Reconciliation Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Reconciliation Journalism

Bradley Peppinck

My master's thesis project contributes a collaborative and critical understanding of Concordia University's Department of Journalism's obligation to amend their journalism curriculum to be in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action number 86, which states:

> We call upon Canadian journalism programs and media schools to require education for all students 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 ("We Are All Treaty People" 198).

Using a research-creation methodology to investigate the particulars of this imperative, I developed a speculative course syllabus that corresponds to the TRC Call to Action number 86. I conclude by arguing that Concordia University's efforts towards advancing reconciliation are incomplete without adopting a paradigmatic shift to the undergraduate journalism curriculum where students are offered equal access to education on the topic of Indigenous Journalism and to critiques of how newsroom practices, journalistic ethics, and media representations contribute to power inequalities.

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INTRODUCTION

Context

In 2016, responding to pressure from faculty and students, Concordia University launched the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group (IDLG) to lead the institution's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Principles for Reconciliation and Calls to Action (O'Connor, 2016). At the occasion of the IDLG's launch, Concordia University Provost Graham Carr unequivocally declared that the university's "response to the TRC is a priority" (Latimer, 2016). While Concordia University's efforts coincide with greater national efforts to address the current status of Indigenous and Settler relations, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the future success of reconciliation will be determined by the work of journalists and media organizations ("We Are All Treaty People" 194). The Commission makes the case that mainstream news media shapes public opinion, can foster outright hostility against Indigenous people, and could ultimately prevent meaningful reconciliation ("We Are All Treaty People" 196-197).

Changing the course of journalistic and media organizations will not be a straightforward task. Historically, mainstream Canadian news media has been a fundamental aspect of colonial processes and continues to contribute to the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people across the country (Anderson and Robertson 3). The TRC Final Report states that this contradiction can only be redressed by remaking journalism education ("We Are All Treaty People" 196-198). The TRC Call to Action number 86 explains that Canadian journalism programs and media schools must mandate curriculum that covers "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" ("We Are All Treaty People" 198).

At the time of writing, Concordia University's Department of Journalism has not yet formally declared a response to the TRC Call to Action number 86. I stress that this task is urgent and important not only because news media shapes public opinion, but it also impacts public policy debates, and adversely affects Indigenous well-being. Brian Gabriel, non-Indigenous journalism scholar and Chair of Concordia's Journalism Department when the Calls to Action were published,

told the CBC in 2017 that the department should implement TRC Call to Action number 86, saying "This is something we have talked about it. It's something we should do" (Baker III, (B) 2016).

Research Problematics and Methodology

This Master's Thesis project contributes a collaborative and critical understanding of Concordia's obligation to amend their journalism curriculum in order to truly prioritize reconciliation. Using a research-creation methodology to investigate the particulars of this imperative, I developed a speculative course syllabus as a proof of concept that corresponds to the TRC Call to Action number 86. To draft the skeletal shape of the syllabus, I enrolled in a graduate seminar at Concordia University's Centre for Teaching and Learning on *Teaching in Higher Education*. The seminar detailed how to shape an undergraduate course syllabus around cumulative learning objectives that are addressed through specific assessment strategies. After completing the seminar, I interviewed three experts to better understand the core constituents of a course that would help train the next generation of journalists to report on Indigenous stories from a place of Indigenous cultural safety. I first spoke with non-Indigenous journalist Marie Wilson, one of the former commissioners of the TRC, to learn more about the genesis of Call to Action number 86. I then interviewed Emilee Gilpin, a Michif journalist and a graduate of Concordia's Journalism Department. We spoke about her experience confronting the department's pedagogy and her current work as a journalist at the *National Observer*.

Throughout all the stages of my project, I continuously reached out to Dr. Dave Secko, non-Indigenous journalism scholar and current Chair of the Department of Journalism, with requests to discuss the current context of Concordia University's journalism education. Unfortunately, due to Secko's own logistical constraints over the span of eight months, we were unable to secure time to connect for a formal interview. However, in February 2019, I secured an interview with Concordia University's 2018 Journalist-in-Residence, Steve Bonspiel, a Mohawk journalist, educator, and the editor/publisher of the Kahnawake community newspaper, *The Eastern Door*. In our conversation, Bonspiel reflected on his experience working with the Journalism Department over several years, first by mentoring journalism interns at *The Eastern Door*, and most recently in his capacity as Concordia's Journalist-in-Residence where he led an experiential and investigative course in which undergraduate and graduate students collaborated to produce a news article about Mohawk language revitalization projects.

Theoretical Perspective

By way of introduction, a disclaimer on my position and theoretical approach to the project is in order: throughout this document, I use the term 'Indigenous' rather than 'Aboriginal' or the racist term 'Indian,' unless quoted or paraphrased in their original context. As described by Kanien'keha:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred, the term 'Aboriginal' emerges from the discourse of legal custodianship. As an alternative, Alfred explains that 'Indigenous' is situated within the context of ongoing colonial oppression and thus invokes a common struggle between different Indigenous peoples working against oppression and fighting for sovereignty at the local and international levels (*Heeding the Voices* 15-16; *Peace, Power, Righteousness* 83). Such naming conventions were an important practice in my project; one important and relevant example is how the Canadian mainstream media refer to the 78-day standoff between Mohawk protestors and the Canadian army as the 'Oka Crisis,' whereas community members use the description "the Resistance at Kanesatake" (Gilpin, 2018).

Naming conventions reflect the line of thought developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault that power is not static or possessed; rather, power is relational and immanent (786). According to Foucault, power resides on a continuum of struggle where certain actors are able to gain purchase in their resistance against oppression (788). Non-Indigenous critical geographer Joe Bryan develops an academic argument for using the term 'Indigenous' by borrowing Foucault's reasoning to argue that the term 'Indigeneity' is a conceptual category that is inscribed within international law to provide an affordance for the recognition of land rights (29). In his work, Bryan obliquely invokes both Edward Said's examination of how Indigenous People serve as an 'Other' and Bruno Latour's prompt that 'we were never really modern' to show that 'Indigeneity' is tied to an imagined past that existed prior to Western contact (25). Thus, articulations of Indigenous identity, unequal or not, are tied to an inhabitable land that represents an unbroken link to a pre-colonial past (29). While this type of academic argument offers one opportunity for advancing land claim rights, Bryan flatly states that decolonial naming conventions are a requisite for all critical scholarship (31).

I helmed this project from my position as a queer, Settler, and translocated-researcher currently studying and working at Concordia University, an institution located on unceded Indigenous territory on the Island of Tiohtiá:ke, or Montreal. No agreements or treaties transfer

title of this land from an Indigenous nation to a Settler body, and over the past few years, municipal authorities have started acknowledging that Settler Quebecois society occupies this territory without permission (see: Shingler, 2017; Richardson, 2019). The Concordia Indigenous Directions Leadership Group explains that the Kanien'kehá:ka "have a strong historic and ongoing presence in the territory with two communities bordering Montreal: Kahnawà:ke and Kanehsatá:ke" ("Territorial Acknowledgement," 2017). The Kanien'kehá:ka are thus recognized as the custodians of the "lands and waters that we share and enjoy today. Their stewardship is a model for how we must collectively respect our natural environment and community as a whole" (text adapted from "Territorial Acknowledgment" developed by the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group in 2017[1]).

A factor that complicates my identity is my mother's Métis ancestry. Through the course of this project, my mother and I started unpacking the historical processes of colonialism that complicate our family identity. Growing up in Northern Alberta, my mother was never told about her Indigenous heritage, and instead was always discouraged from "associating with 'Indians'." Recently, my mother has taken steps to investigate her mother's (my grandmother's) upbringing in central Saskatchewan, and this dialogue helped me understand the tension my mother experiences passing on her family heritage. Indigenous scholars Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehá:ka) and Jeff Corntassel (Tsalagi) assert that "*Being Indigenous* means thinking, speaking and acting with the conscious intent of regenerating one's indigeneity" (614, original emphasis). While I am not suggesting that my mother's Métis heritage positions me as an Indigenous person within this work, these conversations have led me to reflect upon the relationship between our own multiple identities and the roles we adopt in various fields and institutional settings (see: Bourdieu, 1990; Naidoo, 2014). Inspired by this realization, I have tried to approach the work of my thesis project with a reflexive attitude and to constantly re-question my assumptions and unconscious biases. As such, I believe it is important to note that I was afforded access to investigate the complex social processes that affect news media production and journalism education because I am continuously able to leverage my privilege as a straight-presenting, cisgendered white man.

My motivation for pursuing a project that investigates the role of journalism in reconciliation stems from the years I worked as an anti-oppression social worker, housing activist,

1 To read the entire territorial acknowledgement and learn more about why it was written this way, please visit https://www.concordia.ca/about/indigenous/territorial-acknowledgement.html.

and journalist in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of the region called Vancouver, which is located on the unceded Indigenous territories belonging to the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh), and Tsleil-Waututh (səlilʼwətaʔɬ) Nations (City of Vancouver 4). During those years, I worked alongside many resilient Indigenous women who navigate the daily reality of colonial violence that my project addresses. Even as I was there in a supporting role, their strength, emotional support, friendship, and guidance helped sustain me as I faced the everyday repercussions of working in harm reduction at the start of the Fentanyl Crisis (for more information regarding the early conditions of the Fentanyl Crisis in Vancouver, see: Thomson et al. 2017).

Working in harm reduction, the daily reality of my position was one where, on a near-weekly basis, I used the life-saving naloxone treatment to reverse fentanyl overdoses. In 2015, coinciding with what was mistakenly thought to be the height of the overdose crisis, the TRC Calls to Action were first published. As we now know, that historic moment was just the beginning of an ongoing crisis in which fentanyl-related overdoses have become a daily reality across the country, and in Vancouver in particular. At the time, it was obvious that the Fentanyl Crisis was disproportionately affecting marginalized people, and I personally witnessed indefensible racism by medical professionals working with and treating Indigenous people.

The disparity in health and social services between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is dialectical in nature: In the first instance, intergenerational traumas resultant of the residential school system are directly linked to health and social inequalities including unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance use, an increase in lateral violence, and higher levels of poverty (see: Evans-Campbell, 2008; Episkenew, 2009; Lavallee and Poole, 2010; Hartmann, et al. 2019). In the second instance, Indigenous people face harsh discrimination as a result of racist stereotypes, which adds to the stigma associated with seeking treatment for mental health and addictions (see: Adelson, 2005; Waldram et al. 2008; Allan & Smylie, 2015; Goodman et al. 2017). The concrete disparities in health and socio-economic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the first instance are thus reinforced and maintained by the stereotypes and conscious or unconscious biases towards Indigenous people which are propped up through mainstream news coverage.

Research Findings and Reflections

I spoke with editor/publisher Steve Bonspiel after revising the third draft of my speculative syllabus. In our conversation, Bonspiel disclosed that he is working with Concordia University's Department of Journalism to update their undergraduate curriculum with the addition of a full-year, 300 level course on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism.' At that time, in February 2019, Bonspiel was preparing a proposal for the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. From my perspective, Bonspiel's initiative corresponds perfectly with my research problematics and seems to resolve Concordia University's responsibility to implement the TRC Call to Action number 86.

I asked Bonspiel how I could help with his proposal and he encouraged me to leverage my research and my position to make the case for his proposal. Specifically, he said that his proposal "isn't a done deal" and suggested that I use my project to make a convincing argument for why Concordia must modify their undergraduate journalism curriculum to include a course on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism.' Therefore, my research-creation project acts as an intervention into the bureaucratic apparatus that Bonspiel's proposal faces. To elaborate and argue this perspective: in the first section of this written component of my thesis project, I discuss the context of the Call to Action number 86, I make the case for an intervention into journalism education, and finally I detail the ongoing transformations at Concordia University's Journalism Department. In the second section, I summarize my methodological strategy and the research that informed the production of my speculative syllabus including the interviews with Dr. Marie Wilson, Emilee Gilpin, and Steve Bonspiel.

I conclude that the long-term goal to incorporate structural changes to Concordia University's journalism curriculum must contend with the reality that this institution uses a self-preserving model that was built to support the superiority of Western epistemologies (see: Ahmed, 2012). As such, I argue that implementing Steve Bonspiel's full-year undergraduate course on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism' — without equal measures taken to address existing bias in the university's current journalism curriculum — would only be a partial step towards reconciliation at the university. My analysis stems from my belief that the burden to impart a critical perspective on Canada's ongoing history of colonialism to the next generation of journalists should not fall solely on the shoulders of Indigenous activists, scholars, and educators. Instead, I propose an

“ecology of knowledges” model that incorporates the teaching of both Indigenous and critical non-Indigenous journalism in a dynamic system where these knowledges overlap and interact to illuminate the way each contributes “a certain practice to overcome a certain ignorance” (Todorova 675-676; Santos 190). To that end, I believe that components of my speculative syllabus can be adapted to existing mandatory undergraduate journalism courses in order to support Bonspiel’s efforts. The final section of this written component of my thesis project includes possible future avenues for fully addressing the TRC Call to Action number 86 at Concordia University.

PART ONE: TRC Call to Action Number 86

The Indian Residential School System

The imperative to update Canadian journalism curriculum is underpinned by the powerful histories recorded and circulated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC was created in 2008 as one condition of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The largest class-action lawsuit in Canadian history, the Settlement represented approximately seventy thousand survivors of the Indian Residential School (IRS) System who were forcibly removed from their families and sent to church or state-run boarding schools. In addition to monetary reparations to survivors, the Settlement stipulated that the federal government fund a Truth and Reconciliation Commission tasked with recording the testimonies and impacts of the Indian Residential School System as well as teaching the mainstream Canadian public about the System's legacy (Regan 6). In this section, I present a brief history of the IRS System to illustrate the genesis of the TRC Call To Action number 86 regarding journalism education.

The Indian Residential School (IRS) System was one of Canada's explicit policies of cultural genocide in the Indian Act, aimed to assimilate Indigenous children into mainstream Canadian society 'for their own good' (Regan 7). While individual schools existed before Confederation, a formal network of church and state-run schools was enshrined in Canadian law with the passage of the Indian Act in 1876. The Indian Act was then amended in 1886 to authorize government agents to enforce mandatory attendance at residential schools for all "children of Indian blood under the age of sixteen years" ("Indian Act"). This meant that RCMP and other law enforcement agents were compelled to remove children from their families, typically by force, to be educated and housed in poorly maintained buildings where school policy mandated that children were punished for speaking their own languages or practicing their own cultural and spiritual traditions (Regan 6; "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 2). The schools were also enclaves of violence where children were routinely abused — physically, emotionally, and sexually — by the individuals entrusted with 'protecting' them (Regan 7). Countless children were killed at the schools "at the hands of vicious pedagogical authorities, including clergy" or died while running away to escape this violence (Anderson and Robertson 5; Macfarlane 94).

One component of the IRS System's cultural genocide was intended to enshrine the patriarchal, colonial norms of an emerging national identity. John A Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, stood before Parliament in 1883 and explained:

> When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. [...] Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men (qtd. in "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 2).

At these "industrial schools," Indigenous students were forced to adopt and practice 'modern' gendered roles: housework for girls and skilled trades for boys. The "institutionalized child labour" structure of the residential schools was also intended to keep salary costs low and helped justify the under-funding of amenities like adequate food and clothing ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 62, 80). The IRS System aimed to establish a vision of Canada's culturally homogenous and productive working-class identity, in which Indigenous people were rendered invisible (Marx 62; Lukács 87). Continuing to this day is a false public perception that Indigenous culture and identity are only to be encouraged on reserve lands (see: Edmonds, 2010).

Despite its long-term operation and genocidal motivation, the IRS System did not completely annihilate Indigenous ways of knowing and being, for a number of reasons, first and foremost being ongoing resistance. According to non-Indigenous historian Heather MacFarlane, students running away from the schools was a powerful manifestation of organized resistance (94). MacFarlane points to two notable examples: "in May 1953, all thirty-two boys attending a residential school in Saskatchewan ran away together [...], and in 1963, twelve children ran away together from a school in Fort Frances, Ontario" (94). The TRC Final Report also devotes several pages of testimonials to survivors of the IRS system who ran away from the schools where they were kept ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 119-121). Non-Indigenous historian John Milloy notes that children running away from the residential schools became so common that in 1971 "the federal government's Department of Indian Affairs suggested implementing survival training for the children attending residential schools" (287). The cruel irony of this missive is that apprehended children would face more extreme violence when returned to the schools (Talaga, 2019; "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 105-106).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Between 2008 and 2015, the TRC commissioners, Senator and Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair (Anishinaabe), non-Indigenous journalist Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilton Littlechild (Cree), toured Canada and spoke truth to the atrocities committed in the name of education over the span of seven generations ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 27). Survivor testimony described how the schools fuelled intergenerational damage and violence that in turn helped re/produce poverty, mental health and addiction issues, and strained family relations (Episkenew 8-10). The TRC officially concluded in 2015 and released 94 Calls to Action regarding reconciliation between Settler Canadians and Indigenous people, as well as an Executive Summary of the findings contained in a final, six-volume report.

In a 2015 study, non-Indigenous legal scholars Rosemary Nagy and Emily Gillespie critiqued the media coverage of the TRC hearings with specific attention devoted to the 2013 Quebec National Event held in Montreal (37-38). The TRC Final Report cites Nagy and Gillespie's analysis to demonstrate how mainstream news coverage cast the issue of reconciliation as a story of abuse, truth, and subsequent forgiveness while willfully ignoring the way Kanien'kehaka respondents "framed truth and reconciliation more expansively to include the need for societal change" ("We Are All Treaty People" 195). Meanwhile, analysis from Indigenous media scholar Kerstin Knopf shows that Aboriginal news media, such as APTN and local community news outlets, do not commit the same type of narrowcasting (89-91; see also Hafsteinsson, 2013). Despite significant media coverage of the TRC hearings and of various initiatives that symbolically endorse reconciliation, little action has been taken to implement the Calls to Action in the four years since the TRC concluded (see: Carreiro, 2018; Galloway, 2018; APTN News, 2018; CBC News, 2019).

Reckoning with Reconciliation

There is, at least ostensibly, both the political will and the cultural support for reconciliation, which gives pause to the lack of action on the TRC's Calls to Action. One theory of this continued inaction put forward by Dene-Yellowknives political theorist Glen Coulthard is that 'reconciliation' is sublimated through a "liberal politics of recognition" (Wylie 602). In his seminal 2014 book, *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard explains that a "politics of recognition"

requires Indigenous identity first be made commensurable with markers that are recognized by colonial institutions, which thereby precludes the transformative potential of reconciliation by presupposing a position of assimilation (3). Coulthard further argues that the structural logic of reconciliation operates from the top-down in order to advance Canadian political and economic interests while rejecting the possibility of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Ultimately, Coulthard concludes his impressive thesis by arguing in favour of decolonial work rather than reconciliation. He states that structural change starts with grassroots cultural projects that contribute to a critical Indigenous subjectivity, such as the example set by the Idle No More movement (Coulthard 151-179; Querengesser, 2013).

Coulthard is one of many scholars actively critiquing Canada's national reconciliation project. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, two non-Indigenous scholars of literature, point to recent short-term gestures like Prime Minister Stephen Harper's official apology to residential school survivors in 2008 as a ploy to erase a colonial history through a "culture of redress" (1-2). They explain that only a year later, at a G20 news conference in 2009, Harper proudly boasted that Canada does not have a colonial history and thereby confirmed suspicions that his formal apology was crafted solely for the sake of political expediency (20-21). Indigenous scholars Roland Chrisjohn (Onyota':Ka) and Tanya Wasacase (Cree and Saulteaux) push this argument further, stating that both Harper's disingenuous public apology and the TRC's Final Report "directly or indirectly impugn the testimony provided by Survivors" (229). Their critique anticipated our current context where four years after the conclusion of TRC hearings the testimonies and experiences of residential school survivors are seldom addressed or acknowledged and do not circulate in mainstream media. Métis educator and researcher Jo-Ann Episkenew suggests a psychological component of "efforts to redress" effectively shifts the burden away from Settler Canadians. Instead, Indigenous people are deemed responsible to self-manage their pain through mechanisms provided by the state (8-11, 73). The TRC's mandate and structure lent itself to this conniving reversal of blame because its very structure and policies prevented the Final Report from publically 'naming names' or bringing criminal proceedings against individuals who committed heinous offences (Brady 130; Henderson and Wakeham 12).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is actually the second attempt by the Canadian state to use a national inquiry as a mechanism to redress an ongoing history of colonial violence. The first such attempt, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP), was announced in

April 1991 by Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney following the sensational media coverage in the summer of 1990 of the armed suppression of Mohawk protesters at Kanehsatá:ke (Hughes 105; Wakeham 14-15). The RCAP operated as a top-down administrative project mandated to develop legal and policy changes at a time when political tension was high regarding the status of Indigenous people and communities (Wakeham 14). Over five years, the RCAP Commissioners and staff toured the country, produced a glut of material, and published a block of recommendations — which was never implemented (Hughes 117). The RCAP did little to ameliorate the living conditions of Indigenous people or communities and is considered by all involved "a wholesale failure" (Hughes 121, 117). Responding to these critiques and in an effort to address and contextualize the ongoing failure of top-down administrative projects, like Coulthard, I suggest reorienting scholarly attention to contemporary grassroots political actions.

"Nothing about us without us"

Tracey Morrison, late Ojibwe activist and community leader in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, offers an alternative approach to reconciliation with a call to action based on her own experience bearing witness to what she poetically referred to as the daily "song of sirens that ring in my neighbourhood" which represent the possibility of yet another person losing their life due to the "emergency crisis of overdoses and death [that] has taken its toll here" (7). Morrison's call to action is part of a 2017 essay titled "Sad Siren Song's Call to Action," published as the forward in a municipal report on Aboriginal Health in Vancouver. She declares that the only way to tackle the overdose crisis is if everyone — "all organizations and their varying levels of stakeholders, directors, colleagues, and friends [...] right on through across Canada" — rally together "to create positive changes in the here and now" (7). Calling out top-down administrative bodies (not unlike the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), Morrison flatly declares that legal and policy changes are nothing more than "a pipe-dream" and instead we must concentrate our efforts on fighting the stigma against marginalized people (7).

Morrison passed away only weeks after her call to action was published; her death greatly impacted the community, myself included. Reflecting on Morrison's legacy, good friend and colleague Karen Ward shared a memory of Morrison as a tireless activist, effective communicator, and expert organizer, explaining that Morrison's priority was the same year after year: "Nothing about us without us" (qtd. in Lupick, 2017). Jean Swanson, non-Indigenous municipal politician

and recipient of the Order of Canada, explained that when Morrison introduced herself by saying, "I am an Indigenous woman and I am poor and I am a drug user," that she was positioning "her very existence as a challenge to prejudices and inequalities that remain inherent in society and the status quo" (qtd. in Lupick, 2017). According to Swanson, Morrison's legacy teaches that "if we can stop discriminating against people, we will eliminate the rationale for government inequality" (qtd. in Lupick, 2017). Ultimately, Morrison's call to action is about grassroots efforts to address false narratives and stigma, achieved by valuing and prioritizing Indigenous expertise in all research and policy matters relating to Indigenous people and communities.

The TRC Final Report acknowledges these important critiques and states that the current relationship "between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is not a mutually respectful one" and continues to wreak havoc in the lives of Indigenous people (6-7). The Commission belabours the point that there is no single, unified understanding of reconciliation and that "Aboriginal peoples and the Crown have very different and conflicting views on what reconciliation is and how it is best achieved" (25). Instead, the Commission offers its understanding that reconciliation is "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (16). Here, the Commission's reconciliation discourse resembles the decolonial writing from Martinican theorist Frantz Fanon. In his 1963 work *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon explains that the complex nature of structural change requires a "program of complete disorder" (36). And, according to Fanon, historical processes like decolonization cannot be understood and cannot become intelligible "to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content" (36).

The TRC Final Report similarly focuses on a historical investigation of colonialism with much of this attention devoted to the way education must play a role in reconciliation that goes beyond just building and maintaining respectful relationships. The Commission states that students must learn the "honest" colonial history of Canada, "including what happened in the residential schools" ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 21). Out of the total 94 Calls to Action, the Commission outlines sixteen specific contexts relating to education and addresses primary, secondary, and tertiary students. My project focuses specifically on the Call to Action number 86, which states that Canadian media and journalism schools must require education for their students on the legacy of residential schools ("We Are All Treaty People" 194).

Journalism Shapes Public Opinion

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission addresses media and journalism education because "media outlets and journalists will greatly influence whether or not reconciliation ultimately transforms the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples" ("We Are All Treaty People" 194). The Final Report affirms that mainstream media must ensure that coverage of "Aboriginal issues" is fair and non-discriminatory ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 341). Furthermore, the Commission argues that the media's responsibility is for "journalists to be well informed about the history of Aboriginal peoples and the issues that affect their lives" (344). In total, three Calls to Action regarding journalism and media are included in the TRC final report: number 84 calls for increased funding to the CBC to support reconciliation, number 85 calls on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network to support reconciliation, and number 86 specifically addresses journalism and media education (342-345).

The Commission explicates the merits of these three Calls to Action by highlighting the immense power of national news coverage in defining public opinion, instigating hatred, and fuelling division (343). To develop this argument, the TRC Report explains that mainstream news coverage was complicit at the very beginning of Canadian nationhood and supported Canada's explicit policies of cultural genocide in the Indian Act ("We Are All Treaty People" 193). The Commission cites historians Mark Anderson and Carmen Robertson's seminal 2011 book, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers,* to illustrate the insidious ways that colonialism continues to pervade mainstream news coverage. The judicious book from Anderson, a Settler scholar at the University of Regina, and Robertson, a Lakota/Scottish scholar at Carleton University, critically surveys almost 150 years of mainstream newspaper coverage of Indigenous events and topics beginning with the Rupert's Land Purchase in 1869, to the Klondike Gold Rush, through to the Resistance at Kanehsatá:ke (mislabeled as the 'Oka Crisis'), and finally to the activist beginnings of the Idle No More movement across the Prairies in the early aughts. Conjuring non-Indigenous Canadian Communication Studies titans Marshall McLuhan and Harold Innis, Anderson and Robertson argue that in Canada, the newspaper is a communications technology deployed to implement a national consciousness of a modern polity tasked with managing 'the Aboriginal problem' (14). In the following pages, I use the book *Seeing Red* to argue that mainstream news media plays an important, agenda-setting role in society and will, left unchecked,

prevent meaningful reconciliation. In part two of this written component of my thesis, I return to *Seeing Red* and make the case for its inclusion as a mandatory component of all Canadian journalism education.

Anderson and Robertson launch their study on the basis that the Canadian nation-state emerged in the mid-19th century as an *imagined community* and achieved social order through the circulation of newspapers. The term *imagined community,* coined by Irish political scientist Benedict Anderson in the 1983 book of the same name, refers to an era of "print-capitalism" that contributed to the sociological process of nation-building (43-46). Anderson argues that the easy dissemination of cheap newspapers, using vernacular languages, afforded common access to knowledge that was not controlled by the monarchy or the Church. By addressing labourers and capitalists alike, newspapers identified and then generalized a new type of identity of public citizenship (39-40). As such, Anderson argues that newspaper circulation lent support to the historical rise of the modern nation-state and gave political leaders an effective tool of administrative control that could deliver the same ideological perspective across dispersed populations (40).

Anderson and Robertson support the reasoning that newspapers bind a culturally diverse scattering of Settlers by highlighting the way stereotypes emerge organically (12, 47-57). Their argument approaches the thesis from Jamaican-born cultural theorist Stuart Hall who first explained how stereotypes inscribe a preferred meaning in the representation of news events (see: Hall, 1997). Instead, Anderson and Robertson's book addresses monolithic stereotypes that served to convince Settler Canadians that "Indigenous dysfunction" justified land dispossession and cultural genocide (Anderson and Robertson 8). For example, after the Red River Rebellion of 1869, a shipowner in the Maritimes, a nurse in Montreal, a banker in Ontario, a rancher on the prairies, and a gold miner on the Pacific North Coast all shared access to the same carefully crafted, ideological perspective on Métis leader Louis Riel's provisional government. The effect of this newspaper coverage was that the settlement of Red River became synonymous with the state-sanctioned lie that Roman Catholic "half-breeds" could "not even properly feed or clothe themselves" (33). They argue that this system of stereotypes justified the violent efforts to contain resistance and manage Indigenous bodies on behalf of enshrining the political supremacy of the Canadian state (Anderson and Robertson 38).

Aside from newsworthy events like the Red River Settlement, early newspaper coverage tended towards circulating stereotypes with the image of "drunken Aboriginals or reports of violence against Aboriginal women" which steered readers towards casually dismissing what they deemed to be 'Indigenous dysfunction' and to "elicit nothing more than tsk-tsks and knowing nods of the head" (Anderson and Robertson 8). Anderson and Robertson cite non-Indigenous anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss's analysis that these stereotypes manifested in a widespread "Canadian common sense" discourse that educated Settlers on how they should respond to Indigenous issues (5). These stereotypes were designed to educate the Canadian polity on how Indigenous People are a manageable burden once they are essentialized into three sets of characteristics: "depravity, innate inferiority, and a stubborn resistance to progress" (Anderson and Robertson 6).

The process of organically emerging stereotypes, which first helped circulate a narrative of Canadian nationhood, has not changed over the course of 150 years. Framing analysis from non-Indigenous social work professor Robert Harding, sweeping from early Canadian newspapers in the 1870s all the way to coverage in the early 2000s, finds that enduring racism is a common element in the portrayal of Indigenous people and issues. Harding's research concludes that the persistence of these news frames props up a settler-colonial ideology in order to entrench an understanding of Indigenous people as primitive, child-like, and inferior (209). A contemporary example of derogatory and racist news media stereotypes — especially relevant to my context at Concordia University in Québec — is the way mainstream newspapers labelled Mohawk protesters during the Resistance at Kanehsatá:ke as "violent thugs" or "terrorists," while benignly labelling the army and police as "law-enforcement authorities" (Anderson and Robertson 229, 221; for more comprehensive accounts of the media's role in the Resistance at Kanehsatá:ke, see: Skea, 1993; Obomsawin, 1993; Alfred, 1995 & 2009; Simpson, 2014).

Duncan McCue's Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities

The use of racist stereotypes to demonize and dehumanize Indigenous people throughout Canadian history is neither anecdotal nor merely academic. According to Duncan McCue, award-winning Anishinaabe journalist and educator, the issue of discriminatory news reporting practices emanates from the structure of Canadian mainstream newsrooms. McCue's analysis expertly captures the ethnographic conditions that organically re/produce racist stereotypes in mainstream

news reporting, explaining that journalists and editors are equally complicit: journalists narrowcast their stories to Settler audiences and as such leave out historical, explanatory context in their reports; meanwhile, editors choose to under-report on issues that Indigenous people face, or on their accomplishments, while they over-report on their perceived deficits, or on minor bylaw infractions ("Reconciling for the Future" 343-344; Indigenous Corporate Training, 2016). The Commission states that a more sinister element of newsroom politics is an editor or journalist's supposedly neutral position, which acts as a smokescreen to conceal the fact that their work replicates narrative frames that justify policies opposed to the goal of reconciliation ("We Are All Treaty People" 197-198).

McCue also highlights that because of the historic and ongoing misrepresentation of Indigenous people in the media, Indigenous storytellers do not "see a home for themselves in mainstream newsrooms" ("On TRC 86," 2015). This lack of representation in an era of reconciliation continues to exist because many of these workplaces are hostile and difficult places for non-Settler journalists. According to McCue, in order to encourage Indigenous journalists to bring their skills and perspectives to mainstream news organizations, the "newsroom need[s] to be a culturally safe place for those Aboriginal reporters to operate" ("On TRC 86," 2015). To this end, McCue affirms that ending the re/production of racist and discriminatory stereotypes and making space for Indigenous journalists in legacy media organizations starts with journalism programs adopting the TRC Call to Action number 86 ("On TRC 86," 2015; Indigenous Corporate Training, 2016). McCue defends the authority of the TRC, casting it as an analytical body comprised of experts that were deliberately delegated the problem of steering the national reconciliation project. Concentrating on training the next generation of journalists, McCue writes:

> The directors of the journalism schools in Canada need to stop paying lip service to diversity and Indigenous issues and start actually making this content a reality for journalism students in Canada, and if they don't, then we're doing a disservice to our students who are going to, inevitably, be reporting on First Nations issues if they're working in a Canadian newsroom. ("On TRC 86," 2015).

McCue personally took up this challenge long before the TRC concluded its work in 2015. In the context of the University of British Columbia, McCue developed and continues to teach a course for the Graduate School of Journalism called *Reporting in Indigenous Communities*[2]. Following its success, McCue was awarded Stanford University's Knight Fellowship in 2011 to convert the

[2] Check out the news articles produced by the 2018 class: indigenousreporting.com

course content into a website: riic.ca. As I detail in the second section of the written component of my thesis project, the exceptional material from McCue's *Reporting in Indigenous Communities* website structures much of my speculative course syllabus, and I argue that it should be included in all Canadian journalism curricula.

Reconciling Journalism Education

The current state of education on the history, culture, and status of Indigenous people and communities across Canada is dismal. A statistical study published in 2018 surveying first-year undergraduate students in Ontario universities found that almost 76% of the nearly 3000 respondents had no prior knowledge of Indigenous history, culture, and vitality (Schaefli, et al 695). More alarming, although perhaps not surprising, the researchers found "that nearly 90% do not understand the depth and breadth of systemic racism" (698). And yet, to the point of my efforts with this project, the same report concludes that the thoughts and prejudices of these students are radically altered after simply engaging, at a very basic level, with Indigenous perspectives and topics (718). Given its effectiveness in solidifying harmful depictions and stereotypes of Indigenous people, it should come as no surprise that education can also be effective in redressing some of this damage. But what is surprising, then, is the reluctance of Canadian universities, journalism programs in particular, to adopt curriculum in line with the TRC Calls to Action.

Recent pedagogical research from non-Indigenous education scholar Miglena Todorova, which examines the course catalogues of all top Canadian journalism programs, concludes that Canadian journalism education presents a hegemonic formation of "hierarchically ordered journalistic knowledges" (676). Todorova determines that the majority of Canadian journalism programs willfully omit courses, fieldwork opportunities, or co-op placements that are commensurate with Indigenous journalism practices or Indigenous epistemologies. While acknowledging notable exceptions like Duncan McCue's course at the University of British Columbia and that, in 2016, Concordia University advertised "four paid internships for emerging Indigenous reporters at Aboriginal People's [sic] Television Network (APTN) sponsored by the Journalists for Human Rights organization," Todorova argues that there is a monolithic structure to Canadian journalism education that perpetuates the social rift between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians (681, 676). The social justice education scholar concludes that the burden to redress "stereotyping, silencing, and oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada" falls

on journalism educators and departments (688). Todorova's empirical analysis from 2016 squares with other, more recent journalistic reports that investigated the same topic and similarly conclude that the majority of Canadian journalism programs have not yet implemented the TRC Call to Action number 86 (see: Millar, 2016; Gillmore, 2018; CBC News, 2019).

In my own research, I found multiple one-off examples of Journalism Departments inviting experts to guest lecture on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism.' However, despite these one-day conferences or brown-bag lunches with invited guest speakers, it appears that Canadian institutions of higher education frequently position themselves at the forefront of national efforts to advance the process of reconciliation without actually committing to structural changes. And while mainstream media continue to publish resoundingly positive stories about the efforts from universities to engage with 'reconciliation,' scholarly and Indigenous critiques of these initiatives are not so optimistic (see: Tuck and Yang, 2012; Gaudry and Lorenz, 2018).

Kanien'keha:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred, in an article from 2004, argues that trends to 'Indigenize the Academy' are inherently poised for failure because "the university is a battlefield" that is "adamantly and aggressively opposed to Indigenous ways" ("Warrior Scholarship" 92, 88). Alfred declares that the recent bureaucratic uptake and persistence of neoliberal funding models establish a hierarchy of knowledges in universities and prevents the possibility of creating space within the institution for the equal footing of Indigenous epistemologies (88). Similarly, British-Australian philosopher Sara Ahmed writes, in her powerful 2012 book *On Being Included,* about the contradictions of 'diversity' initiatives within the university. Ahmed argues that the institution operates with a self-preserving structure and has ingrained conventions and attitudes that remain obscured until attempts are made to change them. Her ethnographic analysis points out that recent efforts towards 'diversity' are convincingly shrouded efforts to 'include' non-white people in order to establish a closer governing relationship over their bodies where dissent and resistance are more easily controlled (163).

Alfred and Ahmed's critiques speak to contemporary, real-world problems. In one especially notable case in 2016 at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, tenured professor of Native Studies Roland Chrisjohn (Oneida) went on a six-week hunger strike to protest the administration's decision to hand over his course, titled *Social Work Research Methods,* to another professor after Chrisjohn refused to accept their intervention into his planned syllabus (Baker III, (A) 2016). According to news reports, the university violated Chrisjohn's academic

freedom “on racist grounds” by demanding that he modify his syllabus to include education on the various ways that social workers can circumvent culturally safe work practices and generalize their approach to working with Indigenous people despite the obvious diversity of their lived experiences (Debogorski, 2016; Baker III, (A) 2016). This example illustrates how practices of ‘inclusion,’ ‘diversity,’ and ‘indigenization’ at the university can resemble the paternalistic modus operandi of the Indian Residential School System where Indigenous children were ‘brought into’ the welcoming arms of the ‘superior’ Canadian nation-state.

My argument on this inherent contradiction in higher education is supported by a more recent cross-cultural analysis from 2018, where non-Indigenous education scholars Shana Almeida and Siseko H. Kumalo compare the process of ‘decolonizing’ universities in South Africa and Canada. Almeida and Kumalo assert that the goal of decolonizing Canadian universities re/produces colonial truths by ascribing to an “additive model” that seeks to supplement existing processes of knowledge production without critical changes taking place to the prevailing “white supremacist” modes of education (14). Deploying Foucault’s notion of discourse and relational/immanent power, they theorize that the discourse of decolonization invites resistance in order to more easily manage and contain its potential for change. They further proclaim that this discourse obscures the potential for change by promising the always alluring notion of “progress” (14). Almeida and Kumalo’s conclusion links the university’s promise of “progress” to a powerful ideology that negates historical and ongoing effects of colonization in Canada and South Africa, rendering spaces white-owned and operated by inviting and producing impotent positions of resistance through the discourse of decolonization (20). Their contemporary thesis mirrors Alfred’s critique from 2004 and Ahmed’s arguments from 2012 that the university is an institution structured to maintain the superiority of Western epistemologies, further evidenced by professor Chrisjohn's experience at St. Thomas University.

Towards an “Ecology of Knowledges”

The analysis from Alfred, Ahmed, and Almeida and Kumalo confirms that while well-intentioned, there is an issue with education in Canada where diversity, progress, and ‘Indigenization of the Academy’ cannot wholly resolve reconciliation between Indigenous people and communities and Settler Canadian society. According to pedagogy researcher Miglena Todorova, resolving the issue of bias in news reporting requires journalism curricula that

incorporates both Indigenous and critical non-Indigenous education. To accomplish this paradigmatic shift, Todorova suggests adopting an "ecology of knowledges" model where different knowledge systems can interact and overlap in a social and cultural habitat (675-676).

Conceived by Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the 'ecology of knowledges' model assumes that the various relations between different people or between people and nature produces multiple kinds of knowledge and multiple types of ignorances. The history of Western imperialism defines a characteristic of modern capitalist societies where discriminatory access to forms of scientific knowledge structures social inequality. However, Santos argues that a more equitable distribution of scientific knowledge will not resolve social and cognitive injustices, stating that "beyond the fact that such a distribution is impossible under the conditions of global capitalism, scientific knowledge has intrinsic limits concerning the kind of interventions it furthers in the real world" (189). Instead, the 'ecology of knowledges' model is premised on the incompleteness of all knowledges. According to Santos, "[w]hat each knowledge contributes to such a dialogue is the way in which it leads a certain practice to overcome a certain ignorance" (190). Todorova argues that adopting the "ecology of knowledges" model in Canadian journalism education entails "embracing the study of Indigenous communication systems, journalistic techniques, and approaches practised by Indigenous journalists" while also teaching "about how power, (neo)colonialism, capitalism, and hegemony shape the social context of journalism" (676).

I conclude that Concordia University's Department of Journalism has a responsibility to update their undergraduate curriculum because journalism education is not just imparting professional skills, but is also enshrining the superiority of modern, Eurocentric paradigms that originate in colonialism. As non-Indigenous legal scholars Roderick Macdonald and Thomas McMorrow state, decolonizing education means identifying the ongoing and insidious colonization of knowledge because "[o]ur sense of the future is always tributary to our ever-changing understandings of the past" (717). I believe that the goal of preparing journalists for the future requires teaching about the ongoing, daily impact of colonialism while also funding an expert like Steve Bonspiel to teach on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism.' Therefore I contend with Todorova's analysis that the only appropriate response requires two simultaneous initiatives: first, support for the development of Steve Bonspiel's proposal for an undergraduate course on the topic of Indigenous Journalism; second, update existing courses with critical education on the way mainstream news media contributes to Canada's ongoing legacy of colonialism. As Todorova

asserts, this "kind of inclusive and co-created education will foster journalists who are critical thinkers, intercultural experts, and fluid and flexible professionals" (688). I argue that these simultaneous initiatives contribute towards a vision of Canadian news media that communicates with highly diverse audiences while promoting intercultural understanding and camaraderie. In the following pages, I detail the current reconciliation efforts at Concordia University that open the possibilities for such structural change. From this context, I begin the second section of the written component of this thesis project by detailing how my research-creation methodology informed my research findings and analysis; that section culminates with notes on how my speculative course syllabus can be adapted to existing undergraduate curriculum.

Reconciliation at Concordia

With the launch of the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group (IDLG) in 2016, Concordia University is positioning itself at the forefront of national efforts to evoke progressive change by building and maintaining relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. However, the institution's history of engagement with Indigenous faculty, students, and pedagogy has not always been stellar. When he was hired in 2002, Jason Edward Lewis, digital media poet and professor of Computation Arts, was the only full-time Indigenous faculty member at Concordia University (Carolan, 2018). Fourteen years later, after the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, Lewis helped spark the creation of the IDLG by co-writing an open letter with eleven other faculty members and a representative of the First Peoples Studies Member Association that addressed Concordia University's responsibility to respond to 'Indigenous engagement' at the university (O'Connor, 2016). The letter also directly called on Concordia administrators to respond to the TRC Calls to Action that are "directed at educational institutions" (O'Connor, 2016). Their efforts were translated into a public petition that quickly garnered more than 600 signatures and the endorsement of the Concordia Student Union Council of Representatives, representing 35,000 undergraduate students (O'Connor, 2016).

Responding to the open letter, the widely successful petition, and the subsequent media coverage of these initiatives, Concordia University launched the IDLG in 2016. Soon after its launch, the IDLG appointed Kanien'kehá:ka pedagogy expert Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf to the position of curriculum consultant (Mignacca, 2018). Recently, Cree scholar William Lindsey was appointed as the director of the IDLG and will serve as the group's main spokesperson (Anhoury,

2018). In January 2019, Lindsey published his first text as Director of the IDLG and stated that he draws inspiration from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy as he approaches a mandate designed to advance structural change within an institution built with a self-preserving model (1-2). At the tail end of my project, on April 4, 2019, Concordia University launched the *Indigenous Directions Action Plan* and officially committed to take "concrete steps towards the decolonization and Indigenization of our institution," in order to "co-construct a new, shared future based on responsibility, reciprocity, and respect" (7). The Action Plan introduces 39 recommended actions that are grouped into six thematic sections and structured against a three-year timeline.

From the context of Concordia University's institutional change, the Department of Journalism is in an especially public state of flux. Facing the reality of a global crisis in journalism (see: Gasher et al. 2016), the Department is adapting to the 21st century with an updated program structure, strategic faculty hires, and an emphasis on digital media production (Lajoie, 2017). More recently, in March 2019, undergraduate students in the Department went on a week-long strike to protest the unfair structural practice of unpaid internships that they claim is propped up through mechanisms in the academy and media organizations (Carleton, 2019). Nonetheless, the Department recently began addressing its deficit of Indigenous faculty and course options. In November 2017, Dr. Dave Secko, non-Indigenous journalism scholar and Department Chair, stated that the Department is working to incorporate Indigenous reporting into the department's curriculum (Litwin, 2017). Starting in the winter of 2018, the Department invited Steve Bonspiel, editor of Kahnawake-based community newspaper *The Eastern Door*, to act as Concordia's Journalist-in-Residence. In his role, Bonspiel led a course that introduced students to the community of Kahnawake. Bonspiel stated that the direct, relational work was designed to help young journalists "dispel myths about Indigenous people and life on reservations that are widely circulated in mainstream media" (qtd. in Litwin, 2017). These comments mirror the conversation I had with Bonspiel about his proposal to update Concordia University's undergraduate journalism curriculum with the introduction of his full-year course on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism.'

Multiple stakeholders, myself included, are scrutinizing journalism education because the current crisis in journalism is not a chance occurrence — it is present because of long-standing structural contradictions. Elsewhere, I have argued that the crisis demands substantial policy responses at the federal level, but equally important is the imperative to prepare the next generation of journalists to manage accusations of 'fake news' while also reporting on intercultural issues to

an increasingly diverse Canadian population (see: Perry and Len-Ríos, 2016). In 2017, Emilee Gilpin, then a student in Concordia University's Journalism Department, hosted a series of workshops within the department and the university on decolonizing journalism. Now working as a journalist at the *National Observer,* Gilpin wrote about these workshops and detailed how she believes the department can do better to address an outdated Western dogma of objectivity while also teaching about Indigenous cultural safety (see: Gilpin, 2017). Her perspective informs much of my project and from the context of Gilpin's struggles with Concordia's journalism program, I began exploring how journalism education can contend with a response to the TRC Call to Action number 86. In the next section of this written component of my thesis project, I detail the methodological strategy that structured my research and informed the production of my speculative syllabus. Specifically, I offer a summary of how interviews with Marie Wilson, Emilee Gilpin, and Steve Bonspiel determined the core constituents of my speculative syllabus which ultimately produced the preceding analysis.

PART TWO: Reconciling Journalism Education

Research-Creation Methodology

My master's thesis project addresses the role of mainstream news media in the ongoing, national reconciliation project because of my first-hand experience witnessing the impact of journalism in shaping public opinion and policy decisions across the Lower Mainland in British Columbia. For three years during my undergrad, I was the News Director at *CiTR 101.9FM*, the University of British Columbia campus radio station. Later, while working on the front-lines of harm reduction, I contributed as a journalist and editor for a media collective called *The Mainlander*. I am therefore addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action number 86 regarding journalism education — alongside Tracey Morrison's companion call to action — within the context of my current position as a graduate student researcher in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University.

From the outset, this type of project necessitated a model designed to overcome obstacles. I anticipated that the two most challenging factors would be my limitations as a keenly naïve researcher and the immovable nature of bureaucracy. As such, I developed a research-creation methodology as part of a strategy to position my project as an investigation and intervention into institutional barriers in order to highlight the possible entries and affordances to make structural change within a bureaucratic system. My methodological strategy therefore centred on the production of a shareable document that gives contextual form to tacit knowledge about ongoing efforts to advance reconciliation at Concordia University. I drew inspiration for the design of my methodology from the history of research-creation thesis projects produced at Concordia University in the Department of Communication Studies that mix personal, reflexive research with media production. Much of this research-creation work is directly supported by the seminal, genealogical article, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances'" by non-Indigenous media scholars Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk. The research-creation methodology, according to Chapman and Sawchuk, helps "reveal different contexts and methods for cultural analysis" because research-creation practitioners are investigating their own subjective experience in a project's production (11-12).

Chapman and Sawchuk address and interpret subjective research practices by engaging non-Indigenous sociologist Laurel Richardson's scholarship on the topic of evocative, personal

academic writing (10, 18). Richardson writes that knowing and writing ‘about’ subject(s) is a process “intertwined with partial, historical, local knowledges” which necessarily originates with a knowledge of the self (89). Richardson also offers that this perspective frees the researcher “from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone” (89). I found that situating my project from my own subjective goal to advance structural change proved fruitful and reassuring because, throughout my project, I agonized over the design of a research strategy that would adequately represent the spirit of Tracey Morrison's *Sad Siren Song’s Call to Action* from 2017. Assembling my project through the development of a speculative syllabus, informed by scholarly research and interviews with subject matter experts, thus allowed me to centre and concentrate my work around Morrison’s call to action in the name of opened possibilities and collaboration. Prioritizing my subjective research also helped justify my decision to focus almost exclusively on responding to Steve Bonspiel’s recommendation — which necessitated cutting long, complex sections from this written component of my thesis that addressed relevant and important topics like the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the ongoing National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.

The research-creation methodology also squares with recent scholarship from renowned education scholar Margaret Kovach, who is of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry and a member of Pasqua First Nation. Kovach notes that self-reflexive methodologies avoid the type of normative thinking that typically characterizes dubious policy development in Canada (93-94, 98). According to Kovach, research regarding Indigenous people or communities authored by non-Indigenous scholars (while not ideal) require more meditative methodologies where researchers “pause, reflect, think, and think again” about their own position and unconscious biases (104).

Research-creation projects that engage with situated knowledges are also well suited to investigate complex social processes because they counter the university’s “regime of truth” that hierarchically prioritize scientific knowledges (Chapman and Sawchuk 6). As noted earlier, Taiaiake Alfred argues that the university’s hierarchy of knowledges precludes space for Indigenous epistemologies (“Warrior Scholarship” 88). Alfred’s argument corresponds to recent analysis from non-Indigenous professor of Anthropology Alan Smart on the Canadian “corporatization of the university” (60). Smart argues that Canadian universities underfund and devalue the social sciences and humanities by simultaneously eliminating tenured faculty positions while over-enrolling students in those disciplines in order to transfer their tuition revenue towards

"sexy high profile [STEM] fields" (60-61). According to Smart, these funding decisions are flawed because they use evaluation metrics that overvalue the production of discrete and observable facts that are easily illustrated using charts and graphs (61). As Chapman and Sawchuk point out, these scientific metrics cannot effectively evaluate research projects that produce qualitative knowledge designed to provide contextual information to complex social processes (11).

Instead, the paradigm of the research-creation methodology, mixing subjective research with media production, rejects the very premise of binary thinking which positions positivist scientific and humanities/social science scholarship on opposite poles (Chapman and Sawchuck 12). As such, I argue that my research-creation methodology positioned my project as an intervention into Concordia University's institutional apparatuses through the production of a speculative course syllabus. My strategic use of a research-creation methodology also embodies my overall conclusion that the reconciliation project requires collaborative, iterative approaches that are mired in complex relationships between multiple disciplines. Finally, this characterization also corresponds to my proposal to follow Boaventura de Sousa Santos's scholarship regarding the 'ecology of knowledges' model which pragmatically opens new possibilities for social relations and understanding (Santos 190).

Research Findings, Limitations, and Possibilities

Outcome-Centred Syllabus Design

Like all graduate students, I hold an intimate appreciation for the way the course syllabus acts as a conduit to learning. However, before this project, I had no previous experience designing a course syllabus of my own. So, to better understand its structural logic, I enrolled in a seminar offered through Concordia University's Centre for Teaching and Learning on the topic of *Teaching in Higher Education*. The seminar, offered twice a year, is modelled to impart and embody effective teaching strategies grounded in non-Indigenous, constructivist scholarship that prioritizes outcome-centred approaches to learning.

According to the theory of outcome-centred learning, an effective syllabus orients learning around specific, attainable, and cumulative learning objectives that are formulated to successively build upon knowledge through a series of varied assessments (Nilson 17-20). In this way, a syllabus is a contract that enshrines a relationship of trust between instructor and student; mutual

trust and respect is the cornerstone of learning because the perceived relationship between teacher and student is what ultimately enables or constrains the internalization and acceptance of course material (see: Hagenauer and Volet, 2014; Thompson, 2018). Linda Nilson, non-Indigenous pedagogy scholar, suggests that the syllabus establishes mutual respect by clearly linking assigned readings and in-class activities to an overall assignment strategy (36). Finally, a major component of the assignment strategy is the way a teacher's personalized feedback should foster critical reflection. To summarize: an effective course syllabus structures learning by linking clearly identifiable goals to a series of assessments.

It is important to note that the seminar did not include education on land-based pedagogies or other Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (for more information on land-based pedagogies see: Louie et al. 2017; also, Concordia Library's resource, "Land as pedagogy & environment"). Instead, my speculative syllabus is embedded in, yet critical of, Concordia University as a Settler institution of higher education and is designed to reach a Settler audience who lack previous knowledge of Canada's colonial history and of Indigenous culture, history, and vitality. Granted, I am not highlighting this distinction to discount the many positive aspects of outcome-centred learning approaches or to suggest a comparison between knowledge systems or ways of learning. Instead, I posit that my overall master's thesis involved a similar type of cumulative and iterative learning that concludes *here* in this final, reflexive section of the written component of my thesis project.

Throughout the research, design, and creation of my speculative course syllabus, I received positive, critical feedback from my supervisory committee, the course instructor from the graduate seminar at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and from my interviewees. Based on their input, especially from the interviewees, I arrived at three crucial components that orient my syllabus: adequate emotional space to allow non-Indigenous students the opportunity to learn an honest colonial history of Canada, cultural safety training tailored to journalists, and fieldwork that allows students to practice these concepts and build their journalistic skills in research and media production. In the following section, I discuss how the interviews with commissioner Marie Wilson, journalist Emilee Gilpin, and editor/publisher Steve Bonspiel shaped these components.

Emotional Space & Teaching Colonial History

Dr. Marie Wilson, former TRC Commissioner, continues to champion the Call to Action number 86 because journalists play an important teaching role in society and their work instructs Canadians on what types of stories they should be thinking about. In our conversation, Wilson captured the motivation for the Call to Action by stating that the worst thing a teacher or journalist can do is "overestimate people's knowledge or underestimate their intelligence." In other words, Canadians will gladly read accurate and contextual news stories that help make sense of their world and journalists will always want to improve their storytelling. Therefore, the Call to Action is not taking issue with the average news reader nor the ill-equipped journalist but addresses the fact that journalism educators must start offering aspiring journalists access to the tools they need to research, compose, and present stories about Indigenous topics, communities, and events in a culturally safe way.

Before our conversation, Dr. Wilson generously reviewed the first draft of my speculative syllabus and identified two areas that required immediate attention: course readings must emphasize the diversity of Indigenous experience in Canada, and, the syllabus must not use academic jargon, specifically terms like 'settler colonialism.' Wilson elaborated on these two points, saying:

> One of the easy stereotypes is to think all Indigenous people in Canada are First Nations. We have huge ignorance about the diversity within Indigenous populations and particularly the North-South ignorance. [...] That's the other constantly repeated misconception: that everyone North of 60 is Inuit. And, in fact, half of North of 60 is First Nations. But we don't know our own geography to know that. It's like colonialism — there's not a starting point where there's a shared understanding of what exactly that means. There's a presumption that it means the same thing in every context. I think it's one of those things that needs to be defined [in the syllabus].

I addressed Wilson's first recommendation by reworking my syllabus to emphasize learning about the diversity of Indigenous nations, cultures, and histories. I also swapped several assigned readings and other media texts to offer a more balanced representation of Inuit and Métis experience in Canada.

I translated Wilson's second recommendation, regarding academic jargon and teaching about colonialism, by front-loading the course syllabus with slow and deliberate education on Canada's genocidal colonial history. Wilson's feedback equally reflects my own experience trying to make space in the Department of Communication Studies to talk with and teach university

students unaware of the Canadian history of the Indian Residential School System. The syllabus opens space for critical inquiry through a variety of strategies and media texts, including podcasts, documentaries, short stories, news articles, guest speakers, and a blanket exercise[3]. I also designed the Moodle Assignment so that students can leverage their peer relationships to work through shared confusion or apprehension. I conclude that adequate emotional space must structure education and teaching strategies that are designed to confront ignorances and false conceptions about Canadian history and Indigenous identity.

Most of the material covered in the first eight weeks of my syllabus corresponds to the general call from the TRC that all students, regardless of discipline, must learn Canada's true colonial history ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" 21). Therefore, I argue that a close reading of Mark Anderson and Carmen Robertson's book *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* offers critical education tailored to aspiring journalists. Anderson and Robertson's percipient text effectively introduces a critical perspective on Canadian newspaper reporting, details many components of Canada's colonial history, and teaches about the inherent power structure of the Canadian media industry. Their study also clearly explains the sedimentation of representations and stereotypes that have contributed to the harmful relationships between Indigenous people and Settler Canadians.

Seeing Red constitutes a foundational pedagogical tool on which all journalism education should structure the teaching of Canadian news reporting. Indeed, *Seeing Red* is already a requirement in other Canadian journalism programs at the University of British Columbia and Carleton University (Gillmore, 2018). Not at all coincidentally, Emilee Gilpin told me that she recommends teaching *Seeing Red* to all journalism students "because of course we can't know what we're doing in the present day or know how to move forward without understanding what happened in the past."

Reconciling with Objectivity

Emilee Gilpin graduated from Concordia University's Department of Journalism in 2017 and now contributes news articles to the *National Observer's* Special Report called 'First Nations Forward.' In our conversation, Gilpin detailed her experience pushing back against the Department's teaching on the journalistic concept of 'objectivity.' According to Gilpin, objectivity

[3] For more information about blanket exercises, please check out: https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/

was taught to be used as a holy standard, but would also "be used as this kind of shield to any kind of accountability." Instead, Gilpin suggests that normative claims of objectivity, found in proximity to legacy publications and organizations, must be reconsidered and redefined. While it should still play a central role in news reporting, Gilpin argues that journalists should learn to reflexively question their own prejudices or biases, in order to "remain neutral and objective." Gilpin summarized her argument by stating that objectivity must be equated to a commitment to telling the truth.

I asked Gilpin about how to adapt her critique of the Department's teaching on the concept of 'objectivity' to my speculative course syllabus. Specifically, I asked about an article she wrote that appears on the *News* section of Concordia University's website where she rhetorically asks: "What does culturally safe journalism look like? How does objectivity relate to accountability in our work? What is Indigenous journalism?" ("Inaccurate Narratives," 2017). In response, Gilpin suggested that the department should offer cultural safety training tailored to journalists in order to teach that "there's no blanket indigeneity. Different Nations and cultures and peoples are so, so vastly different, so that will mean different things depending on the story and depending on the person." According to Gilpin, journalists should be taught that objectivity sometimes means learning nation-specific protocols like how to approach an elder or knowing when to ask the right questions. Additionally, objectivity might mean spending weeks, months, or years building relationships before it's appropriate to ask for interviews or comments on news stories.

In fact, many of Gilpin's suggestions are outlined, explained, and contextualized in Duncan McCue's *Reporting in Indigenous Communities: The Guide.* Specific articles like "Indian Time" or "Context and Colonial Amnesia" succinctly summarize many of the arguments from the first section of this written component of my thesis project (*The Guide*). Thus, I interpreted and translated Gilpin's analysis into the design of professional development training which spans the last third of my speculative syllabus. In that section, students respond to McCue's *Guide* by engaging with Cultural Safety & Humility Training, through the guise of the principles: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®).

Cultural Safety & Humility Training through OCAP® Protocols

Cultural Safety and Humility (CS&H) Training originates in healthcare education and is centred on instilling a set of reflexive skills that practitioners learn in order to situate themselves

in relation to knowledge about and relationships with Indigenous people (Ward et al. 29). CS&H differs from 'cultural competency' because 'culture' is not a set of static facts about a group of people and their history; instead CS&H understands 'culture' as a living and relational process. For example, as both Wilson and Gilpin point out, it is impossible to be fully 'competent' in 'Indigenous culture' and so it is insulting when an outsider acts as if the material they study in school makes them an expert, or provides them with the sufficient knowledge to generalize attitudes or beliefs of an obviously diverse population. Instead, practicing CS&H situates journalistic research and news reporting in historical and sociological processes like colonialism and patriarchy.

While I have a cursory understanding of, and experience with CS&H Training through my experience in harm reduction, I am by no means an expert. However, I believe this to be my project's most exciting site for future research work. Throughout the research for this project, I was unable to find any resources, peer-reviewed or not, that link CS&H Training to journalism education. And while Duncan McCue's Guide to *Reporting in Indigenous Communities* is an invaluable resource for Canadian journalists, it is now almost a decade old. I believe that in an era shaped by data privacy violations, allegations of 'fake news,' and the national momentum to advance reconciliation, a fruitful avenue of further research is the development of CS&H Training tailored to media makers and journalists that is oriented around OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) Protocols.

Maintained through the First Nations Information Governance Centre, OCAP® Protocols are the de facto ethical standard to ensure that First Nations own their information, data, and knowledge (McMahon et al. 4). Teaching researchers (journalists included) OCAP® Protocols would impart an understanding that First Nations (and Inuit and Métis) communities are stewards of their information, much in the same way that they are stewards over their lands. This education is crucial because there is currently no law or concept in Western society that recognizes community rights and interests to their information ("OCAP® – First Nations Governance Centre," 2017). While broader teaching on CS&H would put OCAP® Protocols in context, these two components are assets that I believe can be extrapolated from my speculative syllabus and further developed into other existing courses currently offered in both the Department of Journalism and the Department of Communication Studies. Ultimately, I believe that teaching about OCAP® would instill in journalists a reflexive approach to covering intercultural stories.

Relational Fieldwork Activities

While studying history is often predicated on solitary reading and writing, a major component of journalism education requires foregrounding shared, lived experiences. For my syllabus, this means challenging students to apply complex scholastic or professional concepts so that they are able to recognize how current relationships between Indigenous and Settler people adversely impact the daily experiences of real people. One component of this strategy is addressed by the course assignments, specifically the two, story-based media assignments where students are going into the field and producing publishable news stories.

Steve Bonspiel told me that journalism students immediately benefit from challenging fieldwork opportunities that require talking with Indigenous people, working in Indigenous groups, or even just visiting Indigenous communities. In our conversation, Bonspiel shared his firsthand experience watching young journalists launch their careers after successful internships or learning opportunities where they bring their work outside the classroom. According to Bonspiel, the skills required to report on Indigenous issues, topics, and communities are highly transferable assets that help journalists establish their careers at other journalistic and media organizations.

CONCLUSION

"We Are All Treaty People"

The title of the final chapter of the sixth and final volume of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, "We Are All Treaty People," implicates everyone across Canada in the reconciliation project. The TRC also conspicuously refers to the fact that "reconciliation isn't an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one" ("Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" vi). In February 2019, four years after the TRC concluded, Steve Bonspiel offered me his understanding and contextualization of reconciliation by saying:

> We can talk about it until we're blue in the face, but if we're not really sitting down and talking to each other, and respecting each other and working towards a better tomorrow, then we're not practicing reconciliation at all. Don't say it if you're not willing to do it.

Throughout this project, I developed the argument that reconciliation in the Department of Journalism at Concordia University means making the space and supporting Steve Bonspiel's proposal to lead a course on the topic of 'Indigenous Journalism.' I also made the case that this goal requires adopting Miglena Todorova's proposal concerning an 'ecology of knowledges' model where non-Indigenous educators teach about the ongoing impacts of colonialism. In the preceding section of the written component of my thesis project, I identified two major components of my speculative syllabus that can be adapted to existing undergraduate curriculum: close reading of the book *Seeing Red*, and, professional development training through the guise of teaching Duncan McCue's *Reporting in Indigenous Communities: The Guide* via Cultural Safety and Humility Training and OCAP® Protocols. At the conclusion of my project, it merits stating the obvious: there is no time to lose; the recent efforts of the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group provide an immediate affordance to make concrete structural change that will directly impact the relationships between Settler Canadians and Indigenous people.

Future Work

I offer one final thought to conclude my project in the spirit of Tracey Morrison's companion call to action. Late in my research, I discovered an alternative approach to the TRC Call to Action number 86, offered by professor Candis Callison, member of the Tahltan Nation located in northwestern B.C, and non-Indigenous professor Mary-Lynn Young, both working in

the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of British Columbia. Callison and Young argue that "Canadian journalists are largely abdicating" their responsibility to accurately cover stories about Indigenous issues ("How the Media Failed Colton Boushie," 2018). To address this bias, the scholars suggest that "Communication Studies and Journalism programs must collaborate to produce education that is critical of Canadian mainstream news coverage" ("How the Media Failed Colton Boushie," 2018). They further argue that journalism schools separated "from their communications school cousins" results in "journalism students having less access to important critiques of structural power relations and inequities — and how media representations can further those inequities" ("How the Media Failed Colton Boushie," 2018). While the orientations and planned outcomes of Journalism and Communication Studies departments can often appear incommensurable, the spirit of Callison and Young's argument calls for academic colleagues to collaborate cross-departmentally in unified efforts to advance structural change

I conclude by asking for allies and accomplices in Concordia University's Department of Communication Studies to help advance and advocate for the implementation of all the TRC Calls to Action. I hope that my project provides necessary contextual information to help understand and think through the ongoing efforts to begin advancing reconciliation at Concordia University. As I've demonstrated, my motivation begins with journalism education and as such, I suggest starting with Call to Action number 86 to empower the next generation of journalists, storytellers, and media professionals to thrive in their future careers. Finally, in order to find footing within this task of launching an institutional strategy towards advancing reconciliation, I suggest the first step begins with asking the Indigenous Directions Leadership Group for guidance to implement the *Concordia University Indigenous Directions Action Plan*.

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