

Constructive Journalism as Decolonial Storytelling: Ethical Narratives in  
Indigenous-Led Climate Action

A Research-Creation Thesis

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Journalism

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **Abstract**

### **Constructive Journalism as Decolonial Storytelling: Ethical Narratives in Indigenous-Led Climate Action**

Lina Forero

This research-creation thesis explores constructive journalism (CJ) as a decolonial approach to storytelling, particularly in the context of Indigenous-led climate action. It proposes examining CJ as a framework that prioritizes meaningful relationship- and trust-building to ensure that Indigenous stories are shared ethically and impactfully.

This research-creation thesis is composed of three parts: (1) A literature review examining CJ and its relevance to journalism education, as well as its conceptual and practical implications for reporting in Indigenous contexts. The review includes discussion on Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA), which is the qualitative methodological framework guiding this research. (2) A collaborative multimedia project focused on Indigenous-led climate action in the Inuit village of Inukjuak, located in the Arctic region of Quebec. This project—featuring a written article, a curated photo gallery, and five short videos—explores how CJ principles might be applied within a Canadian context. (3) A Reflexive TA of the application of CJ principles throughout the project, offering an examination of how these principles shaped meaningful relationship-building and trust-building during the co-creation of Indigenous stories.

To facilitate the project, in October 2024, I traveled to Inukjuak with a research team led by Professor Aphrodite Salas for the initial production phase of this multimedia journalism project, which is focused on a clean energy initiative in the village (Salas, 2022). Using observations and audiovisual materials collected during our visit, this project features key figures involved in the initiative and showcases CJ principles in storytelling as shaped by community relationships.

While the creation of our journalism project has been collaborative, this thesis involves an original photo gallery and short video profiles that highlight key participants in the Innavik clean energy project. All will be published as part of a wide-ranging, interactive multimedia website on CTV Montreal in early May 2026.

Through theory and practice, this thesis explores how CJ can be a strong approach to rebuilding trust, boosting credibility, and engaging audiences in meaningful narratives on Indigenous-led climate action.

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## 1 Introduction

Constructive journalism (CJ) is an approach that emphasizes societal well-being by spotlighting progress and solutions to various issues within news stories. (Constructive Institute, n.d.; Bonn Institute, n.d.; Aitamurto and Varma, 2018, p. 2) CJ is gaining international recognition and is viewed as a counterbalance to the tendency of mainstream journalism to focus on negative news. (Ahva and Hautakangas, 2018). Supporters argue that CJ promotes socially responsible reporting and tackles challenges such as declining trust in the media and disengaged audiences. It arguably does this by providing deeper context, incorporating diverse sources, and offering a balanced perspective that includes potential solutions. (Kibarabara, 2023, p. 5) This thesis explores principles of CJ as an approach for non-Indigenous journalists to share Indigenous stories, as a way to address historical wrongs perpetrated by journalists and Canadian media outlets.

For decades, Canadian media have caused significant harm to Indigenous peoples by engaging in biased and extractive storytelling (McCue, 2022), which has reinforced enduring and damaging stereotypes and has been deeply intertwined with colonial structures. (Aujla-Sidhu, 2022) As Carmen Robertson and Mark Anderson state in *Seeing Red* (2011), “Colonialism has always thrived in Canada’s press,” highlighting the media’s role in sustaining colonial narratives. An examination of press content in Canada since the sale of Rupert’s Land in 1869 through to 2009 illustrates that, with respect to Aboriginal peoples, the colonial imaginary has thrived, even dominated, and continues to do so in mainstream English-language newspapers. (Robertson and Anderson, 2011, p. 14)

Historically, colonial narratives have manifested through the repeated portrayal of Indigenous peoples as morally depraved, archetypally savage or racially inferior:

*The idea that Canadians of Aboriginal ancestry epitomize moral depravity is as old as the press in Canada. The notion finds expression in a variety of ways, including identified sneakiness, poor parenting, thievery, whorishness, dishonesty, laziness, ungodliness, and a tendency for debased afflictions associated with the body (such as sexual debauchery, alcoholism, and capricious violence). (Robertson and Anderson, 2011, p. 18)*

This history of underrepresentation and misrepresentation in the coverage of Indigenous stories has deepened the mistrust in mainstream media. (Clark, 2014). In the book "Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities" (2020), the media's long-standing pattern of "getting it wrong" is explored through the examination of two murder trials of Indigenous women in Canada and the media coverage about them. (Callison and Young, 2020) In one case, the book discusses the impact of this long-standing issue by highlighting the 2014 death of teenager Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg. The 15-year old's body was found wrapped in a bag in the Red River, two months after she went missing. The case was controversial; the accused, Raymond Cormier, had confessed to killing the teenager in police recordings, but it still wasn't enough to convict him, and he was acquitted to the disbelief of her family and friends. (Martens, 2020) Indigenous communities condemned media coverage as being slanted against Fontaine, arguing that it relied on victim-blaming narratives that reinforced harmful stereotypes. (Callison and Young, 2020; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2018)

McCue argues that another factor contributing to the loss of trust in journalists and reporters in general has been the extractive approach to storytelling and sources.

*There is a long history of non-Indigenous people coming to Indigenous communities, asking about people's lives, requesting their stories, then leaving. Those visitors interpreted what they saw and heard—in books, reports, studies, films, or photos. Indigenous people had little say in how those stories were told; in many cases, the story never made it back to them. (McCue, 2022, p. 4)*

Such issues related to the media coverage of Indigenous communities appear in many other academic works (see, for example, Robertson and Anderson, 2011; Callison and Young, 2020; Yahr, 2018; Clark, 2014). Importantly, in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) made a direct call to action for journalism schools in Canada:

*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.*

(National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2015)

Following this Call to Action, some news organizations and journalism schools around the country began to reflect further on the role journalism has played and the harm it has caused to Indigenous peoples. (McCue, 2022) “It is incumbent upon journalism programs in Canada to ensure that future generations of journalists have the knowledge they need to report respectfully and accurately on Indigenous stories.” (Journalism for Human Rights Canada, 2021) (see more references: CBC – Beyond 94, 2018; Salas and Stevens, 2021). Interestingly, while this was taking place in the Canadian context, organizations and institutions around the world were also increasingly adopting the constructive journalism approach (Gyldensted and McIntyre, 2017).

For instance, in December 2015, the School of Journalism at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands incorporated constructive journalism into its curriculum (Constructive Journalism, 2016). Additionally, Karen McIntyre (2015) noted that journalists began discussing this approach in several international media outlets, including The Guardian, The Huffington Post, Columbia Journalism Review, and All Africa (Albeanu, 2014; Gyldensted, 2015a; Haagerup, 2014; Pilane, 2014; Sillesen, 2014; Tullis, 2014, as cited in Gyldensted and McIntyre, 2017).

At Concordia University, I became interested in how Professor Aphrodite Salas was prompted to reevaluate her journalistic research and teaching, beginning a process of learning about how to decolonize her work. (Wright, 2024) This provided the impetus for my own reflection, which led to the development of this thesis and the accompanying research-creation.

When I consider my own journalism career and my time as a TV producer in Colombia, I realize that I witnessed so much of what McCue (2022) described. Producers and reporters, including me, would meet with sources to gather information, and then walk away with their stories. For those who opened their homes to us—sharing their personal lives and often painful experiences—little seemed to change. Often, once an article or TV news story was produced, edits and omissions diluted their voices, and the essence of their story faded.

I also noticed that reaching out to someone and persuading them to share their story was not always about amplifying their voice; it might be what we told them, but often, it was more about securing a pitch-worthy piece for an editor's approval. For instance, during our weekly story meetings or post-production (video-editing) sessions, I observed several colleagues prioritizing the crafting of stories that aligned with editorial demands over honouring the voices of the

individuals who had trusted us with their experiences. We might not have been fully aware of this dynamic, with several factors contributing to it: the fast-paced media environment, the pressure from editors to air stories quickly, and the lack of training in covering certain topics. Personally, I do not recall receiving any training in reporting on Indigenous issues during my time as an undergraduate from 2006 to 2010. Reflections such as mine have prompted scholars and educators to explore alternative approaches to extractive journalism, such as Constructive Journalism (CJ), which seek to transform how knowledge is produced and shared, with the purpose of fostering more respectful, accurate, and inclusive storytelling.

CJ emerged in the digital media landscape of the 2010s as a response to the often negative, problem-focused nature of traditional news reporting. (Nørgaard and Fromas, 2018) Its approach aims to present a more balanced worldview by highlighting issues and exploring potential solutions and positive outcomes. (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021)

Although I have found little literature explicitly linking CJ and the movement to decolonize journalism, the latter of which aims to challenge dominant Western narratives and perspectives that have long influenced both national and international media (McCue, 2022), I do see a strong alignment between the two. This intersection of CJ and decolonizing journalism calls for a significant shift in how news is gathered, framed, and shared, and highlights the importance of relationship- and trust-building, diverse voices, local perspectives, and culturally sensitive reporting. CJ and decolonizing journalism together encourage journalists to move beyond the traditional structures and narratives that have often marginalized or misrepresented Indigenous communities. (McCue, 2022, p. 32)

By incorporating solution-oriented approaches and amplifying underrepresented voices, CJ aims to create a more inclusive, nuanced, and empowering media landscape that better reflects the complexities of our global society (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021). CJ also introduces a new framework for reporting on climate initiatives and sustainable solutions. This CJ approach is designed to "build trust between the media and citizens, strengthen democratic dialogue, and foster the cohesion of communities" (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021).

In this context, this research-creation thesis aims to build on the past work of Prof. Salas (Salas, 2022) and past research from students such as Kaaria Quash (Quash, 2022), but with a new focus on how CJ could connect to decolonized storytelling and support relationship building with the community of Inukjuak. This exploration of CJ as a decolonial approach to storytelling is novel in its potential to offer an instructive path forward in reshaping media narratives about Indigenous communities and climate action. By shifting away from harm-based reporting and embracing solutions-focused, ethically grounded storytelling, this approach has the potential to help us better understand Indigenous issues as related to climate change.

This shift also has the potential to benefit Indigenous communities by ensuring that their climate stories are told with respect. As Mactilda Mbenywe (n.d.) argues in her text, "How to cover migration and displacement related to climate?"

*Prioritize the voices and perspectives of those most affected by climate migration, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, and the global south. Challenge the dominance of Western, elite viewpoints in the media discourse. (Mbenywe – Constructive Institute, n.d.)*

Additional research on the practical application of CJ principles is needed to assess whether this transformative potential can be linked to decolonial storytelling to offer more nuanced and constructive narratives, but Mbenywe (n.d.) further argues media need to try:

*The media should focus on the positive contributions climate migrants make to society, rather than portraying them as a problem. By sharing human stories, we can build empathy and challenge stereotypes, highlighting the diversity and strength of those affected. (Mbenywe – Constructive Institute, n.d.)*

As such, this research-creation thesis focuses on the following objectives:

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the principles of CJ and how they align with Indigenous worldviews and values, particularly in the context of decolonizing climate storytelling.
2. To evaluate the application of CJ through a multimedia documentary project that highlights Inuit-led clean energy initiatives, with a focus on how this approach can amplify community voices and promote solutions-oriented narratives.
3. To explore how personal, professional, and relational experiences shape journalistic practices when reporting on Indigenous-led climate action.

### **Research Questions**

1. How can CJ serve as a decolonial approach to storytelling in the context of Indigenous-led climate action?

2. How can CJ be applied in the production of multimedia content to highlight Indigenous-led clean energy solutions, and what impact does this approach have on fostering relationship- and trust-building with communities?
3. In what ways do personal experiences and professional backgrounds influence journalistic practice when reporting on Indigenous-led climate action, as examined through a Reflexive TA?

## 2 Literature Review

For the purposes of this proposal, the literature review supporting this research-creation thesis explores the following topics:

- Constructive Journalism
- Decolonizing Indigenous reporting
- Relationship- and trust-building in reporting on Indigenous matters
- Climate action reporting
- Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action 84-86
- Reflexive Thematic Analysis

### **Constructive Journalism: a different way to approach storytelling**

When I first heard about CJ, I assumed the concept would be self-explanatory. “Constructive” typically means something that “builds up”—that adds, improves, or enhances—but in the context of journalism, the significance goes much deeper. “Constructive” in constructive journalism refers to a productive, solutions-oriented approach to addressing societal issues (Aitamurto and Varma, 2018). The Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism defines it as “a new way of approaching information, which seeks to reduce or even eliminate the 'negativity bias' with which news is presented in the media. It highlights and promotes positive and solution-focused news, instead of reproducing negative and conflicting stories, while trying, at the same time, to provide answers to key social problems.” (Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism, n.d.)

Constructive journalism emerged in response to the media’s growing reliance on tabloidization, sensationalism, and negativity bias (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021). Mainstream

news often focuses on problems, crises, and negativity (Andersen et al., 2024), which has prompted concern from practitioners and scholars because a singular focus on negativity contributes to audiences becoming disillusioned and disinterested in civic issues. The constructive journalism movement aims to correct bias, strengthen audience–media connections, and reestablish journalism’s authority as traditional media are facing declining trust, public disengagement, and revenues due to negative news. (Rojas-Calderón, 2023; Oliver, 2016; Krüger, 2017). In light of these concerns, solutions-oriented approaches in journalism have gained momentum in recent years: in Europe and the United States, CJ has emerged as a form of journalism that aims to create positive social impact (Gyldensted 2011, 2015; Haagerup 2014; McIntyre 2015) by informing people of issues and by suggesting specific, effective ways to resolve these issues. (Gans 2011; Varma 2017). This approach has gained ground, with prominent outlets—such as The Guardian and The New York Times—incorporating constructive techniques. (van Antwerpen, 2022). It is important to note that, although Constructive Journalism (CJ) has sometimes been conflated with Solutions Journalism in research, the two are different. CJ is considered a broad umbrella term encompassing branches such as Solutions Journalism, Prospective Journalism, Peace Journalism, and Restorative Narrative Journalism (Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism, n.d.). For the purposes of this research, the CJ approach is particularly suitable, as it goes beyond a simple solutions-focused perspective and allows for a broader exploration of the project’s context. As mentioned earlier, through this process, I analyze how the application of CJ can support not only solutions-oriented narratives but also the building of trust and relationships with the communities involved, in the spirit of reconciling journalism’s historical wrongdoing toward Indigenous peoples.

As described by Sanal and Aram (2023), “the goal of constructive journalism is to move beyond highlighting just the positive aspects of a society but to research and seek solutions to its persistent issues and comprehensively present it to the people.” It makes sense, then, to consider CJ as a promising framework for improving reporting on Indigenous issues, which have long suffered from misrepresentation, superficial coverage and negative, colonial stereotypes. (Callison and Young, 2020, p. 163; Anderson and Robertson, 2011)

The Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism (2025) proposes redefining the concept of “news” by promoting a form of journalism that investigates with neutrality and focuses on offering solutions and creative actions, free from negativity and bias.

With that in mind, could CJ be seen as a methodology that supports meaningful relationships and trust-building in the sharing of Indigenous stories, particularly in the context of Indigenous-led climate action? To explore this question, this research-creation project examines three core principles of constructive journalism as articulated by scholars from the Constructive Institute and the Bonn Institute: solutions-focused reporting, nuanced coverage, and the promotion of democratic dialogue. Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) present these principles as a future-focused model developed to expand upon the concept of CJ. In this model, journalism is envisioned as a tool to support democracy by pursuing critical yet constructive narratives—stories that focus on solutions, embrace complexity, and encourage community-involving debates. (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021, p. 6)

### **Solutions-focused reporting**

Within CJ, there are various branches of “journalism,” as identified by the Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism: Peace Journalism, Restorative Journalism, Prospective Journalism,

and Solutions Journalism—all sharing the common objective of improving individual and societal well-being. (Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism, 2025) However, the three institutes I most frequently reference in this thesis: the Constructive Institute (a Danish independent centre working to combat the trivialization and degradation of journalism by emphasizing reporting that is more solutions-focused, balanced, and oriented toward connecting society), the Bonn Institute (a German nonprofit organization that promotes constructive, human-centred journalism to restore public trust and reduce news fatigue) and the Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism (a nonprofit promoting constructive journalism to professionals and the public in Greece and internationally), converge in identifying three core elements of CJ: a focus on solutions, multiple perspectives, and constructive dialogue (Bonn Institute, n.d.). These three elements form the foundation of the literature reviewed in this section on constructive journalism.

The solutions-focused approach encourages journalists to go beyond simply explaining a problem and to ask, “Who is doing it better?” This shifts the focus onto possible solutions and places them at the center of the story. As psychotherapist and pioneer of solution-oriented coaching, Steve de Shazer puts it, “Problem talk creates problems; solution talk creates solutions.” (Bonn Institute, n.d.)

The Bonn Institute also emphasizes that reporters should not only present the problem but also further research how it can be overcome, making a solutions-focused approach the core of the story. The solutions-focused approach also offers a future-oriented outlook that can instill hope and positivity in the audience, without sacrificing context or in-depth explanation of the issue. (Djerf-Pierre, 2024)

## **Nuance coverage**

The Constructive Institute and the Hellenic Institute of Constructive Journalism identify nuanced coverage as one of the three core pillars of CJ, emphasizing that CJ's goal is to help audiences develop a clear and accurate understanding of events rather than oversimplified perspectives. Instead of framing issues in black-and-white viewpoints, CJ acknowledges complexity, assuming that audiences value richer, more nuanced storytelling over simplistic narratives. (Constructive Institute, n.d.) The institute suggests that journalists should frame their ideas around a specific issue and its consequences by examining how the problem has evolved over time, analyzing relevant data, and considering multiple perspectives. This process should help create a more comprehensive understanding of the topic by situating it within its historical background and broader context. (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021, p. 5-6) In addition, the Bonn Institute further emphasizes integrating multiple perspectives as an essential component of any newsroom and any news piece. It argues that newsrooms must actively seek diverse viewpoints in order to adequately represent the complexity of societal issues. As the Institute notes, “the idea of a wealth of perspectives additionally looks at systemic factors, be it in terms of personnel in a newsroom or department, or one’s own blind spots and biases and how to better understand them.” (Bonn Institute, n.d.).

## **Promoting democratic and constructive conversations**

Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) suggest that CJ fosters democratic conversations by facilitating inclusive dialogue and involving the community at every step of the journalistic process. I have witnessed this firsthand with the Inukjuak community, where prioritizing long-term relationships has allowed community members to share their stories on their own terms, verify facts, and help

shape the narrative of emerging and past journalism (Salas, 2022), ensuring that each story is accurate and respectful.

In addition, Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) advocate for “dialogue journalism” (p. 6), which challenges the traditional role of journalists as detached observers. Instead, journalists are encouraged to take an active role in bringing different voices together to navigate complex issues, develop solutions, and co-create nuanced stories. Importantly, they suggest this collaborative approach should begin at the story-idea stage and continue through to publication, engaging the community as partners throughout the process. For this thesis, the constructive approach has been central to the storytelling process. The topic itself—an Indigenous community in Arctic Quebec taking climate action through a clean energy initiative—is inherently constructive. The story aims to highlight how this community is leading meaningful climate solutions grounded in local leadership and sustainability. The Bonn Institute also discusses this pillar as “constructive dialogue,” placing journalists as mediators of relevant information and different perspectives, and as moderators between various societal groups. “Constructive dialogue looks at similarities and possible solutions. This sets it apart from the many media debates centred around confrontation and division.” (Bonn Institute, n.d.) The constructive and democratic dialogue also focuses on the future. Instead of just explaining why an event happened, it goes further to explore where to go from there.

### **Decolonizing Indigenous reporting**

In his book, *Decolonizing Journalism* (2022), Anishinaabe journalist Duncan McCue explores how the media has historically misrepresented Indigenous communities—shaping both how Indigenous people respond to reporters and how reporters feel when covering Indigenous

issues. McCue (2022) recounts in the foreword to his book that non-Indigenous journalists would hide under their desks to avoid being assigned Indigenous-related stories (p. VIII). Reflecting on McCue's discussion, I wonder if this could be a vicious cycle? Reporters avoid covering these stories, leading to superficial narratives, which, in turn, deepen the lack of Indigenous people's trust in the media:

*Stereotypes are a common feature of stories in general, not only in the media, and not only of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples, however, are particularly vulnerable to issues arising from ubiquitous negative stereotyping because of the problems associated with over two centuries of colonization. (Orlowski, 2018)*

Indigenous people have often been portrayed as “troublemakers,” particularly those actively advocating for social and environmental justice. (Belfer et al., 2017) As social work professor Robert Harding states (2005 as cited in McCue, 2022, p. 12), this framing serves to “protect the status quo while limiting the potential for Indigenous self-determination.” In this context, McCue defines *decolonizing journalism* as “the process of deconstructing and dismantling the structures and practices in the media that perpetuate colonial ideas and privilege Western ways of doing” (McCue, 2022, p. X). Others have also argued that despite increased media coverage in Canada, Indigenous peoples are often depicted through a deficit lens. As Callison and Young (2020) mention:

*Indigenous people are more likely to be included in statistical data reporting and to be covered by media, but more coverage doesn't mean good or appropriate coverage. Instead, most mainstream coverage has reflected a deficit model where Indigenous people*

*are represented as lesser than the mainstream public, degenerate, in conflict and/or unable to manage their own affairs. (p. 165)*

This “lesser-than” mentality is reflected in an attitude where Indigenous communities are considered irrelevant unless something bad happens. (Clark, 2014, p. 55) McCue reflects on this further in many of his writings: “An elder once told me the only way an Indian would make it on the news is if he or she were one of the 4Ds: drumming, dancing, drunk or dead.” (McCue, 2014, 2022, p. 7).

We can find evidence of this practice in historical texts as well. Early writings about Indigenous Peoples were largely produced by European explorers such as Samuel de Champlain and Jacques Cartier in the 1500s and 1600s, as well as missionaries like John McDougall and later anthropologists such as Diamond Jenness and Stephen Leacock. In their texts, Indigenous Peoples were frequently portrayed as inferior or as a “vanishing race,” and furthermore, “Most literature written by these authors provided little insight into the realities of Indigenous peoples. Yet, this literature influenced the intellectual foundations of settler society.” (Younging and Cariou, 2025, p. 12)

Scholar Gurvinder Aujla-Sidhu adds that journalism education may, unintentionally, perpetuate negative racial stereotypes and values by reproducing conventional industry practices, (Aujla-Sidhu, 2022, p. 2) specifically:

*Decolonizing journalism practice is equally as important as adapting the academic aspects of the curriculum to be more culturally and globally inclusive. If educators and the media are serious about tackling inequality and social justice, then there is an urgent*

*need to educate prospective journalists about the legacy and impact colonialism has had upon diverse communities.* (Aujla-Sidhu, 2022, p. 13)

In the podcast *Don't Call Me Resilient* (2022), Vinita Srivastava argues that journalism's institutions have failed to teach students how to respectfully and appropriately cover Indigenous stories. For example, she says, "a good part of the reason so many Canadians are not familiar with the history of the Indian Residential Schools is that Canadian media failed to tell those stories." Nonetheless, journalism schools in Canada have only recently begun teaching students to critically examine how they cover issues involving Indigenous communities. (Srivastava, 2023)

Upon reflection, I realized how much I relate to the ideas above, both from my background in journalism and in my current role as a Senior Communications Manager at an Indigenous non-profit organization. I remember my time as a producer while living in Colombia. I recall colleagues referring to Indigenous people as complicated individuals or as opponents to progress in their communities. Looking back, I now recognize how biased I was—and how I also distanced myself from covering Indigenous stories.

After immigrating to Canada, I became curious about First Peoples in this country. I began learning about the three groups: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, as well as the lasting impacts of the residential school system. Later, I had the privilege of joining an organization that promotes Indigenous leadership in the clean energy sector. That was a turning point in my career. I began to hear stories of Indigenous communities tackling climate change through culturally grounded, innovative, and sustainable clean energy solutions, which challenged the biases and stereotypes I had carried. While my role as the communications lead is not strictly journalistic, storytelling

remains at its core. My focus has been on amplifying and celebrating the voices of Indigenous people we work with—those leading change and building community-based energy solutions. I consider this a form of “constructive storytelling” or perhaps “constructive communication.”

From my experience, the path has not always been easy. There have been moments when I have felt a sense of distance between myself and the Indigenous colleagues or program participants I work with. Even so, I have committed myself to learning, listening, and building genuine relationships. That commitment has helped me approach storytelling in ways that are more respectful, inclusive, and aligned with the perspectives of the communities represented.

I recognize that it is unlikely that I will ever fully understand what Indigenous peoples and communities in Canada have experienced. Their histories, realities, and issues cannot touch me as deeply as they do those who have lived them. What I can do, however, is use my skills in service of sharing their stories through their own lens and create the space needed to truly listen.

As Wendy Whitebear (Cree-Saulteaux from White Bear First Nation), former business manager at the University of Regina Press, expressed: “Honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, our stories, needs to be meaningful. We know these stories: they are our stories; we have lived them. Non-Indigenous people don’t have that context. They need help to see through our lens.” (Whitebear, as cited in Younging, 2025)

Similarly, Younging’s *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples* (2025) reminds us that failure often stems from a colonial practice of “transmitting” information about Indigenous Peoples rather than transmitting Indigenous Peoples’ own perspectives about themselves. His work highlights just how essential it is to shift from *speaking* about communities to *amplifying* the voices within them.

McCue notes that the Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) brought attention to the media's role in reinforcing inequalities through persistent misinformation and stereotypes when reporting on Indigenous matters. He also suggests that by reframing stories of Indigenous matters from Indigenous troublemakers to problem solvers, we are contributing to transforming Indigenous-as-victim narratives into stories of self-reliance and self-determination. (McCue, 2022, p. 33)

### **Relationship- and trust-building in reporting on Indigenous matters**

As previously discussed, relationship- and trust-building are essential components of constructive journalism (Jørgensen and Risbro, 2021). McCue also highlights the critical role these elements play in decolonizing journalism, based on his extensive experience fostering awareness about how to engage with Indigenous sources and stories in a respectful, culturally appropriate manner (McCue, 2022, as cited in Perdomo, 2023). This raises the question: how can such engagement be effectively implemented in practice?

In *Decolonizing Journalism: A Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities*, McCue outlines several foundational principles, including acknowledging one's own personal and cultural biases, conducting thorough background research before contacting sources, and approaching interviews with humility and openness. (McCue, 2022) Importantly, he highlights that reporters must view their role not just as information gatherers but as relationship builders—committed to establishing long-term connections rather than transactional encounters. (McCue, 2022, p. 80-81, 113) Other authors have also addressed this point, particularly in discussions of transparency in journalism, which is often treated as a simple transaction between news organizations and their audience. (Palanski and Hickerson, 2022) Journalists such as Melissa Sanchez (ProPublica), Elizabeth Van Brocklin (The Trace), and others (as cited in Yahr, 2018)

emphasize the importance of maintaining respectful, ongoing relationships with sources, especially those who share difficult or traumatic stories. This includes following up after publication to check in, acknowledging meaningful dates like anniversaries, and avoiding transactional interactions. Their approaches highlight a broader commitment to ethical storytelling—ensuring that reporting returns to the affected communities as a key principle of good engagement work (Parris, cited in Yahr, 2018; McCue, 2022, p. 113), that communities are kept informed, that sources feel supported, and that coverage continues as stories evolve. This kind of thoughtful engagement helps build trust, fosters accountability, and reflects a more human-centred, ethical model of journalism that aligns with the principles of constructive and decolonial journalism. (American Press Institute, 2024; McCue, 2022, p. 32)

From my own professional experience, I have observed that relationship-building extends far beyond a single interview or story deadline. Rather, it involves a deep investment of time and presence in the community, demonstrating genuine care for the individuals involved. It might include attending community events, participating in local initiatives, or even something as simple but meaningful as sharing meals. Food, in many cultures, and particularly in Indigenous communities, serves as a powerful connector—a way of showing respect, building bonds, and creating a shared space for dialogue. These moments of informal connection can be just as impactful as formal interviews in building the mutual trust necessary for ethically grounded storytelling.

Additionally, building trust in this context requires patience and a commitment to accountability, as McCue says (as cited in Koenig, n.d.), “It’s really important for our students to understand that they need to be transparent and accountable when they’re working with these local communities.” It’s also important to recognize that communities often have deep-rooted

histories of trauma and distrust towards the media, which can stem from past misrepresentations or exploitative reporting (McCue, 2022). Salas leans heavily on a principle of relating in reciprocity for her journalism projects, informed in part by personal experience and supported by texts such as the *Dewemaagannag My Relations* Indigenous engagement guide from Concordia University. (Salas, personal communication, March 26, 2025; Sioui and Shawayahamish, 2023) Other scholars, such as Lewis, S. et al (2014), have referred to reciprocity as “a key ingredient for the development of trust, connectedness, and social capital.” As McCue points out:

*There are many differences between Indigenous peoples, but reciprocity is one value which I think is common to every Indigenous group that I've ever spent time with. The notion of giving back is deeply embedded in our worldview and in our cultural practices.*  
(McCue as cited in Perdomo, 2023)

Joy Mayer, founder and director of [Trusting News](#) (as cited in Chan, 2023), has argued that “journalists need to understand that it’s reasonable for people not to trust them, for people to have had experiences in their lives that lead to distrust of journalists. That is reasonable and rational,” Mayer said. “And if it’s going to change, journalism needs to change, not the people.”

This change should reflect what McCue (2022) discusses—that reporters should not only take stories from communities but also give something back. As he notes (p. 113), “to make sure the people we interviewed and the people who assisted us along the way get to see, read and hear the story.” This could include sharing drafts for feedback, acknowledging community input in the final piece, or amplifying voices in ways that align with the community's goals and values. McCue (2022) explains:

*It's not common practice for journalists to stay in touch with their sources once a story has been published. But Indigenous communities are familiar with outsiders who come to their communities to take precious things away. That is why it is so important to keep in contact with interviewees before and after a story is published. That continuing relationship signals that you care about getting the story right and you're accountable for your work. (McCue, 2022, p. 80)*

### **Climate action reporting**

In climate change and environmental reporting, mainstream media have long emphasized the negative, highlighting rising anxieties, public concerns, and a sense of hopelessness about the future. (Constructive Institute, 2023; Sanal and Aram, 2023) While these issues are real and urgent, the focus on crisis and catastrophe often overshadows stories of resilience, innovation, and community-led solutions. (Troy, 2024) “One cannot stop negative incidents from happening, as most often these portray the reality of the world we all live in. However, how these are presented can most certainly can be reconsidered and redefined. (Sanal and Aram, 2023) McIntyre and Gibson (2016) stated that news need not only to capture the positive events, but also to focus on narratives that showcase positive aspects emerging from a negative event, or a “silver-lining story.” The authors felt that this approach may allow media organizations not to give up on covering negative events entirely but continue doing so in a rational manner that seeks a positive angle in adversity.

Constructive journalism offers a different approach. Instead of solely amplifying fear and conflict, it aims to spotlight potential solutions and the positive actions people and communities are taking to confront the climate crisis. “Climate change and its environmental impacts are not

just a story of suffering and conflict—they are also about possibility and the potential to transition to a cleaner, more sustainable world.” (Constructive Institute, 2023) As writer, historian, and activist Rebecca Solnit argues, this perspective not only informs but also empowers audiences, shifting the narrative from despair to possibility. (Bioneers, 2023)

Cassandra Troy, Ph.D. in mass communications and an assistant professor in the journalism department at the University of Illinois, conducted an online experiment to explore how people respond to constructive news coverage—specifically a positive story about solar power. Her findings showed that after reading the story, participants felt more confident that solar energy could be an effective solution to the climate crisis. This is referred to as *response efficacy*. Additionally, readers expressed a stronger belief in the collective ability of society to adopt and support solar energy—known as *collective efficacy*. (Troy, 2024)

In the second part of her research, Dr. Troy interviewed 25 environmental journalists about their experiences with climate solutions reporting. Many of them emphasized that reporting on solutions, rather than solely focusing on problems, plays a critical role in helping educate people without making them feel discouraged. These stories, they explained, are essential for helping audiences stay engaged and hopeful rather than overwhelmed. “By focusing on solutions, journalists hope to provide information and resources that people might need to evaluate and engage with a response to climate change.” (Troy, 2024)

The Constructive Institute strongly highlights the strong relationship between climate reporting and constructive journalism. They argue that, now more than ever, journalists need new approaches to covering climate change. A [report](#) by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU)

warns against “climate catastrophe journalism”, which contributes to climate anxiety and causes media users to stop engaging with news stories on the topic.” (Constructive Institute, n.d.)

The Institute also provides examples and data illustrating why a shift toward more constructive climate narratives is not only necessary but effective. They argue that solutions-focused reporting can increase audience engagement, reduce feelings of helplessness, and encourage more sustained attention to climate issues. Norway’s public broadcaster, NRK, offers a compelling example: by intentionally incorporating constructive journalism principles, such as highlighting local solutions, showcasing community initiatives, and framing climate stories around action rather than despair, NRK has significantly increased readership of its climate-related articles. Their experience demonstrates how reframing climate coverage can draw audiences back into the conversation rather than driving them away. (Elster and Jain, n.d.) Specifically, the Constructive Institute developed an AI-driven tool to identify CJ stories and assess how long readers spent on the page. When they ran all of NRK’s climate articles through the model, they found that *“the constructive articles have 50% more readers: 149,000 versus 93,000. The time spent on the page is also higher for climate change articles than for other articles.”* (Elster and Jain, n.d.)

When it comes to climate action reporting, it is also essential to understand its connection to Indigenous worldviews. Callison (2021) examines how mainstream climate change journalism often excludes certain perspectives, and suggests that Indigenous approaches to journalism, knowledge systems, and ecological contexts can offer a more transformative path forward. Indigenous communities have long emphasized that climate change is only one of many ecological transformations shaped by ongoing settler colonialism and its enduring impacts. From this perspective, Indigenous knowledge and relationships with the land, waters, and animals are

central to developing meaningful and effective responses to climate change. (Ulturgasheva, 2018; Whyte, 2017 as cited in Callison, 2021, p. 6; Reibold, 2023).

Callison (2021) argues that wildfires are not just natural disasters; they are intricately connected to issues of sovereignty, colonialism, infrastructure, and the long-standing relationships people have with land, water, and nonhuman beings. “Reporting on wildfires in varied locations provides some insights into the challenges Indigenous knowing and expertise face in mainstream discourse and how to navigate a past-informed present and future.” (Callison, 2021, p. 7) Recognizing these layers suggested by Callison invites us to reflect on a journalism practice that centres Indigenous voices, respects their knowledge, and acknowledges the broader social and historical contexts influencing climate reporting.

### **Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action 84-86**

In 2008, the government of Canada created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to investigate in-depth the harm caused to Indigenous people by the residential school system. (Reconciliation Education, n.d.) and to inform Canadians what happened in these schools, based on testimonials shared by “Survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience.” (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2015)

The Commission spent over six years gathering testimonies from 6,500 Survivors across the country, culminating in hundreds of pages of observations and recommendations for how to move forward with a reconciliation process. (Government of Canada, 2015) In 2015, the TRC released its final report, which consisted of 94 Calls to Action to the government, institutions and all Canadians to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The 94 Calls to Action are “actionable recommendations meant to aid the healing process in two ways: acknowledging the

full, horrifying stories of the residential school system, and creating systems to prevent these abuses from ever happening again in the future.” (Reconciliation Education/What are the 94 Calls to Action?) These Calls to Action specifically target areas such as child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice. Calls to Action 84 to 86 are specifically addressed to media and journalism schools in Canada as follows:

### ***Media and Reconciliation***

**84.** We call upon the federal government to restore and increase funding to the CBC/Radio-Canada, to enable Canada’s national public broadcaster to support reconciliation, and be properly reflective of the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to:

- i. Increasing Aboriginal programming, including Aboriginal-language speakers.
- ii. Increasing equitable access for Aboriginal peoples to jobs, leadership positions, and professional development opportunities within the organization.
- iii. Continuing to provide dedicated news coverage and online public information resources on issues of concern to Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians, 10 | Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, including the history and legacy of residential schools and the reconciliation process.

**85.** We call upon the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, as an independent non-profit broadcaster with programming by, for, and about Aboriginal peoples, to support reconciliation, including but not limited to:

- i. Continuing to provide leadership in programming and organizational culture that reflects the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples.
- ii. Continuing to develop media initiatives that inform and educate the Canadian public and connect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

**86.** 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.

In this research paper, I focus specifically on Call to Action 86 as a foundation for advancing more ethical, decolonized journalism practices. This project offered me an opportunity to apply principles I have learned through my experience working within an Indigenous organization, as well as the invaluable guidance I have received from Professor Aphrodite Salas at Concordia University. By highlighting Call to Action 86, I aim to examine how journalists can meaningfully respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations and foster reporting that respects Indigenous voices, histories, and perspectives.

## **Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

### **Thematic Analysis**

Since the early 2000s, TA has become one of the most widely utilized methods for analyzing qualitative data. (Ahmed et al., 2025). TA offers both a structured and flexible framework for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within datasets. (Ahmed et al., 2025). The aim of TA in developing patterns of meaning or themes across a dataset is to answer a research question. These patterns are determined by the researcher through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision. (University of Auckland, n.d.)

### **Reflexivity**

According to Braun and Clarke (2021)—who introduced their specific approach to TA in their widely cited 2006 paper *Using thematic analysis in psychology*—reflexivity involves the

practice of critical reflection on one's role as researcher, and one's research practice and process. This approach suggests integrating the unique perspective of the researcher into the core of their qualitative research. Other authors also note that “reflexivity is a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes.” (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Robinson and Wilson, 2022)

To conduct Reflexive TA, Braun and Clarke have suggested six phases to guide researchers in a systematic and robust way to explore, interpret, and report a pattern-based analysis from datasets. (University of Auckland, n.d.)

- (1) dataset familiarisation
- (2) data coding
- (3) initial theme generation
- (4) theme development and review
- (5) theme refining, defining and naming
- (6) writing up

The authors suggest that conducting Reflexive TA involves a reflexive, recursive engagement with the dataset, following the above-mentioned phases to produce a robust analysis. “Our reflexive approach to TA involves a six-phase process – starting with dataset familiarisation, moving into a rigorous and systematic coding process, before starting to explore, develop, review and refine themes, and finally producing the written analytic report.” (Braun and Clarke, 2022)

### 3 Methodology

The methodology for this research-creation thesis involves three components that integrate creative production, multimedia journalism practices, and qualitative analysis. The components are:

- 1) a collaborative video documentary production,
- 2) the use of multimedia journalism, and
- 3) a Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA)

#### 1) Collaborative video documentary production

The core creative component of this project is a collaborative, 20-minute video documentary directed by Aphrodite Salas (approved by Concordia's Research Ethics Unit, Certificate #30011198) in which I participated as a research assistant. Developed in partnership with community members from the Inuit village of Inukjuak, Quebec, the documentary focuses on the community's hydroelectric project and their broader vision of energy sovereignty. During our visit to Inukjuak in October 2024, we collected audiovisual content used in post-production.

ᐃᑲ ᐃᑲᑲᑲᑲ *The Flowing River*, is a short film created by Inukjuak community members in collaboration with a Concordia University journalism team led by Aphrodite Salas. The documentary shares the impactful story of how climate leaders in Inukjuak chose to pursue an extraordinary path. In a transformative shift, the Arctic community moved from relying entirely on diesel for heat and power to operating on nearly 100% renewable energy. This achievement did not happen overnight—community leaders spent years overcoming obstacles and advocating for a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable future. Their success

demonstrates a powerful model for the world on how to move responsibly toward net-zero emissions. (Vallée, 2025)

## **2) Multimedia journalism**

According to Mark Deuze (2004), multimedia journalism can be defined in two ways. First, it can be telling a news story on a website using multiple formats—such as text, audio, video, images, graphics, hyperlink and other interactive elements. Second, it can distribute a story across various platforms, such as websites, email, radio, TV, print, and more (known as horizontal integration). For this project, I explore multimedia journalism to share the story of the Inukjuak community-led clean energy projects (Salas et al, 2022). Using multiple digital elements—each offering a distinct perspective—I aim to create a cohesive and interactive narrative.

As Richard Dunham argues, “no young journalist in today’s digital world can expect to succeed without understanding how to harness the power of multimedia to tell stories more effectively.” (Dunham, 2020, p. 26) “That means mastering technical skills, from text tools (such as writing for the web, blogging, using social media and search engine optimization) to visual tools such as graphics, photography, audio, video, animation and web design.” (Dunham, 2020, p. 26) Utilizing tools such as text, video and photography, I aim to highlight community-led solutions and foster further audience engagement with this story.

Building on the collaborative work with Aphrodite Salas, Luca Caruso-Moro, and our partners in Inukjuak, I produced three complementary multimedia journalism pieces: a written feature story (Appendix A), a curated photo gallery of 17 images (Appendix B), and a series of five short videos profiling key members leading the community hydroelectric project (Appendix C). Designed to accompany the documentary, these components aim to engage audiences through

interactive digital storytelling practices that support the application of CJ principles (see Literature Review). Collectively, these creative pieces demonstrate how CJ can bring attention to narratives of hope, innovation, and leadership within Indigenous communities.

### **3) Reflexive TA**

Considering that this thesis aims to **analyze** how the principles of constructive journalism align with Indigenous worldviews in the context of decolonizing climate storytelling; **evaluate** the use of CJ in a multimedia documentary showcasing Indigenous-led clean energy initiatives; and **reflect** on how personal, professional, and relational experiences influence journalistic practices when covering Indigenous-led climate action, this research-creation project applies an approach that combines theoretical analysis, creative production, and Reflexive TA. The third component of this methodology draws on Reflexive TA, the qualitative approach developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. RTA is an interpretive method used to identify, analyze, and construct patterns of meaning (themes) across datasets. In this project, RTA is informed by my fieldnotes, reflections from the documentary-production process, and my personal and professional background. Drawing from my experience in journalism and my current role within an Indigenous organization, I reflect on how these experiences shape my understanding of journalism's responsibilities—particularly when reporting on matters involving Indigenous communities.

#### **Positionality**

I believe that my previous experiences as a television producer in Colombia, my perspective on Indigenous communities—both in Canada and in my home country—my work alongside Indigenous colleagues and program participants, and my journey as an immigrant have all deeply

influenced the way I approach this research-creation project. As Robinson and Wilson (2022) argue, since social research is by nature objective, it must recognize the influences behind it. Our beliefs, values, and interests are shaped by factors such as personal experiences, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)ability, political views, social class, geographic context, and historical background. “These positionalities influence our research interests and topics, the perspectives we adopt in carrying out research, our motivations, how we conduct the research, and the outcomes.” (Robinson and Wilson, 2022, p. 18) This time, I am not approaching the story as a producer seeking high ratings; instead, I am returning as both a student and a full-time worker for an Indigenous organization focused on clean energy initiatives. Through this research project, I aim to engage in journalism through a constructive lens, one that is more aware of the meaning of Indigenous leadership and the importance of trust-building and reciprocity in storytelling, with the goal of improving my practice and strengthening the work I do professionally.

### **Reflexive TA**

To support this analytical process, my literature review focuses on key areas: CJ, decolonizing Indigenous reporting, relationship- and trust-building in journalism about Indigenous peoples, and climate action reporting. The goal of this review is to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding CJ as a potential decolonial approach to storytelling, particularly within the context of Indigenous-led climate action. As Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) note, “the unique strength of constructive journalism is that it complements the reporter’s vital role as a ‘watchdog’ by promoting democratic dialogue and proposing solutions to pressing issues—contributing to the positive development of society.” This perspective aligns with ethical, empowering, and community-centred approaches to reporting on Indigenous climate leadership.

While filming the documentary in Inukjuak, I was able to reflect on how the methodology of CJ has been put into practice and, in fact, has facilitated meaningful relationship- and trust-building when sharing the story of this Indigenous community. With the creative components, I aim to demonstrate that the application of CJ principles can lead to a positive narrative that uplifts Indigenous leadership in the energy transition, creating space for reciprocal conversations and community involvement. Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) noted that media organizations that have aimed to incorporate a constructive approach have “stressed the importance of coming up with new ideas on how journalists might identify ‘a good story’, i.e. one which builds trust between the media and citizens, strengthens democratic dialogue, and fosters the cohesion of communities.”

I examine my experience visiting the Inuit village of Inukjuak, where I engaged with the community while assisting in the production of the documentary. This reflexive approach offered me insights into the potential of CJ to support decolonial, ethical and community-centred storytelling in the era of the climate crisis.

By weaving together a literature review, a collaborative multimedia production, and a Reflexive TA, this methodology aims to offer a holistic approach to exploring how CJ can serve as a decolonial framework for Indigenous-led climate action storytelling. This research-creation thesis is grounded in the belief that storytelling can serve a transformative and constructive purpose by amplifying Indigenous voices, particularly when rooted in reciprocity, collaborative engagement, and critical self-reflection. (Wilson, 2014; McCue, 2022)

## **4 Findings**

To analyze the data gathered during my master's program, I applied the Reflexive TA method developed by Braun and Clarke. This approach emphasizes the researcher's active engagement with the data, generating themes through deep interpretation rather than by using mechanical coding. (Braun and Clarke, 2022)

As Reflexive TA involves six phases—familiarization with the data, generating codes, constructing themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report—I outline my engagement with each phase below. It is important to note that, according to Braun and Clarke, Reflexive TA can be applied to many kinds of datasets, giving researchers significant flexibility. (2022) They suggest that data can be collected through interviews, from existing sources, or based on previously gathered materials (such as open-source survey responses, interview transcripts, diaries, and social media posts. (Braun and Clarke, 2013, 2022)

### **Phase 1**

#### **Dataset familiarization**

My initial engagement with the data began with revisiting and organizing the journal notes I wrote in October 2024 during my visit to Inukjuak. The trip was very intense and fast-paced, so most of my notes were brief and isolated keywords typed on my cellphone. When I returned home, I dedicated time to rewriting and expanding these notes in a Word document, trying to make sense of the fragmented entries. In the spirit of transparency, much of what I documented in those moments reflected my personal feelings and emotional responses during the visit. At the time, these notes were not focused on the application of constructive journalism principles.

A second part of the familiarization process involved reviewing the transcripts of the interviews conducted by our team during our time in Inukjuak. I first engaged closely with these transcripts while editing the five videos part of the creative component of my project. I reviewed the transcripts several times before writing the discussion presented in this document. The third component of this phase consisted of re-reading earlier drafts of this written work, which had been in development for approximately one year. Revisiting these drafts helped me reconnect with my initial reflections and literature review, understand how my interpretations had evolved over time, and further familiarise myself with the data before moving into the coding stage.

## **Phase 2**

### **Data coding**

After reviewing the interview transcripts and reading this document several times, I identified keywords from statements and quotes gathered through my research. I followed the model table outlined in *A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research* (Naeem et al., 2023), which helped me organize the data. Once the keywords were identified, I colour-coded them and developed thematic codes. See the table below.

<b>Statement/Quotations</b>	<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<p>“We certainly are very happy now to share our story and with the great work that you guys are doing, you're helping us share our story. And it's really coming from our point of view.” - Tommy Palliser, Inukjuak community member. Transcript from interview conducted in October 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share our story</li> <li>• share their story from their point of view</li> </ul>	<p><b>AMPLIFY</b> <b>INDIGENOUS</b> <b>STORIES</b> <b>ETHICALLY</b></p>

“That's why you guys are certainly helping us do. We really like to work with you to help us get the message out that there is opportunity to develop these projects and there's people out there that can help.” - Tommy Palliser

- help us get the message out
- opportunity to share our stories
- collaboration

**AMPLIFY  
INDIGENOUS  
STORIES  
ETHICALLY**

**SOLUTIONS-  
FOCUSED STORIES  
TO REPORT ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE**

“It has really helped us help others. That's what we really like to do as well. We like to realize these projects for our community to fight climate change but also to help other communities.” - Tommy Palliser

- to fight climate change
- help other communities

**SOLUTIONS-  
FOCUSED STORIES  
TO REPORT ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE**

“It's just a great collaboration that we were having with you and your team sharing our story. We were even invited to Bogota to tell our story; to share our experiences and that's from the great work that you guys have done to really get our message out there. - Tommy Palliser

- collaboration
- sharing our story
- really get our message out there
- even invited to Bogota to tell our story

**RELATIONSHIP-  
BUILDING**

**AMPLIFY  
INDIGENOUS  
STORIES  
ETHICALLY**

“A relationship, getting to know them, making sure they respect you and your values, and us for the same. We have to give respect back.” – Sarah Lisa Kasudluak, Inukjuak community member. Transcript from interview conducted in October 2024.

- build relationships
- getting to know them
- respect
- reciprocity (give respect back)

**RELATIONSHIP-  
BUILDING**

**RECIPROCITY AS  
KEY TO BUILDING  
TRUST**

“Information is power, and when there's power, there needs to be change. And if we are going to have a positive impact in the world, we need our stories to be heard. And not through the lens of someone else, but

- Telling Indigenous stories through their lens

**AMPLIFY  
INDIGENOUS  
STORIES  
ETHICALLY**

through our lens, through how we see the world. How we view the world and how we are as people.” – Sarah Lisa Kasudluak, Inukjuak community member.

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You guys really amplified it [the story] in a way we wouldn't be able to because we're limited to just our community and Nunavik as a whole. And you are really amplifying our story to the world.” – Sarah Lisa Kasudluak

- amplify stories
  - storytelling tools and skills
- AMPLIFY  
INDIGENOUS  
STORIES  
ETHICALLY**

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“There was a group of journalists that did come that had their own agenda and really showed me that there are people out there that just want to profit from you, from your story. And they don't even really tell it right. They tell it on their own terms.” – Sarah Lisa Kasudluak

- journalists with their own agenda
  - want to profit from your story
  - not telling [the story] right
  - telling the story in their own terms
- RECIPROCITY AS  
KEY TO BUILDING  
TRUST**
- AMPLIFY  
INDIGENOUS  
STORIES  
ETHICALLY**

---

“We have to be careful who we invite in. We have to make sure that they're in it for the right reasons and not just to profit for themselves, because we are such community-based people. We welcome so many people, but there are people out there who aren't nice.” -Sarah Lisa Kasudluak

- welcome many people in community
  - some want to profit themselves
  - careful with who you trust
- RELATIONSHIP-  
BUILDING**
- RECIPROCITY AS  
KEY TO BUILDING  
TRUST**

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“Call to action number 86 that's for journalism educators, that's me. And the idea was to try and mend relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous through journalism somehow. What I'm learning is a lot of it is about relationships.” – Professor Aphrodite Salas, Concordia University.

- Call to Action 86
  - mend relationships through journalism
- RECONCILIATION**

Transcript from interview Salas and team conducted in October 2024.

- learning process about relationships

**RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING**

Constructive journalism is an approach in journalism that emphasizes societal well-being by spotlighting progress and solutions to various issues within news stories. (Aitamurto and Varma, 2018) – Included in this research paper.

- constructive journalism's focus on societal well-being
- CJ highlights progress and solutions

**SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED STORIES TO REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

In the book "Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities" (2020), the authors explore the media's long-standing pattern of "getting it wrong." – Included in this research paper.

- media's pattern of telling Indigenous stories wrong

**AMPLIFY INDIGENOUS STORIES ETHICALLY**

“There is a long history of non-Indigenous people coming to Indigenous communities, asking about people's lives, requesting their stories, then leaving.” (McCue, 2022) – Included in this research paper.

- reporters getting the story and leaving
- extractive journalism

**RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST**

“In many cases, the story never made it back to them.” (McCue, 2022) – Included in this research paper.

- stories don't make it back to community

**RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST**

McCue (2022) highlights that reporters must view their role not just as information gatherers but as relationship builders—committed to establishing long-term connections, not transactional encounters.

- relationship building
- not transactional encounters

**RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST**

Ensuring the reporting makes it back to the affected communities as a key principle of good engagement work. (Parris, cited in Yahr, 2018)

- stories making it back to the community

**RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST**

<p>Lewis, S. et al (2014), have referred to reciprocity as “a key ingredient for the development of trust, connectedness, and social capital.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reciprocity as key element</li> <li>trust-building</li> </ul>	<p><b>RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST</b></p>
<p>“There are many differences between Indigenous peoples, but reciprocity is one value which I think is common to every Indigenous group that I’ve ever spent time with. The notion of giving back is deeply embedded in our worldview and in our cultural practices.” (McCue as cited in Perdomo, 2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reciprocity as a core value of Indigenous people giving back</li> </ul>	<p><b>RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST</b></p>
<p>Mainstream news often focuses on problems, crises, and negativity. (Andersen et al., 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>negative focus</li> </ul>	<p><b>SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED STORIES TO REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE</b></p>
<p>Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) suggest that constructive journalism fosters democratic conversations by facilitating inclusive dialogue and involving the community at every step of the journalistic process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>including community in the process</li> <li>democratic conversation</li> </ul>	<p><b>RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST</b></p>
<p>Jørgensen and Risbro (2021) advocate for “dialogue journalism” (p. 6), which challenges the traditional role of journalists as detached observers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>challenging the journalists’ role as detached observers</li> </ul>	<p><b>RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING</b></p>
<p>“Decolonizing journalism practice is equally as important as adapting the academic aspects of the curriculum to be more culturally and globally inclusive.” (Aujla-Sidhu, 2022, p. 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>journalism education</li> <li>perpetuating negative racial stereotypes</li> </ul>	<p><b>RECONCILIATION</b></p>
<p>“Honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, our stories, needs to be meaningful. We know these stories: they are our stories; we have lived them. Non-Indigenous people don’t have that context. They need help to see</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sharing Indigenous stories through their lens</li> </ul>	<p><b>AMPLIFY INDIGENOUS STORIES ETHICALLY</b></p>

through our lens.” (Whitebear, as cited in Younging, 2025)

- honouring Indigenous worldviews

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It is essential to shift from *speaking* about communities to *amplifying* the voices within them. (Younging, 2025)

- amplify Indigenous voices
- AMPLIFY  
INDIGENOUS  
STORIES  
ETHICALLY**

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“By focusing on solutions, journalists hope to provide information and resources that people might need to evaluate and engage with a response to climate change.” (Troy, 2024)

- solutions-focused climate change reporting
- SOLUTIONS-  
FOCUSED STORIES  
TO REPORT ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE**

### Phase 3

#### Initial theme generation

During phase 2, the following five codes were identified:

1. **AMPLIFY INDIGENOUS STORIES ETHICALLY**
2. **SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED STORIES TO REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE**
3. **RECONCILIATION**
4. **RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING**
5. **RECIPROCITY AS KEY TO BUILDING TRUST**

To continue the process, in phase 3, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022), I began identifying shared patterned meanings across the dataset. “You compile clusters of codes that seem to share a core idea or concept, and which might provide a meaningful ‘answer’ to your research question.” (p. 50) In their book, the authors explained that a theme captures the patterning of meaning across the dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The themes initially generated are the following:

Theme 1 – **Decolonial approaches to amplify Indigenous stories ethically**

Theme 2 – **Reframing climate reporting through Indigenous-led solutions storytelling**

Theme 2 – **Reframing climate action through solutions-focused storytelling**

Theme 4 – **Advancing reconciliation through reciprocal storytelling practices**

Theme 5 – **Constructive journalism as decolonial, relationship- and trust-building narratives**

### **Phases 4 and 5**

#### **Theme development and review, and theme refining, defining and naming**

In this research-creation thesis, phases 4 and 5 are combined to facilitate an integrated reflection and discussion.

Upon reviewing the proposed initial themes, I have narrowed them to three that I consider directly address the first two research questions of this document: how Constructive Journalism (CJ) can serve as a decolonial approach to storytelling in the context of Indigenous-led climate action, and how CJ can be applied in multimedia production to showcase Indigenous-led clean energy solutions while fostering trust and relationship-building within communities.

Theme 1 – **Constructive journalism as a decolonial approach to amplify Indigenous stories**

Theme 2 – **Reframing climate reporting through Indigenous-led solutions storytelling**

Theme 3 – **Reconciliation through reciprocal Indigenous storytelling practices**

However, the third research question—examining how personal experiences and professional background shape journalistic practice through Reflexive Thematic Analysis—is not captured as a standalone theme. Instead, I aim to embed reflexive analysis across all themes. Aligned with the Reflexive TA literature review, my perspectives and professional backgrounds are understood as shaping interpretation and storytelling decisions throughout the research process. Therefore, reflexivity is woven throughout the analysis rather than positioned as an independent theme.

## **Phase 6**

### **Discussion: Reflections emerging from theme development and self-positionality**

#### ***Reflections on constructive journalism as a decolonial approach to amplify Indigenous stories***

To begin with my reflection, it is important to highlight Braun and Clarke's notion that *subjectivity lies at the core of reflexive thematic analysis*. As they argue, "Your subjectivity is essential to processes of reflexive TA; it is the fuel that drives the engine, and reflexive TA doesn't happen without it" (2022, p. 12).

Since applying to the master's program, I have known that, even if I do not plan to return to journalism in a traditional newsroom setting, storytelling would remain central to my professional path, whether in communications, partnerships, or capacity-building program management. Through this research, however, I have come to understand storytelling more deeply as a practice of amplifying Indigenous voices, highlighting community strengths, and centring stories of success and possibility. Doing this research-creation thesis has required unlearning aspects of my undergraduate journalism training and early professional experience, where I was taught to position myself as a detached observer, responsible for presenting the "five Ws" under constant deadline pressure. Putting in practice constructive journalism principles has pushed me to step back, acknowledge my background and position, and reconsider what it means to tell stories ethically and meaningfully.

This project has been an ongoing process of relationship-building with the community members in Inukjuak, with whom we have been collaborating. It has required demonstrating respect for their time, being transparent about our intentions, and consistently expressing appreciation for their feedback to ensure the story is told accurately. This approach represents a

significant shift from my journalistic training, which emphasized avoiding sharing drafts with sources before publication. In contrast, this collaborative and reciprocal process reframes storytelling as relational accountability rather than detached reporting.

Before we travelled to Inukjuak in October 2024, Professor Salas organized two online meetings with the community leaders behind the hydro project: Tommy Palliser, Sarah Lisa Kasudluak and Eric Atagotaaluk, as well as project advisor Chris Henderson, to plan our visit. These conversations were key. They allowed me to begin building a relationship (since I didn't know them beforehand) and to be transparent about the documentary's purpose and the additional multimedia pieces I would produce as part of my research-creation project. Being clear helped develop trust before arriving and felt aligned with the approach this work requires.

At that point, I felt confident that I would do a strong job during the trip. However, the process also became a lesson in humility. A couple of days before departure, I tested my camera, which I had not used in years, only to realize how outdated it felt and how rusty my technical skills had become. I struggled to remember basic settings such as shutter speed and aperture, which made me unexpectedly anxious (as noted in my journal). Below are some excerpts of my field notes:

### ***Notes from day 2***

*The feast was a very interesting experience; I think I'll never forget it. It was all new to me. I have never seen a traditional Inuit feast before. There were lots of people sharing foods on the floor. There was caribou and beluga blubber. I tried them both, but it felt too strong. I tried them raw and plain. Later, somebody told me you're supposed to eat them with aroma seasoning and soy sauce, which I didn't. I'll give it a try again if I can. People were very nice, welcoming and warm. I was tired again. The headache was gone, but it left me feeling drained and dizzy. At the feast, I took photos, but realized my camera is old now. I bought it in 2017. It was a bit dark inside. My photos look grainy or dark, so I took a few with my cellphone and videos too. I hope they work.*

A few times during our trip, I felt frustrated with myself for not having prepared more thoroughly. Yet this discomfort also became a moment of reflection. It reminded me of the importance of practicing empathy, not only toward those around me, but also toward myself. I was there not only to help produce a strong journalistic piece but also to learn about the place I was visiting, its people, culture, and history.

I did my best to focus on the positive aspects of the experience, the warmth of the community members and the generosity with which our team was welcomed. I recall Chris Henderson saying in the car that Inuit people will trust you unless you prove them wrong. That comment stayed with me, shaping how I understood the responsibility and the privilege of being there.

During the interviews (mostly conducted by Aphrodite Salas), Tommy Palliser and Sarah Lisa Kasudluak, two leaders behind the Innavik Hydro project, talked about how their relationship with Salas and her team has evolved over the years. They spoke about the trust that has been built and how pleased they were with the way their story has been represented in the first [multimedia project](#) Salas produced with another group of students back in 2021. From the outset of this project, I have been learning about the values of constructive journalism. We were welcomed into this space because a relationship had been cultivated over time, grounded in the idea of telling a story about a climate solution and its long-term impact on the community's future. Our partners trusted us with their perspectives and experiences, believing we would treat that information with care and responsibility. As we worked on the various journalistic pieces: the documentary, photo gallery, videos, and written feature, the process became an ongoing dialogue with our partners. It involved consistent back-and-forth communication to verify facts and ensure their voices were represented accurately and respectfully.

## *Reflections on reframing climate reporting through Indigenous-led solutions storytelling*

Growing up in Colombia, I was never taught about the deep knowledge Indigenous Peoples hold about the land, water, and animals. As mentioned earlier in this paper, most of what I heard focused on the challenges facing their communities and the so-called “obstacles” they posed to economic progress. For example, when they opposed multinational companies seeking to exploit their lands or when they travelled to major cities to protest for their rights.

When I came to Canada, I began learning about the three distinct Indigenous groups in this country: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Although I gained some understanding over time, it was not until I had the opportunity to work directly with an Indigenous organization that I developed a deeper appreciation of their knowledge systems and their leadership in addressing climate change. I have learned about how many communities are advancing clean energy projects and building the capacity to lead these initiatives on their own terms. In my current role as Senior Communications Manager at Indigenous Clean Energy, my work focuses on promoting our programs and encouraging participation whenever applications open. (Indigenous Clean Energy, n.d.) Beyond that, however, my role is fundamentally about amplifying Indigenous leadership in the energy transition, and, more broadly, within the climate action space. I strongly believe that any meaningful climate solution must involve First Peoples, who have long been stewards of the land and whose guiding principles, such as taking only what is needed and honouring the natural world, offer essential knowledge for addressing the climate crisis. Through this work, I have come to see the importance of reframing climate reporting to highlight Indigenous-led solutions, shifting the narrative from obstacles to leadership, resilience, and innovation.

Reframing climate reporting through Indigenous-led solutions storytelling also challenges dominant and damaging narratives in mainstream media (Robertson and Anderson, 2011), which

often focus on conflict and negative stereotypes. By highlighting Indigenous leadership, storytelling can foster a more positive, hence constructive, perspective of climate action. It demonstrates that climate solutions are not only technological but also cultural and societal, rooted in the deep connections between people, place, and worldviews.

This work has also prompted personal reflection on my own positionality as a non-Indigenous researcher and communicator. It has taught me the value of listening deeply, approaching communities with humility, and acknowledging the limits of my own understanding. I have learned that amplifying Indigenous voices requires patience, care, and respect for the relationships we build. Ultimately, reframing climate reporting in this way is not just about telling different stories; it is about transforming how we understand climate action itself. It is about centring Indigenous knowledge, celebrating their leadership, and inviting audiences to recognize the vital contributions First Peoples make in building a sustainable future.

### ***Reflections on reconciliation through reciprocal Indigenous storytelling practices***

Duncan McCue writes about how extractive practices in journalism have long harmed Indigenous communities, between careless reporting, limited to no follow-up and zero accountability. (McCue, 2022, p. 4) In traditional journalism schools, or at least in my case, students are trained to “get the story out and move on to the next one,” but this project has taught me a different approach grounded in reciprocity, patience, and adaptation.

I grew up in a culture where giving is meaningful. I was taught never to arrive empty-handed. From the moment I was invited to Inukjuak to be part of this project, I thought about what I could bring as a gesture of thanks for welcoming us, for giving us their time, and for sharing their stories.

As the project progressed, the idea of giving back took on a deeper meaning. While developing my pieces, I constantly reflected on my words, the footage captured, and the story we wanted to tell. I have shared drafts with our partners, seeking their input and asking questions whenever I felt hesitant about a fact or detail. Even the logistical aspects of the project—like planning the documentary premiere at the community high school—required patience. We had to reschedule the premiere three times, which at first felt frustrating. Because we wanted to ensure that everyone involved in the documentary could be present, we needed to find a date that worked not only for our partners but also for Uquutaq High School, which was hosting the event. Initially, the screening was planned for Friday, October 17. However, on the Monday of that week, I realized I had forgotten to confirm the date with one of our partners. As a result, we decided to reschedule and asked the school to accommodate a new date. The event was then moved to November 7. That week, another partner let us know she would be unable to attend. Once again, we did not feel comfortable proceeding without her. We reached out to the school for a second time to request another change. By then, I could sense the principal’s growing disappointment with the repeated schedule changes, and I shared that feeling. Having been assigned to coordinate the premiere, I felt responsible, especially as things were not unfolding as smoothly as I had hoped.

After a few conversations with Aphrodite, who gently reminded me of a Greek saying, “every delay is for the best,” I began to trust that things would ultimately evolve as they were meant to. Over time, I came to understand that prioritizing our partners’ availability was not just a logistical concern but an ethical commitment. Their schedules and responsibilities mattered and accommodating them was part of practicing genuine reciprocity.

Rearranging plans within our already busy calendars also became, in some ways, a decolonizing practice. Western mindsets often condition us to adhere rigidly to schedules and productivity-driven timelines. Yet working alongside Indigenous partners calls for a willingness to slow down, to remain flexible, and to prioritize relationships over deadlines. As McCue observes in his chapter on “Indian time,” alternative understandings of time challenge the urgency and rigidity that often shape Western practices.

Eventually, we decided to meet with our partners online to discuss the situation together. We explained that their presence was important to us because they were central to the documentary and because students and other attendees would likely have questions for them. Since we had already postponed once due to someone’s absence, we felt it was only fair to postpone again when another key participant was unable to attend. The event finally took place on Thursday, December 4, 2025, and it was very well received by the students. Although one of our partners was unable to join us at the end, the screening and discussion were engaging for those present.

As mentioned above, as the project progressed, the concept of reciprocity took on a greater meaning and played a central role. This experience has shown me that reconciliation in storytelling is not just about the story itself; it is about reciprocal relationships, respect, and giving back. Practicing reciprocity challenges the extractive approaches that have long characterized journalism and allowed me to honour the time, stories, and trust shared by our partners in Inukjuak. Scholars have highlighted *reciprocity* as a key component in building trust (Lewis, S. et al., 2014), a value deeply connected to Indigenous worldviews.

*Giving back is not a difficult concept, yet one of the most egregious actions of Western research into the lives of Indigenous peoples is the negligence of this ethic. Giving back*

*does not only mean dissemination of findings; it means creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research.* (Kovach, as cited in McCue, 2022)

In her book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (2017), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson defines the alternative to extractivism as “deep reciprocity.” As discussed earlier, journalism has been characterized by colonial, extractive practices. Therefore, to advance reconciliation and respond to the TRC’s Call to Action to media, journalists, journalism education institutions, and educators have a responsibility to challenge these extractive practices by centring Indigenous voices. This involves rethinking how stories are shared, and ensuring that journalism becomes a tool for empowerment, accountability, and true reciprocity rather than exploitation.

## **5 Conclusion**

This research-creation thesis has been both a learning journey in new approaches to journalism and a process of self-reflection. The multimedia project went beyond technical execution. As I discussed throughout this paper, my initial anxiety about performance gradually transformed into a deeper understanding of what truly matters in this work: listening, openness to learning and unlearning, and building meaningful relationships. Additionally, writing this thesis allowed me to find the connections between constructive journalism and the decolonization of reporting, showing how Indigenous stories can be shared ethically through their own perspectives while also contributing to reconciliation.

The multimedia pieces I produced for this research-creation thesis (video series, photo gallery and written feature) challenged me in many ways. I went through multiple rounds of video editing: reordering clips, adjusting details, and finding ways to complement and expand

what was shared in the documentary and the written feature. Writing the feature was not part of my original plan, but I embraced it as a challenge despite having a full plate. Writing it reminded me of how much I used to enjoy it and gave me a clearer understanding of the clean energy project as a whole and, beyond that, a reflection of much of the way we choose to frame our stories can have a significant impact.

I am beyond grateful for my professional journey and the ways it has transformed over the past decade, particularly for the opportunity to work closely with Indigenous communities. The reflections shared above only capture a small portion of the depth of this personal and professional experience. When I reflect on my initial research questions and, based on the evidence presented in my analysis of interviews and observations throughout this project, I can say that my findings suggest CJ can indeed function as a decolonial approach to reporting on Indigenous-led climate solutions. By centring Indigenous leadership and honouring their future-oriented perspectives rooted in care for the next generations, a CJ approach moves beyond negative narratives and instead highlights strength, resilience, and self-determination.

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## 7 Appendix

### Appendix A: Written Feature Story

**Title:** Canada's largest off-grid Inuit-owned hydro project replaces most diesel in Arctic community

**Deck:** Inukjuak's community-led hydro project shows how Indigenous ownership can drive a just energy transition in the Arctic.

**Byline:** Lina Forero



*Innavik Hydro on the Innuksuak River. This 7.5-MW, Inuit-owned facility is Canada's largest off-grid hydropower project. (Photo by Lina Forero)*

It was mid-November 2023 in Inukjuak, Nunavik, when the unthinkable happened.

Nine snowmobiles crashed through the ice and plunged into the dark, Arctic waters.

Miraculously, all the drivers, who had been out hunting caribou, managed to scramble to safety.

Three skidoos, however, disappeared beneath the surface, too deep to retrieve.

Eric Atagotaaluk, who has spent most of his life in the community, says he has never seen anything like it. The ice — long the foundation of Inuit life — is no longer predictable.

“We used to think that the ice was thick enough to go on it by then,” he says, “but even the fall was so mild that the lakes’ ice was still very thin. It’s hard to predict now because of climate change. It’s getting scary.”

For Inuit hunters, the consequences of climate change stretch far beyond damaged or lost snowmobiles. Thinning, unreliable ice conditions threaten not only their safety but also the community’s access to traditional country food—such as caribou, seal and fish—central to Inuit cultural identity and essential to physical health and emotional well-being.



*Community members in Inukjuak gathered in October 2024 to share a feast of traditional food. (Photo by Lina Forero)*

“We depend on our country food regularly,” says Tommy Palliser, President of the Pituvik Landholding Corporation, and a hunter himself. “But now we can’t hunt comfortably. We’re always worrying about the ice — something we never had to think about before.”

Thinning ice is shortening hunting seasons and making them significantly more dangerous.

Aware of these changing patterns, the community began to think about the world they will leave for their children and grandchildren. Protecting the land — and the ability to live from it — means finding ways to adapt that honour tradition while embracing new possibilities.

“That's when we started becoming concerned about it and started learning that we have the opportunity to change that. We're fortunate to have a river that has continuous flow throughout the year, even in wintertime, which allowed us to develop a hydro project,” explains Atagotaaluk, Director of Pituvik Sarvaq Energie Inc., which oversees the Innavik Hydro project, an Inuit-led run-of-river hydroelectric plant that is replacing diesel with clean local power.

### **A clean energy dream realized**

Since the 1960s, Inukjuak — ᐃᓄᖅᐱᓄᖅ in Inuktitut, meaning "The Giant" — has relied on millions of litres of imported diesel for electricity, heating and hot water. Its geographic isolation made the idea of a cleaner energy future seem like a distant dream.

Now, that dream is becoming a reality with the Innavik Project, a 7.5-megawatt run-of-river hydroelectric facility, which has reduced the community's reliance on diesel by 80 per cent, according to Atagotaaluk. Residential electricity needs, including home heating, have now been fully transitioned to hydro power.

Commercial and institutional buildings — about 20 per cent of the total demand — still rely on diesel. Chris Henderson, the founding executive of Indigenous Clean Energy and the project's primary advisor, explains that converting larger facilities, such as schools, remains challenging because their heating systems are more complex and costly to replace.

Pituvik Landholding Corporation is currently looking for funding to complete those upgrades.

Unlike large hydro dams, [run-of-river systems](#) generate electricity from a river's natural flow without creating major reservoirs, reducing environmental disruption.



*Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA) participants tour the Innavik Hydro site in Inukjuak, October 2024. (Photo by Lina Forero)*

### **The trust-building journey behind the project**

The Innavik project required years of environmental studies, negotiations and community consultation.

“You have to study the environment, understand the wildlife and bring the community on board. You have to find partners, negotiate with the local utility (Hydro-Québec), get governments on side and secure funding,” says Chris Henderson, founding executive of Indigenous Clean Energy and the project’s advisor. “It takes fortitude to push through all of that. But ultimately, it’s the community that makes it possible. Without the community, none of it happens.”

One of the biggest challenges was ensuring the safety of Inukjuak's drinking water throughout construction and after the hydro project became operational. Project leaders described a lengthy process of community consultation and communication to make sure that all concerns were addressed. Without any previous or similar northern hydro examples to show the community, they were asking residents to trust in a vision that had never been proven in a place like Inukjuak, making the project a real risk, but one that ultimately paid off.

“We were trying to look for other examples or other projects that are on their drinking water source, and we couldn’t find any in Canada. So, we sort of used ourselves as guinea pigs... hoping that this project would be as minimally impactful as possible to our drinking water source,” reveals Palliser.

Palliser said many community members feared that construction and the hydro project itself could pollute the river with mercury, affecting both the water supply and fish.

Sarah Lisa Kasudluak, vice president of the Pituvik Landholding Corporation, also recalls that many of the concerns focused on land, water, and animals. “Their concerns were right, and we addressed each question with an answer with consultants, specialists... each question that they had, we made sure to get the right answer. And that was how things got rolling.”

Updates were shared through the local radio station, Tuulliup Nipingat FM — the community’s primary source of information.

“It is an outlet for the community, for all that's happening. That's our number one source for information — It's our information station.”

During construction of the Innavik Project, a team member visited the local radio station each week to update the community on daily water-quality testing. Since completion, testing has moved to a weekly schedule with public updates provided annually, according to Atagotaaluk. The project team still submits weekly water-quality reports to the Quebec government, and any unusual results are immediately communicated to the community via radio.

“In 2019, before the project began, we studied the fish species in the area and assessed their health,” he explains. “We conducted two fish surveys,” says Atagotaaluk. “The first was in September 2009 and the second in July 2019.” He recalls that each lasted about two weeks.

“Now that the facility is in operation, we’re required to conduct follow-up studies at the five-year, 10-year and 15-year marks to track any potential contamination.”

Still, some community members have mixed feelings about the project.

Former Inukjuak mayor Pauloosie Kasudluak feels the initial fish studies should have been conducted for a longer period to gather more data.

He explains that the river is home to many species — lake trout, brook trout, whitefish, Arctic char, suckerfish and others. Species like Arctic char may migrate upstream, but not every year. Kasudluak worries that important information about these fish and their movements may have been missed due to the short study period.

While fish studies were conducted in 2019, additional research is ongoing to assess the environmental impacts of building a dam on permafrost in Inukjuak. Researchers at the University of Montreal are continuing environmental monitoring, including an assessment of the impacts of infrastructure development on permafrost.

Atagotaaluk says the concerns were understandable.

“I understand in a way they were afraid that we were going to damage the river. We ourselves were questioning it, even though we were part of the development team. We were kind of unsure. Are we risking damaging the river? It’s our water source. There’s fish there. We still use it for fishing.”

Yet over time, he says, the community has been learning that it is possible to develop a hydro project responsibly.

“As hunters and fishers who depend on the land, we had fears about the environmental impacts.

And now that [the project] has become a reality. We're starting to see, at least in the earlier stages, that impacts have been very minimal so far,” Atagotaaluk says.

### **A milestone of community pride**

Another marker of this transition to cleaner energy is the quiet. The constant hum of a diesel-powered generator, which not long ago characterized the community’s energy production, has finally faded into silence.



*Inukjuak’s old power plant, which stored millions of litres of diesel for heating and electricity. (Photo by Lina Forero)*

“This is the power plant that is no longer running since our run-of-the-river has been producing electricity,” says Kasudluak. “This plant burned millions of litres a year to sustain the community’s electrical needs and heating. It was our main source of electricity.”

The Innavik Hydro project, fully operational since the fall of 2023, is cutting emissions and stabilizing long-term energy costs.

“We are very proud,” she says. “We’re not 100 per cent yet — but we’re getting there.”

### **Learning by doing**

It took 20 years for this project to finally get off the ground — so long that many people began to doubt it would ever happen.

“There was a time, during the development stage, when it was kind of dormant, when there was nothing happening. It was people saying that it wouldn't happen at all,” recalls Atagotaaluk

He remembers that at the beginning, they had no idea how to develop a project like this, but thanks to the guidance and support of the people around them, they learned as they went. And because it was such a learning experience, they are now eager to share it with others.

“With all the challenges we went through, it makes you want to share that experience,” Atagotaaluk reflects. “If someone else is going to go through this, we’re happy to share what we learned and the challenges we faced.”

Patience was perhaps the most important factor. As Sarah Lisa puts it, “You have to be hopeful if you want things to change. I think patience is key to that.”

### **Powering economic growth**

Rooted in the community’s commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the project is expected to create lasting environmental, social and economic benefits for nearly 2,000 residents.

Under a 40-year power purchase agreement signed in 2019, the community sells surplus electricity to Hydro-Québec.

Palliser says the project is projected to generate about \$4 million annually in its first seven years, then about \$2 million per year for the following 15 years, before declining to roughly \$1 million annually.



*View of community homes in Inukjuak, Nunavik. (Photo by Lina Forero)*

Those revenues — expected to total tens of millions of dollars over four decades — will be reinvested locally.

“We want to use that money as seed funding,” Palliser says.

Their vision is to grow the initial \$4 million to \$40 million by attracting additional resources and supporting local organizations — all while ensuring a reliable, clean energy supply that can sustain Inukjuak’s growth for the next four decades.

The project's revenue will support educational, social and infrastructure programs, as well as traditional cultural initiatives for children, youth and elders.

One such initiative is Unaaq, the Men’s Association of Inukjuak. Founded in 2004, the program pairs young men with Elders to reconnect them with traditional skills and cultural knowledge.

“This is where our young men are taught traditional carpentry skills and how to make traditional equipment they will use throughout the winter, as part of the programs we teach,” Palliser says, standing in Unaaq’s workshop. “They learn how to use it to provide country food for their families and the community. It builds pride.”



*Charlie Elijassiapik of Inukjuak's Unaaq Men's Association builds a miniature sled, sharing traditional hunting and tool-making knowledge with youth. This is one of the many initiatives the community plans to support with Innavik Hydro revenues. (Photo by Lina Forero)*

Like the Unaaq, other initiatives aim to strengthen intergenerational knowledge-sharing and cultural continuity.

“We will decide on how we want to use the – whether it's for traditional practices, training, cultural activities, our language protection, our own [Inuktitut] language,” explains Atagotaaluk.

Kasudluak also shares her dream of having a dedicated space where everyone can learn about traditional knowledge and come together for community events. “I always talk about the cultural centre, which can also be a healing centre,” she says. “With the funding we are going to be receiving, there's the social aspect, the education aspect, and the socio-economic development aspect.”

“This is going to be a big change for the community, and it will really enhance our lives.”

## **Partnerships that made it possible**

The \$125 million project was financed through a mix of loans, grants and partnerships. In 2020, Pituvik entered a 50–50 partnership with Innergex, a Québec-based renewable energy producer with experience working alongside Indigenous communities.

“We found a partner experienced in renewable energy projects — not just hydro — with a history of working alongside Indigenous communities,” says Atagotaaluk. “That experience mattered because we needed someone who understood our priorities.”

Innergex supported the Pituvik Landholding Corporation in navigating the power purchase agreement with Hydro-Québec, the construction process, and environmental assessments required to move the project forward.

## **The path to 2030**

For Inukjuak, the shift to hydro is not only about energy — it’s about sovereignty, resilience and building safer futures for generations to come.

“It’s a very exciting thing for our community, and for future generations too. Now, as the world moves toward cleaner energy, I think we have an important role to play,” says Aleashia Echalook, a mother of three and the youngest board member of the Pituvik Landholding Corporation.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the corporation is establishing a trust fund and committee to manage revenues.

“We want to make sure that we’re responsible, that we spend the money responsibly and transparently to make sure that the community understands and is a part of the decision-making process on what the money will be used for,” adds Palliser.

The community is also exploring next steps — partnering with Concordia University’s Voltage program to research electric and hybrid vehicle options and working with Quebec’s transport ministry to secure funding for electric minibuses.

But their plan goes beyond vehicles: they envision building a complete local EV ecosystem — training technicians, creating a dedicated garage and installing charging stations to serve as a hub for all electric vehicles in the community.

“We want to be net-zero by 2030,” Palliser says. “And I think we’re off to a good start.”

## Appendix B: Photo Gallery

### Photo 1



**Caption:** Sarah Lisa Kasudluak, vice president of Pituvik Landholding Corporation, beams as she looks out over the land in her home community of Inukjuak in Arctic Quebec. Through the efforts of Kasudluak and her colleagues, the town has replaced diesel fuel with clean hydroelectric power.

**Photo 2**



**Caption:** Josie Nastapoka, a hunter and member of the Unaaq Men's Association of Inukjuak, shudders as he recalls an ill-fated hunting trip when he and two friends crashed through thin ice on their snowmobiles. According to the World Wildlife Foundation, the Arctic is warming faster than any other region on Earth, at a rate of three times the global average.

### Photo 3



**Caption:** Eric Atagotaaluk reflects as he walks on the land outside his cabin near the Arctic village of Inukjuak in northern Quebec. As project director of Pituvik Sarvaq Energie, he says there were times over the years when it was unclear if the Innavik project would move forward. Now completed and operational as of winter 2024, Innavik has become a source of pride for the community.

**Photo 4**



**Caption:** President of the Pituvik Landholding Corporation, Tommy Palliser says the Inuit-owned Innavik will sell extra power to Hydro-Québec for a projected profit of approximately one million dollars per year. Palliser says the money will be used for training programs and community infrastructure projects chosen by the people of Inukjuak.

**Photo 5**



**Caption:** Charlie Elijassiapik, a hunter and member of the Unaaq Men’s Association in Inukjuak, builds a miniature sled at the association’s wood workshop. Unaaq creates opportunities for elders to share traditional hunting skills and tool-making knowledge with youth in Inukjuak—and is one of many programs the community plans to support with Innavik Hydro revenues.

**Photo 6**



**Caption:** A canoe rests on the shores of the Innuksuak River in Inukjuak, where the river meets Hudson Bay. This community of nearly 2,000 people is transitioning to clean energy, with about 90 per cent of homes already switched to electric heating through the Innavik Hydro project. The community aims to reach net zero by 2030.

**Photo 7**



**Caption:** A danger sign marks the entrance of the Innavik Hydro facility in Inukjuak, Quebec, on a crisp and windy day in October 2024.

**Photo 8**



**Caption:** The Innalik Hydro facility in Inukjuak. The community sells excess power to Hydro-Québec under a 40-year agreement, bringing in roughly \$90 million that will go toward local projects.

**Photo 9**



**Caption:** The Innavik Hydro facility on the Innuksuak River, October 2024. This 7.5-megawatt, Inuit-owned facility is the largest off-grid hydropower project in Canada. Photo by Lina Forero as part of a documentary on Inukjuak's clean energy transition, created for her master's thesis with Concordia journalism professor Aphrodite Salas.

**Photo 10**



**Caption:** Lizzie Lucy Inukpuk carries her baby in an amauti outside the Northern Store in Inukjuak, October 2024. The traditional Inuit parka features a built-in pouch below the hood that can hold babies until about age two.

**Photo 11**



**Caption:** Inuk woman Maryann Kutchaka carries her baby at a community feast in Inukjuak, October 2024. The gathering at Pinguavik Recreation Centre features traditional country foods, including caribou and whale. Climate change is making it harder and more dangerous to hunt as ice becomes less stable and animals change their migration routes.

**Photo 12**



**Caption:** Homes and power lines in Inukjuak, northern Quebec, October 2024. The Inuit community has successfully replaced diesel power with clean hydroelectricity in most homes and buildings through a new grid installed by the community-led Innavik Hydro project, which has been operational since November 2024.

**Photo 13**



**Caption:** The old diesel power plant in Inukjuak shut down since Innavik Hydro became operational. This facility once burned nearly three million litres of fuel each year—a dependency now replaced by clean, community-owned hydroelectricity.

**Photo 14**



**Caption:** Rusting diesel tanks in Inukjuak mark the end of an era. Before the community transitioned to clean hydropower, these storage tanks held millions of litres of diesel fuel needed to heat homes and generate electricity.

**Photo 15**



**Caption:** Aleashia Echalook, mother of three and the youngest board member of the Pituvik Landholding Corporation, carries her three-month-old baby, Dolly, in her amauti as she walks through Inukjuak. She reflects on how the Innavik Hydro project will create opportunities for future generations in her community.

**Photo 16**



**Caption:** With her baby Dolly snug in her amauti, Aleashia Echalook stands outside her home looking toward the Innuksuak river. As the youngest board member of Pituvik Landholding Corporation, the mother of three is hopeful about what the new hydro project will bring for the next generation.

**Photo 17**



**Caption:** A group from the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA) tours the Innalik Hydro site in Inukjuak, October 2024. Representatives from Iceland, Norway, Greenland, Alaska, and Nunavut gathered to hear from local leaders about the challenges and successes of bringing clean energy to this Arctic community.

### **Appendix C: Video Series Links and Transcripts**

**[Eric Atagotaaluk](#)** (YouTube Link)

**Director For Pituvik Sarvaq Energy Inc.**

**Length:** 2 min 39 sec

**Music:** *A New Adventure* by Greyson Roy Gritt (SOCAN 698480974). Licensed through Nagamo Publishing.

## **Transcript**

My name is Eric Atagotaaluk. I'm the director for Sarvaq Energy Inc., which is the new subsidiary of Pituvik Landholding Corporation that operates or manages the Hydro project, Innavik Hydro.

Well, we've been working on that project for so long... There was a time during the development stage where it was kind of dormant. There was nothing that was happening. It didn't seem that it would happen at all.

Now its construction is completed. Now, it's operational since about a year now.

There's a lot of mixed emotions. Being owner of the project, we're expecting some revenue from the project. That's a sense of pride where we'll be able to decide as a community on how we want to use these revenues generated by the project. There's a lot of pride in that.

Well, this project is going to be generating revenue, because we're selling the electricity we're producing to the utility corporation Hydro-Québec. It's a 40-year power purchase agreement with Hydro Quebec, and in those 40 years, Pituvik is going to be receiving \$90 million.

We just didn't want to sit back and watch them try and develop our renewable energy project. We wanted to be involved. We had no clue how to be involved, get involved, how to develop a project like that. But we knew that this was an opportunity for us to be hands-on and develop our own project and then become owner to help us generate more financial resources for our community, so that we could have something to reinvest back our community, too for our community growth, whether it's spiritually, financially, or any way possible. That's what motivated us.

We wanted to create sustainable development in our community, and this was an opportunity for us.

Now that it's not only answering to, it's going to provide financial support or generate revenue for our communities, we're also tackling climate change now. That's a bonus to us.

**[Sarah Lisa Kasudluak](#)** (YouTube Link)

**Vice President, Pituvik Landholding Corporation**

**Length:** 2 min 17 sec

**Music:** *Skipping Rocks* by Jesse Diamond Doreen, Charlotte Qamaniq, Cynthia Pitsiulak and Tasheena Lynn Sarazin (SOCAN 717301863; SOCAN 891184902; SOCAN 780233549; SOCAN 813815544). Licensed through Nagamo Publishing.

## **Transcript**

I am Sarah Lisa Kasudluak. I'm currently the vice president for Pituvik Landholding Corporation.

I'm a visionary... For me, it's easy to envision the future. I am able to see what we would need, a pillar, a beacon to go to, to be able to, let's see, let's go for there, let's aim for that.

A lot of that comes with the values that I was taught by my parents, by my grandparents to be supportive, help when there's help needed, to be always ready to give.

It makes me feel very, very proud of the project because this is going to really enable us to have programs that we want to use, how we want to use it, and it's going to be for our people. So, this is going to be a big change for the community and really, it will really enhance our lives.

It'll give us a resource to be able to say, this is what we want. It'll give us the power to make the right changes on what we need.

It's giving us a tool that we never had. To be able to access what we envision.

We need a change. We need a better change for our people, for our future, for our children, because our communities are growing so fast. There are more kids than elders nowadays, but you have to be able to think community, not just for yourself.

When you're in a position like being a leader, you have to, most of the time, take yourself out of that. You have to be the one to represent your people and what they need.

## **Tommy Palliser** (YouTube Link)

### **President of Pituvik Landholding Corporation**

**Length:** 2 min 28 sec

**Music:** *Submerge* by Jesse Diamond, Doreen Sarazin, and Tasheena Lynn Sarazin (SOCAN 717301863; SOCAN 813815544). Licensed through Nagamo Publishing.

## **Transcript**

My name is Tommy Palliser. I'm the president of the Pituvik Landholding Corporation of Inukjuak.

We certainly will be planning a lot of good things for the community with this hydro project. And also, just doing our part, you know, to fight climate change. That's the main purpose of this project. But then there's like other benefits... The income that's going to be generated for the community to develop programs, social programs, cultural programs, educational programs, infrastructure projects.

So, it's a really win-win scenario we're having here. We certainly have, you know done a lot of good work together among our partners. You know, certainly a good 15, almost 20 years in the making.

We can see here [showing in the map] this is our community of Inukjuak and 10 kilometers upriver, that's where our hydro project is located.

There was a lot of community concerns about the project being upriver, especially any potential impacts on our actual drinking water for our community. So that's why we had a lot of consultations, and you know people, you know from outside the community, you know helping us, advise on how to proceed with the project, making sure that there's minimal impacts to our river, to our drinking water source, and you know making sure that the community's concerns and questions were all heard and answered.

It's such a relief to make sure you know that this project is realized, you know, and having the community benefit from it in so many ways.

And we want to make sure that we're responsible, that we spend the money responsibly and transparently to make that the community understands and is a part of the decision-making process on what the money will be used.

We want to be sure that we use a lot of that money, a seed money, to attract more funding. So we're hopefully going to try and turn that four million to 40 million, just by attracting more funding and supporting our local organizations. And now, we're happy to share our experiences, our lessons learned, our challenges, and hopefully help other communities realize their renewable energy projects, too.

[Aleashia Echalook](#) (YouTube Link)

**Pituvik Landholding Corporation, Board Member**

**Length:** 1 min 15 sec

**Music:** *1997* by Beatrice Liina Deer and Mark Andrew Wheaton (SOCAN 456779894; SOCAN 701514687). Licensed through Nagamo Publishing.

### **Transcript**

My name is Aleashia Echalook. I'm from here. I was born in Montreal, but I was raised here. I'm the youngest board member at Pituvik, and I think I play a pretty important role within the board and the organization.

Being a mom, being a woman, I try to help my community through being part of organizations like Pituvik. especially for my kids and the younger generation.

It's a very exciting thing for our community, in fact, for the future generations, too. We're in a remote area, it was all diesel but seeing the world trying to move towards cleaner energy, I think we play a huge role with the hydro project.

I think we're kind of role models, in a sense, for other communities to move towards clean energy.

[Chris Henderson](#) (YouTube Link)

### **Project Advisor**

**Length:** 2 min 1 sec

**Music:** *A Very Warm Welcome* by Justin Delorme (SOCAN 756112158). Licensed through Nagamo Publishing.

### **Transcript**

Hi, I'm Chris Henderson.

For this project, for the Innalik project, I am the advisor, clean energy advisor, to the Pituvik Landholding Corporation through my development company Lumos Energy, and it was a real honor to do that.

It started around 2006, when I first met a couple of people from the community, Tommy and Michael Kasudluak, and they said they wanted to do a renewable energy project. They said, well why don't you come up and have a look? And after that, it's been a 20-year love affair.

I'm in awe in terms of how the community stayed together and we did it together, and that's where the love comes from. But I'm also in awe of the people that built this. This is really tough stuff to do in a very tough environment, especially through the Arctic winters.

And so, when I tell people what this was about, it was a different future. It was making sure that not only the future was cleaner and away from diesel, but it had community leadership, community ownership. Without community, this doesn't happen. Without community you don't have the fortitude to go forward. Because you have to do so many things, thousands of things to make a project like this happen.

Every ounce of power, every electron, every kilowatt in this community was powered by diesel until two years ago. And what that meant was that the power to heat the community was diesel, the power for the lighting in the community and all the systems was diesel. The power to transport vehicles was diesel and so therefore, there's a huge amount of greenhouse gas

emissions, a huge number of costs and that diesel is being shipped all the way from Montreal around Ungava Bay down here once or twice a year.

Now, what the community has done is replace all the power, virtually all the power with clean renewable energy, virtually all of the heating with clean, renewable energy.

And the plan the community has going forward is to replace most of the transport with clean and renewable energy so that means the community of Inukjuak has reduced more of their reliance on diesel and more of the per capita emissions of greenhouse gases than any other single community in Canada ever will. Now, that's a story I know they'll be telling their grandchildren.

### Appendix D: Behind the Scenes – Photos with Team in Inukjuak

The team included Professor Aphrodite Salas, CTV reporter Luca Caruso Moro, Chris Henderson from Indigenous Clean Energy, and myself, Lina Forero.

