

“An (Un)Usual Narrative”<sup>1</sup>: Treaty Education and Relearning in Post-Secondary  
Canadian History Classrooms

by

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer A. Tupper and Michael Cappello, "Teaching Treaties as (Un)Usual Narratives: Disrupting the Curricular Commonsense," *Curriculum Inquiry* 38, no. 5 (2008): 559.

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Canadian History Classrooms and the Need for a New Framework.....	14
Relearning Through Treaty Education.....	23
Conclusion.....	36
Bibliography.....	38
Appendix I.....	43
Appendix II.....	44

## Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging that this thesis was written on the unceded lands of the Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples. While conceptually this project is not tied to an individual location and it does not advocate for a specific way to teach a specific treaty, when engaging in conversations surrounding treaties, relationality, and decolonization, the importance of place cannot be forgotten. If taken up, the avenues forward that are provided in this thesis need to be pursued in location and relationship specific contexts. They would look different in every classroom and need to be continually adapted.

I would also like to acknowledge that in writing this thesis I stand on the shoulders of giants. Many of the ideas explored are not new and have been intricately articulated elsewhere, but I am eternally grateful to have had the opportunity to consolidate scholarship and build upon it through my own explorations.

Lastly, I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to the countless people who have supported me both academically and personally throughout my academic career and this past year. My father taught me to pursue my wildest and wackiest dreams with unmatched passion and enthusiasm. His love continues to shape every decision I make, and this thesis is a result of the teachings he instilled in me growing up. I dedicate these pages to Tom Shaman, forever with me at heart.

## Introduction

What does it mean to be a Settler scholar in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations, writing your first major research project, a project that was intended to look at the decolonizing potential of Canadian history courses, when gross manifestations of colonial power are actively taking place and Indigenous youth declare that “reconciliation is dead?”

### Introducing the Researcher

I am a Settler, an uninvited guest on stolen lands.<sup>2</sup> My parents are Tom Shaman and Tara DeCourcy. My grandparents are Rose and Tony Shaman on my paternal side and Marg and Don DeCourcy on my maternal side. I have one brother, Harper. I have an extended family who I treasure. Respectively, my family came to Canada from Yugoslavia and the United Kingdom. I grew up in Castlegar, British Columbia, on the unceded lands of the Sinixt, Ktunaxa, Syilx, and Secwepemc nations. My academic career began at Castlegar Primary School and led me to Twin Rivers Elementary and Stanley Humphries High School. My post-secondary career began at

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<sup>2</sup> Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker define “Settler” as a “racially, politically, and economically flexible” identity that is applicable to a broad collective of non-Indigenous peoples living in what has become Canada. Settler identity is formed through diverse systems of relating to the land and is a “multifaceted power dynamic that is concerned with asserting control over the land.” Because all non-Indigenous peoples settled in Canada by choice, intersections of race are important to consider. I use Settler to refer to all non-Indigenous peoples in Canada because, while my white-ness has granted me access to unparalleled channels of privilege, we are all beneficiaries of the settler colonial system. I refer to Settler, like Battell Lowman and Barker do, “as an identity that connects a group of people with common practices, a group to which people have an affinity and can belong either through individual identification or recognition by the group.” See Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Canada* (Black Point NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2015), 2, 15, 70; Chelsea Vowel, “The Terminology of Relationship,” *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, & Inuit Issues in Canada* (Winnipeg, MB, Canada: HighWater Press, 2016), 17; Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, “Decolonizing Antiracism,” *Social Justice* 32, 102 no. 4 (2005): 251.

Selkirk College. Pursuing my degree brought me here to the University of Victoria, and the lands of the Lekwungen peoples for an extended stay.

Near the beginning of my post-secondary career, in a History of the West Kootenay course and a History of First Nations in Canada course, I was confronted with the glaring gaps in my knowledge surrounding the history of Indigenous-Settler relations in Canada.<sup>3</sup> My academic trajectory, since then, has been a journey to understand how I grew up in such extreme ignorance, to try and correct it, and to ensure that Canadian history does not continue to fail in educating its students in such important aspects of Canadian history. Further than my privileged position as a Settler, I do not understand how I lived in “Canada” in a state of such ignorance. I am now nearing the end of an undergraduate degree in Canadian history, with a focus on Indigenous-Settler relations. My academic journey, including this project, has been a deeply personal journey.

### Introducing the Project

I conceived of this thesis project because of my anxieties surrounding what it means to be a Settler working in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations. This project is an attempt to answer my question of how I can operate ethically in this space, and how I can responsibly engage with what are at once my histories, and at the same time, entirely not. The project also stems from the unevenness with which Indigenous-Settler relations were incorporated and addressed in the

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<sup>3</sup> Texts that I relied upon in researching this project use many terms to address Indigenous peoples. I have decided, for the sake of clarity except for in direct quotes, to revise some authors’ choices, and use almost exclusively “Indigenous.” I use the term “Indigenous-Settler Relations” to refer to the history of interactions and relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that have occurred since the arrival of the first Europeans.

multitude of Canadian history courses that I have taken over the past four years. The project, to begin, was rooted in my feelings of frustration surrounding how Indigenous-Settler relations are, or are not, incorporated into Canadian history courses. The diversity of my experience in classrooms puts me in a unique position to speak to the undergraduate experience. Ultimately, though, what I write is my interpretation, and what I see as a way forward.

Within Canadian history courses, there exists the potential to create a space where processes of decolonization can be engaged with. However, following recent events on Wet'suwet'en lands, Settlers' responses to these events, and to solidarity actions, my faith in Canadian history as a medium for decolonization has been shaken.<sup>i</sup> The increased Settler participation and support of actions was an exhilarating change from past Indigenous resistances and provided insight into an exciting potential future. Yet, most Settlers' responses to the actions of colonial governments, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Indigenous peoples, and fellow Settlers acting in solidarity, have fundamentally unsettled me. I was forced to confront, and attempt to work through, intense frustration with myself, with fellow Settlers, and with an academic discipline that has enabled countless Canadians to remain comfortably silent when faced with an outpouring of colonial violence.

I continue to be mystified by how anyone who has taken a Canadian history course, let alone studies it, could not understand just how wrong the actions of the colonial governments and RCMP were, and how they could continue to be complicit in their silence. When colonial violence came to a head in February 2020, and so many people sat idly by or took racist stances, I was forced to face my disappointment in my chosen discipline and the feeling that Canadian history had failed so many. Addressing the question of how we, Settlers, want to exist and take responsibility for our actions, historically and at present, is vital. Canadian history *needs* to

respond accordingly. My experience as an ally and witness at the British Columbian legislature shifted my project, my perspective, and my human self. Witnessing the love that the Indigenous Youth for Wet'suwet'en emanate, and being enfolded in the love of the ally community, has helped me root this project in love for Canadian history: for the people who study it, and, most importantly, for the people who *will* study it.

For good and for bad, Indigenous peoples are impacted by how history is written and taught.<sup>4</sup> Canadian history has, since the arrival of Europeans, been used against Indigenous peoples to further marginalize them and justify their oppression. Currently, Canadian history recounts the discovery and claiming of a vast territory by brave European men, and the benevolent arrivals' delivery of enlightenment and civilization to a "benighted continent."<sup>5</sup> As time and settlement continued, the Canadian historical narrative has come to be centered on the "noble" tasks of settling the West and building a nation. Canadian history fails to acknowledge that Canada is a glasshouse "founded on stolen land, predicated on the elimination of Indigenous peoples, and [is] a nation steeped in racism, violence, and denial."<sup>6</sup> Non-Indigenous Canadians rely on the exclusion and misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples as a tool to enable them to continue to ignore details of the post-contact experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada.<sup>7</sup> The self-image of Canadians has come to be closely tied to discourses of nationalism and patriotism, white prejudice, and the Eurocentric knowledges and traditions that are engrained in Canadian

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<sup>4</sup> Devon Abbott, Mihesuah, "Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming and Empowering Communities*, edited by Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 145.

<sup>5</sup> Susan A Miller, "Native Historians Write Back: The Indigenous Paradigm in American Indian Historiography," in *Native Historians Write Back*, edited by Susan A. Miller and James Riding In (Lubbock: Texas Technical University Press, 2011), 26.

<sup>6</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 79; Susan D. Dion and Michael R. Dion, *Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Dion and Dion, *Braiding Histories*, 56.

history. These prevailing Settler logics have been, and continue to be, reinforced by the narratives that are privileged in post-secondary Canadian history courses.<sup>8</sup> The continuing refusal in Canadian history courses to acknowledge the anti-Indigenous racism-based colonization that fuels the settler colonial project encourages its function as a tool to reinforce and proliferate settler colonialism.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that history is the story of the powerful, how they obtained power, and how they maintain their dominant position. Canadian history's function has adhered closely to this description, and as Smith states, "the negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization."<sup>9</sup> This negation is ongoing in Canadian history, and contributes to the continual assertion of colonial ideologies. The reclamation of historical narratives, however, is a vital aspect of the project of decolonization and is inseparable from the greater process.<sup>10</sup> The challenge of bridging the gap that persists between the historical consciousness' of Indigenous peoples and newcomers to their the land continues to raise important questions about how settler colonial spaces of education can work towards decolonization and how they can be used to disrupt the settler colonial historical imaginary.<sup>11</sup> Colonial culture is, fundamentally, a mytho-historical invention of the past and its moral implications; it is an aversion to the truth about who Settlers are, where we come from, and our presumed right to dispossess and steal the land of

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<sup>8</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, UK: Zed Books Ltd., 2012), 31-34.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Hiller, "Tracing the Spirals of Unsettling: Euro-Canadian Narratives of Coming to Grips with Indigenous Sovereignty, Title, and Rights," *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 4 (2017): 415.



others.<sup>12</sup> Broadly speaking, post-secondary Canadian history courses have reinforced colonial culture by centering narratives around *terra nullius*, the doctrine of discovery, the peacemaker myth, and the myth of development.

Within Settler society, ignorance and wilful denial surrounding Indigenous peoples persist, and are huge detractors from any possibility for decolonization. In 2016, in an Environics survey, Canadians demonstrated an increased awareness of the institutional and interpersonal forms of discrimination that Indigenous peoples face. The survey revealed Settlers had an increased awareness of the gap in the standard of living between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the country, and of the harmful history of residential schools. However, despite respondents' increased awareness, damaging stereotypes persist.<sup>13</sup> Over a quarter of non-Indigenous participants in the survey identified the economic and social disparity between themselves and Indigenous peoples as existing because of the actions of Indigenous peoples. Two thirds of non-Indigenous respondents reported feeling that Indigenous peoples have an overly strong sense of entitlement about receiving governmental support, and 6/10 people did not see themselves as benefiting from the discriminatory treatment of Indigenous peoples.<sup>14</sup> By reinforcing privileged national narratives, history courses have functioned as national propaganda and contributed to the proliferation of these falsifications and settler colonialism. Misconceptions are bound to exist when Settler exposure to Indigenous peoples is limited to the history of the past ten to fifteen years and corporate media coverage, and the longer histories of

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<sup>12</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 120.

<sup>13</sup> Hiller, "Tracing the Spirals of Unsettlement," 416.

<sup>14</sup> The survey was of the general Canadian populace, and not necessarily university graduates or people who study Canadian history, but the prevalence of these attitudes alludes to the wider failing in Canadian scholarly and public history to educate citizens and interrupt the societal colonial present. Hiller, "Tracing the Spirals of Unsettlement," 416.

Indigenous-Settler relations and their impacts on the past, present, and future are minimized or ignored.<sup>15</sup> When the past centuries of interactions between Indigenous peoples and settlers are considered, it becomes abundantly clear that the real problem is not Indigenous peoples' sense of entitlement or their "special rights."

Historically, moves away from misogyny and racism have only enriched peoples' lives, and the same can be said in the fight against settler colonialism. Canadians can only benefit from the realization of justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and how Canadian history is taught in post-secondary institutions needs to no longer be a barrier to Settlers' participation in this fight and the wider process of decolonization.<sup>16</sup> Universities have an important role to play in making this shift in society because they reproduce ways of knowing and understanding the world.<sup>17</sup> There is a considerable shift occurring in the Canadian historical narrative and it is reflected in universities and continues to challenge them. A series of changes need to be made in post-secondary Canadian history classrooms for this educational experience to live up to its responsibility to Canadians and to stay relevant in the face of Indigenous resurgence and Settler awakening to the violence of the settler colonial system, which is upheld in their name. Ignorance to Canada's history of colonial genocide can no longer be an excuse for people's complicity. Canadian history courses need to be breaking the cycle of conflict, which they can do through the disruption of colonial normality.

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<sup>15</sup> Alfred, *Wasáse*, 152. A significant body of literature exists surrounding the implementation of Indigenous Course Requirements, but I am not arguing for them in this thesis. When ICRs could be better supported financially and institutionally they could be an exciting possibility, but currently work needs to be done on the systems already in place. See Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz, "Decolonization for the Masses? Grappling With Indigenous Content Requirements in the Changing Post-Secondary Environment," in *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education*, edited by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang (New York: Routledge, 2019), 160.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred, *Wasáse*, 121; Arthur Manuel and Ronald M. Derrickson, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-up Call* (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 2015), 226.

<sup>17</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, "From Cultural Conflicts to Epistemic Ignorance," in *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of Gift* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2007), 71.

The goal of Canadian history courses needs to be to take an active role in the process of decolonization; however, the outpouring of colonial violence, seen in the dispatching of the RCMP into Wet'suwet'en lands and Canada's response to those actions, has demonstrated that Canadian history classrooms are not ready to serve as a decolonizing space. Recent events have shown that before conversations about decolonization can begin to take place, people need to better understand what we are decolonizing, what decolonization is, and why it is necessary. Emerging from interviews with Settler scholars, I saw both a desire from faculty for new approaches, and a need to break out of old patterns. Willie Ermine's "ethical space of engagement" and treaty education provide potential new frameworks to approach Canadian history. Conceptually, these frameworks offer an opportunity to reframe how we think about post-secondary Canadian history courses. In this paper, I will explore the numbered treaties as a demonstration of how we should change the way we teach Canadian history.

### Situating the project

This project is intended to write into the conversation that decolonization is not a metaphor, and it cannot take place in separated spheres.<sup>18</sup> Decolonization requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life, and merely the development of "critical consciousness" on behalf of Settlers is inadequate.<sup>19</sup> It is necessarily unsettling and has no synonyms or approximations.<sup>20</sup> Metaphorical decolonization resettles whiteness, resettles theory, extends

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<sup>18</sup> Tuck and Yang state that decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization must take place in real, tangible ways, and needs to be more than a pacifying discourse. See Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Educations & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 3.

<sup>19</sup> Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 19-21.

innocence to Settlers, and guarantees Settler futurity.<sup>21</sup> These are not the goals of decolonization. The importance of land underpins the entirety of Canadian history, and it cannot be minimized when addressing decolonization. Decolonization is not merely decentering Settler perspectives and understandings, and Canadian history courses need to adapt accordingly so that the decolonization of Canadian history courses is not separate from the greater process. Moves towards decolonization need to happen in real, tangible ways, and this needs to be realized by anyone who engages in work surrounding the history of Indigenous-Settler relations. Studying, writing, and teaching histories of Indigenous-Settler relations are inherently political acts, which cannot be separated from decolonization.<sup>22</sup>

This project is not about indigenization of History departments, but I hope to write into some of these conversations. Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz write that decolonial indigenization is the “wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new.”<sup>23</sup> Decolonial indigenization is frequently dismissed as “too radical” by university administrators, but Indigenous scholars remain adamant that it is required in order to meet long-term Indigenous needs. Mainstream universities reflect the social and cultural values of the individuals who come from that mainstream, and today that mainstream is the colonizers.<sup>24</sup> However, according to David Anthony Tyeme Clark, through indigenizing as a dynamic course of action, it is possible to:

imagine the academy as a location from which Indigenous peoples appropriate research, writing, and other non- (and sometimes anti-) Indigenous educational resources to seek

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study,” 145.

<sup>23</sup> Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz, “Indigenization as Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Decolonization: Navigating Different Visions for the Canadian Academy,” *AlterNative* 14, no. 3 (2018), 219.

<sup>24</sup> Kuokkanen, “From Cultural Conflicts to Epistemic Ignorance,” 51.

justice for past and enduring crimes, to combat unyielding colonization, to safeguard treaty rights, and to advance general well-being among Indigenous communities.<sup>25</sup>

Universities, including Canadian history courses, are not decolonized but have the potential to be.<sup>26</sup>

Critical Settler Studies is also a significant body of literature. Critical Settler Studies has made many important theoretical and political contributions. The distinction of settler colonialism from other types of colonialism was one of these contributions. Developing understandings of the “every day” aspects of settler colonialism has also been vital.<sup>27</sup> Scholars Emma Battel Lowman, Adam Barker, Paulette Regan, and Eva Mackey were influential to me. Battell Lowman and Barker’s definition of “Settler,” and theories surrounding Settler identity were foundational throughout the research and writing of this project.<sup>28</sup> Central to my argument is these scholars’ debates surrounding “comfortable ignorance,” and why some people refuse to engage with these histories and conversations. In Canada, it is nearly impossible not to know something about the colonial violence that underpins history. According to Battell Lowman and Barker, “frequently, Canadians seem to ‘not know’ about Indigenous peoples’ struggles that have

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<sup>25</sup> David Anthony Tyeme Clark, “Not the End of Stories, Not the End of Songs: Visualizing, Signifying, Counter-Colonizing,” in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming and Empowering Communities*, edited by Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 218.

<sup>26</sup> Gaudry and Lorenz, “Indigenization as Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Decolonization,” 223.

<sup>27</sup> Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 2 (2014): 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 70; Vowel, *Indigenous Writes*, 17.

Important critiques of the field of Critical Settler Studies are demonstrated in Snelgrove, Kaur Dhamoon, and Corntassel’s piece “Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations.” Critical settler colonial studies frequently lack specificity and risk “re-empower[ing] non-Indigenous academic voices while marginalizing Indigenous resistances.” The “colonial fatalism” that underlies critical settler studies positions settler colonialism as structurally inevitable, which is dangerous. Despite critiques, I decided that critical settler studies is a discourse worth engaging with because Settler scholars need to be encouraged to engage in this work and potentially assisted in their engagement. As a Settler I hope my writing can assist other Settlers in the drive towards decolonization.

Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism,” 7-8.

the potential to directly impact the lives and properties of Settler communities.”<sup>29</sup> Claiming ignorance is no longer an excuse Settlers can use; this ignorance must cease to exist, a result to which Canadian history courses must contribute.

Scholarship surrounding the amelioration of treaty education in grades kindergarten through twelve were central in my thinking. Jennifer Tupper and Michael Cappello’s argument that teaching treaties enables the creation of an “(un)usual narrative,” which encourages students to grapple with racism and functions as a corrective narrative to dominant stories, is vital. This interrogative function of the unusual narrative can “fill in the blanks left by dominant narratives, nuancing those privileged stories, raising questions about claims to veracity and the tacit consent of an impartial approach to knowledge.”<sup>30</sup> Tupper, and Capello, write about elementary, high school, and teacher education practices, but, conceptually, their frameworks and theories were highly influential throughout the writing of this thesis because of their conceptualizations of potential uses of treaty education and theorizations of the (un)usual narrative.

This project aims to speak to Settler scholars who, faced with university outlined goals of decolonization and indigenization, the inevitable resurgence of Indigenous peoples and personal and professional responsibilities, feel paralyzed about how to move forward and how to make the next right choice. The possibility of decolonizing post-secondary Canadian history courses exists, and through a process of taking steps in the right direction, Settler scholars can do our part.

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<sup>29</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, *Settler*, 84.

<sup>30</sup> Tupper and Cappello, "Teaching Treaties as (Un)Usual Narratives," 570; Jennifer Tupper, "Disrupting Ignorance and Settler Identities: The Challenges of Preparing Beginning Teachers for Treaty Education," [Indigenous Education] in *Education* 17, no. 3 (2011): 38-55.

## Methodologies

Questions surrounding what it means to be a Settler in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations contributed significantly to the structure of my project. The decision to interview and consult Canadian historians about the anxieties I was feeling, as well as about their teaching practices, felt natural. Likewise, the decision to involve and consult Indigenous scholars regarding how the discipline might move forward, also felt natural. Interviewees consisted of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, some of whom teach in Canadian history and others who work or teach in affiliated fields. Interviewees spanned post-secondary institutions across British Columbia but were concentrated in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. I asked about pedagogies, approaches to teaching Indigenous-Settler relations, how scholars are feeling, challenges they feel they face, and how they could be assisted in moving forward with their teaching of Indigenous-Settler relations. In this section, I was wary of centering Settler perspectives and framing the section in a way that maintains ongoing power dynamics between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The risk of minimizing the voices of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous leadership and replicating “colonizer epistemic privilege” by making the issues “all about us” are issues that I was conscientious of.<sup>31</sup>

Interviewees were selected in consultation with my advisor, John Lutz. They were people who worked in relevant fields in academia that either he or I had some level of connection with, and that I felt comfortable reaching out to. To make initial contact with interviewees, I used information that is publicly available or contact information that had been shared with me in the context of my relationships. From Settler scholars, I had an 87% response rate, and an 85% rate

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<sup>31</sup> Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver BC: UBC Press, 2010), 33.

of successfully completing the interviews from people who responded. Ultimately eleven non-Indigenous scholars were consulted. From Indigenous scholars I had a 100% response rate, but 75% of initial respondents were interviewed. Three Indigenous scholars were interviewed. Initially I was worried about the disparity between the numbers of non-Indigenous and Indigenous respondents, but I addressed this inequality by relying on text-based research and Indigenous authored sources more heavily to allow for different Indigenous perspectives. This disparity is indicative of the presence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars in the academy.

The decision was made to anonymize all interviewees for the written portion of the project because I felt respondents might be more comfortable if their names were not attached to their statements, and I hoped that having identities made anonymous would encourage people to be more candid. It was difficult to gauge, exclusively through conversation, the extent to which what they shared in our conversations is reflected in their teaching practice, but conducting interviews was an invaluable experience and contributed immensely to the foundation of my study. Many interviewees shared that they felt participating in the interview process was an excellent opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice, but it is hard to know how accurate peoples' critical self awareness is. Further complicating research based primarily on interviews is the potential desire on behalf of interviewees to present themselves as progressive, thoughtful, and professional. It was also in the hope of reducing this potential risk that I decided to make interviewees anonymous. I asked interviewees to share their syllabi with me to combat potential skewed perceptions or biases. Although the syllabi are also not an ideal method of analyzing what takes place in peoples' classrooms, they were useful in examining the approaches that are used to incorporate Indigenous content into courses.



## Canadian History Classrooms and the Need for a New Framework

Through interviewing non-Indigenous historians, who teach Canadian history at the post secondary level, I hoped to gain insight into scholars' approaches to Canadian history and the teaching of Indigenous-Settler relations in their courses. By conducting interviews with professors, and examining syllabi, I was able to gain an understanding of how non-Indigenous scholars engage with histories of Indigenous-Settler relations, and how they teach them.<sup>32</sup> I chose to pursue this aspect of the project because non-Indigenous scholars are being asked to completely change the way they know, think about, and teach Canadian history. This restorying is a daunting task. For scholars to move past feelings of nervousness and apprehension, an important step is examining those feelings, thinking critically about where they stem from, and what needs to happen in order to move past them. Paulette Regan states that "settler lack of critical self-reflexivity is highly problematic."<sup>33</sup> In the context of this study, by encouraging Settler historians to critically examine their positions, I hope to better understand personal perspectives and the application of pedagogical approaches. Determining how other Settlers and their institutions could support them in making the required shifts to the way they think about and teach Canadian history was another motivating factor. Treaty education was not addressed throughout the interviews, but following the interview process, as I reflected on what was shared,

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<sup>32</sup> I consulted scholars who both had and had not received formal training in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations. This difference was primarily reflected in scholars' comfort levels surrounding engagement with Indigenous topics. Additionally, I consulted with professors who teach lower and upper level courses in hopes of gaining insight into potential disparities between survey and specific topic based courses.

<sup>33</sup> Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 33.

it became evident to me that through treaty education, a path forward could be provided that is satisfactory to professors, students, and decolonial movements.

When asked about whether Canadian history, as a discipline, has changed over the last decade, interviewees predominantly agreed that it has. Most interviewees reflected on the dramatic increase of Indigenous histories, and the value that is placed on Indigenous voices and accounts of Canadian history.<sup>34</sup> There was, however, a minority that emphasized that adding more Indigenous content was not enough. According to one interviewee, the reported growing appreciation for Indigenous perspectives on historical narratives and increasing inclusion of Indigenous content is not synonymous with the structural change taking place in the discipline of Canadian history.<sup>35</sup> Undoubtedly, there have been changes in what are considered to be important aspects of Canadian history, as interviewees reflected on the exclusion of Indigenous voices in their own training and the early years of their careers. However, merely including these histories and perspectives was vocalized as inadequate when considering the changes that are required in order for the discipline to realize its potential to serve as a decolonizing space.<sup>36</sup> One interviewee explained that the “add and mix” approach with which Indigenous histories have been incorporated into Canadian history is an inadequate method to facilitate transformative change. According to two respondents, the add and mix approach fails to encourage historians and students to push beyond merely acknowledging settler colonialism, to move to what it means to be engaging with Indigenous histories and teachings. This transformative change could be

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<sup>34</sup> Other substantive trends that interviewees mentioned included an increased sense of transnationality, greater appreciation for social, local, and oral histories, and greater enthusiasm towards more subjective approaches to studying history. Interviewees, multiple (professors), in discussion with the author, Fall 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Interviewee K (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Interviewees reported these changes as reflected in their own course structures, textbooks, and in the priorities of organizations such as the Canadian historical association.

enacted through engaging with Indigenous pedagogies or epistemologies and relational approaches to teaching.<sup>37</sup>

When asked to reflect on their pedagogies and approaches to teaching Indigenous history, most interviewees answered that their methods and goals were similar, or identical, to those of the rest of their teaching. The main theme that emerged was a desire to teach foundational skills to their students, including research, writing, and critical thinking. Original, archivally rooted, and primary source research is a common practice across respondents' classrooms and was repeatedly identified as a tool that interviewees use to help teach critical thinking. One interviewee stated that "history is not about remembering information, it's a way of thinking critically about the world and our relationships with each other and to the land," and this sentiment was echoed widely between interviewees.<sup>38</sup> Centering courses around helping students learn how to think critically and encouraging students to come to their own conclusions were expressed by seven of the eleven Settler interviewees.

Multiple interviewees explained how they attempt to draw students into the study of history by bringing to students' attention to the relevancy of the skills learned in their history classroom. Scholars highlighted critical thinking, historical/information literacy, and research, which they identify as relevant not only in the academy and professional arena, but also in one's personal life. Using history as a vehicle to encourage students to think differently about who they are, where they come from, and how they connect to the colonial present was a widely shared

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<sup>37</sup> Interviewee C (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee K (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee L (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Interviewee F (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019

goal.<sup>39</sup> One respondent explained that a “university is a place where undergraduates, in particular, are forming themselves, forming their worldviews, and their opinions.”<sup>40</sup>

Professors seek to engage students by exploring a variety of ways to deliver their material. Some interviewees explained that they are distinctly trying to move away from a didactic lecture-based approach, while other interviewees identified their teaching practices as rooted in a lecture style delivery.<sup>41</sup> Despite the wide range of responses regarding how information is shared, interviewees unanimously shared their appreciation for more discussion-based, student-led learning opportunities. One interviewee shared their approach of trying to “make history come alive” for students.<sup>42</sup>

Responses surrounding changes that professors have seen in Canadian history and Indigenous-Settler relations provided me with insight into how instructors are incorporating Indigenous content and perspectives into their courses; for example, through a more integrated approach or as separate lecture topics. Understanding this aspect of course structure, through conversation, was more difficult than I anticipated, which led to my examining the syllabi of relevant courses. The syllabi reflected an approach of teaching Indigenous content as a separate entity from Canadian history, in specific lectures and topics. Only a minority of the syllabi reflected an integrated approach to including Indigenous centered material. The implications of each approach are huge, especially the practice of isolating Indigenous history from mainstream Canadian historical narratives. Consequences of including Indigenous histories as isolated topics

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<sup>39</sup> This sentiment was shared by six out of eleven interviewees.

<sup>40</sup> Interviewee F (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Interviewee F (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee E (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>42</sup> For example, through engaging with experiential learning, field trips, and guest lectures, this interviewee works to increase students’ engagement with the material that their course covers. Interviewee G (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

or appendages to the mainstream narrative include leaving students with the impression that there is no continuum of Indigenous history in Canada and limiting the visibility of the wider relevance on Indigenous histories.<sup>43</sup> These ramifications were not addressed in the interviews or syllabi.

In the interviews, scholars were asked how they feel when working with and teaching Indigenous histories. Many of these histories have consequential living legacies and how they are shared has direct impacts on peoples' lives. A common response was the feeling of a strong sense of responsibility. Scholars reported feeling responsible to address the historical, and ongoing, exclusion of Indigenous histories from Canadian history, both in their approaches to and teaching Canadian history. One interviewee explained that there has been a glaring gap in how past generations of scholars have approached Canada's past, and that these omissions need to be rectified.<sup>44</sup> The sense of responsibility to "tell the histories right" was brought up by multiple interviewees. The desire to tell Indigenous histories in a way that does not overgeneralize or revictimize, while "doing justice" to the historical events, and actors and making a meaningful impression on students, was brought up by interviewees.<sup>45</sup> One interviewee explained, and others echoed, that they want to do the job well and in a way that respects and honours the histories and peoples who lived and continue to live with them.<sup>46</sup>

Interviewees frequently reported that they feel engaging with the field of Indigenous-Settler relations in their teaching practices is challenging.<sup>47</sup> Some of the factors that interviewees

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<sup>43</sup> Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Indigenous Labor and Indigenous History," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2009): 534; Tupper and Cappello, "Teaching Treaties as (Un)Usual Narratives," 561-563.

<sup>44</sup> This sentiment was echoed across numerous interviews. Interviewee D (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Interviewee H (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

reported struggling with are: the workload and high volume of learning that are required,<sup>48</sup> telling these histories correctly, their emotional response to the material, and their Settler identities.<sup>49</sup> One of the most widely tracked on “challenges” that interviewees reported feeling they face is that, as Settlers, they feel out of place in this field of study.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, the sense of challenge, as I understand it, stems from the intense feeling of responsibility that interviewees share to do this work, and do it well.

From the interviews trends were visible in the ways that scholars are becoming more comfortable teaching in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations. Taking part in various types of learning opportunities, such as courses, workshops, activities, conferences, and reading/researching were frequently brought up as ways that people are becoming more comfortable working with these histories, and more confident that they are doing a good job and sharing the histories.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, through preparation for courses and engaging with their own courses as learning opportunities, instructors reported beginning to feel more comfortable. However, while many interviewees reported engaging in opportunities such as Indigenous Acuity Training, blanket exercises, various workshops and talks, and Indigenization courses, none of this engagement is mandated. People’s engagements in these types of activities stem from a personal commitment to this work. The lack of mandated engagement is reflected in the varying levels of people’s engagement; some interviewees reported ongoing and continual

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<sup>48</sup> Some interviewees explained that they feel that their lack of training in the specifics of this field increased its challenging nature. This sentiment, rooted in having done their academic training elsewhere, was widely shared. Interviewee A (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee G (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee H (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>51</sup> One interviewee expressed the sentiment that the best learning opportunities do not take place in traditional academic settings. They posited that their most valuable learning experiences arose through personal engagements and learning opportunities.

Interviewee F (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

commitment to learning in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations while others have focused their professional development elsewhere.

Within their courses some instructors explained how they respond to challenges of positionality and the emotional content of the histories by foregrounding their own positionality and being more transparent with their struggles.<sup>52</sup> One interviewee explained how they reconcile their Settler identity and their engagement in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations. They explained that the task of restorying Canadian history, and implementing changes accordingly, is huge, and that, while Indigenous peoples might be better positioned to do this work, leaving the burden on Indigenous peoples is inappropriate. Rather it is time to “shift the onus onto Settlers to take an active part in the decolonization process.”<sup>53</sup> Another interviewee explained that by taking a highly subjective and transparent approach when teaching courses in Indigenous-Settler relations, they negate the idea that “mastery” of the field is required, which students must attempt to emulate. Facilitating a more transparent inquiry process, this interviewee feels, minimizes students’ feelings of one day hoping to “know enough” to talk about what they learn and is more conducive to meaningful engagement on behalf of students. Focusing on teaching practice that centers around being open and receptive, teaching students how to ask good questions, and viewing education as a process rather than content-based encourages students to be more receptive to the material.<sup>54</sup> Acknowledging that history is not neutral and professors are

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<sup>52</sup> Interviewee J (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee E (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Appreciation for opportunities to bring in guest speakers was addressed directly by three interviewees. Interviewee D (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Interviewee J (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

Other examples of this practice of being more upfront were shared. For example, certain interviewees explained their practices of being more upfront when working with what they find to be particularly emotionally challenging topics. By sharing these emotions with students, and not attempting to present material in a distanced or objective way, these instructors reported that they feel students are more engaged, but also, they feel more comfortable with their teaching practice. Another approach that an interviewee shared when teaching emotionally challenging topics is to include visual, Indigenous created sources, like movies or recordings of people sharing their own experience.

not neutral, and letting students “see behind the curtain” into people’s own learning process was an important technique that an interviewee shared in their journey of becoming more comfortable when teaching challenging material or courses.<sup>55</sup>

Interviewees were asked if they feel adequately supported by their departments and institutions. Overall, interviewees reported that yes, they do feel adequately supported in doing this work.<sup>56</sup> When professors were asked where there might be room for improvement on behalf of their institutions, one suggestion was that institutions could facilitate the growth of relationships between scholars, departments, and even other institutions.<sup>57</sup> A minority of scholars reported that they felt isolated in doing this work, and that building relationships could help them feel supported. Stronger relationships would enable scholars to more easily learn from colleagues about what they are doing, and would provide opportunities for scholars to talk with each other about how they work and cope with such sensitive histories.<sup>58</sup> As well as desiring assistance in facilitating relationships with other academics, scholars reported that they would appreciate more opportunities and to start to build relationships with more Indigenous colleagues.<sup>59</sup>

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This approach works to foreground Indigenous voices and reduces risks of “speaking for” or “taking space from” Indigenous peoples. Interviewee J (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee E (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee I (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Interviewee J (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>56</sup> One interviewee, however, voiced their concern that while departments and institutions certainly value the work that instructors do to act upon Indigenization Plans and goals outlined by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action, they do not feel instructors are supported in the meaningful way that is required when asking for individuals to engage with the heavy workload and emotional labour that is required. Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee K (professor), in discussion with the author, Fall 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019. The importance of a relational approach to teaching was expressed explicitly by one interviewee and became especially evident through text-based research. Interviewee L (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Interviewee G (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee K (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee C (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Interviewees multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.



While Canadian historians most frequently reported viewing the area of Canadian history as having been significantly changed by the increased inclusion of Indigenous histories and perspectives on narratives in Canadian history, a minority group was not convinced it has substantively changed. To this group, the supposed change, as evidenced by the increased presence of these histories in faculty members consciousnesses and courses, is superficially clear. There has not been the transformative change that Canadian history requires for it to realize its potential for decolonization. Non-Indigenous scholars reported feeling an intense responsibility to learn about these histories and teach them well but shared that they feel it is a challenging task; however, one that is necessary to embark on. Scholars' desire for a new framework to teach their Canadian history courses from became evident through the interviews as people reflected on the challenges, they feel they face, the frustrations they are confronted with, and how they feel about the way their courses are presented right now. While reflecting upon the interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, it became clear to me that treaty education is an achievable pathway to make the required transformative changes in Canadian history.

## Relearning Through Treaty Education

The goal of Canadian history being an opportunity to contribute to the process of decolonization is not being actualized. While Canadian history courses have improved at including more Indigenous content, as was reflected in the interviews, solely increasing Indigenous themed material is not going to lead to this goal being achieved. Engaging with Willie Ermine's "ethical space of engagement" is one potential way to initiate the realization of this goal.<sup>60</sup>

Ermine's "ethical space of engagement" emerged through a thought experiment that positioned Indigenous and Western thought worlds as two entirely separate entities. The worlds are constructed through the distinctiveness of their respective histories, knowledge traditions, philosophies, and social and physical realities. The completely autonomous constructions of the two thought worlds leave a space in between them. This is the ethical space of engagement.<sup>61</sup> Constructed through the ongoing clashing of cultures, this space has the potential to be accessed when the dominating Western gaze meets the Indigenous counter-gaze. The counter-gaze,

projects from the memory of a people and is, in essence the continuum of a story and history. It is the social, political, and historical consciousness about existence, and a place in the universe that is valid and imbued with purpose and hence our cultural/political claims revolve around identity and knowledge and power... This is a gaze that

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<sup>60</sup> Willie Ermine, "The Ethical Space of Engagement," *Indigenous Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2007): 194.

<sup>61</sup> Ermine, "The Ethical Space of Engagement," 194.

remembers a time before colonialism and one that reflects a belief in itself as a human community.<sup>62</sup>

The gaze functions as a mirror. Settlers look into it when trying to witness or capture glimpses of Indigenous realities, but instead see their own reflections. The possibility of entering the ethical space of engagement is opened when non-Indigenous peoples investigate the mirror and engage with the reflection of themselves and their colonizing cultures.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, what the mirror can teach is that it is not really about the situation of Indigenous peoples in this country, but it is about the character and honor of a nation to have created such conditions of inequity. It is about the mindset of a human community of people refusing to honor the rights of other communities.<sup>64</sup>

Opportunities to access this mirror must be more readily provided to Settlers for them to potentially enter the ethical space of engagement with Indigenous peoples. For people to be able to engage with the mirror at all, they need to be provided with a “window” into it. These windows can take the form of “glimpses of unsettling realities,” which provide non-Indigenous peoples with access to the mirror. Opening these windows is the first step in the process of critical reflection.<sup>65</sup> These windows can be created in a myriad of ways, but one method that is achievable in Canadian history courses is providing students with more relevant material. Students can then approach the information as “critical resources” to encourage personal reflection.<sup>66</sup> Students, upon reflection and engagement with the knowledge that has been shared with them, are offered the opportunity to potentially meet the Indigenous the counter-gaze. The windows must disallow false separations of the colonial past from the colonial present and refuse the “alibi of good intentions,” and disrupt the Settler colonial imaginary, demanding a rigorous

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Hiller, “Tracing the Spirals of Unsettlement,” 421.

<sup>64</sup> Ermine, “The Ethical Space,” 201.

<sup>65</sup> Hiller, “Tracing the Spirals of Unsettlement,” 422.

<sup>66</sup> Ermine, “The Ethical Space,” 202.

examination of our personal and societal implication in the on-going history of colonization.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, this means that courses must be structured on information and ways of knowing that contradict the dominant Canadian narrative. Post-secondary Canadian history courses need to serve as a jumping-off point for the required critical reflection on settler cultures, assumptions, and power dynamics that operate within them.

These windows could be opened through treaty education, which would complicate or challenge colonial attitudes. The Settler historical imagination could be unsettled by providing students opportunities for critical reflection. Changing the way that the numbered treaties are addressed, for example, in post-secondary Canadian history classrooms could achieve this goal of unsettlement.<sup>68</sup> Frequently, treaties, and the relationships they established, are viewed as irrelevant or of little importance from Settlers' perspectives.<sup>69</sup> Treaties, in the majority of Canadian history, are represented as the finite moments in which they were signed. The treaties are understood simply as "a convenient way in which [Settlers] could realize control over the land," and as a step in the story of the development as a civic nation. This understanding minimizes treaties' historical and enduring importance.<sup>70</sup> Treaties underpin the entirety of Canadian history, contrary to common perceptions. The settlement of Canada is predicated on the grounds established by the treaties. They established the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and are foundational to the existence of the Canadian state.

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<sup>67</sup> Hiller, "Tracing the Spirals of Unsettlement," 422.

<sup>68</sup> This thesis refers exclusively to the numbered treaties. The numbered treaties are a series of agreements that were made between 1871-1921 and are a distinct aspect of the "treaty era," c. 1700-1923. The numbered treaties cover the majority of what is now Canada. They were selected for this study primarily because of the significant body of scholarship that exists around them.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Asch, "Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation: Stepping Back into the Future," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, edited by Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 30.

<sup>70</sup> Asch, "Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation," 31.

The importance of the numbered treaties is continually undermined in post-secondary Canadian history courses as they reproduce colonial understandings and allow misconceptions to continue existing.<sup>71</sup> Treaties are represented in many problematic ways. For example, treaties are presented as real estate deals that extinguished the “property rights” of those Indigenous peoples and nations who signed them and “eliminated the legal impediment of settling Indigenous lands,” or they are represented as providing “special rights” for Indigenous peoples. Common misunderstandings continue to reinforce the myth of “benevolent peacemaker nation,” and have many problematic consequences.<sup>72</sup> These misrepresentations are the stories that are engrained in Canadian history and public memory. Teaching treaties in a way that highlights their importance is necessary because it would start breaking down the barriers that settler colonialism has created to Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. It would ideally begin to facilitate meaningful engagement on what it means to live in Canada, and open windows for Settlers to meet the counter-gaze of Ermine’s mirror.

The opportunity exists through treaty education to disrupt “hegemonic meaning making practices” in Canadian history and open the possibility of Settlers’ gazes to meet Ermine’s “Indigenous counter gaze.” Shifting how the numbered treaties are taught has four key aspects, which are rooted in location and relationship-specific contexts. Foundationally, these aspects must be engaged within a relational paradigm. First, Canadian history courses must augment coverage of treaties as content knowledge and as an alternative history. Secondly, how treaties are taught must include the diverse range of their understandings. Furthermore, treaty education must highlight the relationships that were established and how they exist today. Lastly,

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<sup>71</sup> Chris Hiller, “‘No Do You Know What Treaty Rights Are?’ Treaty Consciousness in a Decolonizing Frame,” *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 38, no. 4 (2016): 381.

<sup>72</sup> Hiller, “‘No Do You Know What Treaty Rights Are?’,” 382.

demonstrating that treaties contain important lessons on how Canadians should live their lives is vital. Ideally, making these changes would encourage Settlers to take an active role in decolonization and the fight against ongoing colonialism. Crucial to all aspects of how treaties need to be taught is the fact that international treaties were not introduced to Indigenous nations by Europeans. Indigenous nations have a long, complex history of signing treaties between their nations, which cannot be ignored. Teaching treaties in ways that facilitate deeper understandings of the contexts they were signed, their enduring importance, and the cultural differences that have skewed their understanding are required with respect to all aspects of the changes.

Fundamentally, educators taking a relational approach to teaching history is one way to ensure that the changes in the way treaties are taught leads to transformative change. Relational approaches to teaching posit that concepts and ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them.<sup>73</sup> The achievement of this desire would be significant because it would encourage the formation of stronger relationships between educators and students and facilitate conversation and growth between those involved. Understanding and “actively embodying” our responsibilities within these relationships would open possibilities for transformative change in many ways. It would initiate change in how people relate to the content they teach and the personal connections they form around it. A relational approach to teaching provides a healthy forward-looking possibility for educators in Canadian history. The desire to develop new and stronger relationships between other educators and Indigenous peoples was consistently brought up by non-Indigenous interviewees.<sup>74</sup> In the interviews, multiple respondents expressed an

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<sup>73</sup> Dion and Dion, *Braiding Histories*, 54.

<sup>74</sup> Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, “Towards a Relational Paradigm – Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land and Modernity,” in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, edited by Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, 175-208. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 59; interviewee K (professor), in conversation with the author, Fall 2019

interest in hosting more Indigenous guest speakers in their classrooms, which could be achieved by forming relationships with local communities.<sup>75</sup>

History must focus on the relationships that have been built between Settlers and Indigenous peoples, and stop imagining them as a point of departure for the remainder of Canadian history.<sup>76</sup> Understanding the centrality of the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the story of settlement is vital because it shows how they are connected, and refuses the separation of the past, present, and future, which entrenches colonial mentalities.<sup>77</sup> Colonialism “has relied upon the distinction between traditional and modern that underlies notions of progress, development, and civilization to provide the ideological justification for the extension of settler laws and regulations on Indigenous peoples and their lands,” both historically and at present.<sup>78</sup> A relational framework has the potential to challenge these assumptions. It can challenge the dichotomous treatment of the past and present or tradition and modernity, and help non-Indigenous people to see the continuity between them.<sup>79</sup>

Embodying these relationships, and treating them as a “generative, active, process” would help

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<sup>75</sup> Two interviewees highlighted the importance of Canadian historians developing deeper relationships with local Indigenous nations, and one interviewee explicitly identified the need for Settler scholars to work together and strengthen relationships with one another in order to ensure these changes are not isolated. One suggested way to do this was through structured, mandatory workshops. Another potential way was through creating “pods” of professors across different departments, which would build relationships and help scholars see the decolonial changes are taking place across the university. Guest speakers, according to Hiller, provide students with more opportunities for students to meet the Indigenous counter-gaze as they are forced to confront what are often lived experiences of the speaker and contribute to the growth of a relational teaching practice. Interviewee L (professor), in discussion with the author, Fall 2019; Interviewee K (professor), in discussion with the author, Fall 2019; Hiller, “Tracing the Spirals of Unsettlement,” 422.

<sup>76</sup> Asch, “Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation,” 45.

For further reading I recommend the edition of *Canada’s History* magazine, “Treaties and the Treaty Relationship.”

<sup>77</sup> Asch, “Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation,” 45.

<sup>78</sup> Starblanket and Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, “Towards a Relational Paradigm,” 195-196.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

to not lock events of colonialism in a past that has no present, and allow non-Indigenous students to meet the Indigenous counter-gaze.<sup>80</sup>

The first aspect is changing the content knowledge and histories that accompany treaty education. There are narratives and information that need to accompany the delivery of the numbered treaties in post-secondary Canadian history classrooms, so their significance is not misconstrued. Narratives contrary to the dominant Canadian historical narrative provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of the events related to treaty signing. Increased content contributes to a more detailed understanding of the characteristics of the treaties, the signing parties, and their motivations. Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that “to hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges.”<sup>81</sup> Access to these alternative knowledges can form the basis of alternative ways of thinking and carrying oneself.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, Canadian history courses must endeavour to include and meaningfully incorporate more Indigenous content and alternative histories that contrast the popularized narrative. Such an approach would encourage people to interrogate the dominant Canadian history narrative and reflect on histories and knowledges that they may have taken for granted.

The history of coercion in treaty signing is an example of an alternative history that can no longer be minimized or ignored. The history of coercion, on behalf of colonial officials,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Engaging in Indigenous pedagogy is another important aspect of teaching in a relational framework. Indigenous pedagogies are rooted in traditional ways of teaching and call for the building of relationships within local communities and with knowledge keepers. For more information, see Jean-Paul Restoule and Chaw-win-is’ piece “Old Ways Are the New Way Forward: Indigenous Pedagogy Can Benefit Everyone.” The First Peoples Principles of Learning (appended) is an excellent resource and demonstrates how educators can engage with Indigenous pedagogy across classrooms. Engaging with Indigenous pedagogy creates deeper, more meaningful learning experiences everywhere, for everyone. Interviewee N (professor), in discussion with the author, Fall 2019; Jean-Paul Restoule and Chaw-win-is, “Old Ways Are the New Way Forward: How Indigenous Pedagogy Can Benefit Everyone,” *Canadian Commission for UNESCO* (2017): 4-6.

<sup>81</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory,” in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, UK: Zed Books Ltd, 2012), 36.

<sup>82</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, “Imperialism, History, Writing, and Theory,” 36.



shows both the character and values of state-sanctioned officials and the spirit and intent that underlie the agreements.<sup>83</sup> To exclude this history from the national narrative that is furthered in post-secondary Canadian history courses mischaracterizes the events that took place during treaty negotiations and the intentions of those who were involved.<sup>84</sup> Government officials commonly used coercion tactics when negotiating and signing treaties. Colonial officials were known to go to extreme measures to ensure an “agreement” was reached in cases where a nation refused to sign, in particular, a “land cession” or removal treaty. For example, government officials would find some members of the nation who were willing to sign, have these select members sign, then apply the treaty to the whole nation. Indigenous peoples who opposed treaties were known to be threatened with military violence, the refusing of annuity payments, or the withholding of other goods that were needed to live, including food. Furthermore, key food resources, such as the buffalo, were intentionally decimated in order to “bring Indians to heel” and coerce resistant nations into signing treaties.<sup>85</sup> To exclude this history of coercion from university-level Canadian history courses mischaracterizes the agreements that were made, and fails to encourage students to think critically about the validity of the treaties. Providing students with the required content knowledge and alternative histories is essential in facilitating deeper comprehension and appreciation of the treaties.

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2013); James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina SK: University of Regina Press, 2014), 79-126; Sheldon Krasowski, *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous* (Regina SK: University of Regina Press, 2019), 87-174.

<sup>84</sup> It is important to not mischaracterize colonial officials by painting them with too broad of brush strokes. Michael Asch makes the case that treaties were not driven by malicious intentions, and certain government officials had good intentions in the signing and implementing of the numbered treaties. Asch argues that Settler forebearers were acting in good faith, and that the treaties were a meeting of the minds. I contend that Asch’s view of treaties is, ultimately, too idyllic, but, like Asch, I maintain that there were well-meaning individuals and that the relationship established through treaty signing is the path that must be pursued moving forward. For further reading, I recommend Asch’s “Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation: Stepping Back into the Future.”

<sup>85</sup> Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2013), 87; Krasowski, *No Surrender*, 139.

The perceived importance and understandings of the numbered treaties vary immensely between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and treaty education needs to realize this. For example, non-Indigenous peoples frequently see treaties as of little to no importance in their lives. They frequently understand treaties to be land cession agreements, but, contrastingly, the treaties are characterized by Indigenous peoples as legally-binding agreements that were established to enable co-existence between Indigenous peoples and Settlers. For Indigenous peoples, Harold Cardinal likens the importance of treaties to the importance of the Magna Carta.<sup>86</sup> Cardinal explains that, for Indigenous signatories, the treaties were entered into with good faith, hope for a better life, and with an understanding of the magnitude of the relationship that was being established.<sup>87</sup> Elder Kay Thompson, of Treaty 4, explains that her forebearers “didn’t give up the land, they didn’t say, we give you this land. They gave them permission to use the land.”<sup>88</sup> The intent of the treaties, in the eyes of Indigenous signatories, were “to establish a nation-to-nation relationship,” and were not intended to grant Settlers undisputable sovereignty in perpetuity.<sup>89</sup> Including these understandings in treaty education is vital.<sup>90</sup> To exclude Indigenous voices and perspectives of the treaties tells students that these voices are not important or necessary, and their exclusion from Canadian historical narratives is unacceptable.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Asch, “Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation,” 34; For further reading see “Treaties Four and Five: The Fort Qu’Appelle and Lake Winnipeg Treaties, 1874 and 1875: ‘*The Treaties Should Be Canada’s Magna Carta*’” in Sheldon Krasowski’s *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous*.

<sup>87</sup> Asch, “Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation,” 34.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 35-37.

<sup>90</sup> Diversifying sources is a required step in coming to more accurately represent diverse understandings of treaties. “Formalized records,” including treaty commissioners’ reports and government documents, and settler centered public or private records, including newspapers, letters, or diaries, are insufficient because they reinforce colonialism assumptions. Eyewitness and Indigenous oral testimonies add a new and important dimension to the history of treaty signing, but they must be handled appropriately and with care. Krasowski, *No Surrender*, 5.

<sup>91</sup> Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study?,” 151.

People's understandings of the treaties are rooted in their worldviews, conceptions of property, and understandings of relationship. Teaching about these unique understandings, particularly those that do not conform with dominant narratives, is important and provides students with insight into worldviews other than their own.<sup>92</sup> Students could be provided with a visceral lesson in the partiality of knowledge, if they are open-minded.<sup>93</sup> From a colonial perspective, through a series of choices and prioritizations, treaties have been used to justify the settler colonial project through the isolation and erasure of different worldviews, unique histories, and knowledge traditions from the mainstream. Understanding the decisions that have been made surrounding the validity of knowledge provides a space where Canadian history courses could be less hegemonic.<sup>94</sup> Treaties were agreements that "we would live together, sharing the land," and they need to be represented as such in Canadian history courses. Disrupting hegemonic understandings and interpretations of treaties is a necessary step in Settlers reaching the ethical space because it provides more opportunities for students to meet the counter-gaze of Indigenous peoples and critically reflect on the intentions of their Settler forebearers, which underpin the treaties and their current position in the Canadian public consciousness.

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<sup>92</sup> Complicating students' understandings also needs to be done by exposing them to alternative systems of land stewardship/ownership and discourses surrounding sovereignty. The validity of current settler understandings of treaties needs to be questioned, which can be done by exposing students to diverse understandings of property that are contrary to their own. For example, views that negate the understanding of land cession treaties because the land was never Indigenous peoples' to give away, or is an invaluable gift or ancestor, which could never have been sold. These explorations need to be highly location-specific to avoid over-generalizations. Questioning the validity of colonial assertions of sovereignty is another important aspect of treaty education. Currently, treaty education operates under the assumption of Canadian and Crown sovereignty, but that assumption is not definite. For further reading consider Krasowski, "Treaty Seven: The Blackfoot Crossing Treaty: *'The Great Spirit and Not the Great Mother Gave Us This Land,'*" in *No Surrender*, Claxton and Price's "Whose Land Is It? Rethinking Sovereignty in British Columbia," Kent McNeil's "Indigenous and Crown Sovereignty in Canada" in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, and "Territory" and "Sovereignty" by Patrick Macklem in *Indigenous and the Constitution of Canada*.

<sup>93</sup> Tupper and Cappello, "Teaching Treaties as (Un)Usual Narratives," 567.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Additionally, teaching students to understand and appreciate the relationships that were established with the signing of treaties is another key change that needs to be made. Given that the treaties were not land cession agreements, an important relationship was established with their signing. The relationship allowed non-Indigenous peoples to occupy the land and continues to authorize a presence. The treaties established three distinct relationships: the Dominion of Canada and Indigenous nations; Indigenous nations and the Crown; and Indigenous peoples and Settlers.<sup>95</sup> The relationships established were intended to be those of mutual profitability, which ensured the success of all parties involved. However, Settlers' continual failure to fulfill the obligations that were the foundation of the relationship led, justifiably, to embitterment, broken trust, and spoiled relationships. Glimpses into Ermine's mirror can be provided as Settlers are required to think critically about their relationships with Indigenous peoples. Such criticality is facilitated by deepening the understanding of the historical relationship that was established between Canada, the Crown, Indigenous nations, and Settlers.

The numbered treaties address countless contemporary issues in the relationships between Indigenous and Settler peoples, especially matters that stem from the privileging of Western narratives of settlement and development.<sup>96</sup> Treaties demonstrate a way forward in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, but past relationships, and the effects treaties had on them, must be understood. Canadian history courses need to provide students with this understanding. According to Michael Asch, the challenge is ours to follow the path that the treaties were intended to follow. Although the agreements were signed many years ago and countless abuses of power and trust have occurred, "these are the conditions that those

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<sup>95</sup> Asch, "Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation," 38.

<sup>96</sup> Starblanket and Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 195.

with whom we negotiated accepted as necessary to legitimate our presence on these lands. And, should our partners still be willing to trust us to fulfill these faithfully, then that seems to be a good basis on which to begin rebuilding that relationship.”<sup>97</sup>

Finally, teaching treaties in a way that pushes non-Indigenous peoples to see their significance to their every day lives is required for the magnitude of their importance to be realized. The treaties were, and are, the conditions upon which Settlers were authorized to settle in what has become Canada, and the obligations that we made in return.<sup>98</sup> Treaties underpin every aspect of settlement in Canada. The treaties, which cover the majority of Canada, justify Settlers’ presence, and in places that are not “under treaty” they serve as justification based on the precedent set by established Settler presence elsewhere. Asch explains that “treaties are as much a Magna Carta for [Settlers] as they are for those with whom [they were] negotiated, for the legitimacy of everything else, Confederation included, follows from it.”<sup>99</sup> How the numbered treaties are taught needs to further this understanding.<sup>100</sup> Teaching treaties as a “force of the everyday” and a “set of evolving relations that cannot be determined in advance but instead must be lived, enacted and re-enacted, through time-space-specific readings of [their] ongoing meaning[s]... in the present.”<sup>101</sup> Canadian history needs to teach non-Indigenous students of their “treaty inheritance.” “Treaty inheritance” is a dual concept;

One that demands acknowledgement of one’s position as benefactor of bargains struck through deceit, fraud, enforced starvation, colonial arrogance, and bureaucratized violence; and one that also entails practices of remembering, reclaiming, and carrying

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<sup>97</sup> Asch, “Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation,” 44.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>100</sup> Chris Hiller, “No Do You Know What Treaty Rights Are?” 399.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 399.

forward ancient principles, recursive obligations, never-ending promises, and responsibilities from the past into the future.<sup>102</sup>

Treaty education as an ongoing, open-ended process of interrogation is a fundamental and profound step towards the possibility of decolonization.<sup>103</sup> The opportunity to meet the counter-gaze of Indigenous peoples, and engage in critical reflection of their positionality as a Settler and the accompanying institutions, could be provided by encouraging Settler students to act upon the importance of treaties in their everyday lives.

Treaties initiated nation-to-nation dialogues. Each party was informed by their respective worldviews and political and cultural traditions. The agreements, in the eyes of many Indigenous signatories, constituted the terms on which diametrically opposed peoples could peacefully co-exist and share land. The framework of ethical space can help us to understand the fundamental ethical, legal, and moral differences apparent in treaties.<sup>104</sup> For non-Indigenous peoples to begin to engage in decolonization efforts, they need to enter an ethical space of engagement. Post-secondary Canadian history courses need to be initiating this process, and it can be done by encouraging critical self reflection. Changing how treaties are taught, so their importance is no longer minimized, could do this. Visible in the numbered treaties are the distinct thought worlds that are “continually colliding – discursively culturally, epistemologically, ontologically, politically, socially, [and] spatially,” so the space in between them, where the counter-gaze can be met, is especially evident.<sup>105</sup> Canadian history courses need to be working to open that space to the countless students that are exposed to them.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 400.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 401.

<sup>104</sup> Ermine, “The Ethical Space,” 201.

<sup>105</sup> Hiller, “Tracing the Spiral of Unsettlement,” 420.

## Conclusion

Emerging from the interviews, I saw a need, and a desire, on behalf of Canadian historians for a new framework to approach their courses from. Restorying Canadian history is a task that must be undertaken for goals of decolonization to be furthered, and professors see its importance and feel an intense responsibility to be doing it. Canadian historians need to continue actively taking up this task. Making these changes would encourage multitudes of Settler students to enter into the space of ethical engagement. Ideally, it would encourage them to move away from colonizing and racist understandings of treaties. Canadian history could begin to provide students with opportunities to meet the Indigenous counter-gaze by more frequently presenting students with windows into it, which could be done through treaty education. Unsettling Settlers, and their understandings of treaties, would stop them from continuing to be an impediment to Indigenous resurgence. Treaties need to be taught in a place-specific, relational way. They need to be taught in a way that shows the numerous understandings of their importance, of the relationship they established, and how they continue to be of importance in the everyday lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Canadian history is expansive and exciting, but it is a story founded on stolen lands and stolen lives. Post-secondary Canadian history courses need to provide students with that knowledge. Living in an era where discourses of reconciliation, decolonization, and indigenization are so prevalent, we need to better equip students to understand these words and

what they mean. It is an exhilarating time for Canadian history because, as Settlers' awareness increases, spaces will be created for the prioritizing of these alternative histories. When settler society is faced with the immensity and strength of Indigenous resurgence and the potential realities of decolonization, specifically like we were in February 2020, Canadian history needs to be providing its students with the understanding and knowledge necessary to use their voice to fight for a future that we all deserve.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent events on Wet'suwet'en lands refers to the RCMP invasion of Unist'ot'en territory in February 2020. In response to the Unist'ot'en call to action an occupation of the steps of the British Columbian legislature began. Led by Youth for Yintah, a collective of Indigenous youth leaders organizing in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, the two occupations collectively lasted twenty-one days. As a white, cisgender, Settler ally my involvement was primarily reflected in me using my privileged position to act as a witness to the colonial violence the youth were faced with and hold colonial powers accountable, using my connections to mobilize other Settlers, sharing my knowledge, and, when needed, using my body and voice to stand between the Indigenous youth and colonial interference.



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I conducted eleven interviews with non-Indigenous scholars and three Indigenous scholars who teach in Canadian history or related fields. Each interview lasted thirty seven minutes and involved a standard set of questions (appended). Interviews were conducted in Victoria B.C., Castlegar B.C., and electronically (phone and Skype). Interviews were conducted between November 2019 and January 2020. Interviews were conducted with scholars from: Vancouver Island University, University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Capilano University, and Selkirk College.

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## Appendix I:

### First Peoples' Principles of Learning

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions. Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning involves patience and time.
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity.
- Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

## Appendix II:

### Interview Questions

- What is your name and university affiliation?
- What is your field of study?
- How long have you been in the field?
- How long have you been teaching, in your current field or others?
- How would you describe your teaching philosophy/pedagogy?
- What changes have you noticed in the teaching of Canadian history in the last decade or so?
- Have you noticed any changes in the teaching of Indigenous-settler relations?
- What challenges do you feel you face as a non-Indigenous scholar who is responsible for teaching sensitive histories of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-settler relations?
- How do you feel about teaching some of these more sensitive histories, some of which have intense living legacies?
- Do you have any observations surrounding how non-Indigenous professors are teaching Indigenous histories and Indigenous-settler relations, in the context of Canadian history courses?
- Are there any aspects that stand out to you as being done really well, or specific that areas that you think could use the most improvement?
- What steps, if any, have you taken to become more comfortable teaching these histories? Or to deepen your knowledge in relation to the field?
- Do you notice any changes in your teaching philosophy/pedagogy when interacting with Indigenous histories, or histories of Indigenous-settler relations? Do you feel like your approach to history and teaching history changes when teaching Indigenous histories or Indigenous settler-relations?
- Do you think you, and other professors in similar positions receive enough support from the department and academy?
- Where do you think there is room for improvement?
- Do you have any advice for non-Indigenous historians who want to keep doing this work and further engage in these conversations?
- How receptive do you think students are to the changes you've noticed, and changes in course content? How receptive do you feel they are to your delivery?

