

How One Becomes What One Is:
Transformative Journeys to Allyship

by

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BSW, University of British Columbia, 1983

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university
stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land
continue to this day.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomenon of Indigenous/non-Indigenous allyship. In this thesis, Indigenous child welfare leaders were interviewed regarding their perspectives on allyship and were asked to identify non-Indigenous leaders whom they consider allies. Through a storytelling methodology, these non-Indigenous leaders were interviewed regarding their journeys to allyship. As the researcher I employed thematic analysis of the interviews conducted to determine if there are patterns that suggest a process through which a non-Indigenous person becomes an ally. Analysis of the literature and the interviews conducted suggest critical processes that non-Indigenous leaders have undergone, and comprise a series of steps, in the journey to allyship. The research questions addressed in this thesis are:

- (1) Are there process patterns or themes that emerge with the phenomenon of allyship?
- (2) Is there a framework that can be identified that can inform a settler leader's journey to becoming an ally?

The research findings suggest that there are essential process patterns that emerge with the phenomenon of allyship. Further, the findings suggest there is danger in suggesting a sequential or linear process for this journey of head, heart and spirit.

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In both my work and through this thesis research process I have been gifted with a dear friendship with Medicine Water. Her leadership and commitment in advancing Indigenous child and family well-being along with being a mentor to me has been foundational on my journey to allyship.

The encouragement and feedback from Robina and Jeannine, despite my tardiness, is so appreciated, especially during times I questioned my competence to complete this thesis.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my family who have extended their patience for me to sequester myself away to complete this thesis.

Part 1 – Introduction

In the dark and silence of where this colour and language fade, don't paint your ally flag in white tears, I don't want you to apologize in English or Canadian-French, I want you to open your eyes, open your ears, and tell me, that I breath fire.

Mitcholos Touchie (2016)

Becoming Curious

As a non-Indigenous social worker who has held leadership roles providing oversight of child welfare services to Indigenous children, families, and communities, I have been extremely torn and conflicted regarding my role in a paternalistic colonial system charged with ensuring the safety of Indigenous children. My experiences over the past three decades left me with many ethical questions and struggles. For example, how is the safety and well-being of Indigenous children best achieved? What should my role be regarding the safety and well-being of Indigenous children? My thoughts have vacillated. At first, I thought that as a non-Indigenous helper, I needed to vacate the field and get out of the way. Over time this has shifted to believing that I have a moral and ethical responsibility to walk a path with Indigenous peoples, and to jointly right the wrongs of the paternalistic colonial system that I have been part of. I need to leverage my privilege and use my voice to advance a restorative agenda that will support Indigenous child and family well-being. Assuming this restorative journey requires partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, I have reflected on and am curious about the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders. I have seen this partnership at its best and at its worst. I held shame for those times where I was part of the relationship at its worst. Those moments of shame called me to reflect on my journey and

possible paths forward, unpacking my shame to get on with the work that needs to be done. I have come to recognize how shame disempowers and does not honour the journey I have been on. As stated by one of the Indigenous leaders who was a participant in this research, the path forward is about deconstructing the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people so a new relationship can be constructed. This does not involve vacating the field. Rather, this involves showing up ready to go on a journey of co-creating a new relationship, a new reality.

As I reflected on the role of a non-Indigenous settler social worker and leader in Indigenous communities, I became curious about the partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders that were working well. It became increasingly clear there were certain non-Indigenous leaders that were welcomed by Indigenous leaders and communities to work alongside Indigenous leaders in providing and overseeing child welfare services to Indigenous children, families and communities. This sparked my interest to explore what these non-Indigenous leaders were doing that resulted in them being received positively by Indigenous leaders. There is significant research and literature that addresses the qualities of allies in relation to oppressed and disempowered people. There is limited research addressing the qualities of allies of Indigenous peoples. The research that does exist is primarily focused on the attributes or actions required of allies. There is little research on the process or phenomenon of becoming an ally. My research and this thesis became a journey of understanding transformation of one's thinking (head), one's feeling (heart), and one's way of being (spirit). Throughout this thesis journey I have reviewed and reflected on journal entries in an effort to integrate my learning and my experiences in working with Indigenous people and

communities. Throughout this thesis I will share some of the thoughts that I reflected on in my journal.

For 12 years I worked for an Indigenous Child Welfare Agency in British Columbia supporting a First Nation in establishing their child safety services, serving the last 3 years as the Executive Director. One employee, an Indigenous woman, periodically reminded me to get out of my head and think with my heart. I appreciated her openness and directness with me. We had many heartfelt discussions over our years working together. She often encouraged me to examine my truths and beliefs. This was not easy for me and likely not easy for her. I was white, male, and in a position of authority. She was Indigenous, female and an employee. Despite all my unlearning and unbecoming, the colonizer in me would show up in my work, often as the bureaucrat operating primarily from his head. As I continue my learning journey, the teachings of this Indigenous woman, and others like her, have shaped my head, my heart, and my spirit. Taxa
(Knudsgaard, 2014)

Given that only Indigenous people can determine who they identify as allies, this research had to start with Indigenous leaders in order to gather their perspectives on allyship and who they identify as non-Indigenous ally leaders. This research is not intended to examine or draw conclusions about Indigenous peoples by a non-Indigenous researcher. Information provided by Indigenous leaders is presented to help the reader understand Indigenous perspectives on allyship. I was interested in exploring the journeys to allyship of non-Indigenous leaders who Indigenous leaders identified as allies. My work was predicated on the belief that

there is such a construct of allyship, a concept that I was challenged on throughout this thesis journey.

Definitions

For the purpose of this thesis I have used some terms with a specific understanding of their meaning. These terms and their definitions are listed below.

Indigenous - I will primarily use the term Indigenous to represent the First Nation, Inuit and Métis people of the land known today as Canada.

Aboriginal – When referencing source documents that use the term Aboriginal or whatever term is used in each particular source document. Aboriginal, for the purpose of this thesis has the same meaning as Indigenous, recognizing Aboriginal is a settler term to describe Indigenous people.

Non-Indigenous – I will primarily use the term non-Indigenous to represent people who are not Indigenous and represent the legacy of the colonization of Indigenous peoples. These people's ancestors or they themselves are visitors to the land known as Canada. This proposed thesis will focus on non-Indigenous people who represent the dominant colonial ideology.

Settler – When referencing source documents that use the term settler to describe non-Indigenous people, I will use the term settler or whatever term is used in each particular source document. The term settler refers to people who are not Indigenous and represent the legacy of the colonization of Indigenous peoples. This proposed thesis will focus on settlers who represent the dominant colonial ideology.

Allyship - I will use the term allyship to represent the relationship between an Indigenous and non-Indigenous person when an Indigenous leader has identified a non-Indigenous leader as an ally.

Ally – I will use the term ally to represent a non-Indigenous person identified by an Indigenous leader as someone who the Indigenous leader trusts to interact with the Indigenous community.

Leader – I will use the term leader to represent those, including myself, that possess a leadership role such as supervisor, manager, director, and chief executive officer.

Setting the Context – Impacts on Indigenous People

Since Settler contact with Indigenous people, there have been detrimental impacts from colonial oppressive agendas imposed on Indigenous People. The history of colonization and oppression of Indigenous people by non-Indigenous people has had devastating impacts on Indigenous people, resulting in multi-generational trauma. The impacts of a colonial agenda are seen through the imperial context, the Indian Act, residential schools, the assimilation policy, the industrial school initiative, the Sixties Scoop, the adoption of Indigenous children throughout the colonial world, the millennium scoop, and other state interventions into the lives of Indigenous peoples. These impacts have resulted in the over representation of Indigenous children and families in the child welfare system and poor outcomes for these children and families. These outcomes include poorer health, lower levels of education, inadequate housing (including crowded living conditions), lower income levels, higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of incarceration, higher death rates to children and youth from non-accidental injuries, and higher rates of suicide.

Setting the Context – Indigenous Child Welfare in British Columbia

Since the time of Settler contact, Indigenous people in British Columbia have been subjected to oppressive and colonial agendas. Through the residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the foster care system, Indigenous children were subjected to abuse, neglect and deprivation of their cultures. The proclamation of the Indian Act in 1876 allowed the federal government to control most aspects of the lives of Indigenous people. Institutions such as the 28 residential schools in British Columbia separated children from their families, communities, and culture from 1879 through 1984 (Kozlowski et al., 2011). In 1951, with the introduction of Section 88 of the Indian Act (Canada, 1985), the provincial governments assumed responsibility for enforcement of child welfare both on and off reserve. Through the late 1950s and 1960s, Indigenous children were being removed and placed for adoption at alarming rates, resulting in this time being referred to as the Sixties Scoop (Johnston, 1983) and the Child Removal System (Sinclair, 2017) . The number of Indigenous children in care has continued to rise. In the early 1990s Indigenous communities began negotiating their resumption of the responsibility for the care and protection of their children. As a result, there are now 24 Delegated Aboriginal agencies as of 2019, with varying levels of responsibility for the safety and well-being of Indigenous children. This has been achieved through delegation agreements under the provincial child welfare legislation. These agreements were intended to be an interim step to Indigenous communities self-determining how the safety and well-being of their children will be addressed.

In British Columbia, and throughout Canada, Indigenous children and youth continue to be over-represented as children in care and youth in custody. In 2014, 61% of children in care

(MCFD Corporate Data Warehouse, 2014) and 52% of youth in custody (McCreedy Centre Society, 2014) in British Columbia were categorized as Aboriginal in contrast, in 2014 9% of all children in British Columbia were Aboriginal (MCFD Corporate Data Warehouse, 2014). In 2014, the 4399 Aboriginal children in care (MCFD Corporate Data Warehouse, 2014) was nearly twice as many as the 2469 Aboriginal children who attended residential schools in 1960 (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2018). *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness, and Reunification – From Root Causes to Root Solutions* (John, 2016) identified 60.1 percent of children in care as Aboriginal, determining that Aboriginal children are 15 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be in care. *Growing Up in BC*, a joint report from the Representative for Children and Youth and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, identified that Aboriginal children are twelve times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be placed in care (Representative for Children and Youth, 2015). Given the under-representation of Indigenous staff within the child welfare system, the over-representation of Indigenous children is not likely to change. This said, even with increased Indigenous staff, there are root causes and systemic child welfare responses leading to Aboriginal children entering care that must be addressed.

In 2014 the Ministry of Children and Family Development had thirty-five executive positions that are responsible for strategic leadership. At the time only one of these thirty-five leadership positions was held by an Aboriginal person (British Columbia. Official Report of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard) 2015). Strategic planning and leadership functions that drive policy development and practice oversight for Indigenous children and families are carried out by settler staff. During a 2015 Province of British Columbia's Legislative

Assembly question period, a member of the opposition party challenged the Minister of Children and Family Development regarding Aboriginal child and family services.

D. Donaldson: So you have a majority of kids in care of aboriginal descent, and you have the majority of the budget of this ministry expended on supporting First Nations kids, yet one member out of a 35-member senior management team is First Nations. Does the minister...? Obviously, the minister must see that there's something wrong with that picture. The ministry service plan says: "Aboriginal people need to have responsibility to design and deliver their own child and family service." I would think that in this world that we just revealed here, "their own" would be actual control of the ministry, if we were talking statistically what we're faced with here. (British Columbia, Official Report of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard), April 28, 2015)

Within the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the under-representation of Indigenous staff at the senior strategic leadership level means the oversight and provision of child welfare continues to be provided primarily by non-Indigenous people. Conversely, of the 22 Delegated Aboriginal Agency Executive Directors in British Columbia in 2014, fourteen (64%) identify as Indigenous. Despite the Ministry of Children and Family Development recruitment of additional Indigenous leadership staff into the majority of leadership continue to be non-Indigenous people.

Indigenous children living both within their communities and outside of their communities, on and off reserve, will always need support and services delivered by individuals who are culturally aware and responsive. This thesis focuses on settlers who have been identified by Indigenous leaders as allies in order to gather important insights on how one

becomes an ally. Do these ally leaders hold the keys to understanding the phenomenon of how settler leaders become allies?

Research Focus

This thesis examines the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous leaders, specifically what contributes to effective collaboration and partnership in child welfare at a leadership level. Additionally, this thesis explores the construct of allyship and perspectives regarding it. A two-dimensional approach was used through interviewing:

- (a) Indigenous leaders in leadership roles at Indigenous child welfare agencies regarding what constitutes allyship, and who are non-Indigenous leaders who are considered allies by these Indigenous leaders, and
- (b) Settler leaders who have been identified as allies by Indigenous leaders in the child welfare field to gather their journeys that contributed to them being considered allies.

Given the limited research on allyship and solidarity at a leadership level in an era where reconciliation is being called for, there is the need for settler leaders to live out and embody the spirit of reconciliation.

This thesis determines whether there is a process to becoming an ally, and if that process can be identified within a framework? The following questions were explored to address the process and framework regarding allyship:

- (1) Is there a definitive moment when a settler leader can be considered an ally?
- (2) When does an Indigenous person know that a settler leader is an ally?
- (3) Are there process patterns or themes that emerge with the phenomenon of allyship?

(4) Is there a framework that can be identified that can inform a settler leader's journey to becoming an ally?

This thesis is a reflection on the phenomenon of allyship as told by Indigenous leaders and non-Indigenous leaders who are considered allies by the Indigenous leaders. This thesis is not intended to impose a settler construct onto an Indigenous pedagogy. As a non-Indigenous researcher, I bring privilege to this process that may bias the content and findings of this thesis. This thesis is neither an attempt for a non-Indigenous researcher to examine Indigenous people, nor is it intended to create a checklist to fast track becoming an ally.

In undertaking this research, one must recognize the historical impacts of colonization and the continued colonial relationship between settlers and Indigenous people. It is essential to address and understand historical impacts to assure paths forward do not repeat the mistakes of past non-Indigenous leaders. In 2018 Senator Murray Sinclair said the child welfare system has carried on where residential schools have left off, perpetuating colonial behavior through removal and adoption of Indigenous children, that "the monster that was created in the residential schools moved into a new house...that monster now lives in the child- welfare system." (Sinclair, Canadian Press, October 26, 2018). This reminds us of the contemporary nature of our mistakes and the urgency to understand how some non-Indigenous leaders have come to be considered allies of Indigenous leaders. Through this understanding, restorative processes can move forward.

This thesis builds on the assumption that settlers providing services and supports to Indigenous people do not want or intend to be monsters. Social work and how settlers provide supports and services to Indigenous people is in crisis given the continual failure to meet the

needs of Indigenous children, youth, and families. There is an urgency to move toward improved practice that is culturally sensitive and responsive. The calls to action and to move beyond words and commitments underscore this urgency. This thesis responds to these calls to action through the examination of non-Indigenous settler leaders' journeys to allyship. This thesis is not intended to be a self-serving exercise justifying the work of settler leaders with Indigenous people. This thesis is my response to the calls to action through an exploration of working across difference to better understand allyship. Better understanding the qualities and traits of allies, along with the process through which one becomes an ally, will inform settlers in their journeys to become allies.

Reagan (2010) and Atkinson (2010) have offered perspectives on what may be essential for solidarity work and allyship between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Research focuses on qualities and traits of settler allies: What a settler must know, and what a settler must do.

Regan (2010) and Atkinson (2010) speak of the need for transformation but do not identify a transformative process that has necessary steps or phases in the allyship journey.

Understanding this transformation process was the focus in this research. It is recognized that this process may not be the same for everyone and one's journey forward is informed by one's journey to date. What one must unlearn and relearn will vary based on one's experiences and one's openness and willingness to engage in this process. Furthermore, this thesis examines how settler leaders live out and embody the spirit of allyship. Through this thesis I explore the question, "How does one become what one is?" (Nietzsche, 1888), or more simply put, what is the journey one must undertake to become an ally of Indigenous people? Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia have aspirations and expectations regarding the

provision of child welfare supports and services to their citizens (members). The First Nation Leadership Council (British Columbia), First Nation Community Leadership, and the Cabinet of the Province of British Columbia signed the *British Columbia – First Nations Proposed Commitment Document* (September 2015) that included a call for a transformation of child welfare services through establishment of new processes, institutions, and structures. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) identifies key recommendations pertaining to Indigenous child welfare. While these commitments to reconciliation and transformation occur over the next several years, the reality is that settler child welfare leaders will continue to influence child welfare services to Indigenous children, families, and communities. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (2016, 2017) has delivered its ruling and three additional enforcement orders calling for an overhaul to the delivery of child welfare services to Indigenous peoples. It has been 26 years since the release of the reports *Making Changes* and *Liberating our Children Liberating our Nation* (1992), which provided recommendations for transformation of Indigenous child welfare. Many of these recommendations have yet to be implemented (British Columbia, 1992). Therefore, encouraging settler leaders to undertake an epistemological and ontological journey to explore one's truths and beliefs (head), one's feelings (heart), and one's spirit is critical.

"Teaching/learning practices that connect head, heart, and spirit can sometimes transform people in powerful ways that may not be fully understood at a rational level alone" (Regan, 2010, p. 205). The spirit in which we approach Indigenous-settler relationships is essential. It is through this journey that settler leaders and practitioners will identify their values that will help

navigate their head, their heart, and their spirit in working with Indigenous peoples and living out being an ally.

Researcher

Absolon and Willett (2005), Absolon (2011), Smith (2012, 1999), and Fine (2013, 1994) ask what authority, what right, what reasons does one have to conduct research in Indigenous community? Smith (1999, 2012) extends these questions by posing: “What do you bring to the interview, what is your gift?”, “What together are you trying to build?”, and “Are you giving or taking in your research?” As I locate myself in undertaking research in Indigenous communities I must be clear regarding the following questions: What is my connection to Indigenous research? Who am I, given my social location, to have an opinion on such questions? What stake do I have in Indigenous research?

After 15 years as a provincial government child welfare worker, I was approached by the Ktunaxa Nation to work for them to assist in setting up their child welfare agency. Through a 12-year journey as a manager and then as a director, and through a community development approach, I supported the Ktunaxa to resume responsibility under a delegated child welfare model for supporting families and ensuring the safety of all Indigenous children within Ktunaxa territory. Through a return to the provincial government as a manager working with Indigenous communities at an operational and governance level, I had the opportunity to apply my teachings from the Ktunaxa Nation to engage with Indigenous communities. This supported my work regarding their child welfare aspirations and helped me better understand the dynamics involved in bringing together colonial and Indigenous systems. Finally, having now left the provincial government, I have been honored to support a number of Indigenous communities in

a consultative role. With the greatest humility, I believe I bring credibility and investment to conduct this research. My thesis journey will continue my path of building on my experience as a settler social worker entrusted with the responsibility of learning in order to give back and support better outcomes for Indigenous children. Recognizing Indigenous communities has been a transformative journey for me both professionally and personally. Helping improve the cultural agility of settler leaders is a way for me to give back to the Indigenous communities and support their aspirations regarding their children.

I recognize I represent every white man that walked before me. I felt shame and guilt when listening to Elders' stories of resistance to past harm perpetrated onto them. In my journey, I have come to realize that focusing on my power and privilege, rather than the shame of who I represent, is not only liberating but is my responsibility. This strengthens my work in both Indigenous communities and with government decision makers. I can use my privilege, along with my teachings from my immersion in Indigenous community, to inform leaders in the child welfare system of approaches they can undertake to deconstruct oppressive practices with Indigenous people. Recognizing my social location, as a white settler male of European descent, I am born into privilege. Respectfully using my power and privilege while acknowledging my responsibility and accountability to do no harm, I can be the best ally possible and not be limited or reduced by the shame of the atrocities committed by my ancestors. Fraser (2009) asserts that "social work holds the pursuit of social justice at its center, which in turn means the relationship of power cannot be taken for granted" (p. 87). I am able to be an ally and advocate for systemic changes pertaining to supports and services for

Indigenous people through the use of my voice while understanding the ground I am standing on, the people I am working with, and the power I possess in a respectful and honourable way.

Research Approach

The purpose of this thesis was to understand the phenomenon of allyship through the lens of Indigenous leaders and the journeys of settler leaders in the human services field. This thesis examined if there are key process steps that settler leaders must undergo in becoming an ally and the relationship between any such process steps. A narrative approach that incorporates storytelling and critical race theory was undertaken that includes interviews with Indigenous and settler leaders. Through utilization of a narrative approach, this thesis honours the experience and expertise of Indigenous leaders through the stories shared. A narrative approach supports non-Indigenous leaders sharing their stories, as well. This increases the opportunity to examine the heart and spirit of the information gathered. Critical race theory emphasizes how white privilege and racial power influences one's way of knowing and being. Given that this thesis examines relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, addressing the influences of privilege and race is essential. Critical race theory provides an understanding of how racism is embedded in individuals and systems. Thematic analysis was used to review the journeys and stories shared by those interviewed. Finally, this thesis included an auto-ethnographic approach in which I examined my journey in becoming an ally. I have included excerpts from my journal entries that were written during the completion of this Master of Social Work degree. The steps undertaken included:

- (1) I asked Indigenous leaders in the child welfare field to identify settler allies at a strategic leadership level (i.e. politicians, senior government employees), in advancing the delivery of child welfare services to Indigenous people;
- (2) I asked Indigenous leaders in the child welfare field to identify characteristics that make these settler leaders allies;
- (3) I asked settler leaders to share the process they journeyed through to become allies;
- (4) I analyzed the research; determining if there were themes or key process steps to the phenomenon of becoming an ally, questioning whether this is unique to each relationship between a settler and Indigenous person, and identifying any themes and/or key process steps that be articulated in a framework, and
- (5) I reflected on my journey towards allyship including a sharing of journal entries.

Research Questions

In developing the questions, I recognized the need to achieve balance between ensuring key questions are asked and allowing for participants to tell their stories. The interview process needed to have structure while also leaving flexibility for the participants' storytelling process. Fine (2013) uses what she refers to as contact zones where research questions are developed by all who have a stake in the research. Brown and Strega (2005) speak of deconstructive practices associated with post-modernism and post-structuralism forcing the reconsideration of "subject", "object", and "author" in research. Building on this, when considering the research questions, it was essential that I involved those most impacted by the potential findings in the development of research questions. As highlighted by Brown and Strega (2005), this shifts those who have historically been "objects" or "respondents" in research to collaborators and

co-researchers. I also sought feedback from my thesis supervisor to construct the questions for the research participants. The proposed questions were reviewed by the Human Ethics Committee and are provided in Appendix D Questions for Indigenous leaders and Appendix E Questions for non-Indigenous leaders. My guiding research questions were:

- (1) Is there a definitive moment when a settler leader can be considered an ally?
- (2) When does an Indigenous person know that a settler leader is an ally?
- (3) Are there process patterns or themes that emerge with the phenomenon of allyship?
- (4) Is there a framework that can be identified that can inform a settler leader's journey to becoming an ally?

Benefits of This Study

It is my best hope that the outcome of this research supports non-Indigenous leaders to go on a journey of self-examination to identify what steps they need to take or areas that they need support with to be able to work towards allyship. It is through culturally aware, responsive, and competent approaches that opportunities to support better outcomes for Indigenous children and families will be achieved. Through the possible identification of a process in becoming an ally, it is hoped an articulated process will assist non-Indigenous leaders. This thesis is an attempt to promote a paradigm shift in how non-Indigenous leaders perceive and work with both Indigenous communities and the staff they are responsible for. This shift is required at two key levels:

- (1) Shifting the leaders in the government child welfare systems from viewing this as an "Indian" problem to viewing this as a system (dominant culture) needing to take responsibility for its' policies and approaches that harmed Indigenous people, and

(2) Shifting from focusing on what is not working and developing policy based on failures to celebrating what is working well and developing policy building on expertise of Indigenous people who have ways of knowing and systems for caring for their children.

Frideres (in Sinclair 2009) states “For too long theorists have viewed the Indian problem as problems Indians have. They have not viewed it as a White problem” (Nuggens in Sinclair, 2009, p. 105). Nuggens (2009) states “It can also be said that if it were not for the presence of racist discourse towards Aboriginal people, the probability of a more positive outcome would have been greatly increased” (in Sinclair, 2009, p. 100). Recognizing this dominant hegemony, I examined the relationship between Settler leaders and Indigenous people, especially what contributes to effective collaboration and partnership as seen through an Indigenous lens. Settlers that are seen as allies by Indigenous people can support a shift in ideology and practice, which can result in brighter futures for Indigenous children, youth, and families.

Part 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

Becoming an ally, re-envisioning Indigenous settler relationships, doing no harm, and walking in partnership are recurring themes identified in the literature on allyship (Davis, 2010; Strega, 2005 & 2015; Green & Thomas, 2012, Thomas, 2015). In the literature reviewed, the primary source for such information appears to be the authors' lived experience, whether as an Indigenous person or as a settler working within Indigenous community. These lived experiences are steeped with teachings for the reader. Literature regarding other cultural contexts and gender was reviewed. The intention was to better understand the concept of allyship. Other inter-racial relationship and gender relationship are part of the literature reviewed for the purpose of understanding allyship.

Atkinson (2010) and Brubacher, (2008), extend beyond one's lived experience through their research to explore the experiences of others in an attempt to identify the themes that contribute to successful relationships and partnerships between Indigenous people and settlers. Additionally, there is research that identifies actions, sign-posts, and strategies to become a settler ally. Some of this research is in the context of human services work, some of this research is in the context of intergovernmental relations, and other research is at a broad level. There are identified themes in what constitutes a settler ally. What could not be found, regardless of the context, is literature that explores the phenomenon or process of becoming an ally.

It is critical when working cross-culturally that there is not a perpetuation of colonizing practices. Brubacher (2008) examines what it means to be an ally conducting solidarity work as

it pertains to self-government. Atkinson (2010) explores the key attributes of what makes settler social workers allies of Indigenous people. These two qualitative theses explore ally work, also known as solidarity work, through the identification of key approaches taken by and characteristic of settler practitioners who are recognized as allies of Indigenous peoples. Brubacher identifies the need to examine euro-Canadian attitudes and actions towards Indigenous people, that these attitudes and actions are and always have been part of the problem. “Just as love cannot exist without lovers, the Indian problem cannot exist without Indians and those who have sought to manage and change Indians” (Dyck in Brubacher, 2008, p. 2). Atkinson (2010) suggests that becoming an ally to Indigenous people means acknowledging that race is important and has significance in this work. She identifies “The belief that we know good, are good, and can instill good in others, is so ingrained in the social work fabric that there is little meaningful conversation about our potential to do harm” (Blackstock in Atkinson, 2010, p. 1). “As members of the dominant culture, we have to be willing to be uncomfortable, to be disquieted at a deep and disturbing level – and to understand our history, if we are to transform our colonial relationship with Indigenous people” (Regan in Brubacher, 2008, p. 2).

Without critical self-examination, one will neither become an ally, nor be seen as one. Ladson-Billings (2000) states that the conditions under which people live and learn shape both their knowledge and their worldview (p.258). As Atkinson (2010) suggests, one must “understand the roots of their becoming a settler ally” (p. 30).

Focus of Literature Review

This literature review will focus on settler leaders becoming allies with Indigenous people through three key areas. The first is the history of colonization and oppression, and its impacts on Indigenous people and influences on settler people. The second is what the research and literature suggest Indigenous people identify as the key qualities and characteristics of settler allies. The third is what the research and literature suggest are key phases in the process or the phenomenon of settlers becoming an ally with Indigenous peoples. I contend that the attributes of a settler ally must be identified and defined by Indigenous people; however, to fully understand the phenomenon or process of becoming an ally requires settler allies to share their journeys.

This literature review will draw on ally building experiences beyond child welfare. There are examples in the resources sector (fisheries, forestry, mining, and eco-tourism) and examples in other human services disciplines (education) that address both the challenges and the successes in Indigenous-settler relations and development of ally relationships. Lang, a non-Indigenous woman, in *Exploring Indigeneity and Difference in Decolonized Anti-Oppressive Spaces* (2010) shares Indigenous teacher's experiences and views regarding relationships with non-Indigenous teachers in relation to developing ally relationships. One Indigenous teacher she interviewed stated:

We need allies and advocates. There are not enough First Nations people in the jobs and occupations that we would like. We are in a capacity crunch. And I always say, "we need allies and advocates to work with us". If we were to wait to have enough Aboriginal teachers, and not count on other teachers to teach Aboriginal content, it would take us

100 more years to get Aboriginal content into the classroom. So that's why we need allies and advocates in any work that we do. (Lang, 2010)

Despite this example being taken from the education field, the message is transferable to Indigenous child welfare. Similar to Lang, St. Denis (2010), an Indigenous woman, shares Indigenous teachers' experiences and views regarding relationships with non-Indigenous teachers in relation to developing ally relationships in *A Study of Aboriginal Teacher's Professional Knowledge and Experience in Canadian Schools*, (St. Denis, 2010). Both Lang and St. Denis provide key insight into the decolonization of non-Indigenous people in their journey to become allies of Indigenous people in the education discipline.

The literature review will separate the research and literature of Indigenous scholars from non-Indigenous scholars. Davis (2010) states, "it is useful to undertake analysis that looks at both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives and experiences; macro and micro-analysis of relationships; the global and the local; the social and the personal" (p. 8). The risk in offering a view regarding the Other (Indigenous people regarding non-Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people regarding Indigenous people) is that this knowledge is based on the Other's interpretation, as seen through the Other's world view. There is the potential that one could overpower or overshadow the Other's experience, thereby perpetuating a colonial approach. To ensure I do not fall into the trap of "Othering", there are four key areas to explore: Indigenous writings on non-Indigenous allies and solidarity, non-Indigenous writings on allies and solidarity, qualities of non-Indigenous allies, and the phenomenon or process of becoming an ally. It is imperative that the historical context of Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships is addressed as a starting place. This will require non-Indigenous leaders and

practitioners to go on an epistemological and ontological journey in exploring one's truths and beliefs, one's feelings, and one's spirit. "Teaching/learning practices that connect head, heart, and spirit can sometimes transform people in powerful ways that may not be fully understood at a rational level alone" (Regan, 2010, p. 205). The spirit in which we approach Indigenous and -non-Indigenous relationships is significant. It is through this journey that non-Indigenous people will identify their values that will help navigate their head, their heart, and their spirit in working with Indigenous peoples. The literature and research suggest that "how" one acquires knowledge is as or more important than "what" knowledge one possesses (Regan, 2010). Regan contends that how people learn about historical injustices toward Indigenous people are as important as learning about the truths of what has happened.

The Learning Journey

In order to fully understand the impact of colonization and oppression on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, it is essential to look at one's learning process. Research and literature address both epistemological learning in "what" one needs to know to become an ally and ontological learning in the "how" one becomes an ally (Regan, 2010; Bishop, 2015; Lang, 2010).

Curricular learning focuses on the "what" one needs to know, whereas experiential learning focuses on the "how" one learns. Understanding one's privilege and dominance as a non-Indigenous person is essential in working with Indigenous people. Epistemologically, learning about one's truths and beliefs will support greater awareness of the nature and scope of one's knowledge. Knowing what ground one is standing on (Absolon and Willet, 2005) through awareness of one's social location, along with having an understanding of oppression,

are key to becoming an ally (Bishop, 2015; Findlay, 2010; St. Denis, 2010). The literature and research stresses the importance of considering the process through which knowledge is acquired and research is undertaken. As stated earlier to “how” one acquires knowledge is as or more important than “what” knowledge one possesses (Regan, 2010). Regan contends that how people learn about historical injustices toward Indigenous people is as important as learning about the truths of what has happened. When we engage in ontological learning:

we are opening up windows to our souls as we: seek change that will empower us to think and act with purpose, operate from mental models that keep our minds open to life’s infinite possibilities; are able to be open and honest about who we are and what matters to us; can accept conflict, anxiety and paradox as natural forces for living and learning; are willing to go to the edge of our comfort zones and challenge our own beliefs and values, and see life as a continuous journey of learning from a position of gratitude and wonder to explore life beyond our conscious awareness.

(Ontological-coach.com, 2015).

The theoretical knowledge of the physics of paddling a canoe is important, but the practical experiential knowledge of paddling the canoe, especially in rough waters, cannot be taught through curriculum. Curricular learning through understanding of dominance and the history of oppression of Indigenous people are foundational learnings in becoming an ally. However, non-Indigenous leaders and practitioners’ experiences and interactions with Indigenous people are equally, if not more, important in one’s learning journey. Emphasizing ontological learning may be the key to the phenomenon of becoming an ally. Bishop (2015) and Reinsborough and Barndt (2010) reference the spiral model of learning where one’s

epistemological learning and knowledge informs one's ontological learning and knowledge, and this learning through experience informs what one knows.

History of Colonization and Oppression – Its impacts on Indigenous people and influences on non-Indigenous people

The history of colonization and oppression of Indigenous people by non-Indigenous people has had devastating impacts on Indigenous people, resulting in multi-generational trauma. There is substantive literature on the impacts of a colonial agenda which includes the imperial context, the Indian Act, residential schools, the assimilation policy, the industrial school initiative, the Sixties Scoop, the adoption of Indigenous children throughout the colonial world, the millennium scoop, and other state interventions into the lives of Indigenous peoples. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report* (2015) and *Taking Back Our Spirit* (Episkenew, 2009) are two sources that facilitate an understanding of the colonial policies and destructive acts perpetrated onto Indigenous peoples, and of the resilience and resistance of Indigenous peoples. This literature is critical in providing a historical context and an understanding that is foundational to the process of becoming an ally (Bishop, 2015; Findlay, 2010).

Indigenous Writings on Working with Indigenous Community - non-Indigenous Allies and Solidarity

When reviewing the research and literature of Indigenous scholars, emerging themes that are essential when working with Indigenous people include: understanding of one's social location, including privilege and dominance, understanding the history of colonization and

oppression by non-Indigenous people, being intentional in one's work, being reflective in one's work, taking leadership from Indigenous peoples, supporting reconciliatory, future focused and anti-oppressive approaches, and continually engaging in a decolonizing process (Smith, 1999; Absolon and Willett, 2005; St. Denis, 2010; Green and Thomas, 2012; Alfred, 2005; Blackstock, Cross, George, 2006; Gehl, 2011).

Many of these writings emphasize the importance of experiential processes grounded in relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These writings identify essential practices when working with Indigenous people such as understanding one's social location, privilege and dominance; understanding the history of colonization and oppression; being reflective and intentional in one's work; taking leadership from Indigenous people; and engaging in decolonizing processes. Although some scholars are silent on non-Indigenous people working with Indigenous people, the themes for successful work with Indigenous people are applicable to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Understanding One's Social Location including Privilege and Dominance

Indigenous scholars consistently speak of the importance of understanding one's social location. They note that the extent of how helpful a non-Indigenous person can be is directly connected to how much self-reflexive work a person has done (Absolon and Willett, 2005; Smith, 2012; Green and Thomas, 2012; Alfred, 2005). Absolon (2011) and Kovach (2012) stress the need to understand where we are before we begin to think about what we will do. These scholars identify the critical importance of locating oneself, and that gaining the trust of Indigenous people is essential. They stress we can never make the assumption our positionality is neutral. Alfred (2005) suggests "real change will happen only when settlers are forced into a

reckoning of who they are, what they have done, and what they have inherited; then they will be unable to function as colonials and begin instead to engage other peoples as respectful human beings” (p. 184). Gehl (2011) suggests that “responsible allies are fully grounded in their own ancestral history and culture” and “effective allies must sit in this knowledge with confidence and pride” (p. 12-13).

Understanding the History of Colonization and Oppression

Green and Thomas (2012) state “practice must be rooted in a First Nation’s historical analysis” (p. 190). Gehl (2011) suggests “responsible allies are aware of and understand the larger oppressive power structures that serve to hold certain groups and people down” (p. 12).

Being Reflective and Intentional in One’s Work

Green and Thomas (2012) believe “workers must always strive to reach their full potential for practice in First Nations communities, which can only be done by critical self-reflection and by intimately knowing themselves, the families and communities in which they practice” (p. 190). Gehl (2011) claims that responsible allies listen, reflect, critically think, and continually examine their role in oppression (p. 12). Napoleon (2010) asserts that “settlers’ lack of critical self-reflexivity is highly problematic” (Napoleon in Regan, 2010, p. 33).

Espiknew (2009) believes that through non-Indigenous people having a window into the daily lives of Indigenous peoples including challenges, disappointments, hopes, and dreams, they will be able to relate to Indigenous people on an emotional level, thereby generating empathy, which “in turn has the potential to create a ground-swell of support for social justice initiatives” (p. 190- 191). Inspiring empathy in readers and appealing to their sense of social justice engages them at a moral level (p. 75).

Maracle (1990), claims that everything one does and every word one speaks is an act of empowerment or disempowerment. She stresses the need to create space to be critically reflective of what might be perceived as disempowering or empowering, both in the short term and the long term (p.168-169). She asserts that for people of privilege to become racist is painless and this is often not intentional. Conversely, for someone with privilege to “un-become and become something new is going to be excruciating”. She goes on to say that un-becoming is both very difficult and painful. She believes this type of healing is no different than when one’s body is physically injured and needs to heal (p. 169-170). Un-becoming and healing requires a commitment to self-reflection that is likely accompanied by pain. In one of her poems, Maracle writes “I really hope I keep the elite awake at night” (p. 167). She suggests that in order to un-become, one must be willing to look at the impact on one’s actions and words. This includes the recognition that one’s institutions and structures are set up to confirm one’s racial privilege. Through intense reflection one may experience awakening and unbecoming.

Taking Leadership from Indigenous Peoples

Green and Thomas (2012) identify that a key element of best practices in First Nation communities is a “focus on a vision - a dream of a way of life for First Nation children and families that can and will be” (p. 190). This vision is a community vision, a vision of what leadership and community members dream for their children. It is through understanding the vision for community, and not assuming what the vision entails, that practitioners can take leadership from Indigenous communities. Gehl (2011) believes responsible allies “ensure that they are supporting a leader’s, group of leaders’, or a movements effort that serve the needs of the people” (p. 2).

A Decolonizing Process

Alfred (2009) stresses that “the only way to remove ourselves from the injustice of the present relationship is to begin implementing a process of resurgence – apology – restitution and seeking to restore the pre-colonial relationship of sharing and cooperation among diverse peoples. Non-Indigenous people must address their colonial roots, which shape their way of being, by taking responsibility for decolonizing themselves and establishing a pathway forward” (p. 156). Alfred stresses emphasis must be on resurgence of Indigenous people and restitution made by settlers. Smith (2012) states that “coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization” (p. 81), that the reclamation of history is an essential element of decolonization. Further, Smith (2012) states that the process of decolonization can be very messy, that it must be seen within the context of self-determination and social justice. “Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (2012, p. 58). She stressed, “decolonization must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonization (2012, p. 324).

Non-Indigenous Writings on Allies and Solidarity

In reviewing the literature, there are several non-Indigenous scholars who conduct research and write about becoming allies with Indigenous people. Some write about allies in the context of dominance and oppression of racialized groups of people of other cultures, whereas others write specifically about Indigenous peoples in colonized countries (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). These scholars represent a variety of sexual and gender identities. They represent both perpetrators of dominance and the subjects of oppression. Non-Indigenous scholars often state that it is imperative to understand one’s social location, one’s

privilege, and one's dominance (Regan, 2010; Findlay, 2010; Atkinson, 2010; Bishop, 2015).

These particular scholars are white and all speak to their story, their journey, on becoming an ally. Bishop extends her sharing of self by speaking of being both oppressed as a lesbian woman and her dominance as a white able bodied and well-educated woman. She prompts the reader to draw on experiences of dominance and oppression. These scholars represent a range of professions including law, social work, and education. Regan (2010) shares, "simply believing that we do good practices with Aboriginal peoples is not good enough ... self-reflection differs from self-education in that it involves painful work of examining one's complicity in an oppressive culture...only the very brave among us will do this. Becoming a white ally requires this." (p. 105). Regan (2010) suggests that examination and acceptance of one's complicity in an oppressive culture may not be adequate to become an ally. Taking this understanding, an intellectual exercise that may be accompanied by feelings of guilt, shame, or remorse is a first step. Action taken based on this understanding is an act of solidarity. Findlay (2010) identifies the fact that most white people are socialized not to notice racism, or if they do notice it, to believe that they are unable to do anything about it. Furthermore, she stresses:

writing about or talking about internalized dominance is very difficult for people in the dominant place for this reason: it feels normal. Ordinary. We are precisely part of the norm when we operate from the dominant place. The way in which our behavior is oppressive is immediately clear to anyone who is in the target place in relation to us. But as non-target people we experience ourselves as being "ordinary", "just who we are", "part of our personality" (p. 5).

Bishop (2015), in *Becoming an Ally*, states she “was concerned about how many people, deeply engaged in the liberation of their own group, seemed not to be able to see their role in oppressing others and how that comes full circle and perpetuates their own oppression” (p. 2). She goes on to say she does not believe anyone would choose to be an oppressor, but we do so unconsciously out of our emotional scars. I was intrigued by how we reproduce oppression in spite of our best intentions. She provides insight as to how she saw the need to share her realization of her own oppression, but then becoming aware of her role in the oppression of others. Bishop wanted people to know how complimentary the two processes are. Freeman (Christian and Freeman, 2010) speaks of her relationship with an Indigenous colleague:

Friendship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples certainly is not all that is required for decolonization. There are entrenched, systemic issues of inequality, prejudice, violence, poverty, and theft of land that will take years of political action to address. But the relationship between our people does not only exist on a political level; it exists on every level, including the most personal. All of us are part of this relationship; all of us making it what it is. Working things through at a personal level can prepare and strengthen us for other kinds of more public work. The tricky part is to understand what is in the personal is political or social in origin (p. 383).

Regan (2010) stresses that how people learn about historical injustices is just as important as learning the truths about what happened (p. 11). Regan (2010) speaks of an unsettling pedagogical strategy as key in the process of non-Indigenous people becoming allies (p. 197). She suggests an unsettling pedagogy is based on the belief that as non-Indigenous people we cannot just theorize about decolonizing, we must experience it, starting with ourselves as

individuals and then as leaders in our workplaces and communities. Failure to link knowledge and critical reflection to action explains why many settlers never move beyond denial and guilt, and why many educative efforts are ineffective in bringing about and sustaining deep social and political change. Regan states there are very few non-Indigenous negotiators or policy makers who write about their experiences in attempting to resolve Indigenous-non-Indigenous conflicts. Many cross-cultural educational programs are designed to educate non-Indigenous people about Indigenous people without any reciprocal sharing about non-Indigenous history, cultural practices, world views, and values. “For settlers, the stories about residential schools are deeply unsettling. They are filled with experiences that overturn our cultural identity as a nation of peacemakers. They chronicle violence and dispossession that we do not want to hear, because they shake us to the core. But they are potentially transformative. How we listen can be transformative or simply can re-inscribe the patterns of colonialism” (Regan, 2010, p. 191).

Regan (2010) believes it is a moral and ethical responsibility to share her story with others; that this is consistent with Indigenous pedagogy in which stories are teachings that the storyteller has a responsibility to share what they have learned through the gifting of story (p. 31).

“Indigenous testimony to Canada and Canadians is a gift of testimony – how will we as settlers accept these gifts – will we choose to remain colonial perpetrators or will we bear gifts offered with humility, respect and a genuine interest to experience our own unsettling so that we might learn from the profound teachings that history holds for us all” (Regan, 2010, p. 17).

Storytelling offers the potential for truth telling by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Indigenous storytelling is discussed in the Indigenous writing on allies and solidarity section of this literature review. This storytelling requires a willingness to take risks and be vulnerable.

Through this sharing of vulnerability, a respect for each other can be developed that sets a foundation for a trusting relationship. Indigenous scholars Archibald, De Santolo, Lee-Morgan, and Smith (2019) and Thomas (2018) identify storytelling as a decolonizing methodology that ensures research is collaborative and is conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities. Through sharing of story, one can link theory with practice, reconnecting reasoning and emotion; Regan stresses this as critical to an unsettling methodology (Regan, 2010, p. 12).

Considering Goodman's key questions to non-Indigenous allies, Regan suggests that by answering these questions we will be deeply unsettled in our hearts, our minds, and our spirits. It is this unsettling that Regan identifies both as healing and necessary in the journey of becoming an ally. Goodman's questions include: "Does the action I am about to take, or the words I am about to speak or write, come from the head, heart, and hands of a colonizer perpetrator or a settler ally? How am I working in decolonizing ways? What am I doing on a daily basis within myself and in my relationships with my family, my community, my school, or my workplace that keeps me living in truth? Are my actions leading towards just and peaceful relations with Indigenous peoples?" (Regan, 2010, p. 236).

Regan identifies the need to focus on transitional justice. Transitional justice is an approach to redress legacies of human rights abuses, atrocities, and severe trauma in order to facilitate peaceful future relationships (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2019). Winter (2014) identifies transitional justice as "a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights' in the context of regime change" (p. 4). Regan (2010) supports the teachings of transitional justice theory on becoming an ally, "that history education in the wake of systemic violence and deeply rooted identity based conflict must not only focus on curricula

reform but also on pedagogical reform as a means of transforming divisive histories and identities, shifting negative perceptions of marginalized groups” (p. 11).

Regan’s work was seminal to challenge settlers to become reflective and vulnerable in exploring their ways of knowing about and being with Indigenous people. This literature review relies heavily on Regan’s work. Regan and other non-Indigenous scholars identify that understanding one’s social location, one’s privilege, and one’s dominance is foundational to allyship. From this understanding, a non-Indigenous leader can embark on a journey in one’s head, one’s heart, and one’s spirit. These leaders provide insight into key steps as part of the journey to allyship.

Qualities of non-Indigenous Allies

St. Denis (2010), who has conducted research in the education field, asked Aboriginal teachers to identify and describe the qualities and characteristics of non-Aboriginal colleagues who were allies that they found helpful and supportive of Aboriginal education. To become an ally, participants stressed that non-Aboriginal teachers must “start to address the biases and misconceptions that they have about Aboriginal peoples” (p. 48). Aboriginal teachers in this study described characteristics and behaviors of non-Aboriginal allies. These non-Aboriginal colleagues tended to be genuine, honest, trustworthy, positive, open minded and good listeners; they were people who made an effort to learn and to change. These allies were said to be effective with students because they were positive, sought to establish meaningful relationships with their students, and adapted their pedagogy to the needs of Aboriginal students, making efforts to get to know the people of the communities where they were teaching. These allies showed respect and support for Aboriginal people. They learned to use

community resources and be part of the community and understood the importance of participating without taking over” (St. Denis, 2010, p. 61). According to participants, non-Aboriginal colleagues who were allies were also aware of and appreciated the impact of colonization on Aboriginal people, accepted Aboriginal teachers as equals, and valued collaborative learning. St. Denis (2010) identifies the following qualities of non-Indigenous allies who were able to:

- Think outside the box;
- Care about and connect with Indigenous students;
- Listen to Indigenous teachers, parents and community members;
- Take initiative to support Aboriginal education;
- Get to know Aboriginal people as people and recognize the humanity of Indigenous peoples;
- Are positive and want to see Indigenous students and educators succeed;
- Have humility, are life-long learners, and can admit when they make mistakes;
- Are passionate about Indigenous culture;
- Collaborate and cooperate with Indigenous peoples;
- Follow through on commitments;
- Recognize the historical and ongoing trauma and violence Aboriginal people experience as a result of colonialism;
- Work collaboratively against racism;
- Persist when feeling overwhelmed; and don’t think they have all the answers (p. 1).

Margaret (2010), through interviewing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved in ally work, identifies a list of qualities to describe an ally. These include: humility, listening, humour, patience, usefulness, knowing yourself, knowing and acknowledging whose land you are on, groundedness, a thick skin, endurance, long term commitment, flexibility, letting go of knowing, open to constant learning, courageous, critical awareness, self-awareness, as well as the 7 grandfather teachings – honesty, humility, courage, wisdom, respect, generosity, and love. This list is not intended to be exclusive or seen as a linear checklist (p. 15).

Atkinson (2010) asked Indigenous leaders in the child welfare field to identify non-Indigenous allies. Through asking four of these allies to create a journal about their journey in becoming an ally, and conducting a thematic analysis, she identifies five recurring themes among non-Indigenous people that increase the likelihood of them being considered allies by Indigenous peoples. These are:

- The quality of relationship with Indigenous people including humility, humor, and understanding the impacts of colonization;
- Willingness to go on a personal journey examining one's childhood influences, cultural identity, and experiencing blame, shame, guilt, and remorse;
- Going on a professional journey examining one's ethical duty, moral imperative, social justice, and taking responsibility when working in Indigenous spaces to ensure not doing further harm;
- Understanding racism, discrimination, and awareness of white privilege; and
- Exercising white ally potential (p. 91).

Walmsley (2009), through personal reflection as a non-Indigenous social worker suggests those who are considered allies:

- Understand Indigenous people's history and are open to learning about another people's history and her own preconceptions and judgements;
- Are engaged in ongoing learning given not having the experience of growing up in Indigenous community, therefore not having insight into child protection interventions with Indigenous peoples;
- Sees oneself as an ongoing learner, being able to build trust with and openly receiving the teachings from families and communities;
- Has an understanding of one's own culture;
- Recognizes one's power as a social worker when working in community; and
- Being able to develop trusting relationships with community members given they are essential to effective child protection practice (p. 106).

Strega (2009), a social work educator and practitioner identifies locating one-self, self-reflexivity, and understanding of dominant ideologies as key to becoming an ally (p 150). She suggests qualities of allies are:

- Ability to establish and maintain empathetic connections;
- Ability to manage your internal processes;
- Ability to convey information in a non-threatening way;
- Ability to validate the client's perspective;
- Willingness to validate the client's skepticism about agency or worker; and
- Knowledge of cultural, class and other biases held by the worker and the agency (p. 149).

Davis (2010), who has pulled together Indigenous-non-Indigenous ally experiences from resource based practices (i.e. forestry, fisheries, environment), from the arts, from governance initiatives, and from human and health services, suggests “we can conclude that the challenges of alliance-building defy simple solutions and point us towards understanding of relationships that are rooted in the basic values of thanksgiving, honesty, friendship, and justice” (p. 9).

Carnes (1998), through prisoner education in Western Australia, identifies six key questions that non-Indigenous people should reflect on:

- How has colonial history impacted Indigenous people?
- How can the sovereignty of Indigenous people be respected?
- What can be learned from listening to Indigenous people?
- How can I be sure that I am not making things worse for Indigenous people?
- Do I have permission from the right people? (p. 20).

Figure 1 that follows integrates the characteristics of an ally as identified in the literature and research into key qualities.

Figure 1 - Key Qualities of non-Indigenous Allies – A Synthesizing of the Literature

Awareness – Of Self – Of Colonization – Of Indigenous Ways:

- understands oppression, dominance, racism, and privilege
- recognizes the historical and ongoing trauma and violence Aboriginal people experience as a result of colonialism
- works collaboratively against racism
- knows one's social location and how this may influence one's way of being including understanding one's own culture and being critically self-aware
- aware of the culture of the community working within
- understands Indigenous peoples' history and is open to learning about another people's history and their own preconceptions and judgements
- knowledge of cultural, class and other biases held by the worker and the agency

Relationship with Indigenous Colleagues:

- accepting
- treating as equals
- walking with, not in front of or taking over
- collaborative

Relationships with Clients:

- seeks out meaningful relationships – cares about and connects with clients
- adapts approach based on needs of client
- gets to know client beyond the reason for involvement
- recognizes the humanity of Indigenous peoples
- wants to see Indigenous people succeed
- ability to establish and maintain empathetic connections
- ability to validate the client's perspective

Relationship with Community:

- get to know the community of the client
- engage in relationship building activities with community (celebration, ceremonies as appropriate)
- being able to build trusting relationships with community
- collaborate and cooperate with the community
- listen to voices of the community

Self-Reflexive - Learning Journey:

- life-long learners – open to constant learning -
- make an effort to learn and to change
- don't quit when feeling overwhelmed
- let go of knowing – openly receives teachings from families and communities
- willingness to go on a journey examining one's childhood influences, cultural identity, and experiencing blame/shame/guilt/remorse, examining one's ethical duty, moral imperative, social justice, and taking responsibility when working in Indigenous spaces to ensure not doing further harm
- ability to manage their internal processes

Social Justice:

- take initiative to support social justice initiatives
- courageous
- exercise white ally potential
- understand and use power, and work with a participatory approach

Use of Power:

- ability to convey information in a non-threatening way
- recognizes one's power when working with/in community and being able to develop relationships of trust with community members
- willingness to validate the client's skepticism about agency or worker
- readily admit mistakes
- don't think they have all the answers

Culture:

- are passionate about Indigenous cultures
- give thanks

Attributes: genuine, honest, humble, humorous, flexible, committed/enduring, respectful, trustworthy, positive, patient, open minded, good listeners, dependable, useful, wise, respected, loving, generous, able to form relationships, justice oriented, resilient, thick skinned, thinks outside the box

Figure 1 – Qualities of non-Indigenous Allies

Amalgamation of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Scholars – Literature and Research – St. Denis, Margaret, Walmsley, Atkinson, Carnes, Strega, Davis

Phenomenon or Process of Becoming an Ally

Regan (2010) introduces transitional justice theory and its applicability to the journey of becoming an ally. Transitional justice focuses on transformation of systems and people where there has been a history of extreme oppression. When there has been systemic violence and deeply rooted identity-based conflict, the transformation process must not only focus on curricular reform but also on pedagogical reform (p. 11).

Lambourne (2014) identifies six principles of transformative justice: symbolic, ritual, and substantive aspects of justice; prospective that is future oriented but reflective of the past; local ownership and capacity building; structural transformation and institutional reform; relationship transformation and reconciliation; holistic, integrated, and comprehensive (p. 33). These principles of transformative justice align with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars' reflections on the process of becoming an ally.

Regan (2010), through her experience as a crown representative involved in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreements, reckoned with her unsettling during this agreement process. She went on a personal journey that was formative in her identifying what she believes is necessary to become an ally of Indigenous people. She identified four key practices that she believes are part of the process of becoming an ally: building relationships of trust, being authentic, exercising humility, and engaging community (p. 204-205). "Unless we who are non-Indigenous undertake to turn over rocks that remain in our colonial garden, we will never achieve what we claim to want so badly, to transform and reconcile our relationship" (Regan, 2010, p. 236). Regan cautions against the development of a prescriptive model or template. Rather, through the sharing of her personal experience, she provides insight into the process of

becoming an ally. This emphasizes that there is no one checklist: no one set of tick boxes, or no set linear process for reconciliation. For non-Indigenous people this may be challenging, as it requires letting go of one's control, opening up for an experiential process, and responding to one's heart. This is where unsettling empathy may occur. Regan contends that this unsettling place is a spiritual place where reconciliation and ally building can occur. She suggests that "teaching/learning practices that connect head, heart, and spirit can sometimes transform people in powerful ways that may not be fully understood at a rational level alone" (p. 205).

The spiral model of learning has been identified as a process framework that can be applied to becoming an ally (Bishop, 2015; Reinsborough and Barndt, 2010). In *Becoming an Ally*, Bishop (2015) identifies the following phases within this spiral: placing ourselves, reflection, analysis, strategy, and action (p. 116). Reinsborough and Barndt (2010) identify three key elements within this spiral: integration of mind, body, and spirit; intergenerational approach; and intercultural thrust (p. 167-168). Heaslip (2014) offers a variation on this spiral model through a continuous double helix with one side of the helix representing practice and the other reflection. Continuous loops of understanding, learning, practicing, and reflecting are common to Bishop, Renisbourough, Barndt, and Heaslip.

Bishop (2015) examines the process and dynamics of becoming an ally in circumstance where there is dominance and oppression. She provides insight across race, gender, and sexual orientation. The seven steps she identifies in the process to become an ally are:

- (1) Understanding oppression, how it came about, how it is held in place, and how it stamps its patterns on the individual and institutions that perpetuate it;
- (2) Understanding different oppressions, how they are similar, how they differ, and how they

reinforce one another;

(3) Consciousness and healing;

(4) Becoming a worker for your own liberation;

(5) Becoming an ally;

(6) Educating other allies; and

(7) Maintaining hope (p. 12).

Reinsborough and Barndt (2010) provide a model of transformation that involves three key steps: Education for social change, historical and cultural reclamation, and transformative processes of ethical representation (p. 168). Heaslip (2014), through her research exploring allyship and the relationship between research, practice, and reflexivity, identifies three key stages of transformation: Learning about systems of oppression; figuring out our own roles in maintaining those systems; and working alongside those most affected to try to address the inequalities (p. 558).

Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, and Formsma (2006) identify four key phases in a reconciliation process: Truth telling, acknowledging, restoring, and relating. Reconciliation is a key part of the process of becoming an ally. These four phases of reconciliation are guided by the values of self-determination, culture and language, holistic approach, structural interventions, and non-discrimination (Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, and Formsma, 2006). Gehl (2011), in *Ally Bill of Responsibilities*, identifies key actions required of non-Indigenous allies (p. 1). These include understanding his/her own history, the history of oppression, and the privilege that one possesses. From this understanding, she stresses the importance of relationship building through listening to and asking questions of Indigenous people. Smith

(1999) identifies five key stages of interaction with Indigenous people: Demonstrate respect for the people you are engaging with; present yourself in person face to face; look, listen, and then speak; express generosity through being a good host and sharing; do not trample over the people; and do not flaunt your knowledge (p. 120).

Margaret (2010) in her interview of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on being an Indigenous ally suggests “being an ally is a practice and a process, not an identity. It is an ongoing practice that is learned and developed through experience” (p. 12). Susan Lang (2010) identifies six stages in the process of becoming an ally: Know thyself; know the other; build relationships; reframe the experience; plant the seed, heal yourself, and inspire others. “While relationship might seem obvious, what our group discovered was that the crux of relationship building is not simply the doing, but in how you are doing it. It is an ontological shift – where ontology is concerned with how you enact your principles and how congruent these are to your words, behaviors, and attitudes” (p. 113). Findlay (2010) through her work with feminist organizations and Indigenous legal matters identifies three key steps in becoming an ally: unlearn dominance, acknowledge who one represents, and take leadership from Indigenous peoples (p. 15-16).

Wallace (2011) examines through fisheries, forestry, and urban planning “the practical implications for non-Indigenous allies seeking to build decolonizing relationships of solidarity and /or negotiate reconciled partnerships” (p. 156). He identifies three key phases in a decolonizing and reconciliation process: reclamation of power by Indigenous community, recognition that a broken treaty relationship needs mending, and reconciliation; which must be a sincere effort to transform relationships by non-Indigenous people from colonial narratives to

relationships founded on justice, equity, and respect. Three key elements of a helpful ally are identified: Support by non-Indigenous people for the matter in question, respecting Indigenous leadership and decision making, and building trust from a history of fractured relationships (p 161). Trust is defined through five key factors: Shared values and beliefs, honouring the land, participating in ceremony, reciprocal teaching and learning, and speaking one's truth. Wallace (2011) references the work of Anne Bishop as critical to the pedagogy of becoming an ally and the absolute need for non-Indigenous people to engage in critical self-reflection that included examining one's privilege and power (p 164). This includes unlearning one's oppressive role and renegotiating power relations (p 165).

In integrating the perspectives of all of these scholars, I identified seven key phases in the phenomenon or process of becoming an ally. I recognize there is the risk of seeing these phases as linear steps that one must work through. These phases may occur simultaneously, or may be incremental and cyclical in nature. Given this knowledge, the spiral model of learning or the infinity loop more accurately represents the interconnected relationship between these seven phases. There is the continual need to revisit each of these phases based on one's learning and experiences in other phases.

Ally Building Process

Allyship, I suggest, is not a destination that one fully arrives at. The journey to allyship is a process that allies continuously engage in. This may be best represented as a continuous spiral of learning. At each phase of this spiral journey allies learn what they are prepared or able to learn at the moment. When they spiral through this phase again there will be new learning and a greater readiness to learning. This is likely a lifelong process as settlers can

always be better allies every time every day. Allyship involves one's awareness and realization of additional work that one must undertake. The seven phases can be identified as:

- Understanding (self and colonization),
- Listening,
- Unsettling,
- Unbecoming,
- Awakening,
- Reconciliation (giving back),
- Solidarity going forward.

Figure 2 identifies key actions that must be taken at each phase. Figure 3 integrates these seven phases with the spiral and helix models of learning that Bishop, Reinsborough, Barndt, and Heaslip reference in their processes. This is seen as a fluid and dynamic process that should not always be linear or sequential. It is recognized that these examples do not all come from an Indigenous context.

Figure 2 - Ally Building Process - Key Phases – Not Linear (See Figure 3 for Spiral Model)

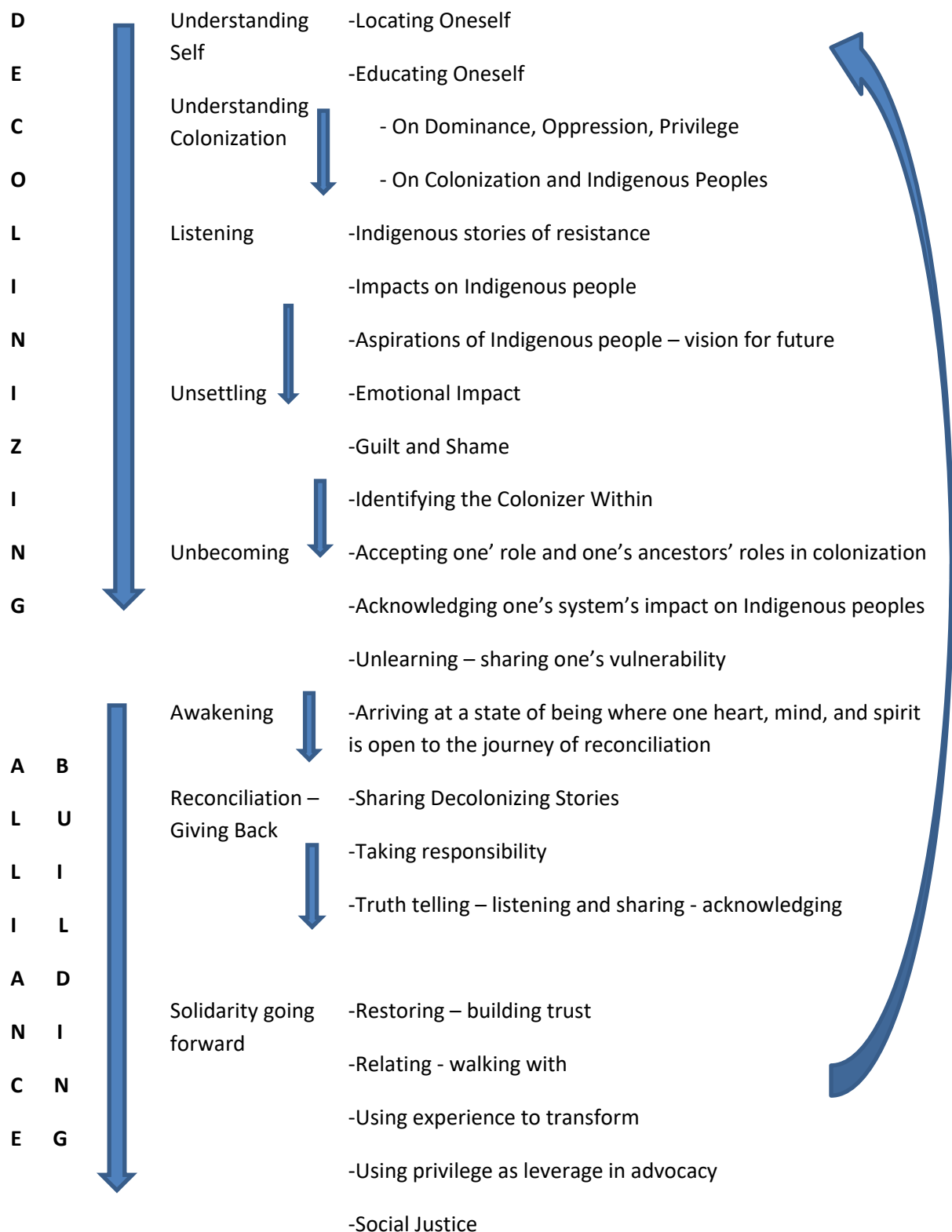
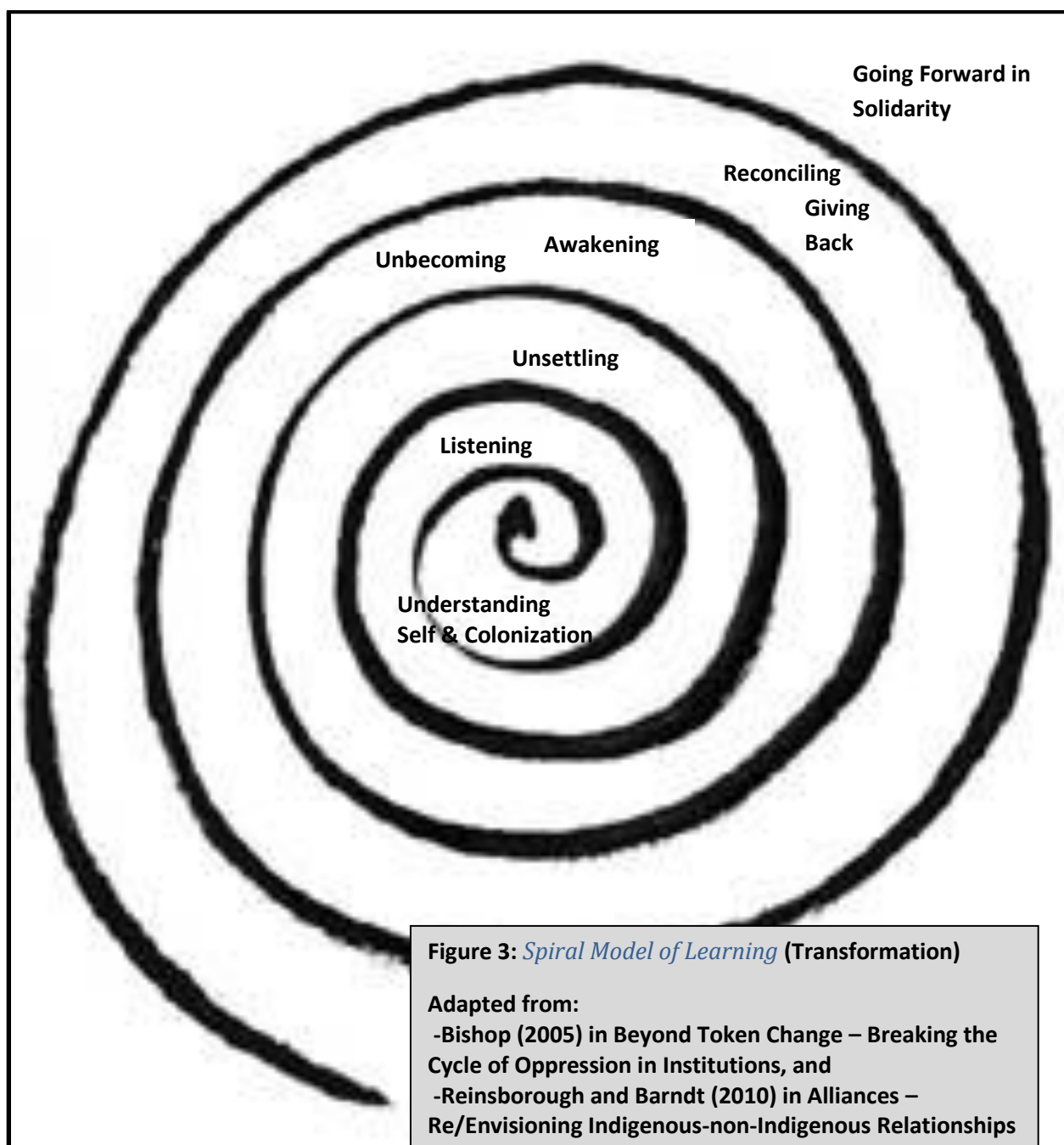


Figure 2 – Process of Becoming an Ally

Amalgamation of (a) Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Scholars – Literature and Research, (b) Knudsgaard Self-Reflection (Journal), and (c) Thomas' Feedback (Journal)

Figure 3 – Spiral Model of Learning



There are many stories of wise Indigenous leaders and non-Indigenous allies that illuminate not only the need to better understand ally and solidarity work but also the need to provide a pathway to guide the journey of becoming an ally. In each of these stories, there will

be different learnings gleaned from the listener, the reader. There is a critical message in this. Just as we will take different teachings from a story, we may take different paths in becoming an ally. This said, there are patterns and key process considerations that can be learned from those scholars who have researched and written on becoming an ally.

As a non-Indigenous person in a leadership role, I must continually challenge myself to ensure I am aware of how my social location influences the lens through which I see the world. Indigenous Elder George Manuel reminds non-Indigenous settlers they must always ask themselves and reflect on how are they showing up in their relationships with Indigenous leaders. This includes exploring are settler's aware of how their actions positively and negatively affect Indigenous people?.

The question is now for the non-Indian North Americans to decide how they want to relate to this struggle. We will steer our own canoe, but we will invite others to help with the paddling (Manual in Regan, 2010, p. 227).

Findlay (2010), as a non-Indigenous scholar provides critical reminders to non-Indigenous settlers on privilege, oppression, and reconciliation.

I have grown up without ever questioning whether doors would be shut in my face because of ancestry or the color of my skin (p. 10).

None of us were born to be oppressors, or to be oppressed. We were born into a movie where the script was written before we were born (p. 3).

If reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is ever to happen, we white people must unlearn our internalized dominance, and learn how to be allies to Aboriginal people (p. 2).

Kendall (2013), another non-Indigenous scholar, reminds us of how many non-Indigenous settlers are not conscious regarding the privilege we hold every day in our interactions with Indigenous people:

Many of us who are white have never thought about our skin colour (p. 46).

It is not hard to see why race matters. This is not rocket science. This is not brain surgery. Maybe it's heart surgery. To reconnect with our hearts, we have to deal with the feelings, unanaesthetize ourselves. Look squarely in the eye a reality that is different from the ones we have acknowledged before. And understand that it is for us that we do it, not for someone else. I work with a primary assumption: Until we as white people are clear about what it means to be white, the issue of race in this nation and in the colonized world can never be fully addressed. We must know about ourselves before we can learn fully about others (p. 39).

Finally, Thomas (2015) emphasizes the work of a non-Indigenous settler does not end at recognizing the privilege one possesses or at being unsettled in a journey of self-discovery. Once one is aware, one has the responsibility to act on this awareness.

It is not just about the unsettling experience, it is what is done with the unsettling experience, how one has learned, how one integrates the experience into one's way of being. (Thomas, Personal Communication, December 2017)

Throughout this literature review a common conclusion is that by being the best ally possible non-Indigenous settlers have the opportunity to establish collaborative partnerships with Indigenous people. Through such solidarity, Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders can begin to address policy and practice approaches within child welfare practices that have

resulted in horrific outcomes for Indigenous children, families, and communities. With a continued dominant number of non- Indigenous leaders and practitioners within the child welfare field, it is critical to understand the concept of allyship to support improved outcomes for Indigenous children, youth, and families. This ensures Indigenous children, youth, and families are treated with dignity and respect.

Part 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

Throughout my social work and leadership career I have engaged in critical self-reflection on how my approach impacts those I have interacted with. For the last 16 years, my work has been primarily with Indigenous people and communities. This critical self-reflection has evolved to my conscious use of self. Despite engaging in reflexive practice, the lens one looks through is coloured with many biases, some that one may be aware of and some that one may be blind to, resulting in unconscious bias. This thesis probes beliefs, values, and understanding of the phenomenon of allyship with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders. It is recognized that each leader has a different lens based on their lived experiences. By identifying the patterns and themes in the stories told by these leaders' teachings, we will be encouraged to better understand the phenomenon of allyship and inform a framework for becoming an ally.

Critical research rejects the idea of value-free science that form the basis of qualitative research (interpretative) and quantitative (positivism) research (Brown and Strega, 2005). As a settler-researcher it is essential that I am aware of my social location and my biases related to this. As self-aware as I imagine myself to be, it is challenging to set aside the lens through which I observe, interpret, and judge.

Methodology

All research methodologies rest on an ontological and epistemological foundation (Strega, 2005). In conducting this research, I had to examine the ontological position of those I

engage with in my research as well as my own. My worldview has been shaped and reshaped by my family of origin and through my child welfare career, primarily in Indigenous communities. This reshaping has included my moving from a paradigm of the child welfare social worker as the expert responsible for finding solutions, to a paradigm of child welfare social worker as facilitator, asking questions of families to help them identify their own strategies and solutions (Turnell, 1999). I have come to believe that families are both resourceful and the experts of their lives. This has been liberating for me and I hope emancipating for Indigenous families. I have shifted from having to carry the burden of being responsible for solutions to being co-creator with families, building their capacity through their expertise. Not only has my ontological foundation shifted through my development as a social worker, but my epistemological foundation has also grown from social worker as expert (one who determines truth based on factors and influences valued by the dominant culture), to now seeing Indigenous communities and families as wise people who not only value their children but have been successful in raising and protecting their children long before the child welfare system existed. Colonial policies and practices, such as the residential school and child welfare regimes, have disrupted Indigenous peoples' traditional child rearing practices. By valuing Indigenous ways of knowing pertaining to safety and wellbeing of children and recognizing that the dominant cultures' best solutions have been detrimental to the lives of Indigenous children and their families, my epistemological foundation is growing to align with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Critical race and standpoint theory are both epistemologies that align with my values and beliefs and are what will inform my research methodology. Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests: (1) the notion that racism is normal, (2) that storytelling is a methodology to

analyze beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge about race that relegates those of color to less than, (3) that there is a necessity to critique liberalism, and (4) Whites have benefited more from civil rights legislation (p. 264). “Critical race theory attempts to inject cultural viewpoints of people of color, derived from a common history of oppression, into their efforts to reconstruct a society crumbling under a burden of racial hegemony (Ladson-Billings, p. 265). Parker and Lynn (2002) identify three main beliefs of critical race theory: The validity of storytelling and narratives, recognizing race as a social construct, and the importance of the relationship between race and other forms of dominance. Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaismer (2004) state that “by starting with the lives of marginalized people, stand-point theory not only critically examines the marginalized groups as done in the past, but also critically examines dominant groups” (p. 15-16). Similar to Critical Race Theory, Participatory Action Research starts from the standpoint of the oppressed, involving the oppressed in design of the research will bring “wide angle vision” that will support the illumination of human relationship; whereas starting research from the standpoint of the top of the hierarchy risks covering up human relationships that must be addressed. Participatory Action Research acknowledges the subjects of the research as partners, collaborators, and co-researchers (Brown & Strega, 2005). Participatory Action Research brings forward the voice of marginalized people representing their experiences in authentic and genuine ways (Smith, 2012). Storytelling has components of both critical race theory and participatory action research.

It must be recognized that we continue to be in a colonial context where there is: ongoing genocide, complex inter-racial relationships, oppression (racial, gender, etc). It must also be recognized there are risks to transferring knowledge from one cultural context to

another as part of this research. This thesis draws from scholars focussing on race and gender in other cultural contexts that are drawn from in an attempt to understand the concept of allyship.

I gathered information from Indigenous leaders who were Directors of Delegated Aboriginal Agencies that interacted with child welfare services in their community leadership role. I opened with an unstructured question asking them to tell me about their experience with settlers who possessed leadership roles. I asked if they are able to identify positive experiences and situations where settler leaders have worked in solidarity with Indigenous people. I asked these Indigenous leaders to identify settler leaders who they consider an ally. I then requested these Indigenous leaders to approach the settler ally leaders to contact me to be part of this research. I shared my research intentions with these settler ally leaders to seek their permission to share their journey of becoming an ally employing narrative methodology through a storytelling approach. Additionally, I reflected on my journey to become an ally utilizing auto-ethnography. Epistemologically, the use of a narrative approach honors the knowledge of one's lived experience.

I conducted interviews with an appreciative inquiry approach through a participant led process. Storytelling as a "means of knowledge production" (Fraser, 2009) is an approach that appealed to me. Quiny and Reissman (2005) identify that there is a range of narrative approaches from discreet units of discourse through answering a question at a time to hearing entire life stories. Thomas (2005) contends that stories told in research present teaching opportunities that validate the storyteller's experiences and provide others who have similar stories the strength, encouragement, and support they need to tell their stories. It is through

these stories that we can learn what has worked in achieving what Indigenous people describe as constructive collaborative relationships with settlers. There have been countless examinations of how the child welfare system is broken, of what does not work, especially between dominant and marginalized people, so I wanted to create a focus of learning from Indigenous and settler leaders who have been identified as allies by the Indigenous leaders. Allies, as seen by Indigenous people, will work to begin to fix a broken system through building on Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing and being. Eileen Munroe (2011), a leading expert, who conducted systemic evaluations of child welfare systems, stresses that we have so much more to learn from approaches that work over approaches that are broken. Regan (2010) has referenced Thomas regarding the “reflective responsibility on bearing witness to the stories”, of the “importance of struggling to learn to listen, not simply hear, the words that the storytellers have to share, they give us teachings that allow us to continue to hear and document these counter stories – our truths”. It is through these stories that we receive teachings of wise practices that provide opportunities for learning from the wisdom of Indigenous people. Indigenous scholars Archibald, Smith, Lee-Morgan, De Santolo and Thomas all identify storytelling as a decolonizing methodology. Storytelling is a purposeful and intentional approach to teach and to learn. Through interviewing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders about what they believe regarding allyship a better understanding how non-Indigenous leaders become allies can be achieved.

Sampling and Recruitment

I drew from the relationships I have with Indigenous Directors of Child Welfare Agencies within British Columbia. I presented my research goals to these Indigenous leaders

and requested their participation in this research initiative. I asked these Indigenous leaders to identify non-Indigenous settler leaders who they considered allies. It was my best hope that four to six Indigenous leaders agreed to participate in this research. Four Indigenous leaders responded to my request for participation. In order to ensure free and voluntary consent of the settler leaders I asked the Indigenous leaders to reach out to the identified non-Indigenous settler leader allies. Again, it was my best hope that four settler leader allies would agree to participate in this research. I anticipated some leaders declining participation. Three settler leaders made contact with me to participate in this research.

Data Gathering Process

I sought permission from the seven research participants to audio record their interviews. All seven participants were interviewed via a phone interview. Six of the seven participants were known to me from my work as a child welfare leader. As rapport and relationship was already established, these interviews were completed in one session. It is my opinion that there was trust and a sense of safety in our relationships. The seventh participant I did not know. This interview was done over multiple calls with the first call focused on establishing rapport. I sought feedback from each research participant to confirm the accuracy of my analysis. At the conclusion of the thesis I will plan a feast or recognition ceremony to which all research participants will be invited. Support was identified for and offered to all participants in the event that they experienced trauma as a result of their participation in this thesis. Upon the completion of the defence of this thesis, all electronic records containing personal information will be deleted and all paper records containing personal information will be deleted. Each participant will be provided with a copy of the defended thesis.

Data Analysis

After recordings of interviews were transcribed, I used narrative and thematic content analysis to classify the teaching gathered in the interviews. The literature review informed the development of the categories for classification such as unsettling and unbecoming. For themes that arose from the interviews that could not be classified within the themes arising from the literature review I created new categories. Additionally, I reviewed my journal entries from the Master of Social Work program to classify these entries in a manner consistent with the interviews conducted. I incorporated my journey as a settler leader through an auto-ethnographic journaling process to determine if my journey had similarities to the identified non-Indigenous settler allies. The qualities of an ally and the process to become an ally, as identified in the literature review, guided my analysis. I used both my thesis supervisor and committee member to provide feedback on my analysis of non-identifying data. This thesis presents non-identifying summaries of what Indigenous leaders identify as the aspects that make settler leader allies as well as shares the journeys to allyship of each settler leader. This thesis incorporates my journey and the teaching I have received as a settler working in and with Indigenous community.

Those who are marginalized may see the world from two perspectives, that of the marginalized and that of the dominant culture. Ladson-Billings (2000) referred to this as: Two souls, double consciousness, margins and mainstreams, the oppressed and the dominant, and wide-angle vision. Dubois' explanation of double consciousness "as a transcendent position allowing one to see and understand positions of inclusion and exclusion – margins and

mainstreams” (p. 260) provided helpful context in analyzing the interviews conducted. As part of the dominant culture, which sees the world through a lens of privilege and power, we fail to recognize the wisdom of double consciousness of those who are marginalized. Given this knowledge, it was important for this research to hear from both the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders.

Ethical Considerations

Smith (2012, 1999) poses cautions and questions when conducting cross cultural research. She states, “you are a guest in someone else’s memories, a guest in someone else’s mind” (2012) and poses the following questions: “Is the researcher giving or taking in the research process? Will the community see potential benefit of the research? What processes are in place to support the research, the researched, and the researcher?” Graham Smith (in Linda Smith, 1999) claims culturally appropriate research addresses power and privilege directly within the research methodology. Thomas (2005) stresses that research must be conducted with “a good mind and a good heart”. One must never lose sight of “for whom” the research is being conducted (Fine, 2013).

When discussing dominant discourse, Smith (1999) says “They Came, They Saw, They Named, They Claimed” (p. 80). Denzin (2008) believes that “Indigenous knowledge systems are too frequently made into objects of study” and “The decolonizing project reverses this equation, making Western systems of knowledge the object of inquiry” (p. 439). This researching approach shifts the focus from being on the oppressed to the oppressor (Fine, 1994; Strega, 2005; Smith, 1999). Further political consideration must be given to how

neoliberal political systems treat Indigenous knowledge. The recognition of ownership of this knowledge must rest with Indigenous people and this knowledge must be used for the betterment of Indigenous peoples. Smith (2008) identifies key questions about any research project including those guided by critical theory (In Denzin, 2008). Fine (1994) identifies the risk of “Othering” when a researcher applies meaning to another person’s reality. This is particularly important in cross-cultural research. These are critical ethical and political questions when settler researchers are conducting research pertaining to Indigenous peoples. Ideas such as research camps and contact zones (Fine, 2013) not only engage those being researched in the design of methodology, but also address ethical concerns of researching down through colonial or paternalistic approaches. Engaging research participants creates opportunities for mobilization and social justice activities. Absolon and Willett (2005) stress the question of how the research will be of benefit to the Indigenous community and not just the researcher. Undertaking research that contributes to social justice through anti-oppressive approaches must be considered when conducting research with marginalized people, particularly when the researcher is a representative of a dominant culture (Brown and Strega, 2005). Furthermore, Brown and Strega (2005) stress that “social justice approaches to research, such as Participatory Action Research, have attempted to position those who might have traditionally been the objects or respondents of research as equal collaborators or co-researchers” (p.7). In order to mitigate these risks, I consulted with my thesis supervisor and Indigenous colleagues to share my research questions and methodology to gather their feedback. In choosing broad questions for discussion and a storytelling methodology this ensured that the participants led the interviews reducing the risk of my conscious or unconscious bias influencing the research

process. Furthermore, the research proposal underwent ethics review and revisions were made to the research methodology based on this review.

Conducting research that matters is foundational to ethically grounded research (Brown and Strega, 2005).

Brown and Strega (2015) identify critical reflexivity as foundational to socially just research. Researchers must be acutely aware of the power and assumptions that they bring to the research relationship. “It requires that we intentionally, consciously, and repeatedly bring our awareness to the question of what influences our perceptions, conceptions, and responses throughout the research process” (p.8).

I cannot understate the importance of ethical approaches. Research can cause great harm if not done with the best mind and heart (Thomas, 2005). This research approach risks increasing vulnerabilities within Indigenous peoples and community. At the same time, there is great opportunity for healing, reconciliation, and restoration. This research proposal was submitted and reviewed by the University of Victoria’s Ethics Committee to ensure this research conforms to the university’s research protocols. Additionally, this research proposal was submitted to the Ktunaxa Nation Social Sector Director to request a representative of this sector be available to support any research participant that experiences trauma as a result of this research. This included ensuring the protection of the anonymity of research participants. As this research did not involve any specific nation and was not about any specific nation, approval was not sought from a specific Indigenous community to conduct this research.

In considering Indigenous protocols, this research presented challenges. All the research was done via phone interviews. I acknowledged my preference would be to have in

person interviews, not telephone interviews. In the initial conversation with each participant I shared my intention to conduct this research in a good way, and I gave thanks to their willingness to participate. I requested the Indigenous leaders state how they wished to be identified and if they wished to be referred to in their traditional names. I recognized the contribution being made to this research and my intent is to host a feast to honour the participants, that I would be coordinating this at a time when Delegated Aboriginal Agencies are meeting in Vancouver to support being able to attend this feast.

Strengths

Relationship-based approaches yield great depth and breadth (Strega, 2005) in research findings. Given my years of work with Indigenous leaders, Elders, and community members, I have established a presence and credibility that will support both depth and breadth in the proposed research.

Through the telling of stories and sharing of experiences, I gained an understanding of the research participants' sense of their reality. This approach helped prevent researcher bias. Research bias was further prevented through the use of an academic supervisor and committee. Given my social location and my experience, both in government systems and in Indigenous communities, I have the influence to promote the research findings through my established and respected relationships with senior government leaders and Indigenous leaders. This research approach addresses ethical concern in that the use of a storytelling methodology supported participant led research.

Social Justice

The University of Victoria Ethics Committee provided approval for this research to proceed. This research promotes social justice on two levels. When I ask myself “for whom” this research is being conducted the response is two-fold. First, my best hope is this research supports better outcomes for Indigenous children and families through informing systems that provide services to Indigenous people of key considerations regarding allyship. Second, it is the dominant culture child welfare leadership who must benefit from this research so they can grow in their reflexive practice, pertaining to how they lead the staff they are responsible for and how they engage with Indigenous peoples. This is necessary for outcomes to change in a system where there is an over-representation of Indigenous clients, who were removed primarily because of perceived neglect, and under-representation of Indigenous practitioners. Therefore, this research has the potential to be an act of social justice and to contribute to reconciliatory processes for the research participants and the researcher and the broader social work field.

Limitations

One of the risks with narrative research is the classification process of the stories told. Researcher bias may result in an interpretation of story based on researcher epistemology rather than the world view of the research participant. It is my best hope that I, as a researcher, did not consciously or unconsciously let researcher bias influence the re-telling of the stories of the research participants.

Given that the audience I am trying to reach is settler leaders in the child welfare system, I question if a qualitative approach to research will compel settler leaders within a neo-

liberal government structure. With the strong emphasis placed on the scientific empirical epistemologies, a quantitative empirical approach may be more compelling, but this approach would lose the teachings shared through the participants' storytelling. I worry that a critical discourse methodology (critical race theory, story-telling, and auto-ethno biographies) will not yield the most convincing findings. I question if the findings derived through a positivist approach may be more compelling. Denzin (2008) states "a hegemonic politics of evidence cannot be allowed. There is too much at stake." (p. 155) Despite potential limitations of my proposed research methodology, I am convinced the depth and breadth (Strega, 2005) of the potential learnings from this qualitative research methodology match or outweigh how compelling a quantitative approach may be seen.

Furthermore, I wonder if the narrative and storytelling approach that I undertook for this research risked the introduction of research bias. I recognize I have preconceived ideas of what Indigenous participants may say. The literature has identified themes on being an ally. It was critical to ensure that the questions asked were broad and open ended. I needed to ensure the interpretation of the responses provided was done through not only my lens, but also the lens of Indigenous people. There is a risk that I interpreted the responses based on my biases. Holten (in Dunne, 2011) describes research starting from a place of no preconceived hypothesis, interview protocol, or literature review. I recognize I entered this research with a bias that a framework for becoming an ally could be identified.

Part 4 - Indigenous Leaders – Stories and Reflections on Allyship

The Indigenous leaders who agreed to participate in this research study bring over 58 years of combined wisdom regarding Indigenous child and family well-being in which most of their careers involved interacting with non-Indigenous leaders. This section will:

- Summarize the combined wisdom of these Indigenous leaders,
- Share the story of each Indigenous leader, and
- Provide reflections from each Indigenous leader on the concept/construct of allyship.

Each Indigenous leader was asked how they wished to be identified within the thesis. They were asked if they wished to be identified by their traditional name. All four leaders chose to be identified with their traditional names.

Wisdom in Child Welfare

All four Indigenous leaders are currently, or have been, Executive Directors at Delegated Aboriginal Agencies in British Columbia. Collectively they have extensive Aboriginal child and family services experience. They have worked consistently and extensively with non-Indigenous leaders in the provincial and federal government along with non-Indigenous leaders in the education, health care, legal, justice, and social services fields. They have experienced allyship, partnerships, racism, and discrimination in their roles as Indigenous leaders. All four identify as First Nations. Three were raised in or near their traditional territory. The fourth was raised near an Indigenous community that was not her ancestral community.

Gathering the Stories – Process

In gathering these Indigenous leaders' stories and reflections on the concept/construct of allyship, these leaders spoke from their heads, their hearts, and their spirits, resulting in a diverse account of allyship. Some spoke from a very theoretical place, while others spoke from a very emotive place. Early in the process, concerns were identified in the conceptualization of allyship, in that allyship introduces polarity in identifying non-Indigenous leaders who are and who are not allies, rather than viewing the allyship as a continuum. It was suggested that we need to remove identifiers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous and focus on gathering a community of support to focus on a common purpose. I believe there continues to be merit in exploring if there is a common phenomenon in the journey to allyship. This perhaps should be reframed to what business do non-Indigenous people need to do, where do their head, heart, and spirit need to be, in order to become part of a community, a circle, to go on a journey with Indigenous people in pursuit of a common purpose.

All four Indigenous leaders were provided with the proposed wording describing their journey, observations, and reflections regarding allyship. They were asked to respond with any recommended edits. Three responded with edits and the fourth, now deceased, advised of her intent to review and provide edits but this did not occur.

Interviewee #1 Sun Woman

Sun Woman's Journey

Sun Woman identifies as an Indigenous person through her lived experience being born to a First Nation mother and being raised in a northern rural First Nation community by her maternal grandparents, who are both First Nation. She was exposed to and participated in the

land as a hunter gatherer, eating the food that her grandfather gathered and harvested and hunted. Her grandfather was a trapper and a trader. Her grandparents resisted the social welfare system offered by the government. Being raised as a part of a framework of resistance brought her into social work to carry on the resistance to colonization and the Indian Act. She described how her grandparents had their very young daughters taken from them to attend the state-imposed residential school. Sun Woman's mother was placed in the sanitarium and was subjected to medical experimentation and testing.

Sun Woman was called to be an advocate for social change from an early age given the teachings of her grandparents. She began her career in 1986 at a provincial child welfare agency and within two years was working for a northern Aboriginal child welfare agency. During the following years, she supported the planning for the establishment of three Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. Her experience has been within an inter-government context working with both those considered allies and those not considered allies. Her whole career has been centered around Indigenous child welfare, including the past 14 years as an Executive Director of a Delegated Aboriginal Agency.

Sun Woman's Observation on the Journey (Phenomenon) of Becoming an Ally

Sun Woman identified an ally who is approximately 70 years old. This ally immigrated to Canada as a child, worked as a social worker, a manager, and a supervisor within government before retiring to resume work within a Delegated Aboriginal Agency. As part of her life journey, she married an Indigenous man who did not identify with his Aboriginal ancestry, had a child with this man, and later adopted an Aboriginal child she had known through her child welfare work. Years later, when this child had her own children that were involved in the child

welfare system, she adopted these children. Through all this she demonstrated her involvement with the Aboriginal community, ensuring these children's Aboriginal identity was strengthened. This a key indicator of an ally in valuing Aboriginal identity, connecting people to their community, participating in ceremonies, and making requests to support the Aboriginal community. When discussing this ally, Sun Woman stated:

In her leadership role within government, one of the greatest contributions that she made was that she broke down the door for us that would provide access to the information on the funding formulas for child safety services, child welfare services at the time. She offered the construct that funding should be based on a percentage of the total percentage of Aboriginal children in care. Offering that construct was not based on being the other, it was based on standing in the community with children who are represented within the system so it came from of a place of fact, justice, and you know just basically there is no negotiation here, that really describes there is a privilege that she brings and that could be perceived as being part of her whiteness but it really is her concept and her belief in social justice and fact.

Sun Woman identified the concept of deconstruction, that in order for any one of us to really feel comfortable with what we are doing, we really need to deconstruct what is going on. She believes:

Being pitiful is important during this time of reconciliation because people are victims of the socially constructed reality, right. We can't go around taking down statues of every single person who was a victim of ignorance and their inability to deconstruct the status quo of the time. Otherwise it will be, it will draw away from the very important work we

do right now if we seek out Indigenous tools to persecute after they have been dead a hundred years. For me it is about building another reality, constructing or informing ourselves of what is possible, who knows, this construct may not be relevant in the future.

Sun Woman stated that the ally she identified was standing in her reality of fact and social justice and access and awareness. Sun Woman suggested that the biggest contribution that this ally brought was that she was a great big force combined with her love of Aboriginal community, her commitment to Aboriginal children, her lived experience with her husband, and with her children. She rose to a very high level in the government.

Sun Woman's Reflections of the Construct of Allyship

Sun Woman brings a critical lens to the construct of allyship. She contends that the concept of ally as we know it is defined within a colonial structure and the concept of ally itself is a colonial notion because it gives favour and consideration, almost like a platform, for a non-Indigenous person to be recognized as someone other than a community member, a helper, that is working within the construct of Aboriginal child welfare. Within Aboriginal child welfare, there will always be a tension until the laws governing the work are consistent with traditional notions of caring for children and helping parents care for their children. Sun Woman believes that within this construct, within that reality and context of Aboriginal child welfare, we really need to recognize that there are no allies and there are no Aboriginal people. She believes that we all are working together for a significant population of children and families that have been impacted by a colonial history. Aboriginal people alone are not responsible for that restoration. Sun Woman stresses that as Canadians, we are all responsible. Therefore, the concept of ally

for Sun Woman, as an Executive Director of an Aboriginal agency, is an important concept to speak of and define, given that non-Indigenous leaders and helpers are either an ally or are not part of the journey, they are outsiders. She states there is not an acceptable category for a non-Indigenous person in an Aboriginal agency other than being an ally. It is a simple concept when you consider it, because the mandate of the Indigenous child welfare agencies is rooted in visions, mandates, and values that speak about restorative practice. Sun Woman says that allies need to understand what Indigenous agencies are working towards. The onus is on the Aboriginal agency and the Aboriginal community to really define what it is they are working towards and what they are protecting and reclaiming on behalf of the community. The more demonstrative the non-Indigenous ally is to these goals, to these processes, the stronger the ally they are seen to be. She stressed that non-Indigenous people need to come to Aboriginal agencies prepared and qualified. When asked what the qualifications are of being an ally she stated ethically Aboriginal agencies should only be hiring people that have reached that place of allyship. Furthermore, she identified that schools of social work need to prepare students to graduate as allies and include courses that examine the social construct of allyship. This said, by identifying non-Indigenous people as allies, this introduces polarity, and polarity is not used in working with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people start from a place of you (non-Indigenous person) stand beside me and we don't make your (non-Indigenous person) reality a point of interest.

Sun Woman indicated that the greatest allies are often people who have knowledge, who are courageous, who have lived a life to share, and who are part of the community. Sun Woman stressed that this is really about joining the circle, that when you join the circle there

are rules, there are protocols, but there is also continuous learning in silence, in listening, and in being present. Sun Woman identifies that there are non-Indigenous leaders who continue to hang on the notion they are bringing the light, greater knowledge, mentorship, and that the government is “better than”. These concepts are neither useful nor helpful, and Sun Woman identifies them as a systemic form of non-allyship. She has seen people approach with what appears to be the right intent but are not able to let go of their beliefs and values or be open to seeing different truths.

Sun Woman recognizes the trauma and impact on Indigenous people and communities. She also recognizes that as part of the healing journey, there will be non-Indigenous people who need to provide support, advocacy, and to be a part of the reconciliation process. She rejects the notion that non-Indigenous people need to step out of Aboriginal agencies to allow First Nations to do the work. She states this as an offensive theory of allyship. Rather, she believes that what really is important is that people have had positive experiences with Aboriginal communities and families and individuals throughout their lives prior to them joining her agency, that they are very well grounded in their own culture and their own heritage, and that they have participated in cultural experiences and continue to practice cultural routines, cultural traditions in their own lives because cultural knowledge is transferable. She also identifies that they must have a really strong sense of social justice for Aboriginal people, that they know the history of injustice and that they are stepping into the circle of reclaiming and restoring practices that make individual families and communities healthy, that they recognize that there are going to be tensions related to the concept of white privilege or non-Indigenous distrust, and that they are willing to engage through conversations about that. Lastly, she says

what is important is that they are willing to seek acceptance into the community, into the circle as a visitor. It really is about joining a community and being part of it, that you are seen and visible in the greater community.

Interviewee #2 – Medicine Water

Medicine Water's Journey

Medicine Water was named after one of her father's ancestors, who was a healer. She grew up in a southern rural Indigenous community in British Columbia. She identifies as a mother, grand-mother, great-grandmother, and member of her First Nation. When Medicine Water was 17 years-old, she noticed that children were disappearing from her community. She claimed, "With the support of my mom we would find the children and we would bring them home". She became a foster parent at the age of 19 years old and took in children from both the community and the child welfare authority. She lived in the basement of her family's old house and remembered when she came back from a weekend away their freezer was pried open and some frozen meat had been taken. Medicine Water and her siblings said they were going to go beat up the kids who took the meat, but her mom said no, as those kids were starving. Her mother's response to these kids needing food to eat and compassion for those less fortunate inspired her and called her to helping and healing roles.

Medicine Water describes her role in the establishment of Delegated Aboriginal Agencies in British Columbia along with Executive Directors from the other DAAs that were in existence in the mid-1990s. In her role, she chaired multiple inter-governmental committees with federal, provincial, and First Nations representatives. She describes herself as an advocate for change that required herself to both push and challenge government leaders and

bureaucrats to support the agenda being advanced by Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. As an Indigenous leader, Medicine Water was able to experience non-Indigenous leaders and identify those leaders she would consider as an ally to the work Medicine Water was advancing.

Medicine Water's Observation on the Journey (Phenomenon) of Becoming an Ally

Medicine Water identified two non-Indigenous social work leaders whom she considers allies that worked for and with her. Both of these leaders worked for the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and then at her agency. One of these leaders later became an Executive Director at a neighbouring Delegated Aboriginal Agency. She described this leader as a valued colleague. She stated that this leader listens, and that he does not try to solve Indigenous problems without listening to the full story. Medicine Water stated:

He is such a great friend who understands and knows how to listen and understand the field of work that we are in. Sometimes you just need someone to bounce an idea off, someone who's not judging me, someone who does not see themselves as a saviour, and allows me to come up with a solution on my own, without telling me what to do.

That is a true friend.... I need someone to listen, to write pros and cons of how I come up with solutions... I just need somebody who understands the work that we do and is willing to take the time to listen.

Medicine Water stated he does not cut her off, nor does he tell her what she should do, nor does he make her feel incompetent. One characteristic that makes this leader an ally is his willingness to listen and encourage Indigenous people to feel empowered to find their own solutions. She stated that he respects the cultural and traditional powers and beliefs of the community and does not impose his own beliefs. Medicine Water stated that when she feels

like she is up against a wall, this leader is a support, that when he sees something on the news, he will reach out to make sure Medicine Water is okay. She describes this ally as a great friend. He understands the field of work, asks questions, and is patient, which Medicine Water states are essential qualities of allies. She described this leader as trusting her enough to take her direction.

Medicine water described this non-Indigenous leader as someone who was prepared to become vulnerable, to take risks, and to trust her. She stated that early on in his time with the Delegated Aboriginal Agency she worked for, she challenged him to become involved in the community, to participate in community initiatives such as a road block. She encouraged him to engage with and develop relationships with Elders. She observed his hesitancy and she commended his willingness to venture into the unknown and be open to new experiences.

Medicine Water described this leader as a strong advocate for Indigenous people using his role as a Delegated Aboriginal Agency Director to take both the provincial and federal governments to task. She stated that people she considers allies are those who keep pursuing matters of importance to Indigenous people, and advocate for what Indigenous people identify they need. She describes him as a huge support who reaches out and stays in contact.

Medicine Water's Reflections on the Concept/Construct of Allyship

Medicine Water identifies an ally as someone who has the empathy to understand the impacts of colonialism, the Sixties Scoop, and the residential school inter-generational syndrome. An ally is someone who will really listen with their heart and not their brain, someone who is willing to stand with Indigenous people and to tackle one area at a time in order to support Indigenous children and families to move forward. Furthermore, an ally is

someone who will have the patience to help undo 125 years of damage done to Indigenous people knowing this may not get done in our lifetime, but is committed to starting the process for the younger generation with the goal of seeing change at some point in the future. An ally is someone who will stand with Indigenous people, who will help them, who will work with them. An ally is not someone who is trying to be a savior or someone who will sympathize with what Indigenous people went through. Medicine Water shared that she had somebody tell her “I’m so sorry for what has happened to you,” and she responded, “How can you be sorry? You weren’t here when it happened.” Medicine Water said allies trust Indigenous people and are prepared to follow up even if this creates discomfort. Medicine Water shared that an ally cannot be afraid to get one’s hands dirty; can’t be afraid to get one’s clothes dirty.

Medicine Water stated that becoming an ally is not an overnight process, that you can’t read about Indigenous people in books and then be an ally. Books don’t really tell everything you have to be aware of to work with Indigenous people. One needs to live, learn, and experience Indigenous community. Medicine Water was talking to some Elders many years ago and she asked, if somebody lives off the reserve and comes back, how much time would they give them to understand the Indigenous way of life? The Elders responded it would take one several years to learn everything, that one can’t just come back and understand the spirituality, the traditions, the belief, the culture, how we gather food, how we fish, how we process our fish, how we process our berries, our roots, and so on. They have to understand everything about an Indigenous culture before they can really understand who the Indigenous people are. They have to understand the stories, that every story has meaning. This is why it would take them several years.

Interviewee #3 – Sqwulutsutun

Sqwulutsutun's Journey

Sqwulutsutun identifies as an Indigenous person who was raised by his extended family within his ancestral community. He was exposed to traditional and cultural ways of life throughout his childhood. Now, as an adult leader with a Delegated Aboriginal Agency within his nation and in his community governance roles, he brings forward the teachings of his ancestors. Sqwulutsutun speaks of advocacy for change, a skill that he was taught at a very young age. Sqwulutsutun shared that people who seem to be allies are in the same canoe as Indigenous people and often have experienced oppression and are now on the same page, fighting for the same causes, and battling injustices. Sqwulutsutun shared how the abuse he experienced as a child drew him to a helping role. He believes that finding common experiences, whether it is abuse, poverty, or other injustices, facilitates empathy, which is foundational to becoming an ally. He stressed that people do not need to share the same experiences, but rather need to experience oppression or other injustices to develop the empathy required to be an ally.

Sqwulutsutun is the Executive Director of a Delegated Aboriginal Agency that provides support and services to several First Nations. He is a member of and has been an elected leader for one of these Nations. He has been in the role of Executive Director for 11 years. He describes himself as an advocate for Indigenous people and has carried a strong political voice. He has led initiatives that have advanced educational and cultural opportunities for Indigenous children and youth. Through partnerships with prominent organizations, he has created the space for Indigenous children to see that their dreams can be realized.

Sqwulutsutun 's Observation on the Journey (Phenomenon) of Becoming an Ally:

Sqwulutsutun identified an advocate of disenfranchised and disempowered nations at a provincial, national, and global level as a non-Indigenous leader he considers an ally. He stated this person is not just as an advisor or a consultant but a friend. He described this leader as being a champion for justice and human rights that is continually attempting to right the wrongs of colonial governments. Sqwulutsutun stated that this appeared to be more than a job, that this was a calling.

When asked what Sqwulutsutun sees as contributing to this person being an ally, Sqwulutsutun identified factors such as being a parent of a special needs child, being from a family that was subjected to oppression, and being an active part of a spiritual community even though it was not Indigenous spirituality. Sqwulutsutun states:

This is spiritual work and consequentially, given his (non-Indigenous ally) mindset regarding spirituality, he is able to appreciate and understand the importance of spirituality.

Sqwulutsutun believes that what contributes to this leader being an ally is his diverse experiences working with many Indigenous and other cultural groups of people. This has included immersion of not only himself but his family into these communities where he was seen not just as a consultant, but as a person. On a daily basis, he is trying to steer leaders and policy makers in an appropriate way that is respectful of and beneficial to Indigenous peoples. He is not about lip service or checking off a required consultation or engagement box. Although he does not work for government, he is able to influence senior government leaders. He can be

viewed as a challenge for government, as he goes out of the box, where people may be uncomfortable.

Sqwulutsutun indicates that what helps this person as an ally is his ability to form relationships at a personal level, that he is not just a consultant, but a friend who shows a genuine interest in people. He presents himself with humility, yet he has multiple accolades that one would never know about. Discussing this ally, Sqwulutsutun says:

I don't want to use the word grass roots but for his background, his work history, his education and all that stuff, he comes in as an everyday guy you can relate to. He doesn't come in with a 2000 thousand dollar suit and storm around with an entourage, he is by himself. He doesn't even have an office, and he is very your everyday guy. If he was walking on the sidewalk you would never put it together. Very humble, very respectful, very calm, just all those great attributes. Amazing individual, so that's why to me he is not there to put on a show.

Sqwulutsutun said he sees this leader's value and belief system aligning with those of many Indigenous communities.

Sqwulutsutun's Reflections on the Concept/Construct of Allyship

Sqwulutsutun identified that allies need to be those who support, encourage, and even mandate cultural awareness and cultural programming for staff and clients. He states that some Indigenous families have lost their culture as a result of the way the system has operated. He stressed that it is time to quit complaining and stating the reasons why something cannot be done, and shift to bringing everything back to the circle. Sqwulutsutun suggests that non-Indigenous leaders who recognize they are responsible to be good neighbours and part of

supporting improved outcomes for Indigenous children and families have the potential to be allies. Further, Sqwulutsutun stressed that this is not just a professional journey, but that one's personal way of being is equally critical in considering allyship. The ally he identified for this research has a personal commitment to allyship that is as strong as his professional commitment.

Sqwulutsutun states that the need to have experienced common feelings, to be able to relate to what another is feeling, is an essential component to allyship. He stated that there is a greater likelihood of allyship in a non-Indigenous leader who has experienced trauma and oppression. He stated that there is greater likelihood to be appreciative of others' spirituality if a non-Indigenous leader is active in their own spirituality. Sqwulutsutun shared:

People that seem to be champions are in the same canoe as myself. Non-indigenous people who are allies, are people that are usually, for example, I will use myself, I am comfortable talking about this, and what not, it's my history of being sexually abused as a child. I am not saying that everyone that is an ally or an advocate, or oneself has been sexually abused, but has had some form of injustice towards them. It may have been assault, sexually abused as a child, or some form of injustice and you always see the connect. Some form of abuse, physical or sexual abuse, you usually right away are on the same page, fighting the same cause, or maybe injustice towards employment or people who have survived through poverty as an injustice, the same causes are usually a social issue.

Sqwulutsutun shared that he has gotten to know other non-Indigenous leaders that may not have had extreme experiences or similar lived experiences as Indigenous people, but still have

personal wounds. He sees such people as able to support social justice initiatives, knowing the difference between wrong and right. He identifies that there are people with good hearts who are open to education and change. He suggested that as people become aware of the impacts of residential schools, child welfare, and bureaucratic discrimination, they have the potential to become an ally. In conclusion Sqwulutsutun stated “lets quit complicating things and let’s bring everything back to the circle, let’s have a circle and dancers who are within the circle.”

Interviewee #4 – White Raven

White Raven’s Journey

White Raven identifies as an Indigenous person who was born to a First Nations mother in an isolated northern community in British Columbia near her mother’s northern isolated First Nation ancestral community. Her name was given to her during a Sundance ceremony and she understands this to mean to be a giver of life, a mother. An Indigenous Elder shared with White Raven that her name is for one who is the bringer of light and change. Her father is non-Indigenous, resulting in White Raven identifying that she fits well with First Nation and non-First Nation peoples. Her parents relocated their family when White Raven was a child to a more central rural community that had a significant Indigenous population. It is the Indigenous women of this community that White Raven feels most connected to regarding her Indigenous being. White Raven knows that for some Indians, she was not Indian enough. She has never visited her ancestral Indigenous community but had significant involvement and exposure to the Indigenous community where she grew up. Her mother attended an Indian church-run day school. White Raven describes having multiple allies and partners in the health and social services fields. She describes herself as a multi-racial leader as an outsider to the communities

supported by the delegated Aboriginal agency she has been the Executive Director of for the past eight years. Her 13 years of experience in Indigenous child welfare has allowed her to examine allyship from the perspective of an Indigenous woman as well as from the perspective of an outsider overseeing services to Indigenous communities.

White Raven's Observation on the Journey (Phenomenon) of Becoming an Ally

White Raven was able to identify three non-Indigenous allies, all of which have been Executive Directors at Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. All three were colleagues of hers in their roles as non-Indigenous Executive Directors at Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. She describes one as having mentored her when she was new to the Directors Forum table consisting of Delegated Aboriginal Agency Executive Directors. She states that eleven years later, she values his directness in every conversation they have. She sees his honesty, his constructive feedback, his praise of how she carries herself, and his recognition that she has come a long way as instrumental in her own developmental journey. White Raven shared:

He took me under his wings when I was new to the Directors Forum. Many years later, almost every conversation we have, I appreciate his honesty, regardless of how challenging. He does not hesitate to speak his mind. He makes mistakes and is quick to make amends. He is proud of me. I have come a long way.

She describes having learned a lot from another Executive Director who was her supervisor. She witnessed her success as a supervisor, her excelling as a leader, her ability to build relationships. White Raven could approach this person and be honest and vulnerable without feeling shamed or judged. She felt safe to have a conversation. This ally shared her own experiences regarding her mistakes, bringing humanity to the work.

White Raven mentions that as she was reviewing the questions for this interview, that she continually thought of this ally. White Raven said that sitting at provincial tables with these allies, she consistently saw them being eloquent yet humble in bringing issues to the table, getting points across, and creating safe spaces to have difficult conversations. She stated there was not a sense of superiority, of us and them, of “I know better”, or “I know how to solve your problems”. Further, she indicated that their strength was in that they were prepared to be vulnerable and take risks, challenging others at these tables. White Raven shared that carrying oneself with a sense of humility, of not knowing all the answers, and a willingness to solve complex problems together are all central to becoming an ally.

Finally, White Raven was able to identify an individual in the provincial government who she felt trusted her ability as an Indigenous leader, and she sees this is essential in becoming an ally. She said she needed to know more about this person to truly consider this person an ally. White Raven identified being able to spend time with and truly learn about a person, both through work and personal relationships, as essential in being able to identify a non-Indigenous person as an ally. She inferred that a non-Indigenous person cannot be an ally without engaging in relationship beyond the focus of the work, that this must be a way of life.

White Raven’s Reflections on the Concept/Construct of Allyship

White Raven identifies qualities of allies, including being strong, competent, patient, calm, thoughtful, and able to think critically. She states that these allies all have ideas and have been influenced by their life relationships, and that allies have a willingness to reflect on oneself as well as an openness to learning. They may come with their ideas, and they understand Indigenous history and colonization. White Raven states that one thing that always

sticks out is a willingness to build and further relationships. Ability, willingness, and passion to advocate for Indigenous people is a central attribute of an ally. She identified that the ability of non-Indigenous leaders' ability to build trust, have excellent communication, to be open to difficult conversations, and being non-judgemental are essential qualities of allies. White Raven indicated that allies trust that Indigenous people know the answers to their own circumstances and are able to build relationships. Further, she stated they are tired of how the system treats Indigenous people. Allies can overcome the white man persona, and they stay even when the road gets bumpy. White Raven believes allies are ones that have passion, they get the challenge, they honestly want to make a difference. She stated that they are not about position, nor about saving Indigenous people, but rather they are about giving back and being a partner on a journey. White Raven shared:

They (non-Indigenous leaders) do have pre-conceived ideas but also a willingness to shift, an openness to learning. They may come with their ideas but they understand their role in Indigenous history and are willing to work through hurdles. One thing that has always stuck out with me is that key ability, willingness, and passion to build relationships and advocate for Indigenous people.

Indigenous people are the true leaders. They are the experts of their lives. Allies do not come with the idea to save, but rather come to learn and support Indigenous peoples' journeys, choices, and leadership. Allies are willing to take the journey together, much like couples. There will be bumps and obstacles in the relationship, but an ally keeps coming back to the table. Allies are humble and able to be put in their place and are willing to explore their feelings with curiosity. When there is a strong Indigenous-ally relationship there is not any feeling of

judgement. White Raven stated non-Indigenous leaders who are allies bring a sense of humanity to this work.

Part 5 – Non-Indigenous Leaders – Stories and Reflections on Allyship

The non-Indigenous leaders who agreed to participate in this research study bring over 100 years of combined wisdom regarding child and family well-being. Over 35 of these years have focused primarily in interacting with Indigenous communities and leaders. This section will:

- Summarize the combined wisdom of these non-Indigenous leaders,
- Share the story of each non-Indigenous leader, and
- Share each non-Indigenous settler leader's observations on the journey/phenomenon of becoming an ally.

I have chosen to use pseudonyms for the names of the non-Indigenous leaders given there were different responses when asked if they wished to be referred to by name or by a pseudonym.

Wisdom in Child Welfare

Four non-Indigenous leaders were approached to participate in this study. The four Indigenous leaders interviewed were requested to extend the invitation to participate to the non-Indigenous leaders. Three of the four non-Indigenous leaders responded to the researcher expressing their willingness to participate.

All three non-Indigenous leaders have had significant involvement with Indigenous child welfare. Two of the three had lengthy social work careers within the provincial government child welfare system who, post-retirement from government, went to work for Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. The third non-Indigenous leader is a lawyer who has provided counsel to First Nations and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. The two social work leaders have been witness

and participant in the evolution of the child welfare system in British Columbia for the past 40 years. The third leader has worked with First Nations throughout Canada and has facilitated cross-cultural conversations internationally. They have been witness to allyship, partnership, racism, and discrimination in their roles as practitioners and leaders. They have experienced their belief systems being unsettled and challenged. They have also had mentors and role-models within their families and careers that have influenced their values and beliefs.

Gathering the Stories – Process

In gathering these non-Indigenous leaders' stories and reflections on the construct of allyship these leaders spoke from their heads, their hearts, and their spirits, resulting in diverse accounts of allyship. Some spoke from a very theoretical place, while others spoke from a very emotive place. All three readily shared information regarding their childhood, their life experiences, and their work experience. When asked to speak to the reasons Indigenous leaders view them as allies and at what point they realized they were allies, they brought humility to the interview, indicating that these were questions that were both difficult and required a lot of thought. They were able to describe many details about their work but less detail about what they view as the process or the phenomenon of becoming an ally. They did not self-identify as an allies.

All three non-Indigenous leaders were sent to review and edit their specific section of this chapter describing their journey and observations regarding allyship. They were asked to respond with any recommended edits. One of the three provided extensive edits that resulted in limited personal information being shared in this thesis.

Interviewee #5 - Riley

Riley's Journey

Riley was born in England to parents who were both of English decent. Riley's father was a laborer and his mother was a nurse. Riley grew up in a nuclear family environment where his father's focus was earning an income and his mother's focus included working as a nurse, running the family home, and pursuing social justice. Riley describes growing up in a working-class family post World War II, when there were multiple social challenges. Riley, like many of his peers, made the decision to leave England with the hope for economic and social stability. He considered immigrating to South Africa, Australia, or Canada. At age 19 Riley immigrated to Canada. He experienced homelessness in Toronto, Ontario. Here Riley commenced a career in the sales industry. This career brought him to British Columbia. He settled in Kamloops where he met his wife and they raised their children. In Kamloops, Riley made the decision to attend post-secondary schooling. Riley graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree and commenced a 26-year career in child welfare working for the provincial government. Upon retirement from government, Riley worked for over 10 years in Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. He continues to work on a part-time basis supporting Indigenous social service organizations. Riley had little knowledge or understanding of the history or treatment of Indigenous people in Canada until well into his social work career. In making his decision to leave England, Riley undertook learning about Australia, Canada, and South Africa. He gained an understanding of apartheid in South Africa and institutional racial segregation however did not learn about the oppression and harm perpetrated onto Indigenous people in Canada. His decision of where to immigrate to

was influenced by his understanding of inter-racial relationships that swayed him away from considering South Africa.

Riley's observations on the journey/phenomenon of becoming an ally

Growing up in England, Riley shared, he had no understanding of Indigenous people of Canada. Riley indicated that he understood poverty and oppression because of his mother's devotion to social justice. Upon arrival in Toronto, Riley became aware of the stereotyping of Aboriginal people, that this is what he saw in Toronto, and consequently informed his initial perception of Indigenous people. In 1972, at the age of 23, Riley moved from Toronto to Kamloops where there was an operating residential school. Riley's stereotypes of Indigenous people were reinforced through his observations of Indigenous people in Kamloops. He states this was despite his attendance at a pow-wow on reserve where he was introduced to Indigenous people drumming and dancing. He said despite this introduction, this really did not change his stereotype of Indigenous people.

When asked if Riley recalled any university curriculum regarding Indigenous peoples or working with Aboriginal people, Riley said not really. Riley identified when he commenced his career as a social worker and he received his first caseload of clients he did not recall any clients being identified as Aboriginal or any discussions regarding Aboriginal people as clients. Riley indicated that there were no discussions regarding the over-representation of Aboriginal people within the child welfare system or attention given to cultural values.

When asked about any childhood experiences that drew Riley to psychology or social worker, Riley shared that he lived in London which had been bombed badly during World War II. There was no housing other than social housing. He shared that any developments outside of

London were all subsidized, that most everyone was poor. It was quite common for him to receive clothes passed down from his brother. Riley recalls a strong sense of community, attributing this to everyone they knew being equally poor. Riley was aware there were wealthy people, but given the vast number of folks without money, Riley does not recall feeling disadvantaged.

In his first years in Canada, Riley reported that he had a difficult life experience that he will never forget, which supported his work toward social justice for Indigenous people. These experiences included sleeping in apartment stairwells, sleeping on cardboard, and eating his way through grocery stores. While in Toronto Riley recalls receiving a twenty-five-dollar cheque and being over the moon with excitement. When reflecting on this time of his life, Riley shares it was a difficult time of his life; however, it was also an important time of his life that furthered his understanding of poverty and oppression.

Riley shared that there were people he knew in England that were going to South Africa because they were subsidized. He recalls that for 10 pounds you could go to South Africa or Australia and you would be assured of a place to live and job. In South Africa, you would be able to have a maid. Riley could not bear the thought of going to South Africa where the apartheid system was in place, where the treatment of others was very bad, and where others were being oppressed. Riley said those going to South Africa did not appear to be considering how others were being oppressed. He did not realize there was oppression of Indigenous people in Canada.

When Riley was asked how he was aware of apartheid and oppressive systems, Riley indicated that his mother influenced his beliefs and values. Riley's mother was a nurse who was politically involved and used her voice to advocate against injustices. "There were a lot of

African people in the neighborhood around us, and my mother would always make sure that everybody had enough to eat, so we always had people over at her house, and people would talk about Africa, and talk about some of the injustice. The few conversations that we had in the house were to do with injustice. When I talked about going away, my mother was a strong advocate of saying not to go to Africa.”

Riley shared that the supports he provided as a social worker for the provincial government ranged from financial supports to child welfare. He recalls having approximately 170 clients, many of which were Aboriginal. As part of Riley’s court training for social workers he was required to do a small cultural exercise. Riley recalls this was not a very big piece of the training, however it prompted Riley to reflect on the treatment of Indigenous peoples. Riley at this point had been involved with the Kamloops Friendship Centre and had visited some reserves. This said, he operated from a place that all people need to be treated the same, in an equitable way. Riley said he became aware of the bad treatment of First Nations people and the negative impacts of colonization. This awareness continued to heighten over the next several years of his career. Riley continued with his government career for 26 years retiring from government in 2004. Within two weeks of his retirement a Delegated Aboriginal Agency south of Kamloops called Riley and requested he go to work for them. He spent six months working there and then applied for a Director position with another Delegated Aboriginal Agency. Riley shared that the six months in the first Delegated Aboriginal Agency was formative for his work with Indigenous community. This was a time when Delegated Aboriginal Agencies were developing their standards of practice and more and more First Nations were working through the delegation readiness process. Riley, in his Director role, assisted the Delegated Aboriginal

Agency to receive full child protection delegation. During this time, he described humbling experiences exposing how much he needed to learn.

Riley shared that he was not quite sure if there was a moment, a specific time or event, that he knew his social work with Indigenous People needed to be different or when he developed awareness of needing to look at social work with Indigenous people differently. He said he could not recall an “aha moment”. He does recall how 80 percent of the families he worked with were Aboriginal, that Aboriginal people are over-represented in the poor. He shared there are child welfare concerns in all classes of people, however, because Aboriginal people are over-represented in the impoverished, they are more visible to child welfare authorities. He stressed that the correlation between poverty and child welfare makes Aboriginal families more vulnerable in the child welfare system. Riley recalls working with band social workers and how the system has not been respectful to the bands and their rights. Riley recalls working with young Aboriginal moms who had their babies placed for adoption and at the time this was not questioned. At the first Delegated Aboriginal Agency Riley worked at he recalls an Elder taking him under his wing, sharing many teaching experiences with Riley. Riley said it was important to take the time to talk and be in relationship in order to receive these teachings. Riley acknowledged his need to learn and become aware. He recalls that on one of his first days with a Delegated Aboriginal Agency, they were smudging when he arrived, and he thought that someone had been smoking marijuana. Riley said he had a very steep learning curve. Riley spoke of the need to put an Elders’ committee together and it was important to not talk to any people without involving chiefs. Riley stated:

I think that I always thought that I was culturally sensitive, and probably within 3 months of working at a Delegated Aboriginal Agency I learned how insensitive I was. And then a long journey of learning began. When I first came to the agency there was an Elder there that took me under his wing. The two of us just began to talk. He told me his history and how it was like growing up. We had a lot of time to talk, and when you are paying attention, you become more aware. We used to go out and pick berries together and the relationship between us grew. It was a very steep learning curve, but as I do now, you really rely on that sort of information to guide you. I put an Elders committee together and it was outstanding. It was important to respect protocol and not talk to any people without involving chiefs wherever possible. I have never gone to band council and they indicated they were okay with having their children in care. I would state we can return the kids but where do you want us to return your kids to. I still struggle. It is important to talk about one's struggles.

Riley recalls meeting with band councils and hearing the council is not okay with their children being in care. Riley said the challenge is in saying 'I hear the council's views' and then being able to have the discussion of how the children will be safely returned, including where they want the children returned to. Riley said that given the long history of contact and colonization, it can be difficult for communities. Going back to traditional ways is discussed but this can be very challenging for a community, and consequently, for the child welfare system. Riley stressed that it is critical that one is aware of the complexities of these challenges.

When Riley was asked to reflect on why Indigenous leaders see him as an ally, Riley shared he felt that others see him always trying to do his best, that he is focused on what is

best for children, and that at times this may not be in line with what policy states and he will push against policy in such circumstances. He said this is a difficult question; that he is not sure what Indigenous leaders would say other than he works hard to be collaborative with others, and not use authority or power over others. He thinks others would see that he is not afraid to challenge government policy. This said, Riley said he has promoted in his work with Indigenous community that all children, Indigenous or not, deserve to receive services based on standards that ensure their best interests. He describes the need to balance the need to be respectful and seek guidance from Indigenous community with the need for children to be safe, that this balance is very challenging for a non-Indigenous person. He believes he is respected by Indigenous leaders for always keeping child safety as a priority despite, at times, this creating the potential for conflict with Indigenous leaders. He believes his honesty and directness established credibility with his Indigenous partners. Riley stated:

She (Indigenous Delegated Agency Director) and I always agreed that the standard that Aboriginal kids, or Aboriginal parents should be held to, should be the same as for non-Aboriginal kids and parents. We operate on the same standards... What I do must make sense for children. This may be contradictory to Ministry Policy. I was not afraid to challenge policy to do what was right for Aboriginal kids ...I think she (Indigenous Delegated Agency Director) saw me as an ally because she saw me as someone who, even if I changed my mind, I was going to try to do what's best for Aboriginal kids.

Interviewee #6 – Tracy

Tracy's Journey

Tracy was born in Austria to parents of German and Austrian decent. Tracy was raised by her single mother in an extended family environment in Austria until age 12, when she immigrated to Canada. Tracy's mother was a factory worker in Austria who immigrated to Canada to secure housing, work, and to save funds to bring Tracy and her sister to Canada a year later. Tracy's father was a soldier in the German Army who returned home from World War II not the same as Tracy remembered him. In Canada, Tracy's mother worked in a hospital and held leadership roles within her union. Tracy obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree. Upon graduation, Tracy began her career in child welfare working as a social worker, a supervisor, and a manager for the government of British Columbia. Upon retirement Tracy worked for over five years with a Delegated Aboriginal Agency. Tracy married an Indigenous man who was not connected to his culture. Tracy worked with Indigenous children and families in her social work career and ultimately fostered and adopted Indigenous children she had worked with. Tracy's first recollection of Indigenous people was in Austria, where Tracy read a novel that had Indigenous characters. Tracy described her understanding as a very romanticized understanding of Indigenous people. She reports this as preventing her from having critical and negative views of the Indigenous people that she met in Canada.

Tracy's observations on the journey/phenomenon of becoming an ally

Tracy described the nuclear family as an invention of North America. Living in Austria, she shared a household with aunts, cousins, her mother, and her sister until the age of 12. Tracy's mother was a single parent. Tracy's parents were divorced in a time and in a country

where one did not get divorced. There was judgement and shame attached to the experience. Tracy described her mother as taking a courageous step even though her mother was frowned upon by her mother's family. Tracy recalls the humiliation her mother faced and how much this impacted Tracy. Tracy describes her mother as a hard worker being employed at an automotive factory.

Upon arrival in Canada, Tracy recalls that it was recommended she be placed in a school with newcomers. There were many immigrants in Vancouver at the time. Tracy said her mother refused this option and elected to place Tracy in a Catholic School. Tracy said her mother was warned that this would not be in her children's best interests. She disregarded this warning. Tracy recalls the first few weeks in school where she spoke no English. She states that after six months she was speaking English.

Tracy said her mother was determined, that she was a strong advocate, and that she continually pushed for social justice. For example, she led the implementation of a pension plan at the hospital she worked at in Canada. Others berated her for part of their needed income being redirected to pension plan contributions. Tracy describes her mother as a life-long learner who collected many books that now form a library in Tracy's home.

Tracy's first impressions of Indigenous people were through a book she read in Austria by Karl May, a German author. Although this book presented an inaccurate and romanticized impression of Indigenous people, it was a positive impression. Tracy describes an insatiable appetite for reading as a child, that she would read at every possible opportunity expanding her worldly knowledge. Even though Tracy read of Indigenous people as a child, she didn't recall meeting any Aboriginal people growing up in Canada. She does recall driving down Hastings

Street where she saw Aboriginal people intoxicated and heard judgemental remarks. This was despite being exposed to excessive drinking in Austria. Tracy does not recall any teaching in grade school regarding Indigenous people other than Aboriginal people assisting the explorers. Despite being a single parent, Tracy's mother was able to save funds to support Tracy to attend university. Tracy earned a psychology degree and graduated with honours. Tracy was considering pursuing a master's degree to become a therapist. One day she noticed an ad in a campus hallway that said, "come work for the Ministry of Welfare and receive paid training to become a social worker". Tracy responded to this ad and was hired. She received three months of training in Vancouver that had very little content on working with Indigenous families, other than some mention of residential schools being necessary for the education of aboriginal children. She recalls learning the kids got a chance to go home during the summer and that the residential schools were a positive thing that was needed. She does not recall any explanation of the many different cultures throughout Canada. She said it was very Eurocentric training.

After 3 months of training Tracy chose to work in Cranbrook. She reports this as a positive experience; working with and learning from social workers who really cared about supporting children and families. Tracy recalls being given what was described as a light caseload of kids who were in permanent care and a number of foster homes. Tracy was aware the majority of the children on her caseload were Aboriginal. Tracy shared:

The first month I had to return a runaway to St. Mary's residential school, you know the little girl was very quiet sitting in the back of the car and I was told she won't run away, she will stay in the back of the car, she was sitting in the back by herself looking forward and it was the first time I had driven to that school and you know I just remember it so

vividly. Driving into the gate and there was a long sort of dusty road the building was sort of off in the distance, and on the one side were trees and the other side were fields. And there was these classes of little kids couldn't be more than elementary school age and they would stand together and look and I even saw their eyes and their eyes were large and you know I felt so terrible when I saw it. I had the feeling that this is very wrong here but I didn't acknowledge it then, you know when I was driving behind the dust you know I slowed down thinking they were getting covered in dust and there were still kids standing outside and no one was playing and I noticed that. The nun greeted us and I mean it was very unremarkable and another nun came and took the little girl and went off with her and we just exchanged pleasantly and then I left. And you know I came back, and I didn't talk to the supervisor about it I just kept thinking about the faces of those children but anyway I carried on with work.

Tracy does not recall any conversations about concerns with the St. Mary's residential school or the Indigenous children residing there. She stated that there was a worker assigned to the school, but she never heard any critical or any concerns being raised about it. It was said it was just the way it was supposed to be. Tracy described her co-workers as caring, committed, and well respected by their clients.

Tracy does not recall participating in any cultural events and taking into account cultural considerations when planning for children that she worked with in Cranbrook. It was not until Tracy was working with children and youth from the Squamish Nation that she began to see the importance of culture in planning for and working with children. She describes her first years as a social worker as a period of total ignorance.

At the age of 22 Tracy moved to Vancouver to continue her work as a social worker. During that time, she returned to school to get her Master of Social Work degree. She recalls that more than half of the children on her caseload were Aboriginal, but little consideration was being made for cultural planning. She stated it was not acknowledged that the system was failing Aboriginal children. Some of the social workers were beginning to talk about this and one supervisor was very supportive of these discussions and open to hearing they were not meeting the needs of Aboriginal children. For Tracy, this was a transformative time. The office she was working for was in a state of disarray with an unanticipated departure of the supervisor. A liberal Jewish supervisor was hired. Tracy developed the practice founded on two key principles: children need to be safe, and children need to have at least one person that loves them. Tracy observed children getting older, placements breaking down, leaving no consistent person in their life to love and support them. This, combined with no positive information about the child's Aboriginal culture and negative stereotypes held by the foster parents, was not supporting the best interests of children. Tracy recalls being triggered by a foster parent who was openly discriminatory toward Aboriginal parents. Tracy said the system was not teaching about oppression or understanding of the history of Aboriginal people. Tracy shared that negative comments were made right in front of her, and despite her challenging caregivers, little changed. Tracy recalled a policy that provided that as children aged out of care, they were not privy to their file information or contact information for their family of origin. This did not make sense to Tracy. She recalled a supervisor who taught her that policy should be intended to serve the best interests of a child. Tracy took it upon herself to sit with each child on her caseload as they aged out of care and review their file with them. Tracy stated:

Even with the most severe attention deficit, the child sat quietly, they sat quietly, they were mesmerised, they would just listen. It still makes me kind of feel so much empathy for them. They would sit there drinking every word, sometimes workers would write really awful things about them and I would have to edit it as I was reading it sometimes if there was a particularly nice thing like a report card or something I would let them look at it. We were not allowed to contact people or give them any contact information or addresses.

Tracy shared two examples of how she supported the reconnection of Indigenous children with family and community during her work as a social worker in Vancouver. She indicated that this was at a time when there was not direction or policy promoting reunification with Aboriginal community. She supported Indigenous children leaving care to successfully reconnect and reunite with their family and community. Several years into her career, Tracy realized that despite the work of good, caring people, Indigenous youth were not achieving positive outcomes. When she reached out to Indigenous communities to engage them in planning, she starting to see different more positive trajectories for Indigenous children. Tracy shared:

What it did was it basically freed me from being afraid of breaking rules because the policy was there to guide but the fact of the legislation was no you cannot, you can't tamper with that. But the policy, you have to make it work for kids. I really learned throughout my experience as a social worker, so that was the beginning of me not being afraid to challenge a policy, because I saw (the positive outcomes) of the decisions. I did

this in consultation with my supervisor. I wasn't like a rogue social worker who just disregarded policy.

When asked what Tracy could attribute her way of practice to, what drove her to push limits, she said she had seen what could be possible and that knowing what was possible she was driven to repeat best practice. Tracy also describes efforts to engage with Indigenous communities where she was told the Elders wanted her to leave, to leave the child, and come back to pick up the child. Tracy shared that she felt this connection was critical for the child so she left and came back. Tracy described her growth from a place of ignorance to a place of becoming culturally aware and inclusive of community in planning.

When asked to reflect on her journey to become an ally as identified by an Indigenous leader, Tracy shared that in the 1980s when she worked as a supervisor for street youth, it was a time of learning, and child welfare was a political hot potato. Tracy described the need to use non-traditional approaches in working with the youth. Tracy recalls recruiting former street people to become caregivers for youth who had experiences that street youth could relate to. She said that many of the former street people being recruited to provide care were of Aboriginal ancestry. Tracy spoke of still being vigilant in their assessment, but being open and accepting on past experiences as potential caregiver strengths. At this time, Tracy recalled an infusion of funding was going to be made to organize work with street youth. This did not sit well with Tracy, as there were established Indigenous service providing organizations that could desperately benefit from increased funding. Tracy was slowly able to advocate for provision of funding to Indigenous organizations to grow their services. She was able to support

organizations that provided support to Indigenous mothers who were involved in the child welfare system. She said the work being done was fantastic and raised her spirit.

Tracy eventually became a contract manager. It was in this role that it became clear that culture is medicine that heals. She became aware of the budget details and reported that despite the significant Aboriginal representation in child welfare caseloads, there was not funding of Aboriginal agencies in a comparable manner. Tracy described bringing transparency to the budget process that did not necessarily gain her allies within the system, but brought credibility to her work with Indigenous communities. Tracy described that with the creation of an urban delegated Aboriginal agency, she worked towards equitable funding. Tracy recalls how she saw the richness and diversity of culture, and how strong and resilient Indigenous people were to have survived what happened to them.

Tracy shared that for years after coming to Canada her family did not feel they belonged, that they were discriminated against, and they were called Nazis. Tracy shared that for generations Germans and Austrians have carried tremendous guilt and shame for what was done to the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Tracy shared that some days she still feels this. Tracy shared that it has been a struggle for her to feel guilt for what the colonial oppressor has done to Indigenous people. Tracy described that it is not her place to rally against the injustices done to Indigenous people, but it is her place to do what is within her power to make a difference. This may be advocating for an individual client or may be pushing for transparency in allocation of budgets. She described taking action for leading in areas that she has authority or influence. She said that if you see an injustice, take action to see what you can do to address it; that even the smallest of steps help.

In her late 20s Tracy met her future partner. Shortly into their courtship Tracy learned he was Indigenous. Tracy shared that despite him being Indigenous he was not practicing his culture. They had one son together and then adopted an Indigenous girl. Over time they learned their daughter had very special needs. Together they supported and raised their daughter. This including helping their daughter reconnect with her family of origin.

Tracy, through her work, came to meet a young Indigenous woman, who reached out to Tracy for support. This young woman had a child and when she had nowhere to stay, she called Tracy. Tracy took this mom and baby into her home. This mom eventually had two more children and then died of an overdose. Tracy and her husband ended up taking in all three children who are now young adults.

When asked if there was one or two experiences for Tracy that she sees as transformational on her journey to allyship Tracy started thinking of the injustices she was exposed to in her work, with the Indigenous single mom who remained positive and resilient, or how small Indigenous agencies were doing exceptional work despite inadequate budgets. She found that she could influence different outcomes; that these experiences helped her understand allyship. Tracy described her journey from total ignorance to being in awe of the culture. Tracy shared she learned the power of culture. She stated she was amazed at how resilient and strong the culture and the people are, and it is very inspiring, and that she is blessed to have worked with Indigenous families and agencies.

Tracy shared that she has been fortunate to have been surrounded by people who also are not afraid and are ready to try something different. Tracy attributes many of the successes she was part of as the product of team discussions where you had like-minded people who wanted to

do the right thing. Tracy shared that one of the things that she brought to the Delegated Aboriginal agency was that they must not fear the system, to not be intimidated. Tracy believes she brought the confidence to speak up in a practical, non-accusatory way.

Interviewee #7 – Morgan

Morgan's Journey

As a child, Morgan immigrated to Canada with his parents from the United States. This was during the Vietnam War. Morgan's father is of Iranian descent, and his mother is American. Morgan's father was a lawyer and later, a judge; and his mother was a ballerina. Morgan began post-secondary school at the age of 16 to study film and ultimately became a lawyer. Morgan's parents' faith was very influential in the formation of Morgan's values and beliefs. These values and beliefs were very much in the forefront during Morgan's education, resulting in him questioning his path to become a lawyer. Upon graduation from university, Morgan focused his legal career in working in cross-cultural environments both within Canada and internationally. Morgan recalls interacting with Indigenous people at an early age in his faith community, that the values of his faith community aligned with Indigenous values. Upon becoming married and a father, Morgan and his family moved to an isolated community in Northern Canada, where his whole family was immersed in an Indigenous community. Since leaving the north, Morgan has worked with many First Nations and government organizations in supporting First Nations' aspirations for greater autonomy and jurisdiction. Morgan has over 20 years of experience as a lawyer, predominantly within Indigenous communities. Morgan has supported the work of Delegated Aboriginal Agencies and First Nations regarding Indigenous child safety and well-being. He has facilitated engagement and strategic discussions with Delegated Aboriginal

Agencies and between Delegated Aboriginal Agencies with both the provincial and federal governments.

Morgan's observations on the journey/phenomenon of becoming an ally

Upon graduation from university, Morgan focused his legal career in working in cross-cultural environments both within Canada and internationally. He also completed his PhD on these topics. Morgan recalls interacting with Indigenous people at an early age in his faith community, and that the values of his faith community aligned with seeking justice for Indigenous peoples. Morgan's family resided in urban centres where there was greater ethnic diversity. Morgan does not recall specific interactions with Indigenous people in his childhood but does recall being with Indigenous people. Morgan states it was not until law school that he became more aware of Indigenous justice matters. Growing up Morgan estimated 90% of the children around him were Caucasian. Other than his family's faith community that in the 60s and 70s had over 30% of members from the Indigenous community Morgan did not recall any Indigenous connections.

Morgan attended University in Montreal, and then in Victoria where he completed his law degree, and then in Boston where he completed his PhD in law. Morgan described going to law school with the intention of being in service of others and addressing issues of inter-racial or inter-ethnic religious conflicts with the aspiration to contribute to peace building. Morgan has developed expertise in constitutional law, which aligned his work with the Indigenous recognition movements. In his early 20s studying law was the same era of Delgamuukw. After law school, Morgan was heavily involved in international peace building and conflict resolution. Morgan recalls one story from when he taught law in Canada's north a guest lecturer came to

speak and his words were not well received by some of the Indigenous students. One of the Indigenous students addressed this guest lecturer challenging the notions he presented. This student stated she had 5 generations living within her. Her grandmother lived off the land and had never met a “southerner”. Her mother was taken off the land and forced to live in a settlement. There is herself who was forced to attend residential school. There is her son who plays video games and watches television and knows little of what it means to be Indigenous. There is her unborn grandchild who will know nothing of what her grandmother’s life was like. This student influenced Morgan’s understanding that there are different epistemologies and the need for different ways of thinking to transform the realities of colonialism.

Morgan shared that he could not imagine not including his personal life in his professional work. The decision to work in the north without involving his family was not a consideration. His daughter, now a young adult, has travelled internationally and supporting social justice initiatives. Her first memories are from living in the north, immersed in an Indigenous community.

Morgan’s parents influenced his choices. He speaks of his parents’ faith community as being foundational to who he has become as a person. His father was involved in International peace building. Because Morgan’s mother was a ballerina, he grew up in a dance studio, which influenced his pursuit of film for his first degree. Morgan describes dancing until his early teens, and this inoculated him to narrow thinking that occurs when studying law by trying to focus on the big canvas rather than the little details. Morgan sees his entry point for working with Indigenous people as relatively straight forward given how he has been oriented through his life experiences.

When asked what he thought Indigenous people would say about him as an ally, Morgan described feeling very fortunate for many reasons. He spoke of working for a leading law firm where he considers one of the lead lawyers as the 'mothers' of Aboriginal law and seen as an ally by Indigenous communities that have worked with her. She possessed core values regarding the injustices she saw and she had a desire to help. Morgan didn't think of himself as a lawyer, but rather he spent his life focused on how to be in service to addressing injustice and building unity. The law has an important role to play, but the lawyers and the law have also put themselves too much in the center, and therefore Morgan was definitely very conscious and aware of this. Morgan thinks people perceive him as being helpful or different, or an ally. He thinks people sense that he was striving to be there for the right reasons. This includes alignment between Morgan's own values in orientation to life and its purpose and trying to stay focused on that as much as possible. Morgan shared that as a lawyer he is not supposed to talk to the so-called client of the other side, that you are supposed to reach out to the other lawyer, and supposedly reconciliation was going to be resolved through talking lawyer to lawyer. This approach cannot break down walls to have a real conversation and do the real work together. Morgan states:

We are fundamentally pursuing what we call reconciliation through means and modalities that are fundamentally at odds with those ends and objectives. Do you really think you're going to build unity through adversarial means? Do you really think you're going to build cohesion and understanding through legal talk and language that nobody understands? You know, the conflictual way. You know this is just all you know. As a social process, as a human process, this is nonsense. I do have a

commitment around building cohesion and unity that I have tried to stay true to. I've strived to be consistent with how I do things, and I hope that focus has been noticed over the years. It is just a different way of going about it, it is certainly a personal way. It's deep friendships that are formed. I don't have any clients so to speak who are just there for a file. I don't have a law office. I don't have business cards. I don't have a letterhead. I don't have anything. It's really just about supporting and helping lead some human interactions and changing the way people are thinking about each other so that they can do new things together in creative ways. That's what I do, or try to do anyway.

Morgan describes coming from a community that is heavily oppressed in another part of the world. He has seen people experience extreme oppression and has seen the impact of this oppression. He states that he is aware that everybody is going to experience their fair share of suffering in life. For some, this suffering may be more acute. For others, this suffering may be tied to a community one belongs to. Regardless of this, he says, all of us as human beings are going to experience suffering that tests our capacities. Morgan describes this suffering as “one of the engines through which we as human beings change and grow and gain the capacity to make different choices, or actualize the capacity to make different choices so that we can make bigger contributions to others in the world”. Morgan states that regardless of one’s background or experiences, we all have an innate and intrinsic capacity and desire to be an agent of creating better conditions for the people around us in a world that often reinforces that we should be more concerned about our own conditions and self-interests. Morgan stresses the importance of challenging people, whether directly or indirectly to really explore the

dimensions of themselves that can support anybody becoming a difference maker and contributor regardless of what their experiences have been. Morgan stresses this requires the courage to really look at themselves and those around them. Morgan identifies his way of being and focus on unity is also a cultural thing, and is certainly more with his faith beliefs and ancestral roots. He attributes this to the values through which one is raised.

Part 6 – Analysis

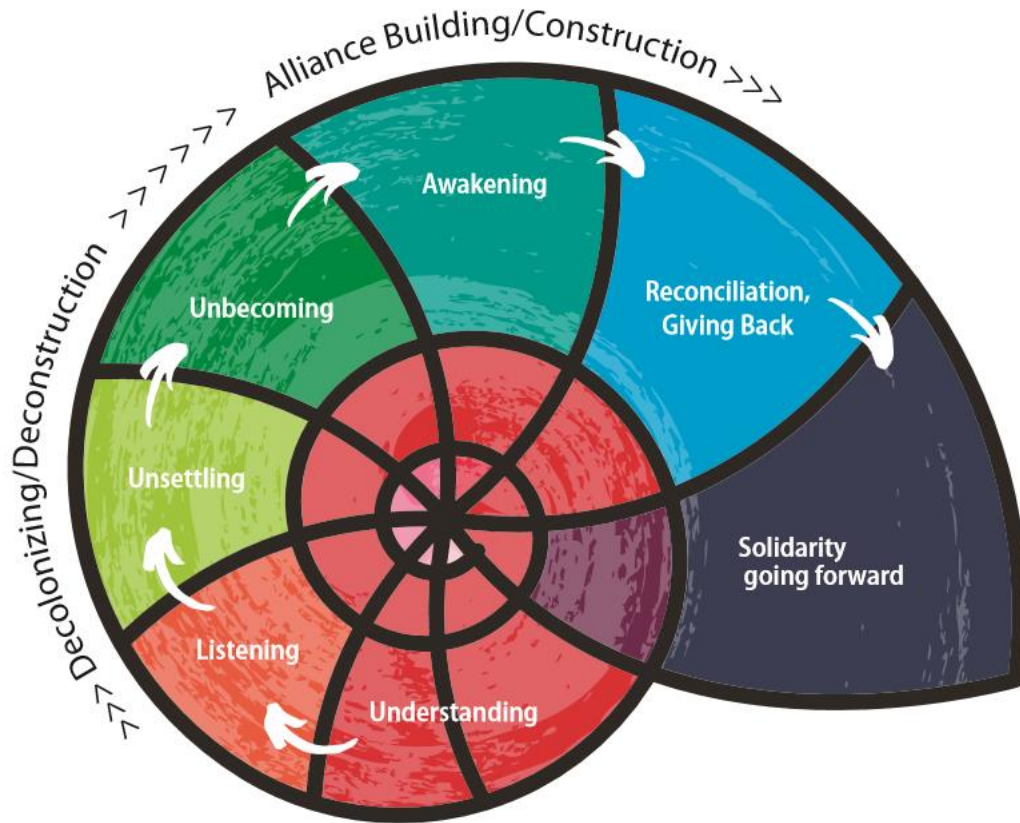
Introduction

Through conducting the literature review, I identified two areas of focus, with the first being the qualities of non-Indigenous leader allies, and the second being the phenomenon of non-Indigenous leaders becoming allies. There was significant information related to qualities of allies but there was limited information on the process of becoming an ally. I conducted thematic analysis of my transcripts with both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous storytellers. These transcripts identified qualities of an ally and patterns in the journeys settlers undergo in becoming allies of Indigenous people. This analysis was then reviewed in relation to the literature review to identify themes between the literature review and interview transcripts. This informed my research findings and conclusions.

In integrating the perspectives of the Indigenous leaders (Sun Women, Medicine Water, Sqwulutsutun, and White Raven) and the non-Indigenous leaders (Tracy, Riley, and Morgan) with the literature review on allyship, I argue that there are seven phases in the phenomenon or process of becoming an ally. There is the risk of seeing these phases as having a start and an end, as linear or sequential steps, rather than moving through and between these phases in a more experiential way that is fluid and dynamic. Bishop (2005), Reinsborough and Brandt (2010), and Heaslip (2014) all suggest that spiral, circular, and looping processes are how one becomes an ally. This is a life-long process. Multiple scholarly perspectives (Regan, 2010; Lambourne, 2014; Bishop, 2015; Reinsborough and Barndt, 2010; Heaslip, 2014; Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, and Formsma; 2006; Gehl, 2011; Smith, 1999; Lang, 2010) on the process of becoming an ally align with seven phases : understanding (self and colonization), listening,

unsettling, unbecoming, awakening, reconciliation (giving back), and finally, solidarity going forward. These seven phases were presented in the context of moving through decolonization into alliance building. Upon reflection and analysis of the interviews of Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, the movement through decolonization through alliance building can be viewed as a process of deconstructing oneself (one's ways of knowing and being) through to reconstructing oneself (one ways of knowing and being). The interviews provided further clarification and refinement of each of these seven phases, referred to as the phenomenon of allyship, is presented in Figure 4 below.

Ally Building Process – Phenomenon of Allyship



Understanding	Listening	Unsettling	Unbecoming	Awakening	Reconciliation– Giving Back	Solidarity going forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Self (b) Oppression (c) Colonization (d) Indigenous People • Locating Oneself • Educating Oneself • Awareness of One's Experiences • Awareness of One's Values and Beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous stories of resistance • Impacts on Indigenous People • Aspirations of Indigenous People – vision for future • Immersion in Indigenous community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Impact • Guilt and Shame • Identifying the Colonizer Within • Examining Racism within • Self Reflection/ Examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting one's role and one's ancestors' roles in colonization • Acknowledging one's system's impact on Indigenous Peoples • Unlearning • Becoming vulnerable and receptive to examining one's beliefs, values, and racist ways of being • Deconstructing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening one's heart and spirit • Becoming aware of protocol • Becoming spiritually aware • Arriving at a state of being where one heart, mind, and spirit is open to journey of reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Decolonizing Stories • Taking responsibility • Truth telling – listening and sharing – acknowledging • Using one's wisdom • Becoming courageous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoring • Relating – walking with/ – interconnected with • Using experience to transform • Using privilege as leverage in advocacy • Social Justice • Anti-racist approaches

Figure 4 – *Phenomenon of Becoming An Ally*

Amalgamation of (a) Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Scholars – Literature and Research, (b) Knudsgaard Self-Reflection (Journal), (c) Thomas' Feedback (Journal), and (d) Interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders

Prior to providing a detailed account of each of these seven phases the qualities of allies as identified by Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders will be provided.

Figure 5 below identifies the determinants of non-Indigenous leader allies, as identified by the four Indigenous leaders interviewed as part of this research.

Figure 6 below identifies the determinants of non-Indigenous leader allies as identified through self-reflection by the three non-Indigenous leader allies.

Figure 5 - Determinants of non-Indigenous Allies – Four Indigenous Leaders Perspectives

Aware – Of Self:

-aware that one has preconceived notions, has a willingness to shift and an openness to learn and explore one's feelings with curiosity

Aware - Of Colonization:

-understands the history of injustice towards Indigenous people, that there are tensions related to the concept of white privilege and Indigenous mistrust
-has empathy to understand the impact of colonization, the Sixties scoop, and residential school intergenerational syndrome

Perceptive/Aware of Indigenous People:

-has positive experiences with Indigenous people and communities throughout one's life
-has early positive impressions of Indigenous people including formative childhood experiences with/about Indigenous people

Relationship:

-emphasizes the importance of relationship – meets people where they are at- builds and forges trusting relationships with staff and Indigenous communities
-demonstrates genuineness, respect, and calmness in relationship – presents with humility

Immersion - Inter-connectedness with Community:

- understands and lives out inter-connectedness- live, learn and experience Indigenous community -has shared/common beliefs
-recognizes lived experience with Aboriginal people
-reaches out and maintains relationship beyond just about the immediate business at hand – willingness to seek acceptance in community
-is a friend in addition to being an advisor or consultant – is seen as a person – is seen and visible in community – forms relationship at a personal level
-immerses self and one's family into Indigenous community – involvement with Indigenous community beyond work relationships

Brings Heart to the Work:

-empathetic – listens with their hearts and not just their brain – patient – safe to have a difficult conversation – brings humanity to the work – is humble

Brings Spirit to the Work - Spirituality – Spiritual Awareness:

-spiritual awareness – able to understand the importance of spirituality for oneself and others
-respect the cultural and traditional powers and beliefs of the community and not impose one's own beliefs – respects self-determination – does not impose
-active part of a spiritual community – deep appreciation of spirituality – while honouring all forms of spiritual
-brings spirit into one's work – how one shows up – how one carries oneself

Understands Protocol:

-understands the significance of protocol when joining with Indigenous people- makes effort to learn, understand, and follow protocol

Committed to Social Justice:

-has a strong sense of social justice for Indigenous people and all people – belief in Social Justice – treats employment as more than a job – is a call to action
-is champion for justice and human rights – attempts to undo wrongs of colonial governments

Experience Oppression:

-has experienced oppression – can relate to experiencing trauma or oppression, even if for different reasons or under different circumstances
-has common identification of the impact of trauma – being the "other" and experiencing the "other" – being subjected to an oppressive government

Privilege:

-uses privilege to access information to Indigenous partners and community – understands the intention and impact of policy
-breaks down doors – provides access to information – great big force
-makes an effort to steer politicians and policy makers in ways beneficial to Indigenous community – ability, willingness, and passion for advocacy

Deconstructive:

-understands the need for personal and systemic deconstruction

Restorative:

-recognizes we are all responsible for restoration – has a commitment to the well-being of Aboriginal children – is a partner on a journey
-empowers people to find their own solutions -join together on what matters – treats people as experts in their own lives – goes out of the box
-is willing to stand with me and tackle-always willing to lend a hand – only a phone call away (approachable, accessible)
-makes effort to better to lives of Indigenous people – committed to giving back – supports, encourages, mandates cultural awareness and programming
-establishes trusting safe, non-judgemental relationships with Indigenous people – extends trust in Indigenous leaders abilities – supports Indigenous leaders
-eloquent yet humble in bringing issues to the table, getting point across, and creating safe spaces to have difficult conversations-meeting people where they are at
-builds trusting relationships

Wise (Competent):

-strong, competent, patient, calm, thoughtful, and ability to think critically – excellent communicator, knowledgeable, non-judgemental, confident, intentional

Vulnerable:

-ability to let go of one's beliefs and values and being open to seeing different truths – makes mistakes and makes amends
-sense of humility, not knowing the answers, willingness to solve complex problems together

Courageous:

-honesty regardless of how challenging – does not hesitate to speak one's mind- open to difficult and challenging conversations – stays when road gets bumpy

Self-Reflexive - Learning Journey:

-continuous learning in silence, listening, being present – ask questions – takes time to learn – conscious use of self
-listen – do not try to solve problems without listening to the full story -willing to listen – understands and knows how to listen

Has Cultural Beliefs:

-has strong understanding of culture - actively participates in culture – has an appreciation for and understanding of the importance of other people's culture
-well grounded in one's own culture and heritage – has positive cultural routines and experiences in one's own life –
-recognizes cultural knowledge is transferable

Figure 5 – Qualities of non-Indigenous Allies as seen by the four Indigenous Leaders

Figure 6 - Determinants of non-Indigenous Allies – Three non-Indigenous Leaders Perspectives

Aware– Of Self:

- high awareness of their ancestral roots- identifies mentors and role models within their families and careers that have influenced their way of being
- able to clearly identify how their values and beliefs have been shaped from their family or origin and life experiences
- able to describe childhood and early adult memories as either immigrants to Canada or a child of immigrant parents to Canada

Aware – Of Colonization:

- as children had little to know awareness of Indigenous people and relationship between settlers and Indigenous people (not negatively influenced)
- learned about colonization of Indigenous people as adults – started their life long career with little knowledge of colonization or pre-conceived notions

Perceptive/Aware of Indigenous People:

- limited or no childhood experience of being in relationship with Indigenous people – no impression of Indigenous people positive or negative
- aware of Indigenous people was through romanticized literature resulting in early impression being positive
- early adult impressions of Indigenous people predominantly but not exclusively negative
- socially aware of international issues regarding oppression of races of people including very personal experiences
- self-realization within professional career of concerning outcomes for Indigenous people – curious and open to reflect on one's own values and beliefs
- through relationships with Indigenous people, at times immersive, developed a positive regard for Indigenous people – realization of what is possible
- all had direct experience either within their family of origin or professional career of the impact of war
- witnessed partnerships, collaboration, racism, discrimination between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as practitioners and non-Indigenous leaders

Immersion – Interconnectedness and Relationship with Community:

- believed relationship is foundation to one's work – with clients, with communities, with partners- self initiated relationships with Indigenous people
- took personal responsibility in forming relationships – prioritized relationship building in one's work – sought opportunities to engage in relationship
- described foundational personal immersion experiences in working with Indigenous communities – involved family members in relationship with community
- spoke of how relationships with Indigenous individuals and/or communities touched their lives in very deep ways -personal relationships with Indigenous people
- recognized the needs to fully engage with Indigenous communities – invited by Indigenous people and communities into community life and ceremony
- involved family members in their relationship with Indigenous communities – invited Indigenous people and community into their lives
- describe long term friendships with Indigenous people that were formed as a result of work relationships -formed personal relationships – initiates relationships

Bring Heart to the Work:

- relationships with Indigenous people and communities that extended beyond professional relationship – circumstances that reflect deep friendships
- described Indigenous people who met through work relationship becoming kinship relationships

Bring Spirit to the Work – Spiritual Awareness:

- no mention made of spirituality, sacredness, or ceremony

Understand Protocol:

- no mention of protocol

Committed to Social Justice:

- described parents who were social justice role models who advocated for social change and made family/life decisions based on ethical and moral positions
- exposed to social justice and advocacy early in their lives – as children their parents were involved in social advocacy social justice movements
- early on they had role models that could be considered social activists

Experience Oppression:

- formative childhood experiences that touched oppression either through direct experience or being made aware of
- have experienced some form of oppression or being considered an "other" in their lives- have overcome adversity from oppression, poverty, injustice
- identified formative experiences that likely contributed to them being identified as allies – witnessed systemic injustices with Indigenous people
- witness to injustices – able to identify injustice – courageous to challenge injustice

Understand Privilege:

- no mention of privilege – spoke of recognition of the power, influence, and authority they held in their professional roles

Deconstructive:

- no mention of deconstruction – action and stories describe the need to undo and move away from colonial constructs

Restorative:

- no mention of restoration or restorative = actions and stories describe restorative practices

Wise (Competent):

- described seeing what was possible – driven to replicate positive experiences – perseveres – strong work ethic
- described being innovators – not just about implementing and executing policy – could identify when policy is not working – willing to move beyond policy
- recognized need to shift away from status quo – willing to become vulnerable and try different approaches – recognize same approach will get the same results

Vulnerable:

- no mention of being vulnerable or the need for vulnerability – describe actions that suggest vulnerability in one's work and life

Courageous:

- seeking exceptions to policy – speaks up when see an injustice even if social or career costs – understands not speaking up makes one complicit

Self-Reflexive - Learning Journey:

- able to describe learning from experiences

Cultural Beliefs:

- recognized the importance of cultural practices -describes involvement in their own cultural practices and openness to experiencing Indigenous cultural practices

Family Construct:

- all had/have spouses – all have children – two of three are multi-cultural families

Values and Beliefs:

- all have experiences being unsettled and being challenges on their values and beliefs.

Figure 6 – Qualities of non-Indigenous Allies as seen by the non-Indigenous Leader

In reflecting on the interviews with the four Indigenous leaders and the three non-Indigenous leaders, there are multiple examples provided by these leaders that align with these seven phases. It became apparent that the Indigenous leaders were able to provide extensive detail regarding their rationale for why the non-Indigenous leaders they selected are considered allies. The Indigenous leaders were able to talk about the non-Indigenous leaders at both a professional and personal level.

The non-Indigenous leaders were able to provide extensive detail in sharing their life story. When the non-Indigenous leaders were asked to reflect on the concept and phenomenon of allyship, specifically what they believe makes them an ally, this appeared to be more challenging for them. Through the stories the non-Indigenous leaders shared, the researcher could extract concepts that contribute to allyship. All the non-Indigenous leaders demonstrated great humility in their interviews and were portrayed as humble human beings when described by the Indigenous leaders. This humility appears to be a foundational element in being an ally.

The Indigenous leaders named concepts such as understanding, heart, spirituality, protocol, ceremony, privilege, deconstruction, restoration, vulnerability, and courage. These concepts reflect walking in a good way with one's head, one's heart, and one's spirit (Regan, 2010). When considering the seven phases of allyship, it is critical that one looks at each phase from a place of head, heart, and spirit.

Understanding

The interviews with the Indigenous leaders revealed multiple considerations regarding understanding. Understanding can be defined on two levels, the first knowledge, and the second experience. Knowledge and experience are both essential elements of understanding.

Five key areas of understanding were identified in the interviews with Indigenous leaders: awareness of self, awareness of oppression, awareness of colonization, awareness of racism, and examination of settlers' ways of being in relation with Indigenous people. Ladson-Billings (2000), Absolon and Willet (2005), Bishop (2015), Gehl (2011), and Smith (1999) all speak to the need to understand both oneself and what one represents in relation to colonization. Bishop (2015) stresses the need to understand oppression.

The allies are well grounded in their own culture and heritage. The Indigenous leaders believed that non-Indigenous leaders they consider allies have experienced oppression and colonization. All three non-Indigenous leaders had immersive childhood experiences related to social justice, oppression, and Indigenous community. All three non-Indigenous leaders had one or both parents who were role models pertaining to social justice. These parents advocated for social change and made family/life decisions based on ethical and moral positions. This exposure underscores the importance of socialization in the process of allyship.

Furthermore, Indigenous leaders believe that allies need to understand and experience spiritual or faith connections and have respect for others' spirituality. Just as it is important for allies to understanding their own and other cultures, Indigenous leaders identified that allies need to understand and experience spirituality. This does not have to be Indigenous spirituality. This is not about imposing your spiritual beliefs and way onto another culture, as this would be a perpetuation of colonization. Rather, it is important to recognize the significance of spirituality working cross-culturally through accepting and being open to different ways of knowing and being.

All the Indigenous leaders identified that lived experiences with Indigenous people is foundational to becoming an ally. Having positive experiences with Indigenous individuals, families, and communities throughout their lives is essential in developing an understanding of Indigenous people. Being open to reflection on past experiences and learning from these experiences is essential as was seen with some of the non-Indigenous leaders having stereotypes of Indigenous people that shifted over time. Equally important is that experiencing their own cultural routines and traditions establishes an appreciation for cultural knowledge. According to Sun Woman, appreciation for cultural knowledge is essential in being an ally.

The allies had pre-conceived thoughts of Indigenous people, but an openness to explore and learn about Indigenous ways of being is an important trait of an ally (Sqwulutsutun). Indigenous leaders distinguished the difference between sympathy and empathy. Allies must possess empathy in order to understand the impacts of colonization and learn to listen with their hearts. On the other hand, sympathy suggests a need to save or rescue which is not indicative of someone who is an ally (Medicine Water). Espiknew (2009) and Strega (2009) also stress that establishing and maintaining empathic relationships are essential in becoming an ally.

As a young child in Europe, Tracy was presented a romanticized impression of Indigenous people through literature she was exposed to. As a child, Morgan came to be in relationship with Indigenous children through a shared faith community that centred around this common faith. As a young child Riley had no awareness of Indigenous people. All three non-Indigenous leaders were exposed to an understanding of social justice and at various levels experienced oppression and relocation as children or young adults. All three non-Indigenous

leaders were raised in families that provided moral and ethical guidance. Additionally, it was evident that all three were open to learning and unbecoming.

Although all three non-Indigenous leaders have very different childhood and life experiences, all spoke of inter-cultural and inter-racial relationships at a very personal level that were formative to their personal and professional development.

All three spoke of first-hand experiences of oppression, adversity, and discrimination directly related to world wars. Two were children in Europe during the second world war and the third has spent much of his career facilitating peace discussions in war torn countries. Additionally, all had to overcome adversity. These experiences are likely foundational in bringing empathy to their work with Indigenous people who have experienced oppressive practices of government.

Each of the non-Indigenous leaders have been witness to allyship, partnership, racism, and discrimination in their roles as practitioners and leaders. It was identified that through all interviews conducted that allies comes with pre-conceived ideas, that they have a willingness to explore the roots of these ideas and understand their role in Indigenous history. Indigenous leaders claim that that allies must be willing to work through hurdles and build relationships to fully understand their ways of knowing and being in relationship to Indigenous people.

Listening

All Indigenous leaders interviewed stressed the importance of non-Indigenous leaders creating space to listen. The Indigenous leaders indicated that non-Indigenous leaders' capacity to listen to Indigenous people is pivotal to becoming an ally. Medicine Water tells us to "listen through your heart". For example she describes an ally as someone "who understands and

knows how to listen, that sometimes you just need someone to bounce an idea off, someone who's not judging me, someone who does not see themselves as a saviour, someone who allows me to come up with a solution on my own, without telling me what to do, that is a true friend, sometimes I know what the answer is, but I need someone to listen." She goes on to share, "I don't want anybody to fix it for me, I want them to listen to me." Allies do not try to solve problems without listening to the full story. Allies do not make Indigenous people feel incompetent. Allies do not cut off others and finish their sentences. Allies do not try to save Indigenous people. Allies listen. Sun Woman spoke to the protocol of joining the circle, that there are rules, that there is learning in silence, in listening, and in being present. White Raven claims that "allies don't come with the idea to save", rather allies come "to learn and support Indigenous peoples' journeys, choices, and leadership."

Unsettling

The Indigenous leaders' reflections on non-Indigenous allies stressed allies' openness and willingness to be vulnerable and take risks. All four Indigenous leaders provided examples of the non-Indigenous allies being immersed in community experiences where they were prepared to be vulnerable and open to being challenged, often through unsettling experiences. A key element of unsettling includes immersion in Indigenous community and becoming deeply self-reflective. Unsettling involves shifting from what one knows (what is in one's head), to becoming vulnerable and being present in a good way; opening one's heart to new relationships and new teaching. These Indigenous leaders' perspectives align with the literature (Regan, 2010; Gehl, 2011; Alfred, 2005; and Maracle, 1990) which indicates that when settlers reckon with who they are, what they have done, and what they represent in relation to

Indigenous people, they will be on the path to allyship. This process is unsettling, uncomfortable and often times very difficult but necessary.

White Raven identified “being able to be put in one’s place” and being open to “explore why one is feeling this way” are essential in the unsettling process. Medicine Water described challenging a social worker to work from his heart, not from his head. She told this social worker:

When you find the way of doing it from your heart then you can contact me, but I don't want to talk to you until then. In about 2 years he found me, and he said I understand now what you mean, by doing the work from my heart, he understood where we were coming from...he was a funny changed person after that, oh my goodness poor guy, I almost ruined him that time, but it was for the good. He understood where we are coming from and he didn't do it (social work) from a book, he did it (social work) from the heart. (White Raven)

Sun Woman asserts that if a non-Indigenous settler is wanting to work in Indigenous community, it is not her job to teach them how to become an ally, that this is about the settler joining the Indigenous circle to learn and to take responsibility for any unsettling that occurs in working in indigenous community.

All the non-Indigenous leaders were able to share unsettling experiences in their relationships with Indigenous communities. They spoke of being humbled in their work with Indigenous communities, that sometimes they made mistakes but were open to learning from these mistakes. They also spoke of needing to be bold and take risks, knowing that they may be challenged on their actions. Through expressing their desire to learn and openness to being

guided and directed, they described developing trusting relationships with Indigenous leaders that supported their development. Sun Woman stresses that the message, to allies is, if “you are joining the circle we have gathered, we want you in the circle, you need to be prepared to examine your way of being and this is not always comfortable.”

Unbecoming

The Indigenous leaders describe allies as being humble and carrying themselves with humility. They also spoke of the learning that they have observed when non-Indigenous leaders have had to reconcile how they may have perceived themselves with how they are seen by Indigenous leaders. Maracle (1990) identifies this as unbecoming, which requires the non-Indigenous leader to be both vulnerable and courageous. This is more than just being unsettled. This is about taking unsettling experiences and transforming settlers’ thinking and way of being. The Indigenous leaders stated that this is what distinguishes and defines a settler ally, someone who is bold enough to reflect on one’s social location and be open to examining and dismantling oppressive and racist ways of being. Through this vulnerability and courage allies can start to deconstruct their thinking about Indigenous people. This deconstruction must respect protocols of Indigenous people. During this unbecoming, reflection on their interconnectedness with Indigenous people is foundational. All the Indigenous leaders shared observations where settler leaders had acted in oppressive or racist ways and when confronted by Indigenous people about their behavior some took ownership and went on a learning journey while others became defensive and reactive to criticism and chastising. What defined those who became allies was the willingness to examine their ways of being and to take responsibility for their actions. The non-Indigenous leaders were all able to describe situations

where they had been challenged on their behavior, resulting in their reflection on their conduct and seeking support and direction from Indigenous leaders to reflect on and make efforts to change their way of being.

Awakening

In order to move from a state of being unsettled, to recognizing the need to unbecome, to move to a state of taking reconciliatory action, settlers must be awakened. The Indigenous leaders provided examples of non-Indigenous leaders being awakened. This point of being awakened may be the closest point to the “Ah ha” moment for non-Indigenous leaders. Awakening your heart and spirit to a different way of being is an essential element to allyship. This includes awareness of the settler’s own spirituality and a receptiveness to the spirituality of others. Without being fully aware of themselves, their culture, their beliefs, and their spirituality, settlers may not likely become awakened to move forward in allyship with Indigenous people. Although both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders were not able to identify a defining moment when they knew the point of allyship was achieved, all leaders interviewed identified indicators of what made the non-Indigenous leader an ally that are consistent with research on allyship within and outside the Indigenous context (Regan, 2010). White Raven shared her awareness of knowing when a non-Indigenous person has been awakened and arrived at allyship:

Allies are strong, competent, patient, calm, thoughtful, critical thinkers. They do have preconceived ideas but have a willingness to shift, an openness to learning, they may come with their ideas, understand their role in Indigenous history, willing to work through hurdles, one thing always stuck out is willingness to build and further

relationships. They possess ability, willingness, and passion to advocate for Indigenous people. They are people Indigenous people can trust. They have excellent communication, are open to difficult and challenging conversations, and are non-judgemental. They trust Indigenous people to know the answers to their own circumstances. They are able to build relationships. They are tired of the system and how it treats Indigenous people. They are able to overcome the white man persona and are prepared to have to have hard and honest conversations and stay even when the road gets bumpy. (White Raven)

Reconciliation (Giving Back)

Indigenous leaders identified four key elements of reconciliation. These included to have wisdom of oneself, to carry oneself in restorative ways of being, to be in relationship with Indigenous people, and to continue to be courageous on the journey of allyship. When looking at reconciling it is essential to meet and honour people where they are at. Regan (2010) and Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, and Formsma (2006) identify reconciliation as a multi-step journey that is grounded in truth telling, acknowledging, restoring, and relating. This is about taking the time to hear from Indigenous people and incorporate restorative approaches into settlers' ways of being. All three non-Indigenous settler leaders accepted invitations into Indigenous communities to support the work of Indigenous communities. These non-Indigenous leaders brought wisdom and expertise they acquired through their work and life experience. The sharing of this wisdom aligned with the aspirations of Indigenous communities. These non-Indigenous leaders took up to the invitation to share their expertise recognizing they themselves continued to have much to learn. Despite the unsettling and unbecoming these

non-Indigenous leaders experienced in their relationship with Indigenous people they courageously continued on the path to allyship. These leaders described carrying themselves with great humility with no intention of being the expert but rather offering their wisdom as requested by their Indigenous partners.

Giving back must always be centred in returning responsibility for the care and protection of Indigenous children to Indigenous communities. Allies are gifted with teachings of Indigenous people. Indigenous people often share great vulnerability with in bringing non-Indigenous people into their lives. Giving back must include allies themselves becoming vulnerable, taking risks, and trusting in the relationships with Indigenous people. This reciprocity will create the foundation for going forward in solidarity.

Solidarity (Going Forward)

In order to achieve solidarity, Indigenous leaders claimed that non-Indigenous leaders must be interconnected with Indigenous people, that they need to be in relationship to community at multiple levels. Social Justice is a key underpinning of being able to work in solidarity with Indigenous people. Being curious, participating in ceremony, and openness to taking direction from Indigenous leaders are essential to going forward on a journey with Indigenous people. Green and Thomas (2012) and Gehl (2011) speak of taking leadership from Indigenous people. Taking leadership can be seen as working in solidarity with communities to support their vision for their children through working to actualize this vision.

All three non-Indigenous leaders identified formative experiences that likely contributed to them being identified as allies. All three witnessed systems not treating Indigenous people in a fair way and this likely has influenced their way of being. All four

Indigenous leaders identified the courage non-Indigenous leaders displayed when they challenged injustices. They used their privilege to advocate for Indigenous children and families. Both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders recognized the courage involved being visible and vulnerable with Indigenous communities and at tables with government and decision makers. As well they recognized being courageous is a necessary step to being true and meaningful partners. This visibility and vulnerability are what makes the non-Indigenous leaders courageous allies who are working in solidarity with Indigenous people. Simply put: “Do you come to our feasts? Do you have tea with our Elders? Do you introduce us to your partner?” are all measures of solidarity with Indigenous people. White Raven believes that “Allies have passion, they get the challenge, they honestly want to make a difference, they are not about position, not about saving us, they are about giving back, about being a partner.” Sun Woman indicated “it really is about joining a community and being part of it, that you are seen and visible in the greater community.” Sqwulutsutun shared that “people that seem to be champions are in the same canoe as myself”, that they have shared experiences with Indigenous people, that they have experienced injustice, and they want to work in partnership to address injustices and are committed to the journey required to achieve the vision of Indigenous people.

Solidarity involves understanding and utilizing privilege in courageous ways. The three non-Indigenous leaders provided examples of what it means to be courageous. Morgan shared that as human beings we are all going to have experiences that test our capacities that include a fair level of suffering, that is it through these challenges that we can rise to be positive agents of change. He states:

Suffering is one of the engines through which we as human beings change and grow and gain the capacity to make different choices, or actualize the capacity to make different choices, that we can make a bigger contribution to others and to the world. We have an innate intrinsic capacity and desire to be an agent of creating better conditions to the people's around them and the world around them. It is often reinforced to us that we should be more concerned about our own conditions and self-interest especially in this society and that of others. Challenging people, directly or indirectly, to really explore those dimensions of themselves leads me to believe that anybody can be a difference-maker or be a real contributor regardless of what their experiences have been to a certain point in life and as long as they are encouraged and given the courage to really look at themselves and those around them. (Morgan)

Finally, the capacity to be self-reflexive as we venture on this journey of allyship is foundational to becoming an ally and ensure we are acting in solidarity with Indigenous people. Morgan believes allyship and solidarity requires a high level of self-reflexivity. He states:

It really is putting up mirrors for people, to introspect as opposed to trying to teach a value. It is helping people with the self-reflection and giving them some tools to go beyond the normal places that people sometimes stop in their self-reflection out of fear or obstacles.

Challenge to the construct of allyship

Early in the process concerns were identified in the conceptualization of allyship, that allyship introduces polarity in identifying non-Indigenous leaders who are and who are not allies, rather than viewing the allyship as a continuum. It was suggested we need to remove

identifiers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous and focus on gathering a community of support, a circle, to focus on a common purpose. Despite the risk of focusing on what distinguished an ally as detracting from a focus on building community that does not differentiate individuals, I believe there continues to be merit in identifying that there is a common phenomenon in the journey to allyship. This perhaps should be reframed to what business do non-Indigenous people need to do, where do their head, heart, and spirit need to be in order to become part of a community, a circle, to go on a journey with Indigenous people in pursuit of a common purpose. Sun Woman speaks of polarity, that the concept of Allyship suggests a person is or is not an ally. Polarization of non-Indigenous people as being or not being an ally that involves including and excluding is not an Indigenous way. She states:

The concept of allyship introduces polarity. We don't use that in our work as Aboriginal people. We start from a place of community, we start from a place of you stand beside me, we don't make your reality a point of interest, we make your reality this community right now and what are the best strategies to move forward, within the constraints of course as we are always, we are still working within heavy constraints, but there is potential and possibility that we seek together, that's what makes an ally, that is the definition of an ally, we steer away from, I don't recognize your difference, I recognize our common interest our common goals, we are working together seamlessly, I am not tripping up over your whiteness, or blackness, Asian-ness. You are working with us, I am feeling the jive, I am feeling the groove, you know. We're together in this. (Sun Woman)

The Moment – The Ah Ha

When the non-Indigenous leaders were asked to identify the “moment”, the “ah ha” at which they realized they were considered an ally, the non-Indigenous leaders could not recall a specific event or time. All three non-Indigenous leaders did state they recognized several years into their careers that they were able to engage Indigenous communities and Indigenous people in what seemed to be a good way. All three non-Indigenous leaders were able to describe experiences that led to understanding oppression, privilege, and racism. All three non-Indigenous leaders were also able to identify immersive, deeply personal experiences with Indigenous people. They described the realizations that they must be ever so conscious regarding the way in which they must carry themselves in their personal and professional lives. They also described this as a journey of continual learning. Despite each of these non-Indigenous leaders being identified as an ally by an Indigenous leader, the non-Indigenous leaders did not identify themselves that way. They are were humble and their humility was an identified trait at an early age.

British Columbia’s Representative for Children and Youth, Jennifer Charlesworth, in reflecting on her role as a witness at an Indigenous child welfare gathering stated “I observed people reaching what I can only describe as their ‘no turning back’ point where they know, without a shadow of a doubt, that the way things have been in child welfare practice can no longer continue. To deny the need to change child welfare now, given all we know, would require us to numb out and allow harm to continue.” In now reflecting on the research for this thesis, an alternate question for non-Indigenous leaders, considered as allies by Indigenous leaders, may be “when did you realize that there was no turning back on the way in which you

are in relationship with Indigenous people?” This may assist non-Indigenous leaders in their reflection on what they do to be considered allies. Although all three non-Indigenous leaders did not identify an “a ha” moment, all were able to describe times they had with Indigenous people at both a personal and professional level where they absolutely understood how they must show up in their work with Indigenous children, families, and communities. In reflecting on the interviews conducted and analysis of these interview, the “a ha” moment may be better represented as the “no turning back” moment. Although all three could not pin-point an “ah ha” moment where they felt they had arrived as an ally, they all described transformative experiences. This may be likely attributed to the humility of these three non-Indigenous leaders.

My own reflection as a non-Indigenous person is that despite the fact Indigenous leaders may consider me an ally, I am not comfortable in this discussion. This said, throughout this Masters’ Program I have been challenged to become increasingly aware of my social location and increasingly attentive to self-reflection to heighten my conscious understanding and use of self.

Indigenous leaders who participated in this research were able to provide great detail, voice, and context in the interview process. Non-Indigenous leaders all brought humility to the interviews, were very open in responding to questions and discussion, and could easily talk about their work. This said, they seemed to struggle when asked questions regarding allyship and what makes them an ally. This appeared to be the least comfortable part of the interviews and given my own experience this makes sense. Often when individuals do something well that is recognized by others as exceptional leadership, the individual minimizes or downplay what

they do. Further, when asked to describe what individuals do, they are often uncomfortable with this discussion not being able to clearly articulate what they do. This may be attributed to the humility in which these non-Indigenous leaders carry themselves. It may be seen as a strange acknowledgement, that one is a decent human being. Praising people for great work may seem to the recipient as why should I be praised for how all settlers should be interacting with Indigenous people. This said, understanding what these individuals do and how these individuals have come to think the way they think is essential in supporting non-Indigenous leaders on their journeys to allyship. In these non-Indigenous leaders “non words” their actions and behaviors demonstrate ally leadership.

In their government social work careers, Riley and Tracy demonstrated a way of being that gained the attention of Indigenous leaders/communities. This resulted in their next career working in Indigenous child welfare organizations. Morgan was resistant to the typical path of a lawyer early on in his career and found alignment with his values/beliefs in working with oppressed populations, including Indigenous communities.

Love, respect, and empathy are necessary for transformation (Charlesworth, 2019). All three non-Indigenous leaders have modelled vulnerability, opening their heart and spirit in engaging with Indigenous people at a deeply personal level. It can be suggested that one of the most courageous acts is to be vulnerable (Brown, 2018). All the Indigenous leaders described their non-Indigenous allies as courageous people who carried themselves with transparency, took risks, and were receptive to correction and direction from Indigenous people. In short, they were “real”. As helpers we expect clients that we are working with to be very vulnerable in circumstances where there are potential significant life altering consequences. As non-

Indigenous leaders working with Indigenous communities, there is often a power disparity where there is the potential for community altering consequences. This is deeply personal for Indigenous leaders. Non-Indigenous leaders who carry themselves with awareness and acknowledgement of their privilege and understanding of the power disparity become “real” to Indigenous leaders. Non-Indigenous leaders who show their vulnerability through the expression of their hopes, anxieties, fears, and personal location, are seen by the Indigenous leaders as genuine and courageous.

All three non-Indigenous leaders have had foundational immersion experiences in working within Indigenous communities that touched their personal lives in a deep way. Allies demonstrate alignment to Indigenous communities’ way of being and consequently received their approval. All three had very personal immersive experiences with Indigenous people. These immersive experiences were more than just a part of their work or profession. These experiences became part of their personal life.

All three non-Indigenous leaders had limited or no childhood experience of being in relationship with Indigenous people. Two of the three spend some or all of their childhood years in Europe. One of these two was introduced to Indigenous people through literature that presented a romanticized view of Indigenous people; thus her early impressions were of a positive nature. The third grew up in Canada with limited involvement, interaction, or understanding of Indigenous people other than through his family’s faith community that included Indigenous people. These early impressions were representative of only a segment of Indigenous people. Riley, upon arrival in Canada, up until his social work career, was introduced to negative stereotypes regarding Aboriginal people. This said, he was socially aware of

international issues regarding oppression of other groups of people. Through work with Indigenous clients, attending Indigenous communities, and engagement with Indigenous partners, he realized the need to challenge the stereotypes he had been exposed to regarding Indigenous people.

Not being able to identify an “Ah Ha” moment when non-Indigenous settler leaders know they were an ally of Indigenous people may actually be a pre-requisite of being considered an ally. What may be more critical is being able to be reflexive in examining their relationships with Indigenous people. All the non-Indigenous leaders were very humble in describing their relationships with Indigenous people, and the Indigenous leaders were able to be very descriptive with explaining how these non-Indigenous leaders are allies.

Part 7 – Bart’s Reflection – The Researcher’s Story

I have said at times that I only hope I have given back as much as I have taken from my journey working with Indigenous people throughout my career. Where is the reciprocity? Am I just another settler benefiting from the exploitation of Indigenous people? There have been so many teachings gifted to me. I believe I have always shown a keen interest and desire to learn from the Indigenous leaders and families that I worked with. I have had Elders tell me that they wish some of their community members would show the interest that I show in learning about their way of being. I have not taken for granted being invited into ceremony; I feel very privileged to be able to participate in ceremony. What is my gift back? I realize I have supported Indigenous people and Nations to move closer to resuming control over the care and protection of their vulnerable children, that I have brought expertise to the Nation that has helped advance this agenda. I recognize that sharing my learnings in the journey to allyship, that includes many unsettling and unbecoming experiences, is my gift back to the Indigenous people and communities that have touched my life. My experiences in the journey from understanding to solidarity, have helped me provide guidance to other settler leaders and social workers. My gift and responsibility is to humbly leverage my privilege and experience to support the transformation of child welfare for Indigenous children. Regan (2010) shares that one of her best hopes is that through writing honestly about what she has learned, she will in some small way be a catalyst for how settlers might breathe life into Canada’s apology to Indigenous people. Regan (2010) speaks of not writing about survivors’ stories, as they are not hers to tell. Rather, writing about her unsettling experiences is her reciprocal gift that she offers to

survivors with humility in the spirit of acknowledging, honouring, and remembering the Indigenous people's teachings (p. 18).

Understanding

I am a settler of Danish and French decent. Three of my four grandparents immigrated to Canada as young adults. My fourth grandparent has ancestors residing in Quebec tracing back to at least the 17th century. The Danish and French cultures were very much a part of my growing years and I was exposed to language, ceremony, and spirituality shared by parents and grandparents. I do not recall realizing or questioning that this might not be the reality for others. I was raised in a predominantly euro-centric rural British Columbian community. I do not recall being aware of or having interactions with Indigenous people. I had little understanding of oppression, colonization, and Indigenous people. As a child I experienced belonging, connectedness, and a sense of identity. My parents and grandparents lived a life of service to the marginalized and vulnerable members of their family and community. I attribute my calling to social work to their values and beliefs impressed upon me.

As an early adult, having relocated to an urban setting, I came to learn about oppression, racism, colonization, and Indigenous people. Throughout my social work career, I worked with Indigenous people. It was years into this work that I came to understand that despite my intent to help, my actions did not appear to make lives better for Indigenous children and their families. When I came to the understanding that families and communities are the experts of their lives, I believe I was liberated from my need to be the expert and know what is best for families. I began to accept families as experts who know what they need.

My immersive journey in working in Indigenous community opened my mind, my heart, and my spirit to understand my social location, privilege, and desire to better understand Indigenous people and Indigenous ways of being. Every day I continue on this learning journey.

Listening

Through my immersion in Indigenous community, I came to understand the impacts of colonization, the stories of resistance, and the aspirations of Indigenous people. This could only be achieved through believing in the values of such relationships and committing the time towards developing relationships. This required me to suspend my truths and to be curious about others' truths. Language lessons, gatherings, celebrations, assemblies, and funerals were all opportunities to listen and learn. Taking the time to hear the stories of trauma and resistance supported my journey to allyship. As I listened to Indigenous peoples' ways of being, I was learning that many of the values, beliefs, and assumptions that were the foundational to my worldview were informed through colonial, paternalistic, and oppressive ways of being. I was beginning to question why I believed what I believed and why I behaved the way I behaved.

Unsettling

As I reflect on some of the most unsettling experiences in working with Indigenous people, I realizing these experiences have been instrumental in my journey to become an ally. Being vulnerable and trusting that the Creator will watch over me has blessed me with teachings that will forever guide me, both as a professional and as a person. I have heard leaders say they do not expect their staff to be vulnerable. I am not sure one can develop competence in working with Indigenous people without an openness to being unsettled. I am grateful for the unsettling experiences in my journey, despite how uncomfortable they were in

the moment. I have experienced conflict with an Indigenous woman who likened me to a priest in a residential school, sitting with a grandmother whose grandchild died while in the care of the agency I managed, being challenged by a community (band) council on my actions, meeting with a mom whose child's death may have been prevented, and speaking up to challenge the system in how we continue to colonize. I wish I could turn the clock back and "redo" some of my past actions. This said reflecting on these unsettling experiences has led me to be ever so conscious on how I show up in this sacred work. I have learned that these unsettling experiences are invitations for reflection and learning. Regan (2010) stresses self-reflection alone is not adequate, that this must be paired with self-education. Through listening to the teaching of Indigenous people about their way of knowing and being I was able to better understand my way of knowing and being. I became conscious and aware of my values, beliefs, and way of being. This awareness surfaced discomfort and raised questions about my assumptions of the world as I understood it. This awareness heightened my understanding of the need to take responsibility for continually educating myself regarding the phenomenon of allyship.

When I reflected on being likened to a priest in a residential school I was humbled by this Elder. She identified the colonial and paternalist ways in which I carried myself. I had thought of myself, a social worker, as a good listener who supports individuals in need. If I was such a good listener what was I doing that made this Elder see me in such a colonial paternalist way? This was unsettling for me.

I have used the expression "I represent every white man" that walked before in my work. I have struggled with what I represent when I enter into Indigenous communities. As a

Christian attending a funeral of an Indigenous person that is performed in Catholic tradition, I have been torn to stand up and accept communion, given what the church represents in the colonization of Indigenous people. I carried shame and guilt for the actions of my ancestors. The identification of the colonizer within me has been unsettling in recognizing how I have perpetuated colonial practices. I learned that how I view the world may be quite different than how another person, in relation to this thesis, how Indigenous people view the world.

Unbecoming

Through an openness to reflect on my actions as a settler social worker I have come to accept what I represent to Indigenous people. This requires me to acknowledge both my role and the role of my ancestors in destructive colonial practices. This also requires me to acknowledge that I have been part of a system that has perpetuated oppressive practices in the lives of Indigenous children, families, and their communities. I need to ask myself, how have my beliefs and values contributed to this perpetuation of colonization, and why were my beliefs and values not strong enough to call me to recognize the harm of my actions?

For the first years of my social work career I focused on administering the policy that guided my work. At the time with limited confidence in the social work role I had confidence I brought a kind caring approach to the work. Others would comment on this approach suggesting I needed to toughen up to be successful in this work. Several years into this work when I accepted a role working primarily with Indigenous communities, I realized not only did I struggle with confidence in the work I began to understand being kind and caring in itself does not serve the Indigenous community. I was beginning to understand all the assumptions I bring from my way of being and knowing, as honorable as they may be, did not align with what the

Indigenous community was requiring from me. I called to task on my action by Indigenous community leadership and family members. I learned that not only did I need to listen, I needed to understand how my way of thinking about the world carried judgements about how Indigenous children and families should be supported. I learned the importance of reflexive practice which forced me to examine how my social location influenced my thinking, communication, and decision making. Through developing relationships with Indigenous partners that required me to take risks and be vulnerable, I realized I needed not only to dissect my thinking about Indigenous people but to go on heartfelt journeys that reflected on the spirit I bring to this work. I held shame for what I represented and for actions I had taken with Indigenous people. Despite this shame I brought a willingness to be vulnerable and listen to at times difficult messages about my way of being. I was both honoured and humbled that Indigenous leaders went on this journey with me, that I was seen to have something to offer and safe enough that Indigenous people took risks in telling me how they see me show up.

Unbecoming is about deconstructing myself and the system I am part of in order to critically self-reflect on my personal values and beliefs. Unbecoming is also about critical reflection on the values, beliefs, and practices of the system I work for and/or represent. Treating unsettling experiences as invitations to reflect on myself, as challenging or difficult as this is, is foundational to unbecoming.

I reflect on many child welfare situations through my career. I made decisions on what I believed, as a white, male settler social worker regarding what I considered best for Indigenous children. I judged Indigenous parents through both a personal and professional lens. For years I did not understand how my way of being and my social location influenced my actions and

decisions. Recognizing this through what Indigenous communities have taught me as well as through a commitment to understanding oneself can be painful but is essential on the journey to allyship. Understanding how one's privilege gives one the power to take action without question is necessary.

As I reflect on my own unbecoming, there are countless examples of where I need to acknowledge how I have contributed to the perpetuation of colonial practices: removing children where I could have engaged family and community in ensuring their safety, failing to understand strengths of Indigenous families, being the expert rather than being curious, not supporting children in care to experience their culture, and not challenging the systems I worked within when the actions I was taking did not sit well with me. I recognize that I cannot correct my past actions, but I can become acutely aware of and learn from these practices as I move forward in a better way on my journey to allyship.

Awakening

Being able to move from immobilization associated with my guilt and shame to opening my mind, heart, and spirit is fundamental to awakening. Awakening is being able to move from deconstructing myself to constructing how I wish to show up in this world, in working with Indigenous children, families, and communities. Acknowledging the wisdom of Indigenous people, that as an ally my role is to leverage my privilege to support the self-determination of Indigenous people, is foundational to awakening. Given this awakening, I had to decide to either get out of the way or to fully commit to supporting Indigenous peoples' vision for their communities, families, and children. For me this was my no turning back point.

After emotionally challenging days in my Indigenous child welfare work in Indigenous communities, after days sitting hearing Elders' stories of resistance, and after days of reflecting on my unsettling and unbecoming experiences, I have come to appreciate that awakening is the pivotal stage where one has to fully commit to allyship. To acknowledge what I represent and recognize my privilege to make a difference is to become awakened. Acknowledgement without the commitment to action a different way of being is not being an ally. Seeing the Bart of my early social work career show up in others has impacted how I need to support a greater voice for Indigenous communities and challenge colonial and oppressive practice.

Reconciliation – Giving Back

I have been honoured to be part of an agenda of decolonization. I have taken responsibility for and learned from my child welfare actions. I have supported bringing forward the voice of Indigenous children, families, and communities. This has not always been easy. Surfacing my truth and challenging a system's truth is not without consequence. As I had focussed intensely on building relationship with Indigenous communities and leaders, these relationships were my medicine when I experienced difficulties and challenges in my work. Ultimately, reconciliation is about standing courageously in my vulnerability and trusting that the teachings that have come from awakening will guide one forward in a good way.

I can vividly recall days where I stood in my truth and lost the favour of the leadership of the system I worked for. I recall having internal struggles – Do I speak up and share my truth and my learning from work with Indigenous communities, or do I not speak and risk being complicit with an agenda I do not support and risk damaging my relationship with Indigenous leaders? Ultimately this internal conflict became so great that I had to step outside of the

system. I questioned what I could have done differently, what I could have done more of, what I should have done less of, and how could I have more effectively advocated for the direction I needed to support? Although difficult, this critical reflection on one's truths is an ongoing and necessary part of reconciliation. I learned how my role should really be about supporting the voice of Indigenous communities and not to be the voice of Indigenous communities. This teaching may not have come to me without the unsettling, unbecoming, and awakening that I experienced.

Solidarity – Going Forward

Recognition and apology are not adequate for allyship. Taking action in partnership with Indigenous communities through using my privilege and experience to support Indigenous communities is a step towards allyship. Coming to understand one's role and leveraging my privilege, regardless of how uncomfortable this may be, is necessary for allyship.

I have been fortunate to be asked by Indigenous communities to support their work within well-being (social welfare, child welfare, health) contexts. I have earned the trust of Indigenous communities and leaders. This has fostered trusting relationships in which I can be a support to Indigenous-led approaches to the betterment of Indigenous communities. I have the confidence and experience to draw on the unsettling, unbecoming, and awakening experiences through my work. I have been able to draw on the understanding of myself, oppression, and colonization that has been imparted to me through the Indigenous community and this Masters of Social Work process. I am clear on my social justice responsibility and that there will be days that are not comfortable for me and days that I will need to unsettle and unbecome in areas

that I was not aware of. Approaching these days with the courage to be vulnerable will support my life long commitment to walk in solidarity with Indigenous people.

Sharing my Truths

Stepping out of my comfort zone is part of my transformational learning and is dramatically altering my way of being. Regan (2010) references Boler's and Michalinos Zembylas' pedagogy of discomfort that "requires not only cognitive but emotional labour" (p. 52) emphasizing the need to move outside their comfort zones. "By comfort zone we mean the inscribed cultural and emotional terrains that we occupy less by choice and more by virtue of hegemony" (p.52). Regan (2010) states that she does not write about survivors' stories for they are not hers to tell, rather she writes about her own unsettling; that this is her reciprocal gift to survivors (p. 18). When I reflect on my journey through understanding, listening, unsettling, unbecoming, awakening, reconciling, and moving forward with solidarity, there are interactions and relationships with Indigenous individuals that guided my learning. Although I cannot reach out to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with a now deceased Indigenous mother whose two children I removed and placed for adoption, this experience that supported my awaking and learning in my work with other Indigenous families . Auto-ethnographic approaches have assisted me in my reflection. Sharing my vulnerability, my humbling through journal entries assisted me in aligning the learning from the literature and research interviews with my experience. In reviewing my journal for formative experiences in my journey towards allyship, the journal entry below is one of my ah-ha moments where I came to the realization there was no turning back in the journey to allyship I was on.

I am going to tell my story – the evolution of a relationship with an Elder and how this contributed to the evolution of me as a person – this is my journey as a social worker in Indigenous communities – my social location, the ground I am standing on has and continued to influence my work – I will speak of the teaching an Elder has provided to me – setting the context – my paternal grandparents immigrated from Denmark – my maternal grandmother immigrated from France – my maternal grandfather's ancestors go back many generations in Quebec I am a husband, my wife is an immigrant – We have three daughters aged 23, 21, and 19 – My career as a social worker began in 1987 on Hastings Street in North Burnaby, not far from downtown eastside Vancouver – I have been a child protection social worker, a resource social worker, a team leader in the far north and the Kootenays - in 2001 I was invited by a representative of a First Nation to come and work for this Nation to assist in setting up their child welfare program– I have to be honest that I may have been more motivated by my disillusionment with the government system more so than the opportunity to work with Indigenous people – what I did not anticipate at the time that I would spend 12 years, from 2002 to 2014 working for this First Nation – this is where I met Moe (name changed) – Moe was a reconnection worker for the agency – she is a Nation member – she came from a large family of 6 or 7 (I believe) siblings – She, along with her siblings experienced residential school and foster care – her and her siblings children and grandchildren experienced foster care and some were placed for adoption – At the time of meeting Moe I was a manager – Moe approached me around 2005 to speak about her sister's grandchildren – she was not happy with the agency and how we had been

providing supports to her family – we met in Moe’s office – at one point in the conversation I made the statement “let me explain” or something close to this - I recall wanting to help Moe understand what the social workers were doing – Moe responded with crying, yelling at me, telling me she was quitting her job with the agency , while she was pulling her poster’s off her wall she told me I was just like the priest at the residential school – she referenced my eye glasses were just like that priest’s – She left the office – Moe not only was involved with the agency as an employee and an extended family member of clients but also was a band councillor – in my role I met with this band council on a frequent basis – the first few meetings after this altercation were awkward for me – Moe did not raise the incident with me and I did not raise it with her – we seemed to be able to do business – this said there was, at least for me, a large elephant in the room – Moe’s grandson came into the care of the agency – he was depressed and there were concerns that he may be suicidal – he made amazing gains – the family was happy with how he was doing – then he went missing from his placement – he was found dead – there was a review conducted – the review document could not (government policy) be shared with the family – I recalled already being told by Moe that we were not being open and upfront with family, now this – I was able to get government to have the person who conducted the review to come and meet with the family – I arranged a dinner meeting with Moe, her daughter (the mother of the deceased youth), the person conducting the review, and myself – the meeting went well – Moe and her daughter asked questions and responses were provided – Moe became a director on the agency board – she was a supportive board member – this said, I felt

there was this unresolved elephant in the room that needed to be reconciled – I wondered what Moe must be thinking – one day I asked to talk with her – I shared that I wanted to talk about the day she decided to leave the agency as a reconnection worker, that it was important for me to talk to her about that day and our relationship – Moe shared she remembers being angry at me but she does not remember what happen that day – she asked me to tell her what happen – I shared – As I told her about that day I was so worried that I may say something that might hurt her but I needed to be honest – Moe told me that she was not carrying anything against me, that this was not personal – I recall thinking how could this not be personal, that when I was told I was just like a priest I personalized this – Moe was a great teacher for me – I knew at an intellectual level that I represent that face of the system but now I feel what it is like at a very personal level to be this face of the system – That day I took the risk to talk to Moe about this incident was transformational for me – Moe and my relationship has grown and we became a team (myself as the Director of the agency and Moe as a board member – When I left the agency the Nation had a feast for my family and I – Moe presented a gift to me on behalf of the board – When she presented this she started to tell the story of Moe and Bart – She was nervous – I stood beside her – she asked me to finish the story – I did – my parents were present – later that night my mother said she knew I worked with Indigenous people but she had no idea of the emotions involved or how this appears to have impacted me. (Knudsgaard, 2014)

I was asked to share my story in a leadership gathering in 2015 in front of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders. I wanted my words to come from my heart and that

my delivery demonstrated the humility I believe I bring to this work. I told myself that I have been in other situations where I had been anxious, and these situations have gone well, so this should be no different. This was different, this was about me being vulnerable and sharing my journey that was both unsettling and unbecoming. I was told how my words had had an emotional impact on those I shared my story with. Settlers not only need to hear from Indigenous people but need to hear other settler stories of colonization and the impact of settler actions on Indigenous people. It is clear that these stories must move from beyond an intellectual experience to an emotional experience. There are teachings for both settlers who are embarking on or are required to work cross-culturally and for Indigenous people to hear the settler experience. This storytelling is so powerful in that we leave our role and others' perceptions of our roles to expose the humanness of each of us, to share our vulnerabilities. It is through this sharing that we create a common bond that will help us move forward as allies. Regan (2010) states that "storytellers share their own life experience with humility as a way of provoking critical reflection in others while continuing to learn themselves" (p. 32). I could not agree more.

In 2012, I participated in the "Returning to Spirit" reconciliation program. Part of this program was one on one private conversations between settlers and Indigenous people. A settler could invite an Indigenous person to have a conversation or an Indigenous person could invite a settler to have a conversation. These conversations were opportunities to tell one's story and ask questions of the other. I recall hearing an Indigenous person tell me after our conversation that she had a new perspective on what she viewed social workers as. Every day social workers are asking parents, children, communities to take risks and to be vulnerable, to

tell their story. This must be unsettling for those telling the story, even if they have had to do this many times before. Where in this relationship is there space for the social worker to share and if such a space existed, how this would promote a stronger working relationship?

It is my best hope that my unsettling experiences and storytelling makes me not only a stronger ally, but a role-model for other settlers aspiring to be allies. This said, as a teacher or role-model, I must be ever vigilant not to slip into the role of colonizer. Regan (2010) identifies that passive empathy is insufficient in a settler response to Indigenous people. She speaks of LaCapra who believes there needs to be empathetic unsettling of “working through one’s own unsettled experience to another’s unsettling” (in Regan. p. 51). LaCapra states:

reflexivity is essential to the task of confronting unsettling stories - however individual self-reflection merely encourages passive empathy or neutral distancing from the Other that is insufficient to effect social and political change” and “One must engage with the other through what he describes as “empathetic unsettlement” or working through of “one’s own unsettled response to another’s unsettlement (LaCapra, in Regan, 2010, p. 51).

I continually find myself working through my responses to Indigenous peoples’ unsettling. In order to be able to lead, I must be able to understand what and why I do something, but also to be able to articulate this to others. Self-reflexivity is key in being able to do this. Some days I think life may be easier if I didn’t engage in reflexive practices, given this reflection often surfaces feelings of shame, anger, and sadness that are part of my unsettling. This said I have come to know that at an experiential level this is essential to becoming an ally and this strengthens my ability to be an ally. I can clearly see how unsettling experiences can be

empowering if viewed through Regan's lens or can be disempowering and render one feeling both hopeless and helpless.

I am reminded of an experience at Returning to Spirit. As one of the exercises we were to write a letter of reconciliation where in-person reconciliation may not be possible. This may be because this person has passed into the spirit world, cannot be found, or does not want to engage with me. I chose to write a letter to an Indigenous mother of two children I removed early in my career. This mother is now in the spirit world. The child welfare actions I took in the removal and adoption of this woman's children continues to be unsettling to me. I made many mistakes in my work with this family. I would take a very different approach if given the opportunity to turn back time. I have wondered what happened to this mother who lost her two children and what has become of her two sons who would be nearly 30 years old. As my practice grew over my career, I reflected what I could or should have done. I also wondered why I did not or was not prompted by my leaders to engage with family and extended family to co-create safety for these children and support this mother. I wondered, if I had supported this mother differently, even if she was not able to parent, what could have I done to support extended family and/or community involvement in the raising of her children where she could have had a role? If I had done this, maybe she would be still in her sons' lives and possibly be alive today. This continues to be unsettling for me; that my actions may have taken away her purpose for life, that my actions may have stolen any hope from her life, and that my actions may have contributed to her early death. This to me is an example of what Regan identifies as empathic unsettling. I know my practice has grown and I have had to reconcile with myself. I know I would respond very differently today. With this knowledge comes the responsibility to

share my story, that as part of reconciliation I need to tell both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people my story in healing myself and supporting the healing of Indigenous people. I am hopeful that my story will help guide other settlers in their learning. Below is an excerpt from a journal entry in which I wrote a letter to this mother. I have changed the name of the mother and children. Although I cannot share this journal entry with this mother as I have learned she has transitioned to the spirit world, and I may never meet her sons who I placed for adoption, I can share this journal entry to provide other settlers with an opportunity to learn from my unsettling, unbecoming, and awakening.

Mary, I was a young junior social worker who knew way too little about the impact of residential schools, the impact of the Sixties Scoop, and the impact of the child welfare system on Aboriginal people. I was doing my best to follow the policies and procedures of the child welfare system. No one guided me in how to protect children in context of family and community. I feel shame that I never asked you what community or Nation you were from, who or where your mother is, and who in your family could help support your children. I believe I took away all sense of hope from you to be a mother. I believe you were hurting. You did not challenge me and the decisions I was making. To this day I remember what appeared to me to be your sadness. I wish you had had the strength to challenge me. When I would go to meet with you, to pick you up and take you to court you were always pleasant to me. Other more senior social workers would comment about why I am picking her up to go to court, if she really wants her kids back she would get herself to court. I had enough values that I knew reaching out to you was the right thing to do. I regret that I was not wise enough to know to ask you and to invite your

family into help plan for your children. I never asked you about or honoured your experiences. I met with your ex-partner and his parents. They were hurting too. Reflecting back, they were likely carrying some racism as non-Aboriginal people. They were likely hurting with their son's risk taking behaviors and his relationship with you. Your children did need protection. There was the need for social work involvement in your life BUT if I were to be your social worker today my approach would be totally different. I would ask you: What are your dreams? What are your hopes? Who are you as a mom, as an Aboriginal woman? Where are you from? Who is important in your life? Who can we ask to join a circle to support you in working towards the return of your children? What do you need to do to safely parent? NOT what I and the system believe you need to do. If after all that we were not able to return your children I would have you involved in developing a care plan for your children. I would look at how you could always be in your children's lives. I would ask you what you need to be able to be part of your children's lives. Mary, I believe I, in my role, took away all hope from you, first with George, and then with Joe. I am angry with the system that did not guide me in the way that I now guide staff every day. I know many would judge you, would disapprove of your actions not understanding what led to these actions. I now recognize my actions ended your relationship with your children. I am afraid you may no longer be alive or if you are you are hurting. If I were to meet with you again I would tell you all of my errors, I am sorry for my actions, what I saw to me was you showing you loved and cared for your children. If I were to meet George or Joe I would tell them: you loved them, you cared about them, you went to every court date because I think you cared,

that it was not their mother that did not want them but the hurts in their mom's life blocked her from being able to parent. I regret how adoptions were handled, that there should have been openness so their mom could be part of their lives. For all this I apologize to you. (Knudsgaard, 2013)

Part 8 – Path Forward to Allyship – Conclusion

The intention of this research was to identify if there is a process in which non-Indigenous leaders must journey through in order to be considered an ally by Indigenous leaders. In order to better understand allyship I reviewed the literature, interviewed Indigenous leaders, interviewed Allies identified by the interviewed Indigenous leaders, and reflected on my journey. Through a story-telling methodology, auto-ethnographic reflections, and thematic analysis integrating the literature with both the research participants and my experience, I was able to identify essential phases that non-Indigenous leaders must work through in journeying to allyship. These were understanding, listening, unsettling, unbecoming, awakening, reconciling, and moving forward in solidarity. These phases or experiences appear to be circular in nature, where one does not necessarily precede or follow the other, and many are revisited multiple times. I conclude these phases are not sequential, it is clear that in order to move toward reconciliation and solidarity, which focus on alliance building and constructing oneself, one must experience unsettling, unbecoming, and awaking, which focus on decolonizing and deconstructing oneself. Simply put, a period of deconstruction and self-reflection is essential to embark on a journey of alliance building and reconstruction. My best hope for this thesis is it supports non-Indigenous settler leaders in their journey to allyship that ultimately will support the best possible outcomes for Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities. This must always be about Indigenous children, youth, and families and not just the non-Indigenous settler leader. As shared earlier in this thesis Regan (2010) emphasizes simply believing that we do good practices with Aboriginal peoples is not good enough. Allyship is a continual journey of both self-reflection and self-education. Reflection alone is not enough. “Self-education involves

the painful work of examining one's complicity in an oppressive culture...only the very brave among us will do this. Becoming a white ally requires this." (Regan, 2010, p. 105). Fully engaging in ally work is about making the commitment to becoming a better human being. This thesis journey has guided my path in becoming a better human. Scholars and authors reviewed, as part of this thesis, state becoming an ally is, a better human, involves taking risks, falling down, making mistakes, and repeatedly getting up to continue on the journey to allyship. Being humble, being trustworthy, and listening respectfully enough to be invited into Indigenous communities are foundational to the process of becoming an ally. Through this thesis work it has been raised that the concept of allyship may be a colonial construct, that by suggesting there is a process or phenomenon to becoming an ally complicates what should be about being the best human being possible. This said in order to truly engage in reflexive practice one must explore one's way of knowing and being. The thesis findings provide a useful framework for the journey of non-Indigenous settler self examination regarding relationship with Indigenous people and communities. Although the focus of this thesis was on examining non-Indigenous settler leaders' journeys to allyship the teachings derived from this thesis can ally to any non-Indigenous settler working with Indigenous communities.

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction to Indigenous Leaders

Research Title: **How One Becomes What One Is - Transformative Journeys to Allyship**
 Researcher: Harald (Bart) Knudsgaard
 Master of Social Work Candidate
 University of Victoria
 250-xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@uvic.ca

Ki?suk Kyukyit (hello). My name is Bart Knudsgaard and I am currently completing my Masters of Indigenous Social Work degree at the University of Victoria.

I am reaching out to you as you are an Indigenous leader in the delivery of Aboriginal child and family services. It is my request of you to consider assisting me in identifying non-Indigenous leaders who you would consider an ally or valued partner to Indigenous people in the area of Aboriginal child welfare. If you are interested in participating in this research I would like to interview you about non-Indigenous leader(s) you consider to be allies. Participation in this research is voluntary.

The research initiative has three components:

- (1) Interviewing Indigenous leaders to (a) identify non-Indigenous leaders considered as allies and (b) to gather information on what makes a non-Indigenous leader an ally.
- (2) Requesting non-Indigenous leaders to share their journey of becoming an ally.
- (3) Requesting Indigenous Elders and community members to provide their perspective on what makes a non-Indigenous leader an ally.

In order to ensure the privacy of research participants and that participation in this research is voluntary I will be asking you to contact the non-Indigenous leader(s) that you identify to provide them with a letter of invitation from me.

It is my hope that through these three components I will come to better understand the phenomenon of becoming an ally, specifically I will be determined if there are process patterns that emerge regarding how a non-Indigenous leader becomes an ally. There has been research regarding what constitutes an ally and what are the characteristics of an ally. It is my best hope to extend this research through examining if there is a framework that has key process steps that are necessary for the transformation to allyship. If there is such a process framework this research may support non-Indigenous leaders in becoming allies.

Dr. Robina Thomas is my academic supervisor. She can be reached at XXXXXXX@uvic.ca. This research will result in my completing a thesis and ultimately my Masters of Indigenous Social Work degree. This research approach has been reviewed by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board. This board can be reached at ethics@uvic.ca or 250-472-4545.

I anticipate this will require 3 interviews that are up to 2 hour long. If you are interested in participating in this research initiative, please contact me and I will provide you with additional details and respond to any questions that you may have. I will follow up this letter with a phone call to you.

Thank you,

Bart Knudsgaard

Appendix B: Letter of Introduction to Non-Indigenous Leaders

Research Title: **How One Becomes What One Is - Transformative Journeys to Allyship**

Researcher: Harald (Bart) Knudsgaard
 Master of Social Work Candidate
 University of Victoria
 250-xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@uvic.ca

Ki?suk Kyukyit (hello). My name is Bart Knudsgaard and I am currently completing my Masters of Indigenous Social Work degree at the University of Victoria.

I am reaching out to you as you are a non-Indigenous leader who has experience with Indigenous child welfare. You have been identified as an ally by an Indigenous leader. This Indigenous leader agreed to provide this letter of introduction to you. It is my request of you to consider assisting me by sharing your journey of becoming an ally. This will likely require up to three interviews over a several month period. Each interview is anticipated to last up to two hours. If you are currently employed in the child welfare field approval of your employer may be required to participate in this research study. Participation in this research is voluntary.

The research initiative has three components:

- (1) Interviewing Indigenous leaders to (a) identify non-Indigenous leaders considered as allies and (b) to gather information on what makes a non-Indigenous leader an ally.
- (2) Requesting non-Indigenous leaders to share their journey of becoming an ally.
- (3) Requesting Indigenous Elders and community members to provide their perspective on what makes a non-Indigenous leader an ally.

It is my hope that through these three components I will come to better understand the phenomenon of becoming an ally. There has been research regarding what constitutes an ally and what are the characteristics of an ally. It is my best hope to extend this research through examining if there a framework that has key process steps that are necessary for the transformation to allyship. This research will support non-Indigenous leaders in becoming allies.

The research findings will be shared through possible presentations to government (Indigenous, Provincial, and Federal), Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, Indigenous communities and research participants.

Dr. Robina Thomas is my academic supervisor. She can be reached at xxxxxxx@uvic.ca. This research will result in my completing a thesis and ultimately my Masters of Indigenous Social Work degree. This

research approach has been reviewed by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board. This board can be reached at ethics@uvic.ca or 250-472-4545.

If you are interested in participating in this research initiative, please contact me and I will provide you with additional details and respond to any questions that you may have. I will follow up with letter with a phone call to you.

Thank you,

Bart Knudsgaard

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

UVIC and School of Social Work Logo

Research Title: **How One Becomes What One Is - Transformative Journeys to Allyship**

Researcher: Harald (Bart) Knudsgaard
Master of Social Work Candidate
University of Victoria
250-xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@uvic.ca

You are being asked to participate in this research study that will gather information regarding the journey of non-Indigenous leaders becoming allies of Indigenous children and families in child welfare work.

This qualitative research study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Robina Thomas (xxxxxxx@uvic.ca) as a part of a thesis for partial fulfillment of the Master of Indigenous Social Work requirements at the University of Victoria.

You have been selected as: an Indigenous leader in the field of child welfare, a non-Indigenous leader who is considered an ally by an Indigenous leader, or an Indigenous Elder or community member with experience in Indigenous child welfare.

There are ethical considerations that I must review with you so that you are fully informed in making a decision to participate in this research.

Unless otherwise indicated by you in writing, all information you provide will be kept confidential and your identity protected. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without having to explain and with no consequences to you. If you wish to remain anonymous, you will be asked to provide a 'pseudonym' to be known by in the thesis. As non-Indigenous leaders have been identified as potential participants by Indigenous leaders, consent from these non-Indigenous leaders can only be obtained upon contact with the researcher. The researcher will not be contacting these non-Indigenous leaders to participate. This contact will be done by the Indigenous leaders who agree to participate in this research.

The potential risks, should you choose to be identified:

- Potential backlash from colleagues who are unable to critically reflect on their child welfare practices and Aboriginal children, families, and communities.
- Potential for emotions to surface that you were unaware of or have not taken the opportunity to reflect on in the cross cultural work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

- Potential for emotions to surface from direct experiences in the provision or receipt of child welfare services, or intergenerational traumas from family and community members.

If you have an emotional response while participating in this research there are supports that can assist you. These include:

- You can contact the Ktunaxa Nation Health department at 250-489-2426. They are aware that their contact information is being provided to you.
- You can contact me and I will ensure you are connected to a support person who is independent of me.

The potential benefits of your participation are:

- Contributing to limited research in the area of Indigenous child welfare ally work.
- Supporting non-Indigenous leaders transform their leadership approaches.
- Furthering your self-reflection on your experiences with Indigenous child welfare.
- Participating in the exploration and development of a framework for how non-Indigenous people may become allies with Indigenous peoples in the oversight and delivery of child welfare practices.
- Increasing the number of non-Indigenous leaders practicing in a good way with Indigenous children, families, and leaders.
- Assisting me in the completing my Masters of Indigenous Social Work.

It is anticipated possible dissemination of this thesis will include utilizing the findings of this thesis in presentations to:

- government (First Nation, Provincial, Federal),
- delegated Aboriginal child welfare agencies,
- research participants, and
- First Nation communities.

No identifying information will be disseminated without the prior consent of the research participant.

You will be provided with a series of questions in advance of any schedule interviews. I will audio record and take notes during all interviews. I may follow up with you to clarify what we discussed in our interviews. You will be provided a copy of my notes for review to ensure accuracy of the information you have provided to me.

Information from this study will be disposed of as follows:

- All copies of my notes, both written and electronic, will be stored in my personal laptop and in my office at home and will be deleted six months after the thesis has been approved through the defense and sign off process set out by the University of Victoria.
- The thesis will be posted on the University of Victoria website for use by others wanting to understand the process of becoming allies in working with Aboriginal children and families.
- The findings of this research may be used for presentations at conferences or to publish journal articles for use by professionals wanting to become allies.

Your time and participation in this study is most appreciated and will be invaluable in the contributing to assisting others in becoming allies.

Your signature indicates that you have read the above information, have had an opportunity to ask and have your questions answered and that you are agreeing to participate in this research. If after signing this consent you decide you do not wish to continue with your participation your consent can be withdrawn.

Agreement to participate in the research:

- ☐ Yes I am wanting to participate in this research
- ☐ No I am not wanting to participate in this research

Participant identity in research findings:

- ☐ I consent to be identified by name and credited in the results of this research
- ☐ I do not consent to be identified by name and do not consent to be credited in the results of this research

Participant responses:

- ☐ I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the research findings
- ☐ I do not consent to have my responses attributed to me by names in the research findings

Name

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent form will be left with you and copy will be taken by the researcher.

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria. If you have any concerns you can reach this board at ethics@uvic.ca or 250-472-4545.

Thank You!!!!!!

Appendix D: Questions for Indigenous Leaders

- Thank you for your interest in this research initiative.
- Do you have any questions regarding this research initiative?
- Do you have any questions regarding your consent to participate in this research?
- I am very interested in how a settler white leader becomes an ally. There has been much research on what constitutes an ally. I really interested in the phenomenon (process) of becoming an ally.
- In your involvement in the provision of child welfare services to Aboriginal children, families and communities are there any settler white leaders that you consider an ally in working with Aboriginal peoples?
- If yes:
 - Please describe this person?
 - Please describe what you know of this person's journey to become an ally?
 - What does this person do that makes you consider this person an ally?
 - Please share any stories or experiences you have about this person.
 - How does this person do _____ (what was described above) that makes you consider this person an ally?
 - Please describe experiences, interactions, observations, etc. that support your view this person is an ally?
 - What differentiates this person from others who would not consider an ally?
 - What do you believe are the characteristics of settler white leaders that make them allies?
- If no:
 - Are there any settler white social workers that you would consider an ally?
 - If yes same questions as above regarding settler white leaders
 - If no:
 - what do you think about the possibility of a settler white person becoming an ally?
 - what would be required for a person to be an ally?

Appendix E: Questions for Non-Indigenous Leaders who are considered allies by Indigenous Leaders

- Thank you for your interest in this research initiative?
- Do you have any questions regarding this research initiative?
- Do you have any questions regarding your consent to participate in this research?
- I am very interested in how a settler white leader becomes an ally. There has been much research on what constitutes an ally. I really interested in the phenomenon (process) of becoming an ally.
- You have been identified by an Indigenous leader as an ally in Aboriginal child welfare. This is an honour! Are you open to participating in this research?
- Please describe your history/experience both at a personal and professional level in interacting with Aboriginal children, families, and communities.
- What is your first memory(ies) in your interaction with Aboriginal children, families, and communities?
- Please share any stories or experiences you have that have supported you becoming an ally?
- What do you think contributed to you being considered an ally?
- What do you think have been the formative experiences in your journey to become an ally?
- If I were to ask the Aboriginal children, families, and communities you work or have worked with what would they say about you that makes you an ally?
- If I were to ask Aboriginal leaders you work or have worked with what would they say about you that makes you an ally?
- How do you think you developed into being an ally? What were the teaching you received? How did you receive these teachings?
- What is your understanding of what the research states regarding the phenomenon (process) of becoming an ally?
- Some say that the journey to become an ally involves one's head, one's heart, and one's spirit? Thinking of your head, your heart, and your spirit what can you share in terms of your stories and experiences that have influenced your head, your heart, and your spirit?