



SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



Social Connectedness as Fostering Relationships between Indigenous Peoples & Newcomers to Canada: Gaps, Facilitations, & Future Directions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research reveals that although an overwhelming majority of people in Canada (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) are aware of the history of “Indian” residential schools, a large portion of Newcomers are still not aware. This signals that there still remain significant gaps that prevent Newcomers from accessing the knowledge and understanding necessary to reconcile with Indigenous Peoples. Such gaps are furthered by the powerful settler-colonial institutions (e.g., media, educational institutions, governments) and the Newcomer settlement sector, which fail to provide accurate resources (from Indigenous perspectives) on Indigenous histories, cultures, contemporary experiences, and the colonial history of Canada. As a result of a lack of access to accurate information, Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples are likely to internalize stereotypes and harmful perceptions about each other, which serve to disconnect and cause tensions between both communities.

This report supports the research project “Building Community between Newcomers to Canada & Indigenous Peoples,” led by BAM - Books Art Music Collective. It centers the perspectives and experiences of Newcomers, refugees, and Indigenous Peoples, in order to understand the gaps preventing the former from engaging in an authentic learning experience, and to create recommendations on how to fill these gaps and facilitate a process of cross-cultural learning in the spirit of Reconciliation. Another critical component of this study is to understand how Newcomer-serving organizations are undertaking the work of providing educational resources and fostering community interactions between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples, while highlighting the gaps that prevent organizations from undertaking this important work. Most participants believe the gaps exist due to the persistence of colonialism and racism, that Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples should build solidarity, and feel that community engagement is important for building relationships.

The report begins with a literature review to understand the theoretical debates and issues surrounding colonialism, decolonization, and how Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples are situated in relation to both processes. Following that, this report highlights findings from the survey, virtual event, and interviews. If Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers have the spaces and resources to understand, engage in dialogue and interact with each other, this is instrumental for fostering social connectedness, by promoting intercultural understanding between two groups that have experienced oppression from colonialism, and by re-connecting people to Indigenous lands.

This study generated five recommendations that governments and non-profit actors can implement to help build Indigenous-Newcomer relations. These are: creating an inclusive citizenship test, providing targeted funding to help Newcomer organizations undertake Reconciliation work, Indigenous ESL education, creating relationship-building spaces for Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers, and creating living and accessible resources on Indigenous allyship.

INTRODUCTION

Although the high level of public awareness surrounding Canada's colonial relationships with Indigenous Peoples is commendable, many Newcomers and refugees still lack the tools and knowledge to partake in the journey towards Truth and Reconciliation. Canada can, and must, do more to ensure that Newcomers and refugees have access to an understanding of Indigenous presence, through community-based interactive avenues and educational resources. In May 2021, 215 unmarked graves of Indigenous children were uncovered at a former residential "school" in Kamloops, BC. Since then, Canadian society had another awakening with the legacies of settler-colonialism, and became more supportive of actions to advance Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. According to The Confederation of Tomorrow's 2021 survey, 60 percent of all respondents were "very/somewhat familiar" with the history of residential "schools." Despite the promising result, wide gaps remain between the understanding levels of Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers: 77 percent of Indigenous Peoples indicated they were "very/somewhat familiar", while only 55 percent of First-generation Immigrants indicated such.¹ This lack of understanding is caused by various gaps in the education provided to settlers

¹ Seyda Ece Aytac, Andrew Parkin, & Anna Triandafyllidou, "Research Note: Reciprocal Views of Immigrants and Indigenous Peoples in Canada," Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration & Integration, Toronto Metropolitan University, no. 1 (June 2022), https://www.torontomu.ca/cerc-migration/Research/researchnote/Research_Note_Reciprocal_Views_of_Immigrants_and_Indigenous_Peoples_in_Canada_June2022.pdf; The Confederation of Tomorrow, "A Report From The Confederation of Tomorrow 2021 Survey of Canadians: Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation," Report, June 2021, https://cwf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CoT2021-report-4-Final_f.pdf; The Confederation of Tomorrow, "A Report From The Confederation of Tomorrow 2022 Survey of Canadians: Relations with Indigenous Peoples," Report, June 2022, https://cwf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CoT-Report-5_Indigenous-Relations_June-13.pdf.

(including Newcomers) and refugees. As a result, Indigenous Peoples continue to be subjected to racism, perpetuated by a settler-colonial society at various interpersonal and systemic levels.² Nevertheless, research also indicates that with proper education and spaces for connection, there is greater intercultural empathy, respect, relatability and appreciation between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples.³ Many community organizations are undertaking work to foster Indigenous-Newcomer connections. For my Fellowship, I am working with BAM – Books Art Music Collective, a Toronto-based organization that is engaged in bridge-building through art, community engagement, policy, and advocacy. One important example is their 2021 “Healing through Music and Dialogue” conversation, where Syrian and Indigenous youth exchanged perspectives on combatting systemic discrimination and injustices.⁴

In what follows, this report first presents the Key Questions of my research. This is followed by an overview of the Methodology, Limitations and Researcher Positionality. Subsequently, this report provides a Literature Review of key issues. The Literature Review is followed by an unpacking of the critical Findings of my qualitative study, through an analysis of the relevant primary and secondary data gathered. I then use my findings to develop Recommendations

² Samantha Loppie, Charlotte Reading, and Sarah de Leeuw, “Indigenous experiences with racism and its impacts,” Fact Sheet, The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, Prince George, BC, 2014, https://www.nccih.ca/495/Indigenous_experiences_with_racism_and_its_impacts.nccih?id=131.

³ Roxana Akhmetova, “The Role of Recent Newcomers to Canada in Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples,” Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2019, https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1993/34231/Akhmetova_Roxana.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁴ “Bridging the Gap—A Conversation between Syrian Newcomers and Indigenous Youth” [Video], Projects, BAM Collective, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://www.bamcollective.ca/services>.

for federal and provincial governments and Newcomer-serving non-profit organizations, to help them build community between Newcomers, refugees, and Indigenous Peoples. Prior to concluding, this report outlines the Implications of my findings and recommendations, for future research and change at multiple government and non-profit organizational levels.

Key Questions

The main questions that I investigated during my Fellowship were:

1. What are some barriers, if any, that prevent Newcomers from accessing full and accurate information about Indigenous Peoples' lives, histories, cultures, perspectives, and/or experiences?
2. How can Canada act to reduce such barriers to information and ensure that Newcomers are well-equipped to play an active part in Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples? Why is such action necessary?

Methodology

My research design was qualitative, as it involved gauging attitudes and perceptions (of Newcomers, refugees, and Indigenous Peoples) on *why* we should reconcile through better education, *barriers* faced in individuals' journeys to Reconciliation, and *potential ways* to move forward. I collected my data using three different methods. First, I conducted 14 in-depth interviews, lasting 30 minutes to 1 hour. These featured seven individuals/community members, four representatives/leaders of organizations serving Newcomers or Indigenous Peoples, and three leaders from BAM Collective (10 were Newcomers/refugees,

four were Indigenous-identifying). Second, I conducted a short online survey through Google Forms, which was targeted to Newcomers and refugees to Canada. The survey received nine responses. Third, I put together and analyzed an interactive and educational virtual event, called “Bridging Gaps between Newcomers & Indigenous Peoples: Virtual Community Roundtable.” The event had two sections: a focus group discussion among three Indigenous panelists, who shared insights on Indigenous-Newcomer solidarity, Indigenizing education, and face-to-face connections; and polls for attendees to reflect on their understanding of Indigenous presence, both pre- and post-Panel.

Through a mix of inductive and deductive coding of survey responses and transcribed recordings of my interviews and the virtual event, I noticed four key themes: *Challenges and Facilitations to Reconciliation*, *Indigenous-Newcomer Commonalities*, *Potential Actions*, and *Organizational Bridge Work and Gaps*. I weigh primary data with secondary insights from scholars that have written on topics surrounding colonialism, decolonization, and Indigenous-Newcomer relationships. I incorporate Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (of the Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou Māori Iwi (Nations)) framework on decolonizing methodologies, by centering the worldviews, concerns and insights of non-Western and “othered” peoples, while also engaging critically “with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (including in current-day thinking, practices, and institutions).⁵

⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory,” in *Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous peoples*, 2nd ed. (Zed Books, 2012), 58.

Ethics & Limitations

My event and interviews were conducted over Zoom because it enables the researcher to reach participants regardless of geographical location, is a low-cost alternative to travelling, and prevents transmission of COVID-19. I prioritized and respected the privacy of all participants. Interviewees provided written consent on a Google form during the sign-up phase and provided verbal consent before the Zoom calls were recorded and stored in a secure cloud. Interview and event recordings were later transcribed for reference, and pseudonyms are used in this report when referring to interviewees. Before and after interviewing people, I sought to keep the process democratic and create an equal power dynamic between the researcher and participants. For example, I sought participants' input on how interview questions could be re-written (e.g., for clarity and cultural sensitivity), and sent them my interview notes to ensure they maintained consent to have their words shared.

However, this study also came with some limitations. First, there were not as many Indigenous participants as I would have hoped. Limited Indigenous representation within BAM, and the challenges of providing honoraria, are potential causes. Another factor could be that Indigenous Peoples have been over-researched and had information extracted from, with little to no compensation or actionable systemic changes made, which has reduced trust in research.⁶ Second, low numbers of interviewees and survey responses could

⁶ Ashley Goodman, Rob Morgan, Ron Kuehlke, Shelda Kastor, Kim Fleming, Jade Boyd, and Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society, "We've Been Researched to Death': Exploring the Research Experiences of Urban Indigenous Peoples in Vancouver, Canada," *International indigenous policy journal* 9, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2018.9.2.3>.

potentially be caused by the time constraints of a 4-month Fellowship, and the small network and limited funding available to BAM to do outreach, which pose challenges to reaching more participants from a wider range of regions across Canada. My study reached 10 participants from BC, 10 from Ontario, 2 from Alberta/Prairies, 1 from Quebec, and zero from the Territories and other regions. Due to small sample sizes and geographical disparities, the findings are not generalizable to the experiences and perspectives of all Newcomers, refugees and Indigenous Peoples.

Researcher Positionality

I conducted this research from the unceded and unsundered territories of the WSÁNEĆ, Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations (collectively, the Lekwungen-speaking Peoples, in the area now called Victoria, BC), whose relationships to their lands, waters and all human and non-human living beings continue to this day. I write from the position of an immigrant of colour and a settler to unceded Indigenous lands, and I strive everyday to be an allied guest through engaging in an ongoing process of unlearning and contesting settler-colonial ways of thinking, and taking actions to help fundamentally restructure institutions that harm, erase, and dispossess Indigenous Peoples and relationships. Apart from an increased awareness of historical and ongoing colonial harms against Indigenous Peoples, I was guided to this research by my own positionality as a marginalized person. As someone who is both queer and an immigrant of colour, and has experienced multiple and intersecting systems of oppression, I am inspired to uplift and support other groups (Indigenous Peoples,

Newcomers and refugees) in their quest for liberation, equity, and well-being. Although I will never understand what it is like to be Indigenous, I write from the perspective of someone who was once a Newcomer. I hope my paper sparks a necessary aspect of Reconciliation: community-building across differences.

LITERATURE REVIEW: ISSUES

Settler-colonialism and Decolonization

Scholars (especially those of Indigenous and equity-deserving groups) have diverse conceptions of *what* settler-colonialism is. Eve Tuck (Unangax̄), K. Wayne Yang, and Patrick Wolfe identify colonialism as a structure requiring the elimination and control of Indigenous Peoples, and extraction of Indigenous lands and living beings, for the political and economic advancement of settler-colonial and imperial states.⁷ Similarly, Aimé Césaire recognizes colonialism both as the domination and “thingification” (exploitation as “instruments” of capitalist production) of Indigenous Peoples and lands, and as a force that ‘de-civilizes’ the colonizer by degrading them to harmful qualities (i.e., violence, race hatred).⁸

In the Canadian historical context, colonialism took the form of policies intended to support the ascendancy of a White, Christian, settler-colonial nation, including the “Indian” Act, residential “schools,” the reserve pass system, the Sixties Scoop, and forced removals of Indigenous Peoples (from their lands) for settlements. Contemporarily, colonialism manifests as the overrepresentation of

⁷ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 4-6; Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

⁸ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972/2000; *Présence africaine*, 1955), 35, 42.

Indigenous Peoples in prisons, lack of clean drinking water on reserves, resource extraction projects undertaken on Indigenous Peoples' lands without their consent, criminalization of Indigenous land defence movements, and the ongoing epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Queer/Two-Spirit Folks.⁹

One response to settler-colonialism is decolonization. We must recognize that *decolonization* is a complex, non-straightforward concept with multiple and varied meanings. One way to understand decolonization is a shift in conscience (in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people), and a revival of Indigenous ways and cultures.¹⁰ Yet, Tuck and Yang caution that decolonization cannot stop at changing conscience and interpersonal behaviours, and is neither a metaphor, nor equal to other forms of justice, as there is no decolonization without returning and restoring Indigenous land sovereignty and relationships.¹¹ Recognizing the importance of returning Indigenous lands, this paper acknowledges that Reconciliation is neither an end in itself, nor should it force Indigenous Peoples to

⁹ Scott Clark, "Overrepresentation of Indigenous People in the Canadian Criminal Justice System: Causes and Responses," Report, Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice Canada, 2019, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/oip-cjs/oip-cjs-en.pdf>; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), "Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls", Vols. 1a and 1b (2019); The Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "2021 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada: Report 3—Access to Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities—Indigenous Services Canada," Report, The Government of Canada, 2021, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_202102_03_e_43749.html; Anne Spice, "Fighting Invasive Infrastructures: Indigenous Relations Against Pipelines," *Environment and society* 9, no. 1 (2018): 40–56, <https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090104>.

¹⁰ "Decolonization and Indigenization," ICT Inc..

¹¹ Tuck & Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," 20.

“make peace” with a settler-colonial order that oppresses and degrades countless aspects of Indigeneity.¹²

Multiculturalism and Colonialism

The term *multiculturalism* can conjure images of a society where all people have rights, freedoms, opportunities, and equal social standing, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, immigration status, race, religion, and culture. Although I support multiculturalism for helping many racialized Newcomers experience a sense of belonging, and for opening opportunities for their success, I also believe it is important to engage critically with the colonial context upon which Canadian multiculturalism was established and operates within.

Scholars such as David B. MacDonald view multiculturalism as an ongoing project by federal, provincial, and municipal governments to “manage” diversity in Canada.¹³ Multiculturalism has also been used to legitimate settler-colonial state power, and has either perpetuated and/or failed to uproot white supremacy and anti-Indigenous racism. How? Since the 1960s, Canadian governments have introduced “multiculturalism” policies intended to fulfill their idealized versions of a society where “everyone is the same” and where Indigenous Peoples give up their distinct status and assimilate into a “liberal multicultural” (read as white Canadian-European) nation. These include the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* of 1971 and the 1969 *White Paper*.¹⁴ Along a

¹² Billy-Ray Belcourt, “The day of the TRC Final Report: On being in this world without wanting it,” *Rabble.ca*, December 15, 2015, <https://rabble.ca/anti-racism/day-trc-final-report-on-being-this-world-without-wanting-it/>.

¹³ David B. MacDonald, “Aboriginal Peoples and Multicultural Reform in Canada: Prospects for a New Binational Society,” *Canadian journal of sociology* 39, no. 1 (2014): 68.

¹⁴ MacDonald, 75.

similar vein, Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene First Nation) argues that the liberal “politics of recognition,” pushed by Canada, preserves the power and sovereignty of the settler-colonial state, thus leaving racialized hierarchies and colonial political-economic structures of exploitation (of Indigenous Peoples and lands) intact.¹⁵

Chizuru Nobe-Ghelani and Mbalu Lumor expose how the refugee-serving sector is also partly responsible for continuing practices rooted in colonial multiculturalism and whiteness. These include promoting integration and ideas that obscure Canada’s colonial realities, such as “becoming a good settler” and that Canadian citizenship is a “social good” in a “peaceful” and “forward-thinking” country.¹⁶ In writing this report, I hope to inspire the creation of a new paradigm of multiculturalism which challenges all structural and interpersonal forms of racism (e.g., colonialism), and honours Indigenous land title and Treaties between Indigenous Peoples and Canada.

Newcomers, Settlerhood and Bridge Work

Settler can be understood by some to refer to someone who has immigrated and settled on a new land. A more negative or critical connotation of *settler* refers to someone who benefits from the colonization of Indigenous Peoples and lands. There is much debate in literature on whether Newcomers and refugees can be legitimately classified as settlers. On the one hand, Bonita

¹⁵ Glen Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire? : Indigenous Peoples and the “Politics of Recognition” in Canada,” *Contemporary Political Theory*, 6 (2007): 437-460, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300307>.

¹⁶ Chizuru Nobe-Ghelani and Mbalu Lumor, “The Politics of Allyship with Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Refugee-Serving Sector,” *Refuge (Toronto. English edition)* 38, no. 1 (2022): 114-118, <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40841>.

Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (alongside other scholars) contend that People of Colour (including immigrants and refugees) are settlers because they live on lands that were stolen from Indigenous Peoples, and also benefit from colonialism and the denial of Indigenous Peoples' access to their lands.¹⁷ On the other hand, Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright challenged Lawrence and Dua's contention, on the grounds that classifying Newcomers/refugees as settlers or colonizers erases their "historical or social relation[s] to colonialism."¹⁸ According to Sharma and Wright, such labelling perpetuates neoliberal and neo-racist thought by "othering" anyone who is "not Native" to this land, and determining parameters of belonging based on nativity and race. Considering both perspectives, this paper contends that non-Indigenous people are settlers, with responsibilities to unlearn/challenge colonialism and act alongside Indigenous Peoples to decolonize society and institutions. In articulating the concept of *bridge work* and stressing the importance of grappling with one's position within settler-colonialism, in the context of Third World feminist solidarity, Robinder Kaur Sehdev states:

Not only do bridges span borders, they also connect the edges of political action and cultural recognition. Bridge crossing also lays the groundwork for the racialized subject's reckoning with [their] own precarious and complicit location within the settler nation, however racially and sexually marked [they] may be, [their] connection to *this* land is not spiritual, nor does it

¹⁷ Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social justice (San Francisco, Calif.)* 32, no. 4 (102) (2005): 134; Robinder Kaur Sehdev, "Lessons From the Bridge: On the Possibilities of Anti-Racist Feminist Alliances in Indigenous Spaces," in *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, ed. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing (ARP) Books, 2010), 117-118; Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 2 (2014): 15.

¹⁸ Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright, "Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States," *Social justice (San Francisco, Calif.)* 35, no. 3 (113) (2008): 123.

permeate [their] culture, knowledge systems, language or philosophies. In this regard, bridge crossing is a powerful tool for challenging settlerhood amongst *all* settlers.¹⁹

Throughout this paper, I will use Sehdev's concept of *bridge work* as a guiding principle that underlies my recommendations on how Newcomers, refugees, and Newcomer/refugee organizations can undertake the work of reconciling and building community with Indigenous Peoples. The work of building bridges and fostering a cross-group dialogue for change is more important now than ever, in a context of divisions between Newcomers/refugees and Indigenous Peoples. A swathe of research and journalism from Winnipeg reveals that although Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples live in the same/proximate neighbourhoods and have similar experiences with colonialism, there is a significant disconnect between these groups, due to stereotypes, misinformation, lack of face-to-face interactions, and violent tensions over the same limited socio-economic resources (imposed by capitalist and extractive systems).²⁰

¹⁹ Sehdev, "Lessons From the Bridge," 117.

²⁰ Muuxi Adam, "Creating inter-cultural understanding: Relationship between Urban Indigenous Communities and Immigrant and Refugee Newcomers in Winnipeg's inner-city," (Report, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW), 2015), https://spcw.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Aboriginal-Newcomer_Report_final.pdf; Aliraza Alidina, Darrien Morton and Jenna Wirch, "Fostering Safe Spaces for Dialogue and Relationship-building Between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples: Wise Practices for the relationship-building process and recommendations for the development of an orientation toolkit," (Report, IPW, 2020), <https://spcw.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Fostering-Safe-Spaces-for-Dialogue-and-Relationship-building-between-Newcomers-and-Indigenous-Peoples-Report-English-Web-View.pdf>; Rose Gilbert, "Amid Tensions, Refugees and Indigenous Canadians Seek Common Ground," *The New Humanitarian, Deeply*, June 1, 2018, <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/refugees/articles/2018/06/01/refugees-and-indigenous-canadians-seek-common-ground-amid-tensions>; John Gyepi-Garbrah, Ryan Walker and Joseph Garcea, "Indigeneity, Immigrant Newcomers and Interculturalism in Winnipeg, Canada," *Urban studies (Edinburgh, Scotland)* 51, no. 9 (2014): 1795–1811, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013502826>.

Indigeneity in Education

Many Newcomers, refugees, and Indigenous Peoples use the public education system, while many in the former two also use English as a Second Language (ESL) education, when they enter Canada. Research underscores the need for Indigenous presence (i.e., histories, worldviews, cultures, and perspectives) to be fairly and accurately represented in education, and integrated in the way educational instruction is carried out. This is evident when educational institutions continue, in their educational materials, to erase Indigenous stories, cast Indigenous Peoples as background characters in “sagas” of Canadian nation-building, privilege Western knowledge over Indigenous knowledge systems, and use linear colonial frames of white “pioneers” “developing” society.²¹

One common response suggested to this gap is *Indigenization*, which, in simple terms, means to make something Indigenous. In an institutional context, *Indigenization* would be a process of “[recognizing] the validity of Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives.”²² Indigenization also “identifies opportunities for indigeneity to be expressed” and “incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.”²³ This report looks at Indigenization in the context of ESL

²¹ Jeremy Siemens, “Education for reconciliation: Pedagogy for a Canadian context,” *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education* 8, no. 1 (2017): 129, <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjnse/article/view/30803>; Christina Cole, “Towards A Pedagogy For Reconciliation-Indigenization: What It Is And Why It Belongs In The ESL Classroom,” *TESL Ontario Contact Magazine*, August 30, 2019, <http://contact.teslontario.org/towards-a-pedagogy-for-reconciliation-indigenization-what-it-is-and-why-it-belongs-in-the-esl-classroom/#:~:text=Indigenization%20requires%20incorporating%20Indigenous%20ways.Indigenous%20peoples%27%20rights%20and%20culture>.

²² “Decolonization and Indigenization,” ICT Inc.

²³ “Decolonization and Indigenization,” ICT Inc.

education and Newcomer settlement. Although an important step in fostering Indigenous-Newcomer relationships, research has highlighted many challenges that prevent Indigenization from coming to fruition. These include, a lack of will or inability among ESL educators to put their pro-reform beliefs into instructional practice, attitudes asserting that including Indigenous content is “subordinate” to “more important” information, and the inability of professional development sessions to inspire attitudinal change in educators.²⁴

KEY FINDINGS

In this section, I provide an overview of some thoughts and insights expressed by participants in my interviews, survey, and virtual event. The primary findings from such interactions are corroborated with evidence from secondary sources.

Challenges and Facilitations to Reconciliation

Knowledge, Assumptions and Stereotypes

Overall, there was a moderate to high level of understanding on Indigenous presence, observed in study participants. Yet, some also indicated holding assumptions about Indigenous Peoples before arriving in Canada. Two interviewees stated that initially, their attitudes were influenced by what they heard about Indigenous Peoples from their homelands or prior countries of residence. For example, interviewee G stated:

²⁴ Amy Abe, “Indigenization in the ESL Classroom,” *TESL Ontario Contact Magazine*, August 2017, <http://contact.teslontario.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/07Abe-Indigenization.pdf>.

“In Brazil, specifically, there's...the day of the Indigenous Person...[There's] a very folkloric approach to it,...as if Indigenous Peoples only existed in the past, and usually, people would celebrate this, in schools...kids will dress up and put [on] feather headdresses...So that's what I would say is kind of negative, because we should have known better.”

G also felt that Canada's image abroad (i.e., as a “rich” and “developed” country with infrastructure) obscures the truth about colonialism and the oppression of Indigenous Peoples.

Although no Newcomer/refugee participant openly indicated holding any anti-Indigenous stereotypes, most interviewees and survey respondents indicated that they heard harmful stereotypes being circulated about Indigenous Peoples. These include perceptions that Indigenous Peoples “do not work nor pay taxes,” are “alcoholics,” “dangerous,” “impolite/rude,” “homeless,” and “unwelcoming towards Newcomers and refugees.” Similarly, we must recognize how anti-Newcomer stereotypes take hold within Indigenous people (i.e., of Newcomers stealing lands or limited resources, being “terrorists,” etc.).²⁵ An interesting reflection was shared by Newcomer interviewee OA, who believes that stereotypes and divisions flourish because emphasizing differences allows the settler-colonial state to “stay on top of things,” while emphasizing similarities creates a cross-group network of safety and relationships which hinders the control of settler-colonialism. If viewed from a ‘social connectedness vs isolation’ angle, stereotypes arise from different spaces (e.g., family, media, governments), and prevent people of similar historical backgrounds from bonding to create a just society where everyone can thrive.

²⁵ Adam, “Creating inter-cultural understanding,” 13, 20-21; Alidina, Morton, and Wirch, “Fostering Safe Spaces,” 18-19; Gyepi-Garbrah, Walker, and Garcea, “Indigeneity, Immigrant Newcomers and Interculturalism,” 1804.

Face-to-Face Connections

An overwhelming majority of Newcomer and refugee participants indicated having at least one face-to-face interaction with an Indigenous community member. Connections were made through various avenues (i.e., university/college, volunteering, community events). Some interviewees expressed that forming face-to-face connections allows them to see a different picture of Indigenous Peoples, compared to the image given by settler society, media, and governments. For example, OA discussed, based on his experiences, how talking directly with friends from Indigenous communities helped him debunk some stereotypes on Indigenous Peoples being “alcoholics” and establish their inaccuracy. This demonstrates that with stronger inter-community bonds and interactions across diverse identities and positionalities, the forces which isolate or disconnect people (in this case, racism) can be challenged or overcome.

Media and Technology

Newcomer and Indigenous participants have mixed perspectives on the potential for media and technology to support meaningful Reconciliation and community-building. Most interviewees expressed that some digital or printed technological medium is necessary for raising awareness among Newcomers and refugees. Examples favoured include books by Indigenous authors, social media accounts of Indigenous influencers, QR codes in public spaces that direct people to educational resources, and other innovative technologies which connect youth to Indigenous lands.

However, some interviewees do not believe that mainstream media is well-equipped to facilitate the learning process, because it covers the side that supports the colonial status quo, while ignoring Indigenous Peoples' perspectives of their experiences. Tee stated:

I feel media is bought and sold by government...to portray the government narrative, and I've been through my life experience at peaceful protests [or] a candle vigil. And then you hear on the news [that] the Natives have the army surrounded or it's just whatever story sells. It's not actually an accurate depiction of what is happening within Indigenous communities...[Also, on politics], we're going to have scandals within our politicians, just as Canadian structures of government have scandals.

Similar to the spread of misinformation and generalizations, we must also recognize how in some instances, the way the media depicts Indigenous Peoples connects to its depiction of Newcomers and refugees. Maggie Perzyna and Harald Bauder's research, which explored how the media coverage of Wet'suwet'en land-defenders in Northern BC compares to the coverage of the irregular asylum seekers' crossing at the Canada-US Border on Roxham Road, Quebec, shows that Western media outlets have a tendency to construct non-White groups who challenge settler-colonialism and White supremacy as "threats" to public safety and order.²⁶ This serves to legitimize the state's criminalization of Indigenous and racialized peoples, and to reinforce colonial systems of power.

²⁶ Maggie Perzyna and Harald Bauder, "Threats from Within and Threats from Without: Wet'suwet'en Protesters, Irregular Asylum Seekers and on-Going Settler Colonialism in Canada," *Settler Colonial Studies* (2022): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2022.2030083>.

Indigenous-Newcomer Commonalities

Colonialism

Throughout my research interactions, there was a general consensus observed that both Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers have experienced (or continue to experience) colonialism. On the one hand, participants expressed that colonialism is the cause of misinformation and disconnection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

“The issues that we [Indigenous Peoples] see, and experience now are as a result of seven generations attending Indian residential schools. Prior to that, we did not have the socio-economic issues,...addictions,...family violence,...alcoholism,...poverty,...sexual abuse, we did not have those things. It was only until those things were done to seven generations of our people from [the] church and [the] state, that these issues arose.” – Tee, *Indigenous organization leader*

From this perspective, it is evident that colonialism works in a cyclical manner. As colonialism takes control, it disconnects Indigenous Peoples from people and place — in particular, their lands, cultures, economic systems, governance structures, relationships to other human and non-human living beings, and knowledge systems. Through colonial violence and acquisition of land, power and resources, Indigenous people can lose access to resources, traditional ways of life, power and agency which creates the space for trauma, poverty, homelessness and addiction to occur. As a result, it becomes easier for stereotypes and interpersonal forms of racism to take hold, which further reinforce structural racism against Indigenous Peoples. A similar perspective was voiced by Jane, who believes that both Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples face barriers to belonging on these lands; the former face barriers to *finding* home on

a new land, while the latter were/are disconnected from *accessing* home on their lands due to centuries of systemic colonial oppression.

On the other hand, participants acknowledged that colonialism in Canada intersects with, or is related to, colonialism abroad. Two Newcomer interviewees and a few survey respondents related the experiences of colonialism in their own homelands to colonialism against Indigenous Peoples in Canada. For example, Newcomer interviewee T felt that the splitting of lands through borders, created and imposed by White colonial powers, is an experience shared by Indigenous Peoples in both North America and abroad.

“Without any regard to who's living here, they just draw a border in a faraway room in London, and we've a state now. [...] a lot of that, I feel, is in common with Indigenous people...here in BC, because we're next to the US, people have kind of cut in the middle in some nations...And when you create a nation that favors one over the other, that creates so much violence, and...just the inequality and unequal access to resources that is as a result of [Western] nationalism.” – *Newcomer Individual T*

“It's all about taking what is inside the land and not caring about whoever lives on top of the land and not caring about the environmental effects of what they're doing to [Indigenous Peoples and lands].” – *Newcomer Individual T*

These responses tie into Césaire's theory, positing that colonialism is a global, yet unequal, system of (dis)advantage where European colonial powers control, exploit and degrade non-White Indigenous Nations/communities to benefit themselves materially. As a result, the latter have to bear the brunt of multiple and intersecting environmental, economic, war-related, health and social crises. Soma Chatterjee's framework of 'no border politics' provides a response to this issue, as it recognizes that borders were made to secure the exploitation of

racialized labour and Indigenous lands (for settler advancement), and challenges the notion that neatly divided sovereign states are a pathway to belonging.²⁷

Furthermore, there was a desire voiced for structural changes/actions to decolonize Indigenous-settler power relations. For instance, Sumac, who works for a refugee-serving organization, stressed the need to ditch framings of “Truth and Reconciliation,” and instead supports framings of “Truth and Reinstatement.” To Sumac, “Reconciliation” framings are dishonest because they imply that there was ever a positive or equitable relationship between colonial powers and Indigenous Peoples in the first place. Instead, Sumac proposed a focus on reinstating Indigenous Peoples as caretakers and sovereigns of their lands, and suggested that structural changes (e.g., ending boil-water advisories) are more impactful than governments merely passing down information to settlers. Although this perspective is not necessarily from the same angle as Sumac’s, Harsha Walia (South Asian settler academic/activist) goes further and suggests that to truly decolonize, Newcomers and refugees should reject citizenship in a colonial state that was built upon (and continues) the undermining of Indigenous autonomy.²⁸

Despite the consensus overall that colonialism should be challenged, and that emphasizing the commonality of Indigenous and Newcomer experiences with colonialism is necessary for bridge-building, some were more neutral on this

²⁷ Soma Chatterjee, “Immigration, anti-racism, and Indigenous self determination: towards a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary settler colonial,” *Social identities* 25, no. 5 (2019): 644–661, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2018.1473154>.

²⁸ Harsha Walia, “Decolonizing Together: Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity Toward a Practice of Decolonization,” in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, ed. The Kino-nda-niimi Collective (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), 50.

subject. For example, Newcomers S and A expressed that the success of such messaging depends on the person, and suggested focusing on creating cross-cultural connection as opposed to merely discussing colonialism.

Access to Services

Another commonality observed from research interactions is the disconnection from, or barriers to, accessing life-supporting services. For example, several interviewees stated that Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples would benefit from building solidarity and connection because both groups experience a lack of access to quality healthcare, housing, and other social programs. These observations are confirmed by a wide body of research, highlighting how Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples face racialized barriers to accessing healthcare and housing, to name a few.²⁹

²⁹ Native Women's Association of Canada, "Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement: Final Report to Indigenous Services Canada," Report, March 31, 2020, <https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/Indigenous-Housing-Policy-and-Engagement-%E2%80%93-Final-Report-to-Indigenous-Services-Canada.pdf>; Damaris Rose, "Creating a Home in Canada: Refugee Housing Challenges and Potential Policy Solutions," Report, Transatlantic Council on Migration, Migration Policy Institute, 2019, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/TCM-Canada-Housing-Refugees_FINAL.pdf; Andrea Sim, "Barriers to Belonging: Navigating Approaches to Protecting Refugees' Access to Healthcare in Canada," The Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP) Working Paper Series, Vol. 9, No. 1, McGill Faculty of Law, McGill University, Montreal, QC, Summer 2020, https://www.mcgill.ca/humanrights/files/humanrights/sim_andrea_jhrip_vol9_2021_barriers_to_belonging.pdf; Mary-ellen Turpel-Lafond (Aki-Kwe), "In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care," Addressing Racism Review, Summary Report, 2020, <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Summary-Report.pdf>.

Land, The Environment, and Cultural Values

Most participants also expressed that Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers should build solidarity because both depend on a connection to place (particularly, to the *land* or *natural environment*) for their survival.

“When thinking about environmental injustice, and how so many communities have barely contributed to climate change, [Indigenous Peoples] are facing most of the changes to the climate nowadays, or they're the ones at the forefront of the environmental movement. So that's one of the key aspects within sustainability where I think there could be a very strong connection between people. At the end of the day, it's just one planet, we got to do what we got to do.” – *Newcomer Individual G*

“That's spiritual, to know that we had such a relationship with the land, that we took such great care of it. And here it is covered with pavement, here it is...taken and commodified, cut,...packaged...constrained and reformed, and just twisted into something that is not natural. And Indigenous people feel that on a spiritual level...So it's important to recognize our relationship with the land.” – *Crystal Semaganis, Panel speaker*

These insights reveal an appetite for restoring Indigenous land relationships, and working in solidarity for such restoration, among both Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples. To build upon the insights from such interviewees, research from Indigenous-Newcomer dialogues in Lower Mainland, BC has shown that members of both groups view the destruction of land as a deterioration of *home*, while the protection of land could be viewed as the protection, re-building and/or restoration of *home*.³⁰ Such values were present in the worldviews of various Newcomer and Indigenous families and communities.³¹

Furthermore, Newcomer and Indigenous interviewees believe both communities are culturally closer together than visible on the surface. For

³⁰ Jessie Sutherland, “Doorways to Home: Indigenous/Newcomer Neighbourhood Dialogues,” *Canadian issues (Association for Canadian Studies : 1999)* (2012): 11–14.

³¹ Sutherland, 12-13.

example, interviewees Tee and Carly stated that such commonalities exist because both groups have an emphasis on community, family, home, and collectivity. This, according to Newcomer interviewees S and Jane, contrasts with Western colonial cultures that value individualism, rapidity, capitalism, and profit. In articulating the Western/non-Western contrast and sharing her reflections from observing Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, Sumac stated:

“I think that really uplifted me in many ways, and inspired me to return to my roots, collect my ancestral teachings, and learn more about the original teachings and instructions we were given...about our role and responsibility as human beings, not just as entities that just keep...taking from the land and everything that is here, but how to live in harmony, how to be in respectful alliance with all of creation.”

Such commonalities emphasize the need to close the *Indigenous-Immigrant Parallax Gap* — where Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers are rhetorically cast in dualities and treated as “separate” by powerful institutions, despite deep similarities — and focus on re-connecting both groups in the face of divisions, crises, and similar historical/ongoing experiences with oppression.³²

Potential Actions

Community Engagement

Throughout my research, conversations around community engagement surfaced through multiple angles. On the one hand, they manifested as access to the spaces which enable cross-cultural learning and interaction between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples. On the other hand, they manifested as the

³² Harald Bauder, “Closing the Immigration–Aboriginal Parallax Gap,” *Geoforum* 42, no. 5 (2011): 517-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.03.007>.

need to create the grassroots, community-level infrastructure necessary to create such spaces.

Over half of all Newcomer interviewees and survey respondents indicated that they either interacted with Indigenous Peoples and/or gained exposure to some aspect of Indigeneity through community events. For instance, interviewee S talked about how he first found out about Indigenous Peoples in Canada from attending Toronto Newcomer Day, and how that motivated him to sign up for a Reconciliation workshop. Yet, four out of six Newcomer individual interviewees feel we need more workshops, cultural programming, and other community events to assist Newcomers in their learning processes.

Similarly, I found throughout my study that community dialogue spaces, which bring Indigenous Peoples, Newcomers and refugees together, are necessary for facilitating cross-cultural learning and understanding. For instance, Carly, an Indigenous representative in a Newcomer-serving organization, shared second-hand reflections on the reactions of talking circle participants. Carly recounted how there was an “adjustment” from earlier expectations of ‘being talked at’ (similar to a lecture), that she saw ‘pride’ on people’s faces and voices, and that participants expressed that hearing the experiences of the other group was ‘beautiful.’ Similarly, I observed in my virtual event that nearly all Newcomer attendees felt that their understanding of Indigeneity improved after listening to three Indigenous panelists, while some admired the panelists’ perspectives (i.e., on respecting Indigenous names, self-education being more powerful than “waiting for” governments). Prior research of organizations such as Immigrant

Partnership Winnipeg (IPW), Ka Ni Kanichihk (KNK), the Vancouver Dialogue Project, KAIROS, and others, also provides support to the notion that creating community engagement and dialogue spaces can enable cross-cultural understanding, respect, the exchange of cultural traditions and ways of knowing, as well as evoke a sense of common experience and admiration among people of both groups' stories.³³ Drawing parallels to the Idle No More movement (for Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights), non-Indigenous people will be motivated to decolonize systems if there are spaces that enable cross-cultural dialogue, relationship-building, and co-resistance.³⁴

Citizenship Test/Newcomer Educational Materials

Although 83 percent of Newcomer individual interviewees had not taken their citizenship test at the time they were interviewed, it was nevertheless a recurring theme throughout research interactions. Multiple interviewees, both Newcomer and Indigenous, expressed that the current citizenship test and other informational materials (given to Newcomers on arrival) did not fairly nor adequately provide information about Indigenous presence and the history of colonialism. Some, for example, felt that the 4,000-year history of Indigenous Peoples, and the truth about the intentions and impacts of colonization, were intentionally eliminated from citizenship test study resources. This policy has

³³ Akhmetova, "Role of Recent Newcomers," 90; Gyepi-Garbrah, Walker and Garcea, "Indigeneity, Immigrant Newcomers and Interculturalism," 1803-1807; Rachel Reesor and Harald Bauder, "Building Relationships between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples," in *The Promise of Migration: A Companion to the International Metropolis Conference, 2019, Ottawa, Canada*, ed. Harald Bauder (Toronto: Metropolitan University, 2019), 29-31, <https://doi.org/10.32920/ryerson.14638017.v1>.

³⁴ Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, "'#IdleNoMore: Settler Responsibility for Relationship,'" in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, ed. The Kino-nda-niimi Collective (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), 222-225.

been advocated by both Indigenous and Newcomer activists and academics. According to Ali Abukar, a Black man and once-Newcomer of Somali origin, reforming the citizenship test is a significant first step in a context where there is a dearth of information provided by settlement agencies and governments on Indigenous presence.³⁵

Education

Based on research interactions, participants expressed mixed views on the ability of educational systems to properly teach about and engage students in Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Education surfaced in three ways: K-12 public education, post-secondary education, and ESL education. On the one hand, two Newcomer individual interviewees felt that their learning experience in the education system was either 'positive' or 'an improvement' when they came to Canada, compared to that in their homelands or prior countries of residence. One example of this is shared by interviewee G, who believes that her college in Ontario was more sensitive to Indigenous experiences compared to schools in Brazil.

Nevertheless, many participants did not express positive thoughts about how the education system engages with Indigenous presence and Reconciliation. For example, Newcomer interviewees G and M expressed that they did not learn enough about Indigenous histories and cultures through ESL,

³⁵ Ali Abukar, "Reconciliation and New Canadians," in *Reconciliation in Practice: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Ranjan Datta (Fernwood Publishing, 2019), excerpt retrieved from Saskatoon Star Phoenix <https://thestarphoenix.com/entertainment/books/immigrants-and-reconciliation?fbclid=IwAR2U89zIjBzHDZ51M0UGVnLog1SWgePthae9HVEuLu67hkXOFKThjCoYDOW>.

while nearly 56 percent survey respondents indicated that neither they nor their child learned about Indigenous presence at any educational institution. Similarly, all Indigenous interviewees and event panelists expressed that public education systems in their provinces are grounded in colonialist ways of thought and action, and fail to represent Indigenous and non-White perspectives and experiences.

“I don't think it does a good job. The public education on history focuses on railroads and old dead white men. And if it's not old dead white men, it's feminism when it was racist, it's focusing on a racist culture and not like progress that's been made...[I]t was great learning about the famous women behind Canadian feminism, but it doesn't honor their racisms and what they did to Indigenous women with their...white legal power and judicial power at the time.” – Q, *Indigenous community member*

To elaborate, Q, who self-identifies as Métis, discussed how public education perpetuates inaccurate stereotypes about Métis people. These responses indicate how settler-colonial institutions cause disconnection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (especially Newcomers and refugees). A failure to promote Indigenous accomplishments, and the privileging one sole Eurocentric lens, are practices that systemically disconnect people from other (in this case, Indigenous) ways of knowing, seeing, and doing, which disempowers people outside the group with unearned dominance.

Allyship, Privilege and Responsibility

When asked about *what* Newcomers can or should do to act in allyship with Indigenous Peoples, the answers from members of both groups were diverse and interesting. From Newcomer and Indigenous interviewees alike (both organization representatives and individuals), I heard that allyship could look like attending community events, calling out racist behaviours when one sees them,

educating oneself, and using what they learn from workshops/events to change attitudes within their families and peers. To my survey, Newcomers offered varying responses on what they would do to educate or change narratives within their communities. One respondent, for instance, mentioned that they would highlight similarities between refugees and Indigenous Peoples, because both groups have experienced violence and displacement. Similarly, there were mixed perspectives on feelings of optimism and empowerment to bring about Reconciliation and end racism. Two Newcomer respondents stated:

“Right now I'm doing my best to educate myself, and understand when it is/isn't my place to speak. I definitely feel empowered within my own group of friends/family to speak on the issues of racism and reconciliation, and to ensure that I'm not silent when I see/hear acts of racism.”

“I don't feel very empowered, because I still don't feel like I have a solid enough education and/or roadmap...”

Such responses indicate that while there is a promising level of commitment to act as allies and a promising level of awareness on privilege, there is still a significant portion of Newcomers who feel that they are not equipped with enough or proper tools to meaningfully partake in efforts to reconcile, decolonize, and/or build community.

Apart from merely opinions on *what* can/should be done, many interviewees and event panelists had a lot to say on the *importance* or *value* of allyship (or, the *why*). For example, many Newcomers and Indigenous interviewees (both individuals and organizations) felt that building Indigenous-Newcomer community and cooperation is necessary for fostering a cross-cultural exchange of traditions, languages, worldviews, foods and

medicine, skills, and stories. Similarly, panelist Shanese expressed that Indigenous-Newcomer solidarity is necessary because it can equip Newcomers with tools to fight colonialism both here and on their homelands.

“We’re able to bring different perspectives, it’s also about sharing knowledge. Indigenous Peoples, yes, of course, have been fighting colonialism on these lands for over 500 years. But we can teach each other things, learn from each other. In the same way, Indigenous Peoples on these lands can teach us how to better combat colonialism on our own homelands.” – *Shanese, panel speaker*

Of a similar nature, panelist Crystal expressed that Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples need to form allyship and solidarity to ensure the protection of all marginalized people from the threat of the alt-right and other growing White supremacist movements.

When looking at these responses from a social connectedness angle, two things are evident. First, knowledge is power. This means that consciously learning, partaking in self-education, and exposing oneself to diverse groups can empower people to fight the oppressive systems that disconnect us from each other and the land. Second, solidarity can build the inter- and intra-community bonds necessary for all of us to feel valued and recognized for who we are, and to keep each other safe in the face of oppressions and crises. In discussing allyship and solidarity, Sehdev’s *bridge work* theory is relevant and important to consider, because the work of learning the truth, unlearning colonial processes of knowing and doing, and forming decolonial relationships is painful, challenging, and requires us to embrace discomfort.

Organizational Bridge Work and Gaps

Organizations have to shoulder the responsibility of undertaking bridge work because various government institutions have created gaps that prevent Newcomers and refugees from knowing the truth about Indigenous presence and colonialism. During the virtual event, panelist Shanese expressed that there is an obligation to create community-based spaces for learning when colonial education systems omit Indigenous truths and ways of knowing.

Based on interviews, Newcomer- and Indigenous-serving organizations are undertaking bridge work in two critical ways. The first form observed was *programming* that fosters dialogue between, and educate, both communities. Conversations from organization leaders H, J, and Carly reveal that Reconciliation-related programming takes many forms, including conversations on issues affecting Newcomer and Indigenous Peoples, skills workshops, and events that promote Indigenous art, music, and food. Similarly, Carly discussed how her organization launched 12 short digital modules which provide historical and cultural awareness, while also including calls to allyship activities for users. Second, Newcomer-serving organizations are pursuing/have made partnerships with Indigenous Peoples to a certain degree. For example, Carly and J indicated that their Newcomer organizations have partnered with countless First Nation and Métis governments, Indigenous non-profits, and non-Indigenous organizations. Similarly, the organization where interviewees H and M both work has an individual serving as an Indigenous ambassador. To all these interviewees' organizations, having proper consultations with Indigenous Peoples

and centering Indigenous leadership are important when creating community programming or educational content on Reconciliation. Meanwhile, Tee's Indigenous organization has worked to build bridges by having some Newcomers either hired or on their board.

Nevertheless, some representatives also indicated that there were gaps preventing their organizations from undertaking bridge work with Indigenous Peoples. One challenge is that many organizations are small and have to deliver a lot for Newcomers/refugees with limited funding. Another issue, voiced by Jane, is that many Newcomers prioritize "getting settled in" and making stable lives for themselves and their families. These include learning English or French and knowing about housing and other services. Considering both barriers, two representatives stated that their organization has not delivered educational or community engagement programming for Reconciliation because they have to prioritize supporting Newcomers and refugees with limited resources. Another interrelated dimension which Sumac brought up is the limited room for creativity in what organizations can do when funders set the instructions.

"From my personal experience, and just kind of understanding how nonprofit entities work. They often work in silos,...are only focusing on what specific instructions they have been given to work on,...they don't go outside those parameters. And that's partially defined by funders, right? Whether it's government or other philanthropic organizations, but it's also a matter of capacity and accountability." – *Sumac, representative of refugee organization*

These observations tie into Jill Bucklaschuk's findings on the challenges faced by IPW and other ethnocultural organizations, who support Newcomers and refugees in a myriad of ways beyond the economic realm (i.e., cultural, social).

Such organizations face difficulties in receiving funding from governments because they are not recognized as settlement agencies; in particular, because they do not fall within governments' priorities for support which tend to solely be economic.³⁶ Third, some organizations did not create educational materials because there was a sense of fear about 'not getting everything right' or that it is not their place to speak on Indigenous Peoples' experiences. To add on observations from interviews, research reveals that the Newcomer- and refugee-serving sector still has a "whiteness" problem. This manifests either through narratives of Canada being a "peaceful" and "progressive" country and citizenship being a "social good", or simply through a lack of engagement with Reconciliation and Indigenous-Canadian relations.³⁷ These discourses and practices legitimize settler-colonialism, and act as barriers to building cross-group efforts to end racism and create a decolonial society built on honouring relationships to lands and each other. Why? Because Newcomer/refugee settlement organizations, powerful institutions which Newcomers rely upon, are keeping the people they serve in the dark from the truth and "integrating" them as new participants in the settler-colonial project.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPACT

My five recommendations are informed by key findings from my interviews, event, survey, and secondary sources. Following the

³⁶ Jill Bucklaschuk, "Ethnocultural community organizations in Winnipeg: A legacy document" (Report, University of Winnipeg, 2018), 2-3, <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/ceci-network/docs/ecc-legacy-document.pdf>.

³⁷ Hasrat Grewal Gill, "Decolonizing "Integration": Exploring the Role of Immigrant and Refugee Newcomer Agencies" (Policy Brief, LEVELYouth Policy Program, Vancouver Foundation, n.d.), 7; Nobe-Ghelani and Lumor, "Politics of Allyship," 114-120.

recommendations is a summary of the implications of the recommendations and findings on future work by BAM, SCSC, and beyond.

To Federal and Provincial Governments

Implement the TRC's 93rd Call to Action on Creating an Inclusive Citizenship Test

As discussed previously, there are significant knowledge barriers which prevent Newcomers and refugees from knowing the truth about Indigenous Peoples and their relationships to Canada. Often, this lack of knowledge is caused by Newcomers not having access to Indigenous-created resources, and in some cases, by partial or inaccurate information which does not recognize the full context of how colonialism impoverishes and oppresses Indigenous Peoples. Due to Indigeneity (i.e., Treaties, Indigenous governance, accomplishments, etc.) being erased from the public narrative, many Newcomers do not know about Indigenous Peoples, and are likely to internalize stereotypes told by settler society.³⁸ The federal Government has an opportunity to address these gaps by following through on their plan (recommended in the TRC's monumental 2015 report, in their 94 Calls to Action) to create a revised citizenship test and Newcomer Orientation resources that are inclusive of Indigenous Peoples' histories, experiences, and relationships to Canada.³⁹ Newcomers and refugees should be exposed to the context of the lands they are entering early into their arrival, so they are not shocked to learn years later about Canada's colonial history (and present). Moreover, being exposed to such information can serve as

³⁸ Sarah Khan, Rochelle Allan, Jason Pennington, and Lisa Richardson, "Paying our dues: The importance of newcomer solidarity with the Indigenous movement for self-determination in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 35, no. 1 (2015): 147-149.

³⁹ TRC, "Calls to Action," 2015, <https://caid.ca/TRCFinCal2015.pdf>.

a powerful catalyst for changing attitudes and encouraging relationship-building between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples. This awareness of history on shared, but unceded land and space will help Newcomers understand the context behind *why* Indigenous Peoples experience disproportionate socio-economic problems today.

Prioritize and Provide Targeted ‘Reconciliation’ Funding to Newcomer Organizations

Although several Newcomer- and refugee-serving organizations have delivered programming and educational materials to support Reconciliation, many organizations have not yet done so due to a lack of funding.⁴⁰ One critical reason is that efforts to support Newcomers through more holistic and cultural forms of integration (e.g., through Reconciliation) do not fall within Government priorities for settlement support.⁴¹ If the federal Government creates a targeted fund with the aim of helping Newcomer/refugee organizations carry out community-based activities related to Reconciliation, this can reduce a critical barrier that prevents such organizations from being willing and able to engage in Indigenous-Newcomer bridge-building efforts. The process of creating education and community engagement requires building long-term relationships with Indigenous Peoples. This is another interconnected process that is centered on reciprocity, which could look like financially compensating Indigenous leaders for their involvement in toolkit development, workshops, events, and more. In other words, relationship-building requires financial resources, and this barrier could be reduced with regular government funding. This fund should also be open to

⁴⁰ Reesor and Bauder, “Building Relationships,” 32.

⁴¹ Bucklaschuk, “Ethnocultural Community Organizations,” 2-3.

small-scale and grassroots organizations, because they are in closer proximity to the communities that they serve, compared to large-scale/national organizations.

Support Educators in 'Indigenizing' ESL Education

Between 2015 and 2017, approximately 16 percent of Newcomer adults across Canada were enrolled in formal language training.⁴² This signals that programs like ESL are widely used among Newcomers and refugees, and have the power to impact users' perceptions. One way to impact learners' perceptions in a positive way is Indigenization. This goes beyond merely adding more 'Indigenous content,' and is largely also about being critical of and changing the way educational materials talk about Indigeneity, recognizing whose voices are excluded and including them, examining and reforming teaching methods, and ensuring Indigenous knowledge systems are on par with Western knowledge.⁴³ One way to view Indigenization would be through what Jeremy Siemens calls "Education for Reconciliation" pedagogy, which combines critical pedagogy (challenging oppressive systems) with Indigenous knowledges (centering interconnectedness and relationships to all human and non-human living beings and lands).⁴⁴ In practice, Indigenization includes but is not limited to:

1. **Integrating experiential and observational forms of learning** that go beyond the confines of the classroom (e.g., land-based learning, museum/gallery visits, volunteering, etc.);
2. **privileging Indigenous authors and speakers;** and

⁴² Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), "Evaluation of Language Training Services," (Report, Research and Evaluation Branch, IRCC, December 2020), 23, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/E4-2018_LanguageTrain_Eng.pdf.

⁴³ Abe, "Indigenization," 33-35; Cole, "A Pedagogy for Reconciliation-Indigenization," 41-42.

⁴⁴ Siemens, "Education for reconciliation," 130-133.

3. **incorporating teaching methods that allow for dialogue, interaction, and storytelling** (e.g., talking circles).⁴⁵

Although the wisdom on how to Indigenize is available,⁴⁶ and some ESL institutions have developed Reconciliation strategies, actions from many ESL educators are still lacking. Provincial governments and ESL institutions can step in by integrating action-based and reflexive components into Professional Development, working alongside Indigenous governments/leaders to reform curricula, and listening to educators' needs by providing relevant resources.⁴⁷ Ultimately, success depends on the political will to create a pedagogy (and society) built on relationality to each other and the land. Another success factor is individual commitment in educators to actively unlearn and confront colonial patterns of thought and action.

To Non-Profit Organizations and the Newcomer Settlement Sector

Create spaces for relationship-building between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples

A participant expressed that in a context of limited resources offered by educational systems (and limited actions by governments to address such gaps), Newcomers and Indigenous people have the responsibility to connect both communities and create learning resources. Newcomer- and refugee-serving organizations can undertake this work in a myriad of ways. One way involves cultivating in Newcomers a sense of relationship to Indigenous lands through

⁴⁵ Cole, 41-42.

⁴⁶ Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL), "Indigenization," in ATESL Best Practices for Adult EAL and LINC Programming in Alberta (Report, 2022), 231-252, <https://www.atesl.ca/documents/1761/ATESL-Best-Practices-for-Adult-EAL-and-LINC-Programming-in-Alberta.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Abe, 31-32.

land-based learning, which is based on the premise of ‘the land as our teacher’; specifically, knowledge is produced from observing and interacting with the natural world.⁴⁸ Second, Newcomer organizations should facilitate dialogue on issues that unite Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers (e.g., climate change, income insecurity, food insecurity, systemic racism).⁴⁹ BAM has taken steps towards this by hosting community conversations between Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers, such as their 2019 Youth Mental Health Conference.⁵⁰ In doing the work of relationship-building, organizations should embrace a long-term and “organic” approach of gradually building trust and reciprocity between both communities, such as through cross-cultural exchanges (of stories, foods, cultural practices, perspectives, skills, etc.) and by connecting Newcomers to mentors from Indigenous communities.⁵¹ What this means is that relationship-building is not a one-off or superficial action of thinking about Reconciliation for one day and not looking back. Rather, it is a lifelong process of accountability to the Indigenous Peoples of the lands that we occupy, and empowering Indigenous leadership at every step.

⁴⁸ Melissa Twance, “Learning from Land and Water: Exploring Mazinaabikiniganan as Indigenous Epistemology,” *Environmental education research* 25, no. 9 (2019): 1319–1333, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2019.1630802>; Nobe-Ghelani and Lumor, “Politics of Allyship,” 122-123.

⁴⁹ Aaron Hemens, “New education program highlights commonalities between Indigenous people, newcomers,” *New Canadian Media*, March 25, 2022, <https://newcanadianmedia.ca/new-education-program-highlights-commonalities-between-indigenous-people-newcomers/>.

⁵⁰ “Youth Mental Health Conference” [Video], BAM Collective, <https://www.bamcollective.ca/youth-mental-health-conference>.

⁵¹ Alidina, Morton, and Wirch, “Fostering Safe Spaces,” 23.

Create 'Accessible' and 'Living' Educational Documents on Indigenous Allyship

In the face of institutionally-created gaps to learning (e.g., the lack of an inclusive citizenship test, Indigenous erasure in education), Newcomer-serving organizations can help by designing their own toolkits to raise awareness among Newcomers and refugees. First, a toolkit should center the local, context-specific histories of the Indigenous lands on which any Newcomer organization operates. Second, a toolkit should highlight Treaties and land jurisdiction, engage with and challenge anti-Indigenous stereotypes, and highlight the positive stories of Indigenous Peoples. Third, toolkits should explain how colonialism and systemic racism continue to affect Indigenous Peoples today and expose the linkages between history and the present. Toolkits should also emphasize allyship and grappling with one's own privilege, and offer a list of educational resources (created by Indigenous authors/speakers) and actions that Newcomers can take on to act as meaningful allies with Indigenous Peoples.

Two efforts to address such needs have occurred in the following cities in BC: Surrey and Vancouver. The Surrey Local Immigration Partnership released a toolkit in June 2021, written from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples in 'Surrey, BC' (the Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Qayqayt, and Tsawwassen First Nations).⁵² Similarly, in 2014, the City of Vancouver released their toolkit *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers*, derived from dialogues between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples (through the

⁵² Surrey Local Immigration Partnership, "Surrey First Peoples Guide for Newcomers," Toolkit, Surrey, BC, 2021, https://surreykip.ca/sites/default/files/SNCG-VERSION%201_0.pdf.

Vancouver Dialogues Project, 2010-13).⁵³ Although these toolkits are important for providing Newcomers with much-needed information (on various aspects of Indigeneity, colonialism and allyship), shortcomings include their limited accessibility and static nature. To ensure ‘accessibility,’ organizations should ensure that toolkits are digestible to readers, available in all languages, and in formats perceivable by People with Disabilities. Toolkits should also be ‘living,’ in the sense that they are dynamic and open to change as new information arrives, are open to the public, and their ownership is vested with the communities they serve.⁵⁴

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS & POLICY WORK

Beyond increased awareness, the desired impact of my findings and recommendations is to foster social connectedness between people, to place, and to purpose. If implemented, these recommendations can foster intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples, because *people* of both groups will be able to relate to one another’s experiences and understand the context behind each other’s plight, while also knowing what the other group has to offer. Implementing such recommendations can also cultivate a sense of connection, care and responsibility to *place*; particularly, the Indigenous lands which they also reside on. Third, bringing Newcomers and refugees to the journey of Reconciliation can cultivate a sense of *purpose*, or a feeling that they are part of a bigger movement

⁵³ The City of Vancouver, “First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers,” Toolkit, Vancouver, BC, 2014, <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/first-peoples-a-guide-for-newcomers.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Alidina, Morton, and Wirch, “Fostering Safe Spaces,” 35.

for positive and transformative change in society. Policy actors should honour the voices and power of Indigenous organizations, governments, community advocates/leaders, and/or Elders, as co-leaders in every stage of decision-making, and honour the First Nations Principles of OCAP (ownership, control, access and possession) on data collection and usage.⁵⁵ This can prevent instances of cultural appropriation or settlers “speaking for” Indigenous Peoples.

In addition to communities at large, this study is useful for guiding the future directions of policy actors (both government and non-profit) that have a stake in decision-making. On the one hand, my findings and recommendations provide government actors with an understanding of barriers that prevent Newcomers from accessing accurate information about Indigeneity, how these barriers are caused by society and institutions, and potential actions to address such barriers. For BAM and other non-profit organizations (including Newcomer/refugee-serving), my study provides the same information, while also acting as a ‘blueprint’ for how they can shape their advocacy to governments, to ensure they have the resources and capacity to create change at organizational levels. On the other hand, my study provides the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness (SCSC) with directions for future research on interconnections between Reconciliation, cross-group solidarity (between Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups), and social connectedness.

⁵⁵ First Nations Information Governance Centre, “The First Nations Principles of OCAP” (Guide, n.d.), https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/nihbforum/info_and_privacy_doc-ocap.pdf.

CONCLUSION

Governments, non-profit organizations, and the settlement sector must work with Indigenous leaders, governments and/or organizations, to create resources and spaces which facilitate cross-cultural learning and interaction between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples. This can build social connectedness and help undo the social isolation and disconnections caused by colonialism. On one side, if Newcomers and refugees have opportunities to learn directly from Indigenous Peoples about their cultures, histories, and land relationships, this can help cultivate a sense of connection to *people* and *place*. On another side, engaging Newcomers and refugees as active participants in Indigenous-led efforts to transform and decolonize society can cultivate a sense of being part of a positive, broader *purpose*. Newcomer-serving organizations also have an opportunity to advocate for changes to the way that funding is allocated to non-profit organizations; specifically, to demand that funding is prioritized for community-building initiatives between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples. Some considerations for future research on Indigenous-Newcomer allyship include: exploring specific issues surrounding funding-related barriers to bridge work; the role of outreach and communication in community-building; and on whether, and how, Indigenizing ESL education contributes to Indigenous-Newcomer relationship-building.

GLOSSARY

Colonialism/settler-colonialism: A policy, practice, or process of acquiring full or partial political control over another nation, occupying it with settlers, exploiting its lands and/or original inhabitants economically, and controlling the original inhabitants of that land. (These terms are used interchangeably in this report, as they carry the same meaning in the North American context.)

Newcomer: An individual who has arrived in Canada from an outside country and has lived in Canada for five to seven years or less.

Refugee: According to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, a refugee is someone who is fleeing their home country due to war, violence, conflict and/or persecution (i.e., due to race, religion, social group, nationality, political opinion, etc.), and seeks asylum in another country to find safety.

Decolonization: A complex process involving a shift in thinking (how Indigenous Peoples view themselves, how non-Indigenous people view Indigenous Peoples), a restoration of Indigenous cultures, worldviews, governance systems and languages, and repatriation of Indigenous land sovereignty and relationships.

Indigenization: A process of recognizing the validity of Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and perspectives, seeking opportunities for Indigeneity to be expressed, and incorporating Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing and doing.

Reconciliation: According to the TRC, Reconciliation is a process of establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. This requires an awareness of the past, an acknowledgment of harms inflicted, atonement for causes, and action to change behavior.

Social Connectedness/Belonging: A state where everyone is respected, seen, and heard; where they are able to exercise fundamental human rights and lead rich and fulfilling lives; where inter- and intra-community ties are forged through cooperation, trust, and solidarity; and where individuals can use their agency and have the chance to achieve meaningful freedoms. It entails creating a society in which everyone has the opportunity to belong, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or political affiliation.

Social Isolation: A state characterized by a disconnect from, an inability to form relationships with, and an inability to actively participate in a broader social network or community. Social isolation is antithetical to social connectedness or belonging.

Indigenous presence/Indigeneity: A term that I use to refer to a wide range of aspects pertaining to Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island (“North America”), including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis groups. Such aspects include their lives, histories, cultures, languages, spiritualities, land relationships, governance and political systems, economic systems, worldviews, perspectives, and experiences.

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