

Duoethnography for Reconciliation: Learning through Conversations

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Positioned by our different cultural backgrounds and histories, we come together as educators to form an ethical space of engagement to discuss the complexities of truth and reconciliation in Canada. As an opening for our dialogue, we reflect on our earlier research—a duoethnographic reading of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action. We came to this work with little prior knowledge, and mixed feelings of nervousness, reverence, and responsibility. By sharing our journey, we may offer direction and support for others interested in beginning or furthering their own reconciliatory journeys. We invite readers to join in our conversations around coming together, negotiating collective responsibilities, making space for dialogue, and creating safety for making mistakes. As we walk together, we see this as a complex opening of possibilities, which requires continuous and simultaneous circling back and circling forward.

Positionnées par nos milieux et nos antécédents culturels différents, nous nous retrouvons ensemble comme enseignantes pour former un espace éthique où discuter des complexités de la vérité et réconciliation au Canada. En guise de début de dialogue, nous réfléchissons sur notre recherche antérieure, une lecture duo-ethnographique des 94 appels à l’action de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation. Quand nous avons commencé ce travail, nous avons peu de connaissances antérieures et ressentions à la fois de la nervosité, de la révérence et un sens de responsabilité. En partageant notre parcours, nous espérons orienter et appuyer ceux et celles qui s’intéresseraient à entamer ou poursuivre leur propre processus de réconciliation. Nous invitons les lecteurs à se joindre à nos conversations portant sur le rassemblement, la négociation de responsabilités collectives, et l’établissement d’un d’espace pour le dialogue où les gens se sentent à l’aise de commettre des erreurs. En se déplaçant ensemble, nous entrevoyons des possibilités complexes qui exigent des mouvements continus et simultanés vers l’avant et l’arrière.

Although we now see that our reconciliatory work began long before our formal inquiry, we had yet to articulate our interests and actions in these terms until we came together. Three years ago, we met at the beginning of our doctoral programs and embarked on reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC; 2015a) *Calls to Action*. We asked ourselves: “What are we being called to do?” The TRC’s summary of the final report (2015b) and *Calls to Action* (2015a; hereafter referred to as *Calls*) had recently been released and we found ourselves in conversations about the larger implications. As these documents were written to address and redress the experiences of Canada’s residential school survivors, we shared a sense of urgency and responsibility to know more.

Our starting place—reading all 94 *Calls* together—was perhaps chosen out of circumstance;

however, we never could have anticipated how this work would change our lives. Our learning has delved deeper, and extended beyond, the formal documents. In this paper, we attempt to retain the organic nature of our original reading and discussions. We frame our practice around the principles of duoethnographic research which involves negotiating language, exposing our insecurities and questions, as well as coming to realizations through stories and struggles. By returning to our earlier work, we hope to share our learning and expand our circle. Our hope is for this work to resonate with the experiences, questions, hesitations, and excitement of others engaged, or wishing to engage, in reconciliatory work.

We see the scholarship around decolonizing education (Battiste, 1998; Haig-Brown, 2009) and Indigenizing education (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Cajete, 1994; Denis, 2007; Simpson, 2014) to be inextricably interwoven, both problematizing normative ways of knowing and doing, and promoting resurgence of culturally-informed practices; yet, we recognize the nuanced differences in their aims: the first problematizes the existing Western/colonial hegemonic influence over educational practices and systems, while the latter seeks to purposefully bring Indigenous pedagogies into educational practices and systems. Given our different positions, one of Métis heritage and one of settler descendent, we gravitate to these fields. We are also inspired by work around education-for-reconciliation (Butler, Ng-A-Fook, Vaudrin-Charette & McFadden, 2016; Cannon, 2012; Korteweg & Root, 2016; Korteweg & Russell, 2012), with the goal of renewing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. In what follows, we explicate our understanding of duoethnography, delineating how the theory, practice, and ethics of research guide our inquiry. Then, we invite readers into our dialogue as we reflect on the processes of learning and relating.

Duoethnography as a Guide

The conversation that follows is a reflection on our initial reading of the *Calls*. In both this piece, and our previous course paper and subsequent conference presentations, we are guided by Joe Norris and Richard Sawyer's tenants of duoethnography which allow us to make meaning through our differences and dialogue (Norris & Sawyer, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013) around reconciliation. We are positioned by our different histories and backgrounds. Thus, we understand the duoethnographic process as a critical conversation, where we strive to push and question each other on cultural aspects of identity, language, and values. Although we share life experiences and stories, we feel an accountability to maintaining good relations as we help each other arrive at multiple understandings of the topic and ourselves (Norris & Sawyer, 2013; Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012). Said differently, we engage with this method to help examine our own lived curriculum (Pinar, 1994) and negotiate how we might collaboratively proceed with initiatives in good ways. In this time, post-TRC *Calls*, we position ourselves as the research sites within the multifarious topic of reconciliation; we see this undertaking as essential, albeit the most difficult work of our time.

Through the duoethnographic process, which Norris, Sawyer, and Lund (2012) describe as "participatory, dialogic and non-prescriptive" (p. 12), we are positioned in a relationship to one another in the praxis of our conversations; as such, there is a dynamic interplay of theory, practice, and ethics in our duoethnographic engagements. Theoretically, as we will further explain through our dialogue, this inquiry centers on generating an ethical space of engagement (Ermine, 2007)—to form trust while questioning taken-for-granted narratives and exploring complex topics. In doing so, we hope to honour the intent of the *Calls* and promote renewed

relations. Our aim is to go beyond excessive self-contemplation towards a collective unsettling. That said, we recognize the complexity of this work and that certain assumptions of voice, power, truth, and representation are embedded in our practice. We make our voices explicit, wishing not to speak on behalf of others, and to invite readers into the conversation. Consistent with duoethnography, we see knowledge as fluid and do not to strive to make truth claims through this work. Thus, we proceed with the understanding that sharing perspectives— influenced by our own values, assumptions, concerns, and aspirations—may reveal new possibilities of living well together.

Practicing Reconciliation through Duoethnographic Conversation

The conversation that follows reflects our duoethnographic process of meeting, discussing, and reflecting on the complexities of truth-telling and reconciliation. Considering our work, the words of Hans Georg Gadamer (1960/1989) resonate with us, in his words:

no one knows in advance what will ‘come out’ of a conversation. Understanding or its failure is like an event that happens to us Conversation has a spirit of its own, and that language in which it is conducted bears its own truth with it (p. 383).

Our initial research was structured, yet the process developed a spirit of its own. When we tried to translate our experiences into the conventional format of a research product—rationale, method, results, conclusion—it was not easily recast. We tried to package our narrative corresponding to this form. As a result, the final product did not capture the richness of our experience. We now see that our work could not be easily fit into a prescriptive colonial frame.

In the following dialogue we tell the story of our meeting, our process for coming into conversation, and our recognition of emergent complexities. Following Norris (2008), we see that “storytelling [data collection] and discussion [analysis] are part of the writing process, not discrete phases” (p. 235). Deciding which conversations to represent, we were mindful that readers may be practitioners, researchers, students, or other persons wanting to take up the *Calls*. For us, reconciliatory work is not done in isolation. Therefore, we hope to provide an opening for readers to question their roles and responsibilities in enacting reconciliation.

Now, we invite you to join our conversation. Feel free to ask questions, reflect on your positionality, and carry the conversation forward in the best way you know how. Although your participation in the dialogue is not demarcated in the turn-taking, we trust that you will engage in your own way. Allow our stories to provoke you; allow yourself to react; and interrogate your responses. As the learning is different for everyone, we ask that you take from our discussion what you need, remembering that reconciliation is an ongoing process and not a finished product or finite endpoint. Wouldn’t you agree?

Jen I: Our duoethnography was a starting point that quickly became something bigger. Meeting you, our initial conversations in class, and our dialogues that would linger as you drove me home each day, have all been formative for my understandings. We were taken by the topics of truth, reconciliation, and Indigenous pedagogy, but I wonder why I came to this research program called by these questions in the first place? My own lived-experience of being middle-

class, able-bodied, white, has been privileged, likely in ways I do not fully recognize. At the same time, I feel a sense of gratitude and fullness while engaging with Indigenous ways of being and seeing. When I met you, I sensed a quick resonance as we both seemed to be grappling with issues and tensions of identity, belonging, and responsibility.

Jen II: I felt it too. We ended up having all the same classes, desks beside each other...

Both: Same names.

Jen I: While all backgrounds and contexts are multi-layered, learning of my settler ancestry brought tension and questions that seemed too contentious to discuss in class. I was unsure if I fully understood the “truth” or what it meant to know the “truth.” Whose truth was I after? What would I do with what was uncovered? It seemed we both wanted to learn more. Our meeting was timely, the fall semester after the *Calls* (2015a) were released. As part of institutional and national conversations, I continued to hear mention of the *Calls* and felt a need to closer look at them myself. I was grateful when you agreed to read and make sense of these documents with me.

Jen II: I was grateful you asked.

Jen I: Taking up this reading with you brought more meaning to the words than if I had read the *Calls* on my own. We came together with similar backgrounds teaching K-12, deep appreciations for the natural environment, deeply felt connections to land and place. We also were positioned differently based on our life stories, cultural identities, and geographic contexts. As educators, it seemed fitting that we question who we are in relation to TRC findings and *Calls*, what are we being called to do, and how we might bring this work forward in our lives and in our classrooms? It seemed symbolic that we began by first positioning ourselves while supporting one another: two bodies, hearts, and voices coming together to address some of the messiness inherent in this work and a desire to do good by the process that brought these documents to life.

Jen II: It was both intimidating and empowering.

Jen I: As I read the transcript from our dialogue, I feel we embodied the essence of Willie Ermine’s (2007) “ethical space of engagement” as a place to safely and honestly position ourselves. As Ermine (2007) states, “... through the contrasting of their identities, and the subsequent creation of two solitudes with each claiming their own distinct and autonomous view of the world, a theoretical space between them is opened” (p.194).

Dwelling in this space afforded opportunities for self-reflection. With each *Call*, we shared our stories and perceptions. By exposing myself in this way and having someone question my beliefs, I reached deeper understandings. I gained insight into how the world could be otherwise. This came with vulnerability—knots would fill my stomach and I could feel my back tensing up—as I admitted what I did not know; my understandings of “Canada,” education, colonialism, and reconciliation were challenged. Ermine states:

At the superficial level of encounter, the two entities may indeed acknowledge each other but there is a clear lack of substance or depth to the encounter. What remains hidden and enfolded are the deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions that will inevitably influence and animate the kind of relationship the two can have (p.195).

Our discussions humbled me. I realized the level of deep conversation and trust needed to be good relations. I had to be open and actively resist being defensive at times. It broadened how I see the world. I wonder how we developed such a level of comfort so quickly.

Jen II: Yes, there was an ease to our conversations. I think it helped that we were both new to the academy. There was so much that we did not know. We were learning together. These experiences created a bond between us. Our relationship was strengthened by shared hardships early on in the program. We entered into a space where our differing social contexts, cultural backgrounds, and personal histories became part of the ongoing dialogue. Shawn Wilson (2008) describes relationality as being at the heart of an Indigenous research paradigm; as such, it felt natural to choose a duoethnographic method in reading the *Calls*. The methodology requires that we work in relationship. For us, this often included coffee and Timbits. The document calls for people to come together. As we shared stories, insights, questions, and more, we developed trust. The safety made it easy to describe my personal heritage—my Métis and settler identities—and experiences of being both, with authority in neither. I grew up walking between two worlds. For me, the *Calls* read like a rallying cry: we are being called to make changes in our western ways.

Jen I: The importance of this work takes me to Paulette Regan's (2009) *Unsettling the Settler Within*, in which she points out the lack of opportunity for people to have reflective dialogue about our histories, present realities, and future possibilities. She states:

... [W]e cannot change the past, [so] we try to ignore it. Talking about the burden of history makes us feel frustrated and overwhelmed...we talk past each other, not hearing the deeper truths residing in stories that are troubling for both teller and listener, albeit for different reasons (p. 20).

I can relate to the difficulty in talking about the complex histories, but I feel it is necessary to do so. I keep returning to the concepts of identity and truth. I did not want to be ignorant to history. It was important for me to have a deep understanding of the complexities to move forward in a good way. Our conversations were ongoing and even as we approached the *Calls* in a more formal way it seemed like a natural and organic dialogue. We decided to frame our discussions around the question, "What are the *Calls* calling us to do, and to be?" This initial question was only loosely defined, providing space for emergent themes and allowing the meaning-making from our stories to guide and frame our inquiry.

Jen II: A Pandora's box indeed, but the hope remained—hope that we could have a better understanding of what was being asked of us. Hope for a presentation. Hope for a paper. Hope that we would learn something about truth and reconciliation, about academic processes, and about ourselves. Where did we begin?

Jen I: I remember coming over to your place, touring around town, and eating dinner with your family; then we began. We had to negotiate the "best" way to go about it, discussing: the ethics of personal storytelling, our desire to honour the document, and the need for rigour and validity. These conversations were driven by the research methodology courses that we were taking; we laughed at the irony of this western discourse and how it cut through what we were trying to do. You often disrupted my tendency to follow the book. We took turns reading the *Calls* aloud and discussing what each one meant to us. This process felt right. We recorded our conversations which seemed weird at first, but eventually I forgot we were recording. That first meeting we only discussed the first ten *Calls* over the course of two hours. We found ourselves needing to do more research. We investigated terminology and found references beyond the scope of the document, such as *Jordan's Principle* (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, 2016) and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2007). These documents provided additional jumping off points for debate and stories. After our

first gathering, we scheduled weekly meetings over FaceTime to continue our conversations.

Jen II: When I listened back through our purposeful visiting—over ten hours of recorded dialogue—you had that awful cold for months; I worried that you got it from my kids when you came down for the first session. If we had started over FaceTime, you might never have been sick at all. I am truly sorry. You showed such strength and commitment to continue with the work. It became evident that our relationship mattered. Later into the calls, I tried storying our conversations to illustrate the breadth and range of topics we discussed; but in doing so, they lost the richness of our insights and connections. Like a Droste effect image—a photo within a photo within a photo within a photo—the storying became a summary of the recordings from our study around a document that summarized six volumes, that came out of thousands of hours of testimony, from generations of traumas, life experiences, and histories. In an effort to be academic, we had narrowed our scope, rather than honouring our learning experiences and knowings. Inspired by our duoethnographic process, we sought ways to become better informed and more involved in Indigenous events, such as attending the Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s reconciliation inspired “Going Home Star” performance in Banff, Alberta in late March 2016, and participating in the Native Centre’s Grandmother’s Teas at the university.

Jen I: Another enriching part of our process was our increased community involvement. We became more actively engaged and we found ways to include others. Our circle became larger right before our eyes. After we storied our conversations and drafted the first paper we presented our work at the Rouge Forum Conference (MacDonald & Markides, 2016). We laughed when they gave us a 90-minute time-slot. We wondered what we would do with that amount of time. You had the idea to have conference delegates participate in a circle activity resembling our dialogue process as part of our presentation. I felt vulnerable going into this, not sure what would come up, and found the activity was extremely generative. The group participation in our activity exposed a need to open more spaces for dialogue. It was apparent that framing our discussion around the *Calls* helped people share their experiences in a focused way. On a deeper level, I left reflecting on what makes these types of “safe spaces” flow, who gets to decide if they are safe? What does it mean to be safe? Had everyone there felt safe? Should we always feel safe? Personally, I grow the most when I allow myself to be vulnerable. Could what occurred there be re-created with another group?

Jen II: Despite our apprehensions, the 90-minute time-slot became a gift. My eyes were opened to the trepidation of pre-service teachers. They are expected to teach Indigenous content; yet, in many cases, they have very little prior knowledge. Our multi-ethnographic approach saw many voices come together around two of the educational *Calls*, and highlighted the need to create spaces for people to explore, discuss, and expand their understandings. The more I am involved in Indigenous education, the more I see that people hold deeply-rooted preconceived notions and misconceptions. I am troubled by things people say, but it would be worse to not address their erroneous ideas. In my youth, I had similar beliefs about “Natives” that lived in and around my hometown of Smithers, B.C. I saw the dilapidated houses and yards on the neighbouring reserves. There were areas that I avoided walking—places where “Indians” huffed Lysol. My knowledge of Indigenous people was limited. I knew that I had Indigenous heritage too, but for a long time my family kept it hidden. It was easier to be seen as white. I understand now that it was better for my father’s business. Not everyone had the luxury of “passing” as part of the dominant culture. All these years later, I still struggle with the tension between being proud of my Métis heritage and feeling guilt and anger for not knowing more about my family’s past.

Jen I: I agree that people continue to hold deeply-rooted misconceptions. I grew up in Ontario adjacent to a Mohawk Nation and there was little interaction between people on and off the reserve. I attended high school with Mohawk students and there was little interaction between groups and little done to celebrate difference. My ignorance continued. It was during my teacher training in New Zealand, and introduction to the Māori culture, that sparked my interests in Indigenous knowledges. As an environmental educator, the Māori language gave resonance to my feelings of connection and aliveness experienced out on the land and water. My exposure to the resilience and beauty of the Māori people, made me more attuned when I returned to Canada. I became more aware of the mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples. The more I followed this trail the more I wanted to learn. Teaching social studies, physical education, and outdoor education, I saw the importance of this topic—for the environment, social justice, the body, wellness—and wanted to respectfully incorporate Indigenous teachings into my practice. Being a white person interested in these topics, I did not know where to begin, who to ask, what to ask, et cetera. I did not want to romanticize Indigenous ways or use them for my own benefit. My intentions were good, but I had a lot to learn. Now, I see the need to honour these tensions and discomforts to move forward.

Jen II: As a Montessori educator, I was comfortable teaching broadly about history from the start of time. It is part of the “Cosmic Education” to introduce the story of the universe beginning with the Big Bang, the story of the Earth, the Timeline of Life, and other stories that help create a sense of place within a bigger picture. Teaching the history of Canada and Alberta with my grade 4/5 class, I was surprised at how little information there was in the textbooks and resources about the First Peoples of Canada: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. I felt compelled to include more teachings about these groups before introducing the colonial history. There were times when I had parents, grandparents, and teaching assistants questioning my practice—is this really part of the curriculum? Fortunately, I knew my program of studies and was confident enough in my practice that I could assuage their concerns. The students’ learning also spoke powerfully about the importance of this work. Field trips to Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park and Glenbow Museum became highlights of the year, with many students asking their families to take them back to these sites on weekends and holidays. While I felt that my classroom experiences were better than some, I knew that I had more to learn. Entering into the doctoral program, I hoped to find community and participate in meaningful engagements. I was especially grateful when you suggested we take this research journey together. As we read through all 94 *Calls*, we had less to say about some areas, such as Child Welfare, Health, and Justice. Both education sections—from legacy to reconciliation—were areas we could dig into more deeply.

Jen I: I recall struggling with what language to use. I felt uncomfortable when the recorder started. The conversation seemed stressed. I was still finding my way into this work and felt nervous about what might come up and potential implications of a recording. I was overthinking it and this seemed to silence me. Instead of speaking from my heart, I was speaking from my head. Over time this became more organic for me. We had many discussions around the proper terminology—“Aboriginal” versus “Indigenous” versus “FMNI,” not wanting to be offensive but inclusive to everyone. Likewise, for terms such as “Nation” versus “Reserve.” We decided to stay consistent with the language of the document. I remain unsettled by these issues. Language is messy and is loaded in history. Immediately, these terms create dichotomies and I see how broad terms can flatten the complexity of identity. I think about what I call myself, or what I am called in-relation to this document (Settler? White? Non-Indigenous?) and how the label

positions me to my ancestry, but it is not all that I am. I am a daughter, sister, friend, teacher, student, “Canadian,” et cetera. My identity is layered and complex.

Jen II: The difference in terminology varies from author to author, text to text, and context to context. I usually look to the examples set by the scholars I am reading, but this did not provide clarity for our work. In *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (Battiste & Barman, 1995), co-editor Marie Battiste and contributor Willie Ermine use “Aboriginal” while contributor Eber Hampton uses “Native.” In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Battiste, 2000), editor Marie Battiste writes “Indigenous” in the introduction and “Aboriginal” in her chapter; Gregory Cajete, James (Sakej) Young Blood, and Graham Hingangaroa Smith use “Indigenous” in their contributions; while Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith writes specifically about “Kaupapa Māri” research. Looking at more recent works, we see that Jo-ann Archibald (2008), Shawn Wilson (2008), and Margaret Kovach (2009), all use “Indigenous” in their publications. “Indigenous” feels like the best choice for our context of educational scholarship, yet the TRC’s *Calls* use the term “Aboriginal.” Initially, it made sense for us to carry forward the language of the document; but as we continue, I think we are both more comfortable with the term “Indigenous.” I agree that the terms position us and that dichotomies can be stigmatizing. As I mentioned before, I do not feel comfortable claiming myself as wholly Indigenous. I am Métis. I am of documented Swampy Cree and undocumented Coast Salish First Nations ancestries. I recognize that documentation is a colonial construct. Perhaps, I should say that I am unclaimed by either of these communities. I am claimed by the Métis Nation; of which, I am grateful and humbled to belong. I am also of settler ancestry: English, Scottish, Swedish, Welsh, Belgian, and Irish. There are less questions and measures when claiming these ancestries. Our identities are complex and, as you say, “messy and layered.” It will be important to keep these tensions in mind as we revisit the *Education Calls*, beginning with the Legacy.

Jen I: I appreciate that the *Calls* are divided into two sections—Legacy and Reconciliation. This reminds me to constantly consider, and reconsider, the truths of colonial history, in combination with engaging in new approaches for reconciling and renewing relationships. An act of balance. Remembering and growing. In the Legacy section, there are seven *Calls* around Education and some have several subsections. What struck us with the first read was the formality of each call, always beginning with the address “We call upon...”, for example with *Call 7*: “We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians” (TRC, 2015a, pp. 1-2). When I read this formal language I sometimes find it difficult, as an educator and concerned citizen, to feel addressed. It comes with a sense of delay. The federal government needs to create a joint strategy, before I can be part of the collective movement. I struggled to find an entry point. I hope good work is being done, but it is far removed from my everyday experience. This does not rid me from the responsibility of renewing relationships in my own context. How can individuals best work alongside the work being done at governmental levels?

Jen II: I agree, the language is quite formal and carries a tone of reverence. Accordingly, I had to look up Section 43 of the *Criminal Code* of Canada, which states:

Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances. (R.S., c. C-34, s. 43.)

I can see why this is a contentious law. It provides a loophole for the abuse that took place in residential schools. It also protects people who abuse children in foster care. The “force” may be deemed “reasonable” or justifiable by the perpetrator, especially when Indigenous children have been seen as “savages” (MacDonald, 1883, pp.1107-1108) since the time of colonization. These racist sentiments and discriminatory practices are deeply rooted in Canadian history and insidious in the ways they manifest today. Thinking of Indigenous people as lesser members of society has been normalized. Sir John A. MacDonald recognized the power imbalance in 1883; he said, “On the question of education, I fear we must admit, on behalf of both Governments, since 1871, that we have been too much in the habit of treating the Indians as minors and acting in too paternal a manner towards them” (p. 1101). The dominant culture has held power over Indigenous groups for so long, that many people are ignorant to their own complacent racism. Why should one group lord power over another and make decisions for them? In the case of Section 43 of the *Criminal Code* of Canada, the law should protect the children, rather than the offenders. There is a lot of privilege and power in being a parent, or acting in place of a parent: as a teacher or foster parent. People should not be immune from penalty if they misuse their authority. Working with children is sacred. Leroy Little Bear (2000) describes:

Children are greatly valued and are considered gifts from the Creator. From the moment of birth, children are the objects of love and kindness from a large circle of relatives and friends. They are strictly trained but in a “sea” of love and kindness. As they grow, children are given praise and recognition for their achievements both by the extended family and by the group as a whole.... Children are seldom physically punished, but they are sternly lectured about the implications of wrongful and unacceptable behaviour. (p. 81)

Until the underlying racist attitudes are addressed across our society, it becomes imperative that this law be repealed to protect all children.

Jen I: Even if racist attitudes do change; I do not believe the power imbalance inherent in this law serves society well. Using force to teach respect and discipline, does not create a world where loving attachments to self, others, or the land are possible. Linking to my above question around the renewal of relationships, I find entry points into *Call 10*. While still calling on the federal government to draft new legislation, I found the subsections, for example: “Developing culturally appropriate curricula Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships” (TRC, 2015a, p. 2), drew me in. Not only is this a quest around identity, but also being in relationship. Only in the past few years have I come to know the Treaty negotiations that my ancestors entered into but did not fulfill. Learning about treaties in school would have undoubtedly altered my understandings of my identity and my part in the story, as I grew up on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee people. I now see my connection to the Two Row Wampum treaty (1613) that was established between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch. It expressed principles of peace, friendship, and mutual respect. The symbolic representation of this treaty is “two canoes flowing down the same river, both running in the same direction, but never crossing paths or diverting the other” (Redwing-Saunders & Hill, 2007, p. 1021). The essence of this first treaty was consistent with the good will extended to my British ancestors through the Silver Covenant Chain (Ransom & Ettenger, 2001; Redwing-Saunders & Hill, 2007). I often think about being on this life path, travelling side by side, and how I might best engage with what this treaty means—as an individual, community member, and teacher.

Jen II: I remember when you first introduced me to this metaphor and how I struggled with it. I still do. My mind travels to the canoe of Peter Cole (2002) and his journey in aboriginalizing methodology within the academy. In his/story, the canoe is shared. Cole sets up the expectation of following protocols for the “invited guest” (p. 448) and uses the canoe metaphor to demonstrate the differences between western and Indigenous epistemologies. His work brings me joy—like poetry, his words are a pointed torrent. Cole’s writing was my first experience of resistance back in 2002. I realize that the two-canoe metaphor speaks of something different. My difficulty with the analogy is not being able to place or see myself in either canoe. For me, this dilemma has been a reoccurring theme since returning to school; there are many people who do not fit neatly into either canoe. I have met people who did not come to know their Indigeneity until later in life; some came from Indigenous families, but were raised by non-Indigenous foster parents; some were raised on reserves, but were not taught their language or traditions; while others made a conscious choice not to participate in their culture. I wonder if there are descendants of the people who entered into the Two Row Wampum treaty who no longer see themselves as distinctly situated in one canoe or the other? Our identities are so inextricably connected to where we come from that I get defensive in this conversation.

This pause brings me back to your question about renewing relationships in conjunction with the governmental initiatives. You have gotten to the heart of the matter. From a wholistic perspective, the efforts needed for reconciliation must be made simultaneously, across many areas, by individuals and groups alike. I see changes being made in schools and teacher education programs, actions being taken by our government, communities making land acknowledgements, and individuals entering into difficult conversations. I see people pushing back against reconciliation, asking: Why is this happening now? Why do Indigenous people deserve special treatment? Why not other groups? How is this my problem? Questions like these have been around for a long time, but the difference now is that more people are responding. With the *Calls*, there is greater strength and impetus for change.

Jen I: Our conversations keep returning to the complexities of identity. I fill-up with discomfort and unease because I do not want to offend your position. I understand that several generations have passed since these original treaties. I agree that I am oversimplifying a layered terrain in terms of how people understand their identities. I hear people say “we are all treaty people”, and I wonder what that means? My intention is not to create a dichotomy but contribute to a conversation around the legacy of colonialism—how might we all move forward as good neighbours? Returning to the original agreements gives me a wider picture of the *Calls* and what it will mean to co-exist peacefully. Largely, Sharon Venne (2011) points me to the good faith and trust placed into the treaties from the Indigenous perspective. Respecting the land and natural laws is central. I think recognition that Indigenous worldviews are fundamentally different from western worldviews is an important seed for *Call* 10. I worry if this is not recognized “drafting new Aboriginal education legislation” (TRC, 2015a, p. 2) will be about fitting Indigenous traditions and understandings into the existing western system, where suitable. An authentic Indigenous curriculum will require new approaches and conceptualization. I do not see it as placing myself in a canoe but entering renewed and ethical relationships to give voice to my friends across the river. I am interested to hear more about what you mean by “wholistic perspective”? What specific changes are you seeing?

Jen II: You have not offended me, but I appreciate your sensitivity. It is an inner tension that I negotiate when an Indigenous versus non-Indigenous dichotomy is presented. As Little Bear (2000) explains, the western and Indigenous worldviews are incongruent but a wholly

Indigenous worldview no longer exists as it did before. I think that revisiting the treaty agreements requires considerable teaching about Indigenous beliefs, perspectives, and worldviews, coupled with an openness to learning on the part of the dominant western culture. It is a beautiful and hopeful thought though. I, too, worry that the development of “culturally appropriate curricula” (TRC, 2015a, p. 7) will be sidestepped, and existing practices will be given a veneer of Indigenization rather than a mindful reconceptualization. To me, a wholistic perspective considers all things in relationship to all other things, simultaneously—in tension and in flux (Little Bear, 2000; Donald, 2009)—like “a ‘spider web’ of relations” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 79) extending to the more-than human world, as you often say. It is a recognition of the complex dynamic relationships that exist in complex dynamic systems (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008), with the added dimensions of ethical responsibilities and seven generations consciousness. There are many moving and interrelated parts to reconciliation, with micro-changes and macro-changes: from a person noticing increased representation and acknowledgement of Indigenous protocols, perspectives, and knowledges (whether they agree with them or not, people are noticing); to whole systems and institutions working to reform their operations, policies, and relationships in good ways (whether they are successful or not will be determined over time, but they are trying). I am heartened by the efforts and risk-taking. The stumbling and misgivings should be expected along the way; this is no easy journey.

Jen I: This conversation is constantly shifting my comprehension of what both truth and reconciliation mean. They are always in flux. The dynamic nature makes me feel vulnerable and sensitive. I think acknowledging my sensitivities is an important part of the process and wonder how this might manifest in others. Do you think the discomfort will turn people away from the conversation? I want to invite more people in, but also want the conversations to be authentic to not flatten the seriousness. In terms of educating for the legacy, I think we need to consider the different interpretations on both sides of the original relationship. These might act as valuable lessons and far-reaching reminders of our failed-relationships, and provide a starting point for mending. While I agree that revisiting the original treaties will also mean teaching about Indigenous worldviews, I feel that many educators will require a greater foundational knowledge first. Only then will we be able to create a culturally responsive curriculum. It is about teaching a relationship, based on understanding and openness with each other. What does it mean to renew a relationship in a good way? I think about close relationships in my own circle and how complex and layered they are. I need to remind myself to reflect on who I am and to listen without judgement. It is not always easy. Maintaining good relationships requires a lot of work. How do we teach students to be in relationship? In my schooling experience, these skills were never taught. With that, I think we have moved on to the next set of calls that consider Education for Reconciliation. What would a curriculum and pedagogy based on “a ‘spider web’ of relations” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 79) look like? I also feel heartened by the micro and macro changes you have noted. Conversations about Indigenous-settler relations are becoming commonplace compared to when I was growing up but, as you say, it will take time. In terms of developing a curriculum for reconciliation, what do you think are the most important elements to consider?

Jen II: For me, imagining a curriculum for reconciliation looks like the learning from our course with Elder Bob Cardinal of the Maskekosihk Enoch Nation. In his teaching, the path was not prescribed; it was responsive to the needs of the learners. Many of the teachings were introduced through stories from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, such as Elder Bob Cardinal, Elder Josephine Buffalo, and Elder Wilton Good Striker. In the web of relations, everyone is

treated as family. I feel a bond with the people we met through the course. Each gathering involved ceremony and ended with a potluck meal. Typically, we do not eat with strangers; we eat with family and friends. Sharing meals created openings for relationship building. It was also an experience in slowing down. We did not have class and then race back to our busy lives, commitments, and obligations. We gathered, visited, laughed, and grew closer. I prioritized this time—the value was apparent and unparalleled. The place study assignment, where we purposefully entered into an attentive and prolonged relationship with the land, was similar. It forced me to slow down, be present in the moments, and attend to my surroundings. I felt healthier, more peaceful, and at ease. While I rushed to meet deadlines in other parts of my life, the assignment gave me a justifiable reason to get outside and observe. In doing so, my life felt fuller. A curriculum for reconciliation might involve similar opportunities. I think that reconciliation education will prioritize relationships: creating community and valuing time on the land. In what ways do you imagine a curriculum for reconciliation manifesting?

Jen I: I am grateful we could take part in that course. The structure over the 13-moon Cree Calendar, the authenticity of our class meetings, and the meaningful impact of our assignments have influenced how I imagine different relationships. These teachings came from knowledge systems my ancestors had tried to eradicate. The course transformed how I will approach teaching and learning relationships going forward. Kindness and compassion are at the core. It seems obvious to me as I write—as a human-being working with other human-beings that kindness and compassion should be the compass. Reflecting on my practice, I worry I was too caught up in the details of outcomes, planning, and assessments, that I became inattentive to such basic considerations. I also recall Elder Cardinal using a seed metaphor to spur us along. He spoke of the necessity to first plant a seed before nurturing it to grow and flourish. I keep returning to this image. It seems vital for a curriculum for reconciliation—the plant will not grow overnight. From me, as a non-Indigenous person, I collected some seeds on outdoor education excursions, long before I knew the word reconciliation. The profound experiences I was witnessing with students fueled my longing to learn more Indigenous wisdom and practices of that lands where I live and work. I believe there is much to be learned from these settings of what reconciliation looks like and feels like in connection to the land. For me, reconciliation must extend beyond a land acknowledgment to experiences with the land. I see many of the calls in the reconciliation section focus on the need to provide funding, and the necessity for collaboration and consultation with survivors. We are extremely fortunate to have Elder Cardinal as our guide, yet I worry about the increased demand on Elders that takes them away from essential work in their own communities. What do you think about this balance?

Jen II: I think you have circled back to the tensions between what is needed from Indigenous people to support non-Indigenous peoples' learning, and what honours Indigenous peoples' commitments to their communities. Once you realize how much there is to learn, you also recognize how much time, patience, and generosity is required in the teaching. Rather than feeling guilty or undeserving of the gifts, I think it is better to acknowledge and give thanks for them. There is an abundance of knowledge not found in books or journals. While we could fumble to explain the wonderment of our learning from Elder Bob Cardinal, I think it is better to leave people with a bit of mystery. Perhaps others will be inspired to seek out their own learning in Indigenous circles. It changed our lives in profound ways. It might change their lives too. As for the creation of new curricula, I worry about Elder fatigue from over-dependence on their expertise; but, I trust that there are people ready to take up this work. We have met strong Indigenous leaders—in our volunteer circles and in our academic communities—who hold

tremendous wisdom and demonstrate unwavering commitment to teaching. As Leroy Little Bear (2016) put it, the “Indigenous knowledge is waiting in the wings.” This is not to say that the knowledge will simply be given over. Nor should it be fit into a western framework of understanding the world. Instead, I think that the knowledge can only be shared if there is readiness on the part of the non-Indigenous people. Readiness to work towards reconciliation; to take-action for and with Canada’s Indigenous peoples; and to create space for and value perspectives of others. Readiness to make mistakes and learn from them. Readiness to not be in charge; to not know the path; and to be at peace with the ambiguity of the journey. I fear that without this readiness, there will not be any change in our understanding and relationships. Readiness holds both promise and commitment, an implied openness coupled with a willingness to act differently than before. I see this tension—between readiness to learn and willingness to teach—as necessary to renewing relationships. How might this become an ethical space of reconciliatory engagement?

Jen I: I am learning that the ethical space, while seemingly a simple idea in the beginning, invokes a spirit more complex than people merely coming together for vulnerable and open dialogue. Vulnerability, itself, manifests in many ways. I feel nervous that others will be suspicious of my intentions. I feel nervous that I will say the wrong thing. It is uncomfortable, and people tend to guard against discomfort. While beautiful, this space has become more muddled and messy. I wonder if I had been applying linear logic, flattening out the complexity of a more cyclical process, or the complexity of identity, unintentionally positioning us in a dichotomy. I now see that some of the calls are written in this linear way, as tasks that can be accomplished and checked off the reconciliation list, while other reconciliation efforts need to be iterative processes—not destinations. While the ethical space “offers a venue to step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur” (Ermine, 2007, p. 202), it comes with an assumption that we are able to step outside ourselves and know where our loyalties rest. As I walk this path with you, I see that I hold deep seated beliefs that I did not recognize before, nor may I ever fully realize. I am sure we all do. It is no one’s fault, but a product of the cultures and stories we live by. In the past, I put a lot of energy into being embarrassed by my ignorance. I see how this is unproductive, it also serves as part of my own process. It calls me to keep returning to myself. Dwelling with the tensions, I am learning how to communicate these emotions, to be who I am, and to ask for help in the process. I now understand reconciliation to be deeply personal, as well as collective. Inner and outer work is needed. By overcoming the “I didn’t know” logic, we can help each other shine light on what it is we do not know. Once we do know, we have responsibilities to do better in a continuous process.

Jen II: As for this journey, I am finding strength between us.

As we reflect on our duoethnography, we find that the *Calls* are a minimum of what Canadians should be reading, but likely the calls are more than many will read. Thus, our work may act as an entry point for others looking to read the *Calls*. We share a possibility of how it can be done in a way that pushes personal boundaries, necessitating readers to dwell with each call, ask questions, and begin discussions toward deeper meaning.

As we reflect on our learning, we see that the responsibilities to the reconciliatory relationship go both ways. Coming together is a process. It will look different for each person, as

they are influenced by their individual experiences, worldviews, cultural backgrounds, histories, and geographies. There needs to be room for dialogue; room for learning; room to make mistakes, and room to grow from them. Misunderstandings are inevitable; humility, patience, and forgiveness are key. Reconciliation is not, and cannot be, reductionist. It is a complex opening of possibilities between people that honours human-to-human and human-to-more-than-human relations. Circling back, we are all being called to action, to acknowledge the inadequacies and incommensurability of our existing relationships. Circling forward, we offer that there is no end or destination to this journey. Reconciliation is in the walking together.

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