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Article

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Abstract: *The release of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report titled "Honouring the Truth and Reconciling for the Future" has evoked a persistent call within learning institutions to Indigenize education, decolonize systems of power, and reconcile Indigenous–settler relations and knowledge. Within this context, the TRC's "Calls to Action" are frequently invoked by institutions attempting to achieve just action. While reconciliation remains a complex, political, and settler-driven endeavour, there has been an effort to "fill the gap" with Indigenous presence, knowledge, and students within academic institutions. Given the limited research on the gendered aspect of reconciliation, our paper contributes to this conversation by examining the impact of the "filling effort" on our critical community work and the ways in which we as Indigenous women engage in reconciliation. By this, we mean the ways we live and understand reconciliation by looking inward toward each other as women, to learn from each other, and to lift each other up. Through a relational accountability methodology and mixed methods (Wilson 2008), we draw strength from our relational and resurgence approaches in an effort to capture our commitment, challenges, and transformative vision of reconciliation as Indigenous women in the academy.*

Introduction

The release of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report "Honouring the Truth and Reconciling for the Future" has evoked a persistent call within learning institutions to Indigenize, reconcile, and decolonize (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018). Informed by the experiences of Residential Schools survivors and those impacted by intergenerational trauma, the TRC's 94 "Calls to Action" call upon all levels of government and all Canadians to engage in truth-telling and reconciliation work (TRC 2015). The TRC is an Indigenous-led organization that was mandated in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (TRC 2015). The TRC's mission is to ensure that all Canadians learn about Indian residential school survivors and their families' experiences, as well as those who did not survive Indian residential schools. Many survivors share that they suffered much physical, emotional, and sexual abuse while being taken away from the families and communities

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that loved and nurtured them. The TRC's hope is that the uncovering of the truth about residential schools could lead to reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settlers by re-learning our shared history.

As described by Gaudry and Lorenz, universities are eager to "undertake a concerted program of reconciliation, to correct the historical misuse of education in Canadian colonial endeavors" (2018, 220). However, the calls for truth and reconciliation within the academy have produced few structural changes or necessary long-term strategic actions (Daigle 2019; Suzack 2019). Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples are increasingly being hired (often to meet equity, diversity, or inclusion quotas) for roles within the academy to perform reconciliation work. With the need to check the "reconciliation" box, the academy has increased its demand for Indigenous faculty and staff (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018; Treleaven 2018).

Many scholars (Borrows 2018; Coulthard 2013; Daigle 2019; Regan 2010; Simpson 2014) have brought a much-needed critique to the reconciliation process in Canada. The resounding consensus of this body of critical scholarship is that reconciliation remains a complex, political, and settler-driven endeavour, and that universities are not immune to such complexities (Suzack 2019). Universities are necessarily involved in reconciliation efforts, and there has been an effort to "fill the gap" with Indigenous presence within academic institutions.

This "filling" effort has highlighted ongoing systemic pitfalls, barriers, and structural injustices. Dr Cheryl Suzack (2019) points out that this is not new. After 17 years of teaching as an Indigenous professor, she offers an Indigenous feminist perspective in "How the Academic Institution Silences Indigenous Faculty: Top 10 Strategies." These strategies include not having Indigenous people in positions of power; putting Indigenous people in the academy in roles that ensure that they speak to the inequities that exist, thus putting them at risk and in vulnerable situations; settler scholars not speaking up when inequities and racialized conversations are happening; not recognizing the immense amount of emotional, mental, and spiritual labour that Indigenous peoples endure in the academy; excluding historical and contemporary Indigenous experiences; and perpetuating the myth that Indigenous scholarship is inferior to Western scholarship (Suzack 2019). Given the limited research on the gendered aspect of reconciliation, we wanted to contribute to this conversation by examining the ways in which the "filling" is a form of disruption that distances us as Indigenous women from critical community work and reconciliation. Kim TallBear, as quoted in Nick Estes' *Our History is the Future*, posits that "caretaking labor is often gendered, and is seen as the work of women" (2019, 19).

The purpose of our research is to examine reconciliation through a gendered, critical Indigenous women's lens. From our visits and conversations over the past year at various "reconciliation"-framed events, we shared our struggles and recognized similar experiences

as Indigenous women scholars at the University of Alberta.[1] Through our struggles, we carried various worries and concerns about reconciliatory narratives and actions. We heard similar concerns from people within our broader communities: How does reconciliation lead to tokenism? Who, exactly, needs to reconcile? Who is reconciliation for, and how do we make it our own? Do we even want to make it our own? As three Indigenous women studying and working within the same institution;[2] in different faculties; and with different roles, histories, and expectations for our own work, we felt it would be invaluable to come together to explore the expectations of reconciliation that we encounter and what our roles as Indigenous women scholars in academic positions entails in the era of "reconciliation."

We have questioned how reconciliation efforts may take on different values and require different roles for Indigenous women in the academy. For instance, we have wondered to what extent, if any, reconciliation labour for women in the academy is expected to be performative and in which ways Indigenous women make it meaningful. In "The Spectacle of Reconciliation: On (the) Unsettling Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Academy," Michelle Daigle affirms that

> Indigenous self-determination is denied as mandates are set without proper consultation and consent while the onus of implementation is placed on Indigenous peoples as they are routinely asked to lend their time and expertise to carry out hollow mandates for Indigenous content. Moreover, gendered colonial power dynamics get reproduced through such mandates as Indigenous women, queer, and Two-Spirit people—oftentimes those occupying more precarious and untenured positions with lower pay in the university—are disproportionately taking on the burdens of such labor. (2019, 712)

Our hope with this article is to share our conversations in relation to reconciliation from Indigenous women's perspectives. In doing so, our aim is to work collectively toward a reconciliation that is meaningful and long-lasting, while recognizing our individual gifts as held in our teachings. Through this project, we asked "How can we contribute to a reconciliation process that evolves over time, taking into account the reality of what is needed in our communities and institutions and the far-reaching, genocidal effects of settler colonialism?" These effects are systemic and structural (Pidgeon 2016); therefore, this work

1 "Reconciliation refers to a process of building and sustaining respectful, ethical relationships between Indigenous peoples and the rest of Canada based on mutual understanding and respect. Universities across Canada have responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action in ways relevant to their institutional context. The University of Alberta has responded with an emphasis on capacity building and foundational change in support of Indigenous initiatives, programming, and personnel with a vision for making the University of Alberta a welcoming place for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. The university's EDI initiatives will endeavor to support the principles of the Indigenous strategic plan and prioritize cross-collaboration with it." (University of Alberta Strategic Plan)

2 When the research for this article was being conducted, all three authors were employed by the University of Alberta. However, during the manuscript preparation, the third author relocated to another academic institution.

will require perseverance and constant vigilance. The work will be constant, taking place in our homes, bodies, workplaces, and institutions. Reconciliation will be an ongoing process. As Indigenous women, we are committed to this work because it is important and because it is not just about us; it is about the wellbeing of the seven generations to follow. We do not have the privilege of walking away.

We understand our communities' strengths and needs and our own roles in this work but found ourselves deepening our thinking and asking a series of interconnected questions. For instance, how can we approach this work while considering relational accountability and recognizing the small acts that are necessary? Who should decide, and how should these decisions be made? In what ways do tokenistic gestures create feelings of isolation, burnout, overburdening, self-judgement, and lateral violence? Considering these questions, then, reconciliation is not an immediate goal; rather, it must be an ongoing process that helps to achieve decolonization and the disruption of settler colonialism. For many of us, decolonization is part of the hard work of reaching back and learning our own history, as well as our teachings, relations, and language. We are asking, "When will academic institutions and the people that uphold them take responsibility for one's own learning and recovery from colonialism inclusive of Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous lives?"

Literature Review

We examined the emerging literature on reconciliation as discussed by Indigenous scholars in an effort to draw on these important conversations. Our hope is to contribute to the limited research on current "reconciliation" from the perspective of Indigenous women in the academy. This by no means discounts or erases the long-standing efforts of Indigenous women who have carved critical pathways within the academy prior to the release of the TRC's "Final Report" and 94 "Calls to Action." On the contrary, we consciously draw strength from their labour, their literature, their ancestral fires, and their critical engagement as we explore together our role as emerging Indigenous female scholars within the academy during this time of reconciliation.

Dr Chelsea Gabel, a Métis scholar, presents an important critique of the "well-intentioned" attempts by universities to respond to the TRC's "Calls to Action." As a recent non-tenured Canada Research Chair, she explains that "much of the work falls on Indigenous faculty, staff and students, and thus doing research becomes a luxury with a real cost for Indigenous scholars" (2019, 88). One of the challenges she highlights is the increasing number of requests from non-Indigenous scholars, faculty, and administration for us to engage in Indigenous advisory capacities, Indigenous education, and Indigenous research in an effort to "legitimize their own research" (89). These seemingly well-intentioned requests end up masking the growing repercussions of settler colonialism. Gaudry and Lorenz discuss "Indigenization" efforts within academic institutions as they strive for ethical and meaningful engagement "with Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge systems" (2018, 218). They point to longstanding inclusion policies that aim to increase Indigenous presence and integrate Indigenous knowledge but that

actually preserve the status quo of the dominant structures. The "inclusion" approach is justified with respect to "reconciliation" and transformation, and yet there is no change in how the academy perpetuates and reproduces the erasure and marginalization of Indigenous peoples. The authors point toward a "more decolonial path" whereby "intellectual power" is shared and foundational changes that are beneficial to everyone are put into effect (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018).

For Indigenous scholars, foundational change means adopting decolonial theories, methodologies, and methods that contribute "to fundamentally reorient[ing] knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new" (Gaudry and Lorenz 2018, 219). In this endeavour, Indigenous women's teachings, knowledge, and approaches offer a dynamic form of engagement (Absolon 2011; Anderson 2010, 2011, 2016; Anderson, Campbell, and Belcourt 2018; Simpson 2011, 2014, 2018). A gendered perspective on reconciliatory work addresses settler colonialism as well as ancestral teachings, kinship systems, roles and responsibilities, land, critical social justice, and women working together, as demonstrated in our decolonial methodology.

The late Dr Joanne Episkenew (2009) asserts that, for Indigenous peoples, change is often about "*Taking Back Our Spirits*" given the long history of oppressive and shame-based knowledge systems. Dr Pam Palmater argues that "decolonization is taking back our power" in the face of "superficial forms of reconciliation like changing names on buildings, placing our art-work on currency, or wearing clothing with Indigenous cultural designs in Parliament" (2017, 75). Building on the research that demonstrates ongoing settler dominance, Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi (2009) discuss reconciliation as a renewal process of our "Indigenous family and community responsibilities in the ongoing struggle for Indigenous justice and freedom," arguing that reconciliation must engage with community and requires "decolonizing actions" in order to effectively change dominating structures (2009, 139). However, the Canadian state's notion of reconciliation "has served to legitimize and reinforce colonial relationships, thus maintaining the status quo" (155). Bopp, Brown, and Robb (2017) point out some of the difficulties of reconciliation in the academy. In response, they, and many other Indigenous scholars, provide long-term strategies and solutions in an effort to decolonize and Indigenize while taking into account the complexity of this work (Barker 2017; Borrows 2018; Daigle 2019; Palmater 2017; Simpson 2014; Tuhiwai Smith 2012).

Joanne Barker affirms that settler colonialism seeks to eliminate Indigenous peoples through "settler laws, policies, and practices" (2017, 23) and that, because settler colonialism is inherently patriarchal, it dismisses Indigenous women and queer perspectives. Further, Barker argues that settler colonialism and imperialism are founded upon "gendered, sexist, and homophobic discrimination and violence" (15). The disregard of Indigenous women's voices, perspectives, and bodies in laws, policies, and practices is enacted inside colonial structures and anywhere colonial governance structures exist. This includes a failure to acknowledge the strengths, resilience, labour, relationality, and decolonial approaches that Indigenous women exemplify in the academy.

Our methodology, methods, and findings, as demonstrated in the next sections, speak to the ways in which we as Indigenous women, scholars, and community members animate our knowledge bundles and remember the power and importance of lifting each other as an act of reconciliation.

Methodology and Methods

> As Aboriginal researchers, we do not assume to be objective. We know there is no such thing. If we thought our position in the world could be passive we wouldn't introduce ourselves by nations, our clans, our kinship networks. We place ourselves in the world as an act of sovereignty and it reinforces our worldview. In our research approaches, we take this on not by pretending that we are neutral. We are proud advocates and activists for our people. We march and protest. We publish and critique. We confront wilful blindness and we will not be silenced. We research to empower our communities. We research to honor the history and battles of our ancestors and we research to arm the next generation of warriors.
>
> *—Dr Joanne Archibald (2008, 185)*

We undertook this work as Indigenous women as an act of resistance with an aim to reinforce the value of our relational worldview. Inspired by the diverse ways in which we come to know, we wanted to expand our understanding by learning from other Indigenous women within our institution. We are not passive researchers in this work, as Dr Archibald states (2008). Using an approach that is common among Indigenous women academics, we ground ourselves in a relational accountability methodology and in ceremony (Anderson and Cidro 2019; Kovach 2005, 2009, 2010; Wilson 2008).

The three authors began critical conversations about our roles and responsibilities within a reconciliation framework. In fact, the creation of all three of our positions were the University of Alberta's response to the TRC's "Calls to Action" and the need for Indigenous people in diverse roles within the academy. We confided in one another about our experiences in assuring the sustainability of reconciliation and the immense emotional, spiritual, mental, and sometimes physical energy it takes to do this work (McGuire-Adams, Gaudet, and Ward, forthcoming). We began this research with an understanding of our own positionality and subjectivity and how they might influence our perspectives on reconciliation in the academy. The extension of our small, three-person circle to include our colleagues was vital to our process. In a quest to understand whether our experiences were, in fact, only common to us three or whether other Indigenous women on campus were also questioning their roles in reconciliation, the need to gather with other women was paramount.

Through our research approach, we sought out spaces in which we could share with one another about our reconciliation experiences in the academy. This coming together represented a profound gift to us as Indigenous researchers. We chose to invite all Indigenous

professors and administrative professionals working at the time at the University of Alberta. A total of 33 women received an email with a letter of invitation and research questions to reflect upon, based on key informant-selection criteria (Neuman 2010). A list was gathered from previous Indigenous-led initiatives inclusive of Indigenous women scholars at the University of Alberta. In the email, we asked these women to forward the invitation to other Indigenous scholars whom we may have missed. With the financial support of a KIAS dialogue grant of $1,000, we hosted three gatherings within the span of a year, entitled "Giving Voice: Indigenous Women Scholars' Dialogue," in which 16 women participated, including the three authors. We recorded and transcribed each gathering and shared the transcripts with the participants. Some women came to all three gatherings, and some came only to one or two, based on their availability and interest. In honouring our traditional hosting protocols, food, beverages, and gifts for our participants were shared. In an effort to align our research activities with an Indigenous women-centred research process, we chose to hire a local Indigenous woman caterer to provide the catering.[3]

We chose to use Indigenous engagement methods of story collection and a process of making meaning from the results that included a collective review of themes and edits to draft papers as a collective of knowledge keepers of our own experiences. Our integrated meaning-making process aimed to support regenerative conversations as we literally seated our conversations within our worldviews of kin keeping and reciprocity. The two story-collection methods used were a sharing circle with a smudging ceremony and a workshop dialogue. Our first gathering took place in the ceremonial space at one of the faculties on campus and started with a smudge and prayer, followed by a sharing circle. For our second gathering, we used a workshop dialogue process whereby each participant was asked a series of guiding questions that we had developed with a focus on reconciliation via a workboard process. Their respective answers were placed on the workboard sheets with sticky notes.

Our third gathering brought women together to review the transcripts of the two previous story collection activities and to discuss emerging themes from our initial analysis. With the Google Drive platform, we made accessible via email and hard-copy the collated version of the transcripts and subsequently shared two drafts (June 18, 2019 and January 16, 2020) to ensure that we were accurately reflecting the share-back conversations. We also provided ongoing updates on our publication steps moving forward. The ongoing dialogue and inquiry influenced the ways in which we continued to engage as a community of women enacting relational accountability, which went beyond our initial research expectations. The ongoing conversations helped shape, affirm, heal, and reclaim the reconciliation narrative and our perspectives moving forward. We revisited with one another through other academic initiatives and in ceremony with an Elder on September 19, 2019, to give voice to the gifts of this project and its continuity in support of the newly formed University of Alberta position "VP of Indigenous Initiatives."

Over the funding period of a year (October 2018 to October 2019), the project's three co-authors and leads met regularly to organize, to debrief, and to usher in our shared enthusiasm

3 Ginger's Bannock was prioritized so as to invest in Indigenous women's social entrepreneurship.

for the project. We worked collaboratively as part of our sharing of responsibilities and engaged ourselves fully into the process based on our respective gifts, strengths, and roles. Our meetings continued in the co-creation of this research paper and further inspired a seed project funding application to support the ongoing need for Indigenous women's decolonial wellness research that was made evident throughout this project.

Indigenous researchers have situated relational accountability in research as being responsive to community (both living and non-living beings) while enacting respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (Johnston et al. 2018; Kovach 2009; Wilson 2008). Johnston et al. (2018) explain that a core aspect of relational accountability entails enacting egalitarian relationships between research participants and toward each other as researchers; the authors note that this approach to research requires the researchers to enact "patience and flexibility" (14). This way of being offers a beautifully nuanced way for us to establish trust with one another and with our research participants. By centring *keeoukaywin*, the way of visiting (Flaminio 2018; Gaudet 2019), the kitchen-table-style dialogue held our experiences as the women sat, talked, ate, and visited. In this way, we created dialogue together. Through our methodology and methods, our work is approached as "an extension of our communal responsibilities" (Moreton-Robinson 2013, 342), which allowed the relationships to flourish in equitable and egalitarian ways. A relational accountability methodology thus defined our responsibilities as sisters, aunties, mothers, nieces, wives, and educators, who belong to our respective Indigenous communities, while working within an academic community. Broadly speaking, reconciliation work within the academy is deftly connected to Indigenous communities that reside inside and outside the purview of the academy.

Meaning-making

As part of our meaning-making process (Absolon 2011), we decided not to work in isolation and thus simply Indigenize what is often known as the "formal" or "Western" approach to data coding and analysis. We chose to disrupt the colonial ideology of working in isolation to ensure that our process of meaning-making was relational and supportive and that it incorporated shared learning, as we revisited the women's knowledge bundles over time and space over 13 moons. This process has influenced our everyday lives, our relationships with one another, and our own engagement in reconciliation. We wanted to honour the graciousness and deep generosity of the women in sharing their stories with us. In our process of making meaning, we are enacting our own reconciliation, with relational accountability at its core. This includes taking care of ourselves and one another through smudging; listening to one another; sharing spaces, including our homes; cooking for each other; and experiencing moments during visits when we laughed, debriefed, and shared. This was all part of the meaning-making process.

Between the second and third gatherings, the researchers reviewed all the knowledge bundles that we gathered, including our documented meetings. We read through the responses in order to establish our understanding of the ideas and stories that were shared and to locate emerging themes. We then shared these themes and our general impressions

with the women who had attended the first two gatherings. We invited them to attend a third gathering to share back with us, to ensure that we understood and were representing their voices accurately. As a part of this process, we were inspired to define ourselves within our Indigenous Women Scholars Collective to ground, contain, and expand our work; this approach to honouring Indigenous women's work, which is free from settler colonial harms and exclusions, was also envisioned by Monture-Angus (1995).

The late Patricia Monture-Angus (1995), a Mohawk woman academic, described the creation of an Indigenous women's network that would bring together a diversity of Indigenous women based on respect and relationships and would reignite the long-held traditions of women's gatherings. The fact that Monture-Angus described such an endeavour demonstrates that this idea has been considered for decades. We explored this option as a way to guide our efforts toward change at the University of Alberta at a grassroots level as women and to support the Indigenous work that is happening at the University of Alberta. It was agreed that we would begin this new phase of our work in ceremony with a Knowledge Keeper and a pipe ceremony.

After the three knowledge gatherings, we (the three researchers) gathered six more times to make meaning of the knowledge shared and to write collaboratively with the aim of reinvigorating the ways in which we work and learn together. Our process of analysis included collectively making meaning of the data, which involved synthesizing the emergent themes in the answers to each of the questions we posed during our engagement sessions. We used Google Drive as a repository for our knowledge sharing and as a way to organize the content we collected or disseminated. Visiting was our primary method of making meaning about how Indigenous women understand themselves in relation to reconciliation. We invited the participants to review the draft article prior to submission for publication as part of our community ethics and relational responsibility.

Research Limitations and Strengths

The limitations of this research include a lack of LGBTQ2S+ voices. During the data-gathering process, none of the participants self-identified as being from LGBTQ2S+ communities. Their exclusion was not intentional. Further, these research findings do not speak to or for all Indigenous women at the University of Alberta who are engaged in reconciliation work. We recognize the limited number of participants given that our initial invitation focused on Indigenous female scholars and given the short snapshot in time, just four years after the release of the TRC Report, when emerging Indigenous women scholars have not yet attained tenure. We recognize that Indigenous women scholars are busy and often have to make difficult decisions about the work they choose to take on and with whom they engage in these critical and uncomfortable conversations. We also do not want to assume that, as Indigenous women, we all must get along and work together as a homogenous and unified community.

The KIAS funding helped to support our gatherings, but we are mindful that hosting must be done in appropriate and respectful ways that women deserve. We wanted to acknowledge the contribution of their invaluable knowledge and ideas towards a balanced

understanding of reconciliation. We recognize that so much work remains to be done and that Indigenous and Settler-Ally women do so much work to strengthen the academy that often goes unrecognized. We chose not to include Indigenous or Settler men in a conscious effort to learn from one another as Indigenous women and explore our own perspectives in this time of reconciliation.

The strengths of this research, of which there are many, include our gathering and coming together as women to begin fostering long-lasting and collaborative relationships based on a mutual recognition of one another's lived experiences inside and outside the academy. Moreover, the choices we made as a research team to utilize an Indigenous caterer and to purchase gifts from Indigenous women entrepreneurs were intentional acts to support Indigenous women and their businesses and to raise awareness of them. The three of us (researchers) were already in relation with one another as colleagues and friends, so love, trust, and respect already resided between us, but our relationship has grown into a sisterhood as we have unpacked and made meaning of the information gathered. As well, we know many of the Indigenous women scholars who shared their knowledge with us, as we have worked with and shared community ties with some of them. Finally, the Indigenous Women Scholars Collective, which was born out of this research, aims to increase our ability to meet with one another and to help ensure our own wellness as we work with the many demands of the academy as Indigenous women.

Research Findings

Our gatherings uncovered three main themes that offer insights into a gendered perspective of reconciliation: 1) Returning to our grandmothers' ways and wisdom—relational accountability and responsibility; 2) settler responsibilities and accountabilities; and 3) working together to build a new way—giving space for the hardships of reconciliation. These themes are interrelated and will therefore not be addressed in isolation from one another.

Returning to our Grandmothers' Ways: Relational Accountability and Responsibility

In the sharing circle and workshop, the participants shared their thoughts on Indigenous women's drive for a deep relational accountability to each other, our respective communities, and our familial responsibilities. The participants shared that reconciliation challenges colonized subject areas that we encounter in academia but is also hard work and that "it fosters an accountability to ourselves, our communities, and to the work we do."[4] Much of this work begins with the self. As one participant explained, "[we need to] start with internal self-reconciliation in order to do external reconciliation work; through this we must remember the physical strength and fortitude of our women ancestors." Another partici-

4 Citations will not be given for individual quotations from the research transcripts, since the participants remain anonymous for the purposes of this article, given our mixed methods approach. Each of these quotation is drawn from one of the three 2018 gatherings.

pant said that "reconciliation entails a personal commitment to heal from the harm and traumas of colonization, which also entails returning to the teachings of our grandmothers/ancestors." Once the self is attended to, an opening is provided for reflecting on our roles and responsibilities, and teaching about who we are as women.

The sentiment that reconciliation work aligns with our Indigenous responsibilities as women was heard. Participants noted that, as Indigenous women, we "carry the spirit of reconciliation," "we are carriers of knowledge and life," "we come together and help each other to do the work as we did/do in our families and communities," and "our ancestors have been doing reconciliation work (sharing, giving, making relationships) since treaty making and we are continuing their work to help change Canadian governance." These perspectives were echoed by another participant:

> Indigenous women are the leaders in our cultures and this transfers to the work we do in reconciliation. This does not make it easy, especially as we grapple with the labour of the work we do. But we also link our work to our purpose in life and for fighting for what is right so our children don't have to fight.

One participant said that, "while our communities have concerns about the academy, the [reconciliation] work we do here is critical for all families and communities (not just Indigenous but all people)."

The preceding perspectives align with the teaching that, as Indigenous women engage in reconciliation work, we are also taking care of current and future relations. A participant highlighted that, "as Indigenous women we have a resilient strength that we carry, and this is our medicine that connects us to our past and future generations, which will continue to be carried forward," and another said that "we are the kin keepers." The teachings shared by the participants and embedded within these results are reflective of ancestral grandmother teachings. As two participants acknowledged, "if we do not weave our teachings into the work we do [it] hinders the invitation to bring people, but being mindful that including different perspectives does not negatively impact the important work we all need to do," and "women are models in ways of doing, knowing that we learn through modeling, spiritual work, to go within, and graciousness expressed towards one another." These positions from the participants align with our Indigenous ways of tending and caring for ourselves, yet the knowledge the women shared does not ignore the complexities involved in having hard conversations within reconciliation processes. Participants shared that

> Indigenous peoples in the academy have a deep experience to [do] reconciliation work that has led to good and bad experiences. It needs to be led by Indigenous voices from Indigenous ethical protocols, such as this research project that is led by Indigenous women. Reconciliation needs truth telling from within Indigenous worldviews, and, we, as Indigenous women, need to voice our concerns and to be respectful. We need to work together and also include Indigenous viewpoints/worldviews into the academy in a healthy manner.

The importance of voicing our concerns as a way of working together to create change was echoed by another participant:

> I see those grandmother roles of correcting those behaviours as really vital to commit and stick through it, cause there's no way you're going to create change without sticking through the really hard stuff like acknowledging those hard conversations need to happen in order to create that paradigm shift, locally and globally.

While the participants acknowledged meaningful connections to relational accountability and to returning to our grandmothers' roles in reconciliation efforts, they also highlighted the importance of not taking on all of the work: "Reconciliation work has to be led by us and it has to involve kind, loving ways to teach allies about their privilege, entitlements, taking up space, and appropriation of our knowledge." One participant asked, "How do we nurture others without doing all of the work? We need allies/accomplices accountable [to reconciliation]." This question was considered deeply by the participants, and forms the next theme.

Settler Responsibilities and Accountabilities

While addressing the self and community accountability were important findings, so too was a focus on settler responsibilities. Many participants suggested that settler responsibilities should be informed by Indigenous teachings and values. For instance, a participant acknowledged that we need a collective "understanding of [allies'] specific roles in reconciliation at the University of Alberta; [and] our teachings from the Elders tell us about inclusivity, kindness, and love." This perspective was echoed when it was shared that we should all "act in loving and kind ways to model our behaviour to others and invite others in, which will foster personal accountability to our truths," and further "[that we need to] come into this work with a good heart and to be supportive of our engagements in this work." One participant noted that, through this process, "dialogue, education—not only colonialist history, speaking up, addressing racism and stereotypical views" are also important.

Participants noted that reconciliation cannot and should not rest with upper administration, although they play an important role. As one participant said, "reconciliation within the academy seems to only occur at the will of upper administration." It was argued that the university as a whole must show accountability, and that some universities are further ahead than the University of Alberta. A participant explained that the University of Alberta "does not have a mission statement like the University of Calgary does; we need to have support from the presidency to open doors." To this end, one idea that was suggested is for the university to "develop a mission statement and [a specific] department working closely with the vice-provost/president" on reconciliation. Through these actions, we could ensure that "the work we do with reconciliation in the university does not end up in a paper archive."

The participants were eager to share their perspectives on what accountabilities settler allies have in reconciliation work. One participant shared that "settlers need to step up and do the work. They need to honour their role in Treaty in this land." Another explained that "non-Indigenous people need to listen; truth comes first [and then] the first thing you need to

do as an ally is weep with us." The women acknowledged settler allies' profound connection to Indigenous peoples and our territories through honouring treaty responsibilities in reconciliation work, which, as a participant suggested, starts with listening and sharing the emotional labour involved in the work. One participant expressed the view that settler allies need to share in the labour: "Accomplices and allies are needed to disrupt the system of hierarchy in academia (relating to power structures) by demonstrable acts of giving (e.g., funding and access)." Another participant stated that

> issues arise when policies are enforced in a hierarchical system. Western society fails to recognize our Indigenous knowledge within the academy so I feel bombarded by following only Western ideals [and] the ignorance that may come with it. I feel that our knowledge systems need to be incorporated at all levels.

The participants shared their ideas about *how* settlers can fulfil their responsibilities and accountabilities to Indigenous peoples in the academy. A participant noted that "reconciliation is righting past wrongs through action through tangible benefits not with just words." A few participants came up with the following list of tangible actions that settler allies and the university itself could take up immediately to address settler reconciliation efforts. 1) A mandatory Native Studies course for students, faculty, and staff should be given at the University of Alberta, along with the support necessary to make it happen. In addition, the University could invest in more infrastructure, instructors, class space, and faculty support. 2) Training for all, and on an ongoing basis, should be provided to help settlers start doing their own work and building meaningful relationships based on EQUALITY and RESPECT (emphasis in original). 3) Settlers should step up and do their share in education, advocacy, and holding their governments to account for reconciliation. 4) Training should be provided for all staff and faculty to help them understand what reconciliation is. Settlers need to step up and do the work of being reconciliation educators. 5) Settler allies should speak up, make public statements, and stand with us. We could create relationship protocol lists to help them understand their responsibilities in building relationships with us. Finally, 6) there should be at least four Indigenous representatives at all levels of academic governance and administration.

Putting these recommendations into action would lessen the perceived "hollow words" of reconciliation efforts, as explained by two participants: "Reconciliation can feel like a catchphrase or do settlers actually mean it and realize the work it requires?" and "Many non-[I]ndigenous people have not acknowledged the vast work of reconciliation." One of the participants encapsulated how settlers can support Indigenous peoples in the academy in reconciliation efforts:

> To implement reconciliation work, Indigenous folks should be the steering committee to direct allies in the university to implement actions. We need to hold settler allies accountable by having them work with us in reconciliation work, and to already be well informed about their responsibilities and to not expect us to teach them. Through this reconciliation work we need spaces to acknowledge our anger as part of it; not just holding space for gentleness and love, but also the anger that comes up, and in these moments, we need settler allies to not expect that we teach them.

As one participant aptly stated, this reconciliation work "is not complicated but it is complex." The complexity of the work is the focus of the next theme.

Working Together to Build a New Way: Giving Space to Address the Hardships of Reconciliation

Many of the women acknowledged the importance of working together in reconciliation work: "Reconciliation is best achieved when Indigenous and non-Indigenous people work together," "we all need to work together to achieve real goals and real outcomes," and "reconciliation needs to go both ways, we need to be able to understand each others' views/consensus to make change happen." The participants were also mindful that a core component of reconciliation work is to address wrongs:

> When two or more entities come together to address wrong-doings that inferred upon the breakdown of their previous relationship AND agreeing upon and enacting actions that make amends to those wrong doing and stop them from occurring again and "not having to say you're sorry twice," as Cindy Blackstock [tells us]. (2011)

In addressing wrongs, there is a strong element of hearing truths. It was stated a number of times that reconciliation is about "finding ways to work together to achieve equity and justice for Indigenous peoples as well as moving forward in a good way. But Truth and Justice must come first," and "hearing truths, challenging the deep misunderstandings, and committing to the process for all people."

Although the participants spoke of the requirement that Indigenous peoples and settler allies work together in our reconciliation efforts, they also spoke of the need to centre Indigenous voices in the process, which "necessarily involves the voices and guidance of Elders and Indigenous teachers." As one participant stated, reconciliation is achieved "by centering Indigenous voices but not (emphasis in original) only Indigenous labour. Reconciliation will mean different things to different Indigenous people, but they decide what it looks like, not settlers." Another participant noted that the university can "support events that centers Indigenous voices [we need to] tell our stories and support each other." Part of the process of supporting Indigenous voices accordingly "acknowledges, respects and gives back space to practice traditional governance systems."

The participants were also clear in their views about giving space to discuss the hardships involved in reconciliation labour, such as tokenism and lateral violence. Regarding tokenism, participants noted that it has become "a big problem—being asked to sit on committees, [to] be a 'voice' but the labour expected is not valued" and that, "as Indigenous women, to be the voice of the community is a [tokenistic] extra work." One participant questioned whether hiring an Indigenous woman is an attempt to "protect non-Indigenous researchers from seeming biased...yeah, it sucks." Another participant had this to say regarding tokenism and the sheer amount of work to be done:

> Indigenous peoples are over exhausted in the work we do and the amount of asks we have. However, we say yes, in efforts to have our voices represented not the voices of the "check-box-self-declaration" faux Indigenous people who claim Indigeneity

> but have no connection to what that means and relationships to community. There is a give and take approach often created where Indigenous people agree to sit on a research project (as a token) but at the same time, we raise the level of responsibility and reciprocity (by instilling ceremonies).

While it is clear that, as Indigenous women, we take on a lot of responsibility, this is amplified by the often felt but not openly shared problem of lateral violence. As stated by a participant,

> Part of this reconciliation work is to work through issues of lateral violence, to practice kindness and implement the Creator's laws. This is decolonization work and we need to help all of our relatives, including white people. In particular we need to ensure they understand the privilege and entitlements they carry within the academic institution. For instance, not often do they have to think about their own decolonization while they do their work; nor do they often consider the challenges their colleagues who are Indigenous or a different colour encounter.

Another participant shared that

> we need to be honest about the lateral violence we experience as Indigenous women, from Indigenous women in the academy. Often as Indigenous women we cry at home because of how we were treated by other Indigenous women, not non-Indigenous people in the academy.

These sentiments relate to working environments not steeped in Indigenous values: "Colonial values make us go into competition as women, individualistic, normalized violence in the academy." Finally, a poignant point was brought out by one of the participants regarding the importance of Indigenous women working together:

> As Indigenous women working in the academy and in pursuit of reconciliation, we need to do this work together rather than in isolation. There is a strong element of isolation to the work we do as Indigenous women in the academy. To challenge this, we need to come together to share, learn, and help build community as Indigenous women.

There were a number of other hardships shared as well. One participant brought attention to the emotional labour involved in centring our worldviews:

> Using our Indigenous ethics and Indigenous knowledge in our spaces and with students is incredibly important, but it also is incredibly hard; there are lots of tears around this work we do while still trying to stay intact, positive, and grounded.

Another hardship noted by a participant is the expectation of selflessness:

> As Indigenous women we are expected to be selfless and give all the time. So while we need to lead reconciliation work, the emotional burden/labour does not have to be all on us. Settler allies need to demonstrate their allyship in ways that support this work and to not react in anger.

This reinforces, once again, the complexity of this work.

While resurgence is a main tenet of reconciliation work for Indigenous peoples, this comes with its own hardships as we work to reframe our own mindsets so as not to feel inadequate in the face of pervasive stereotypes. Through collaborative work and conversations, we become increasingly aware of what we embody when we privilege the voices of Indigenous women: Our inherent nature is to gather and to share our stories and experiences. One participant reminded us that "as Indigenous women, we have a resilient strength that we carry as beautiful human beings of this earth." However, the act of reconciliation is too often misguided—a short-sighted vision of cultural awareness, one-time events, curricular content, and peripheral Indigenous–settler relationship building.

Concluding Discussion

Our research gathered together Indigenous women working in the academy as professors and administrators in an effort to gain a broader perspective on how Indigenous women engage in reconciliation. We wanted to connect with our Indigenous women colleagues to better understand their nuanced experiences with reconciliation and the demands of what can feel like laborious relational and emotional work. It is only when we come together that we become aware of the subtleties of tokenism and how we might internalize or resist it, but this is often done in isolation, without relational accountability structures that allow us to check in, heal, make the right choices, and choose how we seek to engage in reconciliation.

Together, we questioned reconciliation efforts in relation to women in the academy and how our various roles and value systems may lead to either performative or meaningful and impactful reconciliation labour. In some cases, the checkbox remains unchecked, and our emotional labour is left hanging in the air without validation, acknowledgement, appreciation, or a promise of meaningful change. As new Indigenous women scholars in this time of reconciliation, we seem to have been thrust into performative reconciliation, regulated under the settler-colonial checkbox. The academy's approach of filling the gap with "bodies" without truly understanding the emotional labour, commitment, and necessary actions that reconciliation entails is problematic. Reconciliation cannot be something that we check off and then walk away from as if it had been accomplished.

Through a gendered lens of reconciliation, we are able to shed the isolating performance in an effort to remember and to reimagine the power and authority of what has historically been undermined, within a system that has "rendered almost invisible gender roles beyond the heterosexual" (Denetdale 2017, 73). This research can deepen our approach to reconciliation by making visible the resilient stories of Indigenous women working in the academy and giving voice to how we construct our relational networks despite the colonial systems that we navigate daily. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson explains, "in their life histories, Indigenous women perceive their experiences and others' experiences as extensions of themselves. This is a construction of subjectivity that extends beyond the immediate family" (2015, 15). Our findings speak of the importance of returning to the roots of our grandmothers' teachings and our vital contributions within the academy in reconciliatory efforts. Through a diversity of methods, we discussed the challenges of reconciliation by re-centring Indigenous women's wellness and caring for ourselves and one another.

A tangible outcome of the process was the activation of an Indigenous Women's Scholars Collective with the aim of fostering care for ourselves and critical thought about the ways we engage with the academic and Indigenous communities we work with. This first ceremony has propelled us to imagine and to engage in actionable next steps to generate codes of wellness that make sense to us within the context of settler-driven reconciliation. For Indigenous women, this work is non-linear, as we engage with past, present, and future all in the same moment. A non-binary approach to reconciliation speaks to the complexity of the work, given that our lives are not separate from the work we do.

We do not have the privilege of walking away, because the roots of reconciliation are inherently Indigenous, enacted since time immemorial. While we navigate this reconciliation work, decolonization, as the women described, is a necessary part of it and necessitates a commitment from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as well as from the institutions within which we work. In speaking about decolonization, we are also mindful of Tuck and Yang's critical contribution to our decolonial thinking about decolonization: Decolonization is necessarily about the return of Indigenous lands and lifeways, not to be confused with "other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools [which create] settler moves to innocence" (1).

Our research points to the need to engage in critical reconciliation work that is grounded in critical Indigenous theories and decolonial approaches. With this framework, we can ensure that reconciliatory actions are developed that help us reimagine Indigenous–Settler relations and do not become a metaphor that ultimately protects whiteness and settler futurity. This work is not the responsibility of Indigenous peoples alone.

Settler allies also carry responsibilities to engage in decolonial work. Kluttz and Walter (2020) argue that settlers must show solidarity with Indigenous practices of decolonization, which is necessarily uncomfortable and requires "continuous rethinking and acknowledgement of self-reflection on positionality, power, privilege, guilt and legacies of oppression" (52). Although some may think it difficult to become settler allies, we encourage them to deeply consider the ongoing harms Indigenous peoples continue to experience (e.g., the ongoing loss of Indigenous peoples' lives, systemic injustices, overrepresentation in prisons and child welfare systems, and health disparities). Moreover, the many forms of violence that are legitimized, hidden, or denied by systems of power and privilege, "generations of genocide" resulting in our missing and murdered sisters, aunties, mothers, and friends, and the increasing number of youth suicides constitute the real lived experiences of being Indigenous in a colonial state such as Canada (Bourgeois 2018). These truths are difficult to take; to teach to colleagues, administrators, leadership, and students; to speak of in our research; and to reconcile with on a daily basis. This is the "labour" we speak of when we talk about emotional labour. We feel this immense loss in our blood, bones, flesh, and hearts. This is what is often missing in settler allyship. We do not need settler guilt or shame in our solidarity efforts. We need settler allies to engage in critical self-reflection in order to assist in Indigenous-driven reconciliation efforts, to demonstrate their allyship, which this article describes.

Within our research through concentric circles, Indigenous women scholars understand the roles of Indigenous women as the responsibility we take up, our kinship, and extended kinship responsibilities. Further, participants in our research conversations attest that "women carry the spirit of reconciliation" and that we are "the kin keepers." Vital to our understanding of "who we are" is the recognition of our responsibility to one another and to our communities as kin keepers to make reconciliation work meaningful and sustainable. As Indigenous women with varied connections to biological and chosen kin, we understand that the work we do in this colonized environment is critical to the disruption of settler colonialism but is also critical for the betterment of all families and communities. We assert that there must be demonstrable action to ensure Indigenous futurity. Talking about reconciliation does very little to positively change Indigenous lives, let alone Indigenous–settler relations inside and outside the academy.

Along with the Indigenous women with whom we engaged, we explored the complexity of reconciliation within an academic setting. We recognize that reconciliation is a heavily loaded word that people interpret differently depending on the context of their work, their experiences, and the communities they serve. The University of Alberta defines their institutional values under the broad umbrella of "for the greater good." Inevitably, the greater good defines the work that we do and how we do it. In coming together, we unsettled the isolation involved in settler-dominated reconciliation, and, through this deeply meaningful act, we shed our uterine lining to make space for privileging Indigenous women's voices on reconciliation.

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