

<sup>1</sup>: Treaty Education and Relearning in Post-Secondary  
Canadian History Classrooms

by

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## Acknowledgements

# Introduction



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others.<sup>12</sup> Broadly speaking, post-secondary Canadian history courses have reinforced colonial culture by centering narratives around *terra nullius*, the doctrine of discovery (the doctrine of discovery).

Indigenous-Settler relations and their impacts on the past, present, and future are minimized or ignored.<sup>15</sup> When the past centuries of interactions between Indigenous peoples and settlers are considered, it becomes abundantly clear that the real problem is not Indigenous peopl

Historically, moves away from misogyny and racism ha  
and the same can be said in the fight against settler colonialism. Canadians can only benefit from  
the realization of justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and how Canadian history is taught in  
post-secondary institutions needs to no longer be a barrier in this fight

The goal of Canadian history courses needs to be to take an active role in the process of decolonization; however, the outpouring of colonial violence, seen in the dispatching of the  
ponse to those actions, has demonstrated that Canadian history classrooms are not ready to serve as a decolonizing space. Recent events have shown that before conversations about decolonization can begin to take place, people need to better understand what we are decolonizing, what decolonization is, and why it is necessary. Emerging from interviews with Settler scholars, I saw both a desire from faculty for new approaches, and a need to break out of old patterns. Willie

innocence to Settlers, and guarantees Settler futurity.<sup>21</sup> These are not the goals of decolonization. The importance of land underpins the entirety of Canadian history, and it cannot be minimized when addressing decolonization. Decolonization is not merely decentering Settler perspectives and understandings, and Canadian history courses need to adapt accordingly so that the decolonization of Canadian history courses is not separate from the greater process. Moves towards decolonization need to happen in real, tangible ways, and this needs to be realized by anyone who engages in work surrounding the history of Indigenous-Settler relations. Studying, writing, and teaching histories of Indigenous-Settler relations are inherently political acts, which cannot be separated from decolonization.<sup>22</sup>

This project is not about indigenization of History departments, but I hope to write into some of these conversations. Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz write that decolonial

of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians,

<sup>23</sup> Decolonial indigenization is

remain adamant that it is required in order to meet long-term Indigenous needs. Mainstream universities reflect the social and cultural values of the individuals who come from that mainstream, and today that mainstream is the colonizers.<sup>24</sup> However, according to David Anthony Tyeme Clark, through indigenizing as a dynamic course of action, it is possible to:

imagine the academy as a location from which Indigenous peoples appropriate research, writing, and other non- (and sometimes anti-) Indigenous educational resources to seek

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Ibid, 3.

<sup>22</sup>

145.

<sup>23</sup>

Different Visions for the Canadian Academ *AlterNative* 14, no. 3 (2018), 219.





## Methodologies

Questions surrounding what it means to be a Settler in the field of Indigenous-Settler relations contributed significantly to the structure of my project. The decision to interview and consult Canadian historians about the anxieties I was feeling, as well as about their teaching practices, felt natural. Likewise, the decision to involve and consult Indigenous scholars regarding how the discipline might move forward, also felt natural. Interviewees consisted of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, some of whom teach in Canadian history and others who work or teach in affiliated fields. Interviewees spanned post-secondary institutions across British Columbia but were concentrated in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island. I asked about pedagogies, approaches to teaching Indigenous-Settler relations, how scholars are feeling, challenges they feel they face, and how they could be assisted in moving forward with their teaching of Indigenous-Settler relations. In this section, I was wary of centering Settler perspectives and framing the section in a way that maintains ongoing power dynamics between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The risk of minimizing the voices of Indigenous

are issues that I was conscientious of.<sup>31</sup>

Interviewees were selected in consultation with my advisor, John Lutz. They were people who worked in relevant fields in academia that either he or I had some level of connection with, and that I felt comfortable reaching out to. To make initial contact with interviewees, I used information that is publicly available or contact information that had been shared with me in the context of my relationships. From Settler scholars, I had an 87% response rate, and an 85% rate

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<sup>31</sup> Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver BC: UBC Press, 2010), 33.

of successfully completing the interviews from people who responded. Ultimately eleven non-Indigenous scholars were consulted. From Indigenous scholars I had a 100% response rate, but 75% of initial respondents were interviewed. Three Indigenous scholars were interviewed. Initially I was worried about the disparity between the numbers of non-Indigenous and Indigenous respondents, but I addressed this inequality by relying on text-based research and Indigenous authored sources more heavily to allow for different Indigenous perspectives. This disparity is indicative of the presence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars in the academy.

The decision was made to anonymize all interviewees for the written portion of the project because I felt respondents might be more comfortable if their names were not attached to their statements, and I hoped that having identities made anonymous would



## Canadian History Classrooms and the Need for a New Framework

Through interviewing non-Indigenous historians, who teach Canadian history at the post secondary level, I hoped to gain the teaching of Indigenous-Settler relations in their courses. By conducting interviews with professors, and examining syllabi, I was able to gain an understanding of how non-Indigenous scholars engage with histories of Indigenous-Settler relations, and how they teach them.<sup>32</sup> I chose to pursue this aspect of the project because non-Indigenous scholars are being asked to completely change the way they know, think about, and teach Canadian history. This restorying is a daunting task. For scholars to move past feelings of nervousness and apprehension, an important step is examining those feelings, thinking critically about where they stem from, and what needs to happen in order to move past them. Paulette critical self-reflexivity is highly problematic.<sup>33</sup> In the context of this study, by encouraging Settler historians to critically examine their positions, I hope to better understand personal perspectives and the application of pedagogical approaches. Determining how other Settlers and their institutions could support them in making the required shifts to the way they think about

it became evident to me that through treaty education, a path forward could be provided that is satisfactory to professors, students, and decolonial movements.

When asked about whether Canadian history, as a discipline, has changed over the last decade, interviewees predominantly agreed that it has. Most interviewees reflected on the dramatic increase of Indigenous histories, and the value that is placed on Indigenous voices and accounts of Canadian history.<sup>34</sup> There was, however, a minority that emphasized that adding more Indigenous content was not enough. According to one interviewee, the reported growing appreciation for Indigenous perspectives on historical narratives and increasing inclusion of Indigenous content is not synonymous with the structural change taking plac2 Tf11 0 0 1 284.09 487.99 Tm0 g0

enacted through engaging with Indigenous pedagogies or epistemologies and relational approaches to teaching.<sup>37</sup>

When asked to reflect on their pedagogies and approaches to teaching Indigenous history, most interviewees answered that their methods and goals were similar, or identical, to those of the rest of their teaching. The main theme that emerged was a desire to teach foundational skills to their students, including research, writing, and critical thinking. Original, archivally rooted, and primary source research is a common practice across

goal.<sup>39</sup> One respondent explained that a

particular, are forming themselves, forming their worldviews, and

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Professors seek to engage students by exploring a variety of ways to deliver their material. Some interviewees explained that they are distinctly trying to move away from a didactic lecture-based approach, while other interviewees identified their teaching practices as rooted in a lecture style delivery.<sup>41</sup> Despite the wide range of responses regarding how information is shared, interviewees unanimously shared their appreciation for more discussion-based, student-led learning opportunities. One interviewee shared their approach of trying to

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Responses surrounding changes that professors have seen in Canadian history and Indigenous-Settler relations provided me with insight into how instructors are incorporating Indigenous content and perspectives into their courses; for example, through a more integrated approach or as separate lecture topics. Understanding this aspect of course structure, through conversation, was more difficult than I anticipated, which led to my examining the syllabi of relevant courses. The syllabi reflected an approach of teaching Indigenous content as a separate entity from Canadian history, in specific lectures and topics. Only a minority of the syllabi reflected an integrated approach to including Indigenous centered material. The implications of each approach are huge, especially the practice of isolating Indigenous history from mainstream Canadian historical narratives. Consequences of including Indigenous histories as isolated topics

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<sup>39</sup> This sentiment was shared by six out of eleven interviewees.

Interviewee F (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Interviewee F (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewee E (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

For example, through engaging with experiential learning, field trips, and guest lectures, this interviewee works to

or appendages to the mainstream narrative include leaving students with the impression that there is no continuum of Indigenous history in Canada and limiting the visibility of the wider relevance on Indigenous histories.<sup>43</sup> These ramifications were not addressed in the interviews or syllabi.

In the interviews, scholars were asked how they feel when working with and teaching Indigenous histories. Many of these histories have consequential living legacies and how they are shared has direct the feeling of a strong sense of responsibility. Scholars reported feeling responsible to address the historical, and ongoing, exclusion of Indigenous histories from Canadian history, both in their approaches to and teaching Canadian history. One interviewee explained that there has been a glaring gap in that these omissions need to be rectified.<sup>44</sup> multiple interviewees. The desire to tell Indigenous histories in a way that does not tors and making a meaningful impression on students, was brought up by interviewees.<sup>45</sup> One interviewee explained, and others echoed, that they want to do the job well and in a way that respects and honours the histories and peoples who lived and continue to live with them.<sup>46</sup>

Interviewees frequently reported that they feel engaging with the field of Indigenous-Settler relations in their teaching practices is challenging.<sup>47</sup> Some of the factors that interviewees

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(2009): 534

*American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 4  
-563.

<sup>44</sup> This sentiment was echoed across numerous interviews. Interviewee D (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019; Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Interviewee H (professor), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Interviewees, multiple (professors), interview by author, research, Fall 2019.

reported struggling with are: the workload and high volume of learning that are required,<sup>48</sup> telling these histories correctly, their emotional response to the material, and their Settler identities.<sup>49</sup> One of the challenges they face is that, as Settlers, they feel out of place in this field of study.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, the sense of challenge, as I understand it, stems from the intense feeling of responsibility that interviewees share to do this work, and do it well.

From the interviews trends were visible in the







While Canadian historians most frequently reported viewing the area of Canadian history as having been significantly changed by the increased inclusion of Indigenous histories and perspectives on narratives in Canadian history, a minority group was not convinced it has substantively changed. To this group, the supposed change, as evidenced by the increased presence of these histories in faculty members consciousnesses and courses, is superficially clear. There has not been the transformative change that Canadian history requires for it to realize its potential for decolonization. Non-Indigenous scholars reported feeling an intense responsibility to learn about these histories and teach them well but shared that they feel it is a challenging task; however, one that is necessary to embark on. re for a new framework to teach their Canadian history courses from became evident through the interviews as people reflected on the challenges,

## Relearning Through Treaty Education

The goal of Canadian history being an opportunity to contribute to the process of decolonization is not being actualized. While Canadian history courses have improved at including more Indigenous content, as was reflected in the interviews, solely increasing Indigenous themed material is not going to lead to this goal being achieved. Engaging with this goal.<sup>60</sup>

positioned Indigenous and Western thought worlds as two entirely separate entities. The worlds are constructed through the distinctiveness of their respective histories, knowledge traditions, philosophies, and social and physical realities. The completely autonomous constructions of the two thought worlds leave a space in between them. This is the ethical space of engagement.<sup>61</sup> Constructed through the ongoing clashing of cultures, this space has the potential to be accessed when the dominating Western gaze meets the Indigenous counter-gaze. The counter-gaze,

projects from the memory of a people and is, in essence the continuum of a story and history. It is the social, political, and historical consciousness about existence, and a place in the universe that is valid and imbued with purpose and hence our cultural/

remembers a time before colonialism and one that reflects a belief in itself as a human community.<sup>62</sup>

The gaze functions as a mirror. Settlers look into it when trying to witness or capture glimpses of Indigenous realities

examination of our personal and societal implication in the on-going history of colonization.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, this means that courses must be structured on information and ways of knowing that contradict the dominant Canadian narrative. Post-secondary Canadian history courses need to serve as a jumping-off point for the required critical reflection on settler cultures, assumptions, and power dynamics that operate within them.

These windows could be opened through treaty education, which would complicate or challenge colonial attitudes. The Settler historical imagination could be unsettled by providing students opportunities for critical reflection. Changing the way that the numbered treaties are addressed, for example, in post-secondary Canadian history classrooms could achieve this goal of unsettlement.<sup>68</sup> Frequently, treaties, and the relationships they established, are viewed as irrelevant or of little importance

<sup>69</sup> Treaties, in the majority of Canadian history, are represented as the finite moments in which they were signed. The treaties

land nation. This understanding

<sup>70</sup> Treaties underpin the entirety of Canadian history, contrary to common perceptions. The settlement of Canada is predicated on the grounds established by the treaties. They established the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and are foundational to the existence of the Canadian state.

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of Unsettlement .  
This thesis refers exclusively to the numbered treaties. T



demonstrating that treaties contain important lessons on how Canadians should live their lives is vital. Ideally, making these changes would encourage Settlers to take an active role in decolonization and the fight against ongoing colonialism. Crucial to all aspects of how treaties need to be taught is the fact that international treaties were not introduced to Indigenous nations by Europeans. Indigenous nations have a long, complex history of signing treaties between their nations, which cannot be ignored. Teaching treaties in ways that facilitate deeper understandings of the contexts they were signed, their enduring importance, and the cultural differences that have skewed their understanding are required with respect to all aspects of the changes.

Fundamentally, educators taking a relational approach to teaching history is one way to ensure that the changes in the way treaties are taught leads to transformative change. Relational approaches to teaching posit that concepts and ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them.<sup>73</sup> The achievement of this desire would be significant because it would encourage the formation of stronger relationships between educators and students and facilitate responsibilities within these relationships would open possibilities for transformative change in many ways. It would initiate change in how people relate to the content they teach and the personal connections they form around it. A relational approach to teaching provides a healthy forward-looking possibility for educators in Canadian history. The desire to develop new and stronger relationships between other educators and Indigenous peoples was consistently brought up by non-Indigenous interviewees.<sup>74</sup> In the interviews, multiple respondents expressed an

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Dion and Dion, *Braiding Histories*, 54.

Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land and Modernity, in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, edited by Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, 175-208. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 59; interviewee K (professor), in conversation with the author, Fall 2019

interest in hosting more Indigenous guest speakers in their classrooms, which could be achieved by forming relationships with local communities.<sup>75</sup>

History must focus on the relationships that have been built between Settlers and Indigenous peoples, and stop imagining them as a point of departure for the remainder of Canadian history.<sup>76</sup> Understanding the centrality of the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

to not lock events of colonialism in a past that has no present, and allow non-Indigenous students to meet the Indigenous counter-gaze.<sup>80</sup>

The first aspect is changing the content knowledge and histories that accompany treaty education. There are narratives and information that need to accompany the delivery of the numbered treaties in post-secondary Canadian history classrooms, so their significance is not misconstrued. Narratives contrary to the dominant



shows both the character and values of state-sanctioned officials and the spirit and intent that underlie the agreements.<sup>83</sup> To exclude this history from the national narrative that is furthered in post-secondary Canadian history courses mischaracterizes the events that took place during treaty negotiations and the intentions of those who were involved.<sup>84</sup> Government officials commonly used coercion tactics when negotiating and signing treaties. Colonial officials were in cases where a nation refused to sign, in particular, or removal treaty. For example, government officials would find some members of the nation who were willing to sign, have these select members sign, then apply the treaty to the whole nation. Indigenous peoples who opposed treaties were known to be threatened with military violence, the refusing of annuity payments, or the withholding of other goods that were needed to live, including food. Furthermore, key food and coerce resistant nations into signing treaties.<sup>85</sup> To exclude this history of coercion from university-level Canadian history courses mischaracterizes the agreements that were made, and fails to encourage students to think critically about the validity of the treaties. Providing students with the required content knowledge and alternative histories is essential in facilitating deeper comprehension and appreciation of the treaties.

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Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2013); James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina SK: University of Regina Press, 2014), 79-126; Sheldon Krasowski, *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous* (Regina SK: University of Regina Press, 2019), 87-174.

It is important to not mischaracterize colonial officials by painting them with too broad of brush strokes. Michael Asch makes the case that treaties were not driven by malicious intentions, and certain government officials had good intentions in the signing and implementing of the numbered treaties. Asch argues that Settler forebearers were acting

The perceived importance and understandings of the numbered treaties vary immensely between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and treaty education needs to realize this. For example, non-Indigenous peoples frequently see treaties as of little to no importance in their lives. They frequently understand treaties





with whom we negotiated accepted as necessary to legitimate our presence on these lands. And,



## Conclusion

Emerging from the interviews, I saw a need, and a desire, on behalf of Canadian historians for a new framework to approach their courses from. Restorying Canadian history is a task that must be undertaken for goals of decolonization to be furthered, and professors see its importance and feel an intense responsibility to be doing it. Canadian historians need to continue actively taking up this task. Making these changes would encourage multitudes of Settler students to enter into the space of ethical engagement. Ideally, it would encourage them to move away from colonizing and racist understandings of treaties. Canadian history could begin to provide students with opportunities to meet the Indigenous counter-gaze by more frequently presenting students with windows into it, which could be done through treaty education. Unsettling Settlers, and their understandings of treaties, would stop them from continuing to be an impediment to Indigenous resurgence. Treaties need to be taught in a place-specific, relational way. They need to be taught in a way that shows the numerous understandings of their importance, of the relationship they established, and how





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### Primary Sources

I conducted eleven interviews with non-Indigenous scholars and three Indigenous scholars who teach in Canadian history or related fields. Each interview lasted thirty seven minutes and involved a standard set of questions (appended). Interviews were conducted in Victoria B.C., Castlegar B.C., and electronically (phone and Skype). Interviews were conducted between November 2019 and January 2020. Interviews were conducted with scholars from: Vancouver Island University, University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Capilano University, and Selkirk College.

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...rds a Relational Paradigm Four  
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## Appendix I:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning involves patience and time.
- 
- Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

## Appendix II:

### Interview Questions

- What is your name and university affiliation?
- What is your field of study?
- How long have you been in the field?
- How long have you been teaching, in your current field or others?
- How would you describe your teaching philosophy/pedagogy?
- What changes have you noticed in the teaching of Canadian history in the last decade or so?
- Have you noticed any changes in the teaching of Indigenous-settler relations?
- What challenges do you feel you face as a non-Indigenous scholar who is responsible for teaching sensitive histories of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-settler relations?
- How do you feel about teaching some of these more sensitive histories, some of which have intense living legacies?
- Do you have any observations surrounding how non-Indigenous professors are teaching Indigenous histories and Indigenous-settler relations, in the context of Canadian history courses?
- Are there any aspects that stand out to you as being done really well, or specific that areas that you think could use the most improvement?
- What steps, if any, have you taken to become more comfortable teaching these histories? Or to deepen your knowledge in relation to the field?
- Do you notice any changes in your teaching philosophy/pedagogy when interacting with Indigenous histories, or histories of Indigenous-settler relations? Do you feel like your approach to history and teaching history changes when teaching Indigenous histories or Indigenous settler-

