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Decolonizing a Settler Colonial State: How Canada and the United States Have Approached Investigations Into Indigenous Boarding and Residential Schools

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

DECOLONIZING A SETTLER COLONIAL STATE: HOW CANADA AND THE UNITED
STATES HAVE APPROACHED INVESTIGATIONS INTO INDIGENOUS BOARDING
AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
HOLLY JACOBS
CHICAGO, IL
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all Indigenous communities of present-day Canada and the United States, especially the Blackfeet Nation, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe, who have had a particular impact on my life. Thank you also to the Northern Cheyenne, Assiniboine, Crow, Gros Ventre, Pend d'Oreille, Sioux, Cree, and all Indigenous people who have always lived in what is now called Montana. I will be forever grateful to have grown up surrounded by your influence and with the opportunity to learn from you.

Thank you to Dr. Kate Phillippo for your kind and thoughtful guidance. This process was daunting, but you made it a positive, constructive, and deeply meaningful learning experience. Thank you also to Dr. tavis d. jules for teaching me to think more deeply and critically about myself in relation to the world we live in. Thank you to Justin D. Wright for guiding me through writing a poignant, reflective, and meaningful labor acknowledgment. Thank you to my family and friends who stayed by my side and gave me words of encouragement. And finally, thank you to Mason, for all that you do.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author and the entire Loyola University Chicago community acknowledge that the University is located on the ancestral homelands of the Council of the Three Fires (the Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi Tribes) and a place of trade with other Tribes, including the Ho-Chunk, Miami, Menominee, Sauk, and Meskwaki. We recognize that descendants of these and other North American Tribes continue to live and work on this land with us. We recognize the tragic legacy of colonization, genocide, and oppression that still impacts Native American lives today. As a Jesuit university, we affirm our commitment to issues of social responsibility and justice. We further recognize our responsibility to understand, teach, and respect the past and present realities of local Native Americans and their continued connection to this land.

LABOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This author acknowledges that much of what we know of this country today, including its cultural ideas of freedom and liberty, economic growth, and development throughout history has been made possible by the labor and exploitation of enslaved Africans and their descendants who suffered the horrors of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, the ensuing reality of chattel slavery, and terror of the Jim Crow era. We are forever indebted to their labor and their forced sacrifice at the hands of white supremacy. This labor, in combination with land stolen from Native American Tribes, as the result of murder and forcible removal, must be acknowledged as constituting the foundation of this country and its many institutions and systems, in particular its structures of education and law. We must also acknowledge the tremors and traumas of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impacts that are still felt and witnessed today. (Adapted from Stewart, 2021).

This author understands that everything we are, know, and think today was constructed and is perpetuated on the premise that we have an equal world order. What this meant in the past and still means today is systemic violence, exploitation, and oppression of people of color, in particular Black and Native Americans. We do not live in a society that self-replicates uncontrollably, but a society that, in fact, very mindfully maintains its artificially created balance. This society was crafted for the benefit of white supremacy by means of forced labor and land theft, and its systems of law and education continue to ensure that this hegemony endures. In recognizing the truth of this, we must endeavor to enact lasting and ongoing change.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In May and June of 2021, Canadian officials discovered nearly one thousand unmarked graves on the sites of former residential schools for Indigenous children. About 160 miles northeast of Vancouver at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, 215 graves of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation were found (Talmazan, 2021), and in Sakatchewan at the Marieval Indian Residential School, the Cowessess First Nation discovered another 751 graves (“Canada: 751 unmarked,” 2021). The harrowing legacy of these former schools, though officially closed decades ago, continues to affect daily life. In the United States, news of these disturbing discoveries prompted Secretary of the Department of the Interior Deborah Haaland (the first Indigenous person to hold the position) to issue an internal memorandum directly addressing Native American boarding schools. Haaland called for the formation of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, citing the need to “shed light on the scope of [the] impact” of these schools on Indigenous peoples across the United States (Haaland, 2021, p. 1).

For well over 100 years, residential schools in Canada and boarding schools in the United States operated to assimilate Indigenous peoples into their respective settler colonial societies. By forcing them to live away from home, speak only the language of the settlers, cut their hair, change their names, and learn settler history, the thousands of Indigenous students who progressed through these schools lost their cultures, freedom, and dignity, and many even lost their lives. The effects of these schools last to the present day; survivors of these places must

suffer the trauma, families who lost children to the schools must bear the grief, and all Indigenous peoples of North America must endure the consequences of countless policies aimed at their erasure and genocide.

In the years following the official closure of these schools, attempts at restorative justice have been almost nonexistent. Avenues for legal rectification are slim, and even simple apologies from the perpetrating governments have been hard to come by. For example, in 2009, then-President Barack Obama signed a Senate Resolution containing an official apology to Indigenous peoples of the United States, but the text of the apology was buried deep in a defense spending bill and contained a disclaimer stating the apology did not support any legal claims against the government (United States Senate, 2009). Several Indigenous citizens were quick to point out the ineffectiveness of the resolution, criticizing the lack of media attention surrounding its signing, pointing out the absence of any legal meaning, and questioning whether “an apology that’s not said out loud” is really an apology at all (Capriccioso, 2010). In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has been praised by some for his willingness to publicly apologize to Canada’s Indigenous peoples for residential schools (Cecco, 2021), admitted last year to skipping the first-ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (which was established to honor and reconcile with Indigenous peoples who survived residential schools) because he was traveling with his family on holiday (Neuman, 2021).

Moreover, very few non-Indigenous people have any awareness at all of the horrors that occurred in these schools. In the United States, 87 percent of state history standards do not mention Native American history after 1900, and 27 states make no mention of even a single Native American person in their entire K-12 curriculum (“Becoming visible”, 2019). In Canada, however, the story is somewhat different. Canada has no national Indigenous studies

requirement, but starting in the 2023-2024 school year in British Columbia, all secondary students will be required to complete four credits of Indigenous-focused coursework to graduate (Dickson, 2022). Additionally, the Canadian government also established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2007; its primary goals were to use federal funding to hear from more than 6,500 witnesses, gather documentation pertaining to the schools, and educate people about the history and legacy of the residential school system. In the United States, a bill establishing a similar organization, the Truth and Healing Commission, has been pending in the House and Senate for over two years. In 2021, the U.S. Department of the Interior, prompted by Haaland's memorandum (Haaland, 2021), at last launched an investigation into boarding schools to start an information-gathering process. Their final report, which totals just over 100 pages, was released only a short time ago in May of 2022. Though the two nations have similar histories, especially regarding settlement and treatment of Indigenous peoples, their approaches to investigation of residential schools have varied considerably. One thing remains constant, however: any investigatory progress is the result of a protracted struggle by Indigenous peoples and allies in the federal government, and this progress has taken a long time to come to fruition.

The struggle for these nations to achieve full transparency is also a struggle for them to decolonize. As Mamdani (2015) states, even “[a] deracialized [nation] still remains a settler society and a settler state” (p. 607). Dunbar-Ortiz (2021) agrees that “the problem is the general denial or refusal to acknowledge settler colonialism” (p. xxvii) and stresses that “while living persons are not responsible for what their ancestors did, they are responsible for the society they live in, which is a product of the past” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 235). Decolonization in an Indigenous and settler colonial space “does not exist without a framework that centers and privileges Indigenous life” and must contest colonial relations of power (Sium et al., 2012, p. II).

Rather than existing in a binary fashion and necessitating the direct rejection of colonialism, decolonization emphasizes a “multiplicity of epistemologies and ontologies” and crucially, Indigenous knowledges are the starting point (Sium et al., 2012, p. III). By consistently obscuring Indigenous knowledge and histories, or in other words, resisting investigation and transparency regarding residential schools, Canada and the United States actively de-center Indigenous life and fiercely resist decolonization.

The concepts of decolonization and decoloniality have been much discussed in recent years, but providing evidence of the concepts in real life proves a difficult task. This is for several reasons. First, because these terms encompass a broad array of individual actions and ideals, they can seem too nebulous to define and use. Second, colonial discourse has remained incredibly powerful, especially in North America. Introducing decolonial ideals into this space remains difficult; resistance is intense, and colonialism is a force unparalleled in pervasiveness and ability to survive. Simply put, decolonial thought directly opposes centuries of epistemologies and ontologies, meaning the effects of the decolonial agenda and movement will not be seen or felt overnight. Finally, decolonization and decoloniality manifest in a multitude of ways, small and large, every day in the form of (among other things) resistance, criticism of the world order, and introduction of alternative ways of thinking. To narrow the search down to find just one example to study for evidence of decolonialism can be overwhelming.

However, this study seeks to do just that: to use one example, residential schools, in two settler colonial nations to search for evidence of decolonization in action. It is important from the start to be clear on the terminology used throughout. The terms “decolonization” and “decoloniality” have different but sometimes overlapping meanings, which will be expanded upon in chapter 3. However, together, they form what this study calls “the decolonial agenda,”

which stands for any action or movement to effectuate ideals that stem from decolonization and decoloniality. Additionally, decolonization, decoloniality, and the decolonial agenda are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. To find evidence of the decolonial agenda, this study examines the ways in which federal government entities in Canada and the United States have attempted to come to terms with their own past – how they have acknowledged, investigated, and reconciled for forcing Indigenous peoples to attend residential schools, and as a result, causing the lasting negative impacts still felt by these communities today. This thesis attempts to answer the following research question: how and why has Canada made more progress in investigating residential schools, and does this necessarily mean they have come closer to decolonization? In order to answer this, the following sub-question must be addressed first: what does decolonization in the context of residential schools look like in the U.S. and Canada?

Problem Statement

Canada and the United States constructed themselves on a foundation of violence and theft; at their most fundamental, they are settler colonial states. Settler colonialism refers to a phenomenon in which settlers, people (usually white and European) who leave their homeland to permanently move to a new land, forcibly displace and disrupt Indigenous peoples and communities. This process is a structure and not an event (Wolfe, 2006), meaning that the settlement is not contingent upon a foreign nation maintaining colonial rule, but instead is intended to extend in space and time and to outlast European colonialism and imperialism (Hixson, 2013). “Historical distortion and denial” are essential to this structure, as without becoming native themselves, settlers cannot hope to naturalize “a new historical narrative” free of the Indigenous (Hixson, 2013, p. 11). The end result is a settler colonial society of unparalleled effectiveness, with the potential to last forever.

However, by distorting their own history and denying Indigenous histories, settlers continue to disrespect, exploit, and destroy Indigenous peoples and cultures. The story of settler colonialism in Canada and the United States does not end with the dispossession, removal, or even schooling of Indigenous peoples (Hixson, 2013), because many Indigenous peoples and their cultures survived and continue to struggle for basic rights among the now well-established colonial settler governments. Residential and boarding schools embody but one piece of the settler colonial structure, and so far they have remained relegated to history books (if they are even mentioned in them at all) and largely forgotten, out of sight in the fabric of common knowledge.

However, recent events have reminded us again that these schools are not of a thing of the past, nor is settler colonialism. Newly motivated by the disturbing discoveries of hundreds of children's graves, leadership in both Canada and the United States found reason to open up historical inquiries once again. Yet without adequate and deep understanding of the conception, formation, perpetuation, and legacy of residential and boarding schools, particularly in light of the larger settler colonial structure, the colonial settler states will continue on. Without intense, critical analysis with Indigenous voices and an agenda of decolonization at the center, any further study will contribute only to solidifying the settler colonial narrative instead of challenging it. This study hopes to carefully dissect an essential component of the settler colonial structure in Canada and the United States, the residential and boarding schools. By breaking down the recent reparation movements in each nation, it hopes to further expose the ways in which settler colonial structures maintain an unparalleled resilience to any sort of dismantling, including decolonization. Furthermore, this study hopes to use its findings to show conclusive evidence of decolonial agendas in the United States and Canada. These findings can be of use to

law and policymakers, but also to educators in their quest to teach each nation's youth the most accurate and inclusive version of history.

Background

Residential and boarding schools¹ did not arise randomly; they were part of a larger process of genocide, assimilation, and domination of Indigenous peoples in North America. This section briefly discusses the historical background regarding the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States, which ultimately led to systems of assimilative schooling, and also frames the contemporary importance of the issue.

United States

The U.S. constitution only mentions the word “Indian” three times, and all references are economic or operational in nature. Two of the three times the word appears, it is to determine the correct number of representatives in the House, and the third provides Congress the exclusive power to regulate commerce “with the Indian tribes” (U.S. Const., Art. I § 2; U.S. Const. Art. I § 8; U.S. Const. Amend. XIV, § 2). Though Native Americans are now citizens of the United States, there is no separate provision of the Constitution that explicitly recognizes rights inherent to Native tribes or peoples. Because of this lack of constitutional guidance, the U.S. Supreme Court played a large role in the early days of the nation to establish a foundation of law regarding Indian status in the newly formed country, as well as Indigenous rights.

These early Supreme Court cases were the first federal decisions relating to Indigenous rights, and they immediately set about crafting a legal standard by which theft of Indigenous land and displacement of Indigenous bodies was not only legal, but encouraged. Native tribes were

¹ Throughout this thesis, the terms “residential schools” and “boarding schools” will be used interchangeably. Residential schools were implemented in Canada, while boarding schools were implemented in the U.S., but the systems share similar essential functions and characteristics.

determined “domestic dependent nations” (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 1831, p. 17), only able to sell land to the U.S. government and unable to own it for themselves. Paternalistic and controlling policies and law were the standard in early America; soon after these first decisions, the Supreme Court declared federal jurisdiction on all major crimes committed in Indian country (regardless of whether the victim or perpetrator were Native) (*Ex Parte Crow Dog*, 1883), and held that Congress had the power to unilaterally abrogate a treaty with an Indian tribe (*Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*, 1903). In *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association* (1988), a logging project was allowed to proceed through sacred, religious land, because the government could not be entirely divested “of its right to use what is, after all, *its* land” (p. 453, emphasis in original). Through time, the U.S. government has steadily and callously chipped away at inherent Indigenous rights, replacing them with things like reservations, food rations, and eventually, boarding schools.

The legislative and executive branches fared no better throughout history. While the Supreme Court ruled on laws, the legislature drafted them, and the executive enforced them. Congress enshrined boarding schools into law and funded them with federal monies, and the executive branch provided law enforcement and military support to ensure that children attended. Until their official closure year (1969, as set by the Department of the Interior in the 2022 investigation report), all branches of the government were unquestionably complicit proponents of Indigenous boarding schools. After that point, however, the story becomes less clear. A strong and arguably very accurate argument can be made that by remaining silent, by refusing to investigate or be transparent with Indian tribes or the broader public about the schools, the government has remained just as complicit to this day. However, the degree to which this has occurred leaves room for discussion. Has the United States responded appropriately to this issue,

and more importantly, even if it has not, has the government created sufficient space for Indigenous voices to approach this issue on their own? After all, the U.S. is a settler colonial country with a settler colonial government; while it may seem highly unlikely that such a place could contribute at all to such a decolonial agenda, the ultimate truth of that is the very subject of this study, and remains to be seen.

Canada

In sharp contrast, Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act explicitly contains a provision outlining Aboriginal peoples' rights, including treaty rights, land claims, and right to participation in constitutional conferences. The Section recognizes only *existing* rights, however, and does not delineate which rights fall under this category; this means that any right that had been extinguished prior to Section 35's enactment in 1982 is not protected (Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, 1982; Hanson et al., 2009). The Canadian Supreme Court has also previously recognized that Aboriginal title to land existed at the time of colonization, independent of colonial law, representing a crucial recognition of inherent rights (Calder v. British Columbia, 1973). Significantly, the Canadian courts have also addressed at least one issue regarding residential schools. In 1999, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled in favor of a former student of St. George's Indian Residential School who sued the federal government, the diocese, and the Anglican Church of Canada, alleging grievous harms of sexual abuse while attending the school. The court allowed the plaintiff to recover damages from all named defendants, meaning that the government of Canada could be held liable for the individual actions of a residential school employee (Mowatt v. Clarke, 1999).

Canada has also been legislatively active since 1998 regarding residential schools, when the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) was established, then in 2007 when the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed. Both were federally funded, but managed and run by Indigenous peoples of Canada, with mandates devoted to investigation and documentation of residential schools. Additionally, Canada has recently passed two new bills, one which officially recognizes Indigenous status and rights as part of the oath that all Canadians take when becoming citizens, and one which establishes the framework for adopting and implementing into federal legislation the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Citizenship Act, 2021; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2021). As progressive as these examples may seem, especially in comparison to the United States, it is still on the surface unclear whether any of these government initiatives contribute meaningfully to a decolonial agenda.

This thesis seeks to achieve a greater level of transparency regarding residential and boarding schools. Using content analysis, this study suggests that by analyzing official policy documents that attempt to investigate and make reparations for boarding schools, conclusions can be drawn regarding whether the United States and Canada have taken meaningful steps toward decolonization and decoloniality, the dismantling of settler colonialism, and the proper and necessary prioritization of Indigenous voices. This thesis will answer the following research questions: (1) to what extent have reparations efforts made by Canada and the U.S. furthered a broader agenda of decolonization; and (2) how and why has Canada made more progress in investigating boarding schools, and does this necessarily mean they have come closer to decolonization?

Settler Colonialism

This section describes the historical social structure of the United States and Canada, namely, settler colonialism. This is essential background information because it places in context

the need for investigation of residential schools, and in turn, the decolonization of the narrative that has historically surrounded them. By initiating these investigations, the federal governments in the U.S. and Canada have effectively taken the first step towards interrogating their settler colonial histories, and potentially have also begun to contribute to decolonization.

First and foremost, settler colonialism must be recognized as distinct from colonialism. As Veracini (2017) states, settler colonialism “is related to colonialism but also inherently distinct from it” (p. 4). While colonialism progresses in a circular fashion (colonizers move with the intent to return home, discovering something in the process), settler colonialism progresses linearly (settlers move with the intent to stay, discovering nothing in the process). This also means that while colonialism seeks to reproduce its existing order, settler colonialism instead intends to supersede whatever former order was in place, usually a colonial one, with its own (Veracini, 2010, pp. 96-97; Veracini, 2017, p. 3).

Another critical distinction is that while colonialism is chiefly concerned with the exploitation of labor, settler colonialism’s “specific, irreducible element” is territoriality (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). The primary motive for any settler is discovering, conquering, and possessing the land. Because Indigenous peoples are usually the main obstacle to this goal, they are seen as entirely dispensable by settler colonies, and thus the relationship between settler and Indigenous is not that of a master and servant but that of an eliminator and a victim (Veracini, 2010, p. 8). This lends itself to inherently genocidal practices, as indigeneity presents a threat to the “preeminent or sole nationality asserted by settlers” (Morgensen, 2012, p. 9). The requirement of eliminating the native further differentiates settler colonialism from colonialism, as the former governs by means of genocidal erasure while the latter “governs by preserving a subject people

for racialized labor exploitation” (Morgensen, 2012, p. 8). This means that settler colonialism is not merely built on immigration but on utter conquest.

“Invasion is a structure, not an event,” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388) and once the settlers have arrived, they do not intend to leave. Without understanding that settler colonialism is indeed a structure, colonialism in its entirety appears to be relegated to the past, and this further perpetuates the myth that when colonialism disappeared, so did Indigenous peoples (Kauani, 2016). It is undisputed, however, that despite settler efforts, Indigenous people and their cultures survived; to accept the settler colonial narrative as true and as unproblematic is to become complicit, but to interrogate this narrative and instead center Indigeneity is to make the effort to decolonize. Moreover, a multi-dimensional understanding of settler colonialism is important, specifically in the ways to which place, culture, and relations of power are approached, because “the disruption of settler colonialism necessitates the disruption of intersecting forces of power such as colonialism, heteropatriarchy and capitalism” (Snelgrove et al., 2014, p. 2).

Linking settler colonial studies to both the past and the present is particularly essential because this avoids locating Indigenous peoples “outside temporality and presence” (Byrd, 2011, p. 6) and ensures they are not erased as modern subjects (Rowe & Tuck, 2016). Because of this settler manipulation of time and space, it is important to be critical of the ways in which the settler narrative has also diminished the existence of Indigenous peoples to a specific time and place, disallowing their survival into the present. Because the process of settler colonialism is linear primarily (to supersede former Indigenous and colonial rule), settlers cannot afford protracted conflicts with Indigenous resistance and the setbacks they cause. This means that settlers wholly define progress as the erasure and suppression of the Indigenous; there is no means to coexist except for Indigenous peoples to surrender and assimilate (Veracini, 2010;

Veracini, 2017). This also means that settler colonials, unlike colonials, do not engage in any process of discovery; in other words, they do not learn anything new from the Indigenous cultures they subsume. Settlers do not record or incorporate; they only transform the land and peoples according to their predispositions and habits. Moreover, once a settler polity is successfully established, the resistance to decolonization is extreme (Veracini, 2010, p. 98).

This is the final defining characteristic of settler colonialism: its ability to resist decolonization vehemently. Macoun and Strakosch (2013) call this lack of decolonization theory “a kind of colonial fatalism” which can, at its worst, “deny the legitimacy of Indigenous resistances” (p. 435). They posit that the theory of settler colonialism can suggest an unending and inescapable structure that will continue in perpetuity, precisely because of its tendency to polarize choices; Indigenous peoples are either to be held out in the open as vocal resisters or be completely assimilated into settler society, and at the same time, settlers can fall back on the notion that in this realm of complete impossibility, there is nothing to be done about the situation. It is important here to note that the institutions that gave birth to settler colonial theory have historically been in white, male, settler control. The study of settler colonialism, and the theory itself, “cannot be decolonized because of good intentions” (Snelgrove et al., 2014, p. 9). Because settlers invoke whatever process they can to make themselves appear native and proper on the land, removing historical ties and replacing them instead with natural ones, the tenacious resistance of colonial structures like residential schools to denaturalize, or *decolonize*, themselves remains (Veracini, 2010; Morgensen, 2012).

While I agree with Kauani (2016) that settler colonial studies unquestionably do not and should not replace Indigenous studies, my hope is that by using the context of settler colonialism, which recognizes that its ultimate goal is the “elimination of the native *as native*,” the lasting

colonial structures of residential schools may be more easily exposed, and efforts at reparation may either be shown to further or hinder decolonization as a whole. I also recognize that there has been criticism of an over-reliance on settler colonial theory, particularly in the area of Native American studies. Shoemaker (2015) refers to settler colonialism as dogma and criticizes Veracini's (2010) contention that it is distinct from colonialism. However, I agree with Rowe and Tuck (2016) that although some may see settler colonialism as "the new dogma," readers may be quick to dismiss it as a theory and miss "what is so generative in the turn to analyzing settler colonialism," namely, "attending to life lived on stolen Indigenous land" (p. 6).

Additionally, Macoun & Strakosch (2013) contend that in the hands of settlers (like me), settler colonialism runs the risk of being used merely as a "pathway to explain the colonial encounter without engaging with Indigenous people and experiences" (p. 436). However, my goal here is only to expose the history and structures of residential schools, and in particular the way they have since been addressed by the settler colonial governments, and to then examine whether this information points to any progress toward a decolonial agenda. While I do attempt to analyze the methods by which settler governments oppressed Indigenous peoples, I do not seek to supplant "the ontological authority of Indigenous people" over the terrain of their experiences of colonization (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013, p. 437). In fact, my goal is to discover whether the federal governments have done just that, and expose it. Settler colonialism certainly can be used to validate existing colonial hegemony, but it can also be used to identify settler interests and rhetoric, providing researchers with tools to deconstruct and criticize this discourse. "If colonialism is indeed a shared condition, then decolonization needs to be a shared endeavor" (Donald, 2009, p. 5).

Thesis Overview

This thesis advances in five additional chapters. Chapter 2 is the literature review, in which the broad body of work surrounding residential schools is brought together and described. First, this chapter explains the history of residential schools in both the U.S. and Canada, then describes the structure of the schools and purpose behind them. Namely, this purpose was to inculcate Indigenous people with colonial beliefs and norms. The literature review then continues to discuss the legacy of the schools in Indigenous communities, in particular describing the lasting negative mental and physical health effects on survivors and their descendants, as well as lowered educational attainment. Next, the investigation and reconciliation efforts by the federal governments of the U.S. and Canada are discussed; this section of the chapter provides an overview of the initiatives as well as a description of documents used later in the study for analysis. Finally, Chapter 2 concludes with the thought that although the literature shows varying or limited degrees of potential decoloniality, that does not mean the decolonial agenda is not present at all, and points out that this gap in the literature is exactly what the study addresses.

In Chapter 3, a conceptual framework is established, which informs the research questions, codes for analysis, and the study more broadly. The chapter first discusses the concept of decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Corntassel, 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Wildcat et al., 2014; Irlbacher-Fox, 2014; Emerson, 2014; Pratt et al., 2018), then moves to decoloniality (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Nadya Tom et al., 2017; Mignolo, 2018; Walsh, 2018). The chapter considers the unique aspects of each concept (such as that decolonization often refers to an event, whereas decoloniality refers to a dynamic state of mind), but also explains the many similarities between the two. Ultimately, the chapter concludes by bringing

the two concepts together into one framework used to inform the study and answer the research questions. Specifically, the framework looks to how the investigative efforts by the federal governments potentially contest the world order, reimagine that order, bring together multiple histories and ways of thinking, create counter-hegemonic movements, and challenge underlying structures of colonialism.

Chapter 4 details the methods used to answer the research questions. First, the chapter outlines the selected documents, the study's parameters, and the analysis process developed from the conceptual framework explained in Chapter 3. The methodology used in this study is content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Hall & Wright, 2008) and in order to determine further underlying meanings, summative content analysis is also implemented (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Saldana, 2016). Next, the chapter explains the data collection and document selection processes, then describes how recording units (or codes) were defined. The coding process is also explained in detail, which was accomplished using the software NVivo. Then, the chapter discusses how the content analysis was conducted and illuminates key initial findings. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations, as well as a section explaining my positionality as a researcher.

In Chapter 5, the findings of the study are described, and the research questions posed in Chapter 1 are answered, and in Chapter 6, the implications of those findings are discussed. In sum, the findings indicate that the current state of decolonization is quite different between Canada and the United States, but that time spent working on the issue is not the only reason why. Further, while Canada has also spent much more money furthering its investigative efforts, this does not mean those have been made without flaws. Finally, the findings point to key reasons why Canada has made more progress in investigations, and also demonstrate that

perhaps the research question “is Canada closer to decolonization?” was not the most appropriate version of the question to ask. Chapter 6 elaborates on implications that stem from these findings. In particular, the chapter discusses implications for decolonial frameworks, what law and policymakers could take away from the findings and apply back to their respective countries, and potential avenues for further research. Finally, the study concludes with the assertion that ultimately, decolonial agendas require rethinking and reimagining every aspect of society and doing so continuously. Canada and the United States will always be governments founded and steeped in colonialism, but the investigative efforts into residential schools studied here show the ways in which governments and individual people can take steps to ameliorate and make reparations for the harm that was done.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section details the history of Indigenous boarding schools in Canada and the U.S. and provides an overview of subsequent efforts at investigation, reconciliation, and reparation by both federal governments. In its totality, the literature in this area thoroughly examines the development, structure, and purpose of boarding schools, as well as provides firsthand, reflective Indigenous perspectives on the issue. However, the literature has yet to specifically answer the question as to whether and how, in their investigations and other efforts, the federal governments in the U.S. and Canada centered Indigenous voices and leadership, or even potentially furthered ideas of decolonization or decoloniality. This also means that the literature does not address whether any of these efforts make meaningful contributions to decolonization, or whether they instead are merely an illusion, appearing to make progress but wholly intent upon hindering decolonization. This section locates this gap within the literature and shows how the research contained in this study fills that space.

The History of Indigenous Boarding Schools

In North America, boarding schools were initiated out of a much longer process of conquest and genocide that began when the first non-Indigenous settler stepped foot on the continent. What began with European settlers landing in North America progressed to the gradual establishment of independent governments in Canada and the United States. Whether fought and won (as was the case in the U.S.) or granted through parliamentary procedure and formal recognition (as was the case in Canada) (McKeever, 2021), independence for the new

nations did not mean independence for non-white inhabitants. In fact, following their respective discoveries of sovereignty, both Canada and the U.S. turned their focus to expanding their reach, meaning that land needed to be acquired and then appropriated to productive citizens who would contribute to the newly formed governments. Two things were necessary to ensure success of the settler colonial nations: (1) total domination over the land and; (2) either assimilation or extermination of the natives.

United States

In the U.S., when British control gave way to a new American government, the Supreme Court wasted little time laying a foundation of land acquisition laws that stand to this day. The doctrine of discovery and Locke's labor theory were leaned upon heavily in early property opinions, declaring Indigenous peoples only to have a "title of occupancy" and relegating all lands to those who would improve it in accordance with European notions of good land use (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, pp. 199-201; Johnson v. M'Intosh, 1823; Greer, 2012). Not only was the Supreme Court actively dispossessing Indigenous peoples, but the legislature had also passed the 1819 Indian Civilization Act, which established funding for religious groups and other individuals to live among and educate Indigenous peoples (Reyhner & Eder, 2006; Woolford, 2015). The House Committee declared in 1818, "[i]n the present state of our country, one of two things seems to be necessary: either that these sons of the forest should be moralized or exterminated" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 46). An example of this genocidal ideal in action can be traced to 1830, when the Indian Removal Act was passed. This ultimately led to forcible removal of the Cherokee Nation from Georgia to Oklahoma in an event known as the Trail of Tears, during which it is estimated that 4,000 of the 11,500 Native Americans who started on this removal journey died along the way (Reyhner & Eder, 2006, p. 55). Those children who

survived then attended schools that had been established in the state of Oklahoma for the new arrivals. By 1842, there were 52 “Indian schools” in operation across the U.S, and by 1871 that number had skyrocketed to 286 institutions, reporting an enrollment of 6,061 students (Reyhner & Eder, 2006, p. 51).

The 1878 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1878) reported that “the eventual civilization of Indians may be reached through the education of their children” and that such education could only be successful for “children removed from the example of their parents” and “kept in boarding schools” (pp. XXV-XXVI). Religious organizations played a large role in running boarding schools up until approximately 1900, receiving federal funding for their operations. However, because of constitutional separation of church and state, these mission schools were gradually phased out, although that had little effect on the structure and success of the boarding school project as a whole (Reyhner & Eder, 2006). From 1890 to 1930, the student population in boarding schools eventually reached 28,333 pupils, and by 1926, nearly 83 percent of Indigenous school-age children were in attendance (NNABSHC, n.d.).

One boarding school was particularly notorious. The Carlisle Indian School, located in present-day Pennsylvania, was run by headmaster Richard Henry Pratt, who is now famous for his saying in reference to the ultimate goal of boarding schools: “[a]ll the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him and save the man” (Callimachi, 2021). On the school site, there are 186 marked graves of children who died while attending Carlisle, but the number of total deaths can only be approximated (Carlisle Indian School Project, n.d.). Ultimately, an estimated 100,000 Indigenous children passed through United States boarding schools between 1879 and the 1960s. The schools began to fall out of favor in the 1940s, however. As elsewhere in the world, the end of World War II brought great change to the U.S. This brought the decline

of boarding schools, as well as renewed calls to “set the American Indian free” (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 248). States eventually assumed responsibility for the education of all Indigenous children by integrating them into public schools. However, the reprehensible legacy of boarding schools remains, and the effects continue to be felt deeply in Indigenous communities to this day.

Canada

During the founding of Canada, land was either unilaterally appropriated or negotiated away via treaty. First this was done by the British and then passed on by inheritance to the new nation of Canada, and in later years, land was taken directly by Canada itself. The dual objective of “preventing tensions with the Aboriginal people and of strengthening colonial power” played out with the first treaties in the 1780s and continued long after all possible physical land was acquired (Beaulieu, 2014, p. 128). To perpetuate the goal of ultimate control, Canada’s federal government turned to residential schools to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their core identities as well as their homelands.

The development of the residential school policy in Canada can be traced back to Treaty negotiations with Indigenous peoples, in which federal officials clearly expressed the government’s intent to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian settler society (TRC, 2016). Several pieces of legislation in the 1800s made this purpose clear; most notably, the 1894 and 1895 Amendments to the Indian Act gave the government the authority to require schooling for Indigenous children until age 18, and the 1920 Indian Act then made it mandatory for every Indigenous child to attend residential school while also making it illegal for them to attend any other educational institution (Woolford, 2015; TRC, 2016). After studying federal Indian boarding schools in the United States, a politician named Nicholas Davin recommended in 1879 that Canada establish similar schools, with the one exception that they should instead be run

almost exclusively by the churches. Many schools then fell under the direction of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Methodist missionaries, among others, but the federal government assumed all of the operating costs (TRC, 2016).

By 1931, residential schools were nearing their peak, with eighty schools in operation (Woolford, 2015, p. 94). Maximum enrollment was reached in the 1956-1957 school year, with 11,539 total students in attendance (TRC, 2016, p. 38). However, as in the U.S., directly following World War II, the use of residential schools began to decline, and the 1951 Amendment to the Indian Act officially recommended the integration of Indigenous children into public schools. Changing post-war sentiments across Canada held individual inherent rights in higher regard, which prompted the Canadian legislature to adopt a policy of promoting the education of Indigenous children “in association with other children” (Raptis, 2008, p. 119). Additionally, the operations had simply become too expensive; for example, by 1945, there were no school facilities of any sort for 42 percent of school-aged Indigenous children due to funding issues (Fontaine & Craft, 2015, p. 42).

However, during integration into public schools, the influx of Indigenous children into the child welfare system also increased, with former residential school sites transitioning into child welfare facilities. This period is called the “Sixties Scoop,” during which Indigenous children were systematically removed from their parents without consent (TRC, 2016, at 43). By the time most residential schools officially closed in the 1970s, the number of children taken into care by child welfare agencies climbed sharply, with Indigenous children accounting for approximately half of all children in these agencies in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (TRC, 2016, p. 44). Between 1995 and 1998, the last seven residential schools shut down, by which time the system had been in place for over 160 years.

The Purpose & Structure of Boarding Schools: Institutionalizing Colonialism

After years of forcibly removing, relocating, and killing Indigenous peoples, settlers in both countries found that westward expansion had a limit. When physical space to relocate Indigenous inhabitants ran out, the settler governments turned to a different method of conquest; instead of removing Tribes as a whole, they began removing the Tribes from the individual. By forcibly and systematically erasing existing cultural values and replacing them with settler values, boarding schools used a divide and conquer mentality, waging the war of assimilation with one individual at a time rather than fighting the entire Tribal at once. Indigenous schooling efforts in North America continued the United States' and Canada's assimilation policies to make room, first physically and then emotionally and politically, for settlers. The boarding school became the "institutional manifestation of the government's determination to completely restructure the Indians' minds and personalities" (Lajimodiere, 2015, p. 257).

United States

The Federal Boarding School Initiative (2022) reported that federal records "document that the United States considered the Federal Indian boarding school system a central part of its Indian assimilation policy" (p. 37). Key to the remaking of Indigenous identities was separation of the child from the family unit and placement in a completely assimilative environment at the boarding schools, usually located off the reservation and full of students from a wide range of Tribes. The ultimate goal was to replace Tribal association and sense of belonging in every way possible; for example, the Haskell Institute in Kansas established a "cadet battalion organization of five companies," or five Tribes, to break up any lingering Tribal loyalties (FBSI, 2022, p. 40). Another benefit of keeping children of the same Tribe separated was increasing their reliance on speaking English in order to "connect with other Native children" (Fort, 2019, p. 6). The schools

were also run in a rigid military fashion” with studies primarily focusing on vocational education, and days were so heavily systematized that children had extremely little freedom to exercise any power of choice (FSBI, 2022, p. 52). In addition, it was common practice in boarding schools to rename children using English names, as well as to cut children’s hair and dress them in the style of settler Americans. No Indigenous languages were allowed to be spoken, as learning “the language of the greatest, most powerful, and enterprising nationalities beneath the sun” was essentially the first step in creating new, young citizens (ARCIA, 1886, p. XXIII).

Canada

Residential schools in Canada served very similar purposes, and operated in much of the same way, which is likely due to taking inspiration from U.S. Indian boarding schools. The politician tasked with studying U.S. schools, Nicholas Davin (1879), stated that residential schools should be “utilized as much as possible” and that “[i]f anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions” (p. 12). Upon arrival at the schools, children were separated from their siblings, dressed in settler clothing, and some were even assigned numbers, living in a world “dominated by fear, loneliness, and lack of affection” (Fontaine & Craft, 2015, p. 14). Religion played a much larger role in the operation of residential schools in Canada than it did in the U.S., because it was concluded that since all civilizations must necessarily be based on a religion, the effort to fully assimilate Indigenous children would be lacking if the schools did not replace their religions with a new one: Christianity. Funding was scarce, meaning that classrooms were overcrowded, food was lacking in nutrition, and curriculum was both basic and demeaning. For

example, in some books, the words “squaw” and “redskins” were used to describe Aboriginal women and people (Fontaine & Craft, 2015, p. 53).

Many schools also operated under an institutionalized child labor system, under which students would study for half the day and then work for the other half, growing or preparing the food they ate or maintaining school grounds. This was seen as vocational training, yet often involved highly repetitive menial labor that offered no educational value. As in the U.S., students were taught exclusively in English, and a policy of native language suppression was strictly adhered to and also severely punished “to the point that children were led to consider it a serious offense.” Cultural practices were also undermined and even outright attacked; one student was told that the Sun Dance was “devil worship” (Fontaine & Craft, 2015, p. 63). The purpose of residential schools was unquestionably to erase Indigenous identities and instead inculcate in children a settler colonial persona, one who ascribed to settler ideals and aspired to leave behind any trace of Indigenous heritage and instead embrace colonization.

Legacy of Boarding Schools – Colonization Remains, Decolonization Struggles

Though these schools are officially no longer in operation in either country, other methods of assimilative and destructive control have since arisen. For example, as recently as 2018, Indigenous women have made reports of forced sterilization, and modern welfare systems in Canada continue to apprehend a disproportionate number of Indigenous children (Hanson et al., 2020). Additionally, residential schools have been linked to intergenerational effects on the physical and mental health of Indigenous populations in Canada, including increased rates of chronic and infectious diseases and mental illness such as depression and addictive behaviors (Wilk et al., 2017). In the U.S., the Running Bear studies, funded by the National Institute of Health and officially recognized and accepted by the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative,

indicate that the Indian boarding school system impacts the present-day health of Indigenous peoples. Overall, Native Americans who attended boarding school have a lower physical health status than those who did not (Running Bear et al, 2018), and those who attended now experience increased risk for depression, PTSD, and unresolved grief (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003). These intergenerational impacts are profound, and they are also unresolved.

Issues remain in schools themselves, as well. In the U.S. for example, 60 percent of grade 4 and grade 8 teacher participants in the National Indian Education Study (NIES) (2019) responded that during the last two years, they had never attended “professional or community-based development programs aimed at developing culturally specific instructional practices” for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) students (p. 30). The lack of regular training indicates that many Indigenous students are likely not being taught in a culturally responsive manner, a crucial step to connecting school to their heritage and to developing “interest in reading about culture” (NIES, 2019, p. 29). Additionally, though many students reported that their family members had taught them some of their Heritage language, 40 percent of fourth graders and 42 percent of eighth graders reported that they could not speak their Heritage language, and approximately half of all students said they could not read their Heritage language. This is unsurprising, as about 75 percent of teachers responded that they had no knowledge or skill in any Heritage language, meaning that students’ exposure to these languages is extremely limited (NIES, 2019, pp. 34-36). Moreover, as of 2018, Native American students had the lowest graduation rate (74 percent), as well as the lowest higher education enrollment rate (24 percent) of any race or ethnicity in the U.S. (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 101, p. 125). In Canada, Indigenous people fare similarly in systems of education. Although approximately half have a post-secondary education, as of 2011, 62 percent of the non-Indigenous population had completed

some sort of post-secondary program, while only 42 percent of the Indigenous population had. Furthermore, the achievement gap did not narrow between 1996 and 2011, and “at best, the gap has remained at the same level” (Gordon & White, 2014, p. 14-15).

The Subsequent Reconciliation & Reparation Efforts

This section provides an overview of the literature and government efforts surrounding reparations in the U.S. and Canada. While both countries have made some degree of effort towards investigation, the history of doing so is much more extensive in Canada, while the U.S. has been involved in such efforts only very recently. This section is also a preview of the documents selected in the study for content analysis. It is directly within this literature where this study attempts to fill a gap; the literature discussed below documents attempts by federal governments to investigate and reconcile with Indigenous people regarding residential schools, but the literature so far does not address whether these efforts maintain decolonial ideals, or if they are just more laws and policies in a long line of others that maintain colonial control.

United States

The United States has a short history of investigations into Federal Indian boarding schools, and a nearly non-existent history of making reparations. In 1992, the U.S. Senate passed Joint Resolution 222, which designated that year as the “Year of Reconciliation Between American Indians and non-Indians.” This resolution was broad and generic; it did not address boarding schools or any assimilative policy directly, but only sought to offer a legally meaningless gesture of goodwill. Though the document called for the United States to “honor the indigenous peoples of this continent” in order to develop trust and respect, it ultimately came across as tone deaf, as the resolution also recognized and honored the year as the 500th

anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus and colonization (United States Senate, 1992).

Congress did not again touch the issue of Indigenous reparations until 2009, during the Obama administration, when the Senate passed Joint Resolution 14. This resolution seemed to take at least one step in a more adequate direction, acknowledging a “long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes” and offered an apology. It did also go farther in the sense that it enumerated several specific wrongs done to Native Americans, including violating treaties, and it expressed remorse for “violence, maltreatment, and neglect” at the hands of the federal government. However, the resolution was legally meaningless. In fact, it contained a provision expressly disallowing “any claim” or “a settlement of any claim” against the United States (United States Senate, 2009). Critics were quick to point out that there were no public announcements of the resolution, no press conferences held, no consultation with any Native nation, and moreover, the apology was buried deep within a defense appropriations spending bill. Furthermore, other countries with similar historical patterns of Indigenous subjugation had already made more substantial efforts to come to term with their pasts. As of 2009, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had already verbally apologized in parliament to “all aboriginals for laws and policies that ‘inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss’” and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper gave a speech to parliament and tribal leaders, apologizing specifically for the residential school system. The United States, however, had only mustered Senate Resolution 14 (Capriccioso, 2010).

It was not until very recently that any meaningful developments took place at the federal level, specifically with the proposed establishment of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act. This marks the first federal effort in the United States “to

formally investigate and document... cultural genocide, assimilation practices, and human rights violations of Indian Boarding Schools.” The purpose of the Act is also to research the ongoing impact of the boarding schools on Indigenous families and communities, and to develop recommendations for the government in order to “heal the historical and intergenerational trauma” caused (United States Senate, 2020). The Commission must “locate, document, analyze, and preserve” boarding school records and survivors’ stories, as well as submit reports and proposals for legislative and administrative action. Although not yet passed, the Act stands to bring about a true turning point in the history of Indigenous rights and reconciliation in the U.S. The inclusion of the terms “cultural genocide” and “human rights” in the text of the bill are important signifiers of acknowledgment, considering that the United States has never admitted that it committed a cultural genocide with its boarding school policies (Harvard Law Review, 2020). While the bill awaits passing and enactment, it has since been reintroduced to the 117th Congress (Warren.Senate.Gov, 2021).

In the meantime, the Department of the Interior has launched an investigation into over 365 boarding schools, aiming “to address the intergenerational impact” of the schools and to “shed light on the unspoken traumas of the past” (Evans, 2021). In a secretarial memo, Secretary of the Interior Deborah Haaland acknowledged that the purpose of the boarding schools was to assimilate Indigenous children into American society, and also recognized that severe traumas resulted. The Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative’s primary goal was identification of boarding school facilities and sites, as well as the location of student burial sites at or near those facilities. Over the course of the investigation, the aim was to uncover and record experiences of Indigenous children who were placed into boarding schools and to “shed light on the scope of that impact” (Haaland, 2021).

The final report of the investigation was issued in May of 2022 and totaled 106 pages.

The Executive Summary states in part:

The Federal Indian boarding school system deployed systematic militarized and identity-alteration methodologies to attempt to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children through education, including but not limited to the following: (1) renaming Indian children from Indian to English names; (2) cutting hair of Indian children; (3) discouraging or preventing the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages, religions, and cultural practices; and (4) organizing Indian and Native Hawaiian children into units to perform military drills (DOI Final Report, 2022, p. 3).

The Department also identified 33 marked burial sites, 6 unmarked burial sites, and 14 marked and unmarked burial sites present at a school location, as well as stated that the number is expected to increase as the investigation continues (DOI Final Report, 2022).

The Report was explicit about assigning responsibility when summarizing the history of Indian education policy, an aspect which has long been missing from United States history and government documents. For example, it states: “Beginning with President Washington, the stated policy of the Federal Government was to replace the Indian’s culture with our own. This was considered “advisable” as the cheapest and safest way of subduing the Indians, of providing a safe habitat for the country’s white inhabitants, of helping the whites acquire desirable land, and of changing the Indian’s economy so that he would be content with less land. Education was a weapon by which these goals were to be accomplished” (DOI Final Report, 2022, p. 21).

The findings of the Investigation demonstrate the lasting impact of settler colonialism on the Indigenous peoples of the present-day United States. Generations of Native Americans “went on to attend” the schools, “leading to an intergenerational pattern of cultural and familial disruption under direct and indirect support by the United States” (DOI Final Report, 2022, p. 90). One of the most shocking findings of the Investigation was that funding for the boarding school system included those funds obtained *from Tribal trust accounts* managed by the United

States for the benefit of Indians. Perhaps most importantly, the Report states that thus far, the Federal Government has not provided any forum or opportunity for survivors or descendants to voluntarily detail their experiences in the Federal boarding school system.

Reactions to the Report were largely positive, though many noted that there is still much work to be done. First Vice President of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Mark Macarro acknowledged the Report as a signal of progress, stating that boarding schools are “not an issue of the past as the stark reality of generational trauma lives on today... there is still much truth, justice, and reconciliation needed in our communities” (NCAI, 2022). Others note that the Report only “scratches the surface on the schools” and question the role that religious institutions played (Nurse, 2022). Some have criticized the Report for not completely detailing how the children died or who was responsible, and many agree that the report is a “good first step,” but more work is needed. “The children aren’t home,” and until they are, we will not “get to the bottom of it” (Scherer, 2022).

In addition to the DOI investigation and Final Report, in late 2021, President Joe Biden issued a proclamation naming October 11 Indigenous Peoples’ Day, which is observed the same day as Columbus Day (Prang, 2021). While officials across the country, including school board leaders, governors, and entire cities, had already named the holiday and observed it accordingly, the recent presidential proclamation is highly significant because it acknowledges and celebrates Indigenous peoples on a federal level. Additionally, the 117th Congress has proposed several bills that would potentially affect Indigenous rights, including a bill to establish Native American language resource centers (United States Senate, 2021a), a bill to enhance protection of cultural heritage (United States Senate, 2021b), and the reintroduction of the bill to establish the Truth and Healing Commission (United States Senate, 2021c).

Canada

Canada has a much lengthier history when it comes to reparation efforts specifically targeted at investigating residential schools. Recently, legislative efforts to investigate the schools have been amplified, likely due to the discoveries of unmarked graves at former school sites. However, attempts in Canada to make reparations for the past began in earnest in 1998 with the establishment of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The Foundation was both federally funded with \$350 million in grant money, as well as managed and run by Indigenous peoples, and had an eleven-year mandate given by the federal government to direct healing initiatives addressing the legacy and impact of residential schools. Although the Foundation officially closed in 2014, when the mandate was up, it provided essential services to Indigenous communities such as healing centers, while also fulfilling a research mandate to establish a knowledge base regarding long-term health impacts of the residential schools (AHF, 2022a; AHF, 2022b).

The closing of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was mitigated by the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In 2007, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, took place. One element of the settlement was the creation of the TRC, with the goal of creating an investigative organization to facilitate reconciliation among Indigenous communities affected by residential schools (NCTR, 2022a). The TRC, like the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, was given a mandate with a specified ending date, however, when the TRC closed in 2015, it transferred all historical documents and records to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) at the University of Manitoba. This process allowed the mandate given to the TRC to endure, meaning

that research, protection of histories, and education of the public continue via this organization to this day (NCTR, 2022b).

The official mandate of the TRC outlines seven specific goals of the Commission, the powers, duties, and procedures, and positions and groups included in the Commission. Additionally, the mandate requires the completion of “three essential event components” including national events, community events, and individual statement-taking and truth-sharing. Near the end of the mandate, it establishes the National Research Centre (the NCTR), specifying that it shall be made available to “former students, their families and communities, the general public, researchers and educators who wish to include this historic material in curricula” (Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, 2006, p. 11). In its eight years of operation, the TRC traveled to all parts of Canada, heard from more than 6,500 witnesses, hosted seven national events across the country, and presented and published its findings in a final report, including 94 recommendations to further reconciliation efforts between Canadians and Indigenous peoples (NCTR, 2022c). The government of Canada has since promised “to be committed to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples,” as well as “to design a national engagement strategy for developing and implementing a national reconciliation framework” informed by the TRC’s findings (Government of Canada, 2022).

While the continued existence of the NCTR does indeed create an essential space for healing and reparation, the Canadian government has recently taken additional legislative steps to address the harms of residential schools and the cultural genocide they caused. Bills C-8 and C-15 are remarkable and necessary pieces of legislation that move the country further towards increased reconciliation. Bill C-8 officially recognizes Indigenous status and rights as part of the oath that all Canadians take when becoming citizens (El Gharib, 2021). The Act amended the

Citizenship Act in order to include “a solemn promise to respect the Aboriginal and treaty rights of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples” in the Oath or Affirmation of Citizenship (Citizenship Act, 2021). This new oath recognizes the fact that Indigenous rights are both affirmed in Section 35 of the Constitution, as well as derived from historic use of the land by Indigenous peoples (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021).

Bill C-15 establishes the framework for adopting and implementing into federal legislation the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), requiring that all levels of government recognize and affirm those rights as well (Act Respecting UNDRIP, 2021). The United Nations adopted this document in 2007, but Canada and only a few other countries have formally enacted the principles contained within. Bill C-15 enumerates and explains many specific rights, adopting all forty-six articles contained in UNDRIP (El Gharib, 2021; Bellegarde, 2021). From the right to traditional medicines to the right of dignity and diversity of their cultures, Bill C-15 is the most comprehensive and extensive piece of legislation recognizing and affirming Indigenous rights in Canada, and is the first concrete step towards actually aligning law with previously-made promises, declarations, and mandates. Through enacting this bill, Canada has also presented itself as an example of a nation that was not only willing, but also able, to implement a crucial international human-rights instrument (Act Respecting UNDRIP, 2021).

Notably, however, C-15 does not directly enshrine UNDRIP into law, but instead establishes a framework for the implementation of the rights enumerated within. This means that a minister will be made responsible for preparing and creating a plan to achieve the objectives of UNDRIP “in consultation and co-operation with Indigenous peoples” (French, 2021). So while C-15 is certainly remarkable, it does not go as far as many would hope by directly enacting

UNDRIP into law. David Lametti, Canada's current Minister of Justice and Attorney General who introduced the bill in the House of Commons, said, "Bill C-15 is not intended to change Canadian law immediately. Rather, it is an attempt to establish a process that could make federal laws and policies consistent with UNDRIP" (Martisius, 2021).

The people of Canada are divided on their perspectives of C-15. Proponents and supporters see the bill as a long-awaited opportunity for Canada to finally meet its objectives regarding Indigenous rights. One Indigenous scholar said that C-15 is a chance "to actually break with the colonial status quo," while also maintaining skepticism because of the bill's inherent colonial origins in federal government (Gabriel, 2021). UNDRIP contains, perhaps most importantly, an inherent right to self-determination, a right that is taken for granted by white settlers and a right that has been stripped from Indigenous peoples in different ways for hundreds of years. Where the majority of Indigenous support for C-15 seems to come from is the history of UNDRIP itself, as it was uniquely driven and formed by Indigenous peoples from around the world.

Critics of C-15 seriously question whether the bill will have any substance. The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI) issued a letter vehemently opposing the passage of the bill due to inadequate consultation with Indigenous peoples (Timothy, 2021; Stewart, 2021). Stating that "Canada has not adequately engaged with Indigenous peoples," the Deputy Grand Chief of AIAI stated that "[m]eetings were capped, time was restricted, and engagement periods were not extended to make proper use of time and information." The organization strongly opposed passing C-15 as is, citing the importance of "not having our rights dictated to us as [the Federal Government] see[s] fit rather than recognize our right to self-governance" (Timothy, 2021). Other groups have pointed out rather large flaws in the lack of

external oversight and international review by the United Nations, and the bill's reliance on a racist premises that Canada has ownership of the land (Diabo, 2020). Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) stated that the racist foundations of the bill "provide that our inherent rights to our Homelands, and the accompanying natural resources, are subservient to the Crown's presumed underlying title to our Homelands and natural resources" (Turner, 2021).

Conclusion

Boarding schools existed for no short period of time; they were and still are a pervasive and long-lasting influence on Indigenous life in the United States and Canada. The literature surrounding the reparations efforts in each nation shows that the federal governments have acknowledged the existence of these schools and their harmful legacies to varying degrees, but ultimately, decolonization seems to not yet be an explicit priority. For the most part, efforts to decolonize seem to have been initiated by Indigenous peoples themselves. However, this does not necessarily mean that decolonial efforts on the part of the governments are not present. The research proposed by this paper hopes to clarify this very point, determining whether, in absence of obvious and overt attempts by the federal governments to decolonize, such agendas actually exist.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis draws on two very similar concepts: decolonization and decoloniality. I use the term “concepts” rather than “theories” because both decolonization and decoloniality seek to interrogate the hegemony of Western knowledge, including the use of theoretical frameworks. Moreover, they both emphasize the necessity of recognizing that there is no universal truth; rather, a “pluriversal epistemology” is emphasized in order to “de-link from the tyranny of abstract universals” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 13). The term “conceptual framework” seems to adhere more closely to the ideals furthered by decolonial thought, rather than the term “theory,” which is attached to a long history of Western academic thought. This section describes the concept of decolonization, the concept of decoloniality, and the fusion of the two, which I call the “decolonial framework” or the “decolonial agenda.” The framework explained below was used to inform this study’s research questions, and is also utilized in this study to construct codes by which to analyze the selected documents.

In the context of North America, because settler colonialism has set the standard for knowledge, power, and existence, the resulting structures in broader society privilege people of settler descent. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples are for the most part relegated to the margins, their existence devalued and delegitimized. This is where the necessity for concepts such as decolonization and decoloniality emerges. Grown from the work of many scholars, both Indigenous and not, decolonization privileges knowledge reclamation, self-determination, sovereignty, and multiplicity (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Corntassel, 2012; Wildcat et al., 2014;

Wenzel, 2017; Emerson, 2014; Irlbacher-Fox, 2014). Similarly, decoloniality can be described as “the ongoing movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living” (Walsh, 2018, p. 81). While there are scholars who argue that there is a significant difference between the two concepts (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Mignolo, 2018), in the context of settler colonialism in North America, they share far more similarities than differences. For purposes of this thesis, both decolonization and decoloniality will be drawn upon equally and in conjunction with one another. However, the two will be discussed separately below. The chief difference between the two concepts is that decolonization often refers to the event of unsettling a colony or colonial government, while decoloniality challenges “the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 13).

By focusing on how the governments of the United States and Canada privileged certain information and discourses above others while engaging in federal efforts to investigate and make reparations for boarding schools, the concepts described here provide the framework against which the subject of the study is examined. This section first discusses the concept of decolonization, then the concept of decoloniality, then brings them together in a coherent framework in order to assess whether federal efforts to “decolonize” actually adhere to the many concepts behind the word. As Mignolo (2018) states, “the answer to the question ‘What does it mean to decolonize?’ cannot be an abstract universal. It has to be answered by looking at other W questions: Who is doing it, where, why, and how?” (p. 108). This conceptual framework establishes one set of standards against which to measure the actions of Canada and the United States in one decolonial sphere: investigating residential schools.

Decolonization

It is important at the outset to clearly define what the term “decolonization” means. As Tuck and Yang (2012) succinctly state, decolonization “is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools” (p. 1). It is a distinct project, separate from other human rights-based social justice projects, but it is also a nebulous term that has quickly become conflated with many other social causes. However, as Emerson (2014) describes it, decolonization practices “resist and reject colonization. It is almost that simple” (p. 57). Further, it is “not a swappable term” and it has no synonym (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). It is essential to explicitly define decolonization as “everyday practices of resurgence,” reclamation, and re-envisioning by Indigenous peoples, as well as “rejecting the performativity of a rights discourse geared toward state affirmation and recognition,” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 89). By falling into the trap of decolonization as a metaphor, we get in the way of potential alliances and “ultimately represent settler fantasies of easier paths to reconciliation” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 4). In the context of residential schools, decolonization must be referenced only in its most explicit and clearly defined form, and never as a metaphor to be caught up among the litany of other schooling reforms and studies.

Decolonization is also uncomfortable; it requires asking questions that settlers must answer in a manner that deems them inevitably complicit in the continuing colonial structures. Yet to further decolonization in a manner that is comfortable for all is to directly go against its very definition. Specifically, it is not “converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation,” nor is it a generic reference to struggle and oppression (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 21). Indigenous-centered decolonization uses “its own experience of truths” in order to present a “new way of knowing and being that is so old that it looks new” (Emerson, 2014, p. 58). It is a

commitment to Indigenous self-determination and healing, and it requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life.

In the case of residential schools, decolonization also means directly questioning what the U.S. and Canadian governments mean by reconciliation. Tuck and Yang (2012) suggest that reconciliation is “about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing settler future” (p. 35), and is concerned with what decolonization will look like or what the consequences of decolonization will be. However, such questions do not need to be answered before decolonization can occur. Efforts at reconciliation may be a start, but the push to decolonize must also be explicit. Reconciliation has the tendency to conform with settler notions of social justice, whereas decolonization offers a different perspective. While reconciliation may allow settlers to remain within the comfortable bounds of their own knowledge and truths, decolonization requires them to “recognize and challenge their own socialized presumptions of superiority” and unravel the oppression they have created (Pratt et al., 2018, p. 3). This means that if settlers do not name and commit to the additional goal of decolonization, extending the olive branch of reconciliation is an empty gesture. The movement must not merely be to reconcile, but to shift “away from reconciliation and towards decolonization” (Wildcat et al., 2014, p. III). As Tuck and Yang state, “[d]ecolonization is not an ‘and’. It is an elsewhere” (2012, p. 36).

Irlbacher-Fox (2014) provides guidelines for how settlers, can actively work towards decolonization. First and foremost, “Indigenous peoples are not responsible for the decolonization of allies” (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014, p. 153). There should be no presumption that Indigenous peoples must make the first move to create space for their allies to decolonize, nor to continue an ally’s process of decolonizing themselves. When settlers do attempt to incorporate Indigenous voices and knowledge, there is often intense debate regarding how exactly

Indigenous perspectives can fit into the settler-created framework. As a result, any intention of respectfully and meaningfully including Indigenous peoples in projects of decolonization can be rendered moot. Because the “Indian problem” exists within the settler “norm,” the settler privilege continues and is reinforced. However, if settlers were to deconstruct mutual issues “in ways that center settler privilege as the focus of analysis, instead of an approach that highlights Indigenous ‘difference,’” respectful and decolonizing inclusion of Indigenous voices could be attained (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014, p. 150). Constant reflection and awareness of settler privilege is crucial in order to disrupt the unconscious living of it.

Finally, Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) describes many ways in which decolonization operates and can be achieved. For example, she advocates on behalf of Indigenous peoples giving testimony, telling their own stories, and writing their own versions of that story for their own purposes in order to critique and supplement Western history. This history, she contends, was developed directly alongside “imperial beliefs about the Other” (p. 30), the Other being non-white people, including Indigenous people. As a result, history has never been about truth or justice, but about power, and in particular, the power of white settlers. Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) also emphasizes the necessity of challenging what has always been thought of as universal knowledge, as well as challenging who owns that knowledge. Built into this call to action is the interrogation of colonial education like residential schools, and the acknowledgment of their tremendous power in spreading one single knowledge while de-legitimizing all others. Because of this, decolonization also means the “revitalization and reformulation of culture and tradition” (p. 114), and the “struggle for the validity of Indigenous existence and knowledges” (p. 108).

Decolonization at its most fundamental, then, can be described as a web of processes that aim to continuously resist and reject colonization, revitalize and restore Indigenous

epistemologies and traditions, and interrogate and criticize settler privilege. Additionally, it can be defined as the state of being opposite to colonization, or the exact moment in time when colonialism and colonial structures cease to exist. For this study, the first, more dynamic definition is relied upon. The next section will detail some of the specifics of decoloniality, in which there are many ideas that overlap with and echo decolonization.

Decoloniality

Decoloniality is “born out of a realization that ours is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies and epistemologies of equilibrium” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 11). What this means first and foremost is that decoloniality is concerned with the ongoing world power structure, specifically its structural and racial imbalances in society that have remained since the time of colonization and exist now as ongoing phenomena of coloniality. This is not to say that decoloniality is the total absence of coloniality, but rather that it is a movement of many layers, the end goal being the introduction of other ways of thinking and living (Walsh, 2018, p. 81). Moreover, the aim is for “decolonial horizon of liberation” rather than a specific event of decolonization (Mignolo, 2018, p. 125).

Decoloniality is also not a state of enlightenment or existence which one person can possess and another cannot; this would only serve to aggravate ideas of social justice elitism and pit different frames of mind against one another. Instead, decoloniality simply advocates for the introduction of alternative ways of thinking in the cracks and edges of the hegemony of Western knowledge.

History is critical to decoloniality, and in particular, the telling of other versions of history. Because no single universal truth can exist, decoloniality promotes the centering of other interpretations that bring forward a “silenced view of the event while also showing the limits of [colonial] ideology disguised as the true and total interpretation of the events in the making of

the modern world” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, p. 13). This just means that a decolonial history is one that critiques what has always been accepted as the truth and instead illuminates it for what it is: a display of power (see Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). It “exposes the fact that Western epistemologies are exhausted” and shifts the center of knowledge to ask “who generates knowledge and from where?” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 15).

This is a particularly important idea in the context of residential schools, for they were one of the principal propagators of settler colonial knowledge. Additionally, since their closure, they continue to harbor the secrets of multiple histories that have yet to be heard. “Any attempt at working toward decolonial social change from within education” must address several privileges, including the privilege of epistemological, ontological, and curricular choices such as choosing subject matter and defining what is relevant and irrelevant (Nadya Tom et al., 2017, p. 217).

Decoloniality emerges from a context in which the existence of Indigenous peoples is doubted, and it also emerges as a way to tell the history of the world from the experiences of those forced into the margins. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) contends that decoloniality is premised on three concepts: the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of being (p. 11). This means that decoloniality exists to challenge the colonial hegemony within each concept. Fundamentally, decoloniality challenges the long-held assumption that what we know and what we are is and always has been the only correct answer, and instead contends that these assumptions arose from flawed colonial practices. In their absence, decoloniality places multiple ways of being and thinking, multiple histories, and multiple senses of self; furthermore, it makes a point to not suggest that any one of those “multiples” is the ultimate truth.

The Decolonial Conceptual Framework

Together, decolonization and decoloniality overlap and complement each other to create a multifaceted conceptual framework. Decolonization can be thought of as mostly referring to an event, whereas decoloniality is an ongoing movement that exists to combat the current world order. However, as explained above, many scholars contend that decolonization shares several of these dynamic and ongoing aspects with decoloniality. Because of these reasons, for purposes of this thesis I use both together to define what exactly is meant by a decolonial agenda.

Deconstructive acts of resistance, interrogation, rejection, criticism, and contestation make up the decolonial agenda. Simultaneously, constructive acts of reclamation, regeneration, healing, restoration, development, and self-determination also compose another portion of this agenda.

This conceptual framework is large and perhaps overwhelming, but the definition boils down to just this: to further the decolonial agenda means to realize the hegemony of the world order, reimagine that world order, bring together multiple histories and ways of thinking, create counter-hegemonic movements, and recognize and challenge the underlying structure of colonialism (see Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, p. 201). This definition and the information contained in this conceptual framework are used in the following research to examine two potential efforts by colonial governments and their citizens to promote the decolonial agenda. The following chapter breaks down the methodology used to analyze what these processes have entailed so far in Canada and the United States regarding residential schools.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This study draws on selected documents promulgated by the federal governments in the United States and Canada. Each document directly relates to the residential school situation in the respective country, and each was examined using content analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. How and why has Canada made more progress investigating residential schools?
2. Does this necessarily mean that Canada has come closer to a form of decolonization?
3. What does decolonization look like regarding residential school investigations in the United States and Canada?

In this chapter, I outline the selected documents and explain the study's parameters.

Additionally, I explain the analysis process, including the codes developed from the conceptual framework. By using the methodology of content analysis and using the conceptual framework of decolonization and decoloniality, coded documents will reveal important patterns, themes, or absences of essential decolonial concepts. This will in turn inform my research question and sub-questions.

First, I provide the methods of data collection. This includes the means by which documents were selected and also addresses particular documents that were purposely excluded from the study that have only limited relevance. Next, I discuss the recording units and categories, or codes. These were all developed using the conceptual framework of decolonization and decoloniality, were defined accordingly, and continuously reflected upon as coding

progressed. Then, I explain the coding process, including test coding results and changes made to codes before the final round of coding took place. I also briefly explain the possibility of using alternative Indigenous methods for the study, and expound on my decision to rely on a Western methodology instead. This is discussed among other limitations of the study, but also explains why the study nevertheless contributes legitimate and important insights into the state of decolonial thought in the United States and Canada. Finally, the chapter concludes with a statement and reflection on my positionality as a researcher and potential impacts this positionality may have on the study.

Data Collection & Document Selection

I used Krippendorff's (2019) and Hall & Wright's (2008) writings on content analysis to inform my approach. Content analysis "seeks to analyze data within a specific context in view of the meanings someone – a group or a culture – attributes to them," and relies on the symbolic qualities of communications, "thus rendering the (unobserved) context of data analyzable" (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 403). More specifically, I used summative content analysis (Saldana, 2016; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which goes beyond quantitative study of word or phrase frequency, to latent content analysis, which focuses on discovering underlying meanings. The first step in a content analysis research process is to define the sampling units, or to select documents and set parameters for doing so.

Two broad sets of documents were ultimately selected, corresponding to the federal governments of the United States and Canada, respectively, and were then divided further into the following categories: commissions (reports or documents establishing a specific commission or committee); court documents (lawsuits, court filings, settlement agreements) and; law and policy (proposed or passed legislation, Constitutions, policy documents). These documents were

located via internet searches, legal search engines, and government websites. Because the research question of this study focuses on the how and why of government actions, public discourse, non-governmental organizations, Indigenous Tribes or Indigenous bodies, and any other group not associated directly with the federal governments were all excluded categories, as they fall outside the scope of the study. Similarly, state, province, and local documents in the categories of commissions and law and policy were not included in order to keep the amount of data manageable and generalized to the federal level. However, the court document category does include documents from particular provinces and states. This is for two reasons. The first has to do with the nature of lawsuits and courts in both countries. Litigation always proceeds from the most local level and can then be appealed upwards towards federal courts, but in the case of residential schools, litigants found the remedies sought at state levels and therefore had no need for federal courts. Though the remedy was local, residential schools are a national issue. While court decisions or settlements are non-binding in other jurisdictions, they are frequently cited as persuasive authority in other situations. Second, there are no existing Supreme Court cases in either Canada or the United States that deal with residential schools in any capacity. Simply put, if the search for court documents had been kept to this level, it would have yielded no results.

The other major parameter placed on the collection and selection of documents was time. Because the research question asks specifically about the investigation of residential schools, not the creation, perpetuation, and dissolution of the schools, the time frame is clear. Because investigations in Canada began far earlier than in the U.S., the timeframe parameter is longer for that set of documents. The timeline in Canada begins in 1998 with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) Letters Patent, which is the document that legally created the first

investigatory body for residential schools in Canada. In the U.S., however, the timeline begins in 2009, when the federal government issued a formal apology for past wrongs done to Native Americans. The timeframe for both countries ends with the present day. A full list of documents can be found in Appendix A.

Recording Units & Coding Process

All coding was performed using the software NVivo. The selected documents were analyzed using a priori codes, meaning that initially, codes were developed based on the conceptual framework of decolonization and decoloniality. Codes were divided into categories to help answer the sub-question upon which the main research question rests, namely, what does decolonization look like regarding residential schools in the U.S. and Canada? To answer this, the code categories were divided into groups of who, where, when, why, and how (Mignolo, 2018). Definitions of the codes were developed based on the conceptual framework, researcher interpretation, and general content of the documents. In particular, the categories of “why” and “how” were informed by the conceptual framework in order to look for particular actions cited by scholars which are linked to decolonial agendas. For example, the code “pluriversality and multiplicity” in the category of “how” specifically cites several scholars’ contentions (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Mignolo, 2018; Walsh, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) that a decolonial way of thinking is to contest the Western notion of one truth and one way of life, and to make room for multiple ontologies and epistemologies.

“Why” codes presented a particular challenge to implement. In some cases, the motivation behind an action was clear, but in others, the document needed to be fully read and coded for all other categories before the “why” became apparent. For example, the Senate Resolution from 2021 was passed for the purpose of establishing a National Day of

Remembrance for Indigenous children who went through boarding schools. The “why” here fits into the codes “center” and “reconcile settler to Indigenous,” because the goal is clearly to bring this issue to attention and perhaps also to extend some sort of reconciliatory gesture to the Indigenous community. However, after reading and coding the entire document, other “why” codes clearly fit as well, such as “maintain power,” because of the absence of any paths to justice or concrete reparations being made. Oftentimes, it was what the documents lacked that pointed more clearly to a “why,” rather than what they explicitly purported to be or contained.

After a round of test coding, during which one document from the law and policy category from each country (two total) were entirely analyzed, the codes and their definitions were reassessed. Some additional codes were added that emerged from the data – these were “examining the meaning of reconciliation” (which also was informed by the literature, in particular: Tuck & Yang, 2012; Pratt et al., 2018; Wildcat et al., 2014), “giving testimony” (which was purely an emergent code that I added because of the frequency with which Indigenous people provided personal stories), and “compliance with higher authority” (this was also emergent – I noticed that often the reason for action was two-fold, both for decolonial purposes and to comply with directives given by a higher legal authority such as international bodies). I made the attempt to alter codes as little as possible from their conceptual framework definitions in order to better answer the research question: does this necessarily mean Canada has come closer to decolonization?

Additionally, codes were indiscriminately placed within their categories (how, when, where, who, and why), regardless of the likelihood that a code would fall towards one end of a decolonial spectrum or another. For example, the “how” codes of “barring from formal institutions” (more likely to not contribute to decolonization) and “examining the meaning of

reconciliation” (more likely to contribute to decolonization) were in equal hierarchy under “how” during coding. This was done instead of separating the codes out into two separate groups (decolonial and colonial) based on where I thought they would fall in order to decrease the chances that assumptions would be made during coding, and to see how the codes would more naturally fall among all selected documents. Only after coding was complete and during the analysis stage did I arrange the codes into any type of hierarchy or further categorization. This is detailed in the section below. The full list of codes, including groupings and definitions, can be found in Appendix B.

Content Analysis of Selected Documents

First, the raw data was analyzed to assess achieved reliability. Overall, almost all coded text adhered to the definitions set for each individual code. At this point, three alterations were made to the organization of the “how” codes. First, coded text associated only with government action was moved underneath “formal government actions.” Second, coded text associated only with Indigenous action was moved underneath “self determine.” Third, coded text that referred to a specific form of investigation or research was moved underneath “investigate, question, and research.” Grouping the coded material in this way allowed for easier analysis of the raw data, and allowed for trends to be more easily established. The remaining “how” codes were left in their original hierarchy.

Once codes had been finalized into themes and groups as described above, textual analysis began. The main method of analysis was looking for frequency or infrequency of codes in particular areas to determine the presence of certain techniques or actions associated with decolonization and decoloniality. In addition, matrix coding was performed to assess the relationship among particular codes of interest. To answer my research question fully, it was

necessary to look for both the existence of particular codes, as well as the relationship between many of the codes. The relationship is necessary in order to qualify the presence of a code; for example, the giving of funds to an Indigenous group (“how”) is qualified by the purpose of the allocation (“why”).

The content analysis of the coding revealed eight themes that were identified by frequency of code and relation of that frequency to particular documents, as well as frequency of certain codes in relation to one another. Additionally, the relation of groups of codes to each other was examined, since they were separated into “who,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how.” First, funding remains a key method of control over Indigenous people for settler governments. This stood out because of the high number of times the codes associated with funding came up in the coding results.

Table 1. Funding as a Method of Control.

Document	Number of References
Code: give or receive money	
AHF Final Report Summary	6
AHF Final Report Volume 1	12
AHF Letters Patent	11
DOI Final Report	12
Gathering Strength	12
Honoring the Truth	17
Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement	4
Oversight Hearing Haaland Testimony	1
Senate Resolution Remembrance Day	3
Code: allocating funds	
AHF Final Report Summary	2
AHF Final Report Volume 1	13
AHF Final Report Volume 2	2
AHF Letters Patent	15
Senate Resolution Remembrance Day	2

Second, though seldom found anyways, notions of alternative histories, truths, or ways of being are almost exclusively raised by Indigenous people and not the federal governments. This

became clear when a coding matrix was created that compared the relevant “how” codes with all of the “who” codes. Third, churches played a major role in the running of boarding schools and the resulting abuses, but have minimal involvement in investigation or healing processes. Unlike the first finding, this was discovered because of the relative infrequency of the “who” code of churches across the documents, despite knowing their historical involvement with residential schools.

Table 2. Church Involvement.

Document	Number of References
Code: churches	
AHF Final Report Volume 1	1
DOI Final Report	7
Honoring the Truth	8
Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement	1
Mowatt v. Clarke	3

Fourth, “how” a decolonial action occurs does not always correlate logically with “why” the action was done. This was discovered by creating a coding matrix that compared all “how” codes with all “why” codes, and then manually searching for any outliers, such as a “why” code of “self-determine” matched with a “how” code of “barring from formal institutions.” For example, the 1998 Canadian document titled “Gathering Strength” stated that:

A vision for the future should build on recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people and on the treaty relationship. Beginning almost 300 years ago, treaties were signed between the British Crown and many First Nations living in what was to become Canada. These treaties between the Crown and First Nations are basic building blocks in the creation of our country.

While this excerpt was coded with the “how” code of “honor,” it was also coded with the “why” code of “avoid recognizing settler privilege.” The treaties are mentioned only in passing, with no lengthier discussion of the conditions of duress under which many treaties were signed. While acknowledging the importance of the treaties to the Indigenous communities who signed them, the excerpt also avoids grappling with the realities of the treaties themselves, showing a

disconnect between how an action occurred (to honor the legacy of the treaties) and why it ultimately was done that way (to avoid recognizing settler privilege).

Fifth, investigation, development, and healing are the most frequently cited reason for any action. This was identified purely by the frequency of each code.

Table 3. Most Frequently Cited “why” Codes.

Code	Total Number of references	# of documents among which references were distributed
Center	30	16
Investigate or acknowledge wrongdoing	48	13
Development	27	17
Heal	50	15

The top three documents for each of the codes are listed in the table below.

Table 4. Top 3 Documents for Most Frequent “why” Codes.

Center		
THC Proposal Legislation in U.S. Senate	Section 35 of Canadian Constitution	C-15 in Canadian Parliament
Investigate or acknowledge wrongdoing		
AHF Final Report, Volume I in Canadian Commissions	THC Proposal Legislation in U.S. Senate	TRC Final Report in Canadian Commissions
Development		
TRC Final Report in Canadian Commissions	Gathering Strength in Canadian Commissions	AHF Final Report, Volume I in Canadian Commissions
Heal		
AHF Final Report, Volume I in Canadian Commissions	TRC Final Report in Canadian Commissions	C-15 in Canadian Parliament

Sixth, in the United States, Indigenous leaders in government were the main driver of action, whereas the government leaders behind actions were not always Indigenous in Canada. This was identified by looking at the frequency and context of “who” codes among documents. Seventh, the term “reconciliation” is discussed in great detail in Canadian documents, but not in U.S. documents. This was identified by coding, but also just by simply reading the documents. There is a vast difference in the number of pages spent in Canadian documents discussing

reconciliation, and in comparison, almost no time spent on this in U.S. documents. For example, in all the documents, there are forty-one coded references for “examining the meaning of reconciliation.” Forty of these were from Canadian documents, and only one from the U.S. documents, specifically the Senate Resolution from 2009, which stated that the United States:

expresses its regret for the ramifications of former wrongs and its commitment to build on the positive relationships of the past and present to move toward a brighter future where all the people of this land live reconciled as brothers and sisters, and harmoniously steward and protect this land together.

In comparison, one of the forty coded references in the Canadian documents (from the TRC’s Honoring the Truth publication) says:

Reconciliation calls for federal, provincial, and territorial government action. Reconciliation calls for national action. The way we govern ourselves must change. Laws must change. Policies and programs must change. The way we educate our children and ourselves must change. The way we do business must change. Thinking must change. The way we talk to, and about, each other must change. All Canadians must make a firm and lasting commitment to reconciliation to ensure that Canada is a country where our children and grandchildren can thrive.

Eighth and finally, litigation was used as a means to achieve key goals regarding residential schools in both countries, but this was much more effective in Canada than the U.S. This was discovered by looking at the codes assigned to court documents and settlements from each country, and examining the frequency of each “how” and “why” code for each. These findings are expanded on in greater detail in chapter 5.

Limitations

Indigenous Methodologies

It is crucial to note that among other limitations, this study analyzes a topic that centers around the Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States, but employs a Western methodology to do so. Tuhiwei-Smith (2012) expounds upon many methods and methodologies in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. It is particularly

important to me to note that an often-made critique of studies like this one is the refusal to break away from decidedly colonial institutions like universities, and the Western thought contained within them. However, I feel that as a white, American researcher whose knowledge of Indigenous culture, traditions, and ways of life is almost all self-taught, it would be irresponsible and misleading of me to utilize Indigenous methodologies without further guidance or assistance by Indigenous people. By this I mean that I would be wielding a tool developed by Indigenous peoples, for Indigenous peoples, without the proper foundation of knowledge and respect necessary to carry the responsibility. I believe that more harm would be done by a white scholar improperly using an Indigenous methodology than by a white scholar using a Western methodology with inspiration drawn from Indigenous concepts.

To that end, I believe that it is essential to acknowledge that by choosing a Western methodology instead, this study is necessarily limited. However, my choice of methodology is not solely informed by my positionality. I also chose content analysis because the study and comparison done here involves two Western countries with Western laws, policies, and frames of mind. By informing this methodology with distinctly Indigenous and non-Western concepts, however, I seek to strike a balance between methods that would only reinforce Western hegemony with ideas that question the legitimacy of that hegemony.

Additionally, there is a great deal of decolonial action that occurs at the state and local levels of Canada and the United States. Moreover, Indigenous Nations and Tribes have engaged in a great deal of investigation and healing on their own, without the aid of federal governments. However, the scope of this study must be restricted in some way, therefore a limitation exists regarding potential generalization about the state of decolonization in each country. There will

always exist more to study and be said about micro-levels of the issue at hand, but that is not what is researched here.

Researcher Positionality

As a non-Indigenous, white, settler descendant, my research will necessarily be constrained in some ways by my positionality. Positionality describes “an individual’s world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context” (Holmes, 2020, p. 1). Identity is fluid and dynamic because it is constantly affected by social changes, but an individual’s position is essential to recognize because of the way it impacts how they socially construct the world around them (Kezar & Lester, 2010). My world view is that of a settler, and though I make all attempts to mitigate implicit biases that are inherent to all positionalities, but unique to each person, inevitably some are bound to come through. There are many things I was taught to think of “as normal, as pervasive, as good and just,” but by recognizing my positionality I hope to reveal within myself during the research process “hidden aspects of settler colonization” (Barker, 2012).

My positionality has progressed from an individual who was comfortable resting on the hegemony of settler colonialism in ignorance to its current state of beginning to criticize settler dominance and instead turn to the possibility of decolonizing colonial structures, including my own positionality. White settler epistemologies “perform a particular service” for those who are born into a white settler positionality, namely the “distribution of unearned privileges” (Seawright, 2014, p. 564), but what this means for me as a researcher is that I try to make a continuous effort to reflect on this privilege and the ways in which it may affect me. I am not Indigenous, nor can I ever expect to fully comprehend Indigenous realities and existence, but as Moffat (2016) said, I “believe in more than one truth and in many ways of knowing” (p. 750).

This means that while my existence and way of thinking was formed by settler colonial influences, I aim to deliberately reconsider throughout my research process the ways in which my positionality affects my work.

I chose this topic because of a combination of personal and professional implications. Regarding personal implications, I was raised in the state of Montana and was surrounded by Native American education throughout public school. However, I only learned of the existence of residential schools much later in life, and upon reflection that culture of silence was harming many of my friends and neighbors without me noticing. In essence, my unawareness of the history of these schools and the suffering they were still causing is the strongest representation of my own white privilege. In this study I try to confront that privilege externally by performing this research, but also internally by reflecting on my relation to the people and systems in this thesis.

This led me to two broad conclusions regarding professional implications: first, my knowledge, research base, and way of thinking have all been developed in university systems which are historically white. This is a critical point at which to reflect on my privilege – I am studying real experiences that happened to real people, and which continue to cause enormous pain, but I am also studying them with white academic tools and through the eyes of a white, educated person. This study does not seek to exoticize or make a show of the acute suffering that occurred in residential and boarding schools, but instead to understand the ways in which that suffering is being prolonged by the governments and people who caused it. Second, as a law student and future attorney, I am further in a position of privilege in being able to read many of the documents studied with ease, as well as understand their implications within broader legal systems. This study also seeks to understand how these systems, which continue to be dominated

by white people, refuse to dismantle themselves or to be used as tools to help further decolonial causes.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This chapter is organized around the main research question and sub-question: how and why has Canada made more progress in investigating residential schools; does this necessarily mean they have come closer to decolonization and; what does decolonization in the context of residential schools look like in the U.S. and Canada? In answering these questions, eight key findings arose: (1) funding remains a key method of control over Indigenous people for settler governments, even when engaging in otherwise decolonial efforts; (2) notions of alternative histories, truths, or ways of being are almost exclusively raised by Indigenous people and not the federal governments; (3) churches played a major role in the running of boarding schools and the resulting abuses, but have minimal involvement in investigation or healing processes; (4) “how” a decolonial action occurs does not always correlate logically with “why” the action was done; (5) investigation, development, and healing are the most frequently cited reason for any action; (6) in the United States, Indigenous leaders in government were the main driver of action, whereas the government leaders behind actions were not always Indigenous in Canada; (7) the term “reconciliation” is discussed in great detail in Canadian documents, but not in U.S. documents; and (8) litigation was used as a means to achieve key goals regarding residential schools in both countries, but this was much more effective in Canada than the U.S. These will be discussed as they fit into answering each particular research question.

First, this chapter answers the research sub-question, and addresses what decolonization looks like in the context of residential schools in both the U.S. and Canada. This section takes a

deep dive into the exact situation of each country; it discusses the “who,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how” in order to reach a conclusion as to the “what.” In the U.S., this analysis is far briefer than in Canada, but this chapter explains both in detail. The next section of this chapter begins to answer the main research question by examining the ways in which Canada has made more progress in investigating residential schools. Key ideas arose in the findings that were consistent across Canadian documents, but not U.S. documents. For example, the use of the word “reconciliation” has been thoroughly examined in Canada, whereas in the U.S. it is rarely mentioned. The second section of this chapter focuses on these differences in the findings and explains how the findings demonstrate clearly that Canada has in fact made more progress in investigating residential schools and links to the ultimate research question. Finally, the chapter reaches a conclusion regarding the study’s main research question and argues that in many ways, this does mean that Canada has come closer to decolonization than the U.S. However, this does not mean that Canada’s work is finished or without flaws.

Decolonization in the Context of Residential Schools

The United States

“Who” is decolonizing and “when” did it happen? First and most notably, when looking at the main methods of action in the U.S., one clear trend arises. Federal efforts were divided – either they were led by Indigenous people within government, or they were led by non-Indigenous people in government, and the results differed greatly depending on which group did the leading. In other words, the “who” of each document is clear; it is evident by content of the documents alone whether an Indigenous person led the effort and drafted the document. The Senate Joint Resolution from 2009, in which the government formally apologized for a “long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal Government regarding

Indian tribes” was not associated with an Indigenous person either outside of the government or in a leadership position. This document also displayed the highest number of codes themed around a colonial agenda (objectify, tokenize, placate, maintain power, barring from formal institutions, etc.).

In contrast, the DOI Final Report, initiated by the Secretary of the Interior Deborah Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) and written by the Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland (Ojibwe), contained many codes themed around a decolonial agenda (acknowledging the role of race, criticizing the settler norm and Indigenous problem binary, claim humanity, pluriversality and multiplicity, etc.). Moreover, the timing of a formal investigation by the U.S. government into residential schools and the first instance of an Indigenous person holding the post of Secretary of the Department of the Interior is unlikely to be mere coincidence. Additionally, the proposed legislation to establish the THC was also mainly driven by Indigenous leaders, although some non-Indigenous leaders also sponsored the bill to place it in front of Congress. The leadership of Indigenous peoples regarding this bill also led to a high number of decolonial codes in comparison to documents with no Indigenous involvement from the U.S., such as the 2009 Senate Resolution. For example, compare these excerpts:

Table 5. U.S. Legislation, Comparison of Codes.

Document and Excerpt	Coded as:
<p style="text-align: center;">Senate Bill 2907 (2021) (To Establish a Truth and Healing Commission)</p> <p>“Congress finds that— (1) assimilation processes, such as the Indian Boarding School Policies, were adopted by the United States Government to strip American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children of their Indigenous identities, beliefs, and languages to assimilate them into non-Native culture through federally funded and controlled Christian-run schools, which had the intent and, in many cases, the effect, of termination, with dire and intentional consequences on the cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples...”</p>	<p>questioning the origin of knowledge; criticizing Western history; acknowledging role of residential schools; investigate, questions, and research; honor.</p>

<p>House Resolution 53 (2021) (Designating a remembrance day for boarding schools)</p> <p>“Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring) That Congress—</p> <p>(1) supports the designation of a national day of remembrance for the Native American children who died while attending a United States Indian boarding school;</p> <p>(2) recognizes, honors, and supports the survivors, families, and communities of children who attended such schools...”</p>	<p>formal government action; honor; acknowledging the role of residential schools; placate; maintain power; avoid recognizing settler privilege.</p>
<p>Senate Resolution 14 (2009) (apologizing for history of ill-conceived policies)</p> <p>“Whereas the ancestors of today’s Native Peoples inhabited the land of the present-day United States since time immemorial and for thousands of years before the arrival of people of European descent;</p> <p>Whereas for millennia, Native Peoples have honored, protected, and stewarded this land we cherish;</p> <p>Whereas Native Peoples are spiritual people with a deep and abiding belief in the Creator, and for millennia Native Peoples have maintained a powerful spiritual connection to this land, as evidenced by their customs and legends;</p> <p>Whereas the arrival of Europeans in North America opened a new chapter in the history of Native Peoples;</p> <p>Whereas while establishment of permanent European settlements in North America did stir conflict with nearby Indian tribes, peaceful and mutually beneficial interactions also took place...”</p>	<p>tokenize; objectify; dominate history; take advantage; tell Indigenous stories; confuse and conflate.</p>

The 2021 Resolution establishing a National Remembrance Day for those who attending boarding schools does have a fair mix of codes, and this could be for two reasons: first, Indigenous leaders were effectively shut out of the drafting process and had minimal input on the bill, or second, Indigenous leaders had to make compromises for the bill to get passed at all. However, the main point to take from the 2021 Resolution is that very recently in U.S. history, federal government leaders gathered together and acknowledged the many wrongs done in residential schools, but still provided no meaningful path to restitution. The document still functions only as an apology.

Additionally, testimony given to Congress in support of the THC legislation also demonstrates this clear dichotomy. Every person who spoke was Indigenous, but only one was an Indigenous person in government: Deborah Haaland. Her speech did not differ greatly content-wise from the others; all spoke of supporting further investigation into the schools and gave personal and emotional anecdotal evidence of the lasting trauma of boarding schools. One important difference was found, however. The extra-governmental Indigenous leaders mentioned concepts such as self-determination and revealing the truth:

The truth - once unpacked beyond the data and the analysis and into the stories, one by one by thousands - is and will be painful, hard, beyond belief and understanding. It will reveal the underbelly of who and what the country was and in some ways still is. The truth is a prerequisite that will be revealed not once but over time. Truth is not the same as healing.

Secretary Haaland, however, focused the majority of her speech on political achievements of the Biden-Harris administration and used those to appeal to Congressional members for further funding for boarding school investigation:

I am proud of the work the Department is accomplishing to confront its role in these assimilation policies through education and am deeply grateful to Congress for its support as well. In particular, the Department appreciates the \$7 million in funding provided for this work in Fiscal Year 2022, and we look forward to working with Congress on our Fiscal Year 2023 request of an additional \$7 million. These funds are crucial in order for this work to be thorough and effective, in particular the labor-intensive work of gathering and examining records and identifying and characterizing various sites.

This finding suggests that while pleas directly from Indigenous peoples, including telling federal government members about their very personal and painful histories, are an emotionally powerful tool to garner attention, those stories do not hold much weight in the larger institution of government. It suggests that in order for any meaningful federal change to take place, there cannot just be an impetus to make things right, but also to achieve or further political goals aligned with the current party's agenda. Looking at "who" is furthering investigations or

decolonial goals in the U.S., it is clear that Indigenous peoples are doing most of the heavy lifting to put issues in front of decision-makers, but that without knowledge of the system or members inside to utilize it, there is no path to decolonization. In other words, significant policy and law has been created and implemented due to Indigenous leadership within government, but non-Indigenous leaders in government do not support these efforts without other reasons such as political motive.

The second observation that is quite evident on the face of the documents is how recent in time they were written. The oldest is from 2009, and that document in particular is nothing more than an apology for essentially every wrong ever done to Native Americans across the entire U.S. It does not mention boarding schools at length, nor does it provide any means for investigating them. These efforts arose only in the last few years, with the Department of Interior opening investigations in 2019. The “when” demonstrates that the U.S. has attempted to lift the lid on decolonization very recently. Linking to the “who,” it is also notable that these changes coincided with an Indigenous person’s appointment to office in the federal government (Deborah Haaland).

“How” and “why” was decolonization furthered? Funding was one of the most salient “how” codes to appear. Without money, investigations cannot take place, and the U.S. did in fact fund one investigation. The allocation of \$7 million dollars to the Department of the Interior for the Federal Boarding School Initiative is no small feat. When considered in light of the fact that no previous investigation had ever been conducted, this funding certainly promotes a sense of acknowledgement of the gravity of the situation by the federal government. Hypothetically speaking, it would have been just as easy for the government to provide no funding and ignore the problem, as they had up until 2020. However, credit must be given for the financial

acknowledgment of the need to address residential schools. Additionally, the lump sum allocation came with very few strings attached; the money was to be used to investigate residential schools for the span of one year.

On the flip side of this monetary grant, it must be acknowledged that no external commission or review board was created in order to conduct the investigation. The money was allocated, but it was given to a department within the federal government itself. Decolonial concepts would suggest that conducting the investigation entirely within structures and systems designed to benefit white settlers renders much of the investigation moot. This is ameliorated to some degree by the leadership of the investigation: two Indigenous people, the first to hold the posts. While this suggests that an element of self-determination is present, it also is mitigated by the fact that these operations all took place within the formal institutions of the settler government. Regardless, the DOI issued a Final Report which clearly laid responsibility for the atrocities of residential schools at the feet of the U.S. government, its bodies, and churches that it funded.

Next, it is interesting to note that the “how” and the “why” of each action did not always necessarily match. For example, in its resolution establishing a Remembrance Day for survivors of boarding schools, the U.S. government “recognizes, honors, and supports the survivors, families, and communities of children who attended such schools” and encourages the people of the United States to do the same. However, the resolution stops there, and does not contain further plans to substantiate the recognition and honor it bestows. An apology conceivably meant to reconcile with Indigenous peoples and express support for a decolonial agenda is perceived differently in its full context. Instead, the “why” behind the action is to maintain power, refuse to acknowledge settler privilege, and to placate Indigenous peoples. Another example of this

disconnect can be found in the Senate Resolution from 2009, in which the United States stated that it:

expresses its regret for the ramifications of former wrongs and its commitment to build on the positive relationships of the past and present to move toward a brighter future where all the people of this land live reconciled as brothers and sisters, and harmoniously steward and protect this land together.

This excerpt was coded with the how codes of “examining the meaning of reconciliation” and “criticizing Western history,” both of which are codes associated with decolonialism, but also with the why code of “placate” because of the Resolution’s clause explicitly denying the creation of legal claims against the United States.

Moreover, the most frequently used “why” codes across all documents (U.S. and Canada both) were “center,” “investigate,” “acknowledge wrongdoing,” “development,” and “healing.” This finding is significant for two reasons. First, the codes are directly derived from Tuhiwei-Smith’s (2012) processes of Indigenous self-determination (mobilization, healing, decolonization, transformation, survival, recovery, development) (p. 121). As such, they are the codes most closely linked with the conceptual framework of the study. Second, the top three documents for each code are overwhelmingly Canadian (*see* Table 4, p. 53). The sole U.S. document in the list is the THC legislation, which is only proposed and not enacted. Therefore, every instance of these codes within that document is hypothetical only, and has not yet been put into action. In other words, the “why” codes most closely aligned with the definition of decolonization used in this thesis are effectively not found anywhere in documents from the U.S. federal government.

The final finding that points to what decolonization looks like in the U.S. deals with the use of courts and litigation. Importantly, the harms of boarding schools in the U.S. to date have not been addressed by federal courts, nor have any statutory paths to justice been created.

However, one decision from the state of New Mexico does at least make official findings of fact regarding boarding schools and their lasting impact. The court detailed the history of boarding schools, including “the toll that decades of forced assimilation had had on Native Americans” and that at the schools, “the destruction of their cultural and linguistic identities occurred in the classroom.” Finding that forced assimilation practices caused “disconnect between tribal communities and federal and state public schools,” and that school and tribe go hand in hand for Native Americans, the court made a significant finding for education of Native American students in New Mexico:

The history of forced assimilation policies on tribal communities in New Mexico requires the system of education to meet the unique cultural and linguistic needs of indigenous students.

This is the only litigation in the entire United States that mentions residential schools and finds their legacy relevant to the outcome of the case.

The findings also showed how litigation and other legal methods have explicitly been used against the residential school efforts. Again, the disclaimer in the 2009 Senate apology is relevant, because it shows the intention of the government to not engage in any sort of acknowledgement or responsibility-taking for the harms caused by residential schools. Here too, the refusal to enact the THC legislation corroborates this pervasive state of mind in the federal government. In fact, no relief in the form of legal avenues from the federal level has ever come, nor have any paths forward been created. The decolonial framework suggests that in this regard, the United States is firmly rooted in refusing to recognize, let alone challenge, the underlying structure of colonialism. This is crucial, because despite other progress, this barrier to the decolonial agenda is particularly significant. Without critical reflection on surrounding settler structures, investigations and efforts towards justice for Indigenous peoples will likely suffocate.

“What” does decolonization look like in the U.S.? The United States only very recently began its explicit investigative efforts, but that does not necessarily mean that the country is at a state of zero decolonization. In fact, given its recent appearance on the investigatory scene, the United States government has promulgated several documents that directly pertain to residential schools, each of which has at least something to contribute to a decolonial agenda. Other documents from the U.S. shed some different light on the situation, however. For example, the study’s findings clearly showed several occasions on which the federal government performed a supposedly decolonial action but did so with colonial intentions. The formal apology issued in 2009 by the Senate rang hollow because of its lack of substance.

In sum, the United States has at the very least acknowledged the existence of residential schools and investigated their history to a degree. The federal government has created counter-hegemonic movements in the way of proposed legislation, but until that legislation is enacted, this movement exists only in discourse and not in practical action. Additionally, the deviations from the decolonial agenda can be explained to a degree simply by the lack of time spent so far on investigations. However, this cannot explain the full situation, and the refusal to recognize and challenge the underlying structures of colonialism proves to be the United States’ biggest shortcoming.

Canada

“Who” is decolonizing and “when” did it happen? Almost all legislation in Canada was enacted by various federal leaders and federal bodies of government. Significantly, these laws and policies were structured so that after their enactment, control over the investigative and healing efforts deliberately went to a coalition or group of Indigenous people and leaders from across the country. So regardless of whether the bills or policies were promulgated by

Indigenous or non-Indigenous people initially, they were all structured so that ultimate control would end up in the hands of Indigenous people. Notably, however, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (which instituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as one of the terms of settlement) was reached because several Indigenous people sued the federal government, various churches, and various schools in order to obtain justice for the harms they suffered. This means that while much legislation may have been affirmatively created by federal government bodies and leaders, the most impactful commission to date (the TRC) was created out of a broader effort by Indigenous peoples themselves to obtain healing, reparations, and reconciliation.

That said, the courts and laws of Canada had already created space for such a lawsuit and settlement to occur. In *Mowatt v. Clarke*, in which a residential school survivor sued for harm suffered from sexual abuse, the courts laid a foundation for causes of action against the government and churches for harms suffered in residential schools; the direct result of this affirmative creation was the ability of Indigenous people to use the justice system to their benefit. Below are salient excerpts from the case which demonstrate how the court found both the federal government of Canada (the Crown) and the Anglican Church liable for Mowatt's harm:

Canada had a statutory obligation to educate Indian children. Leaving aside the question as to whether that statutory duty was delegable, Canada nonetheless chose the Church as its instrument to fulfill at least part of its statutory obligations. This arrangement clearly advanced Canada's interests...The federal government was at all times the guardian of Floyd Mowatt while he attended St. George's. Canada exercised its power under the Indian Act to remove Mowatt from his home and place him at St. George's. This responsibility was discharged through delegation of the parental role to the principal of St. George's and then to the dormitory supervisors at the school...Both the Anglican Church and the Crown failed unreasonably to protect the plaintiff from harm... The Anglican Church [] was in a position to exercise power over the plaintiff as it pertained to his moral and emotional well-being and dignity. It did so daily by imposing religious practices and influence which involved an interaction that created trust and reliance. The

plaintiff absolutely trusted that he would be properly cared for, especially because this was an Anglican institution... When Clarke breached this trust, [the] Anglicans took control of the matter and took no action. The Anglicans assumed a duty to act on behalf of the plaintiff in this circumstance and did nothing... The plaintiff is entitled to damages against all defendants.

Additionally, the findings indicate that Canadian documents go back in time to at least 1998, when the Aboriginal Healing Fund was created. This means that efforts to investigate have a foundation of at least twenty-five years, and potential could mean that much more progress towards decolonization has taken place.

“How” and “why” was decolonization furthered? As in the United States, funding was one of the most powerful ways in which the federal government was able to have a direct effect on the progress of investigations. The “how” codes of “giving or receiving money” and “allocating funds” arose frequently in the findings with respect to Canadian documents. The giving of federal funds to investigation efforts was overwhelmingly for the purposes of reparations, centering Indigenous issues, helping Indigenous communities heal, providing opportunity for development, and providing space for self-determination. Many of the documents contained specific clauses stating the amount of money granted to the formation of various Commissions like the AHF and the TRC. For example, the Canadian government in its Letters Patent, which established the AHF, stated that one of the objects of the AHF was to

receive funds from the Government of Canada and other parties and to maintain a fund or funds and apply from time to time all or part thereof and/or the income in furtherance of the above objects; and to do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects.

Moreover, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (Canada) specified that “[o]n the Implementation Date Canada will transfer one hundred and twenty-five million dollars (\$125,000,000.00) as an endowment for a five year period to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.”

While a main method of moving investigations, development, and healing forward, funding was also tightly controlled and potentially used a method to control Indigenous actions. Grants were, without exception, provided in lump sums to the various commissions, to be spent in line with their respective mandates and according to their allocation decisions. Key to these funding agreements however, was an element of control. When establishing the AHF in Canada, the federal government included accountability measures and a formal governance model that held the board of directors “legally accountable to the government of Canada for expenditures and adherence to terms of the Funding Agreement.” Volume I of the Final Report of the AHF contains pages accounting for the exact spending of the general fund, for example

Table 1 shows revenues, project grants and administrative expenses in each fiscal year to March 31, 2005. Project grants grew from \$15,241,690 in 1999-2000 to a high of \$68,932,159 in 2004-05. By March 31, 2005 a total of \$305,041,091 had been disbursed to projects. Administrative expense to March 31, 2005 totalled \$46,321,185 representing 13.19% of total expense. A further \$72,704.76 was committed to ongoing projects for a total projected outlay of \$377,745,857 to March 2007, not including the \$40 million announced in 2005. Interest earned and anticipated on the original grant of \$350 has thus added to the amount available to community projects and entirely covered administrative expense.

This was also noted to be a constraint on the effectiveness of the healing the AHF purported to provide for Indigenous communities in Canada. To submit a proposal to the AHF (which is required before the Fund will allocate money to your community for healing purposes), eligibility rested upon “the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools, including the intergenerational impacts.” Though the AHF negotiated to have “intergenerational impacts” added to the eligibility criteria, they noted that there was a great deal of criticism from the communities for “unduly limiting the healing initiatives that it would support.”

Accountability measures to be implemented included government budgeting and reporting and auditing standards. While these measures were put in place to ensure

accountability also to members of the Indigenous communities, for whom the money was appropriated, this was never the sole concern. Fiscal accountability to the government of Canada was always explicitly required. Another example of this stringent requirement is in the AHF Final Report Executive Summary, where the Fund notes that “1,346 contribution agreements have been signed for a total of \$377,745,857 (*audited*)” (emphasis added). So, while funding was the main mechanism by which the federal government enabled Indigenous people to move decolonization and healing forward, it also was a double edged sword that served to keep the government in a fair amount of control.

Another “how” code that came up frequently was “litigation,” and interestingly, it also came up in conjunction with the “who” code of “churches.” As mentioned above, litigation was used by residential school survivors in the case of *Mowatt v. Clarke* to sue for sexual abuse harms they suffered at a residential school. Because of this, a Canadian court found that the government, the school, and the church could all be held liable for these harms. Then, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) occurred. It was the outgrowth of a lawsuit filed by residential school survivors and provided for the creation of the TRC and the allocation of millions more dollars to fund investigation, reconciliation, and healing efforts.

However, the IRSSA did more than just solidify another legal path – it also forced churches in Canada to join in the efforts already being undertaken by the federal government and Indigenous people across Canada. The churches who participated in the running of residential schools are party to the IRSSA, which forces them to engage in work with the AHF and TRC. Moreover, the TRC in its Final Report notes that “for churches, demonstrating long-term commitment requires atoning for actions within the residential schools, respecting Indigenous

spirituality, and supporting Indigenous peoples' struggles for justice and equity." The TRC also directly addressed the church in this call to action:

- 61) We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with Survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to Aboriginal people for:
- i. Community-controlled healing and reconciliation projects.
 - ii. Community-controlled culture- and language-revitalization projects.
 - iii. Community-controlled education and relationship-building projects.
 - iv. Regional dialogues for Indigenous spiritual leaders and youth to discuss Indigenous spirituality, self-determination, and reconciliation.

Yet another "why" code that arose in the findings was "reconciliation." More specifically, this term was developed at great length in Canadian documents. This is a bit unsurprising because the final commission was titled the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission," but the findings are important for the following reasons. First, reconciliation is identified as key to the conceptual framework of this study. It is a concept crucial to investigating residential schools in a meaningful way, and it is a term like "decolonization" that is often used but seldom explained. Second, explicitly defining reconciliation is important because it can often be used as a cover for colonial means.

The two Canadian documents that discuss reconciliation are the Final Report of the TRC and the national survey titled "Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal Peoples." The Final Report contains thirty-six segments of text coded as "examining the meaning of reconciliation." In the introduction to the final report, the TRC states:

Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered.

This summary is intended to be the initial reference point in that important discussion. Reconciliation will take some time.

The Report also addresses what reconciliation means specifically in the context of its meaning to a layperson versus what it means to Indigenous people of Canada. It acknowledges that while most would define reconciliation as the “re-establishment of a conciliatory state,” it is a “state that many Aboriginal people assert never has existed.” The TRC considers the temporal aspect of reconciliation as well, acknowledging that it was understood from the beginning that true reconciliation would never occur during the Commission’s lifetime, but that it is nonetheless essential because “one hundred years from now, our children’s children and their children must know and still remember this history, because they will inherit from us the responsibility of ensuring that it never happens again.”

Moreover, the TRC ensured that the definition of reconciliation included several testimonies about the meaning of the word from various Indigenous people. For example, one person stated, “[for] me reconciliation is righting a wrong. And how do we do that? All these people in this room, a lot of non-Aboriginals, a lot of Aboriginals that probably didn’t go to residential school; we need to work together.” Another said “[there must be] a change in perspective about the way in which Aboriginal peoples would be engaged with Canadian society in the quest for reconciliation.... [We cannot] perpetuate the paternalistic concept that only Aboriginal peoples are in need of healing.” The final, complete definition of reconciliation written by the TRC is

an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change. Establishing respectful relationships also requires the revitalization of Indigenous law and legal traditions. It is important that all Canadians understand how traditional First Nations, Inuit, and Métis approaches to resolving conflict, repairing harm, and restoring relationships can inform the reconciliation process.

Finally, in a survey on public opinion of non-Indigenous people in Canada, reconciliation is discussed with regard to the responses of survey participants. Unprompted, these participants were asked “what reconciliation means to them.” The most commonly used term was “equality,” followed by “making amends” and “healing and forgiveness.” However, only 13 percent of participants could offer “any ideas about what reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians might mean to them.” Further, 80 percent of participants “believe that individual Canadians have a role to play in helping to bring about reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples.” 87 percent support mandatory curriculum to teach Aboriginal history and culture, and 78 percent support providing government funding to ensure the perseverance of Aboriginal languages.

Finally, the codes that revolve around ideas of multiplicity and alternative histories or truths (such as “pluriversality” and “questioning the origin of knowledge”) arose with notable frequency in Canadian documents. The AHF reports mentioned many times the need for individualized and community-based healing processes, acknowledging that there are many methods and means by which to heal. Additionally, the need for culture to be involved in the healing process was also noted:

The prescription that community services should be “culturally appropriate” has been repeated like a mantra for at least 20 years. Yet, communities struggle to fit their needs into the compartments of fragmented services with different mandates and onerous reporting requirements, most of which ignore the repeated call for holistic treatment.

The AHF surveyed participants and concluded that both Western methods of therapy and traditional healing ceremonies and methods contributed to healing. There was more than one way of approaching the problem, and in fact, participants preferred a combination.

According to responses to the IPQ, healing and talking circles and Legacy education were the most frequently used services; Elders and ceremonies were the most highly valued. While services specific to Aboriginal culture were most prominent, the next in order of use and preference were workshops and one-on-one counselling. In fact, the promising healing practices research revealed that cultural interventions were frequently used in

combination with counselling, group work and nonverbal therapies, such as psychodrama and art therapy.

Moreover, these documents noted that the degree to which each Indigenous person needed to heal from residential school trauma varied, as did the time it takes each person to heal; this in itself recognizes the multiplicity of Indigenous existence.

Cultural support and revitalization were cited in every AHF Volume as key to healing and supporting identity formation. Indigenous peoples greatly benefitted from traditions, histories, and stories being shared and reinforced. Acknowledging the role of cultural multiplicity in healing from residential school trauma was essential. For example, the word “healing” itself was seen as problematic in at least one community, because of its different meaning in the Indigenous language:

To some people, the word “healing” implies that a flaw must be corrected or overcome. When translated into Inuktitut, “Mamisaq” is usually meant as “physical” healing; thus, the word “healing” has a problematic cultural interpretation and may be viewed as a weakness by both men and women. Thus, “healing” may force an unwilling identification as a victim and the ways in which healing, counselling and therapy are framed require further discussion, especially by men.

Acknowledging this other truth was crucial to the healing process for those who spoke Inuktitut. Yet another place in which other ways of life was key to acknowledge was in the definition of best practices in healing methods. The notion of “best practices” comes out of Western research, and is “decidedly not Aboriginal.” A member of the AHF recognized the need to “convince academics and *particularly funders* that there are alternative forms of practice” (emphasis added). Without recognition of more than one approach, or multiplicity, the healing would be rendered moot.

Canadian documents discussed notions of truth as well. In the Final Report of the TRC, the Commission acknowledged the essential relationship between truth and justice. The

Commission posed a question by an Indigenous Elder: “When you talk about truth, whose truth are you talking about?” In response, the Commission wrote:

by truth, we mean not only the truth revealed in government and church residential school documents, but also the truth of lived experiences as told to us by Survivors and others in their statements to this Commission. Together, these public testimonies constitute a new oral history record, one based on Indigenous legal traditions and the practice of witnessing.

This stands out as perhaps the most epistemologically significant piece of text among all documents analyzed. In these few sentences, the TRC addresses and recognizes multiple sources of knowledge and histories, encompassing them all into one historical record. The significance of this action cannot be understated; Indigenous stories are no longer relegated to the margins as alternate versions or critiques. These accounts and testimonies now *are* history, and the very fabric of that history has been purposely altered to correct for the exclusion of such voices in the past. This new history is moreover not molded to fit into traditional Western forms, but instead is “based on Indigenous legal traditions and the practice of witnessing.” Not only is Western epistemology challenged, but Western methodology is as well. The definition of knowledge and truth, as well as the means by which those are gathered and learned, have been consciously reformed. Backing up this commitment, the TRC Final Report then spends several hundred pages discussing written history of residential schools in addition to testimony given by thousands of Indigenous survivors to create one holistic history that accounts for multiple perspectives.

Finally, Bill C-15 acknowledged the histories and alternative ways of life of Indigenous peoples, and enacted this acknowledgment into law. C-15 stated that there is an urgent need to “respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples” which derive from their “political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories,

philosophies and legal systems, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.”

Additionally, the bill went further to specify this directive for Canada, explaining that

Canada must take into account the diversity of Indigenous peoples and, in particular, the diversity of the identities, cultures, languages, customs, practices, rights and legal traditions of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis and of their institutions and governance structures, their relationships to the land and Indigenous knowledge.

These findings are significant because they point to the extent to which Canada has engaged in a national agenda to achieve transparency and accountability for the creation and implementation of residential schools. Further, they demonstrate that this effort has not been short in time nor has it been relegated to the sidelines of Canadian political priorities or even public discourse; rather, the findings show that the documents evidence a robust and thorough effort at establishing the foundation for a decolonial agenda.

“What” does decolonization look like in Canada? Canada has spent a significant amount of time investigating and gathering information about residential schools, their legacy, and their effects on Indigenous peoples today. At first glance, it would appear that Canada is well within the realm of a decolonized or decolonial state, but like with the U.S., there is no strict binary of colonial and decolonial, and Canadian documents show the existence of multiple conflicting actions and intentions. First, when looking at the pure dollar amount of funding given to investigatory bodies, Canada seems incredibly committed to a decolonial cause. That amount is in the hundreds of millions and growing, and was specifically committed to investigation, healing, and reconciliation, each of which is certainly a decolonial goal. However, the findings revealed that this funding was not a blank check, but came with measures that held the boards of commissions legally accountable to the federal government for the way the money was spent.

While funding methods left something to be desired, the federal government provided space for the decolonial agenda to manifest in other important ways. One was the consistent

acknowledgement and prioritizing of pluriversality and multiplicity, or other ways of being and knowing. Specifically in the context of healing from residential schools, the Canadian government provided ample and supportive space for Indigenous people to explore many different means of healing that were effective and meaningful to them.

Not only did Canadian commissions address multiple ways of thinking and being, but the legislature did as well. Bill C-15 enacts into law that Canada must take into account the diversity of its Indigenous peoples. An important provision of this to the decolonial agenda is that the bill specifically mentions Indigenous governance structures and knowledge. Once again, Canada creates space for decoloniality to exist, and conceivably begins to reimagine the world order. However, an important caveat to the groundbreaking promise of Bill C-15 is that it only adapts a framework into law, and not any substance or explicit actions. For example, the bill does not go on to say something that directs Canada as to *how* it must take into account Indigenous knowledge (like “Canadian schools must incorporate into their curriculum Aboriginal histories of the area in which they are located”).

Finally, the federal government showed significant commitment to reconciliation, and moreover, to meaningful and thoughtful reconciliation. Though the concept of reconciliation is shared between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and has been criticized for potentially serving settler needs above all else, the reconciliation efforts in Canada overall have proven themselves to be chiefly concerned with making amends with the Indigenous population. This level of dedication is to be expected because of the federal government’s formation of the Truth and *Reconciliation* Commission, but the legitimacy of the reconciliation effort was certainly not a given. As the TRC states, “reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one.” Admitting this immediately shows that the federal government wants to reflect on individual

settler privilege among Canadians, as well as the underlying structures of that privilege in a colonial government.

Overall, Canada has not only investigated and gathered information regarding residential schools, but has also shown a serious dedication to other aspects of the decolonial agenda that go beyond mere acknowledgment of the residential school problem. The federal government has, to varying degrees of depth, brought together multiple histories and ways of thinking, created and implemented various counter-hegemonic movements, recognized and challenged the underlying structure of colonialism, and also begun to reimagine the world order in the Canadian context. In a similar but opposite fashion to the United States, a potential explanation for all of this could simply be that Canada has spent more time on the subject. However, the next section explains exactly what methods Canada has employed to bring about more progress. These, in combination with time, and not time alone, have created the decolonial agenda in Canada.

How and Why Has Canada Made More Progress in Investigations?

Viewing the previous section, some clear similarities and differences between the U.S. and Canada arise. These comparisons serve to demonstrate ways in which Canada has made more progress in conducting investigations into residential schools than the U.S. has. The findings discussed above demonstrate four reasons how and why Canada has managed to make so much progress in investigations and reconciliation regarding residential schools: (1) affirmative use of the legal system; (2) forcing third parties, namely churches, to cooperate with its agenda; (3) being explicit in meaning wherever possible; and (4) deferring to Indigenous leadership to the fullest extent. This section explains each reason, or method of achievement, in turn.

First, the Canadian government and justice system utilized the law to create avenues for achievement of the decolonial agenda (i.e., reparations, healing, and holding someone accountable to Indigenous peoples for harms caused). The Letters Patent specifically explained that the creation of the AHF would not bar additional routes to justice for residential school survivors, setting the tone early on that Canada was genuinely committed to letting Indigenous people resolve their individual claims and trauma. As stated by the AHF, litigation engaged Indigenous people, the government, and the entire nation in a dialogue about the importance and gravity of residential schools. Litigation made the problem not just an Indigenous one; it made it a Canadian one. Moreover, the federal government then ensured that paths to further litigation would remain clear and that Indigenous people would not be locked out of the justice system. Though this process did not explicitly challenge the underlying structures of colonialism in law, it did recognize those structures and attempt to ensure that Indigenous people would not be held back by them.

Second, and in line with litigation and the law, the federal government enforced the participation and cooperation of churches in its agenda of investigating and healing from residential schools. Though the IRSSA lawsuit was filed and initiated by Indigenous people, it was again the justice system of the federal government that ensured that the churches were party to the agreement as well. A somewhat pessimistic and alternative reason for this could be that the federal government simply did not want to share the full force of the blame, both morally and financially. However, what is important is that the federal government used its power, and its settler colonial structures, to ensure greater chance at reparations, healing, and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples who survived residential schools. Not only did a court hold a church vicariously liable for the actions of one of its employees in *Mowatt v. Clarke*, but the courts also

oversaw the joining of the churches to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, ensuring their participation in future efforts.

In comparison to the first and second points raised here, there are zero federal court cases in the U.S. that deal with boarding schools, and only one state case. Additionally, the U.S. government has exercised its power in the opposite way; rather than creating causes of action and other legal avenues through which Indigenous people can obtain justice, healing, and reparations, the U.S. has effectively locked Indigenous people out of the courthouse. Many of the findings demonstrate this fact. For example, the 2009 Senate Resolution contains a disclaimer that the document does not create any legal claim or settle any existing claim. Further, the 2021 Resolution establishing a National Day of Remembrance also creates no avenue for legal action; it acknowledges the wrongs done in boarding schools, but ends there and only “encourages” the American public to reflect on the legacy of the schools. Finally, the proposed legislation to establish the THC remains just that: proposed. In the two years since its introduction into Congress, the bill has remained, unchanged and not enacted. By doing nothing, the federal government effectively hinders this attempt to investigate and potentially decolonize.

Third, the government of Canada made the effort to be explicit wherever necessary and possible. In other words, Canadian documents do not just mention terms like “healing” and “reconciliation” in vague passing. Instead, they go to great lengths to explicitly define what the term means to the commission writing the document, as well as to the broader Indigenous community. For example, the AHF discussed at length that healing from trauma in Haida communities can associate males with weakness, therefore healing must be approached differently there than elsewhere. Additionally, the TRC reflected for several pages on the meaning of reconciliation and ultimately defined it as a “Canadian problem” and stated that it is

an ongoing process that will never end. This specificity avoids what Tuck & Yang (2012) warn against when they say “decolonization is not a metaphor.” By giving space for survivors to give testimony, asking Indigenous opinion and taking it seriously, and keeping definitions and initiatives narrowly focused, the federal government avoided falling into the nebulous trap of general social justice movements. This allowed Indigenous peoples to mobilize for the cause, and projected to the wider world that this was an issue of serious concern, not to be conflated with other causes.

Again, the U.S. failed to reach these heights in comparison. Aside from the DOI Final Investigative Report and the proposed THC legislation and its corresponding Congressional hearing transcripts, every other document from the U.S. glosses over the essential details of what exactly it means with each buzzword. For example, the 2021 Senate Resolution says that Congress “recognizes, honors, and supports the survivors, families, and communities of children who attended such schools” and “encourages the people of the United States” to:

- (A) support and recognize the grief, pain, and hardship many Native American people suffered and still endure as a result of the assimilationist policies and practices carried out by the United States through Indian boarding school policies;
- (B) honor the legacy of and remember those who were lost or harmed by Federal assimilation policies and practices; and
- (C) appreciate the resilience of the survivors and their families with appropriate ceremonies, programs, events, and other activities to support and commemorate with a national day of remembrance.

While these provisions in theory attempt to attain decolonial ideals such as acknowledging multiple truths or honoring Indigenous histories, this is the furthest the document goes in defining these objectives. Without more, decolonization in the U.S. is effectively an amalgam of social justice causes – it is just a metaphor.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Canadian government deferred to Indigenous people and Indigenous leadership to the fullest extent possible. Not only were Indigenous

peoples consulted continuously, but their stories, histories, and testimonies were recorded and incorporated into the already existing Western version of events. This provided space for self-determination, bringing together multiple epistemologies and ontologies, and fostered environments in which people could truly begin to heal. This is evidenced by, for example, the document titled “Survivors Speak,” which was gathered and published by the TRC. In this document, firsthand accounts and stories of residential school survivors are documented and written down so that their version of events may continue to be shared. The document is over two-hundred pages long, and the preface states:

In this volume, Survivors speak of their pain, loneliness, and suffering, and of their accomplishments. While this is a difficult story, it is also a story of courage and endurance. The first step in any process of national reconciliation requires us all to attend to these voices, which have been silenced for far too long. We encourage all Canadians to do so.

Moreover, it is only one of several documents put forth by the TRC. The findings also demonstrate several examples within the documents from the AHF in which Indigenous anecdotes and stories were directly recorded, or in which Indigenous people were directly consulted and listened to regarding healing practices.

In comparison, the U.S. documents are all very top-down in nature, meaning that they are created at a federal level and from a federal perspective, without much Indigenous voice included. With the exception of the DOI Investigation and the THC legislation and hearing transcripts, Indigenous voice in fact is entirely missing. Boiled down to this simple statement, it would seem that Canada is much closer to decolonization than the United States. The following section addresses that final research question.

Is Canada Closer to Decolonization than the U.S.?

The final section of this chapter examines decolonial states of each country in comparison, and answers the question: does Canada's progress over the United States necessarily mean it is closer to achieving decolonization or decoloniality? The findings demonstrate how Canada has invested more money, included more Indigenous input and deferred to Indigenous people, used the existing justice system to create paths to justice, collected and housed vast amounts of information and firsthand accounts, and been explicit in all its efforts to reconcile, heal, and repair. The findings also demonstrate, however, that Canada has not been without faults. Meanwhile, the findings show that the U.S., while extremely late to the game, has in fact engaged in one in-depth investigation and published an investigative report. Additionally, the U.S. has introduced legislation to create a Truth and Healing Commission specifically meant to investigate boarding schools.

At first glance, it would seem that the only significant difference between the two countries is time. Canada began these efforts in the 1990s, whereas the U.S. has waited until the 2020s. However, this does not fully explain the full scope of differences between the two approaches, and looking at the problem only from a temporal lens would make all the research questions extremely obvious to answer – Canada has spent more time investigating, therefore they are farther along in documentation, publication, and education, and therefore they have shown a deeper commitment to a decolonial agenda and have come closer to decolonization. Though this may be part of the ultimate answer, it is not complete without looking at the other factors at play besides time – after all, the U.S. and Canada differed in the findings on the many levels described above (i.e., who was doing the action, how was it being done, and so on). So where does that leave us?

In researching this question and attempting to answer it, I have reached an unexpected conclusion. I have ultimately concluded that the initial research question was improperly phrased. A question that is more accurate to the methods and ultimate goals of decolonization would be this: “has Canada engaged in more effective decolonial actions than the U.S.?” The notion of achieving decolonization and decoloniality assumes that there is a finish line to cross, or an end point that exists somewhere. Because of the decolonial framework’s very commitment to multiplicity, and to more than one truth, this cannot be the case. There will never be a goal to achieve aside from continuously making progress. In this sense, the long answer to the research question is that it depends on whether the countries continue down the path they have travelled thus far. If so, then yes, Canada will always be closer to reaching decolonization and decoloniality simply because the interactive process is there, and the United States will fall short. However, if these paths somehow change, so does the answer.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I discuss what implications applicable outside the study were discovered. These implications relate to several areas of the study, and the chapter is broken into broader areas that I found to be affected by the study as I examined and described the findings. The first section discusses the implications of the findings and conclusions for frameworks of decolonization and decoloniality. In particular, I discuss the experience I had in attempting to define and create helpful and accurate codes and parameters by which to analyze the data, and what this means with regard to the workability of the framework as stands in current literature. Further, I explain how this study could be used as a jumping off point for the use of other methodologies to study similar research questions. Next, I discuss what the findings mean for the federal governments of Canada and the United States, including their citizens. I start by expressing some conclusions about the nature of the federal governments and their ability to decolonize, then I move to examining the implications of the findings on how these governments could improve or further their efforts in the future. I also discuss what this study means for citizens of the U.S. and Canada, and outline my observations regarding the use of a comparative study. Finally, I suggest potential avenues for further research.

Decolonization and Decoloniality

Much of decolonial literature is written in the way of frameworks and theoretical approaches. Additionally, when a decolonial framework is applied, it is usually in a hypothetical manner (e.g., “can we decolonize the healthcare system?” or “can we decolonize ourselves?”),

not in a retroactive manner to look at what has already happened and to evaluate whether movements that purport to have decolonial agendas that are what they claim to be. Though what it means to decolonize or have a decolonial frame of mind has been defined in a fairly clear manner thus far, most literature has not yet attempted to apply such a framework to a real-world example like in this study.

Therefore, the first implication of this study is that it helps to fill in that gap; it builds out an in-depth analysis of two countries' initiatives to make right a colonial wrong, namely, residential schools. On a conceptual framework level, this means that not only does the study make specific findings about the nations themselves, but it also makes findings about the usefulness of the theories and concepts themselves. The conclusions drawn can be used to strengthen or reevaluate parts of the framework. For example, one of the most essential pieces to decolonization and decoloniality is the recognition of multiple histories and multiple truths, and acknowledging the limitations of Western thought and research. However, I experienced that these aspects were the most difficult to find among the documents. Though the conceptual framework would predict this (as colonial governments are unlikely to undo their entire epistemology overnight), perhaps this could lead future scholarly writings on decoloniality to emphasize more strongly the specific need for this self-reflection.

This leads to the second implication for decolonization and decoloniality: this study also illuminates the strengths and weaknesses of using such a decolonial framework. From my experience, it was difficult to convert the scholars' largely hypothetical writings on decolonization and decoloniality into concrete and workable ideas and codes for analysis. For example, an idea like "recognizing the limits of Western thought" makes sense in theory – essentially, one just needs to acknowledge that there are several ways of thinking in the world

and that historically, Western discourse has privileged its own ways to the detriment of others. When it came to looking for this concept in documents, however, it was very difficult to decide on the parameters of this idea. Do I take note of every instance in which any other frame of mind is discussed (such as Indigenous methods of healing), or do I limit this to only those instances in which it is explicitly said “Western thought is not enough?” While it was possible to correct this as coding went on, and the hypotheticals gradually became more concrete, the framework was a challenge to work with in this manner. The implication of this, however, is that this study contributes to building decolonial frameworks out into the real world, including being able to point to concrete examples in which certain aspects of the framework occurred.

Finally, this study also corroborates much of what decolonization and decoloniality posit. In the case of the U.S., for example, the hypothesis that the settler colonial government would be resistant to questioning and acknowledging its past holds true to a degree. In addition, the emphasis on defining reconciliation holds true in Canada – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission spent a great deal of effort doing just that. This means that while testing the limits of decolonization and decoloniality as applied to ongoing movements, this study also shows areas in which the framework has proved to be an accurate predictor of which actions will be successful in furthering decolonial agendas.

Canada and the United States

There are some useful implications of this study for the federal governments of Canada and the U.S., as well as their respective citizens. It is also important here to acknowledge the relative usefulness and strength of this study because of its basis on the following assumption: if one assumes that the federal governments engaged in these efforts in order to honestly investigate, reconcile, and make reparations for residential schools, the findings of this study

provide critical insights as to how successful those efforts have been in furthering a decolonial agenda thus far. However, not everyone, including many people closely involved in these issues, is going to agree with this assumption. If the assumption is not made, the results of this study are little more than exercises in confirmation of the perpetuating forces of colonialism in government structures; if the intention to disrupt is absent, the intention to decolonize is as well. However, I would argue that even if this key assumption is not made, the results can nevertheless be used in much the same way. Specifically, the findings pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in the laws and policies passed so far. With decolonial intent or not, these findings potentially build out to the further implication that research like this could be used by law and policymakers to better inform future efforts to create and run initiatives such as those analyzed in this study.

For example, in Canada, the findings demonstrated that funding remains the central method by which the federal government can promote investigation and healing, but also that the funding is still controlled very strictly. The implications of this finding suggest that fewer limitations surrounding the use of the funds might contribute more greatly to decolonization in a broader sense. Another example would be Canada's use of the legal system. By creating legal causes of action, the justice system effectively opened paths for Indigenous people to move towards healing from residential schools. These findings indicate that continuing these trends in the law limit resistance and open paths for decolonization to progress from within a colonial system itself.

For the United States, it can be more difficult to draw conclusions, simply because of the limited amount of time that the country has been involved in boarding school initiatives. However, though the depth of information may not be as great, there are still useful lessons to be learned from the findings in the study. One implication that is particularly important comes from

comparison with Canada. Specifically, the two nations have very similar histories regarding Indigenous peoples and the creation and implementation of boarding schools. However, where they begin to deviate from each other is with the initiatives to investigate and acknowledge the schools, the very focus of this study. For the U.S., this means that Canada can certainly be seen as an instructive example, particularly in light of this study's findings regarding how closely Canada has followed decolonization and decoloniality frameworks. Additionally, the U.S. can take some amount of comfort in the fact that Canada has been working at the issue for decades longer. On the other hand, the U.S. should also take note that it is far behind the curve and should begin investigations and reconciliation efforts with haste.

Further Research

If researchers want to further hone and develop decolonization and decoloniality, this study suggests that retroactively applying the frameworks to initiatives that investigate colonial structures is a good way to do so. In line with that idea, I believe a fruitful line of research would be to continue applying these frameworks to similar situations in other colonial or settler colonial countries. By doing so, a body of research could be built that complements the hypothetical and theoretical writings on decolonization already; this body would show the limitations of current efforts regarding decolonization and decoloniality, but would also demonstrate how the frameworks can be applied to create future law and policy. For example, this study points to the effectiveness of Indigenous people in leadership positions in the U.S. government in creating and enacting legislation and other policies. By noticing this trend, U.S. policymakers can try to affirmatively create this situation in the future, therefore furthering decolonization efforts.

Potential use of this methodology and framework could take researchers outside of education studies, as well. Colonial structures exist in every area of society, not only systems of

education. This means that future research could potentially look into other realms such as housing, healthcare, or even areas such as the legal requirements to be an enrolled member of a Tribe. Finally, this study employed content analysis, a Western methodology, to a conceptual framework that criticizes every aspect of Western society, including its research methodologies. Because of this, the study is limited, and further research should be done employing Indigenous methodologies in conjunction with decolonial frameworks instead. This could correct for any potential shortcomings or colonial patterns this study falls into.

Conclusions

I set out in this study to learn about how two countries with a problematic history of Indigenous relations have tried to make right one of their many purposeful and harmful policies. The United States and Canada have indeed both made efforts to acknowledge, investigate, and reconcile with Indigenous peoples regarding residential and boarding schools. While Canada has made more progress in their investigations, this does not necessarily mean they are closer to decolonization for two reasons: first, because they have been active in this area for decades longer than the U.S., and second, because the idea that decolonization and decoloniality have an achievable end goal is misguided. There will always be multiple ways to work towards decoloniality, and there will also always be ways to improve relations. Moreover, the unfortunate truth of Canada and the United States is that no amount of investigation and healing can erase the past; they will always be countries built on settler colonialism. However, this study has shown that there are various measures that the federal governments can take in order to ameliorate and make reparations for the harms done.

Ultimately, to further the decolonial agenda with regards to residential schools is to never stop investigating, collecting information and stories, and spreading the many histories and truths

about the past. As the TRC recommended, reconciliation (and decolonial agendas, for that matter) is a continuous process that has no end. This work must remain tireless if it is to progress, let alone stay in a steady state and resist backsliding into colonial habits.

Decolonization and decoloniality is no small feat; it quite literally requires questioning and reimagining the entire society we live in, and not resting for a moment in doing so.

The findings of this study indicate that it is key to not only thoroughly investigate the harms caused by residential school operations, but also to do so explicitly and with involvement and deference to Indigenous people during the process. Law and policymakers are key in ensuring these investigations occur, and because of this they must prioritize and thoroughly consider their treatment of residential schools. However, the findings also indicate that decolonization does not occur without explicit actions to push the movement forward. Without these actions, Native Americans and Aboriginal Canadians remain in the margins of societies that for centuries have tried to invalidate or even completely eradicate their existences. The legal systems that created and enforced residential schools now have the unique ability to critically examine their own roles, and in doing so, decolonize perceptions of the schools and even the legal systems themselves.

However, the findings indicate that this is where the nearly insurmountable challenge exists: how can we expect systems that were designed to oppress and harm a specific group of people (while also privileging another) to turn their enormous power and wealth in on themselves in order to investigate and make reparations for their wrongdoing? The actions documented in this study that have led to successful decolonization efforts have so far been too few. To adapt a statement made by the TRC in their 2015 report: decolonization is not just an Indigenous problem, it is also a Canadian and U.S. problem. Indigenous peoples vibrantly exist

in both nations despite everything the settler colonial governments have done in the past to erase them. It is beyond important to commit to decolonization by means of reparations and investigations for residential schools, because thousands of people still suffer every day. This study finds that the harm caused by these schools is not an artifact of the past, and that by ignoring the issue for so long, the federal governments only exacerbated the pain. To decolonize these histories is of the utmost importance because, as stated by the TRC, “one hundred years from now, our children’s children and their children must know and still remember this history, because they will inherit from us the responsibility of ensuring that it never happens again.”

APPENDIX A
LIST OF SELECTED DOCUMENTS

Canada		
Policy & Law	Commissions	Court Documents
Section 35 of the Constitution Act of Canada (1982) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines inherent Indigenous rights 	AHF Final Report Summary (2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary with future initiatives 	Mowatt v. Clarke (1999) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held that the government and church was liable for abuse at school
Gathering Strength (1998) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Aboriginal Action Plan” • Set aside healing fund for AHF 	AHF Final Report Volumes I-III (2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final reports from 1998-2005 	Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established the TRC
AHF Letters Patent (1998) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official creation of AHF 	Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future (2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRC final report 	
Bill C-8 (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oath of Citizenship amended 	Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal Peoples (2016) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National survey on knowledge of reconciliation 	
Bill C-15 (2021) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDRIP into Canadian law 		
United States		
Policy & Law	Commissions	Court Documents
Joint Resolution 14 (2009) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apology from Senate for wrongs done 	Broken Promises (2018) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal funding shortfall account 	Yazzie/Martinez v. New Mexico (2018) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only case to reference boarding schools
S. Con. Res. (2021) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National day of remembrance established 	Haaland Memo (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memo establishing DOI investigation 	
S. 2907/H.R. 5444 (2021) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pending bill to establish THC (not passed) 	DOI Dear Tribal Leader Letter (2021) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from DOI calling for info from tribes 	
Oversight Hearing on Investigative Report from DOI Report (2022) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testimony from Indigenous leaders to pass 2907 	DOI Final Report (2022) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on preliminary findings by DOI 	
U.S. Constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of the U.S. with repealed sections 		

APPENDIX B
LIST OF CODES

Who	
Code	Definition
Churches	Religious organizations
Government bodies	Branches or specific commissions or committees of the federal government, when acting as one body without specific leadership.
Government leaders	Leaders of federal government institutions/bodies in Canada or the United States.
Indigenous leaders in government	Indigenous people in leadership positions or spokesperson positions within formal institutions of government.
Indigenous leaders outside government	Indigenous people in leadership positions or spokesperson positions outside of formal institutions of government; can be within Tribal government.
Indigenous people or person	Indigenous person residing in present-day Canada or United States
Public	General public/populous of Canada or U.S.
When	
Code	Definition
Distant future	Set date for far away; going to happen
Immediate future	Set date for occurrence; going to happen
Now	Currently happening
Past	Occurred already in the past
Where	
Code	Definition
Curriculum	Curricula in schools (primary, secondary, post-secondary)
Government bodies	Action happening within a specific body of the government or committee/commission sponsored or led by the federal government.
Laws & policies	Activity or progress taking place explicitly within a new law or policy made and adopted by the federal government. Different from government bodies, which include laws and policies, as well as non-legally binding material.
Public discourse	Taking place in public discourse, e.g. news, discussions, fora, etc.
Schools	Within formal institutions of schooling. Primary, secondary, post-secondary.
Why	
Code	Definition
Avoid challenging Western knowledge	To avoid contesting "traditional" narratives of history and the truth, which are only from a white, Western perspective; to avoid allowing multiplicity or pluriversality
Avoid recognizing settler privilege	To avoid the painful and humiliating experience of publicly recognizing settler privilege, specifically the ways in which it privileges white people in formal institutions
Build trust	To establish a relationship of trust and openness between figures of authority and Indigenous peoples
Center	To center Indigenous life and existence, including problems facing Indigenous communities; to show white people and broader society that Indigenous problems affect us all
Claim humanity	To claim humanity and existence; for Indigenous people to assert their existence and assert its vibrancy and livelihood; to remind broader society that Indigenous people are there and matter
Compliance with higher authority	In order to fall in line with directives from higher legal or moral authority; e.g., international organizations or legal bodies

Control Indigenous peoples	Control of Indigenous peoples, bodies, cultures, histories, languages, etc.; for example, not allowing traditional community healing practices, or even document acts of things like forced sterilization (broad category)
Decenter or deemphasize	To play down the significance of the issue for the rest of society as well as for Indigenous peoples themselves; to draw attention away from the seriousness of the problem
Demand recognition	To go beyond asking or more passive forms of bringing issues to the foreground, but to demand recognition of Indigenous peoples
Development	To continue to grow the Indigenous community and move it forward; to make progress in existence and to regain or retain vibrancy
Gain legitimacy within institution	By establishing one's credibility so that non-Indigenous institutions will welcome what has been said or suggested
Genocide	To erase Indigenous existence completely; any effort towards this goal, no matter how small (e.g. acts of cultural genocide or any type of erasure)
Heal	To actively heal from past individual and collective/community trauma; to self-determine the way that healing should look, and to use Indigenous methods of healing; not concerned with healing settlers or settler society
Hinder development	To disallow the development or flourishing of Indigenous cultures or peoples in any respect; essentially, to keep Indigenous peoples quiet and subdued so they cannot heal, develop, or address the past
Investigate or acknowledge wrongdoing	To look into any past policy or law that caused harm to Indigenous peoples; alternatively, to intend that an action acknowledge past wrongs or harms
Maintain power	To keep control of power in government or power in public discourse or perception
Make reparations	To make concrete amends with Indigenous peoples; to admit fault and apologize but also go further and make payment or restitution
Placate	To satisfy Indigenous peoples with mere words but not actions; to give Indigenous peoples something, but not the substance of what they need and are asking for
Problematize	To make Indigenous people, their problems, and even Indigenous existence seem like an inconvenience or a problem for broader society; to control the narrative and ensure the blame is on Indigenous people, not white people
Profit	To make Indigenous people, their problems, and even Indigenous existence seem like an inconvenience or a problem for broader society; to control the narrative and ensure the blame is on Indigenous people, not white people
Receive reparations	To receive concrete amends from settler governments in the form of monetary or other reparations; to receive this along with acknowledgment of harm done and apology
Reconcile Settler to Indigenous	To restore good relationships with Indigenous peoples; the apology without further change; to make Indigenous and white settler societies more compatible with one another
Reconcile with Settlers	To restore good relationships with settlers; the apology without further change; to make Indigenous and white settler societies more compatible with one another; to allow the governments to come closer to harmony with Indigenous communities
Restoration	To reclaim and then restore Indigenous communities, cultures, practices, languages, traditions, histories, testimonies, etc.;
Self-determine	To take control back and determine one's own fate; a term used often in Indigenous communities to include the following: the right to freely

	determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development
Survive	To continue Indigenous existence and ways of life; survival of people, culture, traditions, histories, etc.
How	
Code	Definition
Collaborate	By establishing partnerships that do not explicitly place non-Indigenous or Indigenous people in a leadership role; working together for a common goal
Community healing	By healing in traditional and/or Indigenous-led manners; holistic healing that involves the entire community
Dominate history	By maintaining control and power in historical accounts; by insisting there is one history, one truth, and that history is about justice rather than power
Formal government action	By petitioning, applying for status or funding, any form of using colonial government structures to achieve the goal
Apologize	By offering a formal apology
Barring from formal institutions	By locking Indigenous people out of formal institutions like the justice system; this mainly occurs via procedural laws
Confuse and conflate	By confusing the general public and Indigenous peoples as to what the true nature of certain issues are; this can occur by conflating multiple ideas together
Disenfranchise	By ensuring that Indigenous people, by a variety of means (e.g. criminalization) are disenfranchised from being American citizens
Give or receive money	The giving or receiving of funding in the form of federal monies.
Litigation	Formal proceedings in court by the form of a lawsuit.
Nullify	To allow progress to take place, only to nullify it either legally or by ensuring that the substance of the action or progress is actually meaningless
Objectify	By making Indigenous people consistently the object of actions, never the subject; not allowing Indigenous people to make decisions or take leadership roles
Silence	By completely silencing Indigenous voices; locking them out of discourse and the narrative
Take advantage	To use Indigenous culture etc. to the sole advantage of white settlers; this includes taking advantage of physical land
Tokenize	By placing an Indigenous person, Tribe, or Indigenous issue in a tokenized position of importance in order to ignore the rest
Honor	By acknowledging and honoring Indigenous people and history, regardless of intention
Ignore	To blatantly pretend like the issue does not exist
Investigate, question, and research	Research, investigate, interrogate, criticize, question; formal research efforts or lines of questioning
Acknowledging role of residential schools	By explicitly acknowledging and owning the crucial role that residential schools played in the erasure of Indigenous life and spread of settler life; acknowledging as well the role schools played in complete destruction of Indigenous life, including happiness, existing without trauma, lifespan, etc.
Acknowledging the role of race	Admitting and critically examining the role of race in Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations

Criticizing Western history	By pointing to specific instances within "traditional" accounts of Western history (i.e. history as taught in most schools) that do not account for the full truth or perhaps tell a skewed version of the truth
Criticizing the settler norm-Indigenous problem binary	Examining and being critical of the binary and default thinking of the settler "norm" versus the Indigenous "problem"
Examining and critiquing power structures	Investigating and undermining the existing structures of power in society; i.e. asking why white people have power and legitimacy and why Indigenous people exist on the margins
Examining the meaning of reconciliation	Being critical of what federal governments mean by the word "reconciliation"; i.e. is it just a way to placate and gloss over the past, or is it meaningful and does it actively involve and defer to Indigenous peoples?
One way of life	By insisting there is only one truth and one correct way to live life, the white settler way
Questioning the origin of knowledge	By interrogating where common knowledge comes from, particularly the whitewashed and settler foundations of that knowledge and truth
Keeping or reaffirming promises	By ensuring that promises or treaties will be adhered to and kept; by reaffirming promises and sticking to them
Self-determine	By undertaking any specific action completely without government oversight or direction; Indigenous actions for Indigenous purposes by Indigenous people; alternatively, from a settler perspective, creating the space so self determination can take place
Allocating funds	By any means of taking matters into own hands and deciding for themselves (Indigenous selves) how the goal should be achieved; e.g. appropriating blocks of funding to areas Indigenous people determine to be important with no federal government oversight on that spending
Giving testimony	By telling oral history and sharing personal stories and experiences, also called giving testimony
Pluriversality and multiplicity	By supporting and fostering the idea of more than one truth, more than one way of life, and more than one history; not privileging any of these over another; i.e. supporting more than one ontology and epistemology
Rename and redefine	By renaming and redefining Indigenous tradition, knowledge, places, etc. to strictly settler and Western names and meanings
Revitalizing culture and tradition	By making efforts or space to revive and spread Indigenous culture, tradition, histories, etc.
Sharing Indigenous histories	By sharing histories of Indigenous people, not just white settler history; this also involves acknowledging that Western history is about power, not the truth
Teach and share with others	By spreading stories, testimonies, research, and knowledge
Telling Indigenous stories	By spreading Indigenous histories, testimonies, and stories broadly and into the public discourse

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