

Towards Decolonization and Indigenization of Social Work Research: Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action

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In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 Calls to Action, universities across Canada are currently exploring ways to decolonize and Indigenize. The profession of social work, with its historical and ongoing role in the oppression of Indigenous peoples, has a responsibility to advance and integrate Indigenous worldviews for reconciliation and healing.

In response to these aims, we used the World Café method to stimulate large-scale conversations about the ways in which reconciliation can be honoured in one Faculty of Social Work. In the context of a research symposium over the course of two hours, we hosted 10 tables, involving 62 Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, community members, and Elders. Written notes from the table discussions were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed.

We identified six major themes with respect to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation: (1) social work students currently feel unequipped/unqualified to work within an Indigenous context; (2) there exists a critical need to integrate Indigenous knowledges and approaches into the social work curriculum; (3) power and privilege need to be addressed in relationship to truth; (4) respectful relationships between the academy and Indigenous communities must be developed and nurtured; (5) Indigenous representation and voice needs to be enhanced at all levels within the faculty; and (6) reconciliation must be honoured in social work research.

Aligning with our desire for reconciliation, we offer nine recommendations to begin the journey of decolonization and Indigenization in social work research, education, and practice.

Keywords: decolonization, Indigenization, social work, education, research, practice



Figure 1. Mohkinstsis, the land where the Bow River and Elbow River meet.

Mohkinstsis, the Blackfoot word meaning elbow, the land where the Bow River and Elbow River meet (see Figure 1), has been the home of the University of Calgary since 1966 (University of Calgary, 2018). It is also the place we begin our journey towards decolonization and Indigenization of social work education, practice, and research.

Although the University of Calgary is firmly situated in the heart of Treaty 7 territory, Indigenous education and the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing have not been clearly integrated into its scholarly pursuits. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015a) and to demonstrate commitment to create a culturally relevant learning environment (Grey, Coates, & Yellow Bird, 2008), the University of Calgary has recently joined other post-secondary institutions in Canada on the journey towards Indigenization and decolonization (Kerr, 2016; MacDonald, 2016).

Indigenization and Decolonization of Social Work

The Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, with its central priority for social justice, also responded to the call for Indigenization and decolonization. Indigenization has been defined as:

the transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and

practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the university. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability. (Pete, 2016, p. 81)

Decolonization “engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (Smith, 1999, p. 20), a process which, according to Fanon (1963), “sets out to change the order of the world ... Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally” (p. 36). Decolonizing processes are “accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35), which are situated within various contexts and thus take on multiple forms, manifesting in accordance to geography and environment, ideas, and epistemologies (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012).

Kovach (2009) argues that the purpose of decolonization is “to create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed” (p. 85). As Smith (1999) further explains, decolonization is not a rejection of Western theory, research, or knowledge but rather a process of “centering our [Indigenous] concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p. 39).

In this article, we use Martínez Cobo’s working definition of Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations as:

those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. (United Nations, 2009, p. 4)

In this usage, Indigenous peoples refers to Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016).

It is incumbent upon the social work profession and, more precisely, schools of social work across Canada to embark on the journey of decolonization and Indigenization. Indeed, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (2014) outlines that “Social work programs acknowledge and challenge the injustices of Canada’s colonial history and continuing colonization efforts as they relate to the role of social work education in Canada and the self-determination of the Indigenous peoples” (p. 3). Specifically, social workers must act in recognition of the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care, who account for almost one-half (48%)

of all foster children, while representing only 7% of all children in Canada (Turner, 2016). With respect to the child welfare system, the TRC (2015a) makes two specific recommendations:

iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.

iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing. (p. 1)

Social work is also responsible for carrying out this work due to our central pursuit of social justice (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014) and our professions' complicity "with government colonial actions" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 50), which directly contributed "to the practices of colonization and dispossession" of Indigenous peoples (Healy, 2000, p. 61). We also recognize that these processes continue, as current social work practices and education generally fail to incorporate Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies (Kovach, 2010) or account for the social, political, economic, or worldview realities of First Peoples' daily lives (Dumbrill & Green, 2008). Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2013) challenges us in transforming our teaching and learning:

To understand education, one must love it or care deeply about learning, and accept it as a legitimate process for growth and change. To accept education as it is, however, is to betray it. To accept education without betraying it, you must love it for those values that show what it might become. You have to have enough love of learning to have the courage to remake it, imagine it, and teach it. (p. 190)

As a first step in this process of transformation, with a focus on resilience and resistance (Walsh & Aarrestad, 2015), we begin this inquiry. Posing important questions related to truth, reconciliation, indigeneity, and how these can be fostered in our pedagogy and research, we seek to develop ideas on how best to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015a).

Responding to the Calls to Action: The Faculty of Social Work

The Faculty of Social Work's ninth annual research symposium, *Social Work Research and Social Justice: A Call to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, held on March 7, 2017, aimed to develop strategies for Indigenizing and decolonizing social work research and research teaching.

Who We Are

Christine Walsh is a White feminist, settler, activist, and ally who conducts community-based action-oriented research with Indigenous peoples, families, and communities. She was part of the research team that developed

the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP)¹ principles for decolonizing Indigenous research.

Kimberly Van Patten, a member of the Tallcree First Nation and of Cree, Métis, and European ancestry, is a Master of Social Work student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Originally from a small community in the Treaty 8 region of northern Alberta, Kimberly moved to Calgary in 2008 to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in linguistics and psychology. Since 2011, she has worked extensively with Indigenous youth and communities across Western Canada and in the Calgary area.

Natalie St-Denis, PhD Student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, is of Acadian and Québécois heritage with Mi'kmaq and Mohawk ancestry; her spirit name is Mistahaya Maskwa Iskwew or grizzly bear woman in Cree. She is also *oskâpêwis* (helper) to her Elders and community. Although she lives on Treaty 7 territory, home to the Blackfoot confederacy, her tribal knowledge is grounded in Sioux-Cree teachings and ceremony. Natalie has supported urban Indigenous families since 2011 through deep listening, advocacy, and fostering connections to Elders and traditional healing practices.

Les Jerome, of Michif/Anishinaabe descent, is from the Duck Mountains region of Manitoba. He received his Bachelor of Social Work in 1989 and Master of Social Work in 1997 from the University of Manitoba, and his post-master's diploma from the University of Calgary in 2009 with a special interest in linking First Nations and Métis epistemologies with selected Western psychotherapies. Trained as a family therapist specializing in play therapy for sexually abused Aboriginal children and their families, he worked exclusively with Native people in his personal life and professional career in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario before his current engagement as a tenured instructor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Les continues to maintain his strong Manitoba roots with his family and his communities.

The Data Gathering Process: What We Did

Following land recognition and blessings by Elder Kerrie Moore, Dr. Michael Hart, a citizen of Fisher River Cree Nation, associate professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba, and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledges and Social Work, provided a keynote address. Dr. Hart's presentation set the stage for our inquiry.

We received ethics approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculty Research Ethics Board to conduct the study within the confines of the research symposium. Research symposium attendees were informed about the study via posted flyers and were asked to confirm their agree-

ment to be involved in the study by endorsing a checkbox when they registered for the symposium. Symposium participants were also advised that they were free to join (or not join) the research study component of the symposium. They were also advised that no identifying information would be collected and that they would be anonymous. Following Dr. Hart's address, participants in the symposium were informed that we conducted a modified version of the World Café (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Lorenzetti, Azulai, & Walsh, 2016). The World Café is a creative means of engaging participants in conversations that matter in order to foster collaborative learning and develop new insights and knowledge (Brown, 2002; Brown, Isaacs, & Margulies, 1997). The large-scale dialogue features a number of tables (dependent on the number of participants) hosted by conversational partners who facilitate authentic conversations with participants around key questions. As the conversations unfold, World Café participants move to different tables, to be welcomed by new hosts. The cross-pollination of ideas enhances transformative learning capacities and creates deeper knowledge about what is important. In our case, table hosts were Indigenous faculty, students, Elders, and practitioners. Although our original intention was to focus solely on conducting social work research and teaching social work research, we consulted with our Indigenous table hosts prior to the symposium and broadened the focus to examine the ways in which decolonization and Indigenization of social work education, practice, and research could be advanced. The following six questions framed our discussions:

1. What is/are Indigenous knowledge(s)?
 - a. What is/are Indigenous worldview(s)?
2. What does "reconciliation" mean in social work education, practice, and research?
 - a. What exactly are we reconciling?
3. What does "truth" mean in social work education, practice, and research?
 - a. In the spirit of reconciliation, how can social work honour diverse (opposing?) truths in relation to research and education?
4. How do we honour reconciliation in social work teaching?
 - a. How can we integrate Indigenous knowledges and teaching methods in teaching research in the Faculty of Social Work?
5. How do we honour reconciliation in our relationship with Indigenous learners, instructors, and community partners?
6. How do we honour reconciliation in social work research?
 - a. How can we meaningfully collaborate with Indigenous peoples and communities to create research that arises from, reflects the

perspectives of, and directly meets their needs?

- b. How do we incorporate Indigenous research methods, methodology, and paradigms?

With these questions, we intended to create a dialogue to investigate the process of Indigenization and decolonization in our Faculty in the areas of: (a) teaching; (b) relationships between learners, instructors, and community partners; (c) social work practice; and (d) research. The World Café questions were used to stimulate the exploration of the ways in which reconciliation can be honoured in the Faculty of Social Work.

Student volunteer recorders took written notes at each of the tables. Over a two-hour time frame, we hosted table discussions at 10 tables involving 62 participants. Participants included students, faculty, and community members, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as well as Elders. All of the article authors were involved in the World Café, with the lead author organizing the research symposium and the World Café, and the three co-authors hosting tables during the session.

Following the World Café discussions, all written notes were gathered, amalgamated, and transcribed. The written transcriptions were subjected to qualitative content analysis, which is defined as a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The first two authors read the transcriptions several times to gain familiarity prior to beginning the process of coding. After the written transcripts had been coded independently by the researcher, coding schemes were created and themes were determined by consensus. These themes were reviewed by the other two authors who added further refinement and insights. The intention of the thematic analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) was to summarize ideas to inform decolonization and Indigenizing practices with regards to social work research, education, and practice generally and, more specifically, to provide an empirical foundation upon which to develop an Indigenous strategy for the Faculty of Social Work.

In the following section, we present each of the themes, supported by illustrative quotes. Although positionality of the World Café participants was important, particularly with respect to Indigenous or settler identity, we were not able to collect this information as part of the study and are thus not able to attribute any identify markers to the quotes. Similar to the demographics of the Faculty of Social Work’s students and instructors, the majority of World Café participants were settlers.

In advancing research-based recommendations for Indigenizing social work curricula, our intention is to provide a framework for teaching and

learning Indigenizing strategies with respect to research, practice, and education in the Faculty of Social Work.

Our Findings: What We Learned

We identified six major themes regarding ways to decolonize and Indigenize research in the Faculty of Social Work: (1) *students feel unequipped/unqualified*; (2) *integrate Indigenous knowledges and approaches*; (3) *address power and privilege*; (4) *nurture respectful relationships*; (5) *increase Indigenous representation and voice*; and (6) *honour reconciliation in social work research* (see Figure 2). Although these themes are presented as discrete categories, they are all interconnected and interdependent. Each of these themes and sub-themes are described more fully in the following section with illustrative quotes drawn from the transcripts.

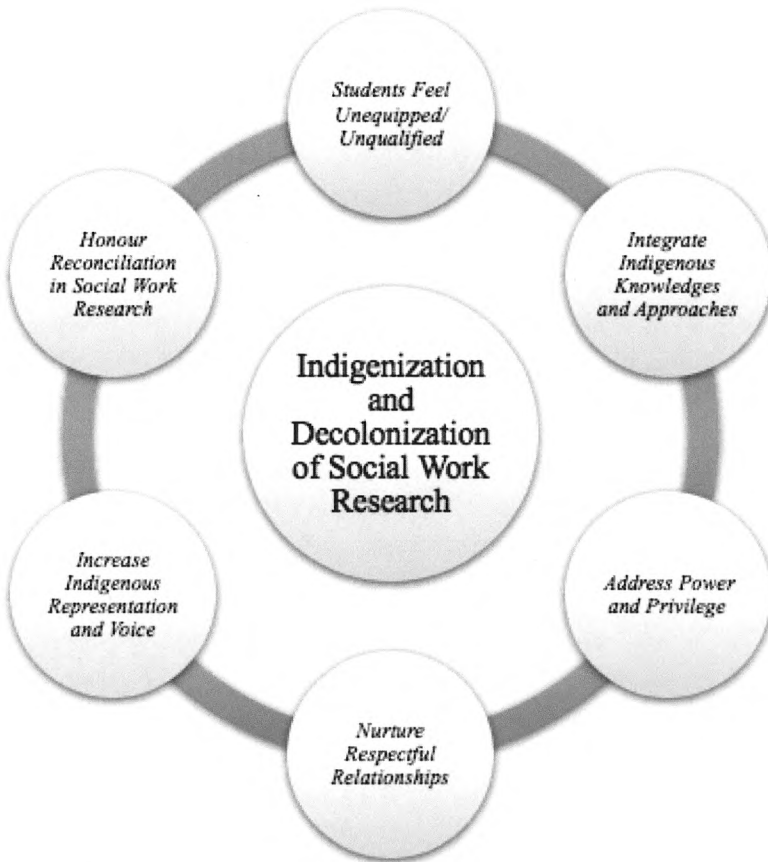


Figure 2. Themes for Indigenization and decolonization of social work research.

Students Feel Unequipped/Unqualified

World Café respondents clearly identified feeling unprepared to engage in questions about incorporating Indigenous frameworks and worldviews into social work research and education. Participants shared that their education has ill-prepared them to address these questions. One participant offered, "We need to have an education that doesn't have token Indigenous messages. It needs to be better integrated into our learning." Another added, "We know so little and we need to understand."

In referring to Dr. Hart's keynote address, one respondent stated, "This presentation has been triggering for me and [has] shown me how little I know." Informants also expressed a lack of awareness about the University of Calgary Indigenous strategy and the process of Indigenization more generally.

Unethical to Engage in this Dialogue

Participants also described feeling that it was *unethical to engage in this dialogue*, a sub-theme of *students feel unequipped/unqualified*. Non-Indigenous participants shared that it was neither their "place" nor their "right" to answer questions about how to begin the process of decolonization and Indigenization in social work education and research. They expressed concern that any ideas they offered would be generalized and tokenistic notions of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews, and would then potentially serve to further marginalize Indigenous peoples. As one participant stated, "if we answer this, we're contributing to the problem."

Participants also cautioned that sharing in the dialogue could be appropriating rather than collaborating or contributing. Respondents asserted that explanations and recommendations should come from Indigenous peoples and communities themselves, and clearly articulated that their role was that of supporting this process. As one respondent noted, "How do we sit with people facing oppression? We cannot tell them how to face it. It needs to be people from the community—it cannot be someone on the outside."

For the participants, reconciliation in the Faculty of Social Work would involve them in "supporting [Indigenous] People[s] by giving them the grounds to speak for themselves" and "creating space for those processes and fighting for the resources to make sure that it happens."

Another conversational partner referenced potential harms in her professional social work practice arising from this lack of knowledge, commenting that graduating social work students often "go out and make a living working with people who are disadvantaged [who] they know nothing about."

Integrate Indigenous Knowledges and Approaches

World Café participants identified the need for greater integration of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews into their education and, more specifically, within the Faculty of Social Work. Applying a strengths-based perspective and offering courses grounded in Indigenous knowledges and content were also noted as necessary by participants.

Study participants also noted an overall lack of knowledge and preparation among students in the program to work with Indigenous peoples: "our education did not prepare us to do better." When reflecting on their personal experience in the Faculty, one participant shared, "the curriculum does not offer enough exposure of Indigenous knowledge, perspective, and history." Furthermore, when the opportunity to learn about Indigenous knowledges does come, "it often comes too late." It was the opinion of respondents that this deficit negatively impacted their practice and was potentially harmful to the people they serve. Echoing the sentiments of many respondents, one participant stated, "we are missing practical tips (hands-on) for supporting and engaging with Indigenous peoples and the system." Participants added that "the institution needs to acknowledge that we are not reconciling because we are not learning Indigenous systems."

Participants perceived current practices in the Faculty of Social Work as not conducive to multiple ways of knowing and as restrictive, rigid, and oppressive to Indigenous peoples and knowledges. As one participant explicated, "Rigidity [of] regulations do not provide room for more than one way of doing things." Decolonization and Indigenization were perceived by informants as inextricably linked; as one respondent stated, "until we start to acknowledge Aboriginal knowledge, decolonizing is just a myth." Participants offered several ways in which Indigenous knowledges and frameworks could be integrated into the Faculty of Social Work, many of which are incorporated into the recommendation section:

1. Acknowledge the validity and importance of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews in the Faculty vis-à-vis the inclusion of Indigenous courses and curriculum;
2. Assist students, staff, and faculty to increase their self-awareness and understanding of their own worldview and experiences and provide opportunities for them to apply this knowledge;
3. Increase opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to listen to and learn from Indigenous peoples: community members, Elders, knowledge keepers, and scholars; and
4. Support students, staff, and faculty in taking ownership and responsibility for learning about and engaging with Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and worldviews.

Reconciliation in social work education, respondents suggested, involves theory and practice and is founded on all four aspects of self: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Some respondents reported understanding Indigenous worldviews of wellness that encompass the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of an individual but they described not being taught how to apply this *wholistic* model into practice (Absolon, 2010).

Experiential learning opportunities were viewed by World Café participants as essential for student success and would serve as “a catalyst for better supporting reconciliation.” Knowledge of Indigenous history in Canada and awareness of the TRC and the 94 *Calls to Action* were also suggested by participants as being highly important to ground the reconciliation process. One participant elaborated on their desire for “mandatory courses in Indigenous culture and history.” Finally, engagement with Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and teaching methods were deemed key in supporting reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization.

Need to Address Power and Privilege

For Indigenous knowledges to be honoured in social work education, practice, and research, participants offered that it is first necessary for the Faculty of Social Work to deconstruct dominant Western frameworks. It was suggested that power structures—systemically and institutionally—should be addressed by the Faculty of Social Work through “reciprocal dialogue,” “learning from others’ experiences,” and “listening.”

Participants drew attention to the persistence of colonization within contemporary society, including in post-secondary institutions. As a counter to these dominant forces, conversational partners voiced the necessity to understand the relationships between power, privilege, and colonization. In referencing the hegemony of Western educational frameworks, one Indigenous respondent noted, “as Indigenous peoples, we are coming to get a formal education to learn the rules to speak to people who are making the rules.”

Truth

Connected to power and privilege is the sub-theme of *truth*; as one participant elucidated, “truth is connected to privilege.” In referring to truth, participants questioned, “Who gets to decide what truth is?” and stated that, “When we [as social workers] say whose/what truths are valid, we are engaging in colonization.”

Respondents also advanced the need for reflexivity in social work practice to explore truth. With respect to the historical foundations of the field, for example, one participant queried, “Do we as social workers truly

acknowledge our [own] truth?" and, "How are we addressing [our] power?" The process of determining *truth* in the academy was also described as problematic. As one participant asked, "Can we [as members of the Faculty of Social Work] have and know 'truth' without an Elder being present?"

Participants urged that the Faculty of Social Work should be thinking critically about the meaning and potential impact of concepts such as *reconciliation* and *truth*. In this vein, World Café conversational partners suggested that the Faculty of Social Work should consider the following questions: (1) Whose/ what truth is being conveyed? (2) Whose/ what truth is being denied or minimized? (3) How might this impact Indigenous students and communities? and (4) How is this knowledge being transferred within the educational setting?

Nurture Respectful Relationships

Respondents identified that the foundation for reconciliation must be solidly based upon the development and nurturing of respectful relationships between the Faculty of Social Work and Indigenous community members, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. Respondents indicated that the reconciliation process requires a welcoming environment wherein trusting relationships can be built and diverse experiences shared. They advanced the need to engage with Indigenous peoples and communities, and recognized that, "We are not the experts. Our education only does so much. We need to listen to the lived experiences." Participants also noted that listening to the wisdom and truths of others and embracing the belief that truths are dynamic, contextual, and diverse is necessary to facilitate the development of an open environment which includes experiential/land-based learning and exposure to different perspectives. In the words of one participant, "Every single person in social work needs to have an awareness of who they are working with and we don't get it—it's against ethics. It is the Knowledge Keepers we need."

These relationships, participants advanced, must be grounded in the acknowledgement and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing. Respondents also indicated the importance of building partnerships and relationships with local Indigenous communities to explore more deeply the meaning of reconciliation and the role of the Faculty of Social Work in the reconciliation process.

Allyship

Allyship, a sub-theme of *nurture respectful relationships*, was raised in several conversations. Participants alluded to an overarching belief that "everyone

has a part to play" in challenging colonial structures, settler privilege, and racism across social work education, research, and practice. In exploring what it means to be an ally, one respondent stated, "I struggle to be an ally, as a white man. How to be an appropriate ally when my physical presence is a reminder of atrocity? So I don't know what part I can play." Participants suggested a role for the Faculty of Social Work to assist in defining and establishing what it means to be an ally as educators, researchers, and practitioners. Challenging social work's role in enacting colonial structures and settler privilege is an important exercise in critical reflection and requires the guidance of Indigenous peoples. In referring to child protective services, one respondent affirmed, "until those systems start to recognize and admit that they are systemically discriminatory, there will be no reconciliation." Another respondent further noted that, "a lot of the people making decisions [in systems] don't have knowledge of and awareness of the communities [they serve]."

Increase Indigenous Representation and Voice

In the World Café discussions, respondents identified the need for more Indigenous students and scholars in the Faculty of Social Work. Participants raised the "importance of Indigenous voice" and identified that we have "only two Indigenous faculty [members]" and questioned, "How can practitioners learn if they aren't learning from Indigenous peoples?"

In referring to the lack of Indigenous voices in the Faculty, participants reinforced the priority to hear directly from those with lived experience; as one respondent commented, "there needs to be a greater recognition in the social work program that truth comes from the people who lived [it]." Several respondents also alluded to the absence of Elders; as one queried, "Where are the Elders' voices?"

In addition to the lack of representation of Indigenous peoples, respondents opined that "time and space" was lacking for difficult conversations to dismantle knowledge hierarchies in social work education.

As a corrective, informants emphasized the need for the integration of Indigenous knowledges and teaching methods in social work programs. Shifting away from colonial values and "legitimizing the Indigenous way of life" in education were promoted as essential to their learning and as means to honour reconciliation in the Faculty's relationships with Indigenous learners, instructors, and community partners.

Learning, participants argued, should come from Elders, Indigenous scholars, and community members: "in order for this to be reconciliation, Indigenous peoples need to be teaching." This necessitates a commitment from the Faculty of Social Work to actively seek out and engage Indigenous

educators and to promote greater flexibility within programming to allow for Indigenous knowledges to be “threaded throughout the program.” Another respondent commented that the Faculty needs to “bring more Indigenous representation into policy.”

Creating practicum opportunities “for students to work alongside Indigenous service workers” was also advanced as a way to enhance Indigenous voice and representation within the Faculty. Similarly, participants identified the need for increased opportunities to engage with Indigenous peoples, communities, and organizations through experiential learning opportunities to acquire practical hands-on skills and knowledge.

Also recommended were practices of “advocating for funding, higher education, and scholarships” for Indigenous learners, increasing opportunities for Indigenous research and supports for Indigenous researchers, as well as making Indigenous “mentors” or “advisors” available to students, staff, and faculty.

Honour Reconciliation in Social Work Research

In terms of conducting research, respondents stressed the need for greater awareness of the historical ramifications and negative impacts that research has had on Indigenous communities. Participants conveyed that ethical research with Indigenous peoples must be community-based and that “we need to start by asking what communities need and want.” Consultation and engagement with community members, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers throughout the research process was identified as critical to reconciliation. This relationship served to establish trust; as one respondent stated, “sharing truths requires a trusting environment. Trust is built through relationships. Therefore, sharing truths requires building relationships first.”

“Engagement, [ethical] practice, [and] listening” were identified as acts of reconciliation within the research process. Creating dialogue with Indigenous communities was deemed necessary to ensure the accurate representation of information in research. Informants also recommended that research should include relationship building, acquiring informed consent, ongoing consultation, and follow-up. The research process should be premised on openness, non-judgement, and integrity. Respondents also advised that an Indigenous ethics board and “Elders in Residence” be made available to researchers to support research.

World Café participants stated that research requires the critical analyses of the “system of Western education” and, to combat this system, they called for continuous self-awareness, personal reflection, and the desire to honour Indigenous peoples and worldviews.

Ceremony was noted as a revered and integral part of the research process. One participant eloquently shared, "In my experience, my knowledge has always been through ceremony. That becomes the research for me. I wonder, then, are social work researchers willing and able to go into ceremony to practice new learning?"

Recommendations

Heeding the TRC's *Calls to Action* (2015a, 2015b), participants' responses strongly support the need for decolonization and Indigenization in social work research, education, and practice. Our findings suggest that the Faculty needs to provide Indigenous content in the curriculum as well as to support students, instructors, and researchers in the process of reconciliation.

In terms of social work education, students need to be provided with the knowledge, skills, and values that will support and enhance their ability to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples. As a first step, a required course that captures the historical and current Indigenous-settler relations is necessary. As Plains Cree scholar Shauneen Pete (2016) advises, "Some courses should be required of all learners (avoid academic ghettos)[;] these courses would take up topics associated with settler-Indigenous relations, treaty responsibilities, and actions aimed at reconciliation. This is shared work: not just the work of Indigenous peoples" (p. 85). Importantly, Cyndy Baskin of the Fish Clan (2006) reminds us that Indigenous worldviews and ways of helping must be incorporated throughout social work education and include an "awareness of the history of colonization; insight into the assumptions, values and biases of the profession, educators and students; understanding of the client's cultural context" (para. 20).

Indigenous peoples must also be at the forefront in developing this curriculum and in determining how this knowledge will be shared (Baskin & Sinclair, 2015). Thus, the development and sustaining of meaningful relationships between the academy and Indigenous communities are vital in reconciliation and in "transformational resurgence" (Moeke-Pickering & Cote-Meek, 2015, p. 3). Specifically, Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and tribal leaders have a key role in confronting "mainstream academic processes" (Moeke-Pickering & Cote-Meek, 2015, p. 3). Weaver and Dennis (2015) further explain the significance of Indigenous Elders:

Indigenous elders have always had and continue to play significant roles in sustaining the vitality of their families and communities. Elders are keepers of cultural traditions and teachings. They are the primary teachers of language, morality, ethics, and responsibilities. They guide younger generations in maintaining our ontology, living our values, and reminding us to focus on what is most important—our families, our communities and our people. They serve as our counselors, providing knowledge, wisdom and kindness when we are uncertain

or when we face challenging situations. They also teach us skills and hone our talents and abilities; be that in traditional practices or in providing for and sustaining our families. (p. 2)

Recent research identified that Indigenous students and instructors face widespread racism within mainstream classrooms (Cote-Meek, 2014). Not only do racist policies and practices within mainstream education need to be challenged and eradicated (Moeke-Pickering & Cote-Meek, 2015), but supports for Indigenous instructors and students also need to be developed and fully realized (Battiste, 2000).

While Indigenous educators and scholars in Canada have called attention to the critical need to open academic spaces for meaningful inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing (Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett, & Gilles, 2014), this work is not theirs alone; it must be embraced by non-Indigenous educators and administrators as well. In light of this reality, and in alignment with findings from this research and evidence in the extant literature, we offer the following nine recommendations to assist the Faculty of Social Work to respond to the *Calls* and findings from the TRC (2015a, 2015b) and to move forward—in a good way—on this journey of decolonization and Indigenization.:

1. Prioritize the hiring of at least one Indigenous scholar.
2. Engage an Elder/Knowledge Keeper in Residence.
3. Create a scholarship to support Indigenous students.
4. Offer training and support on Indigenizing curriculum for faculty.
5. Provide mandatory workshops to engage faculty in questions about the nature of Indigenous knowledges.
6. Form meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.
7. Engage in outreach activities to recruit Indigenous students.
8. Provide support for Indigenous students through existing networks and community outreach.
9. Provide a core course that captures historical and ongoing Indigenous-settler relations aimed at reconciliation.

Our Responsibilities: Knowledge Sharing

Although we offer these recommendations to guide us in decolonization and Indigenization of social work research practice and research teaching, we acknowledge that further refinement, insights, and interpretation are needed through engagement with multiple stakeholders. We have presented the findings of our inquiry and recommendations to our Faculty's management team, the Faculty community more broadly, and at an academic conference aimed at Indigenous adult educators and at another academic conference for social work practitioners. Audience members were welcoming of this pursuit and reiterated the need and the urgency to

move forward in this way. The various stakeholders we shared the report with were also receptive to the recommendations. Critiques that were raised concerned implementing more widespread changes in a more immediate way. Moving forward, we intend to engage in broader consultation with key stakeholders such as Elders, Indigenous scholars, and students, among others, using dissemination tools appropriate to targeted audiences. To frame an Indigenous strategy for our Faculty, we will also determine the alignment of our recommendations with the directions outlined in the University of Calgary's (2017a, 2017b) developed and recently released *Indigenous Strategy: ii' taa'poh'to'pis: Together in a Good Way: A Journey of Transformation and Renewal*.

Our Faculty has also taken some steps towards fulfilling some of the recommendations arising from the study. We currently have postings to hire an Indigenous scholar and a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Child Well-being (recommendation 1). We are seeking funding to create a scholarship to support Indigenous students (recommendation 2) and are in the process of designing a one-day workshop on Indigenous knowledges to offer support for Indigenizing curriculum for faculty (recommendations 4 and 5). While not mandatory, we are collaborating with an Elder and Indigenous social work practitioner and scholar to design a series of courses "to promote the development of and understanding of ally work in the TRC era" and a series of monthly workshops targeted at students to inform social work practice (recommendation 9).

We acknowledge that the decolonizing and Indigenizing initiatives that have begun in the Faculty of Social Work are just the first steps in the reconciliation journey. As we move forward in a good way by engaging with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community leaders of Treaty 7, our collaborative work seeks to further support Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. The TRC's Action 45 in the *Calls to Action* calls for all governments "to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts" (2015a, p. 5). The Faculty of Social Work has the responsibility as allies and in its social justice endeavours to further support Indigenous sovereignty through advocacy work, to change policies and practices that continue to oppress and negate the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Closing Remarks

The enactment of the University of Calgary's Indigenous strategy is a reflection of its commitment to decolonizing and Indigenizing the acad-

emy. Dr. Michael Hart has been appointed vice-provost (Indigenous engagement) effective June 1, 2018 to serve as a key champion and advocate for the Indigenous strategy. Pete (2016) affirms that “academic Indigenization is designed to support the reform of the faculty’s instructional, planning, and evaluation practices and is meant to offer every graduating student an opportunity to learn about Indigenous peoples, histories, contributions, and ways of knowing” (p. 82). Thus, Indigenization is done with the intent that it will enhance the student learning experience by challenging, dismantling, and transforming oppressive ways of thinking and knowing, and create a more inclusive, holistic, and diverse learning environment.

At the heart of any Indigenization project lies the desire for reconciliation, healing of relationships, and ethical engagement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews. As a Faculty that is guided by “social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014, para. 2), social work has much to offer in assisting with the implementation of the Indigenous strategy and, furthermore, has an ethical responsibility to be critically engaged in this process for the benefit of our students, faculty, and community.

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Notes

¹ Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP). See <http://fnigc.ca/ocapr.html>

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