

Casting a Stone in the Water: An Exploration of Truth and Reconciliation in the Context
of a Public Utility

by

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Executive Summary

My partner organization for my research was FortisBC (FEI), a public energy utility in British Columbia. My purpose in exploring truth and reconciliation in my organization was to examine how the organization could respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *92nd Call to Action*, which addressed Canadian businesses and corporations. In particular, I focused on the section that highlighted the need to build mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples. In chapter one, I provide context for how I arrived at my primary research question and sub-questions: "How can FEI employees take action to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia?" My sub-questions are: what can FEI employees do to learn how the organization can become a more welcoming place for Indigenous peoples. Moreover, how can FEI change its business practices to better support Indigenous communities' goals, framed by Indigenous communities? Finally, I intended to encourage other non-Indigenous FEI employees to learn more about colonization and our collective responsibility in the truth and reconciliation process.

Additionally, I hope that non-Indigenous peoples will be curious about Indigenous traditional governance and knowledge, and contemporary Indigenous cultures. In chapter two, I review literature from Indigenous scholars to answer my question: which actions can FEI employees take to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia? I explore two main themes through literature (a) relationships and (b) relational accountability in the context of truth and reconciliation. I also explore several subthemes, including Indigenous worldviews, settler-colonial relations, gender and colonization, reconciliation, Indigenous resurgence, and the responsibility of settlers in the truth and reconciliation process. Finally,

chapter three provides an overview of action research and how Indigenous research methodologies inspired my research process.

Further, in chapter three, I provide insights into social constructionism and my overarching methodology, including study design, data collection methods, participants, data analysis, and trustworthy measures. In chapter four, I share my findings, conclusions, and limitations to my study. The themes represented in chapter four speak to the need for settlers to unlearn and re-learn Canadian history. Further, I discuss how non-Indigenous FEI employees should understand the ongoing impacts of colonization before engaging with Indigenous communities. At the same time, they should be open to learning about the value of Indigenous governance and ways of knowing. In chapter four, I explore the themes shared by research participants, including trust, transparency, and open communications as crucial steps for non-Indigenous peoples who want to engage in respectful relationship building with Indigenous peoples. Finally, in chapter five, I include the organizational implications of my research, study recommendations, and implications for future study. My study recommendations reflect the importance of ongoing learning, change, and growth for FEI employees, including seeking Indigenous input on all matters related to business and operations. The intention for my recommendations is that they be woven into corporate policy to result in cultural transformation. Finally, in chapter five, I speak to how FEI can support future inquiry by examining corporate priorities and localized engagement with Indigenous peoples through a systems lens. The organizational change could be supported by the ethical introduction and integration of Indigenous governance and ways of knowing.

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List of Abbreviations

AR	Action Research
ARE	Action Research Engagement
RRU	Royal Roads University
REB	Research Ethics Board
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UNDRIP	United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
FEI	FortisBC Energy Inc.

Chapter One: Focus and Framing

My research and thesis journey has taught me to always think of the ones who have come before me, for they are the ones who cleared the trail, taught my ancestors the ways of survival, and share stories to help guide me. I grew up on the traditional and unceded territories of the Secwépemc (She-whep-m) peoples, in a town called Barrière, in central British Columbia (BC). The schools I attended were adjacent to the Chu Chua reserve, and I recall the formative relationships that developed in my early years with members of that community. I remember learning about the Secwépemc worldview, which includes the creator as the originator of all life, including animals, plants, and humans. Within this worldview, humans are no more or less valuable than all other life forms, and it is understood that the water, sun, air, and land were made by the creator to sustain all life. The Secwépemc worldviews resonated with me as a child, but as I grew into an adult, I slowly became used to the hierarchy of the Western world, where the human need is placed above all other entities, living beings, and our environment. This hierarchy was most evident in how Canadian business and government seemed to always prioritize resource extraction and commercialization over Indigenous peoples and the sustainability of the natural environment.

After leaving Barrière, a connection with Chu Chua remained as my sister Nicole married a Simpcw (Simp-qwuh) man, Mark Matthew, from Chu Chua. As my relationship with my brother-in-law and his parents deepened over the past 17 years, so did my desire to learn. The more I have learned from Indigenous authors, scholars, artists, and activists, the more conflicted I feel about being a Canadian. While many Canadians feel proud when they think of their nationality, I have inner conflict when I think about the injustices that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples have experienced so that Canadians can prosper.

My thoughts about Canada and Canadians' racist assumptions of Indigenous peoples began during my experiences as an undergraduate student and young professional. When I started my undergraduate degree in 2002, I noticed the courses that resonated with me the most were the electives. For example, if I wanted to read female authors, I had to take Women's Literature. If I wanted to read Indigenous authors, I had to take the one Aboriginal Literature course available in my program. Similarly, if I wanted to learn about traditional Indigenous governance, I had to catch a guest speaker at the Student Union Building on a night I did not have class. These experiences taught me that literature created by writers who were not White men was considered optional in the minds of the dominant society. Likewise, in academia, Indigenous knowledge was marginalized.

Once I observed how female and Indigenous voices were held to the periphery in post-secondary education, I began to notice the same type of exclusion happening elsewhere in Canadian society. More recently, I realized that I too, share the same tendency to exclude Indigenous voices. For example, after submitting the first draft of my thesis to my supervisor, I realized I had not cited Indigenous scholars in many areas where I should have and I was surprised at this because I had planned for Indigenous voices to be at the forefront of my thesis. This situation made me reflect on my academic experience and how Indigenous voices, if included at all, tended to be marginalized and kept outside of what is considered necessary. This experience showed me how deeply ingrained my own hegemonic tendencies can be.

As a researcher, it is my responsibility to be as transparent as I can about my perspectives so that my audience can identify where my knowledge comes from and acknowledge it. My thesis findings and supporting analysis, located in chapter four, are not representative of Indigenous communities in BC. Instead, my conclusions and my analysis were filtered through

my lens with privilege as a non-Indigenous person. I have tried to balance this bias and be transparent about how influential the ideas of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples have been to my central arguments in this paper.

Throughout my research and thesis, I have learned that my relationships with Indigenous people do not excuse me from doing the hard work of unlearning, re-learning, and reflecting on my actions. I have also learned from Indigenous research methodologies that respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity are critical to my relationships. As a researcher, I must recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). Further, Indigenous research methodologies have inspired me to speak openly about how my research project has evolved. For example, in *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2008) shared a letter he wrote to his sons about how he came to his research. By providing his audience with insight into his closest relationships, he allowed his readers to develop a personal relationship with him and his research (p. 21). Wilson demonstrated what respect and reciprocity could look like in academic writing by threading his personal life, relationships, and conversations into his work.

Further, Wilson discussed how reciprocity is more than a transaction between two people. He included Evelyn Steinhauer's (2001) quote: "Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift" (p. 86). I do not deeply understand all of the actions that accompany respect and reciprocity from Indigenous perspectives, but I am committed to learning. Understanding what respect looks like from Indigenous perspectives is part of my ongoing learning, and it is dependent on context, community traditions, and culture.

Respect, responsibility, and reciprocity are essential elements in the literature I have read and reviewed from Indigenous scholars like Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), Leanne

Betasamosake Simpson (2011, 2016, 2017), and Shawn Wilson (2008). In the context of research, I learned from these scholars that respect should be consistent throughout the entire process, and actions like member checking reflect that respect. Member checking is communicating back with participants throughout the research process, which I will discuss more in chapter three. It is crucial to recognize that of the six research participants who volunteered to be part of this study, two identified as non-Indigenous, two identified as First Nations, and two identified as Métis. I offered honorariums to the Indigenous participants for both the interview and the group method participation. I understood this to be a symbol of reciprocity and recognition that traditionally in Canada, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have not been compensated for the knowledge they have shared. When writing this thesis, my understanding of demonstrating respect to the research participants is to share the knowledge they shared with me in the way the participants intended it. At the same time, I hope that my research reflects the respect that I feel towards members of my organization, which provided me with a context in which to explore my particular research topic.

My research took place in the context of a public utility in BC: FortisBC Energy Inc., yet my journey to my inquiry topic began much earlier in my life. After university, my brother-in-law helped me gain a six-month contract in communications with the Interior Health Authority in the Aboriginal Health Network. Looking back on that time, I recall a group of people who had suffered injustice and exclusion at the hands of the Canadian settler society, yet still had the generosity to welcome me, an outsider, into their group. My brother-in-law also gave me another learning opportunity when he asked me to interview his grandma. Even though I was an inexperienced writer, my brother-in-law's family paid me for this work, but in retrospect, I feel I should have paid her for everything she taught me and the wonderful visits we had together.

I describe my research journey because I want my audience to understand how I have personally benefitted from my relationships with First Nations peoples, in addition to the many privileges and rights granted to other newcomers. As a White Canadian, the benefit I experience has been complex. I benefit financially and in almost every aspect of life from Europeans' theft of Indigenous lands, like my French ancestors. The wealth that came from extracting resources from stolen lands and sending them to Europe was passed down to me. Perhaps most surprisingly, given the injustices Canadians have inflicted on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, I have benefitted from the generosity, knowledge, and culture they have shared with me. That generosity stayed with me as I continued on into my professional career.

I spent a few more years in Kamloops and completed my degree in journalism. I found full-time employment at a small company in Vancouver that delivered public utility energy efficiency programs to low-income customers. When that company made some structural changes, I was out of a job and looking for full-time work, so I applied to FortisBC because I had worked with some of their employees on low-income programming. I felt conflicted about working for a company that primarily delivered natural gas because I was more interested in renewable energy solutions for the future. However, over the past seven years with the company, I have witnessed efforts to improve environmental sustainability through FortisBC's commitment to decrease their customers' greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 (FortisBC, n.d.-a, para. 2). In my interactions over the past couple of years, I have also found that more FortisBC employees are interested in learning about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC; 2015a) *Calls to Action*. Because of these observations, once I started my master's degree program, I saw an opportunity to apply my academic research to my organization. By 2018, the year I began my master's degree, there were increasingly more

conversations and dialogue occurring around truth and reconciliation at the highest levels of the organization. I was made aware of this through my organizational sponsor as well as through internal meetings and presentations. I sensed it was a good time to explore the TRC *Calls to Action* in the context of my organization.

FortisBC Energy Inc. (FEI) is a shareholder-owned public utility that provides energy to over 1.1 million people in the province. When engaging with Indigenous communities, FEI (n.d.-b) created its *Statement of Indigenous Principles* in 2001. The principles provide a framework for facilitating clear and open communication with Indigenous peoples on an ongoing and timely basis, with the intent of building mutual interest and benefit for both parties. While the principles recognize, acknowledge, and respect that Indigenous peoples have unique histories, cultures, protocols, values, beliefs, and governments, it is vital to note that the document was a utility initiative and not one led by First Nations or Métis groups. The statement includes a commitment to employment practices and plans that ensure Indigenous peoples are considered for employment opportunities and speaks to FEI's goal to attract Indigenous employees, consultants, contractors, and business partnerships.

It is essential to clarify that these are FEI's goals, created from a utility perspective, and are not the goals of First Nations and Métis communities. Therefore, FEI employees will have to embrace responsibility and a desire to learn about Canada's colonial history and how colonization plays out at a systems level in the day-to-day. It is also up to FEI leadership to ensure employees know about the unique cultures and traditional governance structures of the communities in which FEI serves. There are many ways FEI employees can embrace education and service-learning in this area. Service-learning moves beyond the missionary tendency found in traditional settler volunteerism; it is about an equal exchange in the server's learning and social

action enterprise (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman-Simpson, 2011, p. 324). Because service-learning goes beyond volunteering, it includes preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration for the learner. Non-Indigenous people who engage in service-learning demonstrate a deep interest in learning and respectful interaction with Indigenous peoples.

My intention with this research process has been to encourage and motivate non-Indigenous FEI employees to learn more about colonization as well as our individual and collective responsibilities in truth and reconciliation. There are many ways for FEI employees to learn, including; by reading literature written by Indigenous scholars and authors, enter into a service-learner relationship, listen to oral stories shared by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples or, listen to podcasts, videos, presentations created by Indigenous Peoples. In challenging settler worldviews, I hope that non-Indigenous people like myself can also critically examine how we relate to one another, the land, animals, and our environment. It is vital for settlers to not get too excited about reconciliation as there is still so much truth left to learn, and accept. Further, if we don't take the time to fully understand the ideas and perceptions that were behind decisions made by settlers in Canadian history, we, as settlers, are much more likely to repeat the same mistakes.

I take time in this thesis to focus on a small segment of Canadian history that I feel is most relevant to my literature review overall, the context of my research, and my research topic. Unfortunately, I am not a historian, and the space allotted in this thesis is not expansive enough to include a comprehensive review of Canadian history. However, critical thinking of the past is part of truth and reconciliation, so I did my best to choose historical segments from the perspectives of Indigenous scholars, which best supported the ideas that represent the foundation for colonialism in Canada. There is a continuous link between early colonialism and present-day

colonialism, including systemic racism and oppression towards Indigenous peoples. In the final days of writing this thesis, more than 1,500 bodies of Indigenous children have been revealed in unmarked graves under Residential Schools in Canada, some of which closed only in the past few decades. The reconciliation of Canadians with their history is crucial to building more respectful relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Even with irrefutable proof, many Canadians and politicians in this country continue to deny or avoid the topics of colonial oppression and cultural genocide by pointing fingers at the church regarding the horrors of residential schools. However, it is essential for White settlers, like me, to remember that it's not one particular group of white people who chose to look away as cultural genocide occurred. Denial or disregard has happened at every level of Canadian society. In 1990, former National Chief Phil Fontaine publicly and courageously shared his experience of being abused in a residential school. Yet, more than two decades later, millions of Canadians who were alive when Fontaine shared his abuse have been shocked and horrified to learn about the unmarked graves of children found under former residential schools.

Reconciliation will not be possible if Canadians choose to practice ignorance or denial. Some Indigenous scholars and activists who have been part of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria have questioned the national discourse on truth and reconciliation, seeing it more as "an orientating goal" rather than a transformative shift or a decolonizing movement (Alfred, 2009, p. 181; Corntassel, 2012, p. 91; Coulthard, 2014). In other words, to make a significant shift from where we are to where we need to be, settlers need to have their ideas challenged and reframed by Indigenous perspectives on reconciliation. The type of reconciliation discussed in this thesis represents a transformative shift from today to where we need to be. As Nathan Matthew, Simpcw educator and advocator, has explained, "Reconciliation

is the process of making a shift in thinking, and acting, which gives First Nations a real place in the world, on their lands, with recognized rights" (personal communication, March 6, 2020). I have positioned my inquiry questions and study to focus on the actions non-Indigenous FEI employees can take in truth and reconciliation.

The primary question explored in this inquiry is: "How can FEI employees take action to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia?" My sub-questions were:

1. What can FEI employees do to learn more about how the organization could become a more welcoming place for Indigenous peoples to work?
2. How can FEI change its business practices to better support Indigenous communities' goals, as framed by Indigenous communities?

Significance of the Inquiry

In recent times, Fortis Incorporated, the umbrella company of FEI, has built relationships with some First Nations in Canada by collaborating on Indigenous-led energy projects. For example, in 2015, the Upper Nicola Band and Okanagan Nation Alliance asked the energy industry for proposals to partner with them on a 15-megawatt clean energy project. The Band chose FEI to be the partner on the project. Another example of FEI investing in energy projects that are Indigenous-led comes from Fortis, Ontario. In 2018, the Pikangikum First Nation was the first community to connect to the Ontario power grid via the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line Project. Fortis Ontario was selected by the 24 First Nations communities, the majority owners, to partner on the project because of their experience delivering hydroelectricity and natural gas on a large infrastructure scale. In 2021, the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line Project was nominated as a Clean50 Top Project by Delta Management

(www.wataypower.ca), a boutique search firm operating across Canada and supporting clients in making critical hires in niche markets. This was the first time a significant energy utility provided in Canada invested such a large sum (\$1.83) into an Indigenous-led and majority owner project with the intention of the infrastructure being 100% Indigenous-owned in 25 years. Finally, the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) approached FEI to open the first publicly available DC fast-charging electric vehicle station in a First Nation community in BC. The idea was that FEI would provide the infrastructure, and the OIB would manage the operations. The EV stations, finalized in 2020, feature artwork designed by youth from OIB and the Band continues to manage the stations. These examples show that FEI is willing to enter into projects that are unique to those they have done in the past because they are Indigenous-led. While the intention behind choices made by FEI and other large organizations may be more financially motivated than ethically motivated, the reality is that Indigenous-led projects such as these mean that more benefits are going back to the community and Nations have more control over the safety and environmental impact of the projects. These Indigenous-led clean energy projects provide long-term financial benefits for community goals, like self-determination.

FEI has also joined the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business 2019), a certificate program that judges corporate performance in Indigenous relations at bronze, silver, and gold levels. The certification provides some assurance to Indigenous communities regarding company performance in this program, as an independent, third-party verification supports the designation. The final company level is determined by a jury comprised of Indigenous business people. Reaching gold in Progressive Aboriginal Relations means an organization has demonstrated sustained leadership in Indigenous relations and is committed to working with Indigenous businesses and communities, as reflected in their

business cases (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, 2019). While writing this thesis, FEI was at the bronze level and is ultimately working towards gold. My intention in writing a thesis that shares Indigenous perspectives on building relationships with Indigenous peoples is to encourage FEI employees to learn more about colonization and our collective settler history as a step toward building respectful and authentic relationships with Indigenous communities.

The timing of my research aligned with the organization's increased commitment to improving Indigenous relations through efforts like participating in Progressive Aboriginal Relations (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, n.d.). Further, my research was inspired by the TRC's *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (2015c) and their *Calls to Action* (2015a), specifically the 92nd *Call to Action* for corporations and businesses:

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii. Ensure that Aboriginal Peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal Peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on

the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. (TRC, 2015a, p 10)

The 92nd *Call to Action* served as my original guidepost when I entered this inquiry process. I felt I understood the words in the *Call to Action*. Still, it was not until I joined the research process with my supervisor, inquiry team members, research participants, and Indigenous scholars that I started to build a more personal connection to my research topic. Further, I felt I could connect with a variety of Indigenous scholars because of the personal and first-person style in which they write. As someone who is inspired by an Indigenous research methodology, first-person writing allowed me to be transparent about my subjectivity as a researcher. In addition, this approach to writing exposes the researcher's proximity with their research, and as such, it flies in the face of traditional western scientific research practice.

As Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) noted, under western imperialism and colonialism, it is believed that the individual can be “distanced or separated, from the physical environment, the community” (p. 55). Furthermore, researchers believed, and many still do, that controls over time and space can be put in place so that individuals can operate at a distance from the universe (p. 55.). Indigenous research methodologies do not align with the assumption that individuals can distance themselves from the universe and their relationships. Many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit scholars intentionally use first-person writing to illustrate the many connections with the researcher as they do their work. However, in my early thesis drafts, I found it very challenging to write in the first person as there was always a voice of judgment inside of my head which told me that it was incorrect and elementary, which would mean I was not credible. I imagine that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students continue to hear a similar

voice of judgment from many professors, supervisors, and editors when they choose to write academically, in the first person. As a non-Indigenous person, I would not have suffered a personal and spiritual sacrifice if asked to switch from one writing style to another. However, for many Indigenous scholars, being told they have to write in the third person and remove themselves from their relationships would be unethical and disrespectful to their community. I resisted traditional western ideas about researcher objectivity and academic writing style by writing in the first person. Additionally, I noticed that I engaged in deeper critical and personal self-reflections when I wrote in the first person instead of the third person.

As I thought about my research inquiry questions during reflection, I was continuously interrupted by the question: “As a non-Indigenous person, will I ever be able to understand relationships from an Indigenous worldview?” While it may be true that I can never experience relationships from an Indigenous perspective, I have been gifted with concepts that can help guide me in my relationship with the earth and all living beings. These gifts come from the teachings of Potawatomi botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013):

In a culture of gratitude, everyone knows the gifts will follow the circle of reciprocity and flow back to you again. This time you give and next time you receive. Both the honor of giving and the humility of receiving are necessary halves of the equation. The grass in the ring is trodden down in a path from gratitude to reciprocity. We dance in a circle, not a line. (Epilogue, *Returning the Gift*, para. 8)

My perspectives on relationships were once narrow, restricted to humans, measured in the short term, and fell within the positivist paradigm. I now think about relationships in a more expansive, reciprocal, and long-term way. This shift in thinking has influenced the way I think, work, and approach my leadership practice.

A Note on Leadership

I did my research in the context of a Master's of Arts Degree in Leadership. Before entering my program, my ideas about leadership were influenced by my observations about leaders in my personal and professional life. Upon entering the master's program, I began learning about leadership as a practice from scholars like Peter Senge (2006), author of *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Senge's work on systems thinking resonates with me because it drew on the ancient Indigenous principle, that the world is interconnected. For example, Senge talked about how systems thinking requires other complementary learning disciplines that cause individuals and organizations to "make the shift from seeing the world primarily from a linear perspective to seeing and acting systemically" (p. 125). Non-Indigenous scholars in North America have often claimed system thinking as an approach derived from systems theory when the reality is that in this part of the world, that thinking originally comes from Indigenous principles and worldviews. As a first-year master's student, systems thinking was undoubtedly the most exciting approach to leadership. However, it wasn't until I got into the thesis work that I learned that interconnectedness and systems thinking are two parts of a bigger idea; they do not represent the whole idea of what it means to be in relationship with all other beings. However, relational accountability is about continuous action, and it is driven by love and care. Kimmerer (2013) exemplified the kind of love and care that is required:

I spend a lot of time thinking about our relationship with land, how we are given so much and what we might give back. I try to work through the equations of reciprocity and responsibility, the whys and wherefores of building sustainable relationships with ecosystems. All in my head. But suddenly there was no intellectualizing, no rationalizing,

just the pure sensation of baskets full of mother love. The ultimate reciprocity, loving and being loved in return. (Ch. 3, The Epiphany in the Beans, para. 8)

In reading Kimmerer, I have realized that people can learn more about the importance of leadership and building and maintaining relationships and the balance between humans, the earth, plants, and animals by reading about Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

While I first encountered systems thinking through Senge (2006), having since read more Indigenous scholarship, the kind of leadership practice I will refer to throughout this thesis is inspired by Indigenous ways of knowing and the concept of reciprocity, as discussed by Kimmerer (2013). In other words, systems thinking has a narrow industry focus for business leaders. However, reciprocity represents a way of being and moving through the world. I will discuss reciprocity in more detail in chapter two, as it is connected to reconciliation and is aligned with my main inquiry question, which explores building respectful relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in the context of a public utility.

Engaging with a research process informed and influenced by Indigenous scholarship has been a source of great personal learning. It has presented me with ideas and perspectives on truth and reconciliation that differ from those I held before. I have learned that I cannot distance myself from the truth of settler colonialism in Canada.

Overview of the Thesis

As a settler researcher, it is not my intention to foreground ideas and conclusions from other settlers; instead, I choose to honor Indigenous knowledge and traditions in working towards truth and reconciliation. Central to the primary research inquiry are the findings from the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and, specifically, the 92nd *Call to Action*, which speaks to Canadian business audiences. The TRC (2015c) report would not have

been possible without the courage of over 6,000 residential school survivors who dared to tell their personal stories, and in doing so, they re-exposed themselves to trauma and suffering (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b, p. 7). The survivors' strength has inspired me to explore painful truths about settler-colonial history in this land called Canada. Further, I have learned that to accept and acknowledge truth, I must first remove my cloak of denial (Ladner, 2018, p. 338) to openly discuss central themes such as Indigenous peoples' dispossession from their lands, cultural genocide, and assimilation. Throughout this thesis, I use the word Indigenous to refer to many distinct groups of people, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. Following Taiaiake Alfred's (2005) definition, Indigenous peoples, as an analytical category, are defined by the lands they inhabit and their everyday experience of struggle against colonialism and the dispossession of lands, which distinguishes them from other people in Canada. The literature included in chapter two will further explore the themes of dispossession, colonization, genocide, and assimilation.

As I am not Indigenous, I cannot approach my research from an Indigenous research paradigm; however, I can be inspired by an Indigenous methodology where "we must use relationality to find out more about the universe around us" (Wilson, 2008, p. 95). As I understand Indigenous paradigms, relational accountability in research means "the methodology needs to be based in a community context and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility" (p. 99). In other words, the methodology needs to be relational and accountable to the community from which it originates. In my case, that community is my organization, FEI. Through this research process, I have attempted to engage in learning responsibly, which means exploring my topic with respect and accountability to those who have generously shared knowledge with me.

Following this introduction, my thesis begins with a literature review that explores the history of relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples, relational accountability from Indigenous perspectives, and varying opinions on truth and reconciliation. Following the literature review, chapter three covers my research methodology, data collection methods, an overview of participants, study conduct, and data analysis. I also discuss how I came to determine my data's trustworthiness. I then provide details of the research findings and conclusions in chapter four. Finally, in chapter five I offer organizational implications, study recommendations, and implications for future inquiry.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This literature review synthesizes key themes from scholarly work relevant to my primary research inquiry: Which actions can FEI employees take to be prepared to build respectful relationships with First Nations and Métis communities in British Columbia. The two main themes I explore are (a) relationships and (b) relational accountability in the context of truth and reconciliation. Some of the sub-themes explored later in this section include: Indigenous worldviews, settler colonial relations, Indigenous resurgence, reconciliation, gender, colonization, and the responsibility of settlers. These subthemes support and feed into the two main themes of relationship and relational accountability.

I begin by providing some cultural, historical, and political context for my two main themes. First, I give a high-level overview of Indigenous worldviews as I understand them from reading Indigenous scholarship. I briefly discuss the history of settler-colonial relations in Canada, focusing on how colonization and systemic racism have molded those relations. I then touch briefly on the gendered nature of colonization and discuss reconciliation in a broad sense. Finally, I explore the responsibility of settlers in the truth and reconciliation process. It is difficult and problematic task to write about Indigenous worldviews, knowing that there are so many unique First Nations cultures, as well as Métis and Inuit cultures. However, it seems that literature I reviewed for this thesis consistently included themes of interconnectivity and relational accountability as central to Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous approaches to research and I will focus primarily on these themes.

Indigenous Worldviews

A worldview is a lens through which people perceive and make sense of the world. It is a way of knowing, seeing, and explaining, and it encompasses considerations such as distinct

values about what is essential in life (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 25). Our worldviews often guide decisions, so it is vital to consider them when examining Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations. “If we are to understand why Aboriginal and Eurocentric worldviews clash, we need to understand how the philosophy, values, and customs of Aboriginal cultures differ from those of Eurocentric cultures” (p. 25). The intention of this section is not to suggest there is only one Indigenous worldview that represents all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. Instead, I intend to provide insight into the philosophical and values-based approach which non-Indigenous Canadians adopted to strategically exploit and attempt to eliminate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. This insight will provide important context for the contemporary discussions on truth and reconciliation, which I discuss in this chapter.

Relationship with the Land as Central to Indigenous Worldviews

In his book, *God Is Red*, Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria (2003) explained how Indigenous peoples have traditionally held their land as a place with the highest possible meaning, a reference point from which all communication flows (p. 61). Deloria explained how power and position produce personality. This equation means that the universe is alive and so, the universe is personal and must be approached in a personal manner (p. 23). Because the universe is alive, everything in it needs to be fed and cared for. In her work, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) similarly personified mother earth to illustrate our collective relationship with the land as humans:

We have enjoyed the feast generously laid out for us by Mother Earth, but now the plates are empty, and the dining room is a mess. It’s time we started doing the dishes in Mother Earth’s Kitchen. Doing the dishes has gotten a bad rap, but everyone who migrates to the kitchen after a meal knows that that’s where the laughter happens, the good

conversations, the friendships. Doing dishes, like doing restoration, forms relationships.

(Chap.6, *The Sacred and the Superfund*, para. 68)

Kimmerer made it possible for non-Indigenous readers to reimagine our collective relationship to the land by openly sharing her relationship with the land. Many of us have had mothers whom we love and who give to us unconditionally, and while at times we feel like shirking our responsibilities, we also feel a deep commitment to do our part and give back. When we look at our environment and think about our connection to it, it makes it easier to reflect on what we gain from it and what we take from it for our purposes. When we pay attention to how vital our environment and all living beings are, it is easier to think about what is fair and reflect on whether we are accountable in our relationships. Kimmerer's description of relational connection and her understanding of how much Mother Earth has given us provides powerful examples of this kind of deeper thinking and feeling.

Kimmerer (2013) pointed to the example of nature as the ultimate teacher for humans because the plants, soil, and animals were here first and are all participants in a web of reciprocity (Chap 1., *The Council of Pecans*, para. 30). Kimmerer has taught me that humans can develop a relationship with the land through a give-and-take engagement called reciprocity. Reciprocity is not just about showing gratitude for all of the gifts the earth bestows upon us; it also means asking the earth what it needs from us so that we can give back to her in turn. In other words, we can give to the land and thereby our relationship by restoring her to the state she was in before pollution and environmental degradation. Most Canadians have been living in unsustainable ways for a long time and restoration will require everyone to give back to mother earth.

Moreover, Kimmerer (2013) noted that engaging with the land through reciprocity is a much different approach than viewing Mother Earth as capital or property and treating it like a commodity or repository of natural resources to be extracted and sold for profit (Chap.6, *The Sacred and the Superfund*, para. 70). Kimmerer explained that Indigenous knowledge is generated and shared through living, being, and giving. People, animals, and plants embody the knowledge of the relationship (Chap.6, *The Sacred and the Superfund*, para. 71). This relationship between people, land, plants, and animals differs significantly from the extractive relationship that settlers have taken up with the earth, guided in many instances by the “dominion over” biblical passage. Settler societies have been fuelled by greed, and we have extracted resources from the earth with ferocity and speed to serve the short-terms needs of a consumer-based economy. In the extraction process, not much attention has been paid to how our activities pollute and destroy our waters and the health of surrounding plant, animal, and human communities. Perhaps the best and most recent example of this approach is the Alberta Tar Sands, although our province’s clear-cutting practices are problematic. The roots of this kind of extractive mentality are deeply entrenched in our imperialist history of settler colonialism. It is up to settlers like myself to resist a system that prioritizes an economy that dispossesses Indigenous peoples from their land for resource extraction. I will explore these and other related themes in the next section.

Settler Colonial Relations

To describe settler-colonial relations, I will first define key terms that will appear throughout this chapter. I will then discuss settler colonization, gendered colonization, assimilation, varying views on truth and reconciliation from Indigenous perspectives, and the responsibility of settlers in rectifying the injustices of our history and those occurring today.

Definition of Key Terms

I have written this thesis in the context of a country settlers now call Canada. However, many Indigenous peoples refer to the land settlers think of as North America as Turtle Island. Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) provides context to the name Turtle Island and how it comes from Indigenous oral histories and stories:

Skywoman bent and spread the mud with her hands across the shell of the turtle. Moved by the extraordinary gifts of the animals, she sang in thanksgiving and then began to dance, her feet caressing the earth. The land grew and grew as she danced her thanks, from the dab of mud on Turtle's back until the whole earth was made. (Chap.1, Skywoman Falling, para. 8)

This short excerpt illustrates how culture and perspective shape *how* history is told. I will provide a brief overview of Canadian history. It needs to be stated that while I may cite mostly Indigenous scholars, *how* I describe the Canadian story reflects my perspective and the settler-colonial culture in which I have been raised. Further, I am demonstrating both power and privilege as a White Settler academic to include a cultural mindset that has been largely unchallenged by many White Settler academics in the past. Settlers should seek out texts and stories that focus on Turtle Island's history and its Peoples, written by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, whose life experiences connect them to this land since time immemorial. To move forward with reconciliation, we, as settlers, need to be willing to revisit our collective and imperialist history.

European imperialism and colonization are inextricably linked. Broadly, historians have used imperialism to explain a series of developments leading to European economic expansion and efforts to establish global hegemonic power. Imperialism is tied to the chronology of events

related to European “discovery,” conquest, exploitation, distribution, and appropriation (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 22). From a Western perspective, the fathers of imperialism were so-called “explorers” such as Christopher Columbus and James Cook. However, a critical examination of the legacy of explorers uncovers how they inspired a long succession of other Western European men to “cut a devastating swathe, and [leave] a permanent wound, on societies and communities which occupied the lands named and claimed under imperialism” (p. 22). Thus, imperialism and colonialism are cousins in that colonialism was the physical outpost of imperialism where the colonizers attempted to alter the people and the lands they would claim as their own to export extracted resources back to Western European nations.

Colonialism was also an imaginative outpost, where settlers created and represented the cultural ideal of what western “civilizations” stood for (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 24). Through complex processes with specific trajectories and stories unfolding over hundreds of years in locations across the globe, settler colonialism produced distinctly Western ideas of what it meant to be Indigenous. Because of racist ideologies, those ideas both became the core of how settlers viewed Indigenous peoples. In this way, settler colonialism contributed to directly eliminating Indigenous peoples by physically removing them, stealing their land, and creating a dominant agenda and narrative (Wolfe, 2006). In their essay titled: “Canada: Portrait of a Serial Killer,” Jeff Corntassel and Christine Bird (2017) briefly summarize colonial Canada:

Since its assertion of statehood, Canada’s systemic approach to the murder of Indigenous peoples have included the state’s laws and policies, political and governing bodies, and consciousness of Indigenous peoples and Canadians. (p. 24)

In later sections, I will cover the topic of colonialism in Canada in more detail. The following section will explore settler colonialism and systemic racism that underlies how settlers, as a collective, have approached building relations with Indigenous peoples.

Settler Colonialism

This thesis explores settler-Indigenous relations in the context of truth and reconciliation, so I have only provided a brief history on the period of first European contact spanning through to today. My brief account of Canada's colonial past is not a comprehensive historical account of the land we call Canada. Instead, I explore how historical and current settler perceptions of Indigenous peoples create a barrier to building mutually respectful relationships. I look to Bob Joseph, an educator and member of the Gwawaenuk Nation, and his wife Cynthia Joseph, who have broken down the post-contact era from an Indigenous perspective into four categories: (a) invisible, (b) savages, (c) erased, and (d) not people (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 31). These categories represent the racist way in which colonial government officials perceived Indigenous peoples.

The invisible era began in the late 1400s when the Doctrine of Discovery "provided a framework for Christian explorers, in the name of their sovereign, to lay claim to territories uninhabited by Christians" (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 31). As Indigenous peoples were not Christians, explorers used Christianity to justify not accounting for the longstanding presence and first occupancy rights of First peoples' communities. In Canada in 1534, Jacques Cartier's men were said to have arrived at the mouth of the harbor of Gaspé, Quebec, where they soon erected a cross that said, "Long Live the King of France" (p. 32). Henry Hudson and the British came to Newfoundland in 1610, looking to lay claim to as much land as possible in the so-called New World. History classes taught in public schools until recently in Canada tend to describe the

time before confederation as a relatively cooperative period between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. However, the reality is that early settlers were operating from racism and a legal fiction called the Doctrine of Discovery.

The Doctrine of Discovery (1493) is what Myra J. Tait (2017) refers to as a justification myth. The document was meant to provide legitimacy for settlers who took Indigenous lands and natural resources for the purpose of development (p.140). In order to fulfill their purpose or exploitation of the lands for profit, Indigenous peoples were dispossessed from their lands and settlers believed that any who survived should be absorbed into the larger society, receiving no special benefits (p. 140). In 2015, the TRC called on all entities to repudiate the concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and the reformation of policies within faith institutions continue to rely on such concepts. However, at the time of writing this thesis, the federal government of Canada has yet to renounce the Doctrine of Discovery, and it remains the basis for Canadian law and as such continues to impact Indigenous peoples (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2020). As a settler, accepting truth means acknowledging that we continue to comply with government policy that is illegitimate, racist, and which serves to remove Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands.

The Indian Act

The Indian Act (1876/1985) stemmed from the fourth era that B. Joseph and C. Joseph (2019) discussed: the era representing the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples in the minds of settlers. Showing his racist ideas, Canada's first Prime Minister, John A. McDonald, referred to the non-Christian, Indigenous peoples as savages in both conversation and legal documentation (p. 32). These racist concepts that Indigenous peoples were something other than human are

underlain the creation of the Indian Act. In his book, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality*, Bob Joseph (2018) explained that the Indian Act, fully implemented in 1876, was federal policy through which the Canadian government asserted control over Indigenous People by centralizing power to govern “Indians.” B. Joseph provided an excerpt from the national Indian policy at the time, noting his source was the Annual Report, Sessional Papers, 1876-1877: “Our Indian legislation generally rests on the principle, that the aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage as wards or children of the state” (Introduction, the Indian Act, para. 4). The language in this policy highlights the paternalistic approach the government took in their relationship with Indigenous people “Prior to 1951, the Indian Act defined a human or a ‘person’ as ‘an individual other than an Indian’” (Chap. 1, The Beginning, para. 41). The Indian Act was contradictory because, in one sense, it aimed to segregate Indigenous peoples from White settlers. Still, it was also an assimilationist effort on the part of settlers. By the early 1920s, government officials were working explicitly to get rid of Indigenous peoples through carefully devised colonial strategies, including assimilation.

Further, Duncan Campbell Scott (1920), the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, wrote: “I want to get rid of the Indian problem...Our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department” (Scott Papers, 1021-22, Vol. 10-12). When one considers Scott’s goal declaration to eradicate Indigenous peoples, policies that: violently removed First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples seem unsurprising. Men like Scott believe their dictatorial and racist plans were legitimate in the eyes of the crown. The Doctrine of Discovery, and other policy documents created by White European men have been used to justify violence and theft of lands

from Indigenous peoples. In 2015, the TRC called on all governing and faith-based bodies to repudiate the concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery. However, the federal government's reluctance to reject any document that challenges Canada's right and title to land has been consistent over the past century and a half. These early documents lay the foundation for the Indian Act, which is still in effect today.

Coulthard (2014) noted that while the Indian Act has been amended since 1951, it is still an assimilative document that dictates almost every aspect of life for Indigenous people. The policy proposals. For example, the White Paper, a policy proposal released by the Pierre Trudeau government in 1969, served as an attempt to assimilate 'Indians' into the broader Canadian Society by removing all institutionally enshrined aspects of legal and political differentiation between First Nations and non-Indigenous peoples (Coulthard, 2014, Introduction, para. 11). Indigenous leaders responded to the White Paper with organized resistance. As a result of this organized resistance, ironically referred to as the Red Paper, the proposal never became policy. This kind of policy proposal, which aims to control Indigenous peoples, is an ongoing tactic of colonization.

Colonization in Canada Today

Colonization is an ongoing system of violence that dispossesses Indigenous peoples from their lands, homes, and families: Maintaining control of land is the heart of the colonial agenda. Dispossession carries on for the benefit of settler land ownership, resource extraction, and the Canadian economy. The removal and continued dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands is not just a part of Canada's history; it is a part of Canada's present because it continues today. It is important to note that there are many other examples of colonization in practice, in

addition to dispossession, that I could discuss in this thesis with more time and space. However, I am focusing on land and extraction as it is relevant to my research and thesis as they are set in the context of a public energy utility company. The federal government and a large portion of the Canadian population continually supports the energy industry and their forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands through the force of the RCMP and other federal representatives. For example, in 2020, the government-supported GasLink project to proceed with their pipeline even though the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs never consented to go through their traditional territories. As a result of the protests against GasLink, the RCMP armed and prepared to remove Wet'suwet'en protesters from their lands if they interfered with the pipeline project's progress. In her work, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (2017) Leanne Betasamosake Simpson discussed how this type of forceful removal of Indigenous bodies by the state creates a barrier to building meaningful non-Indigenous-Indigenous relationships: "The removal of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg bodies from the land, from the present, and from all of the relationships that are meaningful to us, politically and otherwise, is the meta-relationship my Ancestors and I have with Canada" (L. B. Simpson, 2017, Chap 3, the Attempted Dispossession of Kwe, para.4). Canada's oppression of Indigenous peoples who assert their unique rights is part of this dispossession. In his book *The Inconvenient Indian*, Thomas King (2012) wrote about the importance of the settler goal to control land in the context of settler-Indigenous relations:

Whites want land. Sure, Whites want Indians to disappear, and they want Indians to assimilate, and they want Indians to understand that everything that Whites have done was for their own good because Native people, left to their own devices, couldn't make good decisions for themselves. (p. 216)

Further, Anishinaabe scholar Aaron Mills (2018) described: “Colonialism isn’t merely a process of newcomer settlement and Indigenous displacement; it’s a mode of relationship between settler peoples, Indigenous peoples and land in which all are harmed [albeit certainly not equally]” (p. 188). As Mills noted, not all are harmed equally. It is important to note that in this process of colonization, Indigenous women experience harm that is particularly violent and subjective.

Indigenous Women and Colonization

To understand the particular harms of Canadian settler colonialism to Indigenous women, I re-visit the culture, values, and perceptions of the early European colonizers and settlers. In the 1600s and 1700s, European men considered women their property. While still in no way equal to men, White women started to see some social and political progress by the early 1900s by lobbying for the right to vote, while Indigenous women were not allowed to vote until 1960. The early European settlers encountered communities where women were highly regarded warriors, hunters, political leaders, or working in roles similar to men. For example, the role of Clan Mother is often noted as an influential political role held by women who were part of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations confederacy. Clan Mothers had many responsibilities, including selecting Hoyanes or Chiefs; they would also decide when ceremonies begin and supervise the ceremony proceedings. They would also ensure that children were raised in customs of the Longhouse, teaching them the Haudenosaunee ways (www.onondaganation.org). Many nations were matrilineal, where family lines are traced through the mothers rather than the fathers. For example, the Haida law of Clan Inheritance goes through the mother (www.haidanation.ca). The power that Indigenous women have within their communities challenged the values and beliefs of the Western European Christian men who settled in North America at that time.

Settler's judgments of gender led to negative stereotypes. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) explained: "We grew up believing the stereotypes and believing that if we existed outside of the domestic sphere, outside of the heteropatriarchal, monogamous Christian marriage, we embodied the dirty, stupid, useless, promiscuous, and irresponsible assumptions built into the word *squaw*" (Ch. 7, *The Sovereignty of Indigenous peoples' Bodies*, para.1). From these racist settler perceptions of Indigenous women came an effort to assimilate. "The attempts to assimilate us were the responsibility of Indian agents, the Methodist missionaries, and the education system because settlers wanted our land" (Ch. 7, *The Sovereignty of Indigenous peoples' Bodies*, para.1). Thus, these negative perceptions of Indigenous women are woven into Canadian culture.

As an example, L.B. Simpson (2017) looked at Susanna Moodie, regarded as a prominent literary figure in early Canadian literature. Her work, which many settlers may excuse as just indicative of the attitudes of the times, includes stereotypes that Indigenous women still hear today in settler society. As L. B Simpson noted, in Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, the author referred to Indigenous women as "fat, ugly, squaws . . . [with] mountains of flesh . . . [who appeared] dirty . . . [and seemed to lack] common decency" (Ch. 7, *The Sovereignty of Indigenous peoples' Bodies*, para. 6). While it is difficult to reproduce these hateful stereotypes in writing, I understand that to ignore the topic of gender and colonization is to forget what I have learned from Indigenous scholars. These egregiously racist attitudes toward Indigenous women are essential to discuss because they persist.

In *The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty*, renowned Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2016) explained how Indigenous women, with their social and political power and their "flesh," would not have been familiar to

colonists in the nineteenth century, and this represented something radically different for settler Canadians:

They [Indigenous women] embodied and signaled something radically different to Euro Canadian governance and this meant that part of dispossession, and settler possession meant that coercive and modifying sometimes killing power had to target their bodies. Because as with all bodies, these bodies were more than just “flesh” – these were and are sign systems and symbols that could effect and affect political life. So, they had to be killed, or, at the very least subjected because what they were signalling or symbolizing was a direct threat to settlement. (p. 9)

A. Simpson also highlighted how these damaging attitudes towards Indigenous women are replicated in current media (p. 5). Furthermore, these stereotypes manifest themselves in disproportionate levels of abuse toward Indigenous women, with results arriving in the thousands of murdered and missing Indigenous women in Canada (L. B. Simpson, 2017, Chap. 6, *Endlessly Creating Our Indigenous Selves*, para. 10). Finally, Audra Simpson (2016) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) demonstrated that colonization is an ongoing, all-encompassing, and persistent force that Indigenous women continue to endure.

Colonization as an Ongoing, Omnipresent Force

The late Secwépemc activist and author Arthur Manuel (2016) provided specific examples of the kind of contemporary acts of colonization and oppression that Indigenous peoples have to endure:

What we know is that if we resist golf courses being built over our ancient cemeteries as was the case in Oka, the eviction from our sacred sites and ceremonial places as was the case at Gustafsen Lake, the building of ski resorts on our land as in Skwelkwék'wét, or

fracking oil and gas like in Elsipogtog, we are confronted by the RCMP or provincial police paramilitaries or even the Canadian army. That is what colonialism is in Canada.

(Chap 5, From Dependency to Oppression, para. 3)

Manual spoke about the overt and aggressive forms of colonization by the state and arms to separate Indigenous peoples from their land. However, other invisible and omnipresent forces of colonization also filter into our everyday lives: the way we think, the way we treat others, and the way we make crucial decisions. For example, in many settler societies, when exploring the past, there is a tendency to uphold a linear, progressive view of events, which defines history according to colonial assumptions and ideals.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explained, the way history is told in contemporary society is contentious, both because of the story of domination and because it assumes there is a point in our past that is considered “prehistoric” (p. 58). In other words, history is only worth studying—indeed, history only happened—after a certain point in time: the “point at which society moves from prehistoric to historic is also the point at which tradition breaks with modernism. Traditional Indigenous knowledge ceased, in this view, when it came into contact with ‘modern’ societies, that is the West” (p. 58). Tuhiwai Smith spoke to how many Westerners still view cultures before modernism as primitive and those that evolved after as progressive. This is not just an abstract idea; it is a concept that is deeply ingrained in how settlers connect themselves and others to history and how the Western culture is ranked as higher or more evolved in comparison to others. These thoughts bleed into our actions as settlers and affect our relationships with deeply connected to cultures that developed before Western European cultures.

The literature included in this section speaks to the history, complexity, and breadth of colonialism and how it continues to shape settler-Indigenous relations into the present day. The next section of this chapter will explore reconciliation in Canada, with a focus on relationships and relational accountability.

Reconciliation

Because of the way in which many settlers and the members of the Canadian government have used the term reconciliation, it can be a contentious concept for Indigenous peoples. For many, it represents another attempt to assimilate Indigenous cultures into a united nation. This form of reconciliation, which seeks to unite all under the Canadian banner, does not respect Indigenous sovereignty. I will not discuss that kind of reconciliation in this thesis. Canadians need to know that truth and reconciliation is just one pathway forward; Indigenous communities offer diverse perspectives on other paths. In the next section, I speak to Indigenous resurgence and then address how truth and reconciliation in Canada have been discussed and explored at the federal level.

Resurgence

Radical resurgence is an Indigenous-led, place-based social, political and intellectual movement gaining more support in the land we call North America since the *Idle No More* movement of 2013 (Alfred, 2016). This movement involves a set of practices through which the regeneration and re-establishment of Indigenous nations can be achieved (L. B. Simpson, 2017, Chap 1., *Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory*, para. 17). Further, resurgence focuses on reclaiming traditional knowledge, culture, and language. Resurgence is a critical movement because it is Indigenous-led, and it embodies self-determination. The significance of radical resistance and self-determination cannot be

understated or undermined. Settlers can support radical resurgence by voting for politicians who understand and support self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

Self-Determination

Self-determination is an Indigenous right. Further:

First Nations should pursue policy which implements legislation that recognizes and affirms self-determination as a section 35(1) right, in accordance with UNDRIP, by creating legislation which ousts provincial law from Indian reserves, and allows Indigenous law and governance to operate in its own sphere of authority. (Burrows, 2017, p. 1)

Under a self-determination model, First Nations would have legislation over child welfare, Indigenous languages, religious and spiritual freedoms, cultural heritage, dispute resolution, gaming, business development, and support. Nations would also have legislative power over forests, air, agriculture, water, minerals, oil, and gas. The Canadian government and many Canadian settlers have been resistant to First Nations having legislative power over natural resources in their traditional territories, likely because it threatens the status quo and a national economy based on resource extraction. “Canada has not generally produced legislation to advance Indigenous self-determination in the fields of economic development and natural resource protection” (Burrows, 2017, p.7). However, Canadian settlers can support transformative reconciliation by applying pressure on the federal government to support self-determination in practice and only voting for politicians that support Indigenous self-determination. However, Canada has a history of presenting reconciliation as a way for settlers and Indigenous peoples to move forward without accepting Indigenous rights or justice.

Canada and Reconciliation

In the early 1990s, the federal government formed the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). RCAP was created in response to the Oka Crisis, where the Mohawk community of Kanesatake defended their traditional territories, in the face of Canadian military forces, by refusing the development of a golf course on their lands without permission. It seemed that after 131 years, the refusal of the Mohawk to surrender their traditional lands to golfers inspired the Canadian government to finally take an interest in restoring justice between settlers and Indigenous peoples. As explained by the government, the purpose of RCAP was to investigate and propose solutions to the challenges affecting the relationship between Aboriginal peoples, the Canadian government, and Canadian society as a whole. The final report from RCAP recommended a complete restructuring of Aboriginal People's relationship with non-Aboriginal people in Canada (RCAP, 1996b). Restoring justice and improving the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples was the intended goal of the Commission.

However, if continued justice was the goal, it seems strange that Canada's next formal foray into reconciliation came a decade later, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC resulted from a class-action lawsuit filed by residential school survivors against the federal government and four national churches for their harm. Survivors agreed to settle out of court, and the TRC was one of the settlement terms. The aim of the TRC was not to deliver justice to Indigenous peoples; it aimed to document the residential school system's history and impacts and foster healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2015b). One of the results from this process was *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015a) for all non-Indigenous Canadians from every level of society. However, given the federal government's practice of colonization and history of upholding racist policy,

there were concerns from many Indigenous leaders that reconciliation was coded language for assimilation.

Multiple Indigenous scholars have warned against the assimilationist potential of a national truth and reconciliation process (Ladner & Tait, 2017, Manuel 2017; A. Simpson, 2016). Assimilation, in this sense, would be a convergence of nations through the merging of sovereignties (Ladner, 2018, p. 336). The Nations that Ladner (2018) is referring to are Canada and sovereign First Nations. Since European contact, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples have consistently resisted colonial forces to protect their land, unique identities, cultures, and rights. In public discourse, the history of this resistance is often overlooked or misrepresented. When the media has taken a more empathetic position or had to report on the remains of children's bodies found underneath residential school buildings, discussions about reconciliation ensue. This more comfortable conversation that often happens in Canadian media is a move towards reconciliation, which represents acquiescence to settler-colonialism or the undermining of the decolonizing movements occurring within many Indigenous communities (Alfred 2009; Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2014). Many Indigenous communities focus on self-determination and choosing a place-based pathway and concentrate on the resurgence of their people's culture, language, knowledge, and traditions (T. Alfred, online video, November 29, 2018). Truth and reconciliation as a pathway forward will only have value if settlers are well versed in Canada's history, colonization, and systemic racism. However, "Few know or understand about our treaties and the relations upon which this country was built" (Ladner, 2018, p. 340). Next, I briefly review historic and modern treaties as a potential aspect of transformative reconciliation. It is important to note that Métis peoples did not engage in treaty-making because settler documentation was used to take their lands away.

The following section on treaties is thus limited to a discussion of treaties between First Nations and settler colonials. However, roughly ninety thousand Métis citizens are living in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2019) and their history is relevant to this study, which takes place in the context of a provincial public energy utility company called FortisBC. Moreover, before moving into treaties as a form of reconciliation, I will provide a very brief overview of Canada's treatment of Métis peoples and Métis resistance in response to colonial oppression.

Métis Peoples

Settlers often question Métis peoples about their identity and Indigeneity (E. Unruh, online video, March 11, 2021). The Métis are Indigenous people and their language, history of resiliency, and culture are preserved through family, kinship, and stories passed down from generation to generation through grandmothers and mothers (E. Unruh, personal communication, March 11, 2021). When settlers question Métis peoples about their authenticity or legitimacy as Indigenous peoples, rather than learning more about their culture, they perpetuate the same suspicion and dismissal of Métis culture that the federal government has demonstrated for a hundred years. Moreover, Settlers, like myself, need to understand that doubting the identity and Indigeneity of people who identify as Métis, does not support a readiness to participate in transformative reconciliation. This suspicion and unwillingness to accept the unique culture and Indigeneity of Métis peoples comes from our history.

For many Canadians, our understanding of Métis peoples does not go far beyond knowing that they are descendants of Indigenous women and White male European fur traders. Some Canadians know that Métis peoples are one of three constitutionally recognized and

distinct groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Still, many Canadians do not know anything else about Métis culture.

For five generations, the Métis have shared a unique culture and language, Michif, that can be traced back to the Red River Settlement and other areas around present-day Manitoba and Alberta. Their language and culture are preserved through stories and land-based ceremonies. Métis peoples are resilient and have always played a prominent role in Canada's history. The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) noted that the Métis involved with the fur trade possessed a unique set of skills and characteristics, rendering them "indispensable members of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal economic partnerships" (p. 186). It was not until this research process that I learned why Métis peoples in Canada do not have land rights.

In 1869-70, a colony of farmers and hunters occupied a corner of Rupert's Land, owned by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), to protect their culture and land rights. HBC then sold Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada for \$1.5 million, amounting to nearly seven million acres of land. HBC did this without consulting with First Nations and Métis peoples who had made them wealthy by sharing their hunting and trapping skills as well as their knowledge of the land. Before the sale, the Métis formed a provisional government. The resistance, or what many know as the Red River Rebellion, was a response to the largest land sale in history. The Métis resistance led to the emergence of Métis leader Louis Riel who fought to protect the land rights of his people. Métis frustration over land rights in the face of colonial dishonesty, disrespect, and aggression sewed the seeds of the 1885 Northwest Resistance, and discontent mounted over the lack of Métis representation in the government of the North-West Territories (which included present-day Alberta and Saskatchewan). Even though representation was granted in the 1880s,

the federal government did not address Métis's title to their lands or grant petitions for proper political representation. Canada did not officially recognize Métis peoples until the 1982 Constitution Act; however, their land rights were not recognized.

Like other Indigenous peoples in Canada, Métis children were forcefully removed from their families and made to attend residential or church-run schools and so they share similar experiences with First Nations and Inuit children, including emotional, spiritual, physical, and sexual abuse (Richardson, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b). In addition to resisting the state and churches over land and forced assimilation, Métis peoples have often felt pressure to prove their identity and Indigeneity. Settlers can demonstrate a readiness to participate in truth and reconciliation by demonstrating a desire to learn more about Métis history and culture. Métis peoples are not included in the next section because their land rights were never recognized by the federal government.

Treaties as a Form of Reconciliation

While treaties *could* create more just relationships between Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous people, and the land, settlers have misinterpreted them to mean that First Nations were signing away their rights to land. For Indigenous peoples, treaties were for establishing long-term peace and friendship. To examine the positive potential of treaties, I provide a look back at two historic treaties: (a) the Two Row or Silver Covenant Chain established with the Dutch in 1612 and the Niagara Treaty of 1764 and (b) the Covenant Chain established with the British and settlers. The former provided an example for the latter. These treaties combined self-rule and shared-rule, and the parallel paths of the Haudenosaunee two-row wampum belt emphasized the autonomy of First Nations Peoples and newcomers (Borrows, 1998, p. 162). The

belt's design symbolized two canoes, sailing forward, side by side, without either canoe trying to steer or interfere in the direction of the other.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) described the overarching goal of treaties for Indigenous peoples in the early days of contact: "At the beginning of the colonial period, we signed early treaties as international diplomatic agreements with the crown to protect the land and to ensure our sovereignty, nationhood, and way of life" (Introduction, para.11). However, the reality is that colonizers entered the treaty-making process intending to take lands and resources away from Indigenous peoples, while First Nations representatives were exercising their inherent rights by sitting at the treaty-making table. For example, at the time, the Williams Treaty of 1923 was heralded as the first of the "modern treaties," when in reality it contained a "basket clause" which, for nearly one hundred years, denied Indigenous peoples hunting and fishing rights (Introduction, para. 11). As L. B. Simpson pointed out, this kind of agreement seems less like a treaty and more like a termination plan. The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, apologized (Government of Canada, 2018) to Chiefs and former leaders, Elders, and members of the Alderville, Chippewas of Beausoleil, Chippewas of Georgina Island, Chippewas of Rama, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, and Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nations for the damages caused by the treaty. However, such apologies (including Stephen Harper's forced apology in 2008) will never reverse the damages caused by the treaties.

The Canadian government has not budged when it comes to one underlying element: there will be no agreement unless it involves the surrender of traditional lands on the part of Indigenous peoples. Tony Pennikett (2006), a settler and former provincial negotiator, described his observation of the government when First Nations exercise their unique Aboriginal rights by sitting at the treaty table. When First Nations leaders come to the treaty negotiation table in good

faith, they soon realize that the government representatives expect them to accept an agreement that includes signing over traditional lands. Pennikett's experiences illustrate how it is difficult for Indigenous leaders to trust that the governments have fair agreement-making in mind when, in reality, this has never been the case (p. 173). For example, the James Bay agreement became the model for the "modern treaties," which encompass treaties in the North, the Nisga'a Final Agreement in British Columbia (Manuel, 2017, p. 101). However, in the Nisga'a settlement, the B.C. government demanded that First Nations extinguish their rights to their traditional and unceded lands. Unceded lands are territories that First Nations never signed away or relinquished. In his work *Unsettling Canada, a National Wake-Up Call*, Manuel (2017) spoke to the reality of this continued dispossession:

It is the loss of our land that has been the precise cause of our impoverishment.

Indigenous lands today account for only 0.36 per cent of British Columbian territory. The settler share is the remaining 99.64 per cent. In Canada overall the percentage is even worse, with Indigenous peoples controlling only 0.2 per cent of the land and the settlers 99.8 per cent. With this distribution of land, you don't have to have a doctorate in economics to understand who will be poor and who will be rich. (Chap. 1, Lay of the Land, para. 34)

When examining the issue of treaties and land agreements, most modern attempts seem to perpetuate at least some level of dispossession, domination, exploitation, and patriarchy, which have been the status quo for the state since European contact (Asch et al., 2018, p. 17). For treaties to become part of truth and reconciliation, the government will need to take an honest and fair approach when entering the process with Indigenous peoples. L. B Simpson (2011) noted that for truth and reconciliation to be meaningful it must be rounded in cultural generation

and political resurgence. And: “It must support Indigenous nations in regenerating our languages, our oral cultures, our traditions of governance and everything else residential schools attacked and attempted to obliterate: (Aanji Maajitaawin, the Art of Starting Over, para. 3).

This kind of reconciliation would represent a transformative shift in Canadian media and settler society.

Canada could move forward on treaties and learn from some of the earliest treaties. For example, some of the earliest treaties include Anishinaabe law and include words like, for as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the grass grows (Borrows, 1998, p. 82). These words speak not only to the occupancy of First Peoples since “time immemorial” but also to the laws that bind humans and all beings, as all are beneficiaries of the earth’s life forces, and “we cannot live independently of our ecological relationships” (p. 82). Healthy ecological relationships are similar to healthy human relationships; there is an expectation of giving and taking and a commitment to learn from and care for each other. Looking to Indigenous laws and governance would be a way of implementing sustainability in decisions about land and how it would be taken care of. I will discuss Indigenous relational accountability with the land and all beings in subsequent sections of this thesis, specifically concerning the role of reciprocity and how this differs from traditional western leadership practice.

Western Leadership Practice

There are many definitions of leadership. Leaders are often defined as confident, knowledgeable, strong, capable, and charismatic in Western business contexts. I have often heard people say that leaders are born, not created, and they possess unique qualities that others do not have (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 12). When many settlers think about successful leaders from history, they might think about Napoleon or Churchill: White men still viewed today in western

contexts as assertive, strategic, and tough on the enemy. Many of the leadership frameworks studied and used today are still based on this kind of leader-follower framework (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 26). This more hierarchical leadership style is often part of the structure of large, corporate organizations; yet, the way leadership is discussed in scholarly works continues to evolve beyond the Western gold standard of the leader-follower model.

The dialogue on leadership as practice in Western academia has changed over the past few decades, and part of that development can be attributed to systems thinking. Senge (2006) described systems thinking as a framework or body of knowledge that allows humans to see patterns in life with more clarity (p. 7). In his work, Senge discussed how structure influences behavior over time (p. 44). In his definition, systemic structures include interrelationships between people and critical variables, such as population, natural resources, and food production (p. 44). Systems thinking helped me contemplate the consequences of my action, or inaction, in a much broader sense. However, through reading Indigenous scholars, my engagement with traditional ways of knowing and governance has caused me to think of leadership as service and in the context relational accountability and reciprocity. If understood and embraced, reciprocity can help settlers engage in a kind of transformative leadership so that we can move away from a leader-follower model into something that is more balanced, equitable, and mutually respectful.

Reciprocity as a Transformative Practice for Non-Indigenous Peoples

Reciprocity is influenced by Indigenous worldviews and it is something that leaders and all people can practice. Kimmerer (2013) has taught us that there are many physical and spiritual ways humans can give back to the earth, even for people like myself who do not have a spiritual or traditional background. For example, Kimmerer explained the interrelatedness of fungus and trees from a scientific and traditional perspective:

The mycorrhizae may form fungal bridges between individual trees, so that all trees in a forest are connected. These fungal networks appear to redistribute the wealth of carbohydrates from tree to tree. A kind of Robin Hood, they take from the rich and give to the poor so that all the trees arrive at the same carbon surplus at the same time. They weave a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking. In this way, the trees all act as one because the fungi have connected them. Through unity, survival. All flourishing is mutual. Soil, fungus, tree, squirrel, boy-all are the beneficiaries of reciprocity. (Chap 1., The Council of Pecans, para. 30)

This example, interwoven with science and metaphor, clearly illustrates how humans can look to plants and other living beings and learn about relationships that can be analogous to their own lives. Kimmerer further spoke to how humans can engage in reciprocity with the land:

Living by the precepts of the Honourable Harvest-to take only what is given, to use it well, to be grateful for the gift, and to reciprocate the gift-is easy in a pecan grove. We reciprocate the gift by taking care of the grove, protecting it from harm, planting seeds so that new groves will shade the prairie and feed the squirrels. (Chap 1., The Council of Pecans, para. 31)

Kimmerer (2013) demonstrated in her writing that if people truly feel grateful for Mother Earth and what has been gifted to humans, their actions reflect this honour, and other living beings will benefit from our responsible engagement. The rules of the “Honorable Harvest” are; take only what you need, and use everything you take (Kimmerer, 2013, Chap 3., Wisgaak Gokpenagen: A Black Ash Basket, para. 23). In contrast, I feel that I am part of a political community where violence is inflicted on the earth by treating-non humans as resources to be exploited at any cost to feed our economy (Mills, 2018, p. 188). However, this does not have to be an eternal plight;

“settlers are always welcome to abandon their current constitutional project and, through treaty, root their political communities in earth” (p. 188). These scholars provide a holistic path for humans, imbued with interconnectedness to one another and all worldly entities.

One way for non-Indigenous humans to reconcile themselves with the earth and Indigenous peoples is by entering into a treaty process in good faith and without a plan to maintain colonial power over the land. In the areas of Canada where treaties do not currently exist, there is an opportunity for the crown to re-enter the process in good faith. It is worthwhile to remember that “we are always in conversation and negotiation with all creation, and it is reciprocity and mutual respect that will sustain us” (Regan, 2018, p. 289). Non-Indigenous adoption of reciprocity and relational accountability is essential for reconciliation to be transformative in the dominant culture of Canada. In the next section, I will discuss the responsibility of settlers in the truth and reconciliation process.

The Responsibility of Settlers in Reconciliation

One of the most prominent themes that came forth in my engagement with Indigenous scholars is the theme of settler denial. There are many examples of settler denial, so many that they could not all be included in this thesis, so I will only provide a few. Settlers demonstrate denial when they describe Canada’s identity and deliberately ignore how colonization, cultural genocide, dispossession of lands from Indigenous peoples, and political violence have harmed the social, economic, and spiritual relations and practices of Indigenous Peoples (Borrows, 1998, p. 107). Many settlers cling to a notion of Canada as a land of great natural resources, filled with peace-loving, fair, and tolerant people (Tait & Ladner, 2017, p. 11). However, a fair and accurate reading of Canada’s true history suggests otherwise, particularly regarding how non-Indigenous people have treated Indigenous peoples.

Settlers must prioritize truth in the truth and reconciliation process and understand that colonization is not only a historical fact of Canadian life, but it is also a present and distressing reality (Borrows, 1998, p. 107). In the final TRC (2015c) report, it is clear that there will be no reconciliation without truth. As a researcher and Canadian, I need to remember this fact because I used language and words that put distance between myself and settler colonization in earlier drafts of this thesis. I did not recognize this until another scholar, who is Métis, pointed it out to me. I am a White Settler; I am part of the Canadian colonial system, benefiting from it. This section reminds me that there is no neutral position for me because if I am dedicated to transformative reconciliation, I can either support the existing system by not doing anything or resist the system and try to change it. When settlers, like myself and others, resist speaking the truth about our history and the systemic racism that still exists, we fail to acknowledge the current realities and violent impacts of colonization.

Another way for settlers to stand firmly in truth is by recognizing how Canada has been influenced by Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

For example, when many Canadians think of North American democracy, they do not generally draw a line back to one of the oldest living democracies on the earth—that of the Haudenosaunee peoples and the Iroquois confederacy (Kimmerer, 2013, Chap.6, the Sacred and the Superfund, para. 10). In social psychology, one may think of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs but ignore the roughly six months Maslow spent living near the Blackfoot Nation and then taking the knowledge that was generously shared with him (Broomé, 2017). When French Canadian culture is discussed, people think about harvesting maple syrup, playing hockey, and the heartiness of a people who resisted English Canada's coercion. However, people do not often connect those identities and the Indigenous peoples' cultures with whom the Canadiennes lived

in close proximity. In her online blog post, *A Colonized Ally Meets a Decolonized Ally: This is What They Learn*, Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe writer Lynne Gehl (2014) noted, “A colonized ally appropriates another nation’s Indigenous knowledge. A decolonized ally does the hard work to uncover their Indigenous knowledge” (para. 16). The first step in uncovering Indigenous knowledge for settlers is to become familiar with their personal history and ancestry and their current culture.

In an earlier post, Gehl (2013) noted that well-meaning settlers need to be aware of tendencies that occur in larger oppressive power structures so that they can draw parallels to their thoughts and actions. Settlers who want to be part of transformative reconciliation can do so by educating themselves and encouraging other settlers to learn as well. Transformative reconciliation also requires effort and action. Settlers can resist a colonial system that harms Indigenous peoples and interferes with their unique cultures in many ways.

Further, White settlers can practice truth by openly identifying examples of coercion, exclusion, and assimilation that exist in the larger colonial systems so that they can critically examine them against their own thoughts and behaviours. Part of this acceptance of truth includes a critical reflection on how White Settlers have tried to save Indigenous peoples as a collective. This was the goal of various teachers, missionaries, social workers, politicians, and volunteers in the past and present. Settlers have never succeeded in their multiple attempts to save Indigenous peoples because Indigenous peoples do not need saving. In his famous 1969 book, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Standing Rock Sioux lawyer, activist, theologian, and author Vine Deloria wrote: “What we need is a cultural leave-us-alone agreement in spirit and fact” (p. 34). All Indigenous peoples in North America can relate to the violent and ongoing cultural interference from colonial governments and settlers. Moreover, Métis-Cree lawyer and blogger

Chelsea Vowel (2014) explained that the best way for would-be allies to help is by recognizing that Indigenous peoples have the power to find solutions for themselves.

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Chapter Summary

In the previous chapter, I have drawn on the perspectives of Indigenous scholars to explore Indigenous worldviews and how they differ from western worldview. I also took a brief look at the history of colonial Canada to set the context for examining settler-Indigenous relations. In my examination, I could only cover a very brief review of the Indian Act and the violent actions and attitudes behind colonization. The historical, social, and political context I provided was crucial for introducing the different forms of reconciliation in today's public discourse. I also shared the role of reciprocity in Indigenous governance and how it can influence

our settler perceptions of leadership. Finally, I explored the responsibility of settlers in the reconciliation process. In the next chapter, I will describe my methodology and how I went about my research process. I will also walk through the steps I took to generate knowledge with participants and explain how I analyzed the data once it was collected.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology and methods used in my inquiry. I have chosen engaged, action-oriented research as my methodology. Action research is a methodology that has been used for at least seventy years but is still relevant for people in schools, businesses, who seek to increase the effectiveness of the work they are engaged in (Singer, 2007, p. 22). As an action researcher, I worked with research participants to explore the FortisBC approach to: communication, interaction, and relationship building with the Indigenous communities they serve. This chapter is meant to describe how I worked with participants in this exploration.

Later in this chapter, I will discuss how I collected data, invited participants into the research process, and conducted the study. I will also discuss the process by which I analyzed the data collected and assessed the trustworthiness of my findings. I will conclude this chapter with a summary of relevant ethical considerations.

Methodology

Action research is an engaged approach which puts the researcher in the middle of their research. It “is a systemic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives” (Stringer, 2007, p. 22). It is important to note that unlike traditional experimental/scientific research that looks for generalizable explanations, action research focuses on specific situations and localized solutions (Stringer, 2007, p.22). Action research was the perfect methodology for my research because I was looking at a challenge in my own organization, what truth and reconciliation looks like at FortisBC, and searching for solutions that would be specific to my organization.

Action research was a methodology that allowed me to be active and fully engaged with participants in the research process, rather than attempting to adopt the role of an objective

observer, which is not possible if we accept that as humans, we have our own unique biases. In action research, credibility does not come from trying to prove that data was collected and analyzed objectively and without bias, rather, it refers to the integrity of the study (Stringer, 2007, p. 57). This type of methodology is supported by a social construction paradigm where; jointly constructed understandings and shared assumptions form the basis for what we know to be true about the world around us. This theory is different from other dominant theories in academic research, like positivism, where the attempted goal of research is to uncover singular and universal truths. It is important to note that objective ‘uncovering universal truths’ does not align with action research, nor does it align with Indigenous research methodologies. In her work *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) noted that the research agenda for Indigenous researchers is about self-determination and it is more than a political goal; it is “a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural, and economic terrains” (p.120). While my methodology was action research, my approach to research was inspired by the Indigenous research paradigm, particularly with respect to relational accountability.

A research paradigm is a set of underlying beliefs or assumptions upon which research is based (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). My research is located within a social constructionist paradigm, which has been developed in Western and settler scholarship, and refers to a “tradition of scholarship that traces the origin or knowledge, meaning, or understanding to human relationships” (Gergen & Gergen, 2015, p. 3). As a settler, I cannot root my inquiry in Indigenous methodology; however, my work is shaped by what I have learned from Indigenous scholarship and that relationships should be actively respected and acknowledged before, during and after the research process. Relationships are the framework for sharing knowledge and this

represents a transformative shift from the traditional western ideal of researcher and participants, where researchers hold the power over participants. If settlers like myself, continue to move towards a framework where relationships are the foundation for sharing knowledge, then we can engage in a more equitable and mutually respectful relationship with participants.

In the context of truth and reconciliation and given the nature of my inquiry questions, it was important to consider research in its cultural context. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) stated that the word “research” is probably one of the “dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” because the term is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1). As discussed in the literature review, I entered this process with an understanding that traditional western academic researchers have a long history of conducting research *on* rather than with Indigenous peoples and; research has generally emphasized problems within Indigenous communities and offered outside solutions (Wilson, 2008, p. 16). For this reason, I set out to work *with* First Nations and Métis participants rather than perform research *on* them.

As someone who went through journalism school 20 years ago, my ideas about research were very much rooted in a framework where one “apprehendable reality is assumed to exist, driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms” and research can converge on the ‘true’ state of affairs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). As such, when it came to my master’s degree and how I thought about the role of the researcher, I brought an individualist, positivist approach and believed researchers should be objective and not influence or be influenced by the research (p. 110). It has been difficult to unwind the influence and importance of scientific western approaches in the context. After years of being educated in a particular way, there is a positivist voice inside me that still tries to speak up and discredit action research and Indigenous methodologies as legitimate approaches to research.

A positivist research paradigm has long been dominant in academia, and it reinforces the idea that an individual can generate knowledge alone (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). Researchers who believe they can generate knowledge alone are also likely to believe they own that knowledge and can use it whenever and however they want, for their own personal advancement. Within this paradigm, what is real is that which can be proven through scientific inquiry: it is that which is not subjective and can be scientifically proven, so the knower must be objective and detached from the discovery of what is real or “Truth” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). On the contrary, action researchers work to centre themselves in their research and acknowledge their subjectivity. Further, “The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individuals and social beings, not in the world of ideas” (Wilson, 2008, p. 60). Therefore, the idea that there are universal truths and objective researchers is rejected in this thesis. Moreover, the goal being presented here, is that all researchers can learn from Indigenous methodologies and by placing relationships and relational accountability as the foundation for their work.

Researchers working from an Indigenous paradigm are accountable to all of their relations in four different ways: (a) how a research topic is chosen (b) data collection, (c) the way in which data are analyzed, and (d) the way in which the outcomes from research are presented (p. 107). This means that relational accountability is present at every step in the research process, and research should be an exercise in building and strengthening relationships.

Relational accountability extends beyond human relationships because knowledge is shared among all creation, which is a fundamental belief in the research process from an Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2001, p. 177): “All creation” means that knowledge is

generated among the cosmos, the plants, and other animals on earth (p. 177). In this sense, knowledge is shared physically and spiritually through stories that act as teachings, connecting Indigenous peoples to their ancestors and all their relations by providing instructions with ethical guidance for all aspects of life (Preface, para. 4), including research. From an Indigenous methodological approach to research, the means and the ends are the same, in the sense that respect and Indigenous knowledge, which includes connection to place and all plant, human, and animal nations, are present through all aspects of the research process.

I admit I do not know how to listen to and learn from all worldly entities, yet my engagement with Indigenous scholars has taught me that knowledge is not a commodity that imbues one with power and status. Knowledge is generated among all worldly entities, and Indigenous ways of knowing teach us that these relationships are held together through a process of respect and reciprocity, which shows up in all aspects of social interactions (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 125). The insights I have gained from Indigenous researchers has changed my idea of what it means to be a researcher from someone who is leading a process and creating something new to someone who is participating and collaborating with others in the generation of data that arrives from the greater knowledge shared among many.

Further, I have approached my inquiry and methodology from an appreciative stance. Appreciative inquiry is a methodology grounded in social constructionist theory (Gergen, 1978) and it should begin with appreciation. For those who take up appreciative inquiry as their main methodological approach, there are specific inquiry processes that must be followed. I did not use appreciative inquiry as a methodology but I did approach my inquiry and work with participants as well as my literature with an appreciative lens.

My interest in using an appreciative lens was motivated by a desire to build organizational strength for FEI employees in the area of truth and reconciliation. At FortisBC, there is a small team of FEI employees who work with Indigenous communities regularly, as part of their day-to-day role. As a result, these employees have more training with respect to cultural competency and truth and reconciliation. Some of them are also Indigenous. However, at the time of writing this thesis, the majority of FEI employees would not have received FEI supported training in cultural safety and humility and truth and reconciliation. I specifically invited members of the FEI Indigenous relations team to participate in my research because I wanted to appreciatively explore what they thought about building relationships with Indigenous communities, because it was part of their job to do so. This type of participant selection is called purposive sampling (Patton, 2002), and I was aware it would limit my sample size. However, I set out to hear those people's stories of learning, precisely so that my research could amplify them and, hopefully, positively influence others to engage in the work of reconciliation and decolonization.

Participants

As my research aimed to explore truth and reconciliation in the context of a public utility, I invited participants who are employees of FEI and whom I knew had experience working closely with Indigenous communities, as part of their professional roles. Two of the FEI employees who volunteered to be participants are Indigenous and have worked for the FEI Indigenous relations team. Two of the other participants who had worked as contractors for FortisBC, were also Indigenous and two were non-Indigenous FEI employees. Even though Indigenous peoples have the freedom to participate in research as individuals and not on behalf of their communities, I learned through this research process that I put myself and others in a

position where extractive research was a possibility. I will touch more on this concept later in this section. First, I will speak specifically to the participants that were invited.

Of the ten invitations I sent out, eight were to FEI employees and two were to contractors who had worked for FEI on specific energy efficiency projects. As this research explored themes like colonization in the context of truth and reconciliation, it is important to mention whether each participant was Indigenous or a settler. Of the six participants who agreed to be part of this study, two identified as Métis, two identified as First Nations and two were White.

It was not until after I had conducted my methods that I realized my approach to inviting participants was problematic for two reasons: 1) Even though the focus of my inquiry questions were on what FE could do to move towards truth and reconciliation I created the potential for extractive research to occur and 2) my intentions were connected to a mistaken concept that Indigenous peoples are part of a homogenous group. Because the Indigenous participants were either FortisBC employees or people who worked directly with FortisBC this made it very difficult for me to understand what would be considered extractive research and what would be ethical research. In hindsight, if I were to approach research again where I had doubts about what would be considered culturally safe and non-extractive research I would either seek input from Indigenous researchers or not engage in the research. Though Indigenous individuals have the right to choose to participate in research that is not representative of their community, in the future, I would never ask an Indigenous person to make that choice because it does not support relational accountability. Secondly, I was not conscious enough of the reality that ideas shared by a few Indigenous do not represent the ideas of other Indigenous peoples. However, I should have reminded myself that Indigenous is an umbrella term for many individual nations and unique cultures. In a 2018 speech delivered at Simon Fraser University, Taiaiake Alfred explained how

linking Indigenous peoples as one large group relies on a social construct specific to the modern colonial period: before contemporary times, “Indigenous peoples were nations in and of themselves” (personal communication, November 29, 2018). Further, he noted that colonization is why Indigeneity is now talked about since all Indigenous peoples share a similar struggle against this similar dynamic of oppression. In Canada, settlers have a tendency to think of Indigenous peoples as a homogenous group when that is not the case. I should have had a greater awareness of this tendency prior to inviting participants.

When developing my plan for my methods, I initially anticipated there being around 10 participants for face-to-face, semi-structured interviews; in the end, six chose to participate. I invited individuals to participate in the interview by providing them with an email (Appendix A), which provided information on the request and the required steps to participate. In the same email, I attached a one-page overview of my research and my main inquiry questions (Appendix B), a consent form to participate in the interview (Appendix C), and my research proposal. I conducted one of the interviews in person and the rest by phone to accommodate geographical distances and others’ safety, due to the onset of COVID-19. As a symbol of reciprocity, I offered Indigenous participants an honorarium after the interviews were completed. I had learned through my thesis ethics approval process that this was a sign of respect to offer an honorarium when working with Indigenous participants.

Inquiry Team

I chose my inquiry team members from my cohort of other Masters of Arts in Leadership program. The three individuals that I selected from my program were also doing their thesis and one of my peers is Indigenous and works for her Nation. I was transparent when I asked that person to be on my team in that, I explained that I felt this person’s insight and feedback on my

data analysis was extremely useful because the person was analytical and had the lived experience of being Indigenous in a colonial system, where relationships are defined differently than in many Indigenous cultures. All members of my inquiry team were asked to sign a letter which stated they would not share any of the participant data.

Data Collection Methods

I used two main qualitative data collection methods: (a) semi-structured interviews and (b) a group audio call, both of which used techniques such as observation, participation, interview, and ethnography (Denzin et al, 2008). I had planned to hold a group sharing circle as opposed to a group audio call; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, I had to change methods at the last minute to respect safety.

Semi Structured Interviews

My first method included six one-to-one interviews. Four participants identified as Indigenous, and two were non-Indigenous settlers. Participants had a choice of whether they wanted to participate in person or over the phone. Due to geographic distances and the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic, one interview was able to take place in person and five occurred over the phone. As the interviewer, I found it easier to resist talking more than necessary in the phone interviews. I also believe the flexibility of the phone call allowed me to engage with more participants because they could more easily select a time that worked for them (McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 7). Coming together at the same time, by phone, still proved to be somewhat difficult considering the differences in participant schedules.

The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for a more relaxed and conversational experience between me and the participants (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 92). The questions for the interviews can be found in Appendix D. My decision to use this method

was inspired by the way in which Wilson (2008) described the flexible and conversational nature of his own data collection process (p. 129). Having now completed my analysis, as I reflect on the process of designing the interview questions, I realize I could have done more to root my research in a community context, which would then have represented a greater level of relational accountability (p. 99). For example, I could have workshopped the questions with people from my organization in addition to members of my inquiry team.

A risk of a semi-structured method was that conversations could end up going in a direction unrelated to my main research inquiry, but there was methodological value in ensuring participants felt free in their responses and did not have the limitations of a structured interview. Once the interviews were completed, I sent invitations out for the group gathering (see Appendix E). Participants confirmed their consent to participate in the group method by responding to my email.

Sharing Circle

I had originally planned for my second method to be a large group sharing circle with at least 10 people. Restoule (2004) described sharing circles as a healing method in which all participants, including the facilitator, are viewed as equal, where information, spirituality, and emotion are shared. My plan was to hire an Indigenous consultant who specialized in leading sharing circles in settler organizations. As a result of COVID 19, in-person group activities were cancelled and I did not hire the consultant. Restoule commented that sharing circles that take place in person, are familiar and comforting for some Aboriginal participants in Canada. Recently, Indigenous scholars have used sharing circles as a research method (Baskin, 2005; Restoule, 2004). Because I am non-Indigenous, I had planned to hire an Indigenous facilitator who was familiar with the practice and who was also comfortable adapting the exercise as a

research method. My intention in planning to use this method was twofold: (a) I had hoped that if there were Indigenous participants, it would be a sign of respect and reciprocity to engage in a method that was not entrenched in Western research traditions; and (b) I hoped the method would have a decolonizing influence by inviting FEI employees to engage in a format that is atypical in the FEI organizational environment.

Due to the timing of my group method within the context of COVID 19, I was not able to proceed with the in-person sharing circle. As a result, I moved with a group phone call where participants could use video; however, participants chose to use audio-only due to comfort levels. At the beginning of the call, I explained that I had intended to have a sharing circle, describing how that process would have gone. However, I noted that we could not use a talking stick or feather because we were not in person or visible to each other, so it would be harder to determine when someone was finished sharing. As such, I asked each person in the group to take as much time as they needed when they shared and verbally indicate when their sharing was complete. I had initially planned to mute those who were not talking, but at the last moment, I decided not to mute others, as I felt it was a sign of respect and trust to have faith and confidence in others. Indeed, it turned out that participants did not interrupt one another, and everyone had a turn to share after each question, and all participants talked for roughly the same amount of time. Questions for the group discussion can be found in Appendix F.

I had hoped that the group phone call would include at least the six people who had participated in the individual interviews. While five people committed to the call, in the end, three were present. Had COVID not occurred and I could have held the group method in person, and I believe it would have had a lot more value as a method. However, considering the disruption of COVID, I was grateful to have three, very engaged participants for the group

method. These participants also participated in the semi-structured interviews. One participant identified as Métis, and the two others identified as non-Indigenous; all three had at least three years of experience working with Indigenous communities.

Study Conduct

Before I engaged in the second method, I shared each participants data back with them in a member check after the individual interviews. Once I had completed the member check, all six of the people who had participated in the interviews were invited to participant in the group call. Upon participation in the group phone call, participants were sent an email with the main themes that came from the interviews, presented in a manner that protected participants' identities. Through the invitation (Appendix E), I also let participants know that the call would be one hour in length. I asked those interested in the group phone call if there were any other important themes they wanted to discuss, but all were ok to go along with themes I brought forward. The entire call was audio recorded, and I took notes during the process. Before closing the group method, participants were invited to offer any additional insights and to send me any additional comments or stories they wished they had shared or did not think of at the time. As the group phone call was not able to take place in-person due to the COVID 19, participants did not receive a meal, as was planned for the in-person sharing circle.

Data Analysis and Member checking

In the next section, I will explain my data analysis process and how I went about interpreting the meaning of my research and how I supported the trustworthiness of my data by checking back with participants, through the analysis process.

Analysis

Once the semi-structured interviews were complete, I listened to and manually transcribed all six audio recordings. I chose to type the words myself so that they could sink in and leave an imprint on my mind. As I listened to the interviews, I noticed the energy in the voices as participants spoke about their work and experiences. I felt energized by the data analysis process.

Once I had finished smoothing the data in this way, I then sent the transcripts to participants to engage them in member checking (p. 2). I invited participants to correct, add, or delete the wording as they saw fit, and I explained that ultimately, it was their data, not mine, so I wanted it to accurately reflect their thoughts and ideas. I was pleased when participants made changes to their transcripts because it aligned with my methodological approach that emphasized respect for participants and supported the trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12) of the data. Next, I will examine the significance of trustworthiness and how it relates to the ethics of a research study.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to how fully others were able to understand that the researcher did everything possible to ensure the data were appropriately and ethically collected, analysed, and reported (Carlson, 2010, p. 1103). Further, reflexivity is a method for ensuring the trustworthiness of the inquiry. Reflexivity is the process of examining both oneself as researcher, and the research relationship.

Within an Indigenous research paradigm, researchers may also journal (Wilson, 2008, p. 135), but trustworthiness is a result of the researcher being in continuous collaboration and conversation with co-researchers, or members of their community, throughout the entire research

process (p. 131). Further, the accuracy of data collected develops when the researcher shares back what they heard with the participants and when the researcher shares their own ideas so that co-researchers can provide feedback on whether the ideas are authentic to the community and context (p.131). My audit trails consisted of journal entries after each interview or conversation. I had also audio recordings of all semi-structured interviews and the group audio call, which made it easier for me to go back and re-listen, check, and reflect. For my practice of reflexivity, I made notes in my journal about personal biases that I noticed throughout my entire journey, some of which I have included as reflections in this thesis.

As a next step in my analytical process, I combined all the scripts into one large document. I searched for and highlighted words that resonated with me, an analysis technique which incorporates word repetitions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 2), and then further determined and highlighted which words were used with highest frequency. In hindsight, I realize this was a positivist way to analyze data and, in the future, I would have spent more with my participants to ensure I had the right themes. I then went back to all of the highlighted words and noted the context in which they were used, and from this, I developed higher-level themes and a system of codes. For example, communication was a word that came up frequently; when I went back and looked at the context for each time it was used, it was often used to discuss the importance of face-to-face or in-person communication.

Once I defined high-level themes, I shared my transcripts and analysis with my three inquiry team members for their feedback, which helped me better articulate how I worded and described the themes. I then shared my themes back with all six interview participants, letting them know how I had arrived at those themes, after working with my inquiry team. I also asked them to provide feedback if they felt I had missed any major themes. This process informed how

I understood the study findings and ultimately came to the conclusions presented in chapters four and five.

Trustworthiness versus validity

In Western qualitative research, validity and reliability are thought of differently than they are within an Indigenous paradigm. In action research, credibility refers to the plausibility and integrity of the study (Stringer, 2007, p. 57). Validity in western context often refers to the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study. However, as a non-Indigenous researcher influenced by Indigenous research paradigms and relational accountability, I think of the credibility of my work being dependent on how I collected and analyzed my data and whether I was true to my participants and Indigenous scholar by sharing their data with respect and in the way it was shared with me (Wilson, 2008, p. 101). Relational accountability means that researchers should not try to separate themselves from their research and their relationships and their research must accurately reflect and build upon the relationships between ideas and participants (p. 101). While I did not conduct my research from an Indigenous research paradigm or within an Indigenous community, I did try to hold the idea of relational accountability in my mind at all times throughout the process. One of my techniques was to engage in member checking, which is compatible with relational accountability and Indigenous research paradigms, as the “analysis must be true to the voices of all participants and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by researcher and participants alike” (p. 101). While analyzing the data, I engaged in member checking to ensure participants had opportunities after the interview to clarify their ideas and thus help strengthen the credibility of the data (Stringer, 2007, p. 58) and to enhance the trustworthiness of the data by challenging my perspectives and interpretations (p. 57). Member checking with participants is a way of ensuring the

trustworthiness of the data and is not necessarily in line with more traditional, western academic approaches to research. For me it was important to capture the *intentions* of the participants as accurately as possible and not just the actual words that were spoken in the interview.

Ethical Implications

In every research process there are ethical considerations which need to be in place in order to protect participants. Participants should not suffer any physical, emotional, spiritual or mental distress because they participated in research. It is for this reason the care and concern of ethical responsibility be carried out by the researcher, at every step of the process.

Respect for Persons

This research involved human participation, and as such, I will address the *Tri-Council Policy Statement's* core guidelines noted in article 1.1 as “Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, [and] Justice” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council [Tri-Council], 2018). I will discuss how these three core principles were adhered to throughout the research. Per the Tri-Council's (2018) rules for ethical research, participants were informed that their participation in the research would not be shared with any other parties inside FEI or outside of the organization. Participants were informed that their privacy would be protected before, during, and after the data analysis process. As most of the participants in this study were either First Nations or Métis, I will also be speaking to the Tri-Council's Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. I have included my interactions with participant in the appendices.

Participants were invited into this research project by an email (Appendix A) that explained the entirely voluntary nature of their participation. Those who chose to participate did

so of their own volition and were sent a consent form (Appendix C), which was signed by all those who participated in the research. In addition to the written consent form, I provided reminders about free, informed, and ongoing consent throughout the process, including a verbal reminder at the beginning of each data collection method, that participation was completely voluntary and participants could choose to withdraw their involvement at any time. I let participants at the beginning of the group phone call that at anytime, they were free to withdraw their participation, even after the conversation was over. I did have to inform them that if they withdrew participation after the conversation was complete, it would not be possible to remove one hundred per cent of their contributions if they were part of a collective conversation. None of the participants elected to withdraw from the study. Participant anonymity was maintained throughout the research process, and none of the participants are identified by their name, job, role, or organization in the thesis. The reason I extended anonymity to all participants is because one participant preferred to be anonymous and at the time, I thought it best to provide the same approach to all so that none seemed singled out. However, looking back on the process now and thinking about what I know about Indigenous research and how participants are usually acknowledged, I would have named all participants who were happy to provide their name. Additionally, the person who wanted to be anonymous had personal reasons to do so.

Concern for Welfare & Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada

The research for this study took place in the context of FortisBC and included 4 Indigenous participants who were FEI employees or individuals who worked as contractors for FEI.

Participants were provided with information to be able to adequately assess risks and potential benefits associated with their participation in the research (Tri-Council, 2018, p. 9). This was achieved by providing an overview of the research project (Appendix B) and sample questions that would be used in both methods (Appendices D and F).

In their Chapter 9, the Tri-Council (2018) has noted the agency and autonomy of Inuit, Métis, or First Nations individuals to decide to participate in research, not on behalf of their community. My inquiry focused on the actions of FEI employees and not the unique culture, history, and/or traditions of a particular community. In addition, my research:

1. Research was not conducted on Métis, Inuit, or First Nations lands, but rather on the unceded and traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples.
2. Recruitment criteria did not include Indigenous identity as a factor for the entire study or for a subgroup of the study.
3. Questions were not asked that pertained to the unique cultural heritage or Traditional Knowledge of the specific community of which a participant may have been a part.
4. Interpretation of research results does not refer to Indigenous communities, peoples, language, history, or culture.

I did work with participants who were directly involved with Indigenous lands or consultations that occurred on Indigenous lands. For participants who self-identified as Indigenous, an honorarium was offered after both data collection methods to acknowledge the value of reciprocity or the act of giving something back in return for gifts received, which is standard protocol in many Indigenous cultures. As the researcher, I received the gift of the participant's knowledge, time, and experience, and in the greater context of Canadian history, I understand how much Indigenous peoples have already sacrificed. Therefore, I understand that reciprocity or

giving back is a necessary foundation to building a mutually respectful relationship (Tri-Council, 2018, p. 123). This research process has also taught me that reciprocity is about much more than an honorarium. It is about learning from my mistakes and educating myself about how I can resist all systems that seek to oppress or steal from Indigenous peoples. Next, I will discuss the proposed output, contribution, and application for my research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Proposed Outputs

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations outlined in this thesis will help inform the internal initiatives at FEI with respect to Indigenous Initiatives, such as Indigenous cultural awareness and engagement training that is offered to all employees. This will be achieved through my relationship with my FEI capstone partner, who is Manager of Indigenous Initiatives at FEI. The initial findings have already been shared with my supervisor, and I developed the recommendations in collaboration with my partner. Once the thesis is approved, I will meet with my partner again to discuss how to implement the recommendations into actions throughout the organization. My capstone partner and her manager have a direct line of communication to the FEI executive leadership and have the ability to drive initiatives throughout the organization.

Currently, all FEI employees can choose to participate in the Bob Joseph Indigenous Corporate Training and specifically, the Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples® course (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., n.d.). The course provides a brief history of Canada, including an overview of colonization and assimilationist policies that affect Indigenous peoples. The training materials provide insight into the challenges Indigenous peoples in Canada face as well as the strength and unique aspects of Indigenous cultures and traditions. Students of the

training are offered tangible ways in which they can improve their approach to building relations with Indigenous peoples.

In the past year, my research partner has also led the development of an FEI employee handbook, which includes a glossary of significant terms and concepts that relate to Canada's colonial history. The handbook also includes appropriate language surrounding Indigenous peoples, cultures, and traditions and introduces concepts related to decolonization.

The recommendations outlined in this thesis are intended to build upon the initiatives that are already occurring and act as a catalyst for new initiatives that will move FEI towards Indigenization of business practices. Additionally, I hope that the information included in my findings, conclusions, and recommendations will help support FEI engagement in truth and reconciliation.

Contribution and Application

I intend to share my findings, conclusions, and recommendations with FEI executive leadership by way of my capstone partner. My hope is that leaders at FEI will be inspired to learn more about our collective history, as told by Indigenous peoples. I hope that FEI will adopt recommendations outlined in chapter five of this thesis into corporate policy, and in doing so, all FEI employees will learn more about traditional Indigenous ways of knowing and governance. A better understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and governance will help guide non-Indigenous FEI employees with respect to how they can build respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. At a company level, an understanding of Indigenous laws and governance can help inform FEI's approach to corporate policy change.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology and methods used in my inquiry. I spoke to how my engaged, action-oriented research methodology was inspired by Indigenous research methodologies and relational accountability. I discussed how participants were invited and how data was shared. I provide insight and transparency with respect to how I analyzed the data collected, assessed the trustworthiness of my actions as a researcher and my findings. I reflected on my actions throughout the entire process. In the next chapter, I will explore inquiry project findings and study conclusions.

Chapter Four: Inquiry Project Findings and Conclusions

This chapter will focus on the findings and conclusions of my research study. I explore how FortisBC employees can actively engage in the TRC's (2015a, 2015b) truth and reconciliation process by asking: "How can FEI employees take action to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia?" My sub-questions were:

1. What can FEI employees do to learn more about how the organization could become a more welcoming place for Indigenous peoples to work?
2. How can FEI change its business practices to better support Indigenous communities' goals, as framed by Indigenous communities?

Study Findings

This inquiry asked participants to draw from their personal experiences and learning. The findings and conclusions I discuss express my interpretation of the ideas and insights provided by research participants and my observational notes during the data gathering process.

Two main methods generated data: (a) six interviews and (b) one group method that included three participants who had also participated in the interviews. I conducted the one-to-one interviews and facilitated the group discussion. Findings from the interviews are coded IP-#. The "I" refers to the interview method, the "P" refers to the participant, and the # refers to the unique number each interview participant was given from 1 to 6. Similarly, the individuals who took part in the group method are coded as GP-#, where the "G" stands for the group, "P" stands for the participant. The # refers to the unique number each group phone call participant was given from 1 to 3.

Further, those who participated in the interview method and the group method have the same number for both. This coding, as well as gender-neutral pronouns, are intended to

anonymize the participants. Finally, there has been some minor tweaking of quotations to ensure clarity of grammar.

When I completed the interviews, I let all participants know that I would check in to ensure I had captured their thoughts accurately. At that point, all interview participants had the opportunity to add to or change what they had said to reflect their ideas accurately.

The analysis of all the data was an invigorating process. It was also challenging because I had analyzed the data knowing that it would be impossible to remove my settler lens and personal biases. Once I identified over-arching themes and findings, I shared them back with all six participants to see whether I was interpreting the data as they intended. Though I have slightly tweaked the wording of the findings since sharing them with the participants, the underlying meaning of the findings remains the same. Five findings came from my analysis of data from both the interviews and the group method or group phone call:

1. As guests in Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous FEI employees may be expected to demonstrate accountability to members of the community because of their colonial positioning.
2. Building trust with Indigenous communities takes time and settlers should approach the process with genuine interest, humility, and transparency.
3. Relationships between FEI and Indigenous communities can be improved if FEI is open to reframing the way business is done in settler organizations.
4. FEI employees can improve their accountability and knowledge through service-learning or respectful interchanges with Indigenous communities.

5. Communication approaches can serve as a barrier to developing respectful relationships or they can act as a catalyst; FEI employees should follow the lead of Indigenous communities and their preferred communication styles.

Finding 1. As Guests in Indigenous Communities, non-Indigenous FEI Employees May be Expected to Prove Their Accountability to Members of the Community Because of their Colonial Positioning

All participants touched on the theme of accountability. In the context of my thesis, accountability is applicable and specific to settlers and other non-Indigenous individuals who work with Indigenous communities and who arrive as guests with a measure of distrust earned by their colonial positioning. I will include participant data that provide insight into the importance of accountability in non-Indigenous–Indigenous relationships, but first, I will provide a reminder as to why accountability is important for settlers to demonstrate in the context of truth and reconciliation.

Canada’s ongoing theft and redistribution of traditional territories directly harms Indigenous bodies, minds, and spirits (Mills, 2018, p. 188). Along with dispossessing Indigenous People of their lands, Canadians have often refused to acknowledge, through words or actions, the traditional governance structures of Indigenous peoples. This refusal has disrupted the place of women in their communities, as women in many communities have traditionally held political and leadership roles. For example, Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2016) explained how it was the women in Iroquois communities who appointed Chiefs, held property, counseled Chiefs, and removed them if necessary (p. 9). Colonization has disrupted traditional governance, as under the Indian Act (1876/1985), reserve communities have been mandated to now elect Chief and

council, even though many communities, including those on the west coast, have had hereditary Chiefs and their own complex systems of governance in place since time immemorial.

It is important for settlers to understand how the Canadian government has negatively impacted Indigenous peoples and how settlers have been largely complicit in the colonial agenda. An awareness of colonization and its disruptive impacts was raised by all participants, though the word colonization was not always used as our k-12 education system erased this part of Canadian history from the curriculum. Other words that participants used included “systems” and “the government.” Through the experiences they shared, participants highlighted the importance of being able to build accountability within an Indigenous community as a means of being prepared to build relationships for the purpose of FortisBC service delivery and projects that occur on traditional territories. Further, accountability is possible in part by having an awareness of colonization and its damaging consequences on First Peoples.

Subtopics under this finding revealed (a) the importance of settlers taking responsibility for their own education and, (b) being open and genuine when interacting with others, and (c) and, (d) flexible and, (e) open to critique. Each will now be discussed in detail under this finding.

The Importance of Settlers Taking Responsibility for Their Own Education and Learning. One non-Indigenous participant who works with First Nations communities as part of their role at FEI noted, “One should do their homework before going into a community. For example, one of the things I have learned is that in many Indigenous communities it is best not to use the words ‘pilot project.’ Communities don’t have time to be part of our experiment” (IP-2). This participant had an awareness of the residential school system, which was an experiment in assimilation, as well, nutritional experiments were performed done on students in the schools. Shortly after WWII, when knowledge about nutrition was still sparse, scientists in Canada took

advantage of already malnourished Indigenous communities by using them as research subjects, without their or their parents' knowledge, to investigate the effects of different diets and dietary supplements (ubc.ca/the-legacy-of-nutritional-experiments-in-residential-schools/). Sometimes the experiments involved decreasing food intake or withholding supplements. Considering this historical context, IP-2 understood why the words "pilot program" can may be triggering for Indigenous peoples.

This participant's experience provided an example of why it is important for non-Indigenous peoples to know their history and understand the impacts of colonization. When mistakes are made and the non-Indigenous person receives critique from the community, they are able to make connections with historical events and themes, understand the gravity of the errors, and not repeat them. Having an understanding of colonization demonstrates accountability, and it can also help build respect in a relationship because it means Indigenous community members do not have to take the time and emotional energy to explain to settlers Canada's colonial history and how it has negatively impacted Indigenous peoples. This is the responsibility of those who are blissfully unaware.

Being Open and Genuine When Interacting with Others. Another element to building trust noted by participants is the ability to be open and authentic. The information that participants shared about their own actions and worldviews provided insight to my research inquiry: What actions can FEI employees take in order to build mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples?

One participant, who identified as Indigenous, told a personal story about being invited to deliver a speech in Haida Gwaii. This participant, a former Olympian, met with community members to discuss the positive role that organized sports had played in their life:

During my speech, I got emotional, just like I am right now because without sports in my life, I would be in prison or dead. The gentleman who was there at the time told me not to apologize because by showing my emotion, I was telling the community that I know their struggles, and I understand them. (IP-5)

This participant's story provided a perfect example of how being open and authentic from the heart can open channels to building connection. However, it is important to note that for many Indigenous peoples, authenticity is deeply connected to culture and lived experience in a way that is not for many settlers. While IP-5 was visiting a community that was not his own, he was surrounded by other people who had the lived experience of surviving in Canada, as an Indigenous person. This allows for a shared understanding that is unique for Indigenous peoples. Authenticity can also be problematic depending on a number of factors: 1) the FEI's employee's level of education surrounding Canada's colonial history 2) FEI employee's awareness and acceptance of systemic racism and 3) their knowledge of community traditions and protocols. This is why it is important for employees to have extensive training before they engage in in community events.

In many cases, when organizations are working with Indigenous communities, there will be opportunities to attend events hosted in the community. For example, IP-1 (Métis) shared some of the events they had attended in First Nations communities over the years, which included conferences, workshop and meetings where dinner will be offered afterwards, to all participants. For some, the evening activities may seem voluntary and outside of the core activities. However, one participant noted that if you are someone who is really interested in learning and building relationship with community, you will want to attend the evening events. IP-1 (Métis) and has had many experiences at community events. From this experience, they

offered: “Bring your spouse or your partner to the dinner, it shows you are not just there for work.” In non-Indigenous organizational settings, the events that occur after the conference are often viewed as optional or a time to network with others. In the context of a settler attending events in an Indigenous community, the expectations are different. Going back to the example provided by IP-1, choosing to attend a community dinner with a significant other signalled to the community a commitment at a personal level, not just at the employee level. This sort of commitment demonstrates respect because within Indigenous worldviews, there is not the same kind of personal/professional compartmentalization of identities.

Another participant noted the importance of arriving well in advance of delivering a presentation in a community in order to build bridges. Building personal connections opens the opportunity to find common ground and relate to one another. As the participant who is Indigenous noted, “Without bridges, you are a nobody to them, and they are more likely to listen to a somebody, than a nobody” (IP-5).

Being Open to Critique. Building accountability with Indigenous communities is also about being flexible and willing to be the subject of humor or critique. One participant (IP-2), who is non-Indigenous, spoke about how important it is for non-Indigenous people to not be easily offended or act like they need to have all the answers. I understood the participant’s message to non-Indigenous people to mean that it is more about being transparent about what you know/don’t know, and be willing to seek answers to things that you don’t know instead of getting defensive when a gap in knowledge is identified by a community. In the context of different worldviews, i.e., settler versus Indigenous, as discussed earlier in this thesis, it is not surprising to consider how these situations come about. In western science, objectivity and

having the ‘right’ answer is valued. However, from an Indigenous worldview, knowledge is shared and learning is ongoing and an important part of life.

I remember when I started working with one community, the reception I had was pretty cool. But I showed up and listened and asked questions about the community. Whenever someone would ask me a question, I would think about who in FEI could help me answer that question for them. I may not have always been able to provide them with the answer they were looking for, but I always followed up. (IP-2)

Had this participant been rigid or defensive with the reception they received, they would have missed an opportunity to learn more about the community’s needs and goals and likely not be invited back. This same participant spoke of how they made it a point always to do their best to get answers for the community demonstrating a sense of personal follow up, rather than just directing community members to a website for information, which would be considered acceptable practice in non-Indigenous contexts. The participant understood that dealing with inquiries and following up with them personally provided an opportunity to build trust with community members. When it came to community requests, the participant’s steadfastness helped them build relationships and trust among community members.

Participants noted that for settlers or outsiders who interact and work with Indigenous community members, it is important to remember that trust is something that is actively built based on the community’s protocol. For example, many settler Canadians place a certain level of trust in institutional organizations and the people that they employ. When an issue like a downed power line or a broken gas meter occurs, many settler Canadians will trust that the service person sent out to their home by their public utility or municipal government will not harm them, their children, or their community. However, because of the history between non-Indigenous and

Indigenous peoples, particularly with respect to public institutions, Indigenous communities are not likely to grant trust unless it is earned. As such, communities have their own vetting processes for guests. As one participant noted, “I remember when I first started working with a community and the Chief said to me, “Tell me who you are, tell me what your experience is, and tell me who I can call to ask about that”” (IP-1). While the Chief was likely aware that the participant worked for FEI, they wanted to ensure the person was who they said they were and determine whether this was someone they wanted in the community.

The participant understood that just because FEI had employed them, it did not mean they would be automatically accepted or trusted by the community, and as such, they provided the Chief with the information requested. The same participant noted that in community, your reputation matters: “If it is good, word travels quickly, but it can also cut the other way, and when it’s bad, word travels much faster” (IP-1). Another participant (IP-6) who is Métis described a similar experience when they visited an Indigenous community for a meeting. As the participant was walking around, they were stopped by an Elder who asked, “Who are you? Where are you from? And why are you here?” In that experience, the participant noted that the Elder had reminded them that they were a guest and that it was a privilege to walk in the community, not a right.

One of the FEI participants shared their thoughts on how FEI, as an organization, has been open to critique and reflection and has made a shift in the way they approach Indigenous relations:

I have been with the company now for over 10 years, and I can say that our perspective towards Indigenous communities has changed 180 degrees. Things have changed significantly over the past five years, even a lot over the past two years. I would say that

in the past, they would have been viewed as stakeholders and approached with data or viewed in sort of an adversarial way. I have seen what has happened in the organization over the past three years, and it's remarkable. (GP-2)

I understood the participant's experience to mean that more people within the company look at the potential of working with Indigenous communities as a unique and positive experience rather than as a burden because it is process that carries more risk for the company when mistakes are made. These experiential examples support the value of settlers taking the time to learn and respect unique Indigenous histories and rights, community protocols, and community needs. Seeking to understand and follow community protocols sends a message of respect to the community, which helps to build the accountability required for a relationship of trust.

Finding 2. Building Trust Through Genuine Interest, Humility, and Transparency

The examples provided thus far illustrate how essential it is for non-Indigenous people to take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate respect and accountability in order to create trust with communities. Trust is essential in building relationships with Indigenous communities, but it takes time to develop, and it is the *community*, not the guest that decides when trust has been earned. Discussions under this finding focused on (a) demonstrating genuine interest, (b) humility, and (c) transparency.

Demonstrating Genuine Interest. The theme of trust came up in every interview and in the group phone call. Participants spoke about how trust is foundational to building relationships with Indigenous communities and identified various ways in which trust could be built. When I probed into what mutually beneficial looked like, their response was:

With mutually beneficial relationships, the onus is on FortisBC to build those relationships because communities already have enough of their own work to manage.

The approach must be one of appreciative inquiry. For example, this could mean FortisBC asks a community, “What do you need, how can we support you to help meet your needs?” In other words, we can’t go in with any assumptions. We need to ask really good questions, listen carefully, and be open and trustworthy. (IP-2)

I had included the phrase “appreciative inquiry” in my communication to participants in advance of the interview. In conversation with participants, I noted that I was using the term to mean that I would be exploring the life-giving aspects of a particular topic rather than looking for or focusing on issues. In hindsight, I think I would have used plain language to describe that approach because appreciative inquiry on its own body of scholarship with academic rigours. If I could go back, I would have used words that are more descriptive and similar to the words the participant used “open ears and open heart.” From what I understand, both participants IP-2 and IP-6 used the words appreciative inquiry to mean open and non-judgemental exploration.

Another participant, who identified as Métis, spoke about building trust by sitting at the table with “open ears and an open heart” (IP-6) and asking community members questions about their goals and priorities to see if there is a way for their team to support those priorities. The same participant (Métis) noted that as someone working with First Nations communities for a utility-funded energy-efficiency program, they believed it was important to demonstrate humility, consistency, and a willingness to meet people where they are at when working with communities: “I tell my [non-Indigenous] staff that before they go into community, forget everything they think they know, and check their egos at the door” (IP-6).

Through their lived experience as a parent and member of the Métis community, this participant was familiar with how it felt to have strangers make assumptions about their character. The participant shared a story about when their son’s teacher’s high school

administrator called one day and asked them to come in to talk. A working parent, they were surprised to learn that their son had skipped some classes. The conversation then moved to the school administrator questioning the participant's ability to provide adequate parenting. As the researcher having this conversation, I was reminded of my own high school impulse decisions. I certainly skipped classes in Grades 11 and 12, as did many of my peers. I regret these decisions now, and I can say with certainty that it was not my parents' fault that I made a few poor decisions, and I do not recall anyone questioning my parents' abilities. Listening to her story and thinking about my judgment, I wondered if the school administrators would have unconsciously or perhaps consciously, given my parents the benefit of the doubt in a way that Indigenous parents are not. The participant's experience made me think of the assimilationist intentions of the Canadian government and residential schools, and the fundamental motivation of the colonial project to interrupt Indigenous parenting and shift authority over to the state. In reflection on what I have learned about colonization, I was able to see a connection between that colonial agenda and the experience described by the participant. The participant's experience provides an example of how colonization shows up in the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples and is not something that those from the dominant society usually ever have to think about, never mind navigate.

Humility. Humility, the ability to have a modest view of one's own importance, came through as a theme in developing more respectful interactions with Indigenous peoples. One participant explained why settlers must demonstrate humility as part of the truth and reconciliation process:

In the past, it was a given that the settler's way of doing business was the way it was going to be. Time has moved forward and we know now we can do better. The call to

action for me is about sitting down, listening openly at the table and moving at the pace that matches the pace of those who are at the table. It means making sure everyone is comfortable, no matter how many times we may need to engage or circle back (IP6).

The way in which settlers have dictated the lives of Indigenous peoples, through assimilative policies, indicates that as a group, we have been arrogant up to this point because we feel that ‘our’ way is normal and correct. Considering this, we can avoid repeating the mistakes of the past by practicing humility, which can be a catalyst in shifting the challenging relationship dynamics that have developed as a result of the history between settler groups and Indigenous peoples.

Another participant shared their thoughts on the importance of being humble when engaging with communities:

So being a little more vulnerable and humbler can be challenging because we are used to building up strength to be strong in a meeting. You identify with yourself and you identify with the company and you want to defend both of those things. (IP3)

This example is indicative of western business culture and the way people feel they need to act. Upon entering the corporate world from non-profit, I also felt the pressure to always appear confident and emotionally infallible, and to be someone who always had the right answers, which is impossible. This point relates to the theme of being open to criticism and why it is important to think intentionally about being open and not pre-occupied with always being correct or sounding smart. The participant explained the mental change that needs to occur with settlers: “You have to shift your thinking to: how can I be constructive and not dominate. It’s about trying to dissociate from being the leader at the table” (IP3). To be humble within an Indigenous community indicates an awareness that there is a lot of room to learn, as a settler and as a guest

in the community. Being humble also allows one to feel open rather than defensive, and curious rather than adopting the guise of all-knowing.

As someone who worked on programs delivered to on-reserve communities, IP6 noted the importance of caring and taking the time to examine the level of service delivered to a community. They shared an experience that had provided great learning. Within the energy efficiency program, some participants qualified for the installation of a new, free refrigerator. IP6 noticed that one program participant who had qualified for a refrigerator had not actually received it yet because she had been missed by the field crew:

I knew the program participant was aware they were supposed to be getting a new refrigerator so when the mistake was realized I followed up with her to apologize. I asked her why she had not contacted us, as we had left voicemails and sent letters. She told me that she never opened her mail because she was afraid to (IP6).

In speaking with this person further, the participant learned that the person, an Indigenous woman, had experienced traumatic events that were related to the kind of information they had received from the government and government-like representatives. As a Métis person, IP6 felt they understood why the woman felt apprehension in dealing with a public utility and its subcontractors. In response, IP6 found ways to relate to the participant and spent extra time communicating with her, trying to make her feel comfortable and eventually, the new fridge was installed. The participant approached the situation with personal openness, historical understanding, empathy, and a shared lived experience of colonial trauma. These qualities seemed to contribute to a positive outcome for all parties involved. This experience also speaks to the power of transparency because the director was open and willing to hear about the real reasons why the woman who qualified for the fridge had felt fear and apprehension.

Transparency. Transparency is a crucial element in building trust and mutually respectful relationships in the context of truth and reconciliation because traditionally, colonizers and the Canadian state have not demonstrated transparency in their dealings with Indigenous Peoples. Earlier in this thesis I discussed treaties and how Canadian governments do not have a history of entering the treaty negotiation process in good faith. Because of this reality and the Indian Act, settlers who are working for Canadian governments, public utilities and businesses, cannot expect to be welcomed into Indigenous communities with trust.

One participant, who self-identified as Métis and has thirty years of experience working with First Nations in a business capacity, shared several examples from their career, which speak to the importance of transparency. In the context of working with FEI, IP1 described the importance of sharing whatever information you have with Chiefs and members of the community you are working with: “One of the foundations of trust is really about not delivering any surprises to the Chief or whoever else you are meeting in the community” (IP1). This participant’s point speaks to the importance of transparency as well as a need to move away from a western business approach where getting an upper hand on the other party in a contract or agreement is considered strategically savvy approach. As IP1 noted in their interview, in a mutually respectful and beneficial relationship, a good contract or agreement is one where both parties walk away better off than they were before.

Another participant recalled a time when he had showed up in a community for a meeting and was surprised when the person, he was meeting was accompanied by a lawyer and an audio recorder. Instead of responding with defensiveness, the participant understood their concern and desire to keep a record of what was being said in the meeting. The participant explained that when a community has had their trust broken or has been lied to, the community member may

approach meetings with an understandable level of distrust, understanding that the person has to protect themselves and their community (IP1). Because of the participant's lived experience as a Métis person, knowledge of Canadian history, and experience working with Indigenous businesses, they understood the community's lack of trust and did not take it personally. Transparency is key in meetings and day-to-day conversations and it is also important when organizations are working with Indigenous communities on large scale energy projects. Transparency will be explored through the themes of informed choice and informed consent under the broader topic of reframing the way business is done.

Finding 3. Reframing the Way Business is Done in Settler Organizations

Canadian corporations are structures that exist within the larger Canadian colonial system and are meant as profit-gathering entities. As such, corporations and businesses, even those that are socially responsible, are always going to be motivated by profit and will most often, avoid activities that present a risk to profit accumulation. The TRC created the 92nd *Call to Action* specifically for for-profit businesses. The first main section is:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

In this third finding, I will share data generated by participants which speaks to the theme of working with Indigenous communities that have consented to FEI energy projects. Participant comments under this topic included the subjects of (a) engage early and communicate often, (b) impact benefit agreements, and (c) take the time, don't rush.

Engage Early and Communicate Often. With respect to the topic of companies such as FEI obtaining consent from Indigenous communities, one participant offered:

Indigenous Peoples should not just be presented with a project for consent. They should be provided with a CHOICE. That can only happen if they are part of the strategy for developing their lands. It should be about informed choice. Not merely informed consent.

(IP-1)

I found this offering particularly poignant in the context of my inquiry, which explored truth and reconciliation, because the participant challenged organizations to go beyond what is required of them, beyond the minimum expectations of the TRC (2015a) *Call to Action*. By placing respect for the community as the priority, companies like FEI can go beyond what is expected of them and set an example for other organizations to do the same. Similarly, another participant noted that organizations like FEI should be in continuous communication with First Nations communities, not just when the organization has a project to advance: “If we are not working with them now, one day we will be” (IP-5). Another participant, who is Métis, noted:

When I think about the future, I think of the holistic or the whole picture. For utilities and businesses, they are usually going to the table when they want something. That is frustration for a member of a First Nation, especially considering it is often something that may not end up in their favour, and it may not benefit all individuals. So, be present before that. Let each community know about your organization first, so there can be a trust built because if you just walk in and go to the table, there is so much mistrust. There is no foundation because there is no relationship. In many Indigenous cultures, its important, this idea of: who are you and where do you come from? But you can't just walk in the door, say that and then have a big ask. So, for me, it's starting and maintaining the relationship the whole way through. (GP-6)

These examples offered by participants should also serve as a reminder that any FEI energy project that impacts Indigenous peoples should have been approved by all members of the impacted Indigenous communities. Elders, community members, and hereditary chiefs should be aware and approve of any project or program that will impact their community and they should know of the people who will be working on the projects and programs.

Impact Benefit Agreements. An Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) can be an opportunity for organizations to build relationships with an Indigenous community. In reality, an IBA is a contract which states there will be impacts on Indigenous rights but there will also be benefits in exchange (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p.93). Many developers and the companies that are part of the energy industry use IBAs and they vary but some benefits included in one could be employment opportunities, community infrastructure support, and procurement opportunities for community run businesses. While organizations that have agreements in place tend to do better than those that do not (p. 93) the participants in this study outlined some of the challenges with how the agreements are created.

The process of creating these agreements is often confidential on the part of the company, which means not everyone in a First Nations community will be aware of how the company determined what is of 'benefit' to the community. While this may be standard business protocol for many organizations in the energy utility industry, if we follow the direction of the TRC reports (2015a, 2015c) and the importance of transparency in building trust with Indigenous communities, then companies must work to find ways for transparency to be reflected in all that they do. The opposite of a transparent process is one where non-Indigenous people are involved in determining what is beneficial for Indigenous peoples, rather than the other way around. Most on-reserve Indigenous communities are operating under the Indian Act (1876/1985), which

means they are forced to have an elected Chief and band council, with elections every two or three years. Many of these same communities also retain their hereditary Chiefs and traditional system of governance. One participant, who is Indigenous, spoke of the nature in which Impact Benefit Agreements (IBA) are presented to their community. Energy and utility companies often offer Indigenous communities benefit agreements in a variety of scenarios, and the work sometimes involves moving into the community and disturbing the lands and ecosystems they support, in order to perform infrastructure maintenance or disturbing the land to install new infrastructure:

If you look at these IBAs, with pipelines, the reality is that some of the First Nations are so impoverished, it's not really a choice with what they are being offered. Because regardless of what we say, it's going to happen. (IP-4)

Further, the participant explained that generally when agreements are presented to Indigenous communities, the company will offer some things in the agreement that the community really needs, like support for adequate housing. However, accepting the agreement and getting support for an immediate community need often comes with a great environmental and community cost: "It's like starving someone for two weeks and then putting a turkey dinner in front them, but there is a pile of rotten food in the middle; they are forced to eat around the rot" (IP-4). The participant stressed that the agreements are written up and then presented to a community, which is often struggling financially and, therefore, does not have a strong position from which to negotiate or push back on aspects of the agreement that are undesirable. This participant's experiences speak to the issue of power and the idea that consent under duress is not consent.

I asked the participant whether they felt there was a possibility, if the IBAs or community benefit agreements were created differently and in collaboration with the whole community, whether they could be fair and useful:

Well, I don't know because these kinds of agreements are quite new. What happens, do they stop next year? I don't have a lot of faith in systems. I have seen where systems, in the past, have led my [First Nations] people. (IP-4)

The “systems” that the participant was referring to are the bureaucratic and legal systems created by settler governments for the purposes of assimilating Indigenous Peoples and for the benefit of settlers, and they include but are not limited to residential schools. In going through the data and my transcriptions a number of times after the interview, I realized that in asking the participant about whether agreements could be improved, I neglected to include the most important point: the fact that for many Indigenous communities, the first priority is survival. In this context, an IBA is not really a choice when as a community; you will do whatever you need in order to keep your family, your culture and your people alive. In this case, my neglect as a settler, was really a way to distance myself from the ugly reality of White Settler colonialism in practice. This is an example of why we, as settlers, have to constantly critically reflect on our actions and whether they parallel those of the larger colonial agenda. In the colonial Canadian context, Indigenous peoples have always resisted assimilation and fought for survival, and while many communities are thriving and experiencing cultural resurgences, others communities feel a great threat to their very existence. IP-4's point is critical because it speaks to what really needs to change. As long as Indigenous peoples have to deal with a system of colonization that works to dispossess them of their lands, and therefore their knowledge, culture, and traditions, they will need to fight for the survival of their people. As long as settlers continue to uphold and support this current

system, they make the fight for survival that much more difficult. The same participant spoke of how, in their experience as an Indigenous person, economic development projects developed by government and Canadian corporations can undermine the power of hereditary Chiefs and traditional governance:

You have to remember that with hereditary Chiefs, their responsibility is to protect the lands for seven generations. The Chief and Council [under the Indian Act and the federal government] work to get elected. (IP-4)

In this context, pipelines and development projects, and the IBAs that often come with them, may be supported by the band and council, but not by the hereditary Chiefs, and communities must have Western-style Chief and Council under the Indian Act (1876/1985). Through the Indian Act, the federal government has ignored and replaced traditional Indigenous governance and has thus made it impossible to obtain free and informed consent from the entire community in communities where traditional governance is present. However, private companies and utilities are not tied to the Indian Act: They can choose to obtain free and prior informed consent, and even better, informed choice, from all members of the community, before designing projects.

Take the Time and Don't Rush. The theme of taking time was brought forth by several participants in the context of building trust and respectful relationships with Indigenous communities:

It takes time, it's time in the community, it's having lunch with the Chief and the band manager, going to community events and meetings. Listen to the speeches and celebrations because you end up talking to people, and you start to understand how much capacity they have. Visit with someone long enough, and they will tell you their challenges, but you are not going to know unless you sit down and talk to people. It's all

time and sincere engagement. One of the foundations of trust is really about not delivering any surprises to the Chief or whoever else you are meeting in the community.

Go slowly, to go fast. It's business at the speed of trust. (IP-1)

For most participants, the experiences they shared involved learning from doing. Reframing the way business is done must also focus on the importance of learning and settler education in the truth and reconciliation process.

Finding 4. Learning Respectfully

In the following section, I will be exploring themes raised by participants that are related to (a) training and (b) learning through experience and in-person interactions. For example, participants highlight the importance of face-to-face time in building mutually respectful relationships. Another important aspect of learning for visitors to Indigenous communities brought forth by participants is the importance of taking the time to learn about the community's culture and protocols as much as possible, before visiting the community. This was perceived as a sign of respect and thus helpful in building mutually respectful relationships.

Training. When the topic of ongoing learning came up in the interviews, a few participants noted that seminars and courses can be beneficial, but learning through action was preferred. The specific in-class training discussed was the Bob Joseph Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples® corporate training program (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., n.d.), which all FEI employees are offered. The training is not currently mandatory, but can be taken voluntarily, and FortisBC covers costs and provides onsite classrooms for course delivery. The training provides historical overviews, lessons on Indigenous worldviews, issues of land and governance, as well as how settlers can further their understanding of reconciliation in action and building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.

When the topic of training came up with one of the non-Indigenous FEI employees, their response was: “I think training is great but for me it always comes back to that human element. I think most Canadians have never been on a reserve or visited a First Nations community. I think we learn more from interactions with one another” (IP-3). This participant had many past experiences in their life to draw from, as their work experience had allowed them to work closely with Indigenous communities. Additionally, it was interesting that through their experiences, IP-3 developed a perspective about education that falls more in line with relational learning and how Indigenous knowledge is generated. This was a departure from the way that IP-3 had received their early education, which was centred in classrooms. From an Indigenous worldview, learning is active and comes from doing and experiencing with other humans, plants, and animals. This participant felt that the best way to learn about Indigenous cultures is to interact with Indigenous peoples.

Learning Through Experience. Participants provided examples of how through struggles or missteps in their relationships with Indigenous peoples, they learned lessons that ultimately helped them adjust their approach and broaden their understanding of the community they were working with. For most participants, when the question of how to come back from a mistake came up in conversation, responses involved reflection and investigation into how their actions were received by the community. One participant, a settler, shared a misstep that was made early in their career:

When I was in school [university], I was taught to be as efficient as possible. I made a mistake early on with a community visit, I tailored the group from three to two so that I could leave and head back to the office to get more work done. I thought, “Why did we all need to be there?” But I missed a valuable learning opportunity and opportunity to

strengthen the relationship. I learned that cramming more things in your day is not necessarily the most important thing. (IP-3)

In this case, the participant admitted that when they initially made the decision to cut out of the meeting early, they were not thinking about the community, but about how to be good at their job in the way that they had learned from school. They had the awareness to recognize that their tendency to prioritize efficiency over building relationship came from Western education and business training. They also recognized that by trying to do their job “right” for their organization, they had missed an opportunity to build trust.

The same participant shared learnings that came from choosing the wrong people to attend meetings with in Indigenous communities. IP-3 noted that when you are a manager and you have to select team members to meet with Indigenous community leaders, you cannot just think about who the appropriate people are from your company’s perspective: “Try to find people in the room that you feel you can connect with the most. For example, maybe throwing my 45-year-old white male boss into the meeting with all women was not the best idea” (IP-3). In retelling these experiences where mistakes had been made with representation at meetings, the participant demonstrated an understanding of Canada’s colonial history. Historically, White settler males have presented a threat and danger, not only to the personal safety of Indigenous women, but also to the traditional power that women hold in community. The participant went on to explain how the right balance of people could be achieved:

Have some balance with who is at the table. For analogy: it’s like party planning with the seating chart—you want people to connect, enjoy themselves, come up with innovative ideas, etc. You do that by careful planning to create constructive relationships. That’s a piece people often forget when planning meetings—often the focus is only on having the

right technocrat in place to explain concepts, and you gloss over the human element. (IP-3)

A few participants spoke to how Western ideas of meeting, planning, and organizing can get in the way of building trust and relationship. Therefore, setting up meetings with an awareness of what the community would prefer, in terms of structure and protocol, demonstrates an act of respect.

Finding 5. Communication Approaches

One of the most common themes that came forth in the interviews and the group session is the role of communication. If done effectively, communication can be a catalyst to building a relationship. Participants discussed the importance of face-to-face communication and the incorporation of humor in communication.

Face-to-Face Communication. To build respect with Indigenous communities, participants emphasized the importance of in-person and verbal communication:

Building relationships is about communicating and talking. It is about building some form of synergy and finding similar interests. It is also about building camaraderie so that there are common areas of interest. It is about looking at what is of interest to both, things which have value. You want the relationship to be based on some form of integrity and trust. (IP-5)

The same participant, who is Indigenous, spoke of the value of face-to-face conversations when you are a guest in a community:

In general, with text and email communication, often, the intended meaning of the communication can be misunderstood, but face to face can help prevent misunderstandings that may occur with text or email. I have found a sense of realism and

humour in the community, and they like to see your face; they want to see you. That human interaction is essential. I have found that in First Nations communities, sharing time is a cultural norm. (IP-5)

Face-to-face communication, rather than text and email communication, is related to relational accountability from an Indigenous worldview; a traditional Indigenous research approach emphasizes learning by watching and doing (Wilson, 2018, p. 40). Further, face-to-face communication is part of a participant observer approach used in Indigenous research. The relationship building that occurs when in-person communication takes place is an important aspect of ethical Indigenous research (p. 40). Face-to-face communication is part of relational accountability and ethical interaction in the context of Indigenous research methodology. Therefore, face-to-face communication can support relational accountability when FEI employees seek to build relationships with Indigenous communities.

With all the examples shared on this theme, participants revealed that communication with Indigenous communities should be more about a desire to understand the community than it should be about delivering information. Participants noted that when communication is used by FEI more as a tool to understand than a channel to send information, communities will tell you which form of communication works best for them. One Indigenous participant spoke of the administrative burden organizations placed on communities when they ask them to fill out written paperwork for every interaction: “When you are working with communities that come from oral cultures, providing written bureaucratic language is not the best way to engage them” (IP-6). FEI participants provided similar insights into the hindrance and barriers that paperwork and bureaucratic administration create for communities.

Humor. Another participant, who is Indigenous, shared some of their experience with regards to embracing humour as a way of building relationship in First Nations communities. The participant spoke about how often, especially when you come to an Indigenous community as a settler or someone who looks like a settler, you have to expect that jokes may be made at your expense. With regards to humour and relationship, the participant explained:

It's about creating fun, creating laughter in building relationship. I have not been afraid to fail; it is part of being an athlete; we learn a lot more from failure. You have to learn from that and not give up, and failing may just be that you cracked an appropriate joke, but one that failed with your audience. That is ok, but it just didn't work. You can't be afraid; you just have to try to find a better connection with others. (IP-5)

The participant shared that perhaps delivering humor and accepting it was easier for them because as an Indigenous person, he grew up around aunts and relatives who were often cracking jokes. They noted that in many settler contexts, managers tell their employees that if they go into communities, they should not make any jokes. The participant understood this concern for fear of delivering an inappropriate or culturally insensitive joke; however, IP-5 felt that to avoid humour is to miss an opportunity to build relationship because humour is important within Indigenous communities.

Findings Summary

Research participants shared some of their most memorable and meaningful experiences working with Indigenous communities as they responded to my questions exploring how FortisBC employees could work to build respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. Participants spoke of the need for settlers to be knowledgeable about their history and the ongoing impacts of colonization before working with Indigenous communities. Additionally, the

themes of trust, transparency, and open communications were emphasized throughout. “Business at the Speed of Trust” (IP-1) was an approach offered by one of the participants and encapsulated the sentiments shared by participants in both the interview and group sessions. *Business at the Speed of Trust* speaks to how organizations like FortisBC can reframe their approach to business so that energy is focused on building relationships with communities rather than following western protocols.

Study Conclusions

At the outset of my research, I presented participants with the primary inquiry question: How can FEI employees take action to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia? Participants generated rich data as they discussed their lived experiences building relationships with Indigenous peoples. The knowledge offered by all participants provided insights into what is working well with FEI and their approach to building respectful relationships with Indigenous communities, areas of opportunity for FEI, and how FEI could open more channels of communication so that more information could flow from Indigenous communities to FEI management and leadership. These experiences and insights were offered in response to this research inquiry and the TRC’s (2015a) 92nd *Call to Action*:

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic

development projects.

ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. (TRC, 2015a, p. 10)

In discussing inquiry questions with participants, it was clear that they felt building meaningful and respectful relationships included the ability to demonstrate accountability to Indigenous community members. As part of the trust-building process with Indigenous peoples, FEI employees should demonstrate a genuine interest in community members, their governance, goals, and priorities. Further, participants offered that a humble and genuine interest to learn can go a long way in building relationship. Four of the six participants, who are FEI employees, highlighted that the best way to learn was through action and interaction with Indigenous communities. All six participants had suggestions for how FEI could improve communication. The participant who identified as Indigenous specifically spoke to how communication to Indigenous communities, including communication that happens around agreements, needs to be fully transparent to the whole community.

Based on the study findings, I have drawn four overarching conclusions. I hope that with the engagement of all levels of FEI employees, FEI will consider implementing recommendations into corporate policy based on these conclusions and with an awareness that

when working with Indigenous communities, they are interacting with a culture, not another business (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 135). These four conclusions are:

1. FEI can support truth and reconciliation by engaging in ongoing, transparent communication with Indigenous communities.
2. FEI can become a more welcoming place for Indigenous talent by creating an educated organization.
3. FortisBC should seek methods for communicating projects, programs, and agreements that are not administratively and financially burdensome to Indigenous communities as a step towards building respectful relationships.
4. FortisBC can work to build respect with Indigenous communities by demonstrating an understanding and acceptance of traditional governance structures.

Conclusion 1. FEI Can Support Truth and Reconciliation by Engaging in Ongoing, Transparent Communication

FEI can support truth and reconciliation through ongoing and transparent communication, particularly with respect to agreements and contracts that affect Indigenous communities and lands. Participants discussed transparency as a theme in the context of personal relationships as well as in communications between corporations like FEI and Indigenous communities. Transparency is inextricably linked with building trust and respectful relationships. By demonstrating transparency, settlers are signalling to communities that they understand the collective history and how trust has been broken in the past between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Transparency also signifies a desire to come up with a relationship and an agreement that works for both the organization and the Indigenous community.

Conclusion 2. FEI Can Become a More Welcoming Place for Indigenous Talent by Creating an Educated Organization

Indigenous awareness training for non-Indigenous employees was discussed as an experience that should be a requirement for all employees. One of the biggest challenges that organizations face in attracting and retaining Indigenous talent is not having inclusive worksites (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 42). Therefore, in order for FEI to attract top Indigenous talent, it must continuously work on creating a culture of inclusivity and respect. B. Joseph and C. Joseph (2019) posited that it is important to create that foundation of awareness so that organizations like FEI can attract Indigenous peoples to leadership positions within the company: “In the resource sector, having Indigenous individuals on your team and in the boardroom can be advantageous in terms of your relations with Indigenous communities” (p. 42). Organizations that have Indigenous peoples in leadership positions will make it more likely that young Indigenous talent and Indigenous-run businesses will want to work with those organizations. Further, Indigenous youth represent one of the fastest growing populations so it makes sense that FortisBC would want their organization to be welcoming to such a large talent pool of the future.

Conclusion 3. FortisBC Should Seek Methods for Communicating Projects, Programs, and Agreements That are not Administratively and Financially Burdensome to Indigenous Communities as a Step Towards Building Respectful Relationships

Participants discussed the need to reduce administrative burdens on communities who want to participate in FortisBC programs. Particularly in the group conversation, participants discussed how Indigenous administrators often wear several hats and have several jobs, so to add additional work to that already heavy load is not an act of reconciliation. Organizations like FEI should examine all of their communications with Indigenous communities to ensure they are

tailored to the community and delivered in a way that does not add burden to the community. Further, FEI employees should be regularly collecting feedback from communities on their processes and style of communication so that changes can be made along the way.

Another aspect of not creating a financial burden for a community is understanding that many communities have thousands of requests sent to them by the government and other organizations as part of consultations. In many cases, communities may not have lawyers or engineers on staff to review the various documents they receive, so then they have to hire contractors to interpret the paperwork. This often ends up diverting money from the community to hire professionals who are usually non-Indigenous. Organizations like FEI can offer funding support to communities, so they do not have to use their own resources to review documents for projects proposed by outside organizations.

In addition, organizations also often put undue pressure on Indigenous communities by remaining loyal to a set project timeline rather than the relationship: “Timelines are thorny issues in Indigenous communities. At present, almost everyone who goes to a community to do business comes with a timeline” (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 90). Placing this kind of pressure on communities will cause stress to the relationship and may cause the organization to overlook risk to the community and the environment. Organizations need to think about the community’s needs and pace, so that they can better align their needs with those of the communities.

Conclusion 4. FortisBC Can Work to Build Respect with Indigenous Communities by Demonstrating an Understanding and Acceptance of Traditional Governance Structures

Organizations like FortisBC are composed of mostly non-Indigenous employees. As such, a greater effort needs to be made on the part of all employees to learn Indigenous history,

including the implications of the Indian Act (1876/1985) and the impacts of colonization.

Participants in my research also challenged settlers to go further and take the time and energy required to understand Indigenous ways of knowing and building relationship. As one Métis participant so eloquently explained:

In my world, when we enter into relationships, the way we enter and how we approach it is about laying the building blocks of where we want to go, through honesty and integrity. Relationships are the foundation for which most things are conducted. It's the foundation for which we build friendships and business; it's the framework that we use.

(IP-6)

Further, employees need to understand that the *Indian Act* (1876/1985) and other federal policies have tried to erase Indigenous governance. In cases where these Canadian governance structures have been enforced, it has resulted in the breakdown of traditional communal culture, governance, and destructive class divisions within Indigenous communities (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 20). However, many Indigenous communities are experiencing growth and reclamation through community-led resurgence of their language, culture, and tradition. It is important that FortisBC, as a colonial structure, is aware of these realities so the organization can avoid making the same mistakes the government has made in not respecting and consulting traditional governance structures. Mutually beneficial relationships can only be built with Indigenous communities if there is an acknowledgement and respect for each community's unique knowledge, culture, and governance.

Limitations of Inquiry

This action research study was designed to respond to the needs of an organization, FortisBC. Therefore, the study is embedded into the organizational context, and there is no claim

that the findings, conclusions, or recommendations would be relevant to groups outside of FortisBC.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to generate data from one-to-one interactions. Participants were purposefully selected based on their interest in the study and their experience in building relationships with Indigenous peoples. The second data collection method, the group phone call, was designed to dig deeper into larger systemic elements that may create barriers to building personal relationships. However, due to the impacts of COVID-19, the group size was smaller than anticipated, including only three participants instead of the five participants who responded “yes” to participating.

One of the limitations to qualitative research using purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) is because participants were selected for a particular reason; in this case, their interest in truth and reconciliation and/or building relationships with Indigenous communities, the research may be expecting participants to share specific viewpoints. Therefore, as a researcher, having pre-conceived notions about what participants will say presented a risk to the research process. I mitigated this risk by developing a member-checking process, where I ensured that participants had an opportunity to review their interview transcript and consider whether their words, as I had captured them, reflected their intended meaning. An additional part of the member checking process involved sharing the preliminary study findings with all participants, with the request that they respond if they felt the findings were lacking in significant content.

The study was also limited by the fact that I am not Indigenous and, therefore, lacked a personal understanding of Indigenous worldviews, such as the idea that all life forms are interconnected (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 26). Indeed, I was educated in a Western system

that centres the individual human as the basic building block of society (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 51).

I took several steps to try to mitigate this limitation. During data analysis, I engaged with an inquiry team member who is Indigenous and grew up in a First Nations community. This was helpful because unlike me, the inquiry team member was able to review data through an Indigenous lens. However, it was still limited by the fact that her culture was not the same as the culture of the Indigenous participants, nor could one Indigenous individual be expected to represent the views and analyses of a larger group. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the notion that there is a unified Indigenous identity or perspective is itself an outgrowth of colonial beliefs.

In general, the limitations of this study do not prevent it from being viewed as trustworthy, as the research procedures were clearly defined and open to scrutiny, there is substantial evidence that the procedures described took place as outlined, and the study shows plausibility and integrity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, Stringer (2007) wrote about the need to describe the context and activities of the research with clarity so that observers can determine the study limitations as well as its potential value. By providing insight into my study context and activities, I hope to support FortisBC by providing research and information that will help inform transformational changes within the organization.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I summarized the research findings and study conclusions. As well, I noted my inquiry limitations so that my audience could better frame my research and my role as researcher. The findings included in this chapter explored some key themes for non-Indigenous people who are working towards building mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples, and those themes included: humility, transparency, and accountability, genuine interest

in others, and taking the time to learn through in-person experiences. The conclusions I discussed in illuminated the importance of FortisBC leadership and employees to demonstrate open communication with Indigenous peoples as well as a commitment to education when it comes to Indigenous governances, cultures, and ways of knowing. In the next chapter, I will review the study recommendations, examine the organizational implications of my research, and provide implications for future inquiry.

Chapter Five: Organizational Implications, Study Recommendations, and Implications for Future Inquiry

In this chapter, I present the recommendations resulting from the research findings and conclusions. I will explore the organizational implications of my research. With respect to the implications of my research for FEI, I explored the ways in which truth and reconciliation could be achieved through transformative cultural change. I provide a link between the kind of organizational change that would need to occur and my specific study recommendations. Finally, I will speak to implications for future study, as this research process is meant to be a catalyst for continued evolution and organizational growth in the area of truth and reconciliation.

Study Recommendations

My recommendations are influenced primarily by the study findings generated from the insights participants shared in response to my inquiry questions: “How can FEI employees take action to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia?” These recommendations are also supported by the literature discussed in chapter two from Indigenous scholars. In order for these recommendations to result in ongoing and meaningful change, I suggest they become part of corporate policy.

The recommendations that follow reflect my research findings and support the idea that for truth and reconciliation to be transformative, non-Indigenous people have to enter into relationships of mutual learning and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, as per their laws and ways of knowing and being, which are connected to their traditional territories (Asch et al., 2018, p. 167). My intention was for these recommendations to represent an organizational shift from the way business is currently conducted to a future state where Indigenous governance, laws, and ways of knowing are woven throughout the organization’s layers.

I do not provide these recommendations to disparage FEI or overlook the efforts made by employees who are committed to truth and reconciliation. On the contrary, it was a group of FEI employees and their commitment to improving relationships with Indigenous peoples that convinced me it was possible to research truth and reconciliation in the context of a public utility. The intention of these recommendations is that FortisBC adapt them into corporate policy.

Five recommendations are put forward as a result of this research:

1. Revisit FortisBC's Statement of Indigenous Principles.
2. Ongoing, organizational-wide dialogue around truth and reconciliation and Indigenization.
3. Deliver Indigenous-specific cultural safety and humility training to all FEI employees.
4. Encourage FEI employees to learn through in-person interactions with Indigenous peoples, when appropriate opportunities arise.
5. Increase transparency with all FEI communications that impact Indigenous communities and the traditional lands of First Nations peoples.

Recommendation 1. Revisit FortisBC's Statement of Indigenous Principles

From an Indigenous worldview, our work is never separate from the context in which it exists. Our work as FEI employees is always in relationship with other living beings who share time and space with us. Put more simply, an awareness of context is central to Indigenous relations and relational accountability and as the context in which we work changes over time, so too should the documents we use to guide how we build relationships with Indigenous communities.

FEI (n.d.-b) created their *Statement of Indigenous Principles* 20 years ago and has been guided by the same principles ever since. The principles offer a framework for FEI employees with respect to Indigenous relations. The first point of the document states: “FortisBC companies acknowledge respect and understand that Indigenous peoples have unique histories, cultures, protocols, values, beliefs and governments” (para. 3). This point is as important today as it was when it was initially written and even more so given current events. However, the impact of the principles may be strengthened if employees have a real opportunity to engage with Indigenous peoples on an ongoing basis. This review process of the principles would also reflect the evolving nature of the FortisBC–Indigenous communities’ relationship.

In order for FortisBC to engage in relational accountability and ensure that the principles reflect the context in which they exist, I recommend that FortisBC invite Indigenous communities to provide input into the document and to ethically consider their inclusion by appointing an equal number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous members in the re-writing. This recommendation was supported by several participants (GP-6, IP-5, IP-1), who noted that FortisBC should be in ongoing conversation with all of the Indigenous communities they serve. As FortisBC provides service to the traditional territories of many First Nations communities, it would be a demonstration of respect to offer members of those communities the opportunity to re-contextualize the document each year. That may also mean addressing multiple documents, as each community has its own unique culture.

Recommendation 2. Support Ongoing, Organizational-Wide Dialogue Around Truth and Reconciliation

Implementing ongoing dialogue on truth and reconciliation is an idea that came from my FEI research partner. Much like safety moments, my partner had brought forth the idea of truth

and reconciliation moments within her team. My suggestion in this case is that the exercise begin with a reflective moment and ends with a commitment to action. My suggestion is that employees take turns at the start of the meeting, sharing reflective moments and at the end of the meeting, the team makes a commitment to action. This commitment ensures that people are not just thinking and taking in information but also actively furthering their own education so that they can actively resist colonization and racism in everyday life.

One example that my partner brought forward to her team was the arrest of an Indigenous man who was trying to set up a bank account for his 12-year-old granddaughter at a BMO bank in Vancouver in December of 2019. The two were handcuffed on suspicion of fraud, even though there was no evidence found at the time or afterwards. By bringing up this example, my partner gave her colleagues an opportunity to think about how the grandfather and granddaughter were treated and consider how likely it is that non-Indigenous people would have been treated the same way. These moments create a space to have dialogue on challenging issues such as colonization and systemic racism and can be a catalyst for deep employee reflection and exploration of how systemic injustices can play out in our regular lives. It is important to mention that Indigenous peoples have never been afforded a safe public space to discuss the harmful impacts of colonization. When Indigenous peoples have spoken to the public media or held protests, they are generally physical and verbal abuse and racism. For example, in 2015 in an article called *Uncivil: dialogue Commenting and stories about Indigenous people*, the Brodie Fenlon of CBC announced that it would be turning off comments on stories related to Indigenous peoples and issues. The reason provided was as follows:

We've noticed over many months that these stories draw a disproportionate number of comments that cross the line and violate our guidelines. Some of the violations are

obvious, some not so obvious; some comments are clearly hateful and vitriolic, some are simply ignorant. And some appear to be hate disguised as ignorance (i.e., racist sentiments expressed in benign language). (www.cbc.ca, November 30).

The intent of this recommendation is to ensure that FEI stand in truth and do not avoid it because there cannot be reconciliation without truth. Dialogue is also an opportunity for FEI employees to reflect on their own actions and thoughts to see whether they parallel those attitudes that were used to design a colonial system which harms Indigenous peoples or whether their thoughts and actions seek to change the system. This kind of dialogue is likely to make most many non-Indigenous employees uncomfortable, which is why it must be part of corporate policy. If it is not part of policy, many employees will consciously or unconsciously want to avoid that which makes them uncomfortable. Further, leaders should create scheduled reporting periods where they communicate with their employees, any policy changes related to truth and reconciliation and how the company is doing with respect to those changes.

Recommendation 3: Deliver Indigenous-Specific Cultural Safety and Humility Training to all FEI Employees.

The importance of humility came forth as a theme in my research as a critical determiner for non-Indigenous people working to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples. Humility requires an open state of mind and a willingness to accept the idea that someone else's opinion may be as valuable, even more valuable, than one's own.

In the context of colonization, humility is essential for settlers who want to participate in truth and reconciliation and build mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples. Throughout most of Canadian history, White settlers as a social group have acted in a way that is violent and oppressive because settlers have believed they knew what was best for Indigenous

peoples. Non-Indigenous people can demonstrate respect for Indigenous peoples by practicing humility and deep listening.

There are several organizations in Canada and BC that provide cultural safety and humility training, free webinars, and education modules. In BC, one of those organizations is the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). FNHA (n.d.) has defined cultural safety as: “an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care” (Slide 2). While the organization works in health care and wellness, FNHA provides training for non-healthcare organizations as well. Further, FNHA defines cultural humility as a self-reflection process to understand personal and systemic biases and develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves “humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when understanding another’s experience” (Slide 2). This training could enhance the potential for FEI leadership to build mutually respectful relationships with leaders in First Nations communities. Training should not be limited to Cultural Safety and Humility, for example, the University of Alberta and Faculty of Native studies offers a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) 12 lesson Indigenous Canada program that anyone can take. For employees who demonstrate a lack of understanding surrounding historical and critical perspective highlighting national and local Indigenous-settler relations, this course would be a good fit. Moreover, leaders need to be monitoring their team’s level of knowledge and awareness when it comes to these topics.

Recommendation 4: Encourage FEI Employees to Listen and Learn Through In-Person Interactions with Indigenous Peoples, when Appropriate Opportunities Arise.

Several participants noted that learning through the experience of interaction with Indigenous peoples is key (IP-1, IP-3, IP-5). While in most cases because of COVID-19, it is not possible at this time to have safe, in-person communication across communities, there will be a time again in the future when it is possible.

From an Indigenous worldview, being together in person is part of relational accountability. One of the things that I learned from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the ongoing process is that there is much we, as Canadians, have misunderstood about the Indigenous cultures that have existed on the land we call Canada, since time immemorial. Our misunderstanding was, in part, due to our inability to put our own agendas aside and listen with genuine curiosity and interest. We can improve our awareness and understanding by listening and learning from people.

Community events that are open to the public are a great opportunity for non-Indigenous people to listen and learn. For example, participants in this research process provided many examples of events they had participated in that would be appropriate for other employees to attend including: art and craft fairs, powwows, sporting events and tournaments, speaking engagements at community centres and food festivals. There are also times when urban and on-reserve communities put out open calls for volunteers. These events also provide an opportunity for FEI employees to support activities that are important to the community and practise reconciliation on a personal level (B. Joseph & C. Joseph, 2019, p. 152). Because these interactions are not necessarily business focused, they present FEI employees an opportunity to develop personal connections. As one participant noted, “Visit with someone long enough and

they will tell you their challenges but you are not going to know unless you sit down and talk to people” (IP-1). When it comes to relationship building, learning by doing is the best way for non-Indigenous people to broaden their understanding of Indigenous cultures, governance and ways of knowing. It is important to note that White Settlers should be aware of the White Saviour attitude that is part of our colonial Canadian history. Many white government officials, nuns, priests, missionaries, teachers, nurses and volunteers have at tried to ‘help’ or ‘save’ Indigenous peoples because they believed they needed saving. Given the many examples of this occurring, residential schools being just one example, myself and other White settlers need to continually remind ourselves that ‘doing’ in the context of truth and reconciliation, really means listening, learning, and being genuinely interested when we are invited to Indigenous communities and events.

Recommendation 5: Increase Transparency with All FEI Communications That Impact Indigenous Communities and The Traditional Lands of First Nations Peoples

Participants described transparency and openness as key to building trust with Indigenous peoples. Transparency is also a sign of respect because the party demonstrating transparency is telling the other that they are not trying to take advantage of the relationship or gain an upper hand.

To reflect on the importance of transparency, it is important to look at Canadian history. In the early international treaties with Indigenous peoples, Canada did not always come to the table in good faith, and many of those treaties that were made, and still exist, have since been broken several times by the federal government. As I covered earlier in this thesis, when Canadian governments engaged in modern treaty making, they have required Indigenous peoples to cede and surrender land. As a dominant group comprised of individuals advancing their own

interests, Canadians as a collective have not been honourable or trustworthy in their dealings with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Transparency is essential because non-Indigenous people have a history of taking without asking about their relationship with Indigenous peoples. Non-Indigenous people take resources and use lands most often without the permission of Indigenous peoples. FEI operates in this colonial context, and because it is an energy provider, everything FEI does as an organization impacts Indigenous peoples and First Nations lands. The word impact is not a strong enough concept to describe digging trenches and laying pipes through traditional territories. When these communities occur without their full consent, it is extraction, and it is harmful. Even if it has never developed infrastructure on traditional lands without the full consent of all affected communities, many in the energy utility and oil and gas industry have. That means FEI has to work even harder to build trust and understand why. FEI is part of a more extensive colonial system that has never given First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples the benefit of complete transparency and respect. As one participant noted, “One of the foundations of trust is really about not delivering any surprises to the Chief or whoever else you are meeting in the community” (IP-1). As an organization, FEI leadership can work to create mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples through open and transparent communication.

Organizational Implications

Throughout my entire research journey, my partner, Tanya Laing Gahr, has been highly present, responsive to, and supportive of my work exploring truth and reconciliation in the context of a public utility. Tanya has been a bridge and conduit between my work and senior levels of leadership within FEI. I met with Tanya several times to discuss the study findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and we had several conversations envisioning what

transformative cultural change would look like at FortisBC with respect to how non-Indigenous people understand or relate to colonization and truth and reconciliation. We wondered together what that future state of our organization could look like. While there may be some people within any organization that are committed to change, most will likely lose interest in changing how they do business, unless they are mandated to do so. This is why it would be best for my recommendations to inform corporate policy change.

While I was writing my thesis, Tanya was leading the development of a comprehensive FortisBC employee Indigenous reference document. Among other things, it provides explanations and references to Canadian history and colonization, federal policies, key definitions and terminologies, and historical context with respect to traditional lands, land ownership, and crown land. The document also speaks to Indigenous worldviews, Indigenous governance, and ways of knowing. I was honoured when I was invited to review the document while in the draft phase. I am unsure what my future involvement on Indigenous initiatives will be once my thesis is complete, as I will be leaving the organization. I hope my research and recommendations will help inform corporate policy changes that will support transformative change. Much like with the federal government, in order for truth and reconciliation to become a reality in organizations like FortisBC, policy changes are required.

I know the kind of transformative cultural change I have referenced in this thesis is possible at FEI because I have seen it happen. A few years ago, FEI made an organizational-wide commitment to safety and wellness. When this commitment was initially made, many employees, including me, were skeptical whether there was genuine concern and intention. One of the earliest elements of change that I can remember was the introduction of “Safety moments.” These moments are opportunities for employees to share their experiences around

safety and wellness as a means of keeping safety top of mind. These moments are unstructured and unscripted, and everyone gets to participate. Individuals will often share an example of a near miss or an accident, then provide education, and build awareness about how that accident or situation could have been prevented. I have been present when our Vice Presidents and CEO have delivered personal and meaningful safety moments that involved losing someone they knew and the lessons they learned from that tragic event. By engaging everyone on a personal level with exercises like safety moments, over time, we achieved buy-in from most employees. Safety is a metric, and it is part of our corporate performance reviews. It has become part of our culture, in that we now know that it is just what we do.

I believe that with the same commitment and dedication to truth and reconciliation, FEI could achieve another transformative cultural shift. FEI employees know that if we make our commitment a daily practice, it will become our culture. We know that if we hold others accountable when we see that they are not prioritizing safety, we all benefit. The same principle applies with truth and reconciliation and building relationships that are more respectful with Indigenous communities. The implication of FEI not accepting the recommendations like those included is that they risk being another colonial organization that has made promises to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and but has failed to act on them. FEI knows how to make a transformative cultural shift, and much like with safety, it starts with leaders who set an example with their actions.

FEI leadership can demonstrate a commitment to truth and reconciliation by actively working to build relationships with Indigenous peoples and by sharing those experiences as well as the learning, reflection, and growth that comes with them. Personal relationship building at the leadership level is a key component in successfully implementing the recommendations from this

study, which are designed to support transformative change. There also needs to be an acknowledgement of two important points: (a) Mutually respectful relationships and relational accountability are the foundation to working with Indigenous communities, and (b) Truth and reconciliation cannot be both transformative and assimilative. One of the study participants, who is Métis, explained it this way:

In my world, when we enter into relationships, and the way we enter and how we approach it, is about laying the building blocks of where we want to go through honesty and integrity. Relationships are the foundation for which most things are conducted. It's the foundation for which we build friendships and business, and it's the framework that we use. (IP-6)

Successful implementation of the recommendations provided in this chapter will be optimized if FEI can shift the way business is done currently to a model that is accepted by Indigenous peoples, based on relationships as framed by their own unique culture, laws, and methods of knowing. This is not to say that there are not already leaders at FEI who understand this: However, this concept has to be shared throughout the organization such that everyone can understand that Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are worth knowing. That awareness and respect will support transformative change.

Implications for Future Inquiry

Transformative reconciliation is a long and iterative process. There is no fixed endpoint, and because of this reality, FEI needs to turn to Indigenous peoples to evaluate how they are doing. The same applies to organizations. As such, I would encourage future inquiry that examines and promotes improving relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in a way that is guided by communities within those three groups. I hope that my thesis has made it

clear that context is a critical element of relationship building. This means that a regional and community-specific approach should be followed when non-Indigenous individuals build relationships with Indigenous peoples. Some research questions that may help generate awareness about how FEI is doing in its commitment to truth and reconciliation could be:

- How can truth and reconciliation to be a part of everything FEI does as an organization?
- How can FEI incorporate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governance and ways of knowing into its corporate policies and business operations?
- What does an inclusive FEI culture look like for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples?

Kimmerer (2013) reminded us about the moral covenant of reciprocity, which tells us to honour the responsibilities we have been given and be thankful and honour all that we have taken:

It is our turn now, long overdue. Let us hold a giveaway for Mother Earth, spread our blankets out for her and pile them high with gifts of our own making. Imagine the books, the paintings, the poems, the clever machines, the compassionate acts, the transcendent ideas, the perfect tools. The fierce defense of all that has been given. Gifts of mind, hands, heart, voice, and vision all offered up on behalf of the earth. Whatever our gift, we are called to give it and dance for the renewal of the world (e location 5684).

FortisBC leadership can look to Indigenous governance and ways of knowing to understand relational accountability to support improved relations with Indigenous peoples and all other humans, plants, and animals. FEI leaders can also engage in systems thinking as a way to focus on the interconnectedness of their organization with communities outside of their organization.

FortisBC is a large public utility, and its actions affect the larger context in which it exists. For example, Senge (2006) noted, “All organizations sit within larger systems—industries, communities, and larger living systems” (p. 342). Senge explained that while it seems illogical to think the well-being of a company can advance independently of the well-being of its industry, its society, and the natural systems, for a long time, businesses have taken these larger systems mostly for granted, but it is now increasingly evident that businesses, individually and collectively, influence these systems and that the consequences of that relationship are becoming significant (p. 342). Leadership among settlers in the context of truth and reconciliation is about continual learning and adaptation.

Thesis Summary

My thesis journey began with recalling my childhood memories and experiences learning about Indigenous culture and ways of knowing while living in rural BC. I described how some of my closest personal relationships continued to inspire my interest in learning more, and how as an adult, I was motivated by the residential school survivors. They participated in the truth and reconciliation process.

In 2015, when the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a, 2015c) reports were released, many Canadians were not familiar with the details of residential schools or Canada’s treatment of Indigenous peoples. Survivors shared their painful stories, and as a result, Canadians had an opportunity to hear firsthand how colonization has traumatized generations of people. The truths survivors shared as part of the TRC process are now being unearthed across Canada, discovering thousands of unmarked children’s graves beneath the residential school buildings.

As an employee of a large Canadian corporation, this research process has been my attempt to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015a) 92nd *Call to Action* and keep the conversation around truth and reconciliation going. This research process also reflects my journey and effort to respond to another *Call to Action*, one that comes from Anishinaabe scholar Aaron Mills:

I want you to pursue an understanding of the law of the Indigenous peoples whose territory you now call home as if not only your legitimacy but also your life depended on it, because for many Indigenous persons, it does. I want you to have no expectations of your government to do even a minute's worth of any of this for you; I want you to take up responsibility for our relationship personally (Mills, 2018, p. 22).

Reading the work of Indigenous scholars has changed the way I form ideas about change. Before this experience, I did not understand that every social movement or positive change in society begins with an understanding of relational accountability. I know now that if I want to support transformative reconciliation, my actions should reflect relational accountability with all people and the earth, plants, and animals. My awareness of the unique relational accountability I have with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, as they are the ones who cleared the trails, taught my ancestors the ways of survival, and continue to share knowledge and stories that help guide me.

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Appendix A: Email Invitation

Hello,

I am contacting you to present an opportunity to participate in my action oriented and engaged research project. I now have approval from Royals Roads University and my Capstone Partner (Tanya Laing Gahr) to proceed with my research.

Attached to this email, I have sent you:

- 1) A high level, one page overview of my entire research proposal and my main research inquiry questions.
- 2) The entire research proposal which I submitted and had approved Royal Roads University (for your reference).
- 3) A Consent letter to participate in a semi-structured interview, with myself (if you are interested in proceeding with the interview you will need to sign the consent form and return to me).

A few things to consider:

- Your participation is 100% voluntary
- If you agree to participate by signing the consent form and returning to me, you will have the option to remain anonymous throughout the research process. This means that no one, other than myself, would know that the data you generated in fact came from you. You will also have the option to have your name used in the research findings and published thesis or just be referenced as a “FortisBC employee.”
- Should you agree to participate in the semi-structured interview, I would send you the interview questions in advance, so that you would have time to prepare.
- The interview would be with me and it would be one hour long. I would need to audio record it so that I could transcribe the interview accurately, afterwards.
- The audio recording would not be shared with anyone.
- Once I have transcribed your interview, I would send the raw data back to you so that you could confirm what I transcribed is accurate.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind Regards,
Michelle Paquin

Appendix B: Introduction to the Research Project

Thesis Overview – sent to participants as an introduction to the research project

Casting a Stone in the Water: An Exploration of Truth and Reconciliation in the Context of a
Public Utility

The purpose of this project is to engage FortisBC in Truth and Reconciliation by inviting Indigenous communities and FortisBC employees to participate in an action-oriented research process. My inquiry questions focus on relationships, one of the central themes reflected in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 92nd Call-to-Action. The 92nd Call-to-Action addresses Canadian corporations and businesses by calling on them to: "Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic projects." As an action-oriented researcher, my goal is to support positive social change through a collaborative and engaged research process. Furthermore, I will be using an appreciative lens to explore my research inquiries.

Inquiry research question and interview questions

My main research inquiry focuses on which actions can FortisBC employees take to build or strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities. The questions asked during the data collection process will be closely related to that central question.

This research process is meant to be a collaborative research approach. Should you choose to participate in the semi-structured interview, you will be asked broad, open-ended questions that allow you to speak to your knowledge and experience with building relationships. Interviews will need to be completed by the end of March, 2020 and should you choose to sign the consent form, I will be contacting you to set up a time for our interview.

Kind regards,

Michelle Paquin

Appendix C: Consent Form for Semi Structured Interview

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the attached information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project and to have data you contribute used in the thesis and any other presentations, articles, or journals.

- I consent to audio recording of the interview, and to quotations and excerpts expressed by me through the semi-structured interview being included in this study, provided that my identity is not disclosed.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

- 1) What does the word relationship mean to you?
- 2) What makes a mutually beneficial relationship, in the context of Truth and Reconciliation and FortisBC?
- 3) How does relationship building differ with Indigenous communities compared to non-Indigenous communities or does it?
- 4) How would you describe a positive relationship that you have built with Indigenous community members and what made it positive?
- 5) What inspired you to work towards building mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples?
- 6) What have you learned about yourself in the process of building relationships with Indigenous community members?

Appendix E: Invitations for the Group Method

Good Afternoon,

I would like to invite you to participate in the final research method of my Capstone Project: Casting a Stone in the Water: An Exploration of Truth and Reconciliation in the Context of a Public Utility.

This group research method was supposed to take place in-person by way of a Talking Circle; however, this is no longer possible.

This call will be facilitated in a similar fashion in that, I will ask a question and each person will be given time to speak without being interrupted. The questions will be broad and open ended as they are meant to generate rich ideas and not constrict thoughts or ideas. The questions will be focus on engagement and relationship and the role they play in initializing larger systemic change.

The questions will be provided by this end of day today.

Should you agree to participate, you may confirm via email, rather than consent form given the COVID nature of work right now.

Thank you kindly,

Michelle Paquin

Appendix F: Questions for Group Discussion

1. What is your perspective on relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous People in Canada, in Canada, and in the context of FortisBC?
2. How can we make positive change with truth and reconciliation and improve relationships with Indigenous peoples when we know that Canadians continue to benefit from Indigenous peoples' dispossession from their traditional lands?
3. In the context of truth and reconciliation and FortisBC's role, if we look at Indigenous peoples as individuals belonging to unique cultures that have existed on these lands since time immemorial, how does that change the way we conceive capital projects and energy efficiency programs?
4. When considering the colonial structures, the federal government has placed on First Nations communities with the Indian Act and a chief and council system, what are our roles and responsibilities as an energy provider in communications with a community? Do we only recognize the band and council? Do we engage with hereditary chiefs as well? How does this affect our relationships and how we engage?