, “The Apologizers’ Apology,” in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 47–62. Apology text at <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649>; accessed April 18, 2016.

²⁰² Canada and René Dussault, eds., *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Vol. 4: Perspectives and Realities* (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, Public Works and Government Services, 1996), 526.

²⁰³ Green, “From Stonechild to Social Cohesion,” 511.

intellectual consensus” but also as “laden with relations of dominance and subordination” and “the result of malicious intent,”²⁰⁴ on a personal but also on a systemic level.

As Louise Chippeway of the Aboriginal Advisory Council in Manitoba reflected to the RCAP in 1992:

Racism is experienced through discrimination, bias, exclusion, stereotypes, lack of support and recognition, negative attitudes, alienation in the workplace and lack of role models in management positions. Racism is exclusion...racism is manifested in many ways. It is unconscious, direct, individual, systemic and institutional.²⁰⁵

Racism is normalized, “transmitted intergenerationally and thus rendered non-controversial”²⁰⁶ and is reinforced through media. Various media outlets function as popular sources of political information and are therefore implicated in the maintenance of the dominant culture; hence the TRC’s Calls to Action 84–86 specifically targeted changes in the media coverage of Indigenous issues.²⁰⁷ At the same time, accompanying the explosion of social media—with its lack of editorial oversight—is an explosion of “common sense” expression dictated and reinforced by deeply-held racist attitudes and beliefs. Philomena Essad draws attention to this “everyday racism [that] is infused into familiar practices [including language, and thus] it involves socialized attitudes and behaviour.”²⁰⁸ Popular attitudes are also reflected in education systems, as William Tooshkeniq (Walpole Island First Nation) of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Nations reflected to the RCAP in 1993:

To me, it is clear that the racism so evident in Canada will not be easily eradicated.

²⁰⁴ Green, 511.

²⁰⁵ Canada and Dussault, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Vol. 4*, 527.

²⁰⁶ Green, “From Stonechild to Social Cohesion,” 515.

²⁰⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *TRC: Summary*, 1: 292–97.

²⁰⁸ As cited in Lynn Caldwell, “Unsettling the Middle Ground: Could the World Use a More Questionable Saskatchewan?,” in *Critical Inquiries: A Reader in Studies of Canada*, ed. Lynn Caldwell, Darryl Leroux, and Carriane K. Y. Leung (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), 106.

Elements of racism are intertwined in history, in the history books, in library books. It is found in school curriculum, enforcement and often within church groups. It is little wonder that the First Nations communities are in culture shock, that the youth are so often disoriented.²⁰⁹

Racism is recorded in the experiences of Indigenous youth from small reserve communities who attend high school in Thunder Bay, a city in northwestern Ontario, Canada: they experience overt acts of racism on an individual level and then systemic racism when the deaths of classmates are not properly investigated by authorities.²¹⁰ Disorientation and intergenerational trauma are also deeply experienced by some youth who live on reserves with little access to resources considered standard for the majority of Canadians and who, as a result, manifest their disorientation by ending their own lives or committing to suicide pacts.²¹¹

This kind of systemic racism is representative of the same colonial assumptions of righteousness and superiority evident in early colonial days in what was once called “scientific racism”;²¹² today, its manifestations may be subtler, but are no less endemic. Carmen Lansdowne (Heilstuk) suggests that youth are scapegoats for the dysfunction in many Indigenous communities. Further, their behaviour is pathologized by the dominant culture. Even when their symptoms are treated, the fundamental reasons that they are at risk are often ignored; the insights of community leaders and some government representatives

²⁰⁹ Canada and Dussault, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Vol. 4*, 390.

²¹⁰ See reflection on Thunder Bay inquiry Jody Porter, “Deep Water,” accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.cbcnews.ca/deepwater>; Tanya Talaga, *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City* (Toronto: Anansi, 2017).

²¹¹ “Joseph Boyden: Attawapiskat, and the Fallout of Intergenerational Trauma” *Macleans.ca* (blog), April 13, 2016, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/attawapiskat-and-the-fallout-of-intergenerational-trauma/>; “Gabor Mate: How Do We Heal Trauma Suffered by Native Communities?” *The Globe and Mail*, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/how-do-we-heal-trauma-suffered-by-native-communities/article29612969/>.

²¹² J. R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (Toronto: M&S, 2004), 228–29.

into the deeper issues are neglected.²¹³ Indigenous people themselves are routinely misidentified as the cause of problems that are, in fact, generated by systemic oppression.

The reality is that the settler colonial relationship is complex and requires, as Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehá:ka) writes, a certain arrogance, complacency, and complicity from both settler and Indigenous peoples who live on this land.²¹⁴ Although racialized-settler peoples are marginalized in Canadian society, they also benefit as settlers and are implicated in the colonial system. Drawing on Albert Memmi's colonizer/colonized analysis, Alfred notes that the one who has accepted the role as colonizer/settler is one who has "internalized colonial myths, mainly racist histories, notions of white superiority, and the lie of progress (or the immigrants' hope that material accumulation and expansion of wealth is indeed the formula for happiness, acceptability by the white man, and legitimacy as citizens)."²¹⁵ Immigrant participation in the structures as they exist amounts to complicity in the logics of elimination of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, it might be argued that the Canadian policy of multiculturalism itself, adopted in recognition of immigrant people, has perpetuated the process of erasure of Indigenous peoples and their rights.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address all the issues and dynamics surrounding multiculturalism in Canada. However, I must address the quotidian and normalized racism that is produced by Eurocentric attitudes and epistemologies rooted in settler coloniality; to do so, it is necessary to point to some examples of the ways this

²¹³ Lansdowne, Keynote address, "Can you Hear the Drum? Aboriginal Spirituality in Theological Education," (CCTE/CTSA, Winnipeg, MB, May 17, 2011).

²¹⁴ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 113.

²¹⁵ Alfred, 105.

racism manifests in policies that affect Indigenous peoples.²¹⁶

One critique of Western epistemological orthodoxy can be found in what Dale Turner (Temagami Anishinaabe) coined “White Paper Liberalism.”²¹⁷ In short, intending equity for all, in 1969, the Department of Indian Affairs sought to legislatively address the so-called “Indian problem” by removing the category of Indian and all its attendant special rights. This White Paper, was based on an attitude of liberalism that privileged the individual and their freedom and equality in a frame of social tolerance and promotion of individual property rights.²¹⁸ Indigenous activists, intellectuals, and politicians resisted and eventually quashed the White Paper. Nonetheless, a legitimating liberalism was promulgated in the enactment of the 1971 *Multiculturalism Policy of Canada*, which claims to “confirm the rights of Aboriginal peoples” at the same time as it reaffirms the story of the two founding European nations through the “status of Canada’s two official languages.”²¹⁹

The languages question, including establishment of two European tongues as Canada’s “official languages” and the subsequent funding of language instruction, is a concrete example of how the policy of multiculturalism is deeply problematic for Indigenous communities. Funding priority is given to the teaching of Canada’s official languages, followed by the heritage language programs designed to help immigrant

²¹⁶ Caldwell, “Unsettling the Middle Ground: Could the World Use a More Questionable Saskatchewan?” 106.

²¹⁷ The story of the 1969 White Paper and Indigenous peoples’ resistance to it will be discussed in chapter 4.

²¹⁸ Dale A. Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto, ON; Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 13.

²¹⁹ Immigration Government of Canada, “Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship,” October 21, 2008, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp>.

children maintain their familial or cultural languages. Even though most Indigenous languages are on the verge of extinction, programs to renew and retain the more than fifty Indigenous languages in Canada are the last and least funded.²²⁰ The loss of language is profoundly problematic, constituting one more example of the ongoing loss of culture and sense of self among Indigenous peoples. As Basil Johnston (Anishinaabe) has argued, it is through language that Indigenous peoples carry their worldviews and thus express their epistemologies.²²¹

As such, to consider Indigenous languages as a single category for funding reflects neither respect for the diversity nor the depth of loss if regeneration of language is not possible. Further, it points to how problematic it is to consider Indigenous peoples, cultures, and languages as one among many in a multicultural Canada. Indigenous peoples, as Original Peoples and founding peoples of Canada, have a unique place within and beyond Canada that must be reflected in more equitable funding and relations.

Racism in Canada is inherited from colonialism and woven into its fabric: it “is the legitimating ideology of colonialism.”²²² Racism ensures that “descendents of settler populations carry with them a preferential entry into social, political and economic institutions; [... and] see themselves reflected in those institutions and in dominant culture, in ways that Aboriginal populations do not.”²²³ Racism is so embedded, encoded, and diffused in our institutions, social, and political structures, that those who are beneficiaries

²²⁰ Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, “Decolonizing Anti-Racism,” in *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*, ed. Ashok Mathur et al. (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011), 253–54.

²²¹ See LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*, 20.

²²² Green, “From Stonechild to Social Cohesion,” 518.

²²³ Green, 513.

of systemic racism cannot and do not wish to see it.

Adam Barker and Emma Battell Lowman explain that settler privilege is the “benefit of not knowing or the ability to claim a soothing ignorance about the negative impacts of settler colonialism.”²²⁴ Eduardo Mendieta (Colombia) suggests that in choosing to know one thing, one inevitably chooses to ignore others. Ignorance is not an absence of knowledge, but rather the “production of knowledge is also the production of non-knowing;” ignorance/knowledge are two sides of the same epistemic and ontological coin.²²⁵

In a similar vein, Trudy Govier argues that we know enough to know that there is a need for change, but we ignore what we know “because the truths we would face would be unpleasant and incompatible with our favourite picture of ourselves, and they imply a need for restitution and redress, threatening our rather comfortable way of life.”²²⁶ So knowledge does not necessarily lead to acknowledgement. There is a way of understanding the narrative of settler presence and Indigenous experiences in Canada such that the realities of information are not absorbed; instead they are contorted to fit the positive self-understanding of settler-Canadian society.

Settler colonial racism and privilege are reflected in policies of elimination/assimilation and have spatial consequences for Indigenous peoples. Green points to Razack’s seminal work on spatialized, raced, and gendered relationships between

²²⁴ Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 87–88.

²²⁵ Eduardo Mendieta, “The Ethics of (Not) Knowing: Take Care of Ethics and Knowledge Will Come of Its Own Accord,” in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, 1st Ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 251. He goes on to make a parallel with “theodicy” and the existence of evil is due to an active or willful turning away from God (p.252).

²²⁶ Trudy Govier as cited by Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 45.

Indigenous and settler bodies, a relationship reflected starkly in sex work that allows men (often White settlers) to have risky adventures in spaces such as “the Stroll” in Regina, while Indigenous women cannot in turn enter the settler spaces of the city.²²⁷ Further, in situations where systemic racism has deadly impacts, as in Neil Stonechild’s 1990 death or the many cases Razack uncovers where police are involved and are the perpetrators, the expulsion from the settler space is physical.²²⁸ To wit, Stonechild’s body was found on the outskirts of the city. During that inquiry, Justice Wright was not able to name the settler coloniality that was manifest, but pointed instead to a “toxic gulf” between individuals who were Indigenous and non-Indigenous that was personal and inter-relational, and to be bridged required cultural understanding.

Green, on the other hand, names “racism in Canada [as] the malaise of colonialism.”²²⁹ Cultural misunderstanding and personal acts are indeed symptoms, but at root the problem is “systemic power relations with historical origins and contemporary practices.”²³⁰ As such, it does not require mere sensitivity training; deep conscientization is required that will lead to systemic analysis, change, and epistemic disobedience.

3.5 Decolonial Option: Conscientization, Epistemic Disobedience, and Ontological Re-embodiment/Resurgence from the Colonial Difference

Conscientization is an essential step in a process of liberation from settler coloniality, that is, the move toward a decolonial turn. It forces a recognition of the dehumanization of settler coloniality for settler and Indigenous peoples. However, for

²²⁷ Green, “From Stonechild to Social Cohesion,” 516.

²²⁸ Green, “From Stonechild to Social Cohesion”; Razack, *Dying from Improvement*.

²²⁹ Green, “From Stonechild to Social Cohesion,” 520.

²³⁰ Green, 520.

settler peoples this means becoming aware of it and moving into an unsettling space of conscientization of the dynamics and choices—individual, social, political, economic, epistemological, spiritual, etc.—that impact Indigenous peoples. Conscientization creates a space in which gaining knowledge puts form “to a bundle of relationships that were previously invisible.”²³¹ That relationality requires a praxis rooted in a dialogue (trialogue or plurilogues) with Indigenous peoples that can lead to liberating action.²³² Freire argues that because liberation must be a permanent condition, then dialogue must become a continuing aspect of the praxis,²³³ making it possible to see and “opt to transform unjust reality,”²³⁴ which in a Canadian context “must translate to action to disrupt settler colonialism[/coloniality].”²³⁵

Praxis is thus central to decolonization. As Eve Tuck (Unangax/Aleut) and K. Wayne Yang remind us in their seminal 2011 article, decolonization of the mind is a first step in the process, but not the only step.²³⁶ A real danger for settler peoples is what these authors articulate as “settler moves to innocence.”²³⁷ Disrupting settler coloniality or living in the uncertainty of transformation is to create risk-filled and unsettling spaces. Anything less re-institutes the power structures of settler coloniality and allows one to “reconcile settler guilt and complicity and rescue settler futurity.”²³⁸ Tuck and Wang challenge settler people to stay in the unusual space of discomfort, to sit in acknowledgement of one’s

²³¹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 111.

²³² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35, 50.

²³³ Freire, 120.

²³⁴ Freire, 155.

²³⁵ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” 19.

²³⁶ Tuck and Yang, 19.

²³⁷ Tuck and Yang, 3.

²³⁸ Tuck and Yang, 3.

current role, and thus guilt and complicity, in systems that undermine Indigenous peoples' ability to live self-sufficient and sovereign lives.

Alfred, in turn, warns of the danger of being stuck in “the right and privilege of indignation and the power to judge” other settlers while using that same “rhetorical posture to release themselves of their own responsibility for the colonial enterprise, both historically and in the way it has affected their own lives, their families' privileges, and their communities' formation.”²³⁹ In this space of renegotiated Euro-superiority, a settler cannot be an ally and cannot support the struggle for liberation. If one is to truly make and live out a preferential option for the poor, the marginalized, and (in Canadian contexts) with Indigenous peoples, then their ontologies, epistemologies, spiritual ways of being, etc. must be empowered to disrupt Eurocentric settler systems that have come to be known as “Canada.” To disrupt “settler futurity” is to engage in epistemic disobedience. It is to take responsibility for the hi/story of Indigenous—settler relations, which requires knowing that story from the perspective of Indigenous peoples. It is to engage deeply in relations and action with Indigenous peoples such that social, structural, epistemic, and *theological* transformation is possible.

Decolonization, or the decolonial option, necessitates “epistemic disobedience.”²⁴⁰ Through the process, *colonial difference* can be identified; the hubris of the “geopolitics of knowledge” of the Eurocentric framework can be named.²⁴¹ To reiterate, the *colonial difference* is that space in which one becomes conscious of and names the dynamics of

²³⁹ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 105.

²⁴⁰ Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto,” *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 2 (January 1, 2011).

²⁴¹ See Castro-Gómez, “(Post)Coloniality for Dummies.”

settler coloniality in one's daily living, as well as in one's epistemological consciousness. The hubris lays in the Eurocentric perspective of being the dominant culture, evidenced for example in the attitude of a colonizer/settler who is not even aware that there might be other epistemological frameworks from which to legitimately function and flourish.²⁴² Thus, epistemic disobedience requires a conscientization and a de-linking or "unlearning;" what Quijano calls "desprenderse" that can lead to a transformational "foreground[ing of] other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding."²⁴³

To engage in a delinking process in the Canadian colonial difference, settler Canadians must challenge the master narratives of this nation: that is, the myth of the two founding nations and of Indigenous peoples' surrender.²⁴⁴ We must re-learn our hi/story to contextualize our current reality and experiences, and we must name the theft of Indigenous lands and racialized violence.²⁴⁵

These are liberating possibilities that are part of the decolonial option. They are acts of resistance. For Indigenous peoples, the assertion of their humanity as Indigenous peoples, from their own experiences and in their own voices, is a form of resistance.²⁴⁶ Typically, the dominant culture does not name or even recognize the way it wields power because it assumes that all cultural norms are the norm for all (this is the zero-point hubris). The collective settler silence then is one of the sources of its power.²⁴⁷

So, it is an act of resistance, of epistemic disobedience, for those among the settler

²⁴² Castro-Gómez, 282–83.

²⁴³ Mignolo, "Delinking," 2010, 307.

²⁴⁴ Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind*, 42.

²⁴⁵ Sunseri, 82.

²⁴⁶ LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*, 31.

²⁴⁷ LaRocque, 28.

population to name the power dynamics and to notice the current and historical dynamics that are at play in the relationships with Indigenous peoples. These acts of resistance expand liminal or “contrapuntal spaces” (drawing on postcolonial Palestinian American thinker Edward Said) in which we can name Eurocentric biases in our intellectual frameworks and disturb the settler canon.²⁴⁸

LaRocque suggests that to decolonize scholarship requires the deconstruction of colonial frameworks, as well as the advancement of Indigenous knowledge systems so as to understand the critical spaces where Indigenous peoples in the academy are using resistance strategies.²⁴⁹ She identifies just such a counter-discourse in the writings that speak of:

...places of birth, our landscapes, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our parents, our kin, our networks, our social regulations, our livelihoods, the use of resources, our foods, our ways of organizing, our faith in ceremonies, our technologies, our music, our languages, our arts and our stories.²⁵⁰

Turner writes of the importance of resistance writers who knew and know both the Eurocentric-knowledge systems and Indigenous epistemologies, and can navigate them well enough to challenge the dominant narratives; he calls these writers *word warriors*.²⁵¹ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) is one such word warrior. In her writing, she focuses on the resurgence of Indigenous peoples through the particularity of the experience of the Anishnaabeg in her area of “Nogojwanong” (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada).²⁵² She sees the reclamation of Indigenous languages as acts of resistance

²⁴⁸ LaRocque, 29–31.

²⁴⁹ LaRocque, 164.

²⁵⁰ LaRocque, 164. There is a similar process in the reinvention, reclamation, re-creation, creative expression and thus resistance, in the engagement of Indigenous Christians with their own cultural expression and living of the tradition; see Justin Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, eds., *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada* (Vancouver, BC; Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 2016).

²⁵¹ Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 92.

²⁵² Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 11–13.

and resurgence. These acts produce not just words written or more importantly words spoken; they create whole worlds and worldviews. She recounts the power of walking the land with her children and recounting the stories from that geo-cultural space: the importance of strawberries and the rootedness of resistance and resurgence in the landscape.²⁵³

Although profoundly beautiful, this storytelling is also profoundly political and empowering.²⁵⁴ It is through these “eruptions of heritage, tied to the thick roots of Indigenous values and modes of relation and ethics” that Indigenous peoples live again as Indigenous, and not merely as part of settler coloniality systems.²⁵⁵ Alfred is deeply critical of the dangers of “aboriginalism,” which he sees as keeping Indigenous peoples engaged in destructive systems with and against the settler state. For him, resurgence requires the emergence of a different spirit and consciousness that reflects Indigenous “ideals of peace, respect, harmony, coexistence at the heart of Onkwehonwe [Original Peoples] philosophies.”²⁵⁶ He is critical of the language and attitudes reflected in the moves to reconciliation, because they risk re-colonizing the minds and beings of Indigenous peoples and do not actually demand real and profound change from settler peoples.

The language of restitution, regeneration, and resurgence that Alfred uses is often threatening to settler peoples.²⁵⁷ It demands a praxis of epistemic disobedience that is frightening because of its unsettling uncertainty. It is work done not in isolation, but in

²⁵³ Simpson, 94, 18.

²⁵⁴ Oral story is innately pedagogical and political according to Lansdowne, “ORiginAL Voices,” 100.

²⁵⁵ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 127.

²⁵⁶ Alfred, 131.

²⁵⁷ Alfred, 151.

relationship. It demands restitution, which includes the return of enough land so that traditional teachings can be re-enlivened. Like Simpson, Alfred suggests that resurgence comes from a “sacred memory,” rooted in:

...the regeneration of an identity created out of the stories of this land, standing up for what is right, and restitution for harm that has been done so that we can wipe away the stain of colonialism. Only then can we begin to build better relationships, see the resurgence of our culture, contend courageously with the threats to our existence, and gain universal respect.²⁵⁸

3.6 Taking a Decolonial Turn

Decoloniality is an important approach to the work of theologizing in the Canadian context. It recognizes that Alfred’s comment that “colonization needed rationalization”²⁵⁹ is enacted through embodied racializing policies under systems of settler coloniality. The M/C/D Collective project, along with the work of Indigenous writers such as Sunseri and Coulthard, name the racism that cooperates with colonialism and capitalism/imperialism.²⁶⁰ A decolonial turn in theological contexts would entail a process of challenging that rationalization and, in turn, acting—settler and Indigenous peoples together—to disassemble that rationalization and then to construct a new paradigm or framework for theology in right or just relations with Indigenous peoples in Canada. LaRocque analogously suggests that like a roofer must remove rotten shingles or wood or they are not doing their job well, the recognition and deconstruction is essential to the restitution and resurgence.

Indigenous and settler peoples are more than the sum of colonial parts but, as

²⁵⁸ Alfred, 131.

²⁵⁹ LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*, 37.

²⁶⁰ Note a similar analysis developed in coloniality section above; Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind*, 82.

LaRocque argues, this does not erase our colonial hi/story.²⁶¹ Indigenous peoples have a lived experience of settler coloniality but when they try to name the power dynamics at play, they are dismissed as bitter or angry. Their anger is justified, righteous even, like that of Jesus or the prophets,²⁶² but is discounted by settler Canadians who are not willing to engage the potential consequences of acknowledging the socio-political and cultural ramifications of being implicated in colonization.²⁶³ Part of Razack's commitment through her research is to engage settlers so that they, and the systems in which they operate, become visible. In this way, settlers can begin to understand "why they do what they do *in order that they are held to account*, both at the individual and collective levels."²⁶⁴ In the next chapter, we will take a decolonial turn by restorying key moments in settler/Indigenous relations to, as settlers, more fully understand the experience of and become accountable for, settler coloniality in Canada.

²⁶¹ LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*, 61.

²⁶² LaRocque, 70.

²⁶³ LaRocque, 143.

²⁶⁴ Razack, "Unmapping Canada: Starting with Bodies and Repressed Truths," 198.

Chapter Four – The Decolonial Option for/with Indigenous Peoples: Restorying

Settler Coloniality in Canadian Contexts

Indigenous peoples have been protecting homeland; maintaining and revitalizing languages, traditions, and cultures; and attempting to engage Canadians in a fair and just manner for hundreds of years. Unfortunately, these efforts often go unnoticed—even ignored—and so flashpoint events, culminations or times of crisis occur.

~ *the Kino-nda-niimi Collective* ²⁶⁵

Change will happen only when Settlers are forced into a reckoning with who they are, what they have done, and what they have inherited...

~ *Taiaiake Alfred* ²⁶⁶

Contextualization is essential to theology, and in particular to theologies of liberation. In this chapter, I contextualize my theological approach by recounting key events in recent Canadian hi/story, but I make an epistemic move to place Indigenous peoples at the centre. To contextualize all of Canadian hi/story or even just the past fifty years is far beyond the scope of this project and has been done by historians such as Olive Patricia Dickason (Métis), J.R. Miller, or John Sutton Lutz.²⁶⁷ In this chapter, I will contextualize some modern Canadian hi/story from within the space of the relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples and with the land. I provide examples from four moments in modern hi/story: first, the policy presumptuousness from Ottawa in the relations between settler and Indigenous peoples as informed by the 1969 White Paper and some of the responses by Indigenous peoples; second, the depth of misunderstanding and

²⁶⁵ Kino-nda-niimi Collective, ed., *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* (Winnipeg, MB: ARP Books (Arbeiter Ring Publishing), 2014), 21.

²⁶⁶ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 154.

²⁶⁷ For example Olive Patricia Dickason and David McNab, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 4th ed (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2009); J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3rd Ed. (Toronto, ON; Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2000); John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2008).

chosen ignorance that led to the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance (so-called “Oka crisis”) and the legacy of the summer of 1990; third, the contentious question of official apologies: and fourth, I touch on the interrelationship of Idle No More (INM) and the TRC. While I can only offer a survey of these events, restorying them is important as each offers insights into a praxis of epistemic disobedience. In turn this praxis is essential to the decolonial turn and the transformation of the relations between settler and Indigenous peoples.

4.1 It’s about a Relationship with the Land: Treaty Troubles

Indigenous peoples’ relationship with the land is one that settler Canadians generally do not understand. It is in part due to predominant Eurocentric attitudes and values: land is for use, development, and sale. It is in part because as migrant peoples—whether by force or by choice—settlers tend not to be intergenerationally attached to a specific territory. Settlers have conquest stories and arrival stories, but Indigenous peoples have creation stories about where they live and are from.²⁶⁸ These set up different dynamics of relationality with and understanding of a space.

Historian J.R. Miller, who writes extensively about Indigenous–settler relations (what he calls *Native-Newcomer* or *Indian-White* relations), suggests that those relationships can be traced through three key movements. He speaks of an initial time of *cooperation* and mutual benefit of contact, mostly manifest through trade and military alliances. This was followed by an extended period during which the European powers wished to settle the land and thus found the presence of Indigenous peoples to be a nuisance; Canadian colonizers chose an approach of *coercion* through negotiations and

²⁶⁸ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” 6; Weaver, *That the People Might Live*, 15–20.

treaty making. Finally, the most recent hi/story is characterized by a *confrontational* dynamic: Indigenous peoples refuse to be victims of the racist policies of this country's political machine and are rejecting propositions that are not life-giving to their communities. As well, Indigenous peoples are raising consciousness (across the country) about the realities of their peoples.²⁶⁹ The kind of resistance and collective mobilization to which he is referring is not new—as will be demonstrated in some of the stories included in this chapter—but is part of the hi/story of resistance to settler coloniality that Indigenous communities continue to live. There is a renewal afoot among Indigenous peoples that moves beyond Miller's frame of contestation or even resistance, to a space of resurgence.

The eruption of Indigenous peoples into the consciousness or public spheres of settler-Canadian society is most often connected to times of what J.R. Miller called *confrontation*, particularly confrontations connected to relations with the land. The policies, decisions, and conversations that happen without Indigenous peoples' presence or input, and which disrupt their relationship with the land as peoples, are most often where there will be and has been resistance from Indigenous communities and a subsequent violent response from settler society.²⁷⁰ Settler communities are often surprised by the events and see each as an isolated incident. This misunderstanding lacks a rootedness in the historicity of events, whether in current or older hi/story, and lacks a recognition of the continuity of Indigenous peoples' experiences of settler coloniality.

²⁶⁹ These are themes under which he structures the book; see Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000; Idle No More is a recent example of this kind of movement breaking into settler consciousness; see Kino-nda-niimi Collective, *The Winter We Danced*.

²⁷⁰ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," 5. See coverage of the conflicts at Oka, Gustafsen Lake, Ipperwash, Barriere Lake, Elsipogtog to name but a few.

One of the fundamental struggles between settler and Indigenous peoples is rooted in dichotomous understandings of treaties (and wampums) that according to Indigenous peoples were set out to define the relationships. Instead, the injustices of the colonial relationship were perpetuated rather than peaceful coexistence ensured.²⁷¹ This is due in part to radically different worldviews and attitudes toward the treaty relationship, and in part to power imbalances that mean Indigenous peoples are required to function within a Western legal framework. Simply put, treaties are "binding agreements between Aboriginal Peoples and newcomers, represented by the Crown, that regulate the coexistence of the two groups in the territory we now call Canada."²⁷² Indigenous peoples understand treaty as a covenantal relationship that is "overseen by the Creator, that established a relationship with God and newcomers, and that provided them with support and friendship in the future."²⁷³ However, for the Government of Canada, as described in a 2009 fact sheet originally available on the website of then Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, a treaty is simply a legal document: "[m]odern treaties are enshrined in legislation and the rights set out in the treaties receive constitutional protection to provide a clear, certain and long-lasting definition of land rights for all Canadians."²⁷⁴ This definition goes on to highlight the importance of management of the land and its natural resources and points out

²⁷¹ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 76–77; For in-depth exploration, see J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Miller, *Lethal Legacy*; Olive P. Dickason, "Reclaiming Stolen Land," in *Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada*, ed. John Bird, Murray MacAdam, and Lorraine Land (Toronto, ON: Irwin Publishing, 2002), 34–43.

²⁷² Miller, *Lethal Legacy*, 160.

²⁷³ Miller, 160.

²⁷⁴ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, "Fact Sheet," (Online, Originally accessed July 29, 2011 but no longer available); the same language is now found on the Algonquins of Ontario website (Tanakiwin) on the Fact Sheet: An Overview of the Algonquins of Ontario Land Claim Negotiations (<http://www.tanakiwin.com/wp-system/uploads/2013/09/16-Aug-6-09-An-Overview-of-the-Algonquins-of-Ontario-Land-Claim-Negotiations1.pdf>; accessed June 1, 2015).

that treaty making creates positive investment climates, which in turn facilitates economic development, jobs, and growth.

However, the government statements reflect neither the language employed by Indigenous peoples nor an understanding of the spiritual significance of the land or of the mutual respect, sense of balance, and interrelatedness between humans and all of creation that is central to Indigenous peoples' worldviews.²⁷⁵ Therefore, for settler authorities, to engage in treaty making means to function within a framework of land ownership, economic opportunities, and legal rights. It is a framework

about handing [Indigenous peoples] the scraps of history: self-government and jurisdictional authorities for state-created Indian governments within the larger colonial system and subjugation of *Onkwehonwe* [Original Peoples] to the blind forces of capitalism by integrating them as wage slaves into the mainstream resource exploitation economy. The surface reforms are being offered because they are useless to our survival as Onkwehonwe.²⁷⁶

Taiaiake Alfred suggests that this reality is a part of the ongoing conquest of Indigenous peoples, in part through "territorial and political disempowerment"²⁷⁷ but more urgently through the loss of their spiritual sense of being as peoples. The challenge for Indigenous peoples is to regenerate and regain dignity to "recover a truly human way of life."²⁷⁸ The challenge for non-Indigenous peoples is to recognize the need for change, to reframe the so-called *Indian problem* (as coined by historic Minister of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott) as actually a *settler problem*, and to reflect on how to shift our patterns of relationship toward more just and fertile ones.

²⁷⁵ Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 2008, 65.

²⁷⁶ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 37.

²⁷⁷ Alfred, 38.

²⁷⁸ Alfred, 38.

4.2 1969 White Paper: Listening but not Hearing

As Leanne Simpson writes, as long as there has been colonialism, there has been resistance to being assimilated.²⁷⁹ But as the Kino-nda-niimi Collective suggested (cited at the beginning of this chapter), there are specific moments of resistance that have had significant ripples and echoes within the resistance movements and shifted the relations of settler coloniality. The response to the proposals in the 1969 White Paper entitled *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* was precisely this, as many Indigenous peoples understood the White Paper's suggestions to be the articulation of yet another tool of assimilation/elimination. The response to the 1969 White Paper created a space for a relaunch or a resurgence in the resistance of and affirmation of Indigenous peoples in this land as Indigenous peoples.

As problematic as it is, the 1876 Indian Act guarantees certain rights and a visible legal presence to Indigenous peoples in Canada. Harold Cardinal (Cree) in his famous rebuttal to the White Paper, *The Unjust Society*, wrote that the Indian Act is discriminatory but gives Indigenous peoples leverage and is an embarrassment to the federal government.²⁸⁰ There is little disagreement in the literature that it needs to be amended—from Tom Flanagan to Dale Turner (Temagami First Nation Anishinaabe) or Bonita Lawrence (Métis)—however the means and ends of that reform are contested. The fundamental differences in understanding of the relationship between Indigenous peoples

²⁷⁹ Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 53 and 101.

²⁸⁰ Canada, René Dussault, and Georges Erasmus, eds., *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Vol. 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, Public Works and Government Services, 1996), 256–57.

and the Canadian settler state, and responsibilities of each, seem to inform the debates and discussion.²⁸¹

The paradox of the Indian Act is that it allows the federal government to be involved in every aspect of Indigenous peoples' governance in Canada—Lowman and Barker describe it as permitting the federal government to “micromanage the lives of Indigenous people”²⁸²—from memberships to status, band council formation, finances, and education etc.²⁸³ As Dale Turner writes:

The *Indian Act* controls virtually every aspect of life on Indian reserves. Ironically, though, the Indian Act, while clearly a colonial policy, also prevents the federal government from stealing Indian lands. The fiduciary relationship has fostered governmental paternalism but it also protects (through treaties) what little political power Indians possess.²⁸⁴

To reform the Indian Act though, requires a collective redefinition of the relationship.²⁸⁵

In the 1960s, the costs of managing the so-called “Indian problem” were on the rise and the federal government was seeking to reduce expenses of the ballooning Department of Indian Affairs.²⁸⁶ For example, when residential schools were increasingly seen as insufficient and inefficient with not enough spaces for the growing school-age population, the federal government made changes to the Indian Act in 1951 to outsource the schooling to the provinces.²⁸⁷ In 1969, the federal government took over the southern Canadian

²⁸¹ Wayne Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues* (Peterborough, ON; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2007), 35–38 where he lays out brief note on the various positions. See also Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*.

²⁸² Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 74.

²⁸³ Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 19.

²⁸⁴ Turner, 18.

²⁸⁵ Canada, Dussault, and Erasmus, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Vol. 1*, 259.

²⁸⁶ Dickason and McNab, *Canada's First Nations*, 374; Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 15.

²⁸⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *TRC: Summary*, 1:68.

residential schools and began a process of closing them.²⁸⁸ In June 1969, the government attempted a massive reform to repeal the Indian Act and the treaties, with the unique rights they ensure, and shut down the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The outraged response from Indigenous peoples across the country was swift and united.²⁸⁹ While it was perhaps an attempt at improving Indigenous people's lives by making them equal citizens, Indigenous peoples had not asked for that change, which was perceived as yet another tool of the logic of elimination and assimilation seen as typical of Canadian "Indian" policy.

Pierre Elliot Trudeau's government was elected on the promises of a just society and participatory democracy; in 1968, they engaged in broad-based consultations, following up on the previous government's promises to revise the Indian Act after consultations.²⁹⁰ In the spring of 1969, Indigenous leaders (members of the National Indian Council delegation) spoke eloquently about "a new era" in the relationship, one of partnership and not one in which they take "directives from [government] officials."²⁹¹ However, the document presented to Parliament in June 1969, by then Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien, created shockwaves. It was seen as yet another example in the "evolution of the Indian Act [wherein there] has been a dialogue of the deaf, marked by the often-vast differences in philosophy, perspective, aspirations between Canadian policymakers and Indian people."²⁹² Cree lawyer Harold Cardinal described it as a "thinly disguised program of extermination through assimilation," which spoke to the way many

²⁸⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 1:69–70.

²⁸⁹ Warry, *Ending Denial*, 35.

²⁹⁰ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 328–30.

²⁹¹ Miller, 331.

²⁹² Canada, Dussault, and Erasmus, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Vol. 1*, 257.

Indigenous leaders and academics (then and now) understood it.²⁹³

Pierre Elliot Trudeau did not recognize the role of the Indian Act, nor the unique relationship of Indigenous peoples within Canada, and further opined that all people within Canada should be treated equally with none having a unique place in its multicultural mosaic.²⁹⁴ This manifested philosophically in his lack of recognition of group or collective rights (as further seen in his treatment of Québec), which in turn meant that treaties were incomprehensible to him: no one group could have a treaty with another part or group within a just and equitable society.²⁹⁵ As such, the opening lines of the White Paper focus on the individual: “to be an Indian is to be a man, with all a man’s needs and abilities.”²⁹⁶ In his extensive analysis of the 1969 White Paper and various understandings of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government, Dale Turner points out in *This Is Not a Peace Pipe* how this individualism is rooted in the liberal theory of justice, which he coined as “white paper liberalism.”²⁹⁷ Turner argues further that this liberal theory of justice meant that individuals should be able to participate equally in free-market capitalism; in the particular case of “Indians... They ought to enjoy the same rights, benefits, and economic opportunities of every other citizen in the state.”²⁹⁸

The problematic of this “white paper liberalism” lies in the imbalance of power in the law as expressed in the presumed superiority and assumptions of Eurocentric ways and

²⁹³ As in Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 336–37; see also Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 94 (drawing on Peter Kulchyski); see assimilation interconnections in Lawrence, “*Real*” *Indians and Others*, 59–60.

²⁹⁴ Based on excerpts of the 1969 “Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy” in Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 331–33.

²⁹⁵ Miller, 329.

²⁹⁶ As cited in Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 21 and 28.

²⁹⁷ Turner, 13.

²⁹⁸ Turner, 29.

traditions, which thereby perpetuate settler coloniality in Canada. In the 1960s, Indigenous rights were not yet guaranteed in the British North American Act and were subject to the will of the Crown.²⁹⁹ It was not until the Calder case in 1973, well after the White Paper was dropped, that a slow shift began in recognizing “aboriginal title” to Indigenous lands.³⁰⁰ And yet, as Anishinaabe (Chippewa) lawyer John Borrows suggests, the legal use of the Doctrine of Extinguishment or the Doctrine of Discovery informs and continues to inform the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government, in part through the land claim processes informed by what he problematizes as “originalism.”³⁰¹

The Doctrine of Discovery evolved from papal bulls in the late 15th century at the beginning of Spanish explorations to and of the Americas. This doctrine has framed much of the relationship of Europeans to the territories they explored and colonized, and continues into international law to this day.³⁰² Fundamentally, the doctrine declared that explorers had rights to the territory in which they arrived, as the presumption was that the lands were *terra nullius*—empty of so-called civilized society—and therefore available for acquisition by Europeans. This continues to underlie the relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples and land claims processes, wherein the presumption is that the land was empty and thus belongs to the Crown, unless individual Indigenous communities can prove their “original” or pre-contact presence to the satisfaction of Canadian law and courts.³⁰³

Although limiting and problematic, the treaties, as the Indian Act, do protect

²⁹⁹ Turner, 18–19 as evidenced in St. Catherine’s milling case in 1888.

³⁰⁰ Turner, 21.

³⁰¹ Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, see chapter 4 “(Ab)Originalism and Canada’s Constitution”; Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 21.

³⁰² Dickason, “Reclaiming Stolen Land,” 36–37.

³⁰³ Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 139–42.

Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. This, in part, is why Indigenous peoples reacted so vociferously to the White Paper. To facilitate participation in free-market capitalism, the Trudeau/Chrétien White Paper sought to translate treaty lands into private property owned by Indigenous people as citizens. This intention shows the fundamental lack of understanding and listening that occurred during the 1968 consultation processes. In essence, ending the treaty relationship would end the unique way Indigenous peoples hold collective rights and their understandings of themselves as nations of peoples in relationship with the federal government and the Crown. This elimination/assimilation attitude is further reinforced by the push to make them equal citizens; as citizens they would have no unique status within Canada and the government could legislate away the “Indian problem” by defining them out of existence. Indigenous peoples would go from being wards of the state to being citizens. There would be no “Indian” per se and no need for the Department of Indian Affairs; individual citizens’ issues would be addressed by various other appropriate government departments.

Within white paper liberalism, this is understood to be eliminating discrimination, but to Indigenous peoples it was an act of erasure. Further, the presumption that they would be elevated to a state of equality as citizens is an articulation of the presumptions within the “civ/sav” (civilized/savage) dynamic.³⁰⁴ In becoming citizens, Indigenous peoples would leave their “primitive ways,” including a physical exodus from reserve lands or traditional territories, and fully join Eurocentric urban capitalist Canadian society.³⁰⁵ If there is no

³⁰⁴ As previously discussed based on LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me*.

³⁰⁵ Wayne Warry points out the ways that even these realities and assumptions create spaces of Indigenous resistance, in Warry, *Ending Denial*, 35–36; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 12–13.

unique status as nations, then their land is free to subdivide and sell as private property.

There is no articulated understanding within this approach that recognizes the unique relationality of Indigenous peoples with the land and with the territories of their ancestors: the land is not private property, owned individually, but a communal space protected collectively.

There is little evidence in the 1969 White Paper that the Trudeau government was listening during the consultation processes held over the previous year, or to earlier policy suggestions. For example, the Hawthorn Report (October 1966 and 1967)³⁰⁶ recognized Indigenous peoples were being underserved and were in a “citizen minus” situation.³⁰⁷ It recommended a framework in which Indigenous peoples would still be recognized as having a unique status—as “citizens plus”—within Canada. However, it seems the agenda of assimilation/elimination was the only option for the Trudeau government. They would not recognize that any of the difficulties Indigenous peoples experienced were due to the legacy of settler coloniality and “insensitive government policies or generations of racial prejudice...or systematic dispossession of their lands [...such that they] experienced severe economic and social problems.”³⁰⁸ Using their understanding of “Just Society” and equality, the government ignored calls for assistance in social and economic recovery without loss of identity, and insisted on the extinction of special status before the law.³⁰⁹

The opposition of Indigenous organizations, leaders, and the grassroots was clear

³⁰⁶ Can be found at <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010186/1100100010187>, accessed October 31, 2017.

³⁰⁷ “The White Paper 1969,” accessed June 1, 2016, <http://Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-white-paper-1969.html>.

³⁰⁸ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 331.

³⁰⁹ Miller, 332–33.

and united. It is remarkable, in fact, for being a time of broad-based unity and from which there continued to be ripples for the next decade.³¹⁰ Turner argues that the reaction to the White Paper taught Pierre Elliot Trudeau about the unique status of Indigenous peoples, which they were willing to defend, and ultimately led to the enshrining of Aboriginal and treaty rights in 1982 amendments to the Constitution, in section 35(1).³¹¹

The events surrounding the release of the 1969 White Paper are significant for the story of relations within Canada. The betrayal felt by Indigenous peoples was profound and continues to feed some mistrust among Indigenous peoples and leaders in the relations with the federal government. But it was also a uniting event that triggered the development of Indigenous leadership in Canada that continues to this day with the evolution of organizations such as the Native Women's Association, the National Indian Council, and National Indian Brotherhood, and leading to the Assembly of First Nations, as well as regional chiefs' organizations who have had much influence in Indigenous circles over the past four decades and in national and local spheres across Canada.³¹² Even among Indigenous scholars and activists who are critical of some of the work of these organizations and their dynamics with the settler state, there is general agreement that this moment reignited passions and possibilities for the struggle and engaged activism among Indigenous communities.³¹³

³¹⁰ Dickason and McNab, *Canada's First Nations*, 372.

³¹¹ Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 18; Tim Schouls, "The Basic Dilemma: Sovereignty or Assimilation," in *Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada*, ed. John Bird, Lorraine Land, and Murray MacAdam (Toronto, ON: Irwin Publishing, 2002), 21.

³¹² Arthur Manuel and Ronald M. Derrickson, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-up Call* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015), 232; Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 339–41.

³¹³ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 4–5.

4.3 1990 Kanehsatà:ke Resistance/“Oka Crisis”: Seeing but not Understanding

This was never a crisis, it was a radical transformation, and to realize the full potential of that transformation, when Indigenous peoples act with such conviction, Canadians should all listen and ask, what can I give up to promote peace?

~ *Leanne Simpson*³¹⁴

Justice must be a duty not a gift...settler society must be forced into reckoning with its past, its present, its future and itself.

~ *Taiaiake Alfred*³¹⁵

During the summer of 1990 we in Canada saw events and scenes that, depending on one's personality or politics, either raised consciousness or triggered the most primary emotions. Whether or not you are for or against the Mohawk Nation, the warriors, the Sûreté du Québec, the Canadian army, the Québec [*sic*] government, the Department of Indian Affairs or its Minister, the federal government, Premier Bourassa or Brian Mulroney, one thing is certain: none of us can escape the impact, the implications or the consequences of the imbalance in the relationship between Canada and the First Nations. We must live with that show of force against Mohawk people.

~ *Ovide Mercredi*³¹⁶

The Kanehsatà:ke Resistance, more commonly labeled the “Oka crisis” (from a settler standpoint), that occurred in the summer of 1990 was the culmination of more than 270 years of settler coloniality. It is a key moment to understand the breakdowns in relations between settler and Indigenous peoples: breakdowns in treaty understandings and in negotiations. It is key to understand also the split between historically rooted understandings and flashpoint media mentalities that feed systems and attitudes of settler

³¹⁴ “The Powerful Legacy of the Rotiskénrakéh:te - Those That Carry the Burden of Peace,” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, accessed June 26, 2017, <https://www.leannesimpson.ca/writings/the-powerful-legacy-of-the-rotiskénrakhte-those-that-carry-the-burden-of-peace>.

³¹⁵ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 113.

³¹⁶ As in Kiera L. Ladner, “From Little Things...,” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 302.

coloniality for mainstream settler society.³¹⁷

To understand the legacy of settler coloniality manifest in the 11-week standoff in the summer of 1990, settler restorying needs to stretch into hi/story and develop an appreciation of the depth, length, and largeness of the betrayal of the Kanien'kéha:ka (Mohawk) peoples. The Kanehsatà:ke resistance irrupted into settler-Canadian consciousness. Anishinaabe scholar and lawyer John Borrows describes these moments as “flashpoint events” in which Indigenous peoples believe the government to be acting in a way that violates the relationship as set out for example in treaties, wampum belts, or even the Indian Act; where efforts at resolution fail and wherein the government still proceeds with its goals—a policy, development, or resource extraction—in spite of the dispute. As a result, Indigenous peoples take direct action to interrupt the settler-colonial system.³¹⁸

Although there are many examples to draw from in the story of Indigenous-settler relations, the Kanehsatà:ke resistance is significant in both Indigenous and settler conscientization, in part because of the extensive media coverage and the various levels of government decision-making that escalated the conflict, but also because of the integral role/influence of these events on both future policies on the governments' side and self-understanding on the Indigenous side.

4.3.1 Restorying the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance

Indigenous communities/peoples and settler society articulate and relate to the

³¹⁷ Michael Orsini, “The Journalist and the Angry White Mob: Reflections from the Field,” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 249–60; chapter 4, Warry, *Ending Denial*.

³¹⁸ As in Peter H. Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events,” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 29.

events at Kanehsatà:ke/Oka in ways that illuminate fundamental differences in their relations with land and with each other. A 300-year-old story makes manifest the problematics of the Doctrine of Discovery/*terra nullius* attitudes of settler society toward the land, which in turn manifests the racist “civ/sav” attitudes of settler peoples toward Indigenous peoples.

In 1717, the French Crown granted a tract of land on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee confederacy to the Sulpicians (a Roman Catholic religious order) with the agreement that the Sulpicians would establish a mission for Indigenous peoples, primarily Kanien’kehá:ka, Wendat, and Algonquin converts to Christianity who were increasingly displaced by colonial expansion.³¹⁹ Indigenous historian, Olive Patricia Dickason (Métis) suggests that the mission at the Lake of Two Mountains was chosen as a location to keep Indigenous peoples out of the way of the settler peoples establishing Montréal, but close enough to call on their warriors if they were needed.³²⁰ Since the 18th century, the Kanien’kehá:ka people have consistently tried to gain title to these traditional territories and been denied by the colonial powers.

The Kanien’kehá:ka point to the Two-Dog Wampum belt as evidence of the agreements for these lands between the Crown, the church, and subsequent colonial powers. This particular wampum has a cross at the centre, representing the church (and the Sulpicians in particular); with two people on either side representing faithfulness to the faith and to each other; a white background representing the whole of the territory; and

³¹⁹ Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 320; Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events,” 32.

³²⁰ Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 320.

dogs on either end representing loyalty and also protection in that the dogs would bark warnings at anyone who would encroach on these lands.³²¹ The wampum was rejected as evidence of an agreement or treaty by Indian Affairs as early as 1781 despite great hopes based on the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

It is the understanding of the Kanehsatà:kehró:non that the original title was theirs and that the Sulpicians were merely trustees. They submitted petitions for these lands in every generation and in every decade up until the mid-1800s.³²² The Sulpicians rejected the title contestation and after a British ordinance in 1841 confirmed their title, the order began to sell tracts of lands to French-Canadian settlers. In 1875, the settler-citizens who had arrived on the lands to the east of the seminary formed the town of Oka; that contested land sold to them by the Sulpicians had been the territory of the Algonquin who were relocated near Maniwaki (300 km west of the settlement).³²³ It is perhaps little surprising that many Catholic Mohawk/Kanien'kehá:ka people converted to Protestantism (the Methodist church) in protest; some also claimed or were blamed (depending on the perspective) for burning down the Catholic church in 1877. The divisions among the Christian Indigenous peoples, and further between the Kanien'kehá:ka and the settlers, were explosive.³²⁴

The federal government attempted numerous relocations to different parts of modern-day Ontario. However, the Kanien'kehá:ka rejected many of the offers of poor

³²¹ Geoffrey York and Loreen Pinder, *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 86–87; Dickason and McNab, *Canada's First Nations*, 320; Georges Emergy Sioui and Miguel Paul Sioui, "Comments on the Excerpt from Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance," Aboriginal Perspectives: National Film Board, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://www3.nfb.ca/enclasse/doclens/visau/index.php?mode=theme&language=english&theme=30663&film=&excerpt=&submode=about&expmode=3>.

³²² Dickason and McNab, *Canada's First Nations*, 319–21; York and Pinder, *People of the Pines*, 84.

³²³ York and Pinder, *People of the Pines*, 95.

³²⁴ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 354; York and Pinder, *People of the Pines*, 92–96.

lands; such as those near Lake Timiskaming or those set aside at Doncaster, described as “a paradise of sterility, rock and frost.”³²⁵ The government also rejected their request for lands near Nipissing as “too good for Indians.”³²⁶ In 1881, just under a third of the Kanien’kehá:ka families moved to land set aside near Gibson in Ontario. The seminary had agreed to buy land, pay compensation for lots they were leaving in the seigneurie, and provide a log cabin for each family. However, the land was inferior, settlers were already on the land, the houses had not been built, and government provisions were slow to arrive. Some families sought to return to the area of Kanehsatà:ke, but found their properties already sold by the Sulpicians.³²⁷

The question of rights and control over these lands continued into the 20th century. In 1883, a report indicated that the land had originally been set aside for the “benefit of Indians” and as such they deserved compensation.³²⁸ However, in 1912, the land claim reached the Privy Council in England where the claim was rejected; the Privy Council recognized the Sulpicians had obligations to the Mohawk/ Kanien’kehá:ka, but the government did not act.³²⁹ In 1945, as the seminary sought to sell further lands for agricultural development, Indian Affairs bought the remaining lands—comprising only 1% of the original seigneurie—but refused to grant the status of reserve for the Kanehsatà:kehró:non.³³⁰ The federal government had not consulted with the community on this purchase and did not secure the area known as the Commons or the Pines. Then in

³²⁵ York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, 95.

³²⁶ As in York and Pindera, 96.

³²⁷ York and Pindera, 97.

³²⁸ As in Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 321.

³²⁹ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 1991, 303; Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 321; York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, 102.

³³⁰ Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 321; Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 2000, 355.

1947, the town of Oka was granted lands by the provincial government. Logging began on the Pines and a decade later plans to develop the land for a golf course began.

None of these events went without official and unofficial responses on the part of the Kanehsatà:kehró:non. Despite Indian Act limitations, they took action by all means possible to protect the Pines:

- In 1936, Barnard Gabriel and his wife faced down the guns of René Dourte who was hired to manage the Pines by the Belgian landowner, and handed him a government document stating that the Commons were for use by the Kanehsatà:kehró:non.
- Lena Nicholas, the chief's daughter, confronted him again about a sawmill on the Pines in 1950; she read him the Royal Proclamation of 1763.
- In 1959, Jeffrey Gabriel raised funds to hire lawyers, a right that was only given to Indigenous peoples in Canada in 1951, to block Québec legislation that would confirm the municipality's title to the land and then to take their case before a Senate committee to protect their disappearing lands.

In 1961, the request to have the land, including the forested area, designated a reserve was rejected.³³¹ Then, despite documentation, and a long history of activities, life, and direct actions by Kanehsatà:kehró:non in the area, in 1975 their comprehensive land claim was rejected. Two years later, they began a specific land claim process.³³² The former is based on occupancy and traditional use not extinguished by treaty or superseded by law;

³³¹ Based on stories recounted in York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, 102–6.

³³² Dickason and McNab, *Canada's First Nations*, 321.

the latter is based on obligations due to treaty, regulation, or the Indian Act.³³³ It took almost a decade, but that claim was also rejected in 1986.

4.3.2 Settler Coloniality, the Doctrine of Discovery, and the Summer of 1990

The long view of the story can be part of an essential conscientization of settler Canadians and Christians to the participation of our governments and our churches in settler-colonial processes that so deeply affect Indigenous peoples in Canada. The events in the summer of 1990 represent, from this contextualization, less a crisis and more a slow burning fire heated by the sense of the Kanien'kehá:ka people of Kanehsatà:ke (but also Akwasasne and Kahnawà:ke) of their never extinguished rights to these lands being dismissed and their ongoing struggles being ignored. In both land claims processes, the government stated the Kanien'kehá:ka were not present since time immemorial, any title was extinguished by French and British Crown, and the federal government had no lawful obligation.³³⁴

The basic presumptions evident in these rulings point to the highly problematic framework in the land claims processes of the Doctrine of Discovery/*terra nullius* attitudes of settler coloniality. The presumption is that Indigenous peoples must prove in a very particular way their presence on the land, but settler communities can assume their right to be present. In addition, land claims are rejected despite stories of members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy being present in the territories since the time of the first arrival of Europeans.³³⁵ Tracing this story, even to its colonial roots, shows a certain

³³³ Dickason and McNab, 376.

³³⁴ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 1991, 304.

³³⁵ Jacques Cartier refers to the Hochelaga settlements (Iroquoian) in the area; as in Dickason and McNab, *Canada's First Nations*, 76; Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 1991, 290.

amount of obligation on the part of the church and the Crown. The original agreement implied that the land was in trust to the church for a mission for Indigenous peoples; when no longer serving that purpose and that population, the land should revert back to the Crown. Both scenarios, even without legal obligation, point to relational accountability—more clearly articulated in the (rejected) Two-Dog Wampum—rather than the elimination/assimilation of Indigenous peoples that presumes the town of Oka (incorporated for less than 150 years) has more rights to the land than the Kanehsatà:kehró:non, who in settler hi/story alone have been on the land for close to 300 years.

Further, this story highlights the problematic attitudes of settler coloniality that presume the inferiority of Indigenous peoples and the right to economic development of the settler and colonial powers. There is significant evidence of the racist “civ/sav” attitudes of the church leaders and the government. The Sulpicians claimed the Indigenous peoples were lazy and not committed to the settlement or the agricultural development of the lands.³³⁶ And yet, when they wanted to displace the Mohawk/ Kanien’kehá:ka people to Gibson, they were willing to pay each family for the “improvements” to the land of the seigneurie.

The depth of settler racism is further evidenced when in negotiation for resettlement: the government presumed that some lands were too good for “Indian use.” The very act of establishing the Seigneurie de St. Sulpice mission at the Lake of Two Mountains is awash in Eurocentric superiority and the infantilization of peoples who have

³³⁶ York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, 89.

lived throughout these territories since before the colonial story began. The attitudes of protectionism presume the brokenness of Indigenous peoples as opposed to their capabilities and strengths, and their right to live and defend themselves and their lands as Indigenous peoples.

This strength is what was in evidence in the summer of 1990. The town of Oka wished to expand their golf course into the Pines, which was highly contested over the years of conflict, in particular because the Kanehsatà:kehró:non believe their ancestors planted these trees and that within them is a sacred burial ground.³³⁷ Members of Kanehsatà:ke (many of them were women), having experiences of the land being developed while still embroiled in a dispute during the development of the first 9-hole golf course, set up a barricade in March 1990 to forestall this construction.³³⁸ The tensions continued to escalate in the town of Oka; the province claimed a need to intervene based on “law and order” and thus enforced a court injunction on July 11, 1990.

The deadly escalation of force further entrenched both sides, with police laying siege to Kanehsatà:ke. In solidarity, the Mohawk of Kahnawà:ke blocked passage on the Mercier Bridge into Montréal. The militarization intensified with the deployment of Canadian Armed Forces, “tightening the noose around Kanesatake and advancing inexorably on Mohawk lines.”³³⁹ At the end of the 78 days, the warriors stepped down peaceably. Forty-two were arrested and only two were found guilty of any charges, one settler police officer was killed, one young Indigenous girl was bayoneted, and the

³³⁷ Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events,” 34–35.

³³⁸ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 1991, 304; Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events,” 34.

³³⁹ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 1991, 305.

Canadian government paid out \$5.28 million for the disputed lands to compensate for stopping the golf course expansion. The military operation cost close to \$200 million.³⁴⁰

For many settler Canadians, the events of Kanehsatà:ke were shocking, both from a lack of understanding of the whole story and for the ways it disrupted a sense of Canadian self as peacekeepers.³⁴¹ In many ways, it was “wake-up call that was never heard”³⁴² for settler society. The historical interconnections show the events to be not so much a “crisis” as to have been the consequences of the unjust echoes of hundreds of years of settler coloniality.

For many Indigenous peoples, the events at Kanehsatà:ke and the “Indian Summer”³⁴³ of 1990 were an awakening; a realization of not being alone, of seeing the self as a warrior and not as a victim, of publicly exposing the racism experienced by so many, and the realization that there is an alternative to being complacent.³⁴⁴ The echoes of the Kanehsatà:ke resistance reverberate so deeply in part because it was televised, photographed, and witnessed by people across the country and around the world. As Kiera Ladner suggests, the fact that it was witnessed from the comfort of people’s living rooms

³⁴⁰ Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 322; Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events,” 38; Lawrence, *“Real” Indians and Others*, 285.

³⁴¹ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 11; Leanne Simpson, “Niimkiig,” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 16.

³⁴² Ladner, “From Little Things...,” 311.

³⁴³ The ways that Indigenous peoples’ resistance emerged across the country created a solidarity that could not be broken; many remember it as this *Indian summer* because it felt like it belonged to Indigenous peoples. It is spoken of by many of the authors in Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson, eds., *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades* (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010).

³⁴⁴ Wab Kinew, “Cowboys and Indians,” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 47; Christi Belcourt in Harmony Rice, “How Far Would You Go? A Women’s Perspective on the Twenty Years Since the ‘Oka Crisis,’” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 25; anonymous First Nations woman in Alfred, *Wasáse*, 123.

made the events personal and memorable such that, young boys shifted from playing cowboys and Indians to being warriors. Although an example of broken wampum and “white Windigo greed,”³⁴⁵ the resistance is also a spark that ignited the hearts, minds, and actions of a new generation of Indigenous leaders: lawyers, reporters, musicians, teachers, and politicians “who were now continuing the work of all those Elders, warriors, peacemakers, women, healers and braves [*sic*] ones that woke up, and began to teach the youth about our responsibilities [as Indigenous peoples].”³⁴⁶

Ripples of policy shifts are going forward from these events as well, including the negotiations for the Charlottetown Accord, the territorial agreement for Nunavut, and the implementation of the research process for the RCAP (released in 1996).³⁴⁷ The RCAP is a well-respected document among Indigenous peoples as the culmination of a process that studied living conditions across Canada, reflected on the relationship with and within settler coloniality, and pointed to ways “relations with Aboriginal peoples must be reformed if they are to be just and mutually beneficial”,³⁴⁸ including the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.³⁴⁹

The Kanehsatà:ke resistance/Oka crisis is an example of one of the ways that the churches are deeply embroiled in settler coloniality and embedded with colonial powers in government (further seen in the residential schools system). The calls for radical change from Indigenous peoples and in documents like the RCAP need to resonate deeply in those

³⁴⁵ Simpson, “Niimkiig,” 15.

³⁴⁶ June McCue, “Gratitude and Inspiration: An Honour Song about Kanehsatà:ke,” in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 280.

³⁴⁷ Borrows, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 77–78.

³⁴⁸ Russell, “Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events,” 43.

³⁴⁹ Manuel and Derrickson, *Unsettling Canada*, 108.

systems of governance as well. Although in many ways the Kanehsatà:ke resistance/Oka crisis embodies the relations gone awry (with some exceptions), its echoes, if heeded, have the potential to engage settler Canadians and Christians in deep self-examination needed for transformation.³⁵⁰

4.4 2008 Apology for Indian Residential Schools: “Sad Chapter” Logics of Settler Coloniality

“We are sorry.”

“We apologize...”

Repeatedly, then-prime minister Stephen Harper spoke these words from the floor of the House of Commons on June 11, 2008. For over a decade since RCAP’s recommendation to address the Indian Residential School system, many Indigenous peoples and leaders waited for these words. The act was momentous, if fraught with contradictions and tensions.

Official state apologies play very specific and narrow roles in the relations between the apologizing state and the offended or harmed party. They are symbolic speech acts that can bring individual moments of healing. However, the 2008 apology for the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) has not brought a transformation of settler coloniality and colonial relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian settler state, in part because of the “sad chapter” logics of settler coloniality (discussed in Chapter 3).

³⁵⁰ Kanehsatà:ke activist and educator Ellen Gabriel speaks of the continued frustration, difficulties and harassment by/with Sureté Québec and local Oka police forces who do not allow the Kanien’kehá:ka people free access to the Pines area and the main park for ceremonial purposes including the collecting of medicines; keynote address at KAIROS Covenant Chain Link VII conference at the Wabano Centre in Ottawa in October 2016, and also in an tweet in May 2016 (distributed through the Right Relations Network listserv, May 20, 2016).

The apology opened with the statement that the “treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.”³⁵¹ The statement frames the wrongdoing as if it were part of a closed chapter and thus the words lay the wrongdoing carefully to rest in the past. By naming the IRS policy as something in the Canadian past, there is a presumption that the racializing and racist attitudes that formed and informed that policy are also part of a closed system that has no part in a Canadian present (as actually stated in the apology). Further, by using personal affect and naming the policy as sad, the apology personalizes the wrongdoing rather than acknowledging it as part of a persistent policy system that perpetuates settler-colonial violence against Indigenous peoples and their communities in Canada. As Coulthard writes, it is an apology for the “*legacy* of a past abuse, and not the abusive colonial structure itself.”³⁵²

The apology narrowly defines the offense as the creation and implementation of the schools, and further narrowly defines the policy as emerging from a cultural misrecognition. As Mackey writes in the *Apologizers Apology*, these are “apologizable” acts and frames.³⁵³ They fit the individualism of a liberal Canada; in a multicultural state, they point to the wrongness of acts that disrespect Indigenous peoples’ cultures and ways of life. However, this apology also delinks the residential schools policy from the material settler coloniality agenda of land acquisition and the betrayal of treaty relations.³⁵⁴ It fails to name the policy as rooted in a racist legal system that permits the betrayal of treaty

³⁵¹ “Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools,” November 3, 2008, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649>.

³⁵² Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 109 (emphasis in the original).

³⁵³ Mackey, “The Apologizers’ Apology,” 49.

³⁵⁴ Mackey, 50–51; James (Sa’ke’j) Youngblood Henderson, “Incomprehensible Canada,” in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 115–16.

obligations (right down to promises of a good education for children) with the intention of appropriating land and extracting resources.³⁵⁵

By displacing children from their homes on the land, the IRS policy stripped children of the possibility of learning who they are as Indigenous peoples rooted in the land. Further, in removing the children the policy displaced women within communities from their role as storykeepers, as there was no one to receive the teachings.³⁵⁶ The loss of these cultural ways of knowing and being have ruptured relations with the land, and thus in many ways facilitated the state's acquisition of territories and of resource extraction agreements. In many communities, the leadership has shifted from treaty relations with the land to the struggle within settler coloniality frameworks for land as a material resource for economic exploitation.³⁵⁷ Thus, the apology is firmly embedded in the logics of assimilation/elimination of Canadian settler coloniality. By erasing the links between the schools and land acquisition, settler Canadians are given permission to be distant observers of the past and neither need to see themselves as implicated in this "sad chapter" nor as beneficiaries of this policy and the ongoing system of settler coloniality.

Mackey points out the minimal effort required in this speech act by the apologizer in the process and, drawing on Nicholas Tavuchis, highlights the presumption that Indigenous peoples will immediately experience the "conversion of [their] righteous indignation and betrayal into [a granting of] unconditional forgiveness."³⁵⁸ Within the few

³⁵⁵ Mackey, "The Apologizers' Apology," 54; Razack, *Dying from Improvement*, 17–19.

³⁵⁶ Mackey, "The Apologizers' Apology," 51; see chapter 5 on impacts of residential schools in Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others*.

³⁵⁷ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 78; for discussion of development tensions due to 2010 Olympics see Alfred, *Wasáse*, 40–41; see protocols and protests in Sun Peaks development in Manuel and Derrickson, *Unsettling Canada*, 137–46.

³⁵⁸ As in Mackey, "The Apologizers' Apology," 49.

short paragraphs of the apology, it moves from naming that for which the state is apologizing to a new horizon of relationship, without waiting for a response from the recipients. Further, it not only narrowly defines the acts for which it apologizes, but it narrowly constructs those recipients (Indigenous peoples) to whom it is apologizing: it perpetuates the anomic discourse and the image or stereotype of the destroyed, extinguished, maladaptive, dying, or disappearing “Indian.”³⁵⁹

The symbolic act of the apology contains Indigenous identity, and presumes the response of Indigenous people to be a positive acceptance of the apology.³⁶⁰ As a speech act, it does not engage in dialogic relations that would require a listening role for the state on behalf of settler Canadians.³⁶¹ However, as Mackey points out, many of the leaders who responded to the apology—though they appreciated it being spoken—were cautious and seemed to indicate that they would wait and see what kinds of shifts in the relationship might come.³⁶² It was seen as a first step in a process toward reconciliation. Unfortunately, for many, their hopes have not been fulfilled.³⁶³

4.5 Post-Apology Relations: Beyond Reconciliation to the Land

Within a year of apologizing for the residential school system, and claiming the attitudes that developed that program had no place in Canada, Stephen Harper declared at a

³⁵⁹ Dian Million, “Trauma, Power, and the Therapeutic: Speaking Psychotherapeutic Narratives in an Era of Indigenous Human Rights,” in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 163.

³⁶⁰ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 163; Mackey, “The Apologizers’ Apology,” 55.

³⁶¹ Mackey, “The Apologizers’ Apology,” 55.

³⁶² Mackey, 57.

³⁶³ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 105; Heather Scofield, “Four Years Later, Harper’s Apology for Residential Schools Rings Hollow for Many | Toronto Star,” *thestar.com*, accessed September 6, 2016, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/06/11/four_years_later_harpers_apology_for_residential_schools_rings_hollow_for_many.html.

G-20 Summit in 2009 that Canada has no history of colonialism.³⁶⁴ The disjuncture is hard to reconcile except when nestled within the “sad chapter” logics of settler coloniality where the colonial story must be relegated to the past and the realities of settler coloniality negated to permit ongoing land and resource acquisition. This frame of reference permits the seeming contradiction of the TRC (2008/09-2015) co-existing with the settler coloniality logics of Bill C-45 (The Jobs and Growth Act of 2012, as discussed later in this chapter).

The TRC was rooted in Eurocentric notions that presume a particular frame for “truth” and “reconciliation.” The truth-telling in its narrow mandate was within the confines of a space to speak of specific and seemingly provable traumas experienced by the survivors in residential schools, which could in turn be financially compensated and thus create the space to turn the page on that “sad chapter.” However, the truth-telling required was of the type of “heart knowledge” that Indigenous peoples have acquired through their experiences of deeper systems of settler coloniality, of which the residential schools are only one part, although not insignificant.

While reconciliation is a comfortable theological notion and a commonplace term in current Canadian society, it is not necessarily an appropriate framework for the restorying of relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canada. Among Indigenous scholars, it is a contested term because reconciliation frameworks can ignore the power imbalances that exist in Canada. Further, as Leanne Simpson argues, the danger of official reconciliation processes in Canada, as for example with the TRC, is that they create a

³⁶⁴ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 105–6.

presumption among settler Canadians wherein settler society and its governance assume the historic wrong has been righted and thus Indigenous peoples have no further “legitimate source of contention.”³⁶⁵ In addition, the difficulty of the reconciliation envisioned in the narrow mandate of the TRC is that it is still within settler coloniality when, as suggested by Coulthard, a transformation of the very colonial relationship itself is what is needed. A different understanding of reconciliation would see individual transformation, but systemic change is also needed;³⁶⁶ as discussed and suggested by Alfred and Coulthard, this would involve a restitution rooted in Indigenous resurgence.

As Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee), Chaw-win-is (Nuu-chal-nuth) and T’lakwadzi (Gary Dawson Quatell, Kwakwaka’wakwa) point out, these official processes, in attempts to repair damages, define the devastation too narrowly and do not recognize the ongoing impacts of colonialism on individuals, families, and communities.³⁶⁷ The apology and the framing of the TRC were so narrow that they cannot account for the depth of relational rupture with family, with stories, with ways of knowing and being, with *mino bimaadiziwin* (the good life),³⁶⁸ and with the land (“*aki*” in Algonquin or Anishnaabeg languages). The term *aki*, although translated as land, speaks to all the relations on earth that produce life and are animated by the Creator, and which produce an ecosphere where all things are in cooperative and fertile relations.³⁶⁹

By contrast, a Western epistemology is grounded in a textually inspired

³⁶⁵ Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 22.

³⁶⁶ See Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*.

³⁶⁷ Jeff Corntassel, T’lakwadzi, and Chaw-win-is, “Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-Telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation,” *English Studies in Canada* 35, no. 1 (2009): 140.

³⁶⁸ Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 17.

³⁶⁹ Bishop Mark Macdonald, “Listen to the Land!” (Oikotree (Transformative Theology Working Group), World Social Forum, Montréal, QC, Canada, August 11, 2016).

understanding of a relationship of dominance: use and abuse of “creation.”³⁷⁰ It is permitted and encouraged by a particular interpretation and translation of the Biblical Genesis stories of creation, one that is rooted in an understanding of progress. In this, each of the seven days in Genesis 1 move toward ultimate being and perfection, leading to a relationship of dominance including among human beings. These hierarchical logics within settler coloniality, despite apology and articulation that colonial power relations are part of the past “sad chapter,” permit the ongoing exploitation of the land and its resources. In fact, not only do the conditions or logics of settler coloniality prevail in relations between peoples but the economic systems mean that the conditions of land and resource exploitation are accelerating, thus increasing the impacts of the logics of assimilation and elimination for Indigenous peoples. For example, as Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark Macdonald recounted, resource extraction puts Arctic peoples at risk of disappearance. He pointed out that 70 percent of peoples who live in the Arctic depend on subsistence hunting for survival. In one region of Alaska, the Porcupine deer are being driven off the land by oil extraction. As such, the approach to this resource acquisition does not care that the consequences on the land is “*de facto* ethnic cleansing.”³⁷¹

4.6 Idle No More: Epistemic Disobedience For and With the Land

As suggested previously, wherever there has been settler coloniality, there is and has been resistance and resurgence. In contemporary times, this is seen in the women in northern Quebec among the Paukatuuit Inuit who are putting their lives on the line to stop

³⁷⁰ Anne Marie Dalton, “Human Rights and Liberation in Feminist Creation Theology,” in *Intersecting Voices: Critical Theologies in a Land of Diversity*, ed. Don Schweitzer and Derek Simon (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004), 126.

³⁷¹ Macdonald, “Listen to the Land!”

the pipelines threatening their territories, livelihood, and socio-cultural-spiritual ways of being.³⁷² This is also seen in the ongoing resistance of the Algonquin community of Barriere Lake to the logging companies who are clear-cutting the trees in their territories, rendering making a living off the land and thus experiencing the spiritual reality of that life, increasingly impossible.³⁷³ This is seen in the push of so-called “survivors” of the residential schools system risking their own wellbeing to share their stories first with the RCAP, then pushing for the apologies from various institutions (church and state) and their extensive participation in the TRC process (including in the IRS Survivor Committee), despite critiques and flaws of that process. Finally, this is seen in the strength of four women, Indigenous and settler in Saskatoon (Treaty 6), coming together to speak of the potentially devastating impact of Bill C-45 and the flow from that event linking to the hunger strike of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence (Muskogee Cree/Treaty 9) and the *Idle No More* (INM) movement.

Idle No More was the name of an educational event in December 2012 about the impacts of the omnibus Bill C-45. This act of epistemic disobedience inspired actions across Canada, some high-profile and some local, that coalesced under the *Idle No More* mantra. The C-45 piece of legislation included changes that would directly impact Indigenous peoples’ treaty rights as well as access to land and included changes to the

³⁷² As presented by Viviane Michel, “Gendered Impacts: Indigenous Women and Resource Extraction” (KAİROS Convergence Assembly, World Social Forum, Montréal, QC, Canada, August 11, 2016).

³⁷³ “Indigenous Peoples Struggles and Resistance: Building Solidarity for Land, Self-Determination and Justice.” (World Social Forum, Montréal, QC, Canada, August 10, 2016); this example and others are found in Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 117; interview with Patrick, Right Relations Ministry of First United Church, April 27, 2015; Shiri Pasternak, “On Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake Against the Federal Land Claims Policy” (PhD diss., University of Toronto (Canada), 2013).

Indian Act; yet again without consultation.

One high-profile act of epistemic and embodied disobedience was conducted by then-Attawapiskat chief Theresa Spence. She began a hunger strike to highlight the conditions in her community and to raise up the burgeoning movement. The beauty of *Idle No More* lay also in the ways that it highlighted the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples and the diversity of approaches in their grassroots acts of epistemic disobedience, which included many diverse forms of resistance from teach-ins and round dances, blockades disrupting the capitalist coloniality systems, to chiefs meeting with government leaders and chiefs risking their lives in hunger strike protest.³⁷⁴

There are tensions, as in most grassroots movements, and one of the struggles is a sense that the movement fizzled out too quickly. However, some suggest that this was less because of the tensions of the heterogeneity but because the unique approaches of different nations were not respected in favour of a pan-Indigenous approach.³⁷⁵ Nonetheless, *Idle No More* represents another irruption of Indigenous peoples into settler consciousness. It opened spaces created by Indigenous peoples to learn, coalesce, and resist together; it created spaces through which settler people have been invited into deeper relations that might begin to shift settler-colonial relations, and also change relations with and within *aki*.

The TRC, which ran from 2008/09 to 2015, was concomitant with this radical grassroots movement. In the 94 “Calls to Action” listed in the TRC’s Executive Summary Report³⁷⁶ is a re-invitation into treaty relations in which settler peoples must humbly

³⁷⁴ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 162–64; Palmater, *Indigenous Nationhood*, 76–83.

³⁷⁵ This issue has been raised in personal conversations. It is an important issue to address in future research.

³⁷⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *TRC: Summary*, 1:316–317; the listing of the 94 Calls to Action follows.

respond to the calls of Indigenous peoples: calls to which we settlers bear witness, partner, and engage in a deeply-needed praxis with Indigenous peoples. As will be suggested in chapter seven, this will require an unsettling depth of listening (an aural praxis) to the voices, protests, actions, dances, songs, and drumbeats of Indigenous people, and a restorying based on the vibrations of those invitations to right, just, and fertile relations.

This chapter has opened the hermeneutical encircling of restorying in Canadian contexts. Through the exploration of three key moments in Canadian hi/story, I have pointed to the logics of settler coloniality in Indigenous–settler relations in Canadian contact zones. This process is part of the decolonial turn and conscientization for settler Canadians. In the next chapter, in a similar vein, I will initiate a restorying of relations within The United Church of Canada.

Chapter Five – A Story Not Told in Full: Restorying Indigenous Peoples and Leadership in The United Church of Canada

History cannot be remade. This is simple realism. But this must not prevent us—on the contrary, it should stimulate us—to see the meaning for us today of an honest interpretation of the events that have occurred since that time.

~ *Gustavo Gutiérrez*³⁷⁷

...there has been a tremendous spiritual arrogance at work in the theological enterprise in church and academy.

~ *Janet Silman*³⁷⁸

The United Church of Canada understands itself to be rooted in the Christian gospel of justice.³⁷⁹ In 1925, it united multiple denominations—including Methodists, Congregationalists, and most Canadian Presbyterians—and sought to become the Protestant Christian church *in* and *of* Canada. As Neil Semple wrote, it would “instil a common set of Christian principles, help preserve national and social stability, guide the country’s conscience, and make Canada a legitimate model for the entire world.”³⁸⁰ It would be a uniting force and work for health, education, and welfare of Canadians.³⁸¹ It is a church associated with the ideas of the social gospel, with the development of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation and to social movements for the welfare of Canadians to create

³⁷⁷ As in Lansdowne, “Bearing Witness,” 163.

³⁷⁸ Janet. Silman and Stan McKay, “A First Nations Movement in a Canadian Church,” in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (Geneva, Switzerland : Maryknoll, NY: WCC Publications ; Orbis Books, 1997), 40.

³⁷⁹ The Permanent Committee on Programs document, “A Justice Seeking/Justice Living Church,” and the Intercultural Task Group report “Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation” offer a vision of the church as an intercultural, mutually transformative, equitable, justice seeking and justice-living community. As in “Record of Proceedings of the 41st General Council, Ottawa, ON” (United Church of Canada General Council Office, August 11, 2012), 432.

³⁸⁰ As in Don Schweitzer, “The Changing Social Imaginary of The United Church of Canada,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 280.

³⁸¹ Schweitzer, 281; as seen in the images of the work of First United Church in Vancouver, in Phyllis D Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking The United Church of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press, 2014), 68, 192.

a more equitable place to live.³⁸²

This church has also acted to “Christianize” society,³⁸³ and has traditionally identified very closely with its majority White, Anglo-Saxon population, thus rooting its frames of reference and action in Western Eurocentric epistemologies.³⁸⁴ This creates a tension between the church’s social imaginary as a just and uniting church,³⁸⁵ and the marginalization that its epistemic position creates for non-White and non-English speaking people in the United Church. Although it may position itself as a justice-seeking church, it reproduces the matrix of systemic racism and is rooted in many of the same settler-colonial attitudes as the nation-state. Similarly, the church’s story of relations with Indigenous peoples remains a story not told in full.

Restorying Indigenous peoples and their leadership into a narrative that surveys key moments in recent United Church hi/story is an important act of acknowledgement and accountability; as a White Euro-settler Christian, this is a complex and fraught exercise for me. One of the limitations of the restorying in this dissertation is that I am drawing on church documents, publications, and academic records that are primarily written by other White settler people, although I also use resources written by Indigenous people (including some of the church documents).

A further limitation is that, although I strive to centre Indigenous peoples’ stories, I

³⁸² Harold Wells, “J. S. Woodsworth: Christian Socialist and Peace-Monger (Part I),” *Touchstone* 33, no. 2 (June 2015): 55; Harold Wells, “J. S. Woodsworth: Christian Socialist and Peacemonger (Part II),” *Touchstone* 33, no. 3 (October 2015): 51–59; Schweitzer, “Changing Social Imaginary,” 280.

³⁸³ This language of “Christianize” was linked with “civilize” in many Canadian government policies. It feeds in to the racist “civ/sav” dynamics (drawing on Emma Laroque’s work) developed in Chapter 3.

³⁸⁴ Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “The United Church of Canada: A Church Fittingly National,” in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, ed. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto, ON; Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 204.

³⁸⁵ Schweitzer, “Changing Social Imaginary,” 190.

am a White settler-Christian queer woman writing the story in my own voice. Indigenous people have agency to write their own stories in their own resurgent voices. I am not writing for Indigenous people but for other settler people. I commit to this academic practice in acknowledgement that as settler Christians, participants in The United Church of Canada and Canadian society, we have a responsibility to or an accountability for decisions made, past and present, that impact Indigenous peoples' lives. It is part of what J.R. Miller named in 1996 at the end of his tome on residential schools, in which he writes that there are systemic patterns and national bodies (church and state) that must be made accountable for the impacts of settler state and church actions on Indigenous peoples. Ultimately however, it is the Canadian people who bear responsibility, because

...behind both the churches and the government stood the populace, who in a democracy such as Canada ultimately are responsible...If people get the government they deserve, then the people are responsible in a moral sense for what government does in their name. Canadians [and I would specify settler Canadians] in general ought to shoulder their share of responsibility along with the elected politicians and the bureaucrats, and the churches' senior administrators and humble missionary volunteers. There is plenty of responsibility to go around, and more than enough work to be done to remedy the malignant legacy of residential schools.³⁸⁶

Restorying as settler Christians, as argued in the Introduction, is to participate in a process that takes some responsibility for the settler-Canadian Christian past and seeks ways to participate in appropriate spaces, which means sometimes with Indigenous peoples and sometimes on our own, to transform the settler Canadian and Christian present.³⁸⁷

In this chapter, I present key moments in the relationship of Indigenous peoples

³⁸⁶ James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 434–35.

³⁸⁷ Lansdowne, "Bearing Witness," 36.

with and within the United Church in recent hi/story. In the first part, I write an autoethnographic-type reflection that articulates my location and stance as a researcher in relation to recent literature on the United Church in light of the recent change to the United Church's crest.

Then I survey two recently published books that present thorough accounts of the United Church's hi/story. I interweave a critique of the perceived silences in these academic voices and records of the church as they seem to have not yet taken up the commitment to right relations in their work and approach. These volumes show many signs of "settler moves to innocence"³⁸⁸ that must be raised up in ongoing processes of conscientization as a church and as settler Christians. The United Church role in residential schools ended in 1969 when it either closed or ceased to run the schools, but, as James Scott points out, the church then went silent on its record of relationship to these institutions³⁸⁹; I would further add that the record seems to be quiet on the growth, development, and emergence of Indigenous leadership in the church.

As such, in the second part of the chapter, I restory some of the development of the All Native Circle Conference of The United Church of Canada drawing on a wide range of textual resources including archival records of General Council proceedings and historical issues of United Church magazines (*The United Church Observer* and *Mandate*). It is an important story to uncover, acknowledge and weave into the narrative. The Indigenous

³⁸⁸ Explained in chapter 3; see Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," 3.

³⁸⁹ Rev. Dr. James Scott is a retired United Church minister who worked on the residential schools file for the United Church of Canada until the release of the TRC reports in 2015; see (Rev.) James V. Scott, "Reflections on the Legacy of Residential Schools," in *Canadian Theological Students' Association* (Theology from the Margins: Definitions, Dynamics and Intersections, Montréal, QC, Canada, 2016), 3.

leadership in evidence in the All Native Circle led the church to offer numerous apologies, so I highlight three apology stories. This narrative can be and must be retold with Indigenous peoples in the central roles they played. I conclude the chapter with elements of work still to do and some directions for a fuller restorying. To restory them is an important act of epistemic disobedience to the settler church narrative and it is a humble step in living into right relations in the United Church.

PART I – The Crest of Change: The Record of Settler Coloniality in The United Church

The new church saw its ‘call’ or special mission as that of building up the Canadian nation, but a Canadian nation that centred mainly on its ethnic elements from Britain and a nation the citizens of which spoke chiefly English...If the United Church generally ignored francophones, its attitude to Aboriginal peoples was more pernicious. It adopted a paternalistic understanding of Canada’s first peoples, hoping to Christianize and Canadianize them by assimilating them.

~ Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng³⁹⁰

I wish to bear witness (in the sense of sharing the hope of the christian³⁹¹ faith), by sharing the multitude of ways that the church has broken my heart, and why I still believe there is cause for faith, hope and love through the religious vehicle of christianity...I have a broken heart. The church and society have both broken my heart over and over again.

~ Carmen Rae Lansdowne³⁹²

5.1 This is Not the Hi/story I was Looking For: Re/search Heart Break

I approached this chapter assuming I would find extensive academic pieces written about the stories of Indigenous peoples in The United Church of Canada. I expected I would be able to write an overview of Indigenous peoples within the United Church: challenging, encouraging, leading, and restorying this primarily settler institution at the national level. Then I planned to focus on a smaller local story of hope and

³⁹⁰ Ng, “The United Church of Canada: A Church Fittingly National,” 206.

³⁹¹ The use of lowercase is intentional by the author.

³⁹² Lansdowne, “Bearing Witness,” xi&xiii.

conscientization, a group of mostly settler Christians in a church in the Ottawa Presbytery on unceded Algonquin land.

I began my work by reading three recent hi/stories of the United Church published in 2014, 2013, and 2012 that were written and edited by respected United Church scholars. What I discovered was not what I had originally expected. Instead of there being robust stories of Indigenous peoples, I observed that the 2013 record does not acknowledge Indigenous peoples at all,³⁹³ the story of Indigenous peoples is barely present in the 2014 hi/story, and the place and role of Indigenous peoples is not centrally highlighted in most of the historical or thematic chapters in the 2012 account. I was shocked but also intrigued: how is it possible for engaged theologians and historians of the United Church to sidestep these relations, especially in a time of preparation for the 30th anniversary of the famous 1986 Apology, at a time when the church had repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery (2012) and incorporated the colours of the medicine wheel into the crest as a symbol of the centrality of Indigenous peoples to the story of the church (2012)?³⁹⁴ As part of the changing of the crest, the John 17:21 verse “That all may be one” was interpreted in Kanien’kéha by the phrase “Akwe Nia’Tetewá:neren” meaning “All my relations.” Why were these relations spoken of so briefly, or not at all, in these written records? Why did these versions not restore Indigenous Christians of the original founding churches into these records?

³⁹³ Due to this lacuna, I did not include it in the survey below. Kevin N. Flatt, *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and The United Church of Canada*, McGill-Queen’s Studies in the History of Religion. Series Two ; 64 (Montréal, QC: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013).

³⁹⁴ “GC41, ROP,” 278–80, 453–62.

5.2 Survey of United Church Hi/story: A Decolonial Critique of the Literature

In the epilogue of Phyllis Airhart's book *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking The United Church of Canada*, she writes that "As time passed, the church's call to Christianize the social order seemed arrogant and paternalistic," but she does not explicitly name Indigenous peoples or their experiences.³⁹⁵ In her introduction, she suggests that Indigenous peoples were important and central to the church and Canada by using the work of settler sociologist John Ralston Saul and his problematic idea of Canada as a "Métis civilization," but the rest of the work barely recognizes Indigenous peoples' presence.³⁹⁶ She allows the racist record to stand. She repeats the "doomed to disappear" type of narrative without critique or comment.³⁹⁷ In writing of a time when the dominant narrative seemed to be of uncritical support for residential schools, she does not highlight the critiques of the schools by even the Women's Mission Society (WMS). Rather she presents the counterargument of settler women to dismiss the critiques of conditions at residential school raised by Indigenous women.³⁹⁸ In my view, her work silences Indigenous women and feeds into the logics of elimination/assimilation of a settler-Christian church.

Airhart highlights the United Church report to the bilingual and bi-cultural report of Canada in 1964 that points to the importance of Indigenous peoples, specifically naming "the contributions of Indians and Eskimos [*sic*]" that belie the English-French foundation of

³⁹⁵ Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation*, 294.

³⁹⁶ Airhart, 7–8.

³⁹⁷ Airhart, 8–9.

³⁹⁸ There were letters written to complain about school conditions, such as that of Lucy Affleck noted in United Church of Canada, *Justice and Reconciliation: The Legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the Journey Toward Reconciliation* (Toronto, ON: The United Church of Canada, 2001), 17; Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation*, 78.

the nation, but she does not highlight the contributions of these peoples within the church.³⁹⁹ Indigenous peoples are essentially absent, save as residential school survivors, victims of White racism, and as a foil to White guilt and calls to action as in the brief mention of a Saulteaux man murdered as reflected upon by broadcaster and author Peter Gzowski and as a call to address “Canada’s Alabama.”⁴⁰⁰ The story of Indigenous peoples as leaders in the United Church is absent. A critical telling of how Indigenous members, lands, and even church buildings came to be part of the church is absent.

The fourteen essays of the 2012 collection edited by Don Schweitzer, *The United Church of Canada: A History*, elevate the story of Indigenous peoples in pockets but in its overall thematic analysis aligns itself closely to its settler Anglo-Saxon story of origin and rootedness in settler coloniality as a church institution despite the church’s commitment since 2006 to be an intercultural church. William Kervin’s analysis of the church’s worship tradition highlights the dominant church story and, in an act of erasure, only mentions Indigenous peoples’ worship in the second to last paragraph as part of a cluster of the many ethnic groups whose contribution to the church’s worship tradition are yet to be studied.⁴⁰¹

Michael Bourgeois’ study of The United Church of Canada’s theology perpetuates the assimilation/elimination patterns of the White settler church. For a church “awash in theology,” the United Church does not seem to take the commitment to the place and role of Indigenous peoples and the uniqueness of their theological prism and contribution

³⁹⁹ Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation*, 211.

⁴⁰⁰ Airhart does not name him in her book. His name was Alla Thomas and he was killed May 11, 1963. Gzowski’s letter was republished in a 1964 Board of Evangelism and Social Service (E&SS) Report, as in Airhart, 232.

⁴⁰¹ William S. Kervin, “Worship on the Way: The Dialectic of United Church Worship,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 198.

seriously. In his introduction, he names the importance of exploring the

...church's soteriology, or theology of salvation, and would include consideration of the relationship between salvation and social justice: the implications of the United Church's participation in, and recent apologies for, Canadian colonial treatment of First Nations peoples; and the influence of increasing cultural and religious pluralism in Canada.⁴⁰²

My critique is twofold: Bourgeois limits the place of Indigenous peoples, naming only First Nations and thus ignoring Inuit and Métis, to that of victims of the colonial role of the church. He makes them objects of the church's apology, rather than theological agents of the church and its story. He then dismisses their uniqueness by lumping them into the basket of "cultural and religious pluralism in Canada."⁴⁰³ He does not attempt to explore the unique perspective that Indigenous peoples, ministers, and theologians might bring into the conversation on, for example, revelation.

The dynamics of assimilation/elimination seem most obvious in the chapter on ministry by Charlotte Caron. There have been Indigenous ministers and lay leaders in the church for over half of its history. The unusual leadership in 1946 of the Rev. E.T. Monture, of Six-Nations reserve is mentioned in an earlier chapter by John H. Young on *The Golden Age: 1946 to 1960*.⁴⁰⁴ The chapter on ministry, however, addresses the evolution and development within the broader dominant church, integrating the story of women's ordination and special recruitment for immigrant ministries. Caron mentions ministry in over 30 languages in 1959; an intertextual reading leads me to wonder if the

⁴⁰² Michael Bourgeois, "Awash in Theology: Issues in Theology in The United Church of Canada," in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 260.

⁴⁰³ Bourgeois, 260.

⁴⁰⁴ John H. Young, "A Golden Age: The United Church of Canada, 1946-1960," in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 19.

reports of the committee on diaconal ministry recognized any Indigenous languages.⁴⁰⁵ In the late 1980s, she mentions that “First Nations people were claiming their right to self-determination in church and society” and so “the All Native Circle Conference was inaugurated” in 1988, preceded by the creation of three centres for theological training of Indigenous leaders in Manitoba, British Columbia, and Ontario in 1983, 1985, and 1987, respectively.

As a church, that at its creation sought to be the national protestant church of Canada and was enacted with a Parliamentary Act in 1924,⁴⁰⁶ the journey to conscientize and “un/settle” from settler coloniality is long and complex. The United Church of Canada incorporated and took over the Methodist and Presbyterian-run residential schools, such that in 1946 it is noted that The United Church of Canada ran ten schools, but only six in 1960. The last one closed in 1973 (in Port Alberni and was only run by the United Church until 1969).⁴⁰⁷ The closings of the schools, although in part for financial reasons, might also signal a recognition that, as policies, assimilation and even integration had not worked.

A shift in the 1960’s to “listen to the world” more explicitly helped the institutional church understand the decline in international mission. The 1966 Report to the Commission on the World Mission called upon the church to acknowledge its guilt and to be humbler in its approach to issues of race and culture and to dialogue with people of many faiths.⁴⁰⁸ In

⁴⁰⁵ Charlotte Caron, “A Look at Ministry: Diversity and Ambiguity,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 207, 219 fn20.

⁴⁰⁶ Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation*, 34, Table 2.1.

⁴⁰⁷ Young, “A Golden Age: 1946-1960,” 90; Joan Wyatt, “The 1970s: Voices from the Margins,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 133; Scott, “Reflections on the Legacy of Residential Schools.”

⁴⁰⁸ As in Sandra Beardsall, “‘And Whether Pigs Have Wings’: The United Church in the 1960s,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 105&106.

the chapter by Sandra Beardsall, she suggests that this work set the church on its path of penitence leading to later apologies. However, the only explicit mention of Indigenous peoples is one sentence on the second last page of this article with a critique of the church: “While missions with Aboriginal communities became more culturally sensitive, and “Indian rights” found their way to the pages of the E&SS [Board of Evangelism & Social Service] reports, the church was far from seeking full participation of the Aboriginal members, or from articulating its collective shame in the colonizing relationship.”⁴⁰⁹

Although this might be true, in my reading of Indigenous scholars working on questions of the reemergence of Indigenous spirituality in communities and the role of Indigenous peoples in the churches, I found clearer evidence of transnational and ecumenical work being done by the United Church. For example, in 1966 the United Church co-published the Report of Indian-Eskimo Association with The Anglican Church of Canada, *Right to a Future: the Native Peoples of Canada*, with a view to “help stimulate much thought and action as we seek to develop more creative attitudes, relationships and policies in this area of our country’s life” and by supporting the development of the Indian Ecumenical Conference (IEC) that first started to meet in 1969.⁴¹⁰ The IEC was supported by the United Church financially, and by Rev. John Snow (ordained in 1963) who became

⁴⁰⁹ Beardsall, 112.

⁴¹⁰ Ted Scott (Anglican bishop), as in James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era: A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 76 & 127. Interestingly Airhart puts much importance on the Anglican-United churches union conversations but she does not mention this important ecumenical work in which they were engaged. Further important research would be in teasing out some of the cross-fertilizing work being done within each denomination and how it affected the relations with other Christian denominations. For example, explore ways that the Anglican Church of Canada’s commissioning of the Hendry Report to understand the role and place of its Indigenous membership might have influenced efforts in the United Church of Canada in the 1960’s.

chief of his Nakoda-Wesley band of Stoney Indians in 1968.⁴¹¹ These meetings were radical, as they were developed by Indigenous leaders in an attempt to address the colonial legacy in terms of the impacts on the spiritual lives of their communities. Some of those issues were the divisions among Indigenous Christians, thus seeking ecumenical ties, but of central import is healing across the great divide of traditional spiritual teachings and practices with Christians, Christian churches, and Christianity.⁴¹²

The chapter by Joan Wyatt on the 1970s makes central the stories and events affecting some of the peoples who are usually on the margins of United Church hi/story. In turn, Wyatt listens to “Feminist Voices” (primarily White women) and attends to “French-English Relations” and “Aboriginal Peoples” (acknowledging but leaving queer questions to another author in a different chapter).⁴¹³ This chapter is unusual because of the way it makes central Indigenous peoples—in ministry, in church politics, in church polity, in ecumenical circles—as agents within the United Church, not solely as objects or victims of residential schools. Wyatt mentions ecumenical church representatives playing a significant role on the McKenzie pipeline inquiry lead to ongoing solidarity work with Indigenous peoples through Project North. Indigenous peoples began to gather to celebrate, share, practice, and reclaim their spiritual traditions and find spiritual unity as Indigenous peoples.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ Nancy Millar, “John Snow: ‘Who’s Heathen Now?’; An Ordained Indian Chief Explains Why His People Turn from the Church,” *The United Church Observer* 37 (March 1974): 28.

⁴¹² Reflections on the I.E.C. concept paper by Bob Thomas and Ian MacKenzie in Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire*, 107–8; Stan McKay reflects on similar themes in Larry Krotz, “One Of A Kind: The Rev. Stanley McKay,” *The United Church Observer* 36, no. 12 (June 1973): 28–31.

⁴¹³ Wyatt, “The 1970’s,” 121, 130–34.

⁴¹⁴ Wyatt, 122.

Wyatt notes some of the same tensions that are named by former United Church of Canada Moderator Stan McKay (Cree) when she names issues of underfunding, lack of support resources, and racism within the United Church.⁴¹⁵ These relatively brief inclusions are the beginnings of the call for and enacting of the consultations with Indigenous peoples in the United Church that lead to the 1982 appointment of Stan McKay as the Native Ministries Coordinator.⁴¹⁶

The radical record of the church for the 1980s marks this as a time when the United Church made a choice to affirm lesbian and gay members and openly welcome them to ministry in the church.⁴¹⁷ As a queer woman, I am struck by how the church's narrative does not highlight and focus on the multiplicity of barriers it was transcending in its work in the 1980s. The praxis of the church raised up in the academic record is the place of primarily White homosexual people in the church and not Indigenous people.

In an article on the public theology of the United Church, Harold Wells notes the ethical witness the church offers to Canadian society by removing barriers to ordered ministry through its General Council in 1988.⁴¹⁸ The living church was engaged in transversal conversations with Indigenous peoples, wherein Indigenous leaders were challenging the church further on its apology, but the textual record highlights issues

⁴¹⁵ Wyatt, 133–34.

⁴¹⁶ Dean Salter, ed., "Mandate Interviews Stan McKay," *Mandate* 14: 4 (September 1983): 3–8.

⁴¹⁷ Tracy J. Trothen, "1980s: What Does It Mean to Be The United Church of Canada? Emergent Voices, Self-Critique, and Dissent," in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 151–54.

⁴¹⁸ Harold Wells, "Not Moral Heroes : The Grace of God and the Church's Public Voice," in *Doing Ethics in a Pluralistic World Essays in Honour of Roger C. Hutchinson*, ed. Phyllis D. Airhart, Marilyn J. Legge, and Gary L. Redcliffe, Comparative Ethics Series (Waterloo, ON: Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002), 80; Trothen, "1980s: What Does It Mean to Be The United Church of Canada?," 152.

around the ordination of gay and lesbian members. I suggest this is due partially to a reality that ordaining gay and lesbian people does not require epistemic disobedience, whereas listening to and being affected by the stories and requests of Indigenous peoples within the church demands it. Queer people of the church challenged what had been understood of sexuality within Christianity and thus challenged it to a just response for equality, but the church was able to continue to be a primarily White settler church working within Eurocentric paradigms of settler coloniality.

To return to Schweitzer's book, the two chapters by Tracy J. Trothen and Ross Bartlett, which cover the period from 1980 to 2003, only briefly mention Indigenous peoples and in both instances not as actors of and within the church but as acted upon by the church. In two paragraphs, the story of the apology rests within the paradigm of the settler church and comes from the "General Council Executive [in March 1985, who] gave formal recognition to the need for the Apology."⁴¹⁹ There is no sense of the role or continuity of the presence of Indigenous peoples and their leadership; the All Native Circle is named as formed in 1988 and its response to the apology is mentioned. The chapter on the 1980s acknowledges the hesitancy of Indigenous peoples to accept the apology and some of the critiques of the lack of follow-through.⁴²⁰

Bartlett's sixteen-page New Millennium chapter gives one paragraph to naming residential schools abuses, to acknowledge sorrowful responses of church members (presumably not Indigenous members), and to note the leadership absorbed in the legalities

⁴¹⁹ Trothen, "1980s: What Does It Mean to Be The United Church of Canada?" 147.

⁴²⁰ Trothen, 147.

of these realities, again presumably non-Indigenous/settler leaders.⁴²¹ This paragraph does not fundamentally challenge foundations of settler coloniality; it presumes the perspective of the dominant church; it is concerned for the church's financial wellbeing and does not engage the journey nor particularly the present realities of the church's Indigenous membership.

In the chapter dedicated to the story of Indigenous peoples, Alf Dumont (Ojibwe and a United Church minister) shifts the narrative centre to the space of balance between Indigenous spiritual teachings and walking a Christian way. He acknowledges the problem of conversion and the Canadianizing attitudes of dominant Western Euro-Christian frames and the continuation of residential schools that The United Church of Canada inherited from founding denominations.⁴²² In a single sentence, he flips the source of the 1986 apology from the oft-repeated narrative that the church offered it and places leadership back in the hands of Indigenous peoples as the ones who “called on the United Church to apologize for not acknowledging the spirituality or honouring the culture of the First Nations people.”⁴²³ Further, Dumont acknowledges the hi/story of Indigenous peoples convening consultations throughout the 1980s to restory and redefine themselves in The United Church of Canada. It is these processes and the Indigenous Elders and leaders who pushed for the development of the All Native Circle, which is, as Dumont acknowledges, an affirmation of walking the traditional ways with a Christian way.⁴²⁴ Interestingly absent

⁴²¹ Ross Bartlett, “1990-2003: The Church into the New Millennium,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012), 176; more is explained by Roger Hutchinson in Dumont and Hutchinson, “United Church Mission Goals and First Nations Peoples,” 233–35.

⁴²² Dumont and Hutchinson, “United Church Mission Goals and First Nations Peoples,” 222&223.

⁴²³ Dumont and Hutchinson, 223.

⁴²⁴ Dumont and Hutchinson, 223.

is an indication of the complexities of faith expression among Indigenous peoples of the church; some communities do not wish to and do not bring the traditions together.⁴²⁵

Dumont then proceeds to share an important Ojibwe teaching that reflects on the call to the settler church of the Seven Fires Prophecy (which I speak of in the Introduction). It is a gift and a challenge to “both the church and the government and the society in general to take full ownership and responsibility for what they did do, whether it was done with good intentions and good faith...It was not done with deep respect and true unity in all the ways of the Creator.”⁴²⁶

The latter half of the article is written by settler theologian Roger Hutchinson. He acknowledges the early patterns of dominance in the church’s mission frame, the efforts to journey with Indigenous peoples through the work of Project North (starting in the 1970s), and, the humbling process of participating in the legal processes of the 1990s triggered by Indigenous peoples who lived through IRS. It is a journey that ultimately led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the process of the TRC in Canada.⁴²⁷

Hutchinson recounts shifts in the church’s actions, but the rest of the book suggests that the praxis has not been met with epistemic shifts that truly honour the journey of Indigenous peoples in The United Church of Canada. Pointedly, Dumont and Hutchinson conclude the chapter by acknowledging the ways the settler-colonial dominance continues to be in the “basic orientation as well as particular judgments” of the church. They

⁴²⁵ As witnessed to me by a United Church minister who worked in an Ojibwe community in Ontario; and in the Catholic context which is shared by Kitty Bell who states that it is not good for the medicines to be brought into the Catholic Church on Manitoulin Island. See Theresa Smith, “The Church of the Immaculate Conception: Inculturation and Identity Among the Anishnaabeg of Manitoulin Island,” *American Indian Quarterly* 20, no. Fall (1996): 515–26.

⁴²⁶ Dumont and Hutchinson, “United Church Mission Goals and First Nations Peoples,” 227.

⁴²⁷ Dumont and Hutchinson, 228–33.

recognize that “the quest for a shared story” continues to require a deep listening to those “many voices within” the church who challenge this settler-colonial orientation.⁴²⁸

In the above sections, I laid bare some of the silences and erasures in the historical record on Indigenous peoples’ presence and leadership in recent United Church academic texts. Given this lacuna, I will now draw on many of these “voices within” the church through a wide range of resources to begin telling a fuller story of Indigenous people and their roles in the hi/story of the United Church.

PART II – Quest for a Shared Story: Restorying Indigenous Peoples’ Leadership

Yet it all started because we could no longer tolerate living under paternalism, in which others spoke for us and refused to hear our stories.

~Stan McKay⁴²⁹

The 1986 apology of The United Church of Canada was not an act initiated by the settler church. Rather, it was a response to Indigenous leadership in the United Church that had been pushing for accountability to the shared story for decades. Liturgical resources distributed for the 30th anniversary of the Apology recognize that it was Alberta Billy (Cape Mudge First Nation/We Wai Kai Nation) who, on behalf of the Elders and leaders of the National Native Council, named the colonial experience and called the church to be accountable.⁴³⁰ In a spirited or inspired moment, Billy requested an apology from the highest court of The United Church of Canada for the historic injustices toward Indigenous

⁴²⁸ Dumont and Hutchinson, 235.

⁴²⁹ Stan. McKay and Janet. Silman, *The First Nations : A Canadian Experience of the Gospel-Culture Encounter* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 38.

⁴³⁰ Rev. Susan Beaver, “From Apology Towards Reconciliation: 30th Anniversary of the United Church’s Apology to First Nations Peoples” (The United Church of Canada, 2016), 1, <http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apology-30th-anniversary-litany.pdf>; Comprehensive Review Report, “United in God’s Work -- Backgrounder #4: Aboriginal Ministries” (The United Church of Canada, August 2015), 1, <http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report>.

peoples.⁴³¹ Although it was she who spoke the words, that moment represented over a decade of work by Indigenous peoples in the church.

5.3 Restorying Indigenous Leadership in The United Church of Canada

By the 1950s, the central leadership of the United Church began to awaken to the fact that its relations with Indigenous peoples were not functioning. In a 1947 brief to a Parliamentary Committee, the United Church recommended closing residential schools.⁴³² Its own 1955 Commission to Study Indian Work recognized that the church was not able to recruit needed personnel to its schools, to its “missions” (as the Indigenous churches were categorized until the mid-1960s), or to their medical facilities.⁴³³ Leadership in Indigenous communities often came from Elders who were leading worship and resolving struggles and tensions, often without the national church’s recognition.⁴³⁴ Many of the White settler-Christian ministers sent through the Home Mission Board were not able to speak local Indigenous languages and were dependent on Elders who thus maintained control of local churches. But the ministers seemed to hold a parochial attitude of paternalism toward the people in their communities.⁴³⁵ Through these individuals and in national structures, the church seemed unable or unwilling to recognize the strength and depth of the faithfulness

⁴³¹ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 31.

⁴³² “United Church of Canada: Steps in the Journey Towards Right Relationships (1947 – 2008),” accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/partners/ucc-steps.htm>. In this restorying, I will not focus on the hi/story of residential schools and The United Church of Canada, save in the moments where it aids to shift the narrative focus away from the settler church and toward leadership by Indigenous peoples.

⁴³³ Larry Krotz, “Native Church Signals New Directions,” *Mandate: A Dialogue with Canada’s Native Peoples* Special Edition: 16, no. 4 (1985): 16.

⁴³⁴ As recounted by Stan McKay in Krotz, “One Of A Kind: The Rev. Stanley McKay”; McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 23–24.

⁴³⁵ Krotz, “One Of A Kind: The Rev. Stanley McKay”; Dianne Jensen, ed., “Profile: Alberta Billy,” *Mandate: A Dialogue with Canada’s Native Peoples* Special Edition 16, no. 4 (1985): 22–23; McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 23.

of Indigenous peoples and their leadership.

The Ojibwe- and Cree-translated Bibles were sources of deep faith, carriers of culture, and signs of resistance for many Indigenous Christians in the church. Janet Silman (mixed heritage English/Cree/Scottish and United Church minister) reflects on how intertwined the Cree Bible is in the lives of those from the North. She notes it was Cree speakers who gave missionaries the words they needed, thus it was Cree people who developed the theological and biblical language for the Christianity lived and articulated in those communities. Cree Elder and former moderator, Stan McKay adds further that the translations of the Bible and hymns in Indigenous languages reflect Indigenous cultures and are a way of “liberating some of that memory of our own stories.”⁴³⁶

Gladys Taylor (Ojibwe) remembered the Ojibwe Bible as enlivening her faith and it being a source of communion in her community.⁴³⁷ She recounts the importance, in turn, of her leadership in the community as she remembers, with sorrow, being denied the right to offer communion to a dying woman who sought her out specifically to receive the sacrament in their Indigenous languages. Taylor had to fight in the 1980s to be reinstated as an Elder who could offer communion.⁴³⁸

By the mid-late 1960s, the national church made symbolic shifts toward acknowledging Indigenous peoples within the church by moving the responsibilities for the Indigenous church communities, primarily associated with reserves, from Home Mission to incorporating them into local presbyteries. Unfortunately, these decisions were made with

⁴³⁶ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 42–43.

⁴³⁷ Dianne Jensen, ed., “Profile: Gladys Taylor,” *Mandate: A Dialogue with Canada’s Native Peoples Special Edition* 16, no. 4 (1985): 25.

⁴³⁸ Jensen, 25.

insufficient local consultation. Pulling out of these communities had decades-long consequences for the Indigenous churches. The difficulty of positioning within a Euro-Western church system, amplified by language barriers (most Indigenous representatives to Presbytery meetings were not European-language native speakers) and further complicated by the rural poor/urban middle-class divisions of the church, meant that Indigenous peoples could not communicate the unique needs of their communities to the broader church.⁴³⁹

In the 1970s, a movement began among the Indigenous peoples within the church; their multipronged approach meant that there were multiple levels of response from the church. For example, in northern Manitoba, a Northern Elders Council began to meet to address the difficulties caused by “isolation, language difficulties and separate cultures.”⁴⁴⁰ In the same period, as per a decision of the 27th United Church of Canada General Council (1977), the national church began another review of its work with Indigenous peoples. This mandate initiated a long process for Indigenous peoples to find their voice and sovereignty within the church.

In 1979, a questionnaire was distributed to all Indigenous United Church communities; feeding frustration for some who felt it was a call for yet another study, not action or recognition. The following year, an Indigenous leadership gathering was organized at White Bear, Saskatchewan.⁴⁴¹ Many Indigenous Christian Elders remember this event as marking a significant shift in their feeling of having a place in the church; it is

⁴³⁹ Krotz, “Native Church Signals New Directions,” 14, and specifically reflected by Stan McKay, 16-17; it is further important to note that this marginalization extends to any members who do not speak English fluently.

⁴⁴⁰ Krotz, 14; Salter, “Mandate Interviews Stan McKay,” 3.

⁴⁴¹ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 28.

a time of resurgence for Indigenous peoples and seen as a shift toward a relationship of mutuality.⁴⁴²

It is also a time when some Indigenous leaders had space to articulate a deep frustration with and within the church. Stan McKay observed the depth of racism in the church in a 1980 article in The United Church of Canada magazine, *The Observer*.⁴⁴³ Previously, in a 1973 interview when he worked as a minister in his home community of Fisher River, he spoke of the problematic dismissal of Indigenous peoples and their deep spiritual knowing as Indigenous and Christian; his frustration grew over the decade as he sensed the deeper issues that were not being addressed by the dominant settler church.⁴⁴⁴ Strangely, the 1970s was also a time, as previously discussed, when the church was beginning to recognize its responsibility to its Indigenous membership. For example, the church supported the spiritual and political explorations of the IEC (1971). In response to pipeline protests, along with numerous ecumenical partners, the United Church was a founding member of Project North in 1975 as well as its successor movements in the Aboriginal Rights Coalition and KAIROS.⁴⁴⁵ And then, in 1977, the aforementioned review of its work with Indigenous peoples was written.

5.4 Call for an Apology: Resistance and Resurgence as Indigenous Christians within The United Church of Canada

The national consultations of the early 1980s (White Bear, SK; Fort Qu'appelle,

⁴⁴² Jensen, "Profile: Alberta Billy," 23; McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 28–31.

⁴⁴³ Hugh McCullum, "The Evil of the 80s: What the World Council's Consultation on Racism Found about Western Nations and Their Churches," *The United Church Observer* 44, no. 3 (September 1980): 17.

⁴⁴⁴ Krotz, "One Of A Kind: The Rev. Stanley McKay."

⁴⁴⁵ Wyatt, "The 1970's," 122; for a description of the development of the Indian Ecumenical Council (IEC), see Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire*.

SK; Oka, QC; Morley, AB; Koostatak, MB⁴⁴⁶) marked a resurgence for Indigenous peoples, a time of learning to trust their voices and stories, and for Indigenous members to move into official positions within the national church. They initiated a space where Indigenous peoples had direct voice in governing bodies and began the movement toward self-government and sovereignty as Indigenous Christians within The United Church of Canada.⁴⁴⁷

Silman remembers that, at the first gathering, the Indigenous peoples requested a separate gathering space. Out of that circle, the Indigenous participants offered to teach the church about the Spirit (and their traditional ways and teachings) and requested to be taught about church structures and polity so they could effect change for themselves.⁴⁴⁸ In 1982, after the Manitoba gathering, a position was created, and Stan McKay was appointed to the role of National Native Ministries Coordinator. At the time, he said, “there is a Native church now. We can tackle some of the difficult problems that face us and we are prepared to dialogue with the United Church” about training and church structures.⁴⁴⁹ During this period, conversations were initiated to open the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Centre based on her dream of Indigenous church leadership: “a learning center run *by* Aboriginal people *for* Aboriginal people was a big step in giving the gospel the people’s voice.”⁴⁵⁰

Indigenous Elders and leaders were also pushing for more accountability of the church and its structures to Indigenous peoples. As previously mentioned, this meant

⁴⁴⁶ Salter, “Mandate Interviews Stan McKay,” 3–4.

⁴⁴⁷ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 30–31.

⁴⁴⁸ Silman and McKay, “A First Nations Movement in a Canadian Church,” 172.

⁴⁴⁹ Salter, “Mandate Interviews Stan McKay,” 4.

⁴⁵⁰ Janet Silman in Silman and McKay, “A First Nations Movement in a Canadian Church,” 173.

finding means to have their voices heard at presbytery, conference, and General Council despite language barriers and differences in decision-making systems (consensus-based circles versus debating and voting courts). One such action was the creation of a Native presbytery in northern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario known as Keewatin.⁴⁵¹ It was a time of internal healing within and among various Indigenous communities.

By 1985, the members of these gatherings, now the National Native Council, had participated in enough meetings to know how to address the General Council Executive. They had also engaged in sufficient dialogues (including their experience as part of the two-year mission study process of the United Church), discussions, and circles of healing to know the ways these processes were not working.

After an official written report, properly submitted, Alberta Billy decided to challenge the church on its silencing of Elders and Indigenous peoples. She “offered these words to the Executive of the General Council: “The United Church of Canada owes the Native peoples of Canada an apology and make it clear that our spirituality was, in fact, our natural sacredness and not paganism as the missionaries implied.””⁴⁵² She told Stan McKay she would do this, and while they knew this was not part of due process or protocol, those present also knew it was a cry of the spirit. Recognizing that an apology on the spot was not enough, and unsure of the response of the broader dominant church, the Executive initiated an 18-month education process. McKay describes it as the most exciting time of his tenure, and culminated in the official request for an apology at the 31st General Council held in

⁴⁵¹ Salter, “Mandate Interviews Stan McKay,” 5.

⁴⁵² Comprehensive Review Report, “Backgrounder #4: Aboriginal Ministries,” 1.

Sudbury, Ontario, in August 1986.⁴⁵³

The process leading up to the apology was filled with anxiety for both the members of the National Native Council and for the dominant/settler church. As the Saskatchewan Conference experienced during its “year of repentance” in 1979, the national church was learning the depth of spiritual courage it takes to engage in a conscious time of listening to Indigenous peoples and to work toward more just and healthy relations.⁴⁵⁴ It was also perceived by the dominant church as an important act of solidarity and witness to Canadian society, at a time of preparation for a First Ministers Conference to discuss constitutional reform and the place of Indigenous peoples within Canada.⁴⁵⁵

But there were some concerns that the church was being asked to apologize for the Gospel.⁴⁵⁶ Indigenous members of the church feared greatly that the General Council would decide not to apologize; however, they were reassured in circle with Elders that all they could do was ask in a good way, prayerfully gather, and still dance as a people no matter the outcome.⁴⁵⁷ The agenda for General Council was set well in advance and involved a process of presenting the information, with representatives of the Native church offering teachings and requesting the apology, and then leaving the church Court for further discussions, and finally returning to the Sacred Fire to await a response.

In Sudbury, the Court heard the proposed words of the apology, discussed Petition

⁴⁵³ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 32; “Record of Proceedings of the 31st General Council, Sudbury, ON” (United Church of Canada General Council Office, August 13, 1986), 230–31; Adele Halliday, “The Apology: Reflections from the Beginning - Interview with Alberta Billy,” *Seeing Ourselves: Ethnic Ministries*, fall/winter 2006, 4.

⁴⁵⁴ Based on an article by Bob Haverluck, as republished in the “GC31, ROP,” 233.

⁴⁵⁵ “GC31, ROP,” 233, 239–44.

⁴⁵⁶ As seen in defeated amendments to the Petition in the “GC31, ROP,” 84; Hugh. McCullum, “A Council of Faithfulness and Caring,” *The United Church Observer*, October 1986, 8.

⁴⁵⁷ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 32–33; “GC31, ROP,” 231.

558 (the request for the apology was submitted by the British Columbia Conference), voted, and passed it.⁴⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Indigenous members of the church were prayerfully gathered in circle at the Sacred Fire with traditional Elders Jim Dumont (Ojibwe-Anishinaabe) and Art Solomon (Ojibwe). Stan McKay describes the evening as overcast, but “by the time we could see the commissioners walking down toward us, the moon was out. In the clear night there was a sense of things being well in the universe.”⁴⁵⁹ A moment of grace was reflected in the humming of *Amazing Grace* by those approaching. Moderator Robert Smith entered the teepee with Elders and sat in silence. When asked to speak, he offered an apology for the historical wrong of the church representatives who imposed Euro-Western cultural ways and destroyed the rich traditional teachings and spiritual ways of Indigenous peoples, and asked that they “forgive us and to walk together in the Spirit of Christ so that our people may be blessed and God’s creation healed.”⁴⁶⁰

The moderator recounted to General Council the next day what had occurred and said that the apology had been accepted but that a response would take months, as the Elders felt they needed to consult with their communities.⁴⁶¹ A published description of the dance that followed the apology by some present speaks to the depth of the commitment of those present and the breadth of the release for those on this journey:

Voice ringing, [Smith] mourned the destruction of “the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer, and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred...”

When he finished, there was the soft sound of a woman sobbing into the darkness,

⁴⁵⁸ “GC31, ROP,” 83–85, 666; Donna Sinclair, “Of Course We Forgive You,” *The United Church Observer*, October 1986, 11.

⁴⁵⁹ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 33.

⁴⁶⁰ “GC31, ROP,” 85; Sinclair, “Of Course We Forgive You,” 10&11.

⁴⁶¹ “GC31, ROP,” 94; McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 34.

rising into a rhythmic wail of emotion overflowing into the crowd. The drums began, there were embraces, tears, dancing, the spoken wisdom of the elders, until the space ceased to be simply the lower parking lot of Laurentian University in Sudbury and became what it had always been: Ojibwa territory, with two peoples meeting on it, this time in a moment of grace.⁴⁶²

5.5 The All Native Circle Conference: A Council of Elders

When the national church was preoccupied with other issues, All Native Circle Conference was approved and came into existence.”
 ~ Janet Silman⁴⁶³

The apology process marked a shift in space so that some Indigenous Christians felt that they could bring their traditional practices into the church in worship and structures. One Indigenous woman, reflecting on which parts of her culture had been destroyed or consumed by settler society and church, felt conflicted about the impact of the apology and described it as “like rubbing salt in my wounds ... [and yet] I do know one thing. From now, I will wear my Native dress to church.”⁴⁶⁴

Structurally, the National Native Council learned that they needed a more direct voice, and they needed self-government within the church to effect change for their communities.⁴⁶⁵ The model for that process was the development of Keewatin Presbytery (in northern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario). As that presbytery developed in the early 1980s, the members realized that they had to be church in a different way. They were inclined to circle gathering and that the work of their meetings emerged through witnessing and personal sharing leading to consensus.⁴⁶⁶ As such, following the 1986 meetings,

⁴⁶² Sinclair, “Of Course We Forgive You,” 10.

⁴⁶³ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 37.

⁴⁶⁴ Sinclair, “Of Course We Forgive You,” 12.

⁴⁶⁵ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 35.

⁴⁶⁶ Salter, “Mandate Interviews Stan McKay,” 5.

processes were underway to negotiate a new church structure. It was a complex process, because although the 30th General Council made a commitment to develop an Indigenous conference within the church, the Native Council struggled to fit in the hierarchical model of the dominant church's system.⁴⁶⁷

Nonetheless, the model for this new structure was rooted in the circle. Stan McKay remembers and reflects that it is a way of being in which all Indigenous peoples had a voice and decisions could be made with a wide-open agenda, with wide ranging discussion and presentation of concerns. It was a space within which all Indigenous members were empowered to speak, listen, and be heard.⁴⁶⁸ Because of the importance of the circle to the group, it seemed obvious when searching for a name that it would become the All Native Circle Conference (ANCC). The annual consultations then became the Grand Council and the ANCC was initially divided into four regions based on the identity and political realities of different groups within The United Church of Canada.⁴⁶⁹

The ANCC was covenanted and the leadership was confirmed at the 32nd General Council in 1988, although for organizational purposes it had essentially been formed by the General Council Executive in November 1987. The ANCC became the 13th conference within The United Church of Canada, based on the joint work of the General Council Executive and National Native Council in the "Circle of 10" (reflecting the number of members).⁴⁷⁰ The presented motion acknowledged the work of the Spirit in leading the

⁴⁶⁷ "First Steps (General Council News)," *The United Church Observer*, October 1986, 12.

⁴⁶⁸ McKay and Silman, *The First Nations*, 36.

⁴⁶⁹ McKay and Silman, 36–37.

⁴⁷⁰ "Record of Proceedings of the 32nd General Council, Victoria, BC" (United Church of Canada General Council Office, August 17, 1988), 335.

Council of Elders and called on General Council to respond “by constituting the ANCC as 13th regional court of our church, to include those Native Presbyteries that have chosen or will choose to covenant into it.”⁴⁷¹ The importance of this work, and to give official place to those ANCC members, meant that this was the first act of the 32nd General Council. It was followed by the installation of commissioners, then of the Leading Elders, with the presentation of talking sticks based on the tradition of BC coastal peoples as they were gathered in Victoria, British Columbia.

The acts, symbols, gifts, and words spoken during the commissioning ceremony were rooted in numerous Indigenous spiritual traditions. For example, the covenant with the ANCC spoke of the Sacred Fire at the centre of the circle lighting the way for seven generations (four were named and three more were implied in the words “yet unborn”) and caring for Mother Earth as a faithful communion of Christians.⁴⁷²

The long-term commitment to journey together was reinforced in the first official act of the ANCC in its response to the apology. Despite the record of the 31st General Council indicating the apology was accepted, the Native Council took two years to consult, reflect, and word their response. A dense three paragraphs were spoken by Edith Memnook (Cree-Saddle Lake/Whitefish Lake): it acknowledges the words of the apology spoken, affirms Indigenous traditions, and requests respect for those traditions and to live into peaceful coexistence such that there can be healing of “the Indian spirit.” It is also a challenge to the settler church to live into its apology.

⁴⁷¹ “GC32, ROP,” 77–78 the phrasing is significant, because the BC Native Ministries and some Indigenous congregations chose not to join the ANCC.

⁴⁷² “GC32, ROP,” 78.

Alf Dumont (Ojibwe), first Conference Secretary/Executive Secretary of the ANCC, spoke to General Council to clarify the distinction and opportunity being offered in the ANCC receiving and not accepting apology.⁴⁷³ It is a traditional Euro-Western expectation that an apology be accepted; as reflected in Moderator Robert “Bob” Smith remembering an Elder whispering “of course I forgive you”; Smith expanded this to mean that the church was forgiven leading him to tell General Council: “of course they accept your apology.”⁴⁷⁴ However, Dumont clarifies that the Indigenous members of the church were committed to walk with The United Church of Canada but it was in the spirit of anticipation that the church and its members, in word and action, would live into the apology. It is an invitation to ever-deepening relations in a more just way and on a path of healing. His statement also makes clear that this is an invitation to mutual relationship as he reiterates the 1980 Aboriginal consultation’s offer of teachings from Indigenous traditions. It is an offer to help the church in its healing journey toward becoming what it is “meant by God to be,” (as different than the ways of being that were articulated in the 1986 apology) as it is enriched by the Indigenous members of the church and broader communities through their teachings about the Creator and all creation.⁴⁷⁵ As was suggested by General Council Executive:

It is prayerfully expected that the Great Spirit will lead us all into a deeper covenant faithfulness and to the discovery of new ways of being the Church of Christ together. We move in the confidence that new life and hope for our native brothers and sisters will thereby enrich all God’s people, both in the United Church and beyond.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ “GC32, ROP,” 161.

⁴⁷⁴ Sinclair, “Of Course We Forgive You,” 10; “GC32, ROP,” 94.

⁴⁷⁵ Task Group on the Relationship of The United Church of Canada to Aboriginal Spirituality, *Circle And Cross: Dialogue Planning Tool* (Toronto, ON: United Church of Canada, 2008), 42; McKay, “Aboriginal Christian Perspective on the Integrity of Creation.”

⁴⁷⁶ “GC32, ROP,” 336.

5.6 Apologies and More Apologies: Deepening Accountability, Ever-Deepening Covenant

Moving in to a deeper covenant means being accountable to the impacts of the settler coloniality choices and not simply the good intentions of the members of the United Church over time.⁴⁷⁷ In the 1990s, this stance challenged the church to become accountable for the legacy of and their role in the devastation of Indigenous peoples and communities caused by residential schools.

After the 1986 apology, The United Church of Canada began to delve into the hi/story of residential schools. The 1991 report of the *Moderator's Task Group on Residential Schools* recognized the ways that the church perpetuated settler coloniality by forcing Indigenous peoples to reject their own traditions and ways of life if they were to become Christians.⁴⁷⁸ Part of how this was implemented was in the residential schools where individuals and communities lost culture, language, and parenting skills, and became alienated from family and community.⁴⁷⁹ Further, multiple generations of painful stories are told about sexual, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual abuse. It is a system that the former moderator Stan McKay, also a survivor of the system, and the TRC have named as a cultural genocide.⁴⁸⁰

It was, yet again, Indigenous people who were calling the church to be accountable

⁴⁷⁷ See Jeremy M. Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2011) for a thorough exploration of church apologies in Canada. He problematizes the idea of apology and accountability for the best intentions of Christian ancestors. He explores different issues of multiple denominations, including some of the story of the United Church's experience of apologies.

⁴⁷⁸ As in The Healing Fund, "Why The Healing Fund? The United Church of Canada Response to the Indian Residential School Experience" (The United Church of Canada, 2011), 12.

⁴⁷⁹ See George Erasmus as in The Healing Fund, 19.

⁴⁸⁰ The Healing Fund, 16; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *TRC: Summary*, 1:1.

to the relationship.⁴⁸¹ Further, as Keith Howard and Gaye Sharpe experienced as settler-Christian witnesses in the courtroom during the “Blackwater case” (regarding the abuses at the Alberni Residential School), they and the church were being pushed to think beyond the “good intentions” or “the pies baked by women across the Church for our ‘Indian work’ We could not dissociate ourselves from the terrible social costs that the system of residential schools inflicted on First Nations families and communities.”⁴⁸²

As the church’s lawyers pressed survivors and denied their stories, these church members were forced to face the agony of witnessing the legal impacts stacked on top of the lived impacts of this experience. They were not simply hearing about a closed residential school and a particular predator but rather witnessing and participating in the ongoing reality of settler coloniality.

The depth of listening that was demanded of those witnesses in British Columbia unlocked a story that The United Church of Canada’s settler members and leaders had not heard; it revealed a painful communal reality among its Indigenous members and leaders that had not yet been spoken. It unleashed a painful, uncomfortable, and uncertain time. It brought to light the “colonial wound” with which Indigenous peoples have lived and continue to suffer, and of which settler Christians were (and are) becoming aware.⁴⁸³ Former moderator Marion Best speaks of her pain as she became conscious of the story during her tenure (1994-1997); she is explicitly saddened and frustrated by the racism in

⁴⁸¹ Keith Howard and Gaye Sharpe, “Were You There,” *Touchstone* 16, no. 2 (May 1998): 16.

⁴⁸² Howard and Sharpe, 21.

⁴⁸³ This idea is introduced in Chapter 3 and developed further in Chapter 7. I draw on Mónica González García, “Towards a Decolonial Horizon of Pluriversality: A Dialogue with Walter D. Mignolo on and around ‘The Idea of Latin America,’” *Lucero* 17 (November 2005): 39.

her church. She sees the inability of the church to raise a full million dollars in the early days of the Healing Fund (established in 1994 to support educational and healing efforts for Indigenous members of the church) and the unwillingness of the 36th General Council to offer a full apology as part of a barrier to the church's ability to live out the 1986 apology and to move into a full healing process.⁴⁸⁴ It is a sign of the colonial wound that must be addressed more deeply on many levels in the United Church from leadership positions to pew members.

In the fall of 1998, the United Church took another risk and the moderator spoke another apology to Indigenous peoples on behalf of the dominant church, particularly to the survivors of residential schools and their families. The legal constraints were part of what made the apology spoken to residential school survivors by Moderator Bill Phipps in October of 1998 such a risk,⁴⁸⁵ but as witnesses and survivors spoke up and challenged the church, many felt keenly the moral obligation that meant it was a risk that the church could no longer sidestep. It was to be part of the church's process to be unsettled by the hurt and anger of Indigenous peoples,⁴⁸⁶ members of the church and beyond, and to a continued journey toward right relations through ongoing witness to the pain from national to local levels.

At General Council 37 in Toronto (2000), recognizing the importance of continuing to speak the apologies, former moderators of the United Church were commissioned to offer them in various Indigenous communities, although by the mid-2000s they recognized

⁴⁸⁴ Marion Best, "Keep Listening to the Stories," *Touchstone* 16, no. 2 (May 1998): 9–10.

⁴⁸⁵ Edwin Searcy, "What They Thought Was Best," *Touchstone* 16, no. 2 (May 1998): 5; Bart, Right Relations Ministry of First United Church, June 12, 2015.

⁴⁸⁶ Best, "Keep Listening to the Stories," 9; Howard and Sharpe, "Were You There," 17–18.

that they needed to be translated into Indigenous languages to be properly offered in communities.⁴⁸⁷ One embodiment of the apology occurred in an “apology feast” in April 2004 to members of the Gitxsan nation who attended the Edmonton IRS; the feast was the culmination of a four-year alternative dispute resolution process. Gitxsan Elders and chiefs guided the settler representatives from the church and the government in protocols to create a gathering in the feast hall tradition. Brian Thorpe, who was one of the church representatives in this process, describes the unsettling experience of offering the invitation to the feast, and further by participating in a ritual embodiment of the cultural and spiritual bondage the children experienced in the school. He describes feeling vulnerable as words were spoken in Gitxsanimax as he, representing the whole church, was bound to his chair by one of the chiefs.⁴⁸⁸ This ritualized reversal of power was humbling for him, but also part of an important part of the healing process for the parties involved.

Paulette Regan, who was on the planning team for the feast, similarly recalls the importance of vulnerability and learning through deep listening. Learning the protocols of being hosts for the feast hall set the settler participants outside their normative frameworks and placed them in the vulnerable position of needing to trust their guides to lead them into this healing ceremony in a good way. She recalls a moment of feeling the recognition of her humanity by the Gitxsan guides and the need for their teaching and guidance, which created a space to be an intercultural team.⁴⁸⁹ For Regan, the performative acts of the feast hall

⁴⁸⁷ “Record of Proceedings of the 40th General Council, Kelowna, BC” (United Church of Canada General Council Office, August 9, 2009), 657.

⁴⁸⁸ Brian Thorpe, “Transformation in the Encounter: Reflections on a Dispute Resolution Process,” *Touchstone* 24, no. 2 (May 2006): 24–25.

⁴⁸⁹ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 203.

were an embodiment of restorying hi/story with Indigenous counter-narratives⁴⁹⁰; it created a space to embody the tradition of the feast hall being the place for treaty relations⁴⁹¹ and thus for deepening covenant relations.

The signing and development of the IRS Settlement Agreement (in 2006) provided a formal mechanism to the way The United Church of Canada has continued its commitment to live out its apologies, through the TRC processes (2008-2015) and living into the TRC Calls to Action directed specifically to the churches (2015).⁴⁹² The United Church continued to be led by Indigenous peoples through the TRC process as efforts were made to continually work with and check in with the Survivors Circle and with its own representatives of the ANCC.⁴⁹³ James Scott, in reflecting on his time working on the legacy of the residential schools, drew on a teaching in Matthew 5: 23–24⁴⁹⁴; he offers that The United Church of Canada has been on a 30-year journey of remembering the broken relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada and within the church, and working on a process of reconciliation. He was struck by the wisdom of former moderator Stan McKay who reminded him that as Indigenous peoples, they do not need partners in the work but relatives.⁴⁹⁵ The invitation, as the 2012 renewal of the crest suggested, is to consciously live

⁴⁹⁰ Regan, 209.

⁴⁹¹ As per June McCue (Ned'u'ten) in Regan, 199.

⁴⁹² (Rev.) James V. Scott, Cecile Fausak, and David MacDonald, "The Residential School Update: The Residential Schools Steering Committee" (The United Church of Canada, January 2008), 1. This includes any Call to Action that names the "parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement" and specifically CTA #58-61 in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *TRC: Summary*; Scott, Fausak, and MacDonald, "The Residential School Update: The Residential Schools Steering Committee," 1.

⁴⁹³ "GC40, ROP," 660.

⁴⁹⁴ It refers to Jesus' teaching that if you are bringing a gift to the altar, and remember that you must be reconciled to your sister or brother, then leave your gift and go be reconciled before you return to your offering.

⁴⁹⁵ (Rev.) James V. Scott, "From Invisibility to Visibility: From Stranger to Relative" (Ottawa Presbytery of the United Church of Canada, Ottawa, May 12, 2015).

into the promise of “All my relations” and the ongoing journey of living into right relations as settler and Indigenous peoples together.

5.7 Ongoing Journey to Restory

In the first part of this chapter, I surveyed recent literature published on the hi/story of The United Church of Canada and offered a critique of the lacunas in that theological record. My analysis points to ways that settler-Christian academics must renew their commitment to a decolonial turn to record and tell a more just story of Indigenous peoples in the church.

In the second part, I constructed an ecclesial hi/story of Indigenous peoples’ participation, leadership, and transformative commitment to the United Church. This restorying shows ways that the living church is engaged in an ongoing effort to live into its moral obligation, but must constantly renew its efforts toward living into right relations with Indigenous peoples within and beyond the church.

It has not been an easy story to uncover, and this restorying is but a beginning. It required archival research into not only many years of General Council Records of Proceeding, but also historical issues of The United Church of Canada publications.⁴⁹⁶ It is research that I would like to pursue, ideally to co-learn/co-research with an Indigenous scholar. It will require further interviews with leaders in The United Church of Canada whose stories have yet to be recorded and who carry the bundle of the story in their hearts, bodies, minds, and work. There are also important ecumenical facets to explore, as

⁴⁹⁶ The Records of Proceeding were generously scanned by staff in the Ottawa/Montreal Presbytery office in Montreal, and a few trips to Emmanuel College (with follow up help from staff and family) were required to gather the resources.

suggested earlier coming out of the work of the IEC, but also in recent years in terms of the church's responses individually and collectively to the TRC's Calls to Action. It is an essential story to expand and raise up in order to live into the decolonial and un/settling commitment of being an intercultural church.

The restorying work in this chapter also points to the reality that right relations do not happen instantaneously, but require an ongoing commitment to revisit words spoken, decisions made, and intentions set by the church. It requires an embodied attentiveness and a depth of listening that is a new experience in the relations within settler-colonial systems.

In the chapter that follows, I will recount the story of a local community's commitment to this kind of listening and learning. It is the story of one United Church community's efforts (and even then, primarily one small group within the congregation) to listen, learn, and act together, as they figure out what it means to be settler and Christian on unceded territory in Ottawa, Canada. It continues the narrative, but at the local level, of the church's journey to live into right relations with Indigenous peoples.

Chapter Six – Restorying at a Local Level: The Right Relations Ministry of First

United Church

The goal of the Right Relations Team is to help the congregation to *listen, learn,* and *act* on matters relating to Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

~ *First United Church Annual Report, 2011*⁴⁹⁷

An autoethnographic narrative uses its particular standpoint to disrupt the conventions of a conversation that is already underway, to shift the centres of that conversation to the margins, the margins to the centre, and to keep the whole dynamic in flux in ways that provoke the transformation of the conversation itself and, by extension, the wider contexts in which it occurs.

~*Natalie Wigg-Stevenson* ⁴⁹⁸

The work of the Right Relations ministry of First United Church in Ottawa began in 2009 in connection to the relaunch of the TRC with an official presentation to Church Council in April 2010. This group of settler Christians gathered to educate themselves about Indigenous peoples and relations with them within Canadian contexts/realities, but also to educate the congregation. The members saw this education and action process as important, with each coming from their own individual stories and experiences, and thus each being inspired for different reasons to see the relationship with Indigenous peoples as an important, essential and urgent social justice commitment for themselves and their church community.

In this chapter, I restory the experiences of the members of the Right Relations ministry team of First United; it is a story that I have been part of as member of the church and the team since 2011. This restorying embodies and grounds my dissertation in the concrete experiences of a specific community of people: a community whose commitment

⁴⁹⁷ First United Church, *2011 Annual Report*, presented in March 2012, p.24.

⁴⁹⁸ Wigg-Stevenson, “You Don’t Look Like a Baptist Minister,” 186.

to listen to, to learn about as well as with, and to act with Indigenous people has informed, inspired, and guided my research.

Lived experiences are essential for grounding theologies rooted in a liberationist tradition. The call of liberation theologies is to a transformative praxis through a preferential option for the poor. It is important to recognize that First United Church in Ottawa is a community of settler Christians who are not the poor and marginalized but, through their communal praxis, they are manifesting a decolonial option to establish right relations with Indigenous peoples.

The structure of the chapter is along the *spacemoments* of learning of the group and the congregation from 2009 to 2015 with a focus on the pivotal growth or learning years within the congregation between 2011–2013. Spacemoments is a term found in John Paul Lederach and Angela Lederach’s work and it describes the moment when sound erupts from a sound bowl; it is an endeavour that requires coaxing and re-coaxing as the sound will dissipate if it is not tended to.⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, in the work of the Right Relations Team, this chapter describes their own personal efforts but also their communal efforts to coax and re-coax a community into the spacemoments of hard work toward right relations.

To bring the reader into these experiences, I use a polyphonic narrative and episodic storytelling; this allows me to incorporate as many of the original voices/words of the members of the Right Relations Team as possible and reflects their telling of these days and

⁴⁹⁹ John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: Journeys through the Soundscape of Healing and Reconciliation* (Oxford, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 100. A precursor to this concept is found in John Paul Lederach’s description of “spacetime” which is a circular understanding of the relationship of time with space, such that the past, present and future all simultaneously inform social meaning, identity and story, see Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 146.

events. The restorying parallels the learning experiences over time and in many spaces of the team and their reflection on this work in the congregation; as a result, the structure of the restorying itself shows the processes of deepening learning of the team and the community. The first section of the chapter (6.1) lays the groundwork for the emergence of this community's commitment to work toward right relations with Indigenous peoples; the second section (6.2) re-stories twelve spacemoments of listening, learning, and acting of the Right Relations Team with First United primarily between 2010–2015; and the third section (6.3) points to a fruition, with the TRC events in Ottawa, of this work and commitment.

6.1 Stumbling Toward Right Relations

I do not remember noticing her energy during the Blanket Exercise in the Labyrinth Room at First United in that winter of 2011. But I remember it afterward. She was well dressed; a well-put-together woman, perhaps even a “lady,” she was so “just so.” She got more and more flustered as the sharing went around the talking circle. When she finally spoke, she had a lisp that caught my ear. She spoke of her outrage at the portrayal of the good people she had worked for in government. She defended their honour, and perhaps hers by extension. I remember desperately wanting to talk back to her points. I think I managed not to. I remember the minister was sitting across the circle from me. His energy was palpable to me, as was his frustration.

I think there was a breakdown in the respect for the circle in that moment. I believe people responded to her directly, breaking form but also breaking the communal bond of the circle as a space for all, in all our vulnerabilities. She was counterattacking, defending, shutting down as she was being shut down. Emotions were running high as we all were

being challenged by the unsettling narrative of the Canadian story recounted in this embodied learning experience. The settler tendency toward “moves to settler innocence”⁵⁰⁰ are so much more natural than being engaged, challenged, and transformed.

A few years later, I asked the minister if he remembered that event and that interaction. “Oh yes! I thought we lost her that night.” I still see her. Dressed just so, she comes in to church and occupies a pew. We did not lose her in the sense that she no longer attends church. But did we lose her on the journey to conscientization and the praxis required of settler Christians toward right relations?

6.1.1 First United: Roots of Listening and Learning

The story of right relations at First United Church goes back to the day one steps in the doors, according to Bernadette.⁵⁰¹ She describes with passion and compassion, joy, and with an aching heart, the importance of being in right relations in all our relationships. She describes it as an essential aspect and, for her, the essence at the foundation of First United Church. That commitment meant that when she began attending in 1994, she helped translate for a Chinese family whose elderly father was in palliative care, and who the church was supporting through prayer and presence. It meant she received with grace the reports and friendship of her daughter’s Sunday school teacher and the regular check-ins of the minister at the time. She traveled at least 100 days per year for work and yet, with a growing congregation and packed coffee hour, these two women always found Bernadette.

⁵⁰⁰ A term defined in Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor”. This notion is explored in Chapter 3 on settler coloniality.

⁵⁰¹ Bernadette (this is a pseudonym) is the only non-white member of the group. Note that all the names of the members of the Right Relations Team, congregants and the current minister have been changed. The name of the church is the actual church in Ottawa. The names of resource people, such as ecumenical or national church representatives, have not been changed. The names of guests or invited presenters to the church have not been changed.

“It’s all about relationship,” she says.

The further expression of living into those right relations with Indigenous peoples is an extension of what First United has always been about in Bernadette’s (now) 25-year experience in the community. For her, right relations are a broad-based experience of living with an open heart and engaging fully with life and all those who cross her path. She remembers in the 1990s when an Aboriginal woman who was part of the “60s Scoop” came to the church and spoke about her journey to self-discovery. It was at a time when few were talking of these issues. Bernadette noted emphatically that she learned about residential schools and the need for healing of the relationships with Indigenous peoples at her church.

Others in the Right Relations Team describe moving the community of First to awareness and action about Indigenous peoples in Canada and their experiences and stories, as a difficult struggle. They felt that the congregation was in avoidance; I had an experience of this that I described above during the Blanket Exercise in 2011. However, Julia and Jennifer both recall making announcements at Sunday services and feeling like they were looking out at a distant and unresponsive group of people who did not want to hear what was being said. Jennifer describes “people’s eyes kinda glazing over” or a “stone face” looking back at her. Julia adds that First is a feisty active community, and so this response was at odds with her previous experiences, as they were “polite but not really there.” Julia herself is committed because as one who turned a blind Republican-raised eye to the civil rights movement in her youth, she swore to never ignore the trampling of another’s rights again,

I wish that I would’ve had the knowledge and the chutzpah to get involved. It was the same thing. But I didn’t even want to know...I didn’t even want to know about the pain, so I found out later. But this time! I think I almost said at one point, if this

ever happens again, where somebody's rights are being that badly treated...I want to know, cause I want to do something...when someone's being marginalized, that is, that's against the laws of nature and laws of life and so it's incumbent on people that are comfortable to do something about that!

Right Relations with “our Aboriginal neighbours” is not something she feels the congregation has taken on as their own. She is not sure whether people are overwhelmed, see it as unimportant, or if they feel too guilty about the damage done. But she insightfully reflects that a “reality about all this, is people are numb around it.”

This is not easy nor particularly grounding work. It is unsettling and the more you know, the less you feel you know or understand. Julia chuckles as she recalls how the first group of people gathered “in such innocence” because they cared about what was happening to Indigenous peoples in Canada. They “initiated a number of events and opportunities to help develop greater awareness of, and engagement with, Aboriginal peoples in Canada.... [to] help the congregation prepare itself for meaningful participation in the Truth & Reconciliation process underway across Canada.”⁵⁰² They came to realize in gathering “to listen to others, and understand how much there is to learn, surprised at how little [they] know.”⁵⁰³

6.1.2 First United: “Dare to Grow” from its Roots

Grappling with conscientization to our settler attitudes, the roles of our churches in colonial projects such as residential schools and those of our country's administration is a decentring exercise for those with settler privilege in Canada, and First United is one such congregation. It was the first United Church established in Ottawa, founded in 1925, and

⁵⁰² First United Church, *2010 Annual Report*, presented in March 2011, p.23.

⁵⁰³ First United Church, *Church Council Minutes*, April 22, 2010.

formed by the joining of Westminster Presbyterian and First Congregational. A primarily Euro-Canadian congregation today, its members are typically well-educated; many work in social services, NGOs, or government, and some are retired clergy. The Church struggled with the prospect of closure in the 1980s and found a new identity and reinvigorated community with a focus on issues of justice and faith. As the community discerned the best uses for its resources, it decided to give up its huge downtown building on Kent Street and forge a new ecumenical relationship with All Saints Anglican in Westboro Village, a neighbourhood in Ottawa. First United's congregation moved in to its new life, to the ringing welcome of the church bells, at 347 Richmond Road in April 2007.

Being in this new space and part of town, the congregation searched for a new grounding that would hold true to the community's commitment to justice. They engaged in a multilayered discernment that they named "Dare to Grow" (starting after the Annual General Meeting in March 2008). Patrick remembers the importance of the "living room" conversations, a strategy to hear from as many in the community as possible through small gatherings in many different people's homes. Each living room gathering had a recorder whose summaries of the conversation were brought to Church Council. Through that process, the commitment to the Ministry of social justice was restated, reinvigorated, and reengaged.⁵⁰⁴

Prior to this time and overlapping this local church's discernment, the national church was struggling with accountability to the people who had been harmed by their residential schools' experiences. Bart remembers being on the national church's Executive

⁵⁰⁴ First United Church, "Summary of the Dare to Grow", *2009 Annual Report*, presented in March 2010, pp 2-4.

when the Baxter case, a class action suit connected to residential schools, was being discussed (in 2006). And because of the reality that they were one church among many named in the lawsuit, and because of the legal vulnerability of The United Church of Canada due to its national structure, and of what he recalls as a desire not to defend themselves, that the church joined the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and process.⁵⁰⁵ Bart remembers that the presence, wisdom, and knowledge of James Scott⁵⁰⁶ was important in grounding the work of First United and the Ottawa Presbytery.

In 2008, the Ottawa Presbytery began a process of learning about the TRC and discerning about the residential schools, but also about how as church at the local level, they were going to carry forward and heal from that legacy. Steph, who was on staff at First United as the Diaconal Minister in Pastoral Care and Ministry of Presence, was invited to attend a retreat sponsored by Presbytery. She remembers the “Living Into Right Relations” retreat at Temple Pastures⁵⁰⁷ as an eye-opening, intellectually-challenging and heart-changing event. Steph was exposed to national leaders in the work of right relations with Indigenous peoples in the United Church and ecumenical worlds: James Scott, Wayne Shaney, Ed Bianchi, and Laverne Jacobs. Although there were follow-up meetings of the Presbytery’s “Living Into Right Relations” group, the event did not lead to sustained action at that level of the church.

⁵⁰⁵ The IRSSA is an agreement between the Government of Canada, the responsible churches, and the Indigenous peoples who attended Residential Schools. One of the components of the agreement was the institution of the TRC.

⁵⁰⁶ James Scott is a member of First United and as mentioned in chapter 5 was the senior national staff General Council Officer for Residential Schools. He is known as Jamie in our community and is referred to as such by members of the Right Relations Team and in church bulletins and minutes. For consistency across the dissertation and at his request, I will refer to him as James.

⁵⁰⁷ She mentioned this retreat in her interview, and it is recorded as part of her ministerial report in First United Church, *2008 Annual Report*, presented in March 2009.

However, at the local level at First United, in conjunction with the “Dare to Grow” discernment, there was energy and interest. As an affirming congregation, there was a stated desire to make links with issues of social justice in common with LGBT, such as justice for Aboriginal people.⁵⁰⁸ There were mentors and leaders on issues of Aboriginal justice in the community such as James Scott who was mentioned previously, Sylvia Smith who created the *Project of Heart* memorial project with youth, and Michael who has been actively engaged in solidarity with Indigenous peoples his whole life with expertise in land claims processes.

6.2 Right Relations Ministry at First United

The exact moment of emergence of the Right Relations Team at First United is unclear. However, the percolations bubbled up with the 2008 Canadian apology for residential schools and the establishment of the TRC in 2008 and its re-establishment in June 2009. Bart was on the organizing committee for the opening events of the TRC at the Museum of Civilization (now Museum of History). Steph recalls attending a reception at the Westin Hotel the night before the apology and then she was invited to the TRC opening too.

Michael shared his learnings with the seniors of the TGIF group on numerous occasions starting in 2008.⁵⁰⁹ Julia remembers a conversation with Michael, wherein they were discussing the TRC. She remembers him saying that “they should be educating every

⁵⁰⁸ First United Church, *2009 Annual Report*, presented in March 2010, p.21.

⁵⁰⁹ First United Church, “TGIF Friday Afternoon Group”, *2008 Annual Report*, presented in March 2009, p.14.

single school about this so that the schoolchildren show up for those TRC things. Every church should be educating so all the churches show up.” It seemed vital to them that their congregation be informed and prepared.

Still others in the group have had a commitment to right relations with Indigenous peoples since their childhood and this commitment through the church was a natural outgrowth. For Jennifer, it is in continuity with her sense of being just in the world; on the playground, she was considered the social worker of her grade one class as she stood up for friends who were not treated fairly. She grew up surrounded by poor people like her and her family, and that sense of solidarity—and the class analysis and the race analysis that goes with those early childhood experiences—has never left her. It is now enacted in the ways that she seeks to be in relationship emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually with Indigenous women in particular. For example, through women-identified drumming groups (like with Minwaashin Lodge) that she joined since she began drumming almost a decade ago.

Another member of the group, Michael, also found that childhood experiences of living on the margins of his city and growing up right next to the reserve, such that Indigenous people were the neighbourhood kids he played with, are his inspiration to continue to do the work personally, professionally, and ecclesially. His early racial observations were of a disconnect he felt between his home Presbyterian church in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and the whiteness of that group of people, and his feelings of certainty that his Indigenous friends would neither be welcomed nor would they feel at ease to be present in that church community. This disconnect is what has informed his lifelong passion to learn through research and study and also teach about the relationship between Indigenous

peoples and the Canadian government, in particular through land claims processes.

This small ad hoc group of six to eight congregants formed and forged informal links with local initiatives in late 2009 and early 2010.⁵¹⁰ Steph recalls gatherings at Michael and Julia's home to learn together, to coordinate and share about their participation in local activities whether powwows or events at Golden Lake or Kitigan Zibi, and to dream up their own events. Jennifer, through her relationship with many Indigenous women and drumming circles, encouraged her friends and fellow members to join her at various powwows. Steph and Bernadette recall these experiences as acts of physical engagement that moved them out of their physical comfort zone in their own space/church and placed them into unknown spaces. They remember that that risk-taking was part of what allowed them to learn what it means to risk relationality and engage in right relations. The networks that individual members became connected with and the events that they collectively participated in were part of their own awakening and conscientization.

6.2.1 Right Relations: Embodied Learnings

Although emerging out of the call from the TRC, the group did not limit itself to learning about residential schools. This element, although fundamental to the story of relations and the need for healing, does not represent the fullness of the story or the relations. The approach has been part of a multi-fold engagement to learn as much as possible and on as many levels as possible about the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler peoples in Canada. This commitment was nurtured by relationships that

⁵¹⁰ Some of these are mentioned in First United Church, *Church Council Minutes*, in January and February 2010.

each of the members had with the ecumenical organization KAIROS,⁵¹¹ which afforded learning opportunities that they had with its Ottawa staff person Ed Bianchi and experience of the Blanket Exercise, but also to participate in the annual educational conference here in Ottawa, the *Covenant Chain Link*, since 2009.

The Blanket Exercise is an embodied experiential learning tool using role play to expand people's understanding of Canadian hi/story.⁵¹² As Bart succinctly put it: "so the Blanket Exercise is a way of condensing very complicated pieces of information into a visual for people who know nothing, to get some sense of it." Bernadette remembers struggling the first few times she experienced it: "The Blanket Exercise is so complicated, that I felt like, okay is it that I'm a slow learner? No no no. It's 'cause the history of Aboriginal people in Canada is so complex." Steph, Jennifer, and Bernadette speak of the impacts they each felt through various embodied learning opportunities they had, especially how haunted they still are by various role plays.

As they recount those stories, they are speaking of the character they were assigned in the first person, as if it really was them going off to residential school and hearing the grandmothers wailing or experiencing the loss of land and community. Steph reflects on the richness of the learning they were doing in those early days and months of the group: "So...to be in contact with a deeper sort of sense of the history, and the importance and

⁵¹¹ KAIROS is an ecumenical organization bringing together 10 churches and religious organization to work on issues of ecological justice and human rights. One of their 5 areas of work is Indigenous Rights. See <https://www.kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights> (accessed May 15, 2017).

⁵¹² The facilitators of the Exercise prepare the space by laying out interconnected blankets on the floor; these represent the original territories of Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada. Participants are invited to gather on the blankets. As a script is read, various participants are affected by disease and policies of the colonial and then Canadian government, and must leave the blankets. Simultaneously, the blankets are folded up thus representing the shrinking spaces on which Indigenous peoples now must live.

what was happening, was, was amazing. And, so you couldn't help but feel you wanted to be more engaged and to learn more."

6.2.2 Right Relations: Rooted in the Congregation

Julia and Patrick described the importance or the reality of rooting this work in the structure of the congregation. Patrick recounts that, in fact, philosophically for him this was an essential piece of what it meant to be in right relations. He felt that they needed to have their enthusiasm and passions and emotions cross-checked by a group of people who were outside of the immediate small circle. He remembers that it was important in his view to check how or when they as individuals were responding to a social justice issue, or when they were responding on behalf of the congregation as a ministry of the church. And thus, what appropriate lines of communication needed to be assured to ensure that they were not speaking out of line.

Julia, who is recognized by many of the members as one of the anchors and a driving force that has kept the group alive, remembers wanting institutional support for this work. She saw it as important to make a presentation to Council. On April 22, 2010, they (represented by Julia and two others who are no longer part of the group) made a three-phase proposal to Church Council for a lay-led initiative on Right Relations at First United. The team was "looking to build relationships and how to develop response from our community to first-nations [*sic*] communities."⁵¹³ They spoke of how much there is to learn and how little non-Aboriginal people know and proposed bringing their learnings to the congregation through information centres, such as notices in the church bulletin, *First*

⁵¹³ First United Church, *Church Council Minutes*, April 22, 2010, p.3.

Glance, on display boards at coffee hour as well as an information table, and followed by a fall educational program. Church Council supported the ideas and offered the suggestion that a further link with youth was equally important. The May 2010 minutes of Church Council reflect that right relations is to be one of the congregation's five social justice focus areas that Steph oversaw.

6.2.3 Right Relations: Educating So All Will Show Up!

Michael reflected that the weekly educational work was key to raising the profile of Indigenous peoples' stories and issues in this congregation. That ministry of presence was what rooted Right Relations as part of the identity of First United:

[...] one of our priorities was simply to maintain the profile of our interest in these topics. That did not mean making announcements every week, haranguing people, you know, about the desperate situation of other people somewhere else. You know, just...we didn't want to tire people out.

But what we tried to do, well...'cause we had a table at coffee hour, near where people come in, with stuff out...on the table, what was happening in town...activities here... made that information available, made ourselves available and stayed visible. I think that's the most effective thing a group can do within a context of a congregation. There's lots of issues that are coming and going, so the consistency of one...with people at it...Get a coffee, and they'd wander over. You know...Some tentatively and others would charge right in and just wanna know anything you knew, and ask about and tell what they knew [...], and just have conversations. That is the single most valuable thing to do. Cause people will lose interest, you know...if it's not their main thing in life, it's outside their normal purview...they won't go looking for it, typically. It has to be kinda in front of them.

And I've always thought that, even people in the congregation [at First], who, never touch it...who never pick up the ball on any aspect of it. It starts to define the congregation. It defines the community by its continued presence...so quietly and unobtrusively and even unconsciously, it elevates the entire community.

The work of this team moved in and out of the life of the congregation in 2010 and 2011: in these informal coffee times on Sundays, but more formally with Steph's leadership of the "Ministry of Social Justice and Outreach and Wider United Church of Canada"

through “Refl’Action” gatherings⁵¹⁴ (one of the first was a showing the film *Frontrunners* in November 2010) and the worship life of the community with the November 21, 2010, service “Seeking Right Relations with Our Aboriginal Neighbours.” As Julia recalls, Paul Carl (Algonquin, Oneida, European) was invited to reflect on the Red Road and the richness of traditional spirituality:

We decided to start not by guilting anyone out but to start with the beauty of the traditional culture. And he was gorgeous, he taught the kids, he stayed after and we did a circle during coffee hour. Just answering questions. He did the children’s time, he brought a big bear rug and they all sat on the rug and he let them hold everything. Ah! I just love the guy!

He gifted the community with a weaving of a wolf that Bart wove into the Advent liturgical season. Bart was touched by this service and the encounter with Paul Carl, as he said:

I think that was a pretty pivotal service. It was for me personally. So, if we’re talking personal storytelling, that Sunday made me *think* differently...it really was about knowing him, as opposed to being educated about the issues... So, he came and taught simply. There was a humility in the way in which he, um, he just shared his life and his stories. That. That. That was different. ...it changed the nature of the way of doing the work. Away from ‘doing for’ to ‘we have a lot to learn’ and ‘we need to walk beside or perhaps behind.’

But as he, the team, and the congregation discovered in the struggle of the community of Barriere Lake, figuring out how and who to walk beside is complex.

6.2.4 Right Relations: Hearing into Relationship through Algonquin Trees

The Right Relations Team prepared a five-week educational series for Lent 2011, rooted in its conviction (as Bart’s comments highlighted) that people need not only opportunities to be exposed to the issues facing Indigenous peoples but to have encounters

⁵¹⁴ This term is used at First United to speak of learning opportunities at the church; the evenings are structured with a gathering time around a meal, then a learning time with a speaker or film, and the evening ends with a group discussion time.

and be engaged in relationship with Indigenous people. Their series entitled “Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: A chance to listen and to learn” was a pivotal moment in the journey of conscientization of many of the members, particularly the presentation by Michel Thusky on the situation of the Algonquin people of Barriere Lake. Julia says quite simply that “people were gobsmacked.”

Linda named this evening as key in the series; the sorrow in her voice was palpable as she described the “egregious” exploitation of the land and the shock as she recognized this community’s land and trees were “being taken and logged without their permission. And just...that that could still be going on...” Michael, who was an organizer of this first lecture series, describes that talk as compelling, as it

...was a direct encounter in the middle of a struggle. Partly because of the...the timing of it...there was a process, that people, at that time, were currently engaged in...and partly the character [of Michel]...but we were all impressed with the way they made their presentation. The calm deliberateness of it. [...] For everybody, myself included, that was most compelling experience and one that made...made us want to be involved, be doing something. And I think at the very heart of it, is relationship. Cause the other sessions were about people that weren’t in the room. And that last one was: the people were in the room.

Patrick was outraged at the seeming disrespect for the Tripartite agreement,⁵¹⁵ and the “bad relation apparent between Barriere Lake and the QPP [*sic*; Sûreté Québec]. And there had been a demonstration at which two young men were arrested. And I discovered that they were without legal counsel.” Patrick forcefully speaks of the lack of just and due process as a result and further, his sense that they as a congregation could do something

⁵¹⁵ “The Barriere Lake Trilateral Agreement was signed August 22, 1991 by the Algonquins of Barriere Lake, the government of Quebec, and the government of Canada.” See http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-41-37-eng.pdf (accessed May 15, 2017).

concrete. Thus, he made a push for the church to help create a defense fund; he himself put money forward and “First United...set up a special bank account to receive donations in aid of their legal struggle against the federal government’s challenge to their traditional system of government.”⁵¹⁶

Bart added some more texture to this simply reported statement. He reflects on the congregation’s desire to act with justice in the world and the complexity of what it is to enter these spaces of relationship and trust with Indigenous communities, especially given the distortions caused by the colonial legacy and the multiplicity of perspectives in Indigenous communities and in the church community generally. He reflected:

I’m always in that, trying to balance this...trying to balance this desire to advocacy and respond—which I think we need to do—with knowing that there sometimes are a little bit more involved in the issues. So even with when getting involved with Barriere Lake. And recognizing that...Like I think, I’m quite happy with how we’ve responded to Barriere Lake. [...] I don’t accept the argument: it’s too complicated, we can’t do something...So that’s why we did take a stand on Barriere Lake. They came. I trusted the Right Relations, they made a judgment. We tried to facilitate some things, but we couldn’t take on their legal battle, nor fund it. Though some people asked us to do that. We tried to find ways to be supportive, but we couldn’t go down that route. Even as a religious organization we’re not allowed to do that.

Despite the church’s overarching commitment to issues of justice for and commitment to journey with Indigenous peoples, there are tensions within the community at First, which Bart hinted at in terms of formulating responses to Barriere Lake, and later Centre 510 (in 2015) and Chaudière Falls (since 2015). Those tensions are further amplified by the plurivocality in Indigenous communities. Bart said:

There is a division [...] in the Aboriginal community and we’ve picked a side [in Barriere Lake]. That’s fair. The same thing is happening with Chaudière Falls. These are complicated issues. So, what I...so it’s always a bit of a trick, for the

⁵¹⁶ First United Church, “Right Relations” under “Social Justice Ministry”, *2011 Annual Report*, presented in March 2012, p.24.

church to take a side on a particular issue. You know, there's right relations, which we'll all say we're behind right relations...and then when it gets into some particularities of the issues, the Aboriginal community doesn't speak with one voice and so..., this is a challenge. So how do we not get co-opted by one perspective or something like that? But yet, not become so fearful that you take no stand on anything.

It was the original experience of hearing those stories directly from the people experiencing the oppression that called forth such a strong desire to act and to make things right from Patrick. He described the learning in great emotional detail:

...hearing about Barriere Lake and hearing about how they had worked to create an agreement: federal, provincial and the band. Hearing how that was totally disrespected and not implemented by the lumber companies and the province. [...] having those those people [Patrick choked up and teared up as he spoke] it was really very moving. From Barriere Lake...And they came to talk about the difficulties they had and how they were confronted by people stealing their trees, with police bullying them, arresting them, using the law against them. And how it divided families. And how they had this Band council in Maniwaki that was appointed by the Minister. And why did the Minister do something like that? Shut them up! It was astounding to hear the stories! We could not possibly have understood the realities without the stories. So...and hearing them was so important.

He goes on to add, "It's that conceit of power that was so *impressive* because it was so *oppressive*. I had never myself, other than theoretically, understood oppression. Because these were people, and sort of like Oka, these were people who appeared in good faith to have created an agreement, only to be betrayed."

As Michael reiterates, it is the experience of that personal encounter with injustice and the call to right relationship that pushes people to want to take a stand and take action:

The experience had enough authenticity and they exhibited...enough integrity...that people [in the church] were, we were...all willing, wanting to be in relationship. Whether that meant from the periphery, which it likely would be...as no one was planning to move to Barriere Lake. What kind of role, could any of us in our situation play in relation to them in their situation? They had shown their willingness to share their story...to go out of their way to share their story, with a relatively small number of people...and it was such that it evoked a response, a desire on everybody's part to ... But at the root, it's relationship.

First United has maintained a relationship with Barriere Lake beyond this event, and the community has continued in the learning journey.⁵¹⁷

6.2.5 Right Relations: Deepening Engagement

In worship, the community had since June 2008 an annual Aboriginal Sunday service around the time of the Summer Solstice and National Aboriginal Day. However, in 2011, a Right Relations Sunday service was created around the Equinox in September. James Scott offered the reflection on Scripture. The 2011 Annual Report recalls James' "deep insights into the legacy of Residential Schools, and how 'making right our relationships' with our (Aboriginal) brothers and sisters is a prerequisite to being in right relationship with God."⁵¹⁸ As a way to honour the Algonquin peoples, whose stories the congregation had heard and whose stories the members of the Right Relations Team began to carry in their hearts, on April 24, 2011 a territorial acknowledgement began to appear in the Sunday bulletin. It read: "As we worship, we give thanks to the Creator for the Earth and we honour the Algonquin people upon whose traditional land we gather."

In 2012, the Right Relations group was described in the Annual Report as "one of the most active small groups at First."⁵¹⁹ The team was active in the church, creating the Aboriginal Sunday service in June and supporting the *All my Relations* service in September (reflecting on the new United Church of Canada crest); as well as they created a

⁵¹⁷ First United Church, *Right Relations minutes*, January 9, 2013; learning event with KAIROS. Also in certain moments of crisis over the past five years – such as when their funding had been frozen by the federal government – the Barriere Lake community has called upon their contacts at First for support. Most recently in March 2017, there was a chili dinner fundraiser for the Barriere Lake Defense Fund at the church.

⁵¹⁸ First United Church, "Right Relations", *2011 Annual Report*, presented in March 2012, p.24.

⁵¹⁹ First United Church, *2012 Annual Report*, presented in March 2013, p.13.

three-week Lenten series with Charlie Angus (MP for James Bay) on the motion in Parliament on *Shannen's Dream*; Cindy Blackstock on *Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle* and the *I am a Witness* program of the First Nations Caring Society.⁵²⁰ Additionally, the current minister and Peter Larson delivered a presentation on the Occupied Territories in Israel and Palestine. Linda, with help of a couple other members, wrote almost weekly mini-book reports for First Glance throughout the year; they were intended to give congregants opportunities to learn and provide direction for their own research and study. Linda found it a challenging task, especially as she felt she got no feedback on the usefulness of her work.

The shift in 2012, despite ongoing challenges, was that the work was integrating at many levels in the life of the church. A deeper engagement with the Presbytery office was noted with events organized with Chief Gilbert Whiteduck in Ottawa and in Kitigan Zibi. Then, at First United, the youth were involved in the *Our Dreams Matter Too* campaign in support of equitable funding for First Nations education⁵²¹ and the seniors in TGIF were learning about and fundraising for *Shannen's Dream*. Additionally, Church Council submitted a letter to the national church's *Task Group on the Basis of Union and the United Church Crest* to offer appreciation for their work, and to encourage them to recognize the legacy of residential schools in the wording.⁵²² Further, the presence and education of the broader community was engaged through events at the Westboro neighbourhood summer

⁵²⁰ Each of these is a campaign to address different aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives, in particular that of the youth. A brief explanation of each can be found at <https://fncaringociety.com/7-free-ways-make-difference>, accessed October 31, 2017.

⁵²¹ See <https://fncaringociety.com/our-dreams-matter-too>, accessed October 31, 2017.

⁵²² First United Church, *Appendix #5, Church Council Minutes*, January 2012.

festival, *WestFest*, particularly an Aboriginal art exhibit coordinated by Bernadette and her friend Simon Brascopé (a Tuscaroran/Algonquin artist from Kitigan Zibi). Even though the artists were not paid to exhibit, as she says “he’s my relation...[silent moment] ...so when someone’s your relation, you do things you don’t normally want to do.”

6.2.6 “Living into Right Relations”: Risking with Kitigan Zibi

As a member of the Right Relations Team, I remember the very rich learning experience in January 2012 that occurred when Presbytery invited Kitigan Zibi chief Gilbert Whiteduck to speak. We tried hard to create a circle but the room was packed and people lined the hallway just to hear him. He stood, quietly and calmly, holding a talking stick. He admitted that he had never been invited to speak to a church group and that it felt risky for him to be there. I remember this so clearly, because the risk had never struck me before; it caused me to reflect yet again on my white settler privilege. There was a respect in the room for the stories he shared and an openness in mind and spirit to what he offered. I suspect he felt that respect, because he subsequently welcomed a whole group from the Presbytery to the community.

Presbytery, as part of its *Living into Right Relations* commitment, opened an invitation to all the congregations in the area to visit the Algonquin Territory of Kitigan Zibi Anishnaabeg in March 2012 to meet with Chief Gilbert Whiteduck in the Cultural Centre and to be guided on a tour by the principal/executive director of the school facilities. I remember the space of the Cultural Centre: a beautiful gathering circle is placed in the middle of the building and the circle around the outside of this space was where we toured and learned the hi/story of the community. Having written the year before about the wampum belts that Chief William Commanda had carried, I was awed to see the *Kaswénta*

and *Jay Treaty* belts on display.

For me, this was an experience of learning about something and then experiencing it in its own context. It brought the stories and the teachings to life in a new and grounded way. Similarly, when we were in the library at the school, I noticed a book display that had science books that were presenting Indigenous scientific knowledge. It sent me back to when I read Vine Deloria's book *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. I imagined what a similar display might look like in the high school where I had formerly taught in Toronto. I was struck by the epistemic shifts that are required to move our settler learning spaces out of its Euro-Western zero-point hubris.

Later, the director of the school had our group hang out, as the kids probably did during the week. in the centre of the building on the stairs. She shared some of what was happening on their reserve to support their children in learning and growing and countering the intergenerational trauma legacy of residential schools. As Linda noticed, it is an intergenerational task to learn in a new way and requires a serious commitment from the teachers to stay grounded:

And that was pretty impressive too; seeing the school...because the school was absolutely fantastic! I mean each classroom was really well equipped and well planned...and...you could tell there was an interesting learning environment. And then they have a room, where it was Indigenous culture...so that's where they taught the culture...and then learning the kids came from that school who are still on the land...and they were bussed in from Barriere Lake. So you see...and you saw the commitment of teachers to what they were doing. That was really impressive...and then the daycare, the community centre...so that was a very interesting experience. Because it was so successful!...They've got teachers there who lived on the reserve and got their MAs and came back and taught. So that, that was really impressive and very moving.

While we were there, Gilbert Whiteduck accepted Steph's invitation to participate in the Aboriginal Sunday service at First United in June 2012. Steph and I spoke about this

during our interview. She reflected on seeing him alone in the Community Centre, and went up to chat. She saw it as an opportunity that she took to ask him to come to First. Her thinking was that “you can only ask, and he can say no.” As we discussed this, I wondered about protocols with visitors and whether there might have been a cultural divide there in terms of whether he could even say no to her. I asked her what she thought made it possible for him to take the risk to come speak in a church on a Sunday morning; she pondered

I guess I never thought of safety in terms of that. I mean he didn’t know me. In terms of that: the opportunity was there and I took it. He is a person and I am a person. And I didn’t see there was any need...and maybe I’m just wrong in that. But he accepted it as such. So, he obviously was open to that. What made it possible? I don’t know. I think that’s the Spirit working. I think so.

Interestingly, at another occasion, Steph did reflect on the risk for Indigenous women who were participating in a December 6th service at the church.⁵²³ She remembered a service that was led by people working with *Sisters in Spirit*, and remembering Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and

...they had the huge pictures. Were you there that time? And there were pictures in the narthex and there were pictures up in the chancel. And one was a mother who spoke, and the other was a daughter who spoke. And it was a very moving service.

And I remember going up and thanking one of those two speakers for coming to share with us and thanked her for having the courage to do that. Because it’s not easy to come into a church setting and I thought, ah my goodness. And she said, “no thank you, for having us.” And I thought, oh my gosh, you know, like it’s that bit of graciousness that’s coming out, and you think “oh they must be so angry.” And yet here they are, getting up the courage to speak in front of people in a church. And that is not easy. And so, for her to thank us, I thought, my gosh that’s really something.

I asked her what that evokes in her and she said: “I guess a great sense of humility.

⁵²³ As part of the December 6th National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Ottawa, the church hosts a service after the memorial gathering at Minto Park.

Um. And thankfulness for their generosity of spirit. Really. And so, learning to walk with ...is so important. To do that journey well...”

6.2.7 Right Relations: Walking with Idle No More

And the Spirit was moving in late 2012. The Annual Report. though, humbly suggests: “December found us becoming involved in the “Idle No More” movement and the spiritual fast of Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat on Victoria Island as they began to bring their protests and concerns for Indigenous Rights to the Federal Government and Crown. This has focused our work in to the new year.”⁵²⁴

Julia simply remembers: “Then we just waited for events. Like when Theresa was here. We took food down and sat around the fire down there.” And Steph says: “I think we’re beginning to learn and the Idle No More helped us a great deal...and we went on the walk and we went to the Island and had a wonderful afternoon session down there. And we’re taking food for the, the ones at Victoria Island, so we became involved in that Idle No [More]...not deeply but certainly enough that we got a good sense of what was happening.” And Jennifer, through her drumming circles:

I was actually very involved with Theresa. In fact, I was...there was a handful, there were four of us when it was freezing rain. And she didn’t want to meet Prime Minister. But they asked for drummers to stay on the Island to support her and I was one of them. That was...that was really powerful. [...] I had the connection to it...with Minwaashin. And it was interesting cause I was able to call [the church], [...] and they ran over with water...and...We were collecting stuff at church, and Bernadette and I (and other people) like Julia would bring it over.”

As a member of the congregation and the Right Relations Team, I remember that as the movement of Idle No More was shaping, I was at home nursing an infant. But I was

⁵²⁴ First United Church, “Right Relations”, *2012 Annual Report*, presented in March 2013, p.27.

still reading my emails, and through connections with KAIROS, our church was part of the movement with simple acts to provide wood and water. Bart had the opportunity to “chat with Chief Spence” when he went to Victoria Island with MP Paul Dewar⁵²⁵ and Michael was forwarding some of the early coverage of the movement.⁵²⁶ It was impressive that this small group of settler Christians could be so active and interconnected with such a radical grassroots Indigenous movement. And, as the Annual Report noted, “United Church congregations were encouraged to participate by our Moderator as well as KAIROS. First United was well represented.”⁵²⁷ The actions of the team were concrete and followed the requests of the Indigenous community; a learning that had been growing in the group since its inception.

6.2.8 Right Relations: Witnessing Truth and Reconciliation

The work of the Right Relations Team has been rich and has been spiraling out into the broader community since that time: “...the Lenten series planted an awful lot of seeds [said Jennifer]. We did it for a couple of years in a row...and that’s the other magical part, is that, it’s taken a life of its own. It’s that, it started in small group. And then people came, and actually some people came from other churches. And now their churches have the Right Relations groups.” Steph thinks that the work at First United spurred on the work at the Presbytery level, and enriched the broader work of the church in and around the city:

That was the turning point for us [the February/March 2013 Lenten Series]—as a congregation and as a Presbytery—um...I forgot to say, I and Julia and several of us were involved in the *Living into Right Relations*, [at] the Presbytery. We had both of

⁵²⁵ Personal correspondence, email of December 19, 2012. Of note is that Paul Dewar was the NDP MP for Ottawa Centre and a member of the congregation at the time.

⁵²⁶ Personal correspondence, email of December 19, 2012; <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2318295945> (re-accessed April 15, 2017).

⁵²⁷ First United Church, “Right Relations”, *2013 Annual Report*, presented in March 2014, p.25.

those kind of attachments as well....[so] we invited, we put posters around for the community, we invited Presbytery [she was interrupted by the telephone ringing]...I remember... 'cause I guess I was doing a very major part in this cause you know [she was on staff]...realizing a third [of the people in attendance] were First, a third were...other churches, and a third were the community. And I was blown away by that. I thought isn't that something! I was so happy...I dunno, it just spoke to the importance of what was going on. And people's willingness to come and learn.

And that willingness to listen and learn moved a bus-load of people to act as witnesses at the TRC's national event in Montréal in April 2013. For Julia, her inspiration in this work was that people would show up for those sharing their stories at TRC events. As she says, "It's such a tender moment showing up for the TRC, after aaaall those people sooo courageously spoke. If nobody shows up for that...that's so appalling, I can't even imagine that." So, Julia and Bart priced and decided that there were funds the church could use to rent the bus and then refund it; and they filled the bus with a wait list of others who wanted to join in. Julia remembers that

We took the bus to Montréal for the TRC. Up till then we had been a group that puts on speakers, people coming, people talk to each other and people going through that percolation of Oh My God!...that percolation... And we decided we gotta take some action here. And plus which the call came: we need/want some witnesses. All this is happening and there is not enough witnesses. That's what matters. So...so we just said: why don't we all go?

Steph could not attend but she recognizes the power of the time leading up to it, and the impact of the action and the event:

So anyway there was this kind of, you know...fomenting of things going on. [smile in her voice] and, that was very exciting! I was very disappointed that I couldn't go on the bus to Montréal and I just missed it...But what was good is that they filled the bus. And some from our group, Jennifer [and Linda]..., they were volunteering at that TRC. And so...It was a major involvement that changed people's...it shifted, people began to make those kinds of shifts.

For Linda, the experiences she had in Montréal as a witness to the testimony of those who were in the residential schools, and then, as a participant and observer in

ceremony, deepened her understanding and appreciation of Indigenous peoples. She was impressed by those who spoke and that witnessing deepened her call to praxis:

I know there are very difficult stories. But the bravery of the people talking...I mean ...speaking and telling their story. That. I think that keeps me going...in a sense that, I think these people shared their lives and their pain, and that we really do, we need to respond to that. Because...I don't know many people who are settler who, who would tell their story...Where the people were so vulnerable and so hurt and so abused.

But the experience in Montréal, for her, was not only about the horror of experiences at residential schools, but of the resiliency of people and the re-awakening of spiritual traditions:

I went to Sacred Fire in the morning...so that...that was worth doing...they had a pipe and just the importance of the fire. Just beginning to realize [staccato pauses with each word] there was a whole lot of...ceremony and protocols that I knew very little about...but that I was...and that I wanted to respect and learn about. So, and it...brought home to me, the real significance of the gathering for people:...not only was it truth-telling but it related [to] the spirituality and the historical significance of the event. And just seeing that the traditions were still alive...you know, I don't understand all about the pipe ceremony, I'd like to learn more about that...[and other] people were very concerned at some point...how people behaved in the circle...So learning to recognize that is important and sacred, and you have to be aware of that [as a settler participant/witness]...So it was a good learning experience. And also to see that those traditions are still alive and they still have meaning to people. That was really important for me to see. [...]

And so then you're put into a culture which still has ritual and protocols...which are important and which they approach that...I mean...that they...it's a point of pride, 'cause these have survived...people are remembering and so you have to, you respect that.

Jennifer stayed for a week in Montréal and volunteered in various capacities, often at reception so she had lots of informal interactions with survivors. She is haunted by the stories she heard but also the ache of the impacts of residential schools on people as adult, that is, the realities that these are not simply stories of horrible things that happened to children:

Hearing some of those stories was just unbelievable. I mean, especially old men, and you're sitting in a circle—who is like 78 years old—and he's still afraid of the dark, still has nightmares and sleeps with a blanket over head...and he's 78 years old, and he looks like a really proud older gentleman...those stories don't go away easily.

The events at the TRC in Montréal were experienced by the participants to be not only about truth-telling but also about a deeper living spirit: wounded and resilient. Bart reflects theologically on this moment in the national church's story and the opportunity being called forth from local congregations in the work on *truth* and *reconciliation*:

...the moment you use words like truth and reconciliation, you're using spirit words, you're using our biblical language right? [sort of a chuckle] The truth shall set you free...be reconciled. That's what the essence of our Christian story is. Sooo, then there becomes a pretty natural link to the spirit task of truth and reconciliation. We can't not be about truth and reconciliation. [...Because,] I would say truth and reconciliation is core to gospel story or good news that truth shall set you free. And that there is healing or reconciliation that we might all be one, right?...which is the mantra of the United Church: that 'all may be one.' Sooo, the sense of obligation to the one who is broken, especially if I'm the cause of the brokenness, is clearly the call that comes to us through the Christ and through God. And because we recognize that that call isn't limited to the Christian story. It's a call that goes beyond the Christian story. That...in fact, it was our obligation in some ways, to hear the call through the Aboriginal story and not our story.

6.2.9 Right Relations: From Congregation to City-wide

The “bus moment” was a pivotal moment in the life of this work of the congregation of First and in broadening the commitment beyond its church walls. Julia points to the shift in energy, passions, and relationships that emerged:

...something happened to people because they went. Because they actually...And we were on the bus with lots of people we didn't know...including [one Indigenous woman for whom that day] changed her life 'cause she testified. She testified that day. And she also decided 'I'm going to be a bridge between my sisters in all parts of that circle.' That day was amazing! [...] Then we became the people that went on the bus. And so I think that sometimes taking a small dramatic action that you step out of your comfort zone is really good.

Julia continued to have the passion required; despite feeling drained and exhausted,

she could not let this momentum fizzle.

And at that point, it takes a strong leader to manifest that stuff. Steph was moving toward retirement, so she couldn't. She's awesome. If she's on the case, she's amazing. Linda felt too new at the church. Jennifer is a fighter [...] So I said wait a minute...I don't want to quit! And I felt...Can't give up on all these people, they are waiting for First United. Council is on board. Bart is on board. We just did this TRC thing. This is too good to miss! This has taken three years to get here! So we called that first [post-bus group] meeting and 30 people showed up.

And from that meeting, the Right Relations Network of Ottawa (RRN) was born.

Julia describes with some humour and humility, frustration and joy, the process of its inception:

So I'm the one who said, there's not enough people at our church to make a team and we've already gotten speakers for three years now. And I'm too tired to do it all alone. So...we, Steph, and Linda, so let's see what happens, so we just sent out a note to all the people that were on the bus. [...]

Well it turns out that the...the national church had given the presbyteries the mandate to conglomerate their churches and make something happen [connected to the TRC], but they didn't know that I conglomerated...atheists, Unitarians, etc. And they were all there at the meeting! [...] [Some] reps from Presbytery came, and we're talking about what we could do, and [...] we were all excited, we all shared why we were there. [The Presbytery representatives realized it wasn't just going to be a United Church group and so...] Presbytery pulled back, and they went off and had a few of their own meetings and so on. And that's fine, that's fine; 'cause they had certain funding and a certain mandate. So they had to do that...But...So this little group...in a way, we're all sort of like, we just did this, [...and] we're going to do this because we care.

The energy of that new group took energy away from First United. Julia is convinced it was an essential move or the momentum would have been lost. Steph was conflicted during our interview about the loss to First, she was so excited about the expansive community reach of the 2013 Lenten series, but was experiencing the loss to First in 2015. Yet, in the interview, she recognized that the group had started to outgrow itself:

I think we came to an actual time when we just knew that it was no longer about a small group... That it had to take on a different life. It had to, step out, into the larger setting. And, take that commitment to different step or different, you know... and bring the congregation from that... It was in role modeling and risking to step out, and be much more involved in the community at large. And to role model that and the richness of growth that can happen. I think we just outgrew ourselves [...] But also in terms of the group, per se, we'd outgrown that [type of educational work] and so we, naturally just needed to get out further, I think...

Nonetheless, the group's work did not disappear at First United. There were key events that interconnected the Right Relations Network, the Presbytery-wide efforts, and the ecumenical networks (especially KAIROS) with the people and work of First United for right relations work. In January 2014, there was a Refl'Action on the TRC along with a presentation by Inuit youth from Nunavut Sivuniksavut. Then in March, the church hosted a gathering to participate in the TRC events from Edmonton through a livestream. As the year moved on, there were fewer events at the church, but members of the Right Relations Team were actively involved in broader activities.

A major focal point for learning emerged in the book-study group that started in 2014 (through the RRN) and continues to meet at First United in 2017. At KAIROS' *Covenant Chain Link IV* in October 2013, a participant from the bus (and subsequent RRN member), wanted to understand more of Paulette Regan's ideas. I was in a small group discussion with her, and we hatched the idea of a book study to read Regan's book, *Unsettling the Settler Within*. There was a call out through the RRN that led to a study group of 11 women from different communities (some church and others not), including two of us from First United.

We gathered faithfully through the winter of 2014 (and I through my comprehensive exam process) to read and learn together and to try to understand and map out ways that we

might more actively be un/settled in our commitments to this journey. Another group from the RRN picked up the same book in the Fall of 2014. The richness of this learning space has led to the ongoing book-study group that continues to meet every Tuesday morning at First United.

6.2.10 Right Relations: A Sunday Movement

One of the ways that the Right Relations Team and the community continued to embody and respond to their learnings about Indigenous peoples is in the annual Aboriginal Sunday service. Early on, in the Right Relations efforts at First United, Bart says there was a recognition that to get the whole congregation on board with this commitment, it needed to happen in worship:

...if you want to have an impact of the whole community, you have to do it on Sunday morning. You can have all the educational events you want in the middle of the week. And there will be some people who will come to them, but it is, less than 20% of your community, maybe even less than that. And it's usually the people who have already bought in. So we made a decision, that Right Relations was part of our worship experience. [...] We recognized that we had to do it liturgically and if we were gonna have right relations and the whole community was gonna have right relationships, it had to happen on Sundays.

Over the years, First United shifted the way they envisioned those services; as Steph said, “going from maybe having a token Indian come, so to speak, to really trying to engage at a deeper level and have more representation.” So, for the June 24, 2012, service the main reflections were offered not only by Gilbert Whiteduck but also Allison Fisher (from Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health). Larry Langlois led a smudging ceremony before the service in the courtyard. Grandmothers Francine Payer and Francine Desjardins, sat down on the ground with the children and offered them “teachings of water and gratitude,” with the Earth Mother Drummers calling in the ancestors and closing the circle with a traveling

song. One of the epistemic shifts in that service was in the recognition of a protocol that it would be the Algonquin chief, although in our church, who would welcome us to Algonquin Territory and offer the opening prayer. Perhaps this was another moment when the Spirit was leading.

In 2013, one of the ways the community nurtured its un/settling learnings was by not having some Sunday services in the church building, but by being present in spaces where Indigenous peoples invited the community to learn in ceremony. As Steph recalls,

...we went over to Victoria Island. Do you remember? And we sat in a circle, and there was the strawberry, the grandmothers came...so instead of being in our own sanctuary on Sunday morning, we all took off and went over there. There again Presbytery was invited, so there again, you have not just our own congregational people, but you have the wider representation.

And again, the Spirit moves, because not only did they learn about water ceremony and the importance of the strawberry teachings, one of the *kokums* (grandmothers) who came was an anti-fracking activist, and so there is the opportunity for deepening the link between the spirit journey and acting in this world. The power of being present does matter as Julia conceded:

So slowly we showed up. So was it last year or the year before last [in 2013]...we did water ceremony down at Victoria Island. Two grandmothers came, three! from Kitigan Zibi. And things are funny how they show up. A grandmother was there from Nova Scotia: and she was a leading activist against fracking. She was awesome! I love this woman! "yeah, I had to come!" [in this gruff voice] She was like, "something's going on, you gotta go do it!"

As minister, Bart's faithfulness and commitment to this work within the congregation emerged in 2014; as there was a less obvious group to call upon, but he and the Worship Committee committed to keeping the work alive. So, in 2014 and through 2015 until the closing events of the TRC in Ottawa (in June 2015), the sanctuary was the

primary space for listening, learning, and acting. Instead of a single annual service, the themes of right relationship with Indigenous peoples became embedded in Sunday services over many months. At the time of the annual Aboriginal Sunday service in June 2014, Bart, Steph, Julia, and I co-created a Right Relations Sunday service drawing on resources from two of the book studies with excerpts of *Buffalo Shout*, *Salmon Cry* but also Regan's work on unsettling; I offered the theological reflection based on my research "What Does a Settler Theology of Liberation Look Like?" It was an act of shifting the conversation, to recognize the work that we as settlers need to do to live more fully into our call to justice in relation to or with our neighbours who are Indigenous.

Bart took the liturgical focus on just and right relations from Advent through Lent and into the time of preparation for the TRC. For the annual Christmas Pageant, which he wrote, he drew on the work of KAIROS and the Blanket Exercise to create a piece that told the birth story of Jesus through some of the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The many years of educational circles with the Right Relations Team had created a space where Indigenous peoples' "stories [...] got into our consciousness. So when I did the play, the Christmas pageant last year [2014], that was not new to anybody. It sort of brought it together but it wasn't new and I actually think we did that pretty well. It was pretty significant [tapping arm rest]...And it really did grow out of our own experience." When I asked him about the feedback he got from it, he enthused:

People loved it!...one person said wow that was political. And it was!!...because we went after Harper for his panda bear thing and we named it. So, that was significant.

So probably what I've done as minister...there have been many times, I can think of several, when I have used what I was learning in the wider church, in stories, in sermons that was beyond "Sundays where we dealt with right relations." [in a

grumbly funny voice] [...] So I think of the ways Right Relations flavoured our being that went beyond the Sundays where we invited a guest in.

During Advent 2014, the four candles for the season reflected the four colours of the medicine wheel (in the crest of the United Church since 2012) and the energies of the four directions and were lit at Christmas and for Epiphany. In February 2015, four Indigenous women came to present about the work of their various organizations in Ottawa: Melissa Hammell (Wabano), Denise Anne Boissoneau (Odawa), and Christine Lund and Charlotte Qamaniq (Tungasuvvingat Inuit).

And in the spirit of moving and crossing the border spaces that divide settler and Indigenous peoples, the whole congregation gathered at the Wabano Centre For Indigenous Health for a Sunday service in April 2015 and participated in a large Blanket Exercise and sharing circle. This event mirrored a similar opportunity that many had experienced at the Presbytery-wide Blanket Exercise in November 2013 (a flyer was inserted in *First Glance* in October 2013). Steph, based on her training at the Centre for Christian Studies, insisted over the years in her ministry at First, that people sit in circles (especially if Indigenous people were participating). The physical space creates an emotional connection that she experiences as central to being in community. She sees it as opening people up to one another because:

...you're more exposed. And that's why they [settlers/congregants] often don't like it at first...because they think, oh my gosh, you know like...there's nowhere to hide. But then as they experience the circle, in the sense that you pass a feather and everybody has an opportunity—you can pass if you want—but you also have the opportunity to speak. And, so when they can get over their fear, of feeling so vulnerable...They also listen with a different intensity. You know at Wabano, the circle after the Blanket Exercise: people were just, so, they were very attentive to one another. You don't get that, if you're in a room where the chairs are; you're looking at the back of somebody's head; you don't get that engagement!

Jennifer saw the participation of so many at the Sunday at Wabano as a sign of the transformation of the community and the community really taking this work on as their, especially as many people also brought guests to the event. Linda, as an organizer, was elated at the efforts people made to come and participate extensively in the conversations, despite some grumblings she had heard about the distance and if it was car accessible. She was glad that some 130 members of the congregation (with some friends) showed up:

But they've been pretty well prepped over the years. And the fact that so many people came [to Wabano Centre]. And people brought friends. People brought relations. And that shows such a level of comfort. You know, that we were doing something interesting and they wanted to share it with people...so I was encouraged by that.

Patrick saw the experience as a sign of “the maintenance of the energy.” He further reflects that “Congregations take on things [...]. Congregations take up issues and they may have a life and they may not. But this has had a continuing life [at First] which is quite interesting.”

6.2.11 Right Relations: A Struggle

It does not mean that the continued life of this commitment to right relations in the community is not a lot of hard work on a small group. The leadership for these events over the years seemed to fall primarily to three members: Michael, Julia, and Steph. They each happily took up this mantle but also recognized that it led to some burnout, not in terms of commitment to working toward Indigenous-settler partnerships and tapping in to networks throughout the city, but in terms of guiding the group and the congregation. It is work that seems to always require active leadership, unlike Julia's experience of the Meditation Group which seemed to ultimately build a life of its own. This work seems to require active spearheading by specific leaders and sometimes unsustainably.

By 2015, Michael reiterated numerous times in the interview that he no longer had the resources and energy to make the group at First United happen. He was committed to concrete actions happening around the city, which included supporting the re-establishment of Centre 510 to do its support work of the urban Indigenous population in Ottawa, but no longer for the educational efforts at the church.

And sometimes the learning efforts of one part of the congregation are not always reflected by all in the congregation. Jennifer recalls some of the nastier things that she heard from members of the congregation: “Even with the Idle No More, Theresa...people were still very mixed reviews mostly at that point in time...[both in terms of] the vibes and the feedback. Some pretty harsh feedback from some: like get over it, they get enough money, they get free education, like all the typical.” In response to my question about whether this was from people at First United, she was quick to reply, “Oh yes. Definitely. You’d be surprised with comments like that.”

Julia reflects on the effort required in learning and moving the team and the congregation along:

The trajectory starts with something where you go ‘holy shit?! Really?!...And then there has to be a loooong trajectory of learning: first learning history and then learning and practicing waking up and decolonizing. So there’s two phases to that learning. So then in the second phase, especially you start putting your toe in the water, you show up for justice events and you may actually do some support work. Because also Aboriginal people just don’t jump in and go, ‘oh yay, we love you! Come and help us.’ They don’t do that at all. [yeah] It’s like, you have to get trustworthy first.

That work to get trustworthy is reflected in a First United Church document in the archives entitled *Program Logic Model Draft, February 2013*. The goals as stated in the 2011 Annual Report for the Right Relations Team had been to “listen, learn, and act” and in

this 2013 document, Church Council is reflecting a recognition of this work. In this document, under the section that addresses the church's financial stewardship, they continue to support "Barrier [sic] Lake," among its other commitments. In the category of the church's Activities, the work of "Awareness Raising – Internal" to the church, lists the Right Relations educational efforts and Refl'Action dinners, and leading to "Social Action" of the community "protesting alongside Aboriginal groups." This work, is further reflected in the document's section entitled a short-term outcome that "Local Aboriginal organizations and communities are aware of First United, and it's [sic] Right Relations activities." Although Julia sees this as true, at the time of the interview in March 2015, she is frustrated that the whole church has still not taken up the work of Right Relations: "Our church has a reputation among the local Aboriginal communities that this church steps up, but among the people in the church, hardly anybody shows up for anything...it's pretty sad."

6.2.12 Right Relations: Showing up for the TRC

The services in May and June 2015 marked the engagement and encouragement of the Right Relations work in the life of the congregation. As Michael suggested:

The group was carrying the church along, but the church was willing to be carried along. Everybody's got things that they're putting their energy into, so to me, that's normal. At the ministerial level, there was certainly tremendous support by [the minister], for the interest. He's been very supportive all the way through. [...] This past spring with the TRC, he's been really good at beating the drum ahead of time. This is not just really important but it's the most important thing for [our church], for us to be paying attention to.

Each of the services in May had the theme of *Walking Together We Find the Way* as a preparation for the TRC Walk for Reconciliation on May 31, 2015. The Advent candles of the four directions were lit to evoke that connection with our liturgical journey as a

community. The morning of the city-wide Reconciliation Walk, some members attended the Presbytery sponsored event at Dominion-Chalmers United Church; and Bart with Julia offered a service at First United that ended early enough to send the congregation off to enact their commitment to right relations by joining the TRC Walk from Gatineau over the Ottawa River, past Victoria Island, and Parliament to a celebratory gathering at City Hall. Bart also led a prayer service at the Human Rights Memorial at the end of the day.

From a small group of six to eight members of the Right Relations Team gathering in homes and then in the church, to listen and learn together, through to almost 100 congregants joining in the Walk, the team seemed to have been able to move the community such that even if not all came, many “showed up” to be in solidarity with our neighbours who are Indigenous.

6.3 Right Relations: A Ministry of Presence through Listening, Learning, and Action

Michael suggests that by the ministry of being present and presenting, these issues and stories begin to inhabit the whole congregation:

And I’ve always thought that, even people in the congregation, who, never touch it...who never pick up the ball on any aspect of it. It starts to define the congregation. It defines the community by its continued presence. So, quietly and unobtrusively and even unconsciously, it elevates the entire community. People begin to absorb this...an image of themselves as a community: ‘Yes that’s what we do.’ Even if they’ve never touched it themselves. It’s what we are doing as a community. It’s part of our identity, to be interested in these things, to be, not sitting on our hands. ...and it’s there. So 100 people go to the TRC march [May 31, 2015], well, according to [the minister] anyway...But ten people might be doing anything about/on Aboriginal work...but by the time the march was, you know, the build up to the march, those issues weren’t coming from another planet...the ground was being tilled, you know...

For Jennifer, the community’s response in 2015 is wonderful:

And actually I said that to somebody [...], and told her how amazing the progression has been. Because I said, from that response, just a few of us, and if you dared to talk alone about it, people's eyes would glaze over or people would be...crafted to say hello good-bye. Exit. And I said, not long ago...April 19 or something when we went to Wabano, the service [and Blanket Exercise]...Almost every single member made it, plus a lot of them actually brought guests...and I said it was just so amazing and beautiful to see the transformation. Even now, when you talk about the TRC and how many people participated in the TRC and are engaged. Or participated in the Blanket Exercise and it's really kinda...awakened something within them.

I think Julia reflected a key learning of the community in that this work of building and living into right relationships with Indigenous people lies in the importance of listening with respect:

So people from Kitigan Zibi know us, in a way. They'll show up for us now. Like, the first guy that came, he said, when you invite, here's how you invite respectfully, if you're respectful you wouldn't believe how word gets out: people will come if the word gets out that you're respectful, that you're appreciative, and...that you really listen.... I think we've done that pretty well...Just from learning.

This small group of settler Christians, through their local United Church and a network of connections and relationships (as a result of being in Canada's capital, and the work of other members of the church and the minister at the Presbytery and national level), is interconnected to the wider work of The United Church of Canada. As such, their commitments both inform and are informed by the relationships on local, regional, and national levels. Thus, this story of the Right Relations ministry of First United offers an embodied contextualization of the commitment of a primarily settler-Christian church to live into right relations with Indigenous peoples.

It is a narrative of ever-deepening conscientization; it is a story of this communion of people becoming aware of the epistemic violence in a Canadian contact zone on unceded Algonquin land, that feeds a wound of divisiveness between settler and Indigenous people.

It is a story of this small group of settler Christians becoming aware of their complicity in the systems and structures that perpetuate the oppression of Indigenous peoples. It is a story of *conscientization*⁵²⁸ whereby the members of this team shift to a conscious engagement with Indigenous communities to begin a transformation of structures that oppress. It is a story of relationality among themselves, in the congregation, and with Indigenous peoples. It is not a story of perfection and of complete radical systemic transformation, but it is the story of a cyclical engagement and experience of ever-deepening *listening, learning, and acting* as an ongoing process of participation in a liberation journey.⁵²⁹ In the next chapter, I will further reflect on some key themes of this restorying that point toward a settler theology of liberation rooted in aurality.

⁵²⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 55.

⁵²⁹ Carmen Lansdowne points to both Paulo Freire and Gustavo Gutiérrez's "insistence that [...] the route to liberation and freedom was a process of conscientization." Conscientisation (nor liberation) is a final destination, but it is an ongoing engaged process. Lansdowne, "Bearing Witness," 163.

Chapter Seven – A Theology from Auality Within the Canadian Colonial Difference:

A Settler-Christian Approach to Healing the Colonial Wound

...the ethnographic theologian works as a seeker at the site of a wound who is looking for the arc of redemption in practice.

~ Mary McClintock Fulkerson ⁵³⁰

Reflecting on a conversation with an organizer from the Presbytery, Julia shared that "...if you are going to do this work, you have to think [in terms of] the long haul—there are going to be no short-term goodies here." She paused. Then as she continued, her voice quieted, "You know, this is...there's tonnes of wounds, there's tonnes of mistrust, there's so much to know, the colonial mind is still here. It's gonna take a while. So, if you want to do this, you better commit for the long haul! Which was really good for us to hear."

~ Julia, *First United Right Relations Team*

My research is transversally constructed across different fields to develop a theological approach that is liberationist and seeks healing of wounded relations embedded in the ongoing realities of settler coloniality in the contact zone of Canada. In this chapter, I draw on the experiences of First United Church's Right Relations Team's journey as a small group of settler Christians becoming conscious of the impact of settler coloniality on Indigenous peoples. Further, the restorying process reveals the colonial difference and the impact of settler coloniality on themselves as they begin to understand and identify as settler. It is a journey of becoming conscious of the colonial wound that they too bear in a different form and from which they seek to heal through a relational praxis with Indigenous peoples.

Following this, I weave some of the learnings of this community with key

⁵³⁰ As in Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology*, 175.

(de)coloniality principles, in particular the journey to heal from the colonial wound. As I previously argued in the Canadian political and ecclesial hi/story chapters, the colonial wound is kept open by racializing and sexualizing heteronormative settler systems and power relations of the matrix of coloniality that harm Indigenous peoples.

Healing relationships has been central to Christian discourses.⁵³¹ I integrate the work of Indigenous theologians such as George Tink Tinker (Wazhazhe/Osage) and Carmen Lansdowne (Heilstuk) with the peace-building work of John Paul Lederach and Angela Lederach on *social healing* and aurality to articulate a settler approach to decolonial healing.

This liberationist theological approach is rooted in embodied—thus in heart, mind, and spirit—metanoia or transformation of settler peoples. It is experienced in the relational spaces created in communities to risk the two-sides of storytelling: speaking or voice-ing and listening or hearing, or the oral and the aural. Each point to the different healing journeys of settler and Indigenous peoples: the one is in the resurgence of “ORiginAL voices”⁵³² of Indigenous peoples that create unsettling vibrations in the intimate AURAL spaces where settlers witness to and engage in a transformative healing praxis with Indigenous peoples, their truths, and heart-songs.

In this chapter, I first explore decolonial healing through the experience of the community at First United, then I develop this delinking process through scriptural analysis, and lastly, I argue for a transformational settler theology rooted in a praxis of aurality.

⁵³¹ Lansdowne, “Bearing Witness,” 204.

⁵³² Lansdowne, “ORiginAL Voices.”

7.1 The *Right Relations* Journey Toward Decolonial Healing Through Auality

As the Right Relations Team's story in the previous chapter illustrates, this journey toward right relations has taken congregation members deeper into understandings of themselves as settler peoples and has changed their self-identity, their relationships to Christianity, and their relationship with Indigenous peoples. Fundamental to that journey, as an Affirming congregation, is a commitment to social justice. More specifically, commitment to right relations with Indigenous peoples, is recorded as coming out of a congregational commitment to queer or "LGBT" justice.⁵³³

Interestingly, Carter Heyward's definition of what it is "to queer" aptly describes the journey of the community and the struggle toward right relations:

To queer is to transcend boundaries, to cross over from one identity or standpoint to another, often defying established dogma or teachings of organized religion, politics and other traditional associations...Queering means breaking away, breaking towards, bursting open, spiraling backward and forward, up and down, in and out, in relation to master narratives of Father Gods, gender identities and doctrinal absolutes. Among Christians, queering takes imagination and a willingness to break towards that which we cannot yet see very clearly.⁵³⁴

To queer within settler—Indigenous relations is to embody a relational and epistemic disobedience to the grand narratives of settler coloniality.⁵³⁵ The exploration of relations with Indigenous peoples for the community at First United, and their increasing understanding themselves as settler peoples, has revealed breaks and fissures as the community and individuals struggle with different standpoints and journeys into "righting"

⁵³³ First United Church, *2009 Annual Report*, presented in March 2010, p.21. This was also reiterated by Julia and Steph at the Sharing Circle on June 14th, 2017.

⁵³⁴ Heyward, "Breaking Points: Shaping a Relational Theology," 22–23.

⁵³⁵ "Through trespassing and transgressing, through mining submerged knowledges, queering attempts to change the way we see and act." Lisa Isherwood, *The Power of Erotic Celibacy: Queering Heteropatriarchy* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 1.

relations that have been wounded by at least seven generations of settler coloniality.⁵³⁶ It is not a straight journey, but it is one that breaks away from settler coloniality, toward relations that burst open wounded hearts in grace. Julia speaks with tenderness about the beauty of her encounters with Indigenous people; throughout the interview she effuses with “I love the guy” and he’s part of the family or “I just love this woman!” Her spiritual encounters through this work have moved her to an understanding of relations that suggests that there is, as she said, “an increased ability to be with what is, to face what is, with love, and to live a radical trust. It’s one plus one equals infinite you know. It’s trusting that when hearts are shared and there’s a common move toward goodness, life rises up and supports that.” As such, a settler theology is essentially relational. It can only exist in relationships that are actively forming with Indigenous peoples. It is a circling or spiraling journey, much like the one into and out of the labyrinth that many members commit to walking each Solstice (but especially in June as a solidarity praxis on National Aboriginal Day). It leads to ever-deepening learning, unlearning and relearning as more and different members become engaged in the conscientization or delinking process.

As Heyward suggests “*God is the struggle for right, mutual relation and God is the power in and of mutuality.*”⁵³⁷ Such an understanding of God’s embodied presence shapes a transformational trust as settlers un/settle into right relations with Indigenous peoples.

7.1.1 Healing the Colonial Wound

The colonial wound in Canada is fed by a border that settler Canadians rarely

⁵³⁶ As Justice Murray Sinclair said at the presentation of the Executive Summary Report of the TRC at the Delta Hotel in Ottawa. Personal notes, June 1st, 2015.

⁵³⁷ Heyward, “Breaking Points: Shaping a Relational Theology,” 18.

transgress.⁵³⁸ This is a border that requires no policing but is carefully maintained by the logics of the settler-Canadian state and peoples, fixated in an epistemic frame that divides settler from Indigenous, and manifest in settler stereotypes about the *otherness* of Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples.⁵³⁹

Nonetheless it is a boundary that can be transcended by settler peoples, as Michael suggested in our interview, through conscious and relational engagement with Indigenous peoples. As we saw in the efforts of the team and the congregation at First United, it requires a commitment from settler peoples to a depth of listening: a praxis of aurality (I will elaborate later in this chapter) and a commitment to change and engagement with Indigenous peoples in long-term relationship.

From an Indigenous epistemological understanding, relationships shape reality; one is not in relationship with the Creator and creation, but one is those relationships.⁵⁴⁰ One's identity and ideas develop through the formation of relationships: as Indigenous peoples, it is through and with community, land and clan.⁵⁴¹ By being on Indigenous land/within Indigenous peoples' territories, settler peoples are in permanent relations with Indigenous peoples. A settler person's identity as settler is shaped in relation to and in relationship with Indigenous peoples, whether we know an Indigenous person or not. These relations create

⁵³⁸ The colonial wound is a concept elaborated by Walter Dignolo drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa's work on the "herida abierta" (the open wound) festering at the border of Mexico and the United States, rubbed raw by economic, cultural and spatial divisions and separations of the enforced border. As in González García, "Towards a Decolonial Horizon of Pluriversality," 39.

⁵³⁹ Some of these stereotypes were shared with Jennifer, even as late as 2012 around the Idle No More efforts. See also exploration of settler comments in media in Lansdowne, "Bearing Witness," 172–73.

⁵⁴⁰ Tink Tinker, "Why I Do Not Believe in a Creator," in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*, ed. Steve Heinrichs (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2013), 176.

⁵⁴¹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 7–8.

and inform a queer and un/settling identity for settler people; it is a displacing way to be.

This unsettling identity within the power systems of settler coloniality can create a dynamic of uncertainty and displacement among settler peoples (as argued in Chapter 3). It feeds into the logics of elimination/assimilation, which lead to the negation of Indigenous peoples' existence. This pattern of denying the existence of Indigenous peoples feeds the brokenness of the relations within the colonial wound.

Walter Mignolo argues that one who does not come from the margins can neither feel nor experience the colonial wound in the same way as the marginalized. The colonial wound is rooted in a lived experience, although he does suggest that the "colonial wound cuts across social classes, and it is both racial and patriarchal."⁵⁴²

Jennifer and Michael, co-learners from the Right Relations Team, through their childhood experiences of poverty and living on the margins of the power of settler coloniality, have an embodied experience of the colonial wound. Their experiences of that marginality where they lived in formative spaces and developed relationships with Indigenous people has facilitated their understandings as adults of this relational wounding. Michael has a vivid understanding of racism as fundamental to Canadian society, which he describes as "saturated in racism. You inhale it!", which allowed him to develop a critical analysis of Canadian church systems (the Presbyterian church of his childhood, which he studied for his Master's thesis) and of Canadian government systems.

Settler peoples can engage in processes of conscientization through learning and

⁵⁴² Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonial Options and Artistic/Aesthetic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter Mignolo," 201.

understanding, and thus deconstruct the systems that perpetuate colonial wounding.⁵⁴³

Michael aptly speaks to identifying as settler, as human (and specifically as a white, cisgender man in his case), and of the gift of participating in lessening colonial wounding through relationship with Indigenous peoples:

I am who I am and that's who I should be. And I should be that responsibly in my relationships. Using the power I have, which is a lot, in this society, but using it responsibly in a humble way, among other things...It makes me glad when I see people being who they are/bringing themselves to possible relationship. Not trying to get away from themselves by being in relationship. Then it's more authentic. You have to...you have to...you have to own yourself, you have to know who you are too. And being in relationship can help tell you that. And it's good. Who we are is good! We're just human beings too.

Healing from colonial wounding requires that settler peoples become conscious of colonial wounds as their own, as a 'settler problem': "...once you realize that you have also been colonized, that your mind, your body, your senses, your sight, your hearing have been modeled by the colonial matrix of power, that is, by its institutions, languages, music, art, literature, etc.—or what is the same as Western Civilization—you begin to 'heal.'"⁵⁴⁴

The process of becoming conscious of this border as settlers is a communal journey.⁵⁴⁵ Steph's work for the church, allowed her to help build circle-spaces of being, learning, and for growing together in community. Each of the members of the Right Relations Team spoke of the importance of educating congregation members (Linda), embedding Right Relations work in structures of the church (Patrick and Julia), and

⁵⁴³ Walter Mignolo, "Foreword: Decolonial Body-Geo-Politics at Large," in *Decolonizing Sexualities: Transnational Perspectives, Critical Interventions*, ed. Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Counterpress, 2016), <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/11/03/decolonizing-sexualities-foreward-walter-mignolo/>.

⁵⁴⁴ Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonial Options and Artistic/AestheSic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter Mignolo," 207.

⁵⁴⁵ Gaztambide-Fernández, 207.

expanding conscientization into the broader community beyond the church (Steph and Bernadette). The church's capacity to act toward their own decolonial healing reflects the communal journey of conscientization to the colonial wound as settlers.

7.1.2 A Delinking Journey: Grounded in Community Praxis

Delinking is “to think and become by embodying categories of thoughts that are grounded in non-Western experiences. [It is b]order thinking and doing.”
*~Walter Mignolo*⁵⁴⁶

Through their learning circles and relationships with Indigenous peoples, this small group embarked on a delinking journey to “build decolonial sensibilities, decolonial subjects or, still, help colonial subjects to re-emerge, re-surge, and re-exist.”⁵⁴⁷ Individually and collectively, they engaged in processes of embodied learning and conscientization through the Blanket Exercises with KAIROS (which many of them now lead), broadening their horizons of understanding through participation in Covenant Chain Link gatherings, expanding this epistemological transformation through years of book-study groups, and sharing that learning through development of the annual Lenten Series and Sunday services.

They raised awareness in their church community about the ongoing impacts of coloniality on women and children through December 6th services focusing on Indigenous women's stories, the realities of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and later *Walking With Our Sisters*. A unique pastoral reality at First United Church is that there are many children of adoption and adoptive mothers. Each year around Mothers' Day, they have a unique Birth Mothers' Day service to honour children, mothers, and families of

⁵⁴⁶ Gaztambide-Fernández, 206.

⁵⁴⁷ Gaztambide-Fernández, 205. He is drawing on the work of Leanne Simpson's ideas here.

adoption. Over the years, this circle has become a safe space to share painful stories. Steph recounted the story of one young woman's adoption by a family in the church; it included the painful realization, as she grew older, that she as an Indigenous woman was part of the 60s Scoop.⁵⁴⁸ Linda reflected on this Indigenous woman's strength, because it was she and her son who were facilitators for the Blanket Exercise when First United gathered at Wabano in April 2015. This particular story brings Indigenous and settler relations intimately into the church circle and into the community's relationships in deep and difficult ways, and also carries seeds of healing. Her willingness to take that role to educate this church community that was part of her colonial story is a sign of her resurgent subjectivity and decolonial healing as an Indigenous woman. In turn, her presence and guidance gifts the church community with a relational engagement to further its decolonial healing.

Through the praxis of the Right Relations Team, First United developed a reputation as a community that would *show up* and support local Indigenous peoples' calls for help. For example, Patrick reflected on the process of listening to the people from Barriere Lake in 2011: "It was astounding to hear the stories! We could not possibly have understood the realities without the stories...and hearing them was so important. They were worth a thousand books. They really were." That learning brought the church community into a deeper relationship with Indigenous people from the Algonquin territories that we travel

⁵⁴⁸ The 60s Scoop refers to the experience in Indigenous communities, coming out of the 1960s but continuing to the present day, of the government removing Indigenous children from their birth families and placing them with settler peoples and families.

quotidianly.⁵⁴⁹

There were calls from Indigenous communities that many at First United felt capable of answering because of their community's delinking journeying. As Chief Theresa Spence committed to her fast in Ottawa in 2012, the church was called on to take concrete actions. The congregation was asked to support her and the sacred circle on Victoria Island in very practical ways with wood and drinking water, canned goods for non-fasters, and prayers.⁵⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Julia contested that, despite its reputation, the church did not always step up in its relations with Indigenous communities, and Bart reflected on difficulties with specific actions of the church in certain solidarity projects (as mentioned with Barriere Lake and Chaudière Falls). The journey is complex and ongoing.

7.1.3 An Un/settling Praxis: Walking Toward Decolonial Healing

Part of the community's praxis toward decolonial healing was through their own displacement: intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The team's commitment, with the church community, to delinking has been neither a perfect nor straightforward process; some of the harsh feedback (and stereotypes) that Jennifer has heard over the years might suggest that the learning has re/settled some rather than un/settled. It is a difficult move to shift epistemological position and to delink or un/settle one's thinking, and so it becomes easier to settle back in to one's own world view. Marilyn Legge, drawing on María Lugones' decolonial feminist work, suggests that "world traveling," as traveling between settler and Indigenous spaces or worlds is "a loving way of

⁵⁴⁹ This relationship carries on as in March 2017, the church hosted a fundraiser and educational event for the Barriere Lake Defense team.

⁵⁵⁰ Personal correspondence throughout December 2012 and January 2013.

being and living.”⁵⁵¹ Indigenous peoples must always navigate the settler world as the settler-colonial state is always seeking to manage their lives. For settler peoples, decolonial healing and developing decolonial sensibilities demands a conscientized traveling or transgressing of the borders that keep the colonial wound in place and fresh. Some of the examples in the previous section, of being called on to support local actions, point to the relational accountability of a community that was fed by opportunities and “traveling the world of others, and being mutually encouraged [then] to world-travel together.”⁵⁵²

Moments of physical displacement constitute spatial and epistemological transgressions of the invisible settler—Indigenous border by the church community and have nurtured the community’s capacity for relationship and engagement in decolonial healing. For example, physically moving the Sunday services at various times, whether to Victoria Island or Wabano, moved members of the church community who might not otherwise have had, or taken the opportunities to encounter Indigenous peoples. Therefore, creating sacred spaces for encounter with the congregation has been critical to the delinking journey that the team sought to create or recreate for its church community. Members of the Right Relations Team who met with Chief Whiteduck at Kitigan Zibi, or went on the bus to the Montréal events of the TRC, experienced physical movements that had reverberating impacts. Patrick reflects that working on right relations has

⁵⁵¹ Marilyn J. Legge, “Christian Ethics, Social Sciences, and Moral Imagination,” in *Theology and the Crisis of Engagement: Essays on the Relationship between Theology and the Social Sciences in Honor of Lee Cormie*, ed. Jeff Nowers and Néstor Medina (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 39. I recognize this language could evoke the images of the imperialist “Travellers’ stories” that reinscribe the colonial gaze on Indigenous peoples, as we are reminded in Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 8–9. However, I understand Legge and Lugones to be challenging this gaze by invoking an embodied displacement or un/settling of the settler by engaging with Indigenous peoples’ worlds and worldviews in a humble and transformative way.

⁵⁵² Legge, “Christian Ethics, Social Sciences, and Moral Imagination,” 40.

...enriched my notion of the spiritual part of experiencing what it is to be Aboriginal. And I can never quite be there. But...I feel I can identify better with them through not just the stories, but the spiritual energy that actually brings us together as human beings. So, there's that sort of rainbow...the rainbow of peoples approach that I think is very spiritually grounded.

His comment reflects growth but also an acknowledgement that settler peoples cannot know the experience of colonial wounding as Indigenous peoples live it. However, the world traveling that congregation members have done to listen to, learn from, and connect with Indigenous peoples and their stories has deepened their spiritual journey as settler peoples living on unceded Algonquin lands.

Walking with Indigenous peoples (sometimes quite literally) is to create opportunities to transgress borders and boundaries to meet with, learn with, work with, and journey with Indigenous peoples. This is an experiential journey that reflects the metaphor of walking as a way of doing theology (the *caminata*): walking is a movement that is spatially grounded but not limited to a specific site.⁵⁵³

For most settler peoples, it is uncomfortable, and even a painful displacement; it requires circles of support of settlers by settlers.⁵⁵⁴ But, as Bernadette reflects, "when we talk at First United about walking with people it's literally, it's walking hand in hand with them..." She giggled and added, "There's so much joy in this!" The relations that are being nurtured and sustained are not controlled by either party, but importantly not by settler-Christians. These relations require a long-term-and lifetime commitment. In reflecting on

⁵⁵³ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London New York: Routledge, 2003), 72 & 73.

⁵⁵⁴ This is something that I experienced and reflected on the need to find community to do this work. Also, as Julia reflected, many Indigenous people are asking settlers to do their own work so that in the destabilizing power dynamics, Indigenous peoples do not always need to be the educators for settlers. Bart reflected on the importance of having settler leaders within First United, such as James Scott, who were active in right relations work to support the community in its conscientization process.

her relationship with Algonquin/Tuscaroran artist Simon Brascopé, Bernadette succinctly said: “you can’t...you don’t do right relations today and it ends in 2000 whatever, okay. It’s forever. It’s forever.”

7.2 Healing Settler-Christian Colonial Woundedness: Restorying and Scriptural Epistemic Disobedience

Dualistic thinking feeds the colonial wound and does not free up spaces for healing across the contact zones and into the conscientization space of the colonial difference. The process of decolonial healing is an epistemic conscientization process; as suggested above, it demands an epistemic disobedience that might allow for delinking our thinking and understanding as settler Christians. One must recognize the ways that settler coloniality continues to divide and conquer our minds, bodies, and hearts through simplistic dualities, including our understanding of settler/Indigenous,⁵⁵⁵ oppressor/oppressed, and God as liberating. These frames of reference must be unveiled in the colonial difference as we engage with what we have been called *Canaanite eyes*, and I would add ears, and try to delink some of the Christian story.⁵⁵⁶

In this section, I engage in a delinking that reflects and references specific Christian stories. Inspired by the work of some Indigenous theologians (Robert Warrior and Laura Donaldson among others), I queer the decolonial method⁵⁵⁷ and bring my understanding of

⁵⁵⁵ A more expansive relationality was introduced in the methodology with the development of the “trialogical” approach needed in White settler, Racialized settler and Indigenous peoples engagement.

⁵⁵⁶ Drawing on Andrea Smith and Laura Donaldson’s work in Chapter 2.

⁵⁵⁷ As Mignolo writes: “...delinking is precisely to think and become by embodying categories of thoughts that are grounded in non-Western experiences. Border thinking and doing...is precisely the decolonial method.” Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonial Options and Artistic/Aesthetic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter Mignolo,” 206. And queering refers back to Carter Heyward’s ideas cited above in section 7.1.

Canaanite eyes to explore Jesus' relationship with the religious Other of the doubly occupied territories: the land of Canaan as occupied by Israelites and then the Roman Empire. This process exposes settler peoples' identity as settler; it is an identity that is transversally constructed in various relational spaces. In turn, exposing settler peoples' identity can be un/settling and in that liminal space, as we also see in some spacemoments of Jesus' encounters with Canaanite/Samaritan/Indigenous peoples, there is potential for a metanoia experience for settler peoples in relation with Indigenous peoples.

7.2.1 Christian Settler Healing: Delinking Scripture Stories

There is an epistemic shift demanded in expanding, as Bart said, "our lexicon" as a church to include settler language, which he continued, is "a pretty transformative moment." This un/settling transformation mirrors the impacts of Althaus-Reid's "tactics of defamiliarisation and connections" based on Deleuze's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.⁵⁵⁸ Given the importance of land in the relational frameworks of Indigenous peoples, the earthy roots of this language are useful in un/settling theology and Christian thinking.

Althaus-Reid describes deterritorialization as "the notion of abstracting [or] moving out of an original context which has impeded not only the formation of new understandings but the creation of new links or connections amongst ideas." Thus, reterritorialization is "the act of making new connections or re-codings of reality once an original context has been superseded (although not necessarily obliterated)."⁵⁵⁹

Bart reflected in our interview that settler language literally deterritorializes his

⁵⁵⁸ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 60.

⁵⁵⁹ Althaus-Reid, 60.

understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures because,

...that whole biblical narrative of the Promised Land is completely transformed for me. Primarily through, settler language that comes from, 'I'm a settler and there were other people living here.' [his tone changes] And then even the notion of Promised Land being a particular land in Palestine. All of a sudden, I begin to understand that all lands are promised!

The un/settling process of reterritorialization means that, as he says, "settler language, changes how I get to talk about the Bible. And then it, it changes my perception of self." Bart recognizes theologically and personally the significance of this epistemic shift away from a particular Promised Land to all land as holy, but also that perhaps the promise is not of a particular territory such that "when I tell Exodus story: they are journeying to a vision, a freedom...not a land." And in that personal shift, there is the challenge of the land on which he lives and owns a house, and what sacrifice would be demanded in a return of land? To take "the locus out of Israel/Palestine to place it in my own life, in my own context. And so both the positives and the negatives: so looking at this land as promised and then looking at this land as invaded." He recognizes that as "some of those stories have been transformed, so I begin to talk about this land as 'Promised Land' and all land is promised and about...And what are sacred lands, right? when...Which changes my Christian story significantly." A moment where the encounter with Indigenous peoples and their stories transforms and creates theological "breakthroughs against the official story of interpretation."⁵⁶⁰

One of the difficulties of Christian identity for many Indigenous theologians is the insistence on embracing the Hebrew Scriptures as the roots of the Christian story and thus

⁵⁶⁰ Althaus-Reid, 73.

of its identity.⁵⁶¹ For many Indigenous peoples, this can lead to an identity crisis and certainly has led to community divisions. For those who choose to embrace the Christian way, there is often a rupture with and within the community and its ceremonial traditions.

In an Indigenous worldview, ceremony is considered foundational to reality and survival as Indigenous peoples. Thus, the divisions brought by missionaries created deep struggles within Indigenous communities.⁵⁶² For many Indigenous peoples, in particular those who embrace a Christian faith expression, part of the decolonial healing process is also a reclaiming of their own *Old Testament* or original covenant, ceremonies, worldviews, and ways of being. Tinker claims to have suggested this reclamation, and Steve Charleston (Choctaw) first articulated it eloquently almost 30 years ago.⁵⁶³ Indigenous peoples need to root their faith expression in their own lands, within their own origin stories, informing and transforming their understanding of Jesus and of Christianity.

If Christianity and settler Christians are to take Indigenous theologians and Christians seriously, then an identity delinking must also occur for us. It is not that we need to search for a new Old Testament or dismiss the Hebrew Scriptures, but that we must come to explore and take seriously the fluidity of relations within the scriptures and the impacts of our chosen identification with certain characters within those stories. Our identity is not

⁵⁶¹ Steven Charleston and Elaine A Robinson, eds., *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

⁵⁶² Tinker explores the geo-political and relational implications of the spatial positioning of villages and the breakdowns caused by missionary impositions in George E. “Tink” Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 72–73; themes he explores more deeply in George E Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

⁵⁶³ Tinker, “American Indian Liberation: Paddling a Canoe Upstream,” 63; first published in 1990 but updated in Steve Charleston, “The Old Testament of Native America,” in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 69–81.

set at a given moment and that then progresses forward in a linear manner. Rather, our identity as settler Christians is a profoundly relational one. Restorying our subject status as settlers has the potential to transform our theological spaces and how we read our ancestral stories.

7.2.2 Delinking within Liberation Theologies

Many liberation theologies take the Exodus story as foundational to their faith and sense of freedom. Gutiérrez suggests it is paradigmatic, because many peoples, particularly the poor and marginalized, have similar experiences.⁵⁶⁴ The Moses story is a liberative one: freed from slavery, the people begin a new life in a new land ripe with promise. However, as settlers, if we are to take the work of Indigenous scholars seriously, particularly the very challenging work of Robert Warrior (Osage), the question of whose land is invaded in this freedom story becomes central to our interpretation. And what power relations are re-inscribed as new colonial relationships are firmed up and lived out throughout the generations in these invaded lands?⁵⁶⁵

As argued above, an authentic settler identity is relational. One way to explore this is through the relationship of power positionality within the stories. Generally, Christians identify with the Israelites in the Exodus story: their oppression as slaves, the narrow escape into freedom beyond the Red Sea and into new life in the land promised by a liberating God. However, as settler Christians this identity is far more fluid and inter-relational. Our positionality is dependent to some extent on how and who we understand

⁵⁶⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 2001, 157; he explores the Exodus story further p.153-158.

⁵⁶⁵ For a theological exploration in the Australian context, see Chris Budden, *Following Christ in Invaded Space: Doing Theology on Aboriginal Land* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009).

ourselves and our God to be.

Dave Diewert, a settler theologian, suggests that the “exodus narrative itself significantly influenced the shape of the Gospel accounts of Jesus, and, abstracted and depoliticized, it has served as a model for various Christian theological constructions of salvation.”⁵⁶⁶ As such, a settler theological approach to a decolonial healing process, must explore and transgress settler positionality within key relationships in this story of slavery and liberation, and the settler legacy that plays into the Jesus story.

Drawing on Laurel Dykstra’s work, Diewert suggests that settler-Christian identity is more in line with the Egyptian slave masters and Pharaoh than it is with the Hebrew/Israelite slaves. As he writes, settlers “have benefited from a history of colonial violence, genocide, deception, exploitation, and racism.”⁵⁶⁷ For instance, the legacy of cultural genocide due to residential schools in Canada seems more in line with Pharaoh’s genocidal command to kill the Hebrew children.

Relations with Indigenous peoples were exploited for capitalist colonial gain, both through the fur trade and the theft of lands; and the depth of the civ/sav racist paradigms in dominant Canadian society put settlers “fundamentally at odds with the God of the exodus, the liberator of the oppressed.”⁵⁶⁸ He goes on to explain that this is not a bleak dismissal of the Egyptians and thus of white settler society, as even among the Egyptians there is resistance. Indeed, the strength of the midwives who refused to participate in the mass

⁵⁶⁶ Diewert, “White Christian Settlers, the Bible, and (De)Colonization,” 133; Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote: “The Bible presents liberation – salvation – in Christ as the total gift...Liberation can thus be approached as a single salvific process,” as in Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

⁵⁶⁷ Diewert, “White Christian Settlers, the Bible, and (De)Colonization,” 134.

⁵⁶⁸ Diewert, 134; the lower case is in the original text.

murder and genocidal commands of the Pharaoh is very relevant and speaks to the power of resistance. Diewert then points to Moses rejecting the comfort of his position to rejoin the freedom movement of his people, and then the many unnamed Egyptians who “refused to extend [state power and] its violence onto the bodies of foreign slaves and their families, and in one way or another cooperated in their liberation.”⁵⁶⁹

Diewert’s reflection on positionality and shifting with whom Christians, and specifically settler Christians, identify points to the need for theological ruptures and transgressions to un/settle theology. Further, there is an importance in the recognition of the ways that Indigenous peoples have been treated as the oppressed and that for Indigenous Christians reading this story, they might seek liberation from the Egyptian/Pharaonic power system of settler coloniality. However, Diewert’s analogy breaks down in the suggestion of a physical choice to displace from the oppressive territories, and move to new lands as “essential for establishing alternative, self-governing Israelite communities.”⁵⁷⁰ He points to Taiaiake Alfred’s work for examples of ways that Indigenous peoples have revolted and are resurgent in their efforts for self-governance and sovereignty. Yet, many Indigenous peoples, including Alfred I would suggest, do not wish to establish their sovereignty in new lands.⁵⁷¹ Rather, they seek to have their identity and their relationships within their territories acknowledged as ancient and rooted, and to build a freedom and resurgent way of being in these territories; almost despite, to spite and in spite of the Pharaoh, and perhaps even the God of the Exodus.

⁵⁶⁹ Diewert, 135.

⁵⁷⁰ Diewert, 134–35.

⁵⁷¹ Alfred, *Wasáse*.

The image of the Exodus story as a liberation story depends on with whom one identifies. The God of the Exodus has brought the Israelite people out of slavery and into freedom into a “promised land.”⁵⁷² If one shifts the narrative focus to the Indigenous peoples of those promised lands, then as, Warrior challenges, this invasion is an enslavement, a marginalization, and a negation of the Canaanites.⁵⁷³ The biblical narrative succumbs to the logics of elimination and assimilation as it focuses on freedom for a new people on the land, and marginalizes the original people of those lands. The Israelite people, liberated from one form of oppression, become settlers in this new Canaanite land. Warrior charges that for Indigenous peoples and, I would argue for settler people as well, the God of liberation is interwoven with the God of conquest.⁵⁷⁴

On the journey of decolonial healing then, the God of the Israelites has the capacity for liberation and conquest; as Warrior says, “[a]s long as people believe in the Yahweh of deliverance, the world will not be safe from Yahweh the conqueror.”⁵⁷⁵ Recognizing these dynamics of the story challenges traditional Euro-Western dualistic frames (of deliverance/conquest here), as it points to more relational understandings of liberation and healing. This is an epistemic shift, which in turn impacts more traditional Eurocentric ways of interpreting and understanding the salvific story of Christianity; this point was explored in Chapter 2 through Tinker’s work to shift the understanding of salvation to one of healing rooted in creation and relationality. It would seem then that there is more fluidity to the

⁵⁷² Based on Gutiérrez, in Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*, 73.

⁵⁷³ Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today”. There’s an elaboration on his argument in the liberation theologies, Chapter 2.

⁵⁷⁴ There is a rich discussion (through additions by 2 Cherokee theologians, William Baldrige and then Jace Weaver) that follows in this publication of the piece. It shows a breadth and diversity of thinking and reflection on these stories and Indigenous peoples’ places with and within them. Warrior, 100–104.

⁵⁷⁵ Warrior, 99.

relationships as one transgresses simple oppressor/oppressed and liberator/conqueror dualisms. My point is simply that one's understanding of this kind of healing journey is relationally dependent on with whom one identifies in the narrative and how, in turn, this shifts relationality with those in the story, including with God. The Gospel stories reveal another layer of complexity to our understanding of God the liberator in Jesus.

Through her *caminata* (journey of theological exploration) with women who are poor in Latin America, Althaus-Reid suggests that Jesus is a

...‘messiah in process’, becoming Christ in a process of popular conscientization where the roles are reversed, and it is the poor people and the suffering women who teach him, with their questions, their rejections and their proposals, what it means to be God in the midst of the poor.⁵⁷⁶

In doing so, she engages two sides of the conversation, with Jesus asking “who do you say I am?” and at the same time the reciprocal question of the women, “who do you think we are?”⁵⁷⁷ She takes her analysis into the flow of blood of these women by entering an embodied conversational analysis of the story of the hemorrhaging woman. This standpoint allows an ever-deepening understanding of Jesus as incarnated in his own “body of a sexed messiah who interpreted the world from a phallocentric perspective, who did not experience the objectified lives of the women of his era.”⁵⁷⁸ He does not know the colonial wound of these women that is fed by sexist, patriarchal, and racist systems,

In his compassion, in the face of this woman's courage to touch him, Jesus ‘generously’ heals her of this bleeding affliction. However, what Althaus-Reid and the

⁵⁷⁶ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 48.

⁵⁷⁷ Althaus-Reid, 47; this is also a question/story that Tinker points to as significant for Indigenous Christian identity (see Chapter 2).

⁵⁷⁸ Althaus-Reid, 45.

women with whom she was learning go on to argue is that perhaps this is exactly what was not needed. The woman might have instead needed “a conscientization dialogue” to help her organize against this patriarchal system that marginalized her so deeply. Perhaps if Jesus had “deeper insights into the structures of discrimination and oppression [he] could have established a dialogue with the woman and with the community surrounding them concerning the theme of menstruation and women’s oppression.” Jesus’ “conceptual horizon was limited” and so “he does not challenge oppressive law but stops the consequences of the law by eliminating that considered impure (the flow of blood).”

Althaus-Reid goes on to conclude that those in the dialogue “agreed that it was not the flow of our blood which needed to stop because in it we have the source of our humanity and power.” Jesus’ act is charitable and destructive; it ignores women’s systemic oppression and does not challenge “the basic political and religious patriarchal structure of his time” and so this “salvific gesture...may still be oppressive and colonial.”⁵⁷⁹

7.2.3 Delinking: Taking ‘Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians’ Seriously

Generally, in the liberation theologies tradition, there is an emphasis in the analysis of the imperial Roman powers and the ways that Jesus the liberator rejects their temptations and pushes back. Althaus-Reid reminds us that Jesus’ birth is an “irruption of God during the *conquista* of Israel by the Roman Empire.”⁵⁸⁰ However, as seen through the story of the hemorrhaging woman, Jesus is not always a fully conscientized agent; he was part of his socio-political system and experienced the privilege of being male in that world.

Numerous dialogical interchanges between Jesus and women occur across the

⁵⁷⁹ Althaus-Reid, 50–51.

⁵⁸⁰ Althaus-Reid, 25.

Gospels; Althaus-Reid further reminds us that Jesus became messiah in the *caminata* with women through “dialogical process[es] of popular conscientization.”⁵⁸¹ Part of the queering of theology is to recognize that identity, even Jesus’, is not simple but is transversally constructed in various positionalities in the liminal relational spaces on the journey; Jesus the liberator is also genealogically interwoven as Jesus the settler, descendent of settler Israelites.

To heed Warrior’s challenge to place Canaanites as central to the reading of Christian texts and conversations is then to notice more intentionally the dynamics at play in Jesus’ encounters with Canaanite others. William Baldrige, an American Baptist Cherokee, took Warrior seriously and grappled with the consequences for himself as an Indigenous (Canaanite) Christian. His search took him to story of the Canaanite woman begging for her daughter’s healing. Feminist readings, often white feminist readings that ignore her Indigeneity, bring us to this story in awe of her strength and as a model for feminist Christianity: this woman stands her ground and demands healing for her daughter in the face of multi-layers of oppression.

Similarly, Baldrige sees that because this Canaanite woman risks speaking up, the “son of the god of Canaanite oppression repents.” He understands that this is the “miracle: The Son of Yahweh is set free.” And the daughter is healed as are “the wounds of bitterness in the Canaanite woman.” Baldrige proposes that the faithfulness of Canaanite/Indigenous peoples “can change the very heart of God” and Christians.⁵⁸² Achiel Peelman, drawing on

⁵⁸¹ Althaus-Reid, 25.

⁵⁸² In William Baldrige’s “Native American Theology: A Biblical Basis.” His response to Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today,” 101.

this analysis suggests this reading calls the church to be transformed, and to allow itself to be transformed “like Jesus facing the Canaanite woman, is liberated from any form of racism, sexism and imperialism.”⁵⁸³ But is Jesus healed of his sexist, single, heteropatriachal, cisgender male appearing, settler biases in this encounter? Is he instantly healed of his colonial wound? Is this Canaanite mother’s colonial wounding resolved and her multi-generational trauma instantly healed? Healing the colonial wound is not so simple.

Baldrige and Peelman are limited in their arguments as relationally they want Jesus to be the liberator and not still the son of the God of the conquest. Warrior responds to Baldrige and points to the ongoing nature of the struggle and the healing. He frames it in such a way that recognizes that, in Baldrige’s analysis, there is an acknowledgement that “there might be something wrong with the Christian god—something requiring conversion and repentance” but that Indigenous people still “must go begging to the people who colonized us in order to secure the bare minimum of justice.”⁵⁸⁴ The continued hi/story of settler coloniality, the over 525 years of “confront[ing] them in strength with our humanity...to little avail”⁵⁸⁵ suggests that God, Jesus, and Christianity have yet to be healed.

Inspired by Althaus-Reid’s systemic analysis of the dialogical encounters of Jesus with poor Indigenous women and in the spirit of decolonial healing, I attempted to listen to the reverberations of Indigenous/Canaanite women’s voices, aware of the ongoing

⁵⁸³ Achiel Peelman, *Christ Is a Native American* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 187.

⁵⁸⁴ His response follows Baldrige’s piece, after Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today,” 102.

⁵⁸⁵ Warrior, 103.

wounding dynamics of settler coloniality within this biblical contact zone.

Unlike the hemorrhaging woman, in this encounter Jesus engages in a dialogue with this Canaanite woman (commonly referred to as the Syrophoenician woman). In the Matthean version of the story (Mt 15 21–28), we see some of the patriarchal context of this encounter. Jesus allows the patriarchal sexist pressure of his tight-knit group of male friends to shape the way he addresses her. Bolstered by his man-friends, he makes sure first that she knows her lesser place as an Indigenous woman; he has only come for the settler/Israelite people. The sexist settler treatment does not deter her—perhaps she has come to expect it and she is on a mission of a higher purpose to save her child—and she continues to address him respectfully.

Jesus, then needs to remind her that she is less than human and no better than an unworthy female dog. She is provoked and possibly angered; she rises to the occasion and she hands that insulting language and attitude back to him. She reminds him that he has power and that he needs to be humble enough to remember that he serves all of God's creation, two-legged and four-legged alike.

This Canaanite/Indigenous woman calls the settler God in Jesus to account. In the realm of peace and justice, the healing offered is for all and she insists that this messiah on the *caminata* stop and pay attention. Perhaps it is the proximity, the intimacy of this spatial encounter, or the vibrations of her voice, her pain, her child's suffering; this encounter rattles the settler Jesus. She interrupts the sexist settler-colonial heteropatriarchal relations and jars him out of his comfort zone. In a moment of recognition and repentance, he offers her daughter healing, but he stays at his own table, with his own people. She then disappears from the narrative.

He, on the other hand, goes on to other great healings along the Sea of Galilea to ringing praises of the (settler) God of Israel (Mt 15:31). He participates in the healing of this Indigenous/Canaanite Other, but he himself is not healed as an Israelite-settler, and the relations are not healed.

7.3 Settler Metanoia Toward a Relational Theological Praxis of Auality

...you know what we need? We need metanoia!

~ Teresa Burnett-Cole⁵⁸⁶

...conversion, *metanoia*...is a task for the listener: the hope the poor must come to feel, the radical change of conduct of the oppressors, the demands made on all to live a life worthy of the Kingdom.

~ Jon Sobrino⁵⁸⁷

7.3.1. Embodied Decolonial Healing: A Praxis of Auality

Tongues were lost; mother tongues were buried while human tongues were cut from mouths. Women's tongues were silenced for centuries. What survived entered into a covenant of silence, and since then it has never fully spoken again.

~ Marcella Althaus-Reid⁵⁸⁸

If we accept that sound is vibration, and we know that vibration touches every part of our physical being, then we understand that sound is "heard" not only through our ears but through every cell in our body.

~M. L. Gaynor⁵⁸⁹

In their peace-building theory, John Paul Lederach and Angela Lederach explore a sonic embodiment to communal or social healing. Social healing represents "the capacity of communities and their individuals to survive, locate voice, and resiliently create spaces for meaningful conversations in the midst of escalated and structural violence."⁵⁹⁰ This notion

⁵⁸⁶ This comment was made in a planning meeting, as we were discussing settler/Indigenous relations, by one of my dialogue partners who is a Haudenosaunee United Church minister.

⁵⁸⁷ Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 76–77.

⁵⁸⁸ As in Lansdowne, "Bearing Witness," 167.

⁵⁸⁹ M. L. Gaynor in Lederach and Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry out*, 112–13.

⁵⁹⁰ Lederach and Lederach, 208.

is profoundly significant for right relations in North American contexts. The importance of voice-ing, and creating or participating in safe spaces to speak is incredibly significant for Indigenous peoples; the risk to share their ORiginAL voices as an epistemic and ontological offering.⁵⁹¹ This points to the power of their epistemological system of oral teachings, storytelling, and returning to these teachings as part of a healing process.⁵⁹² Storytelling is a relational reality; it is rooted in space and requires speakers and hearers. A settler-Christian theology in Canadian contact zones must take the side of listening seriously.

Lederach and Lederach suggest that social healing is a modest proposal that flourishes between individual healing and reconciliation. Social healing is an aural experience; they propose a sonic dimension that frames healing as a spatial and relational experience.⁵⁹³ Like a Buddhist meditation singing bowl, a sonic experience needs a container to coax the sound into being, and when the conditions are right, a sound will emerge from the bowl.⁵⁹⁴ Sound is formed through a series of waves that echo out from the space of the source and travel multi-directionally and multidimensionally.⁵⁹⁵ It requires a relational proximity such that the vibrations of the echo can be felt.⁵⁹⁶ As they suggest, this requires a container, which they name as the local community.⁵⁹⁷ They speak of the power of voice being restored to those from whom it has been stolen through violence (including

⁵⁹¹ ORiginAL is a portmanteau term combining ORAL and original. It is pointing to the importance of Oral Traditions for Indigenous communities, and the strength derived from their being Original Peoples. The use of “originalism” is also a decolonial act challenging “terra nullius” notions among settler peoples. Lansdowne, “ORiginAL Voices.”

⁵⁹² Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 189–90; Rupert Ross, *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, 1996).

⁵⁹³ Lederach and Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry out*, 89.

⁵⁹⁴ Lederach and Lederach, 90–93.

⁵⁹⁵ Lederach and Lederach, 94–97.

⁵⁹⁶ Lederach and Lederach, 89.

⁵⁹⁷ Lederach and Lederach, 210.

structural), moving them to meaningful conversation, which create social echoes and “the impulse that mobilises ideas and movements for social change.”⁵⁹⁸

The aural nature of healing is transformational in the work of engaging in right relations as settler peoples. The aural is connected to the ear, to the vibrations that resonate deep inside our heads. This is an essential liminal and transgressive sensation of engagement, where the disembodied vibrations of sound that erupted from Indigenous peoples’ tongues enter settler peoples’ bodies deep inside our heads. This is the space between voice-ing and meaningful conversation.

What happens with those vibrations at the epicentre of the colonial system, in the settler’s mind, is fundamental to the potential for transformation and healing. How settlers hear the stories from Indigenous peoples and their experiences of coloniality has the capacity to awaken a transformational decolonial healing process. Alternatively, this will reinscribe the patterns of settler coloniality.⁵⁹⁹

This aural engagement cannot happen in a vacuum; there needs to be careful and prayerful work to create a safe container for the emergent interpersonal and communal process. It requires a mental transformation that Paulette Regan describes experiencing as she prepared to be a witness for the TRC and to receive residential school survivors’ stories.⁶⁰⁰ As someone committed to justice, recognizing that she was not there as an ally but as a representative of the state, the perpetrator of the violence, the one who created the harm, was challenging. She says the kind of listening required is so difficult! Not simply

⁵⁹⁸ Lederach and Lederach, 209.

⁵⁹⁹ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 191.

⁶⁰⁰ Regan, 171–73.

because you are listening to a painful story, but because you must listen to receive the story in such a way that you are participating in restoring that person's dignity. Because the experience is overwhelming, the temptation for the settler witness is to become defensive and disengage, and not to sit in and with the burden of the story. The stories affect the listener intellectually but also physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and so demand an embodied listening (an aural praxis) to the pain, grace, and beauty of the person and their story.⁶⁰¹

In a communal engagement, as witnessed by the Right Relations Team, it takes commitment to an iterative process of listening and hearing, experiencing and re-experiencing, and to a relational engagement that has no limit or timeline. As a local community, First United (but especially within the Right Relations Team) committed to hearing stories of Indigenous peoples not only in a place and space of the Indigenous peoples' choosing, but also in displacing themselves. The community became an embodiment of the container from which sound is coaxed and emerges, and wherein the vibrational echoes of those stories were received, reflected upon, and continue to be received.⁶⁰²

Healing, like sound, is not a linear process with predetermined and clear steps; just as pain and suffering are cyclical, so too is healing part of an ongoing cycle. Lederach and Lederach describe violence, reconciliation, and healing as fluid and ambiguous⁶⁰³ and that

⁶⁰¹ Drawing on Regan, 191–92.

⁶⁰² In the spring of 2016 a new leadership team took the mantle of this work and recommitted the community through renewed learning and worship opportunities. The new “Living Into Right Relations Circle” at First United has set out to continue to nurture, coax and attend to the healing of relations with Indigenous peoples.

⁶⁰³ Lederach and Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry out*, 49.

social healing must be attended to over time. Any relationship that is no longer attended to cannot stay healthy. As settler peoples, we cannot get hooked on “short-term goodies,” as Julia was told early in the Right Relations process at First United (quoted at beginning of this chapter), but must engage in the settler—Indigenous restorying “for the long haul.” It is far too simple to attach to a time when this broken relationship, and attendant systems, with Indigenous peoples will be fixed. But it is not reparable, this is not the goal. Relational reality means that it must be attended to forever and that we cannot yield to the temptation for closure.⁶⁰⁴ This relationship is not one led by settler peoples but one in which the settlers journey with Indigenous peoples; it is relational in nature and not driven by agenda or outcomes. The conversations—the multidimensional and multidirectional dialogues and trialogues—are the crux of the transformation.⁶⁰⁵ The relationship demands a metanoia, that is, a transformation that has no time limit. It is not a transformation that requires a reinvention necessarily, but one as I have suggested that requires a restorying. In the iterative decolonial healing process, Scripture, hi/story or the news, liturgy, theology, or a walk is transformed as settlers’ ears, eyes, and beings are changed by the intimate aural relational engagement.

7.3.2. Metanoia and Decolonial Healing

Decolonial healing demands a transformation of Indigenous–settler relations. Metanoia is not an individual’s sudden change of heart, but it is an embodied relational process of conversion to the plight of the marginalized rooted in a communal praxis.⁶⁰⁶ As

⁶⁰⁴ M. Minow as in Lederach and Lederach, 111.

⁶⁰⁵ Drawing from Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 90.

⁶⁰⁶ Lansdowne, “Bearing Witness,” 219–20.

Rosemary Radford Ruether wrote in developing a feminist understanding of metanoia,

As sin is not a ‘something,’ a bad ‘part of ourselves,’ but distorted relationship, so metanoia or soul-making is essentially a journey of transformed relationship, relationship to oneself, to one’s immediate community, of society and of culture, finally, a transformation of our relationship to all creation, to animals and plants, air, soil, and water.⁶⁰⁷

This mirrors Tinker’s starting point for theology in a healing space of salvation rooted in creation and not original sin (see chapter 2). So, the *basileia* of which he speaks is rooted not in a time to come of God’s Reign, but in a place in which God’s healing and creative process is still and always engaged: in a Realm and with all of creation. It is a Realm wherein God as Creator will be in right relation with all createds and, in turn, the createds will be in right relation with each other.⁶⁰⁸ This Realm is not an other-worldly place but is grounded in this world of God’s creation; it is in relationships between Creator and created and among all creation in an idyllic state of balance and harmony.⁶⁰⁹

When Indigenous peoples speak of the relationship with the land, it is about all relations with the winged ones and the four-legged ones and the crawling ones and the swimming ones. For example, when Leanne Simpson writes of treaty, and that her people once had treaty with the salmon, this is neither an easy nor straightforward way of understanding relations for settler peoples.⁶¹⁰ It is not a relationship that settler peoples typically have had. It is a call for relations of radical equality with all of creation. It is a call for healing with all of creation and a moving into and toward deeper decolonial relations.

⁶⁰⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Feminist Metanoia and Soul-Making,” *Women & Therapy; London* 16, no. 2–3 (1995): 39.

⁶⁰⁸ Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 2008, 52.

⁶⁰⁹ Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance*, 97.

⁶¹⁰ Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, 87–88.

When one's actions are spiritually rooted, then one is *walking in balance* with the Creator and all of creation.⁶¹¹ Humans, in right relation with each other and with creation, participate in and co-create the Realm of God.

Ruether goes on to say that the transformational journey is different depending on where one is positioned in relation to the systems of power. In the process, “this breakthrough experience also involves getting in touch with one’s own anger and hurt, bringing to consciousness one’s experiences of betrayal and abuse and recognizing one’s own complicity with this diminishment [in our personal and collective histories].”⁶¹²

7.3.3 Decolonial Healing: Indigenous Sovereignty and Settler Auality

Decolonial healing involves an acknowledgement of historical wrongdoings, but also the need to transcend what has been done and recognize and name the realities of settler coloniality. For Indigenous peoples, it involves a journey to recover and reawaken, to recreate and resurge as Indigenous or *Original Peoples*; this complex engagement is facilitated by the ability of communities to determine for themselves the tools and means for healing and the directions needed to be taken for the wellbeing of their own communities.⁶¹³ It requires personal and communal healing, and a deeply spiritual understanding of cultural and political engagement.

As Warrior asserts, self-determination or sovereignty is the power Indigenous peoples possess as communities and as individuals to make decisions that affect their

⁶¹¹ Smith, “Native Feminist Theology,” 155–56.

⁶¹² Ruether, “Feminist Metanoia and Soul-Making,” 41–42.

⁶¹³ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 175; Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*.

lives.⁶¹⁴ Wayne Warry reflects that this self-determination requires a positive environment for change where individuals feel empowered to contribute to the community's wellbeing, but where they also feel emotionally safe and spiritually centred such that they can exercise what they understand to be their inherent rights.⁶¹⁵ Those rights are rooted in a web of relationships with all of creation that include the material and spiritual as Pawnee activist Crystal Ecohawk says, bound by mutual responsibilities and obligations. Ultimately, this articulation of sovereignty is an act of epistemic disobedience, because it challenges Euro-Western frames in which sovereignty is linked to absolute power, whereas for Indigenous peoples it is related to the inherent connection with the earth, the natural order of living things and the Creator.⁶¹⁶ Sovereignty also includes an acceptance of who and what is around communities; as such it is also to accept the presence of others and recognize both historically and contemporaneously that settler and Indigenous peoples work together both in times of frustrating disagreement and rich alliance.⁶¹⁷

For settler peoples, decolonial healing comes in confronting the settler-colonial legacy, and through that awareness commit to no longer perpetuating the cycles of oppression and duplication of asymmetrical power relationships.⁶¹⁸ It demands an active

⁶¹⁴ As in Smith, "Dismantling the Master's House with the Master's Tools: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies," 76.

⁶¹⁵ Wayne Warry, *Unfinished Dreams: Community Healing and the Reality of Aboriginal Self-Government* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 207.

⁶¹⁶ Cree activist and lawyer Sharon Venne, as in Smith, "Dismantling the Master's House with the Master's Tools: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies," 80; for similar development in the Anishnabe context see John Borrows, *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit's Guide* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁶¹⁷ Indigenous women interviewed in Smith, "Dismantling the Master's House with the Master's Tools: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies," 81.

⁶¹⁸ Lynne Davis and Heather Yanique Shpuniarski, "Spirit of Relationships: What We Have Learned about Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Alliances and Coalitions," in *Alliances Re/envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynne Davis and Heather Yanique Shpuniarski (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 349.

engagement in unlearning the inherited colonial story and actively contesting settler ignorance. There is no excuse for not knowing about the situation of Indigenous peoples in this land. Barker insists that settlers must challenge themselves to access information about disease, starvation, alcoholism, and poverty, and listen deeply to the stories of racist treatment not only by individuals, but also by the systems in place in this country in churches, corporations, the courts, and the government.⁶¹⁹

Healing from the colonial wound requires working to overcome the distrust that Indigenous people have of the settler population and its institutions. It is an epistemic shift but it is also a praxis: it demands engagement in real and present struggles of Indigenous peoples' survival and resurgence.⁶²⁰ It demands a commitment to change and for justice. However, engaging with Indigenous peoples further demands settler peoples step back, listen deeply, and not seek to lead, but be led through a praxis of decolonial healing.⁶²¹

7.3.4 Metanoia Relations: Transformational Stories

In a settler theology, metanoia is a process of conscientization to the colonial wound and a transformation of settler relations with Indigenous peoples. For settlers, it emerges from a praxis of aurality in turn leading to a recognition of the ways settlers perpetually reopen this wound individually, as a society, and as churches. Metanoia also leads to a recognition of the ways that it wounds and twists epistemological spaces, and the ways that settlers also need to be converted from settler coloniality. It is not an instantaneous transformation of the relationships or systems; one inquiry will not change the situation of

⁶¹⁹ Barker, "From Adversaries to Allies," 319.

⁶²⁰ Barker, 316.

⁶²¹ Davis and Shpuniarski, "Spirit of Relationships," 340.

Indigenous women who are being murdered and go missing across Turtle Island. It is profoundly relational experience. As we saw in the story of the Right Relations Team's work, it requires *spacemoments* for speaking and listening that transgress the borders and boundaries between settler and Indigenous peoples. It requires a continuous commitment to the relations, and it demands that settler Christians

...take up the task in each day, in each relationship, in each generation, in specific social and historical contexts; the struggle to enhance loving, truthful and just relationships and to curb and cure hate, fear and violence. It is in this way that we also both receive and manifest the redemptive work of the Holy One.⁶²²

Metanoia relations—transforming and being in right relations—require a process to build them over time, multiple times, and even a lifetime (as Bernadette reflected on forever relations in our interview). The story of Jesus as settler, like those of us on Turtle Island, is not limited to one encounter. Fortunately, the Scripture stories, especially the Gospels, are plurivocal spaces of storytelling; we learn to hear and see Jesus (God and ourselves) in different lights at different moments. In the Johannine story of Jesus' conversation with a Canaanite woman at the well (John 4:4-42), we see the beginnings of a metanoia for the settler Jesus through the relationship with this woman and her community. In the story, Jesus and the woman have a lengthy debate about faith and its sources and the stories of the ancestors. In this encounter, Jesus' friends do not intervene and do not try to send this woman off; they stand back and listen. The woman for her part is fascinated by the ideas and goes home to share them with her community. Jesus is fulfilled in the encounter; the Scripture story says that he was tired and hungry before he met her but does

⁶²² Ruether, "Feminist Metanoia and Soul-Making," 44.

not wish food or drink after. Further, he decides to step out of his Israelite constraints and stays in this community (for two whole days according to Scripture) to listen and learn, to heal, and to be in a relational process with this particular Indigenous community.

The Scripture story says that this woman and her community are converted in their encounter and through their relationship with Jesus. It is less clear if the woman whose daughter is healed is converted or if she returns to living her life faithful to her own traditions. The diversity of stories and relations in the Scripture stories reveals the colonial wounding and points to engagement in transformational relations to heal from it; they provide us many opportunities for reflection and to understand Jesus, God, and ourselves as healing settlers on a journey into right relationship with Indigenous peoples. The invitation in these relational spaces, to listen deeply and transformationally, simply to sit and be in relationship without an attachment to an outcome, is the call of right relations; sometimes those offers and invitations will be richly accepted and sometimes they will be rejected. But they are part of the metanoia praxis for right and just relations.

7.4 Transformational Settler Praxis of Auality

Auality is not a praxis wherein settlers do *for* Indigenous peoples. Rather, it is in the space of a parallel and interactive journey like the *Kaswénta* (the Two-Row Wampum) treaty. The story of this covenantal relationship is woven into the beaded wampum belt with two canoes (symbolized in the white rows) paddling in common waters, each on their own journey but connected through liminal relational spaces in the beads of peace, friendship, and respect (symbolized in the purple rows).⁶²³ It reflects a relational space for border or

⁶²³ Sisco, "Honouring the Kaswénta," 45–46.

decolonial thinking and doing⁶²⁴; each canoe embodies the separate but interdependent space of each community to journey wholly in their own healing and giftedness. As such, it is a process where the settler-Christian community's aural engagement, learning, and growth in their own decolonial sensibilities pushes them toward supporting Indigenous communities and people in their own time and space, and with their expressed needs. It is a journey of settler-Christian liberation and transformational healing *from* within settler coloniality, *for* right and just relations *with* Indigenous peoples.

In listening to many Indigenous peoples' voices, if good, right, fertile and just relations are to be achieved, settler peoples must commit to a decolonial turn. Settler peoples must be willing to engage in a praxis of aurality: to listen deeply to Indigenous peoples, in the safe container of a communally engaged space, and to learn new ways of hearing what is being said; although there may be a language in common, patterns of speech and cultural norms are often radically different, and require an epistemic disobedience on the part of settler people.

Further, there is not always consensus in Indigenous communities about needed actions, nor is there always consistency in messages.⁶²⁵ This is not a reason to dismiss or to disengage. It is a challenge to slow down processes long enough to truly hear. In the healing process, Indigenous peoples will be angry at what has and is transpiring in their communities. As Eva Solomon (Ojibwe) said, they will need to cry out until they believe

⁶²⁴ Mignolo speaks of the decolonial option as one in which "decolonial thinkers and doers have to work in the entanglement and differential of power - thus border epistemology and decolonial thinking and doing." Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonial Options and Artistic/Aesthetic Entanglements: An Interview with Walter Mignolo," 206.

⁶²⁵ Rupert Ross, *Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Aboriginal Reality* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), 131.

they have been heard and can then turn and tell a new story.⁶²⁶ The job of settler peoples is to engage patiently, listen deeply, and be ready to hear that new story. In acknowledging complicity in what many Indigenous peoples call the cultural genocide that has occurred in Canada, settler Christians who live on this land must acknowledge a profound failing to follow Jesus' command to love our neighbours.⁶²⁷

In this chapter, we transgressed the borders of Indigenous–settler relations as part of a praxis to heal from the colonial wound. To theologically deterritorialize the Promised Land and to recognize the importance of a decolonial turn in our theological and scriptural analysis is transformative of the relations between settler and Indigenous peoples, and with God. Settler metanoia becomes possible in the conscientization to the colonial wound through a praxis of aurality toward potential transformative relationality in decolonial healing. In the concluding chapter, I will point to the contributions of this dissertation to a decolonial turn in theology and the possibilities for further restorying.

⁶²⁶ Question & Answer with Richard Twiss, “*Can You Hear the Drum?: Aboriginal Spirituality in Theological Education*”, Canadian Council for Theological Education/Canadian Theological Students’ Association, Winnipeg, MB, May 17, 2011.

⁶²⁷ Mario I. Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide: A Theology of the Periphery*, Reclaiming Liberation Theology (London: SCM Press, 2009), 116.

Conclusion – A Decolonial Turn Toward a Settler Theology of Liberation

The canoe is upside down. We're in the water together.

We need to flip the canoe over together.

~ Ray James (Gitksan)

*as shared with me by Rev. Maggie McLeod
(Cree/Peepeekisis First Nation)*

Restorying relations between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canadian contact zones has required a hermeneutical encircling that brought together liberation theologies, decolonial thinking, and settler studies to develop the unique methodological approach of this dissertation. The relations have been wounded by the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realities of settler coloniality. Bringing together the locus of land and relationality from settler colonialism and Indigenous authors with the social, economic, racial, and epistemic hierarchization of de/coloniality exposes the colonial wound that is hidden in the zero-point hubris of settler consciousness. Restorying is thus part of an essential journey of conscientization and settler metanoia. In this concluding chapter, I point to some unique contributions and potential future work in restorying a decolonial turn in theology.

The restorying of this dissertation began with an overview of key concepts in liberation theologies, with a focus on Indigenous liberation theologies from North America (Chapter 2), and moved into the development of the concept of settler coloniality for the purposes of analyzing the relationship between settler and Indigenous peoples in Canadian contact zones (Chapter 3). The restorying is rooted in key moments of Canadian hi/story since 1969 (Chapter 4), followed by development of the relationship within and between The United Church of Canada and Indigenous peoples (Chapter 5). A unique hermeneutical encircling follows with the autoethnographic restorying of a local United Church's praxis

toward right relations with Indigenous peoples as a primarily settler church (Chapter 6). These efforts to restory point to a unique liberationist theological approach to an embodied metanoia or transformation of settler peoples in relationship with Indigenous peoples in a Canadian contact zone (Chapter 7).

It is important to recognize the significant efforts required for this restorying. For example, the tenacity of the myth of the “crisis” at Oka in 1990 means that it is a challenging story to draw out and to flip to see the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance. I was astonished to learn that Indigenous peoples have been following the protocol rules of settler-Canadian governments to establish their right to that land since before the existence of the community of Oka. And yet, the logics of elimination/assimilation of settler coloniality give precedence to the settler community. The Kanien’kéha people were not passive until 1990 but resisted all along. I was devastated to learn the costs associated with the standoff: in lives lost, relationships decimated, and money paid out for the military operation and to restore some of the lands. And yet, the almost 300-year old contestation is still not resolved. This example is just one among many across Canada that need restorying to feed the transformative understanding required for decolonial healing.

The decolonial turn is not a passive transformation, and so the efforts to restory are essential to nurture relational shifts. In restorying within The United Church of Canada, there is so much more archival work to be done to tell the intercultural story of Indigenous peoples within the church more fully. As was developed in the chapter on the ANCC and the apologies, restorying to recognize the strength and resistance of Indigenous Elders and members and not primarily to see them as victims of Christianity is powerful work. Even at Kanehsatà:ke/Oka, as I was told by a United Church minister (and I found traces of this

recounting in General Council Records of Proceedings also), the Indigenous community called the church to live up to the 1986 apology and show up as witnesses to the events of the standoff. To flip the locus of the story to Indigenous communities is to understand their leadership role in calling the wider church to accountability and to honour their resurgence as Indigenous peoples.

Restorying relations with Indigenous peoples as a queer White settler Christian demands a depth of self-reflexivity that is afforded through the tools of autoethnography. Methodologically, this dissertation is a contribution to the nascent literature in ethnography and autoethnography with theology. Restorying one local, primarily settler community's experience allowed me to plumb the richness of my co-learners' stories to explore what it is to live into right relations with Indigenous peoples. My own research question limited my search, but to pull other strands of reflection out of the interviews to knit still more analytic dimensions of righting relations would be fascinating; for example, to further unpack settler/race privilege and a tendency to fetishize Indigenous people in order to prove one's un/settling commitment and worth as a settler-ally would be powerful, painful and crucial further work. Expanding the conversation by exploring varying experiences of communities across Canada with a focus on local differences and the impacts of regionality from the different contact zones of Canada (Western, French, Maritime, etc.) would deepen the restorying efforts.

Settler metanoia opens questions of transformation of the Christian community. Further research could unpack inherent tensions, but with the potential of reconciliation as a framework for restorying the relations. Given the critique by Indigenous peoples of the ways reconciliation stunts the decolonial healing process, how could a contextual

theological restorying of reconciliation transform Christian thinking and settler praxis in relationship with Indigenous peoples and the land? Further development of a theology of aurality, for example, to deepen an understanding (and critique) of the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4) and the call to HEAR, would potentially have transformative impacts on the Christian story.

There is still further theological work emerging out of the restorying toward settler metanoia. In this dissertation, I pointed to a more expansive understanding of the oppressor/oppressed or settler/Indigenous dualisms through the recognition of the diversity of peoples—both settler and Indigenous—and the diversity of those experiences. My own experiences as a White settler are part of the importance of the restorying in this dissertation but also one of its limitations. Moving toward a collaborative research team model that better reflects the trialogical diversity would further shift the theological paradigm through the transformational power of the members' engagements with each other and with the material. Further ethnographic work to explore such trialogue spaces would expand the container for the reverberations of decolonial healing through relationality and thus point to the potential for a deepening intercultural theological praxis.

Indigenous peoples continue to be gracious leaders and powerful partners on this decolonial healing journey. They continue to

Invit[e] everyone to make their way to the kitchen table, to come to the gathering place. I am not saying that you (or we) will always be welcome there, given the weight of history, or that it will be an easy journey, but I can promise that there will be some food and good conversation waiting for those who come willing to listen, and to reciprocate, in turn.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁸ Lisa Brooks' Afterword in Weaver, Womack, and Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, 246.

Settler people are being invited to engage in right relationship with Indigenous peoples. There is an opportunity for decolonial theological engagement rooted in a political and spiritual liberatory praxis. Settler peoples can begin to transgress settler coloniality by risking an *aural* praxis with the *ORiginal* voices of Indigenous peoples, and to be transformed to live and act into more just, fertile, and right relations with Indigenous peoples of these lands.

APPENDIX I Saint Paul University – Ethics Certificate
(REB File # 1360.5/14 R1)



UNIVERSITÉ
SAINT-PAUL
UNIVERSITY

07-03-2017
dd-mm-yyyy

Bureau de la recherche et de la déontologie
Office of Research and Ethics

**Ethics Certificate
Research Ethics Board**

REB File Number 1360.5/14 R1

Principal Investigator / Thesis supervisor / Co-investigators / Student

Last name	Name	Affiliation	Role
Morgan	Joëlle	Faculty of Theology	Principal Investigator-Student
Roll	Susan	Faculty of Theology	Thesis Supervisor

Type of project Doctoral Thesis

Title To Re-story the Relations: Decolonizing Toward a Settler Theology of Liberation in a Canadian Context

Approval date
15/10/2014
(dd-mm-yyyy)

Expiry Date
31/12/2017
(dd-mm-yyyy)

Decision
1 (approved)

Revision: Extension of the project and change of the thesis director.

Committee comments

The Research Ethics Board (REB) approved as presented the project extension and the change of the thesis director.

The researcher is invited to use the reference number 1360.5/14 when recruiting participants.

In accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, the Saint Paul University Research Ethics Board has examined and approved the application for an ethics certificate for this project for the period indicated and subject to the conditions listed above.

The research protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB. This includes, among others, the extension of the research, additional recruitment for the inclusion of new participants, changes in location of the fieldwork, any stage where a research permit is required, such as work in schools. Minor administrative changes are allowed.

The REB must be notified of all changes or unanticipated circumstances that have a serious impact on the conduct of the research, that relate to the risk to participants and their safety.

Modifications to the project, information, consent and recruitment documentation must be submitted to the Office of Research and Ethics for approval by the REB.

The investigator must submit a report four weeks prior to the expiry date of the certificate stated above requesting an extension or that the file be closed.

Documents relating to publicity, recruitment and consent of participants should bear the file number of the certificate. They must also indicate the coordinates of the investigator should participants have questions related to the research project. In which case, the documents will refer to the Chair of the REB and provide the coordinates of the Office of Research and Ethics.

Signature

Louis Perron
Chair
Research Ethics Board

1/1

APPENDIX II Guideline Questions for Semi-structured Interviews

I, as the researcher, will conduct semi-structured appreciative interviews. I expect to be flexible enough to adapt the interview questions to the particular participant's style of sharing and storytelling.

How and when did the Right Relations group start at First?

Who were the members?

How often did you meet?

How difficult was it to decide on this name for the group? Is it the same name still?

What did you do? How formal a process was it?

What were the early stages of learning for the group?

When or how did it shift to a Ministry? What did that shift entail and mean for you as a member?

What is one of your strongest memories of learning for you personally? An "aha" type moment.

What has the learning, if anything, meant for you as a person of faith? And on/in/to your faith journey?

How do you stay Christian in face of this history?

What does engaging in work of right relations give you: personally, spiritually?

Why put your social justice efforts here? As individual but as a church community?

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