SOCIAL WORK FOR LAND BACK:
ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL WORK, DECOLONIZATION, RECONCILIATION, AND INDIGENOUS SELF-DETERMINATION

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki,
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DEDICATION PAGE

TO MY RESEARCH COLLABORATORS…You are the *soul* of this work. I love you all.

TO ALL THOSE SOCIAL JUSTICE WARRIORS, Changemakers, movers, Shakers, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, Wisdom Holders, Sacred Grandfathers, Grandmothers, Elders, Environmental Activists, Environmental Educators, Environmental and Ecosocial Workers, Radical Scholars, Writers and Creatives who come before me, and walk alongside me. Without all of you, this work would not exist.

TO LORD DALHOUSIE… May this project, along with all the other radical research projects and initiatives coming out of this institution named after your colonial legacy, repair the harms you have caused and inspire others to offer repair wherever and however they can.

TO ALL ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL WORKERS…Thank you for pushing for this transformation within our field for almost my entire life. I want you to know that despite my critiques and analyses of your decades of work, I have the utmost respect for your scholarship, wisdom, and tireless efforts. I am eager to collaborate and engage respectfully, and I could not have completed this project without you all. Your work has led me to "wow" audibly and reflect in utter awe, snap my fingers, and dance out of my chair… your work has inspired this!

TO THE TREES…so many of you have carried me along this journey, supporting me in growing big, strong, wise, and resilient like you. I hope this project allows you and your wisdom to stand, stall and stay rooted; I pray you will not fall. I pray that you will outlive us all.

TO THE STARS… thank you for reminding me of the Great Cosmic Infinite Divine, that is, reminding me that I am on my path despite the trials and tribulations I may face in my world.

TO THE UNBORNE CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE GENERATIONS… I hope this project and everything that spirals from it light that ember of the eighth fire so that you, too, can learn to love, nourish, and thrive in harmony with our Sacred Earth Mother. I hope to meet you someday when I am in the Spirit World.

TO MY GUIDING ANCESTORS… My nêhiyawak Grandmother, whom I am precisely the seventh generation from, her daughter, Angelique Dion, my great great grandfather Alexis Carrière, and my Celtic great grandparents, Owen and Josie Coll—who I had the pleasure of knowing in this lifetime—are all ancestors who I believe have guided me throughout this journey and this project; and I honour them greatly.

TO MY MÉTIS KIN… given our unique identity and our origin story, I believe that we have a very critical responsibility in Canada to educate our communities about Canada's history, the Red River Métis Nation, and to guide Canadian society in living in respectful relationship with Indigenous Peoples, as well as these sacred territories we call home, alongside all our relations.

TO OUR RELATIVES IN PALESTINE... who are true *warriors* of Land Back and all others demanding Land Back. **Land Back is a global social and environmental justice issue.**

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ABSTRACT

Using an anti-colonial Indigenist research framework, through two sharing circles and eleven one-on-one conversations, social work researchers, educators, practitioners, and students answered the following research question: How can social workers in Canada who value sustainability and the environment come to understand Indigenous land reparations (Land Back) as the most rational response to the climate crisis through social work education and practice?

This research centres on the voices of collaborators who are doing work at the margins of the profession of social work, sharing their reflections on practice examples and lived experiences about how social work's pursuit of sustainable and ecological practice can simultaneously encompass the interrelated goals of contributing to settler solidarity, Indigenous sovereignty, decolonization, and Indigenous land reparations. Four overarching guiding tenets for Social Working for Land Back were identified: compassion, relationality, solidarity with all our relations, (un)(re)learning, and cultural humility. Through pedagogical and practice reflections and recommendations, collaborators urge social workers to re-imagine settler futurities, consider abolitionist social work, mobilize, unite, and implement incremental changes to transform the current systems while building alternative systems centring ceremony, rest, care, peace, prayer, the next seven generations, and eco-social economic structures. Future implications for all social work stakeholders are also discussed.

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I extend my deepest gratitude to my co-supervisors, Professor Gail Baikie and Catherine Bryan, for their incredible guidance throughout this process. Gail has nourished my knowledge of Indigenous and anti-colonial perspectives and Indigenous research methods substantially, leaving me in many moments of awe and deep gratitude, while Cat supported me in strengthening the structure and flow of my writing and guided me through the many components of the thesis process, acting as my rock and cheerleader every step of the way. I also give thanks to Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, my external reviewer, for taking the time and energy as a committee member and putting up with my dissertation-length master's thesis, and to my committee member Dr. Haorui Wu who also provided feedback on the methodologies and writing processes, bringing in that critical environmental social work lens.

Wela'lin to Mi'kmaq Grandmother Dorene Bernard, who supported the sharing circles of this project as part of the research methodologies. It has been an absolute pleasure and honour getting to know you and sharing many synchronicities and sacred spaces with you. I have learned so much from you in my short time with you, and I will always cherish those teachings.

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I also want to acknowledge the fur babies, tree relatives, the Atlantic Ocean, and many other non-human relatives who held, nourished, and supported me throughout this process. And a special resounding thanks to you to Justin Andrews (a.k.a. Ducky), who believed in me from Day One. Landa is born on December 15, 2023! Happy birthday, Landa! I am a New Mommy! I have so many other dear pals and loved ones to thank; you all know who you are, but I am running out of space on this page (Vincent, mama, Rocky, Alaina, and Maggie, to name a few.)

Finally, I also want to extend gratitude to this territory, the lands, and waters of Mi'kma'ki, that have held and nourished me throughout this project, and appreciation to the peoples of these territories, the Mi'kmaq People—who have shared many profound and transformational teachings with me—many of which inform this project, and the way I walk in the world today.

PART ONE – PLANTING THE SEED

Chapter One: Introduction

Opening the Circle: Prayer, Relationality, and Reflexivity

In honour of the Eastern direction, Grandfather Sun, the sunshine, the fire, our inner fire, our guiding light, the spark within us, our Spirits, the season of Spring, our crawler relatives, I burn tobacco.

In honour of the Southern direction, Grandmother Moon, the water, our Hearts, the oceans, lakes, and rivers that flow, emotions, our tears, the season of summer, our swimmer relatives, I burn sweetgrass.

In honour of the Western direction, Father Sky, the air, the stars, the planets, our Minds, our thoughts, the season of autumn, and our flyer relatives, I burn sage.

In honour of the Northern direction, Mother Earth, the earth, the soil, the grass that grows, the ground beneath us, our Bodies, the physical realm, our walker relatives, which includes us as humans, our plant relatives, and all our relations, the season of winter, I burn cedar.

I call upon the Good Grandmothers and the Good Grandfathers, all our healed and well honourable ancestors, known and unknown, our Higher Selves, above and below,

And all other entities that should wish to be with us at this time.

Creator, Great Spirit, please hear this prayer.

We ask for your support in decolonizing our Spirits, Hearts, Minds, and Bodies, so that we may be present with the Sacred Knowledge, wisdom, teachings, and stories shared herein. May we be guided to honour these messages in a good way moving forward; that we learn to embrace the sacred responsibilities each one of us holds in responding to these messages, in honour of the seven generations who came before us, and the seven generations that follow us. I also ask that you support us in extending and applying these teachings far beyond the context of so-called Canada, moving beyond colonial borders, in recognizing that land back is a *global issue*—and with that, Creator, at this critical moment in history, I ask that you send an abundance of radiant love, grounding peace, and deep strength over to our relatives in Palestine, who are true warriors of land back. May we stand in solidarity with *all* our relations. May we be guided by the Seven Sacred Anishinaabe Grandmother and Grandfather teachings of truth, honesty, wisdom, courage, humility, respect, and love as we engage with this research project, and all else in our lives.

Go raibh maith agaibh, merci, thank you, maarsii, miigwetch, wela'lioq.

All our relations, Msit No'kmaq.

May God give you
For every storm, a rainbow,
For every tear, a smile,
For every care, a promise,
And a blessing in each trial.
For every problem life sends,
A faithful friend to share,
For every sigh, a sweet song,
And an answer for each prayer.
—*Irish Blessing*

My Relationality and Reflexivity

I, Dani Sherwood, am a queer, femme, Two Spirit settler of mixed Irish, French (Franco-Manitoban), English, and Scottish ancestry, and a member of the Red River Métis Nation. All my relations know me as *wâpiski-pihesiw iskwêw*, meaning White Thunderbird Woman in Nêhiyawêwin, of the Turtle Clan. Opaskwayak Cree researcher, scholar and writer, Shawn Wilson (2008), says "research is ceremony". Thus, I've shared my Spirit name here, as this research project has been and is a form of ceremony. I intend to uplift Spirit herein.

I began this chapter by opening the circle of this sacred space we now share, as you embark on this reading journey. This prayer written above is similar to the prayer I shared to begin each of the 11 conversations shaping this project. In honour of the lands that gave rise to this project, the prayer is guided by the Medicine Wheel Teachings, as well as my Métis and Nêhiyawak (Cree) ancestors. I also offer an Irish blessing, in honour of my Celtic ancestors. I am grateful to all my ancestors and guides who stand by my side and have given me strength throughout this project. These prayers welcome you into the ceremony that is this research. May these stories move you as profoundly as they have moved and continue to move me.

From an Indigenous worldview, we begin ceremony, relationship, and communication, by introducing ourselves, the territories we come from, and our kinship ties, as a form of respecting and honouring our interconnectedness with our human relatives, the lands, the waters, and all our relations[1], that shape who we are (Absolon, 2023). From an Indigenous perspective, we only know what we know through our own experiences (Baikie, 2020), hence the importance

[1] "All our relations" refers to a belief commonly shared by Indigenous Peoples that all of life is connected by spirit and that we are in relationship with everything and everyone around us, from the rocks to the cosmos, and every person, animal, plant that ever was or ever will be—*all* of existence. As Hart (2014) explains, "to fully respect and honour spirit and, in turn, life, we must nurture the relationships we have with ourselves, with other people, with other animals, with the elements and with the spiritual realm" (Hart, 2014, p. 73-74). Thus, often, Indigenous Peoples will end prayers with a phrase that means 'all our relations' to honour these relationships.

of positioning ourselves. Additionally, from an anti-oppressive lens, in this case, one focused on anti-colonialism[2] and decolonization[3], it is also important to situate ourselves, in ways that recognize the privileges and oppressions we may face simultaneously, given our social location (Mullaly, 2017). Social work research pedagogy, and practice, are concerned with social justice, and recognize the contextual factors at play; we are influenced by our socialization and power dynamics. More specifically, as a social work researcher adopting a decolonizing lens, I am guided by a decolonizing critical reflection practice (Baikie, 2020), which encourages me to question my assumptions, examine the source of my beliefs by connecting them back to the worldviews and materialistic contexts that influence me and have shaped my experiences.

Through critical reflection, I nurture my self-awareness. In this way, I decolonize my practice by working to challenge and unlearn the influences of my Euro-Western upbringing that may lead me to unintentionally reinforce colonialism and oppression, while I Indigenize[4] my practice by strengthening and supporting Indigenous worldviews and understandings, within and beyond this research. As I walk in two worlds as a Spirit with blended ancestry, I hope to weave these two anti-colonial/decolonizing and Indigenous/Indigenizing lenses throughout this text. Thus, in what follows, I share my relationality, and I use the principles of decolonizing critical reflection to share my personal and collective story of colonialism.

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[2] Anti-colonialism can be generalized to mean "against colonialism", and is a theoretical framework thoroughly described and explored in subsequent chapters. Importantly, it encompasses the process of decolonization.

[3] Decolonization is the process of "de-colon-izing . . . much like detoxing from all the toxins we ingest into our bodies. De-colon- izing is similar to detoxing and clearing out the colonizing knowledge and practices that we have ingested and adopted from colonial social work education" and practice (Absolon, 2019a, p. 9). Decolonization is the process of unlearning and healing from colonial violence and damage, which is a process that is meant to involve everyone (Baskin & Davey, 2017). See Appendix H for collaborators' definitions of decolonization.

[4] To Indigenize relates to the broader concept of Indigenization which in the social work context refers to culturally and locally relevant social work practice and education (Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2010). As a Red River Métis person, to me, Indigenizing means infusing what I have learned about my Indigenous culture and cultural teachings I have received from my Indigenous relatives and community, into my ways of knowing, being, and doing, as a form of cultural revitalization and resurgence.

Due to the impacts of colonialism on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada[5], historically, my Métis ancestry was silenced in my family. Colonial projects of Indigenous erasure and cultural genocide[6], such as the residential school system[7] (Antone, 2014) and the sixties scoop[8] (Menzies, 2014), meant that for generations, my family members hid their Métis identity to protect themselves from being removed from their homes and communities. Also, due to settler colonialism, I grew up away from my home territory of the Red River Métis Nation. Instead, I grew up on the beautiful ancestral, traditional, and current territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish nations (Vancouver, British Columbia), where my mother's parents settled after immigrating to Turtle Island from Ireland. I am eternally grateful to the Coast Salish peoples who, for millennia, have been caring for the waters and lands that gave me my first breath, nourishing and sustaining me for the first twenty years of my life. There, I was raised as a typical white Canadian settler, living in a bubble of white privilege and settler

[5] Section 35(2) of the Canadian Constitutional Act of 1982 recognizes three distinct groups of Indigenous Peoples in so-called Canada: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (Library and Archives Canada, 2023). In this thesis, when I use this term, I am referring to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Turtle Island living in the current Canadian context, unless otherwise specified.

[6] The Truth and Reconciliation of Canada has described the Canadian settler state's treatment of Indigenous Peoples in so-called Canada as a "cultural genocide" which they define as:

> destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next (TRC, 2015, p. 1)

[7] The Indian Residential School System (IRSS) was a forced assimilation project lasting over a century, instated by the Canadian Government beginning in the 1700s, as part of the colonial agenda to address the "Indian Problem" by assimilating, "civilizing" and "Christianizing" Indigenous children across the Canadian settler state through education provided in boarding schools by Christian Missionaries (Absolon, 2023; Antone, 2014). During the period of the IRSS, Indigenous children were subject to substantial harms resulting in traumatic impacts, resulting from spiritual and cultural loss, miseducation, discipline, and misuse (Antone, 2014). During the IRSS era, Indian Agents were hired by the government to forcibly remove First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children from their homes and take them to the schools (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018).

[8] The term "Sixties Scoop" was introduced by Patrick Johnston (1983) in his report for the Canadian Council on Social Development, to describe the significant number of Indigenous children being forcibly removed from their homes during this decade and placed into the child welfare system (Menzies, 2014). Furthermore, majority of Indigenous children adopted during this time were adopted by non-Indigenous parents (as cited in Menzies, 2014).

ignorance, with minimal understanding of Canada's colonial history and presence, and minimal appreciation for First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples. Internalized anti-Indigenous racism was and continues to be commonplace within my family.

Growing up away from my Métis homelands further removed me from my Métis culture and community. As an adult, I have begun my lifelong journey of reclaiming my Métis culture and kinship ties. This journey began when I moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba at 19 years old, on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Dakota, Dene, and Oji-Cree Nations, heart, and homeland of the Métis Nation. "Manitoba" is said to have derived from the Anishinaabemowin concept of "Manito Ahbee Aki", which translates to "where the Creator sits" (Stranger, 2021). I lived there for 7 years, which is where my Franco-Manitoban and Métis family is from—and there is no place else across Turtle Island where I have ever felt more spiritually and ancestrally at home. From 2017-2019, I worked for an addiction treatment facility as a caseworker, where over 80% of my clients were Indigenous. It was then that I began to see the effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples—on my brothers, sisters, and siblings—who were not afforded the same opportunities in life as myself, because they did not have white settler privilege; they could not hide and silence their Indigeneity like my family did. This experience impacted me deeply, as I had finally begun to realize the extent of the ongoing harms of colonization here in Turtle Island, and how I hold much unearned power and privilege because of this colonization, as a light-skinned person of mostly European ancestry—as a settler colonizer in so-called Canada. Eventually, this led to my return to university in pursuit of a master's degree in social work, in hopes of learning how to engage in social service work and support Indigenous Peoples, in a more respectful, informed, meaningful, and safer manner.

At the addiction treatment facility where I worked, there were also Traditional Grounds onsite, as part of their Indigenous Services program. There, I connected with an Anishinaabe Elder and Knowledge Keeper and began to participate in naming, sweat lodge, sharing circle, and full moon ceremonies. I then learned that all my relations know me as White Thunderbird Woman of the Turtle Clan. Ever since, I have aspired to uphold the great responsibility that comes with my name. Among Indigenous communities across Turtle Island, the thunderbird is commonly known as a large supernatural, powerful, and sacred bird that protects humans from evil Spirits (Andra-Warner, 2018). Thunderbirds are also understood as channels between the Spirit world and the physical world (Andra-Warner, 2018). Meanwhile, the colour white is thought to represent peace, mourning, heaven, sharing, purity, and light (Alchin, 2018; Nazanin, 2021). Finally, within the Anishinaabe Seven Sacred Grandfather and Grandmother Teachings, the turtle represents truth. I intend to live up to my name through this project, and beyond.

Since the inception of this project, I have also connected more deeply to my own ancestral stories. I have learned that a foundational element of settler solidarity and decolonizing work is reconnecting with the stories of one's ancestors and reclaiming one's own traditional and historical cultures that existed before the rise of settler cultures which favoured the erasure and assimilation of diverse cultures in favour of the monoculture[9] that is the EuroAmerican / EuroCanadian culture we see prominent today across Turtle Island. I now know that on my Celtic side, my maternal grandmother's parents, both with the same family name "Coll", meaning "hazel" in Gaelic, were some of the first people of Ireland. We cared for the hazel trees, where the hazelnut is sacred in Celtic creation stories, including that of the Salmon of Wisdom,

[9] Like biodiversity, cultural diversity in humanity is also favourable (Matthies et al., 2020). Like monocultures in farming, monocultures in society are harmful (Matthies et al., 2020), and result from the same colonial-capitalist systems that overproduce, overconsume, and commodify all life forms (Harvey, 2003). This hope is that this thesis will inspire an increase and return to cultural diversity within and across humanity once again.

who once ate nine hazelnuts and was granted access to all the wisdom of the Universe. I have also slowly been teaching myself Gaelic, the traditional language of my Irish ancestors, and learning Irish blessings. I am reminded that the first wave of colonization happened in Europe, before the colonization of Turtle Island. And it was then that my pagan Celtic Irish ancestors, Medicine People who lived in harmony with all our relations, were colonized, and burned to death during the witch hunts. I also found out that my mémère's pépère (my great great grandfather) was Alexis Carrière, who was the founder and president of l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph à Saint-Pierre and helped build the Dawson Trail. Alexis' cousin, Charles Carrière, was 1 of 19 *dizaines* who accompanied Gabriel Dumont in the battle of Batoche (Barkwell, 2015). Meanwhile, Alexis' aunt, Geneviève Carrière, had two sons, Andre and John Sansregret, who were active in the 1885 Resistance, while her husband, Louis Pontbriand dit Sansregret supported Louis Riel during the 1869-1870 Resistance (Barkwell, 2015).

Although I am seven generations from my Nêhiyaw (Cree) Kôhkom on my Métis side of the family, which may seem distant, this is right around the time when the Métis Nation was born. Across many Indigenous cultures, one foundational principle is to live in ways that honour the seven generations that came before us—our ancestors—and the seven generations yet to be—the children, and the unborn. When we pray with sacred medicines, we honour this principle. It is for this very reason that I feel a personal responsibility to honour my Indigeneity in this project, despite my lack of cultural and historical lived experience as a Métis person.

Given that my connection to Indigenous culture and ceremony began in Manitoba, alongside my ancestral ties to Treaty 1 territory, I choose to honour Anishinaabe teachings throughout this project. At the same time, I am currently residing in Mi'kma'ki —the unceded, unsurrendered, traditional, and current territories of the L'nu / Mi'kmaq. Mi'kma'ki is also where

my home institution, Dalhousie University, is located. Here, I have learned much of what I now know about social work, Indigenous perspectives, Indigenous scholarship, anti-colonialism, decolonization, and postcolonialism. Thus, I also choose to honour Mi'kmaw teachings throughout this project. I was told that a Mi'kmaw Elder once said that since colonization began in the East of Turtle Island, this is an especially critical place for decolonization to take rise. I hope this project can be a part of that rising.

Reconciling my identity as both a Métis person and a settler is a lifelong journey. I find it challenging to affirm my Métis identity as someone who did not grow up connected to my Métis culture, kinship, and stories, who is white, with mixed ancestry. As Métis scholar Lowan-Trudeau (2012) indicates, "being Métis in Canada is not always easy. As people of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry, we are not either/or, we are both at the same time[10], simultaneously colonizer and colonized" (p. 114). Thus, this project aims to create space for non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities—including our ancestors, the children, and the unborn—to come together with the shared vision of healing through truth and reconcili*action*[11], in pursuit of healing the lands, the waters, Mother Earth, in pursuit of environmental restoration and climate crises mitigation. Facilitating this project has allowed me to deepen my understanding of the responsibility I hold as one who is both colonizer and colonized. Given that many of my ancestors played a role in dispossessing Indigenous Peoples of their lands and have

[10] There is a need to challenge the simplified binary view of Settler versus Indigenous identities. As Alook et al. (2023) and Palmater (2013) elaborate, many people come from mixed lineages, highlighting the intricate context-specific nature of identity. In this thesis, 'Settler' may refer to those not identifying as Indigenous and those whose ancestors are not from their current territories. The complex analyses and nuanced articulation required to recognize these diverse histories and related responsibilities are beyond the scope of this thesis project, and further exploration is encouraged.

[11] As explored in subsequent chapters, the term "reconciliation" has become somewhat problematic as it often leads to performative attempts at reconciliation in a "ticking the box" fashion, such as standardized, impersonal land acknowledgments one might read from a script. These performative efforts are slow to actualize reparations and healing for Indigenous Peoples, the lands, and the waters, hence the emergence of the term "reconcili*action*". See Appendix H for collaborators' definitions of reconciliation.

contributed to settler-colonial harms against Indigenous Peoples, I have a responsibility to disrupt this ongoing legacy of colonial violence by actively supporting the reparations Indigenous Peoples are seeking for their territories and existence. Simultaneously, given my Red River Métis lineage, and my accountability to the Seven Generations who walked before me, including my Nêhiyawak relatives, I have a responsibility to support Indigenous resurgence on both a personal and collective level, alongside my Indigenous relatives.

The Soil: Earthing, Grounding Philosophies

Before further introducing the research topic, one must first understand the grounding philosophies guiding the research—the soil in which the seed of this project has been planted.

Etuaptmumk - Two-eyed seeing

The soil earthing this project is also comprised of *etuaptmumk*. Albert Marshall, a Mi'kmaq Elder, describes etuaptmumk, or Two-Eyed Seeing, as the gift of multiple perspectives, wherein we learn from one eye that sees the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing (e.g., Indigenous Knowledge), and from another eye that sees the strengths of Western ways of knowing (e.g., anti-colonial theory; Bartlett et al., 2012). Etuaptmumk is when we use both eyes together for the benefit of all our relations (Bartlett et al., 2012). For Marshall, Etuaptmumk "is about life ... what you do, what kind of responsibilities you have ... not putting yourself above or below ... knowing that you are part and parcel of the whole" (Marshall et al., 2010, slide 73). This theoretical lens is particularly relevant to this research project. This project asks how environmental social work education and practice (Western ways of knowing, being, and doing) might move forward in a way that is more aligned, compatible, and consistent with Indigenous understandings of the land, climate change, and climate change mitigation. In many ways, this project asks: "how can Etuaptmumk guide the profession of social work in protecting,

supporting, and healing the land, the waters, the people, and all our relations/the Web of Life?" Etuaptmumk is necessary due to the domination of Western perspectives in the field; these reparations to the lands, waters, and Indigenous Peoples must be both ethical and equitable. Thus, the research questions further evoke this guiding ethical principle of Etuaptmumk.

Living in the Time of the Prophecies

Within the dominant EuroCanadian / EuroAmerican societal discourse, environmental crises and the ongoing rape and pillage of the Earth are met with fear, doom, dismay, and a sentiment of what might be named "the end of the world". Meanwhile, environmental scientists producing quantitative data and evidence for "the point of no return" when it comes to temperatures and sea levels rising. Yet, when we begin to consider Indigenous worldviews, the narrative shifts to the end of *this* world (Alook et al., 2023), where prophecies from Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island and beyond shed light on this time in a harmonious way that instills a sense of hope and deep understanding for the quality of today's world (Mitchell, 2018). As Penobscot writer Sherri Mitchell (2018) says, we are living in the time of the prophecies. Here, I draw upon the Wabanaki Prophecy, as it is here on the soil of the Wabanaki Confederacy that this seedling—namely, this research project—was birthed. I then turn to a brief overview of the Nêhiyaw prophecy of the Rainbow Warriors, connecting back to my ancestry, and my roots, as the caretaker of this seed. Finally, I share the prophecy of the Anishinaabe Seven Fires and Lighting the Eighth Fire, to honour the many Anishinaabe teachings I have received and continue to receive that further nourish the soil earthing this seedling.

The Wabanaki Prophecy: The Eastern Door. Sherri Mitchell explains that "the Wabanaki are the people of the first light, the people of the Eastern Door" (2018, p. 215). It is here in the East where first contact was made between the newcomers and the Native peoples,

and it is here where the first blood was shed between our people, where the ongoing history of colonial violence first started**; it is also here** where healing must begin and take root (Mitchell, 2018). In the East, we are the first to greet the sun and the moon. The East is also the direction of fire, where the sun's heat first touches the Earth, and so it is also the place of birth, where new life forms. The East is also the direction in which Creator is thought to reside (Mitchell, 2018). Sherri Mitchell (2018) further describes the prophecy:

> We are told that when the people of the world rise up, a great healing will begin. In order for that healing to take root, the people must return to the place where the initial wounding took place and join together with one heart and one mind to heal the wounds that they carry within them, and those carried by Mother Earth. When they do, the Eastern Door will open and the Creator will begin to renew this land. The opening of the Eastern Door will usher in a new beginning and a new way of life for the people of the Earth. (p. 216)

Mitchell describes dreams she had of this time as a young girl, and now, 43 years later, the opening of the Eastern door has begun through a series of ceremonies. She explains that the ceremonies, which began in 2017, will take place 4 times in each direction, with one final ceremony in the East. This is a very powerful prophecy that speaks to the criticality of decolonizing work, Indigenous resurgence, and land-based healing, rising, and occurring in the East, the region of the Wabanaki people. It also instills a sense of deep hope, as these ceremonies to open the Eastern Door have already begun. This prophecy infuses the soil of this seed, as this seed/project is meant to be one of the many healing balms for the wounds resulting from colonial violence that began at the time of first contact, the wounds that burden us as humans, and by implication, Mother Earth.

Nêhiyaw Rainbow Warriors Prophecy. This prophecy is similar to the Navajo Hopi Rainbow Warrior Prophecy, which speaks of a time when people from every race and every direction—hence the term rainbow—would unite to heal Mother Earth (Mitchell, 2018). The people who kept the ways of the Earth would teach the newcomers to live in alignment with the Earth again, to protect humanity from ongoing destruction. Those who came to learn from the people of the Earth would then share those teachings with other people across the globe, thereby eventually restoring the Earth to its natural state of wellness and beauty (Mitchell, 2018).

This prophecy enriches the soil for this project in so many ways. First, it speaks of all nations, colours, creeds, and races coming together, which is essential for reconciliation and healing both in Canada, and globally. Second, this project also highlights voices from a variety of races and directions, seemingly representing the rainbow, voices of those who may very well be rainbow warriors themselves. Third, this prophecy also resonates with me deeply on a personal level, as the caretaker of this knowledge bundle who is also a mixed-raced person, with Nêhiyaw ancestry. The Nêhiyaw Rainbow Unity song is a song I learned in the sweat lodge in Manitoba back in 2018. Most of the songs sung in the lodge were Anishinaabemowin, but this one song is Nêhiyawêwin, and it is one I connected to the most, memorizing it intuitively. Interestingly, I did not learn the teachings of the Rainbow Warrior prophecy until very recently, yet the melodies and the teachings of the Rainbow Unity song have long been embedded into the prayers, layers, and soil of this project. Given that this song connects me to my Nêhiyaw ancestors, and represents Unity, which I understand as all people of all nations coming together for healing, I have sung this song during many prayers and ceremonies, while holding this project in my heart.

Anishinaabe Seven Fires Prophecy: Lighting the Eighth Fire. The final prophecy enriching the soil is the Anishinaabe Seven Fire Prophecy which deeply reflects the timing of this project. In this prophecy, seven prophets came to the Anishinaabe people to tell them of their future journey, represented by seven fires that they would encounter along their path. According to oral tradition, it is believed that the Mi'kmaq heard the first prophet, while the rest of the prophets were recorded by the Anishinaabeg (Sutherland, 2020). The prophet of the First Fire spoke of the time when Anishinaabe people lived in the dawn lands of the Atlantic, where spiritual teachings led them toward the west (Kimmerer, 2013). The prophet of the Second Fire spoke of the time when the Anishinaabe people set up camp along the sweet water (Mitchell, 2018), the shores of Lake Huron (Kimmerer, 2013). There, they would lose their way, but dreams of a little boy would send them back on their true path (Mitchell, 2018). The prophet of the Third Fire told them they would find their way to lands where food grew on water (Mitchell, 2018). There, they would establish their homeland, harvesting wild rice (Kimmerer, 2013).

Then, the prophet of the Fourth Fire came to the Anishinaabe people as two in the form of one, representing the two faces of the light-skinned people that would arrive at this time (Mitchell, 2018). The prophet of the Fourth Fire cautioned that these settlers—light-skinned people—may wear the face of true brotherhood, or they may wear the face of death. The prophet warned that "if [the light-skinned people] come carrying a weapon and if they seem to be suffering, beware. Behind this face is greed. You shall recognize the face of death if the rivers are poisoned, and the fish are unfit to eat" (Seven Fires Foundation, n.d., para. 5). The prophet of the Fifth Fire explained that "there [would] be a struggle between the way of the mind of the light-skinned people and the natural path of Spirit of the many nations of natural people" (Seven Fires Foundation, n.d., para. 6). The prophet of the Fifth Fire further spoke of the light-skinned

people bringing with them the destruction and assimilation of Indigenous Peoples and culture (Kimmerer, 2013). The prophet of the Sixth Fire explained that this would be a time of suffering, when "the cup of life would almost become the cup of grief"; and yet, the spiritual lives of Indigenous Peoples would keep them strong (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 365).

The prophet of the Seventh Fire was young, with glowing eyes, and spoke of a time when the waters would be contaminated, along with all the plants and animals that depended on that water, and the air would become unfit to breathe. The Prophet of the Seventh Fire explained that:

> the way of thinking that was brought to the red, black, and yellow nation by the white nation would bring great danger to the entire Earth, and threaten the continuation of all life. But during this time there would be a new people that would awaken from the cloud of illusion and come forward (Mitchell, 2018, p. 223)

These new people, known as the Oskimaadiziig (Simpson, 2008, p. 14), would turn around and "retrace their steps to find the treasures that had been left by the trail. The stories that had been lost will be returned to them. They will remember the Original Instructions and find strength in the way of the circle" (Seven Fires Foundation, n.d., para. 10).

Many people believe we are now in the time of the Seventh Fire, which emphasizes our responsibility to recover the sacred teachings, stories, and languages from our Elders—those that make up the Original Sacred[12] Instructions—so that we may reignite the sacred fire's flames (Kimmerer, 2013; Mitchell, 2018).

At this same time, the light-skinned people will be given a pivotal choice:

[12] Some Indigenous writers refer to these as the "Original Instructions" (e.g., Kimmerer, 2013), whereas others refer to them as the Sacred Instructions (e.g., Mitchell, 2018), although the two terms appear to convey the same meaning. In this thesis, I use the term "Sacred Instructions" from this point forward.

> The Light-skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire—an eternal fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood. If the Light-skinned Race makes the wrong choice of roads, then the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back at them and cause much suffering and death to all the Earth's people. (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 93)

Some liken this path to choosing wisdom, and trusting our inner voice, over the selfish voice of the ego (Seven Fires Foundation, n.d.); others liken this decision to choosing the path of spirituality, over materialism and greed (Sutherland, 2020). Thus, this prophecy grounds the moral lens of this project because it speaks directly to the light-skinned race that might be the face of death or the face of brotherhood, and that in this very present time now—it is on the light-skinned people to make this decision of choosing wisdom and spirituality over greed, materialism, and selfish ego-driven mentality.

Western social work, as a profession supposedly grounded in wellness and social justice, made up predominantly of light-skinned people in the Canadian context, I would argue, has an inherent responsibility to choose the right road. I assert that the right road for social work involves taking accountability for the profession's colonial roots and ongoing related harms, while supporting Indigenous communities and Indigenous social work and Ways of Helping, which came well before Western social work (Baskin & Davey, 2017; Hart, 2002; Hart, 2014), in remembering and reclaiming the wisdom therein. Social workers must also reconnect with ancestral wisdom, and the Sacred Instructions, living in harmony with the Earth and all our relations, through social working and beyond. In embracing this philosophical framework, this

project seeks to understand how social work can choose the right road through its response to environmental crises[13].

Why Social Work for *Land Back*[14]?

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant and increasing push within the field of social work to respond to environmental crises (Bell et al., 2019; Billiot et al., 2019; Coates, 2003; Dominelli, 2013; Powers et al., 2021)—the greatest threat facing human health and wellbeing of our time (WHO, 2021). Given the profession's commitment to creating an "economically, socially, and environmentally just world" for "all beings" (CASWE-ACFTS, 2022, para. 3), sustainability more broadly, alongside responding to the myriad of specific social justice[15] and environmental justice issues resulting from environmental crises has emerged as a critical focus for social work. Indeed, a wealth of literature has been published in the realm of environmental social work: an approach to practice that "assists humanity to create and sustain a biodiverse planetary ecosystem. . . by adapting existing social work methods to promote societal change" (Ramsay & Boddy, 2016). Additionally, professional governing bodies, including the

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[13] In this thesis, I use the terms "environmental crises", "climate crises", and "climate change" interchangeably, to denote the significant increase in environmental disasters (i.e., forest fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.) impacting Mother Earth and all her inhabitants, as well as other changes increasingly happening in the environment, related to temperature, sea levels rising, and decreasing access to clean drinking water, as well as the depletion of other resources (Dominelli, 2013; IPCC, 2022; Schibli, 2020).

[14] I use the term "Land Back" in reference to the larger Indigenous-led movement that calls for land and water reparations here on Turtle Island, and globally, where settler states have non-consensually and unethically occupied the territories of Indigenous Peoples, hence the term "stolen lands". As the NDN Collective (2021) states, Land Back is "a movement that has existed for generations with a long legacy of organizing and sacrifice to get Indigenous Lands back into Indigenous hands. Currently, there are LANDBACK battles being fought all across Turtle Island, to the north and the South" (NDN Collective, 2021). Two prominent examples of territorial-specific Land Back projects in Turtle Island North include 1492 Land Back Lane (ICA, n.d.) and Idle No More (2020). The Yellowhead Institute (2019) offers an overview of Land Back. See Appendix H for collaborators' definitions of land back.

[15] In Yellow Bird's (2010) glossary of terms for decolonizing social work with Indigenous Peoples, he explains how before colonization, Indigenous people had their own unique "rights, security, opportunities, obligations and benefits to one another and to other tribal nations. Now Indigenous Peoples are forced to live with Western colonial definitions" (Yellow Bird, 2010, p. 278). Thus, Indigenous Peoples' access to the kind of social justice largely taken up in the environmental social work literature, is contingent on Indigenous Peoples' support of Western colonial control of Indigenous society (Yellow Bird, 2010).

Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS), have stressed the importance of environmental and sustainability-focused practice and pedagogy (Shibli, 2020; CASWE-ACFTS, 2021). Environmental social work (also referred to as ecological social work, ecosocial work, green social work, and a plethora of other terms; see Ramsay & Boddy, 2016), regularly reiterates that *all* social work should be environmental social work—calling for a paradigm shift where the values of environmental social work are infused into *all* social work practice.

However, with rare exceptions (e.g., Bell et al., 2019; Billiot et al., 2019; Hiller & Carlson, 2018; Yellow Bird & Gray, 2010), most environmental social work calls to action have fallen short of adequately addressing the need for decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenous self-determination within social work's efforts to engage in sustainability and ecological practice. This is despite the explicit connection between colonialism, the land, and climate change (Deranger, 2021; IPCC, 2022; The Red Nation, 2021).

Why Social Work for Land Back? Land Back means supporting Indigenous sovereignty and governance over their home territories, in this case, specifically, Turtle Island—the land more commonly known today as North America. Vitally, "Canadian" soil was never actually ceded or surrendered. When Europeans began to settle these lands, many treaties were created between two sovereign nations, the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, and the British Crown, coming together in agreement to be in relationship and partnership, sharing and living with the lands and waters together. Importantly, all Canadian citizens today are still obliged to these Treaty agreements. Treaties were created to exist "as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the grass grows" (FSIN, 2008, slide 1). Treaties are sacred agreements that have been made and honoured for thousands of years between Indigenous communities across Turtle Island, long

before the arrival of Europeans (Newhouse & Belanger 2010). Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island did not view the land and waters as commodities, as "objects" to be bought or sold (FSIN, 2008). Rather, land and water are understood as relatives, ancestors, alive, and a part of humans (FSIN, 2008). In other words, Land Back acknowledges that the lands and waters have been unduly occupied, dispossessed, and treated by the Crown, and the settlers under Crown rule, now known as "Canadian" citizens.

Most of these treaties were made hundreds of years ago. Thus, they must be adapted to fit the present-day contexts, environments, lifestyles, and needs of all nations presently residing in each territory, hence the rise of modern treaties, land claims, and agreements. Further, not all lands across the Canadian State are covered by treaties. Instead, some lands are considered "unceded" as no signed legal agreements were made between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples concerning those lands. Thus, these are also stolen lands. Land Back is applying this acknowledgment in action, which includes supporting Indigenous land reclamations, supporting Indigenous Peoples in reconnecting with the land and waters in ways that are culturally relevant and meaningful to them, and supporting Indigenous-led healing of the lands and waters. Contrary to popular opinion, Land Back does not necessarily mean sending anyone who is not First Nations, Inuit, or Métis back to where they or their ancestors came from. Instead, Land Back can mean authentically honouring the intentions of the Treaties. Land Back can also mean settler Canadians being in sacred, reciprocal, and respectful relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The concept of Land Back is complex, and its meaning is further explored and addressed throughout this thesis. For now, it is essential to understand that Land Back is often understood as a critical way to move forward in response to climate crises, environmental degradation, and water pollution, because it means a return to Indigenous traditional ways of caring for the land,

and being in relationship with the land in ways that honour traditional ancestral knowledge and wisdom, and sustain the waters and lands for future generations to come (David Suzuki Foundation, 2021; Deranger, 2021; Klein, 2014; The Red Nation, 2021).

Indigenous Peoples are, by definition, people of the land. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the lands we now call Canada for at least 20,000 years (Absolon, 2023), are especially knowledgeable in healing and restoring our environment to mitigate the increasing harms and violence resulting from the rampant decimation, rape, and pillage of the planet. These increasing harms and violence are happening in large part because of the dominant colonial-capitalist worldview objectifying the environment, humanity, and all our relations through ruthless extractivism, commodification, and overconsumption, intricately connected with imperialism and the Marxist notions of primitive accumulation, overaccumulation, and accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). Even the 2022 Report from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change names colonialism as a driving factor contributing to climate change (IPCC, 2022). As Eriel Deranger (2021), member of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Executive Director of Indigenous Climate Action argues, "colonization caused climate change", and "Indigenous rights are the solutions".

To further illustrate why Land Back should matter to social workers concerned with the environment, I turn to The Red Nation's (2021) discussion on Land Back, *The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save our Earth*:

> The crux of the so-called "Indian Problem" in the Western Hemisphere hinges on this question: "What do Indians want?" For us, it's a larger social problem of underdevelopment. Colonialism has deprived Indigenous people, and all people who are affected by it, of the means to develop according to our needs, principles, and values. It

> begins with the land. We have been made "Indians" only because we have the most precious commodity to the settler states: land. Vigilante, cop, and soldier often stand between us, our connections to the land, and justice. "Land back" strikes fear in the heart of the settler. But. . . it's the soundest environmental policy for a planet teetering on the brink of total ecological collapse. The path forward is simple: it's decolonization or extinction. And that starts with Land Back. (The Red Nation, 2021, p. 6-7)

The Red Nation (2021) reminds us of the interconnections between colonialism, Indigenous Peoples, and environmental crises, as they argue that Land Back is the most rational political response to environmental crises—it's decolonization or extinction.

Thus, is time for social workers who are devoted to protecting our planet, living in sustainable ways, and creating an environmentally just world, to intentionally and respectfully develop the capacity to join Indigenous Peoples in healing Mother Earth. And yet, social workers often end up being the "vigilantes" standing between Indigenous Peoples and their connections to the land and justice, as The Red Nation (2021) describes. Social work that engages in sustainability and ecological practice, without attention to Treaty responsibilities, and the stories of the lands on which it attempts to engage in sustainable practice, will only cause further harm. Social work must challenge the conceptualization of "terra nullius", which describes Turtle Island as "empty" land before its "discovery" by Columbus. Further, social workers must understand that the land in Canada encompasses histories of colonization and Indigenous resistance and resurgence (Hiller & Carlson, 2018). Thus, any environmental social work discourse and practice that overlooks Canada's settler colonial history and its ongoing legacy; the tens of thousands of years of Indigenous existence and relationship with these territories; alongside ongoing Indigenous resistance, and resurgence, is reifying land dispossession. As

Hiller and Carlson (2018) contest, all environmental social work must be viewed, then, as either disrupting or *reifying* land dispossession (p. 60). This thesis is a cry to social work to wholeheartedly choose the former—to disrupt land dispossession.

In recognizing the challenge of accepting and actualizing this call for the profession of social work, I turn to the medicines of the lands throughout this process, which can serve as a healing balm. Each chapter of this thesis is guided by the teachings and healing properties of traditional Métis plants, offered by Métis artist and writer Christi Belcourt's 2007 book on *Medicines to Help Us: Traditional Métis Plant Use*. These medicines are intended to guide both myself and the reader in the creation and digestion of this thesis, respectively. These medicines are also meant to mirror the healing potential of Social Work for Land Back.

Guiding Medicine: Tansy – *Maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk* as Social Work for Land Back

The plant chosen for this chapter is known as *Maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk* in Michif, while its common name in English is Tansy. In Anishinaabemowin, it is known as *O'ckinigi'kweaani'bic,* which translates to, "young woman's leaf" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 55). Maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk is a yellow flower that grows in clusters across Canada, while originally introduced from Europe, Indigenous Peoples quickly discovered its healing properties. It is known to treat the diseases of women: "internally, it is also given to treat worms and to promote sweating and break fevers. Externally, maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk has been used to treat swelling, tumors, inflammations, cuts, and bruises" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 56).

In the Anishinaabe creation story, "the Earth is said to be a woman. . . she is called Mother Earth because from her comes all living things" (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 2). Yet, as the late Anishinaabe Elder and knowledge keeper Dave Courchene Nii Gaani Aki Innini (Leading Earth Man) explains, with all the toxins and poisonings of the waters, and the degradations of the

lands, we are simultaneously seeing more and more diseases manifesting within women; as the Earth carries this pain, so too do the women[16].

Like maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk, the profession of social work also came to Turtle Island from Europe. Although this profession was also invasive, perhaps it too, like the plant, has the potential for healing the feminine and diseases of women. Social work could embody the medicine of the "young woman's leaf" by treating the swelling—of colonial harm; the inflammations—of greed, power, and the ego; and the cuts and bruises—to the land, the waters, the people, and all our relations.

This treatment can only be done by recognizing that some of the greatest cuts and bruises we encounter in this profession, have also been caused by the profession itself. As is described in the next chapter, social work has been complicit in the colonial violence against the land, waters, all our relations, and Indigenous Peoples. It is time for social workers concerned with healing the planet, to also consider treating the worm—the parasite—of colonialism, that is eating the planet alive. As Kathy Absolon, Anishinaabekwe social worker and scholar from Flying Post First Nation, powerfully describes "to de-colon-ize is to detox from colonial ways of seeing, being, and doing that we have all absorbed into our Spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies" so that we can reconsider and transform the ideologies and assumptions that underly our social work praxis (Absolon, 2019c, p. 51). Maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk—social work for land back—offers this detox.

Overall, this project aims to spread awareness about social work's complicity in Canada's colonial history. This project highlights opportunities for the profession to take accountability

[16] I gained this insight through my conversation with 1 of the 11 collaborators for this project, Dr. Elizabeth (Liz) Carlson-Manathara. Liz shared that she first learned this teaching from Elder Dave Courchene while receiving his support after being diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in her early twenties.

and make reparations to Indigenous Peoples for the enduring harms of colonialism, particularly in terms of environmental degradation, and violence against the land, waters, and all our relations, which disproportionally impacts systemically marginalized communities. This project envisions social work curricula and practice wherein social work's colonial history, Indigenous Peoples and communities, *and* sustainable and ecological practice are not separate, rather interconnected matters critical to all forms of social work. One way to realize this vision and plant the seed of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk within the profession—is by lifting and centering the voices of social work students, scholars, educators, and practitioners, who actively disrupt land dispossession through sustainable and ecological social work education and practice.

Project Overview

This project explores how social work, in its pursuit of sustainable and ecological practice, can simultaneously pursue the interrelated goals of healing the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, decolonizing social work and therefore broader society, upholding Indigenous self-determination, and supporting the return of Indigenous territories. The goal of this research is to elaborate on the strengths and potential of existing approaches to social work pedagogy and practice that are concerned with Indigenous self-determination, reconciliation, and decolonization, to demonstrate the pertinence and criticality of these approaches within social work ecological practices and responses to climate crises[17]. This research centres the voices of social work educators, scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and students from across Canada, who understand the centrality of Indigenous self-determination,

[17] The focus is *not* to describe the abundance of brilliant Indigenous-led climate responses that are happening across Turtle Island, but rather to illustrate how social workers can adjust educational and practice approaches to support and spread awareness about said Indigenous-led responses. To learn more about the actual responses, start by visiting Indigenous Climate Action (ICA, n.d.) and Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN, 2021).

reconciliation, and decolonization within sustainable and ecological social work practice. Using an anti-colonial Indigenist research framework, through 2 sharing circles and 11 one-on-one conversations, participants, hereon referred to as collaborators, were asked the following.

Research Questions

How can social workers in Canada who value sustainability and the environment come to understand Indigenous land reparations (i.e. the Land Back movement) as the most rational response to the climate crisis, through social work education and practice? And, more precisely:

a) What are examples of social work education that disrupt colonialism while upholding settler solidarity within Indigenous-settler relationships, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous land reparations through curricula on sustainable and ecological practice?

b) What are examples of sustainable and ecological social work practice that disrupt colonialism while upholding settler solidarity within Indigenous-settler relationships, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous land reparations?

Thesis Overview

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part, where we are now, is called 'planting the seed'. In this section, we began with Chapter 1, an introduction and overview. The seed and the soil were introduced. In this section, I also aim to provide an understanding of the larger environmental context of this seed and soil. Thus, Chapter 2 turns to a discussion of the historical context of settler colonialism in Canada, and social work's complicity therein. Through a review of environmental social work literature, such as literature on green social work, and ecosocial work, considering both social work pedagogy and practice, and its limitations, Chapter 2 describes areas where the pre-existing soil is nutrient deprived. Yet, as Chapter 2 concludes with

a discussion of the literature on anti-colonial, decolonizing, and Indigenous perspectives on environmental crises responses, it also highlights elements of the soil that remain nutrient-rich.

The second part is called 'watering the seed'. In this section, I turn to what gives the seed life, in addition to these nutrient-rich layers of soil: water. Water is that which connects us all, and water also represents the heart, emotions, and tears of both grief and joy. Water is the life-giver. Water fills the womb. This section begins with Chapter 3 on the methodology of this study which has centered the heart, emotions, and water, through the tools of sharing circles, the conversational method, as well as the co-creation of a short documentary film for knowledge mobilization. This chapter describes the Anti-colonial Indigenist research framework, recruitment details, data collection methods, and analytical processes. In Chapter 4, through experiential reflections, I describe how this methodology led me to embody research as ceremony which, like water, has had ripple effects spreading throughout my life. In this chapter, collaborators are also introduced, and findings regarding the manifestation of Spirit within the research processes and collaborations are explored. This chapter reveals how the methodological processes have given way to heartfelt conversations imbued with life-giving energy, wherein tears of grief and joy were shed, as if to water the seed of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk.

Finally, the third section is called 'growing the seed'. This section begins with Chapter 6, presenting a Social Work for Land Back Framework, shaped by a weave of collaborator voices that shed sunlight on the seed. Chapter 7 then explores how this Framework might be taken up in practice, illustrating Social Working for Land Back in action, drawing on collaborators' lived experiences, stories, and examples—demonstrating how social workers are currently growing the seed. Similarly, Chapter 8 explores how this Framework can be applied through social work education. This section ends with the concluding Chapter, which considers how social workers,

other professionals, and society at large, can unite to support, witness and be in relationship with this seed in a way that allows it to grow and thrive. Here, I will review the planting and watering process, to give way to the growth of the seed. In other words, this chapter will summarize the findings and contributions to theory and practice, woven with personal reflections and insights from the literature, to provide recommendations and inspiration. I will then close the circle.

Chapter 2: A Literature Review of Contextual History, Critiques, and Possibilities

May you have the hindsight to know where you've been.
The foresight to know where you're going,
And the insight to know when you're going too far.
—Irish Blessing

To understand an anti-colonial approach to environmental sustainability in social work, we must also understand the stories of these lands and the stories of the First Peoples of these lands, as well as the impact colonialism has had on the land, its peoples, and social work's involvement therein. Put differently, Social Work for Land Back demands an understanding of climate crises' impacts on Indigenous Peoples. In turn, I argue that one must understand the climate crisis as an outcome of the same histories and processes that have sought to subjugate and annihilate Indigenous Peoples, and their manifold ways of knowing, and caring for the land. The history of the social work profession, then, is intertwined with the origins of climate crises. In consideration of this history, and through discussion of environmental social work literature, this chapter underscores that social work responses to climate crises demand the resistance and disruption of the colonial structures that have given rise to social work.

Guiding Medicine: Milkweed - *Dilet narbaazh*

This chapter is guided by the medicine known as dilet narbaazh in Michif-Cree, with the common name Milkweed in English. Considered a weed by some (Belcourt et al., 2007), dilet narbaazh can function in both deterring and supportive ways. The Monarch butterfly depends on it for survival, as it will only lay its eggs on dilet narbaazh. Dilet narbaazh can also act as a contraceptive. Additionally, medicinal purposes include using "the 'milk' from its stems. . . to cure warts and aid in the removal of moles and ringworm" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 35). Anti-colonial and Indigenous social work that disrupts the status quo can act as a contraceptive to the ongoing harms of colonial-capitalism, aiding in the removal of its figurative and literal

tapeworms, moles, and warts, each a reflection and outcome of the oppression within that system, while giving way to new change (butterflies eggs) emerging.

Historical Context of Settler Colonialism and Social Work's Role in Climate Crisis

The extractive objectives of the Canadian settler state, combined with Western understandings of land-as-object-as-property, along with the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples, has made for a context in which social work has played a role in contributing to climate crises. The settler Nation-State, known as “Canada”, began with the “discovery” of the lands of Turtle Island, now known as “North America”, by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Despite Indigenous Peoples having lived on these lands for at least 20,000 years prior (Absolon, 2023), since the 1500s, the Vatican Christian Church, tied up with the British Crown, began developing the *Doctrine of Discovery* as a legitimate legal notion justifying that those who “found” the land had the right to take the land (Krawec, 2022, p. 47). A related legal concept from England, *terra nullius*, meaning “empty land” in Latin, also justified the European Nations coming to Turtle Island to claim the Doctrine of Discovery. Terra nullius required that “lands that were not occupied by any person or nation, or which were actually occupied but were not being used in a manner that European legal systems approved…” (Miller as cited in RAVEN Trust, n.d., para. 15). This “manner” approved by European legal systems would be that of the “civilised”, which could only be held by those with Christian qualities, namely, Christian beliefs and practices, whiteness, and speaking European languages (RAVEN Trust, n.d.). Indigenous Peoples’ ways of being in relationship with the land, Indigenous cultures, and governance systems were deemed “savage” and “illegitimate” by settlers, and Turtle Island was thus considered “empty of civilised human habitation” (RAVEN Trust, n.d., para. 17)[18].

[18] This type of colonization wherein outsiders claim land inhabited by Indigenous Peoples as their new homes, out of a need for more space and land, is known as settler colonialism (Tuck et al., 2014).

What further complicates these matters is the discrepancy in the perspectives on the land. While European people understand the land-as-material, land-as-resource, land as something to be bought and sold, used, and objectified, Indigenous Peoples have long understood the land-as-relationship, rooted in place-based ethics of reciprocity (Coulthard, 2010). These relations with the lands were honoured through treaties established between sovereign Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island, through consensus, long before contact (Newhouse & Belanger, 2010). Treaty agreements were made to end disputes, create peace, and determine how to be in respectful relationships with the land. When the Europeans arrived, these treaties were created between the sovereign Indigenous Nations and the Kings and Queens of Europe, wherein the Crown mistook the treaties as the surrender of land. This stark difference in relating to land is arguably what has led to the land degradation we see today resulting from this land-as-object Western Anglo-Saxon colonial mindset.

The unsustainable use of lands and waters by Europeans has impacted the traditional ways of life of Indigenous Peoples as early as the 1700s (Long, 2014). By the end of the War of 1812, the Europeans' military alliances with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples were no longer needed, and as the fur trade dwindled, European settlers turned to farming, in need of more land (Andersen 2014; Slattery, 2015). As the Industrial Revolution and modern capitalism were on the rise, so too was the welfare state – where the professionalization of social work emerged. Social work as a profession emerged from European Western ideology and became a catch-all system, to support those falling through the cracks of a system that was not properly designed to support all people (Dominelli et al., 2010; Cornell & Jorgensen, 2019). Thus, social workers became colloquially known as "agents of the state", acting as "band-aid solutions" to the current neoliberal capitalist system that is not designed to support all people equally and

equitably (Baines, 2011). Social work has often supported the "status quo", which has led to the perpetuation of colonial-capitalism and violence, and the consequential increase of climate crises, environmental degradation, and devastating health impacts to all our relations.

Soon after, the *Constitutional Act of 1867* forced "Indians and Lands reserved for Indians" under the federal jurisdiction of the Government of Canada, thereby stripping Indigenous Peoples of their independence and increasing the government's control of Indigenous Peoples while isolating and underfunding Indigenous communities (KAIROS Canada, 2023). In 1876, all laws considering First Nations peoples were placed into the *Indian Act*, increasing the State's control, eventually leading to the outlawing of sacred ceremonies, limiting hunting, and fishing, and replacing traditional Indigenous governance structures with European-style elected chief and council Indian Band systems (KAIROS Canada, 2023). Indian Agents were also sent to monitor and exert control over Indigenous communities (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018). Essentially, Indigenous Peoples were thought to be "in the way" of the land, and the racist stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples being "uncivilized" and "savage" were reinforced and perpetuated in the establishment of the Canadian government, law, and societal structures.

From the mid-1800s, the Government sent Indian Agents to remove First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children from their home communities and lands, to send them to the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) where they were then stripped of their culture, spiritual practices, ceremony, language, and traditional teachings. Many children suffered unspeakable traumatizing and debilitating neglect and abuse, often resulting in death. In 1946, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), alongside the Canadian Welfare Council (CWC) issued a joint submission to the Senate and House of Commons, endorsing the IRSS and the assimilation of Indigenous children, despite the release of earlier reports by Dr. P.H. Bryce,

Indian Affairs Medical Officer, noting the atrocious rates of abuse, neglect, and even death of children happening through the IRSS (Blackstock, 2009). Operating until 1996, the IRSS tore Indigenous communities apart, and the trauma that survivors and their families lived with, including those pre-dating the IRSS, has impacted successive generations, still to this day.

As Indian Agents transformed into social workers (Fortier & Hon Sing-Wong, 2018), social workers placed children into the IRSS until the 1960s and continued to play an integral role in Canada's assimilation project as it evolved into the Sixties Scoop, between the 1950s and the 1980s. During this period, social workers forcibly removed and isolated First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children from their communities, placing them most often with non-Indigenous families instead (Menzies, 2014), resulting in spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical complex traumas, manifesting into intergenerational traumas. By displacing children from their home territories, social workers have disrupted the transmission of cultural intergenerational teachings (Sinclair, 2020) from Elders to future generations, regarding ways of caring for and being in relationship with the territories across Turtle Island.

This disruption continues today through the current child welfare system, known as the "millennial scoop" (Foster, 2018). It is estimated that there are three times the number of Indigenous children in care today than during the height of the IRSS (Blackstock et al., 2004). More recently, Indigenous social workers have successfully advocated for Bill C-92, passed in 2019, which affirms the jurisdiction of Indigenous nations over their own child and family services, supporting the continuity of children's kinship, cultural, and land-based connections (Indigenous Services Canada, 2019).

While the overall landscape of the settler-state-Indigenous relationship has changed over recent years in Canada, with the government releasing a variety of reports focused on supporting

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples[19], there are ongoing violations of treaty agreements, Indigenous livelihood, waters, and lands across the country. For instance, the oil and gas industry in Alberta is in direct violation of the following two conditions outlined in Treaties signed over 150 years ago: (1) "the Indigenous groups in the area would be able to continue to hunt, fish, and practice ceremonies, and that right would be protected and upheld by the Crown (Federal Government of Canada)"; and (2) "no land development would happen further than the depth a plow digs into the Earth" (Superneault, 2023, para. 13). This ongoing legacy of settler colonial state violence against the waters, lands, and Indigenous Peoples is the context of the "Canadian soil" on which the profession of social work aims to engage in environmental sustainability and ecological practice. Thus, this context must be at the root, heart, and centre of this practice.

Present-Day Climate Crises and their Implications on Indigenous Peoples

In this section, to set the stage for the importance of environmental social work, I provide an overview of the major impacts of climate change on the human health and wellbeing of humans, with a focus on the marked impacts on Indigenous populations, which demands responses from the profession. Since, at least, the 1900s, human activity has been the major force behind climate change, leading to recurrent heat waves as well as an increase in droughts, excessive flooding, hurricanes, and other extreme variations in weather patterns. Global temperatures hitting record levels have led to a state of emergency (Schibli, 2020). To reap the material wealth and surplus necessary to "the pathological drive for accumulation that fuels colonial-capitalist expansion" (Coulthard, 2010, p. 82), the development of oil, gas, mining,

[19] See Canada (1996) Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) Calls to Action, and The National Inquiry (2019) on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit Peoples, and Viens (2019) *Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec.*

factory, and other extractive industries has drastically increased extraction, production, and therefore Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions (IPCC, 2022).

Meanwhile, industrialized nations and corporations are offshoring manufacturing to developing nations, leaving the latter to bear the consequences of the resultant carbon emissions (Schibli, 2020). Shibli (2020) argues that “resource extraction [is] tightly linked with colonialism and [reveals] how the global North has exploited developing nations in the South” (p. 6). These emissions also pollute the air, killing up to 3 million people yearly, the majority of whom are vulnerable and marginalized populations in the Global South (Dominelli, 2013), many of whom are also Indigenous.

The emissions resulting from this incessant colonial-capitalist drive for surplus, consumption, and accumulation also lead to environmental degradation, an increase in waterborne diseases, water scarcity (Alton, 2015), food insecurity (Dominelli, 2013), and other devastating health impacts disproportionately affecting marginalized communities across the globe. Rising sea levels are also threatening the survival of small coastal communities and island states (Dominelli, 2013). The deforestation of old-growth trees also reduces the carbon absorption required to offset emissions, while simultaneously displacing Indigenous tribes from their homelands (Shibli, 2020).

Schibli (2020) also emphasizes that social workers must pay special attention to mitigating the impacts of climate change affecting Indigenous populations, who are also harmed by the colonial-capitalist land-as-object mentality and resultant impacts on the environment at disproportionate rates. In addition to the forced displacement and/or environmental degradation resulting from extraction sites, non-consensual resource extraction within Indigenous communities is an ongoing issue, as is currently the case in Grassy Narrows. Grassy Narrows

First Nation, Ontario, is one of many examples of land and water poisoning resulting from extraction sites in Indigenous communities, now infiltrating the bodies of animals, plants, and increasingly humans residing in the area. This disrupts cultural practices such as hunting and fishing, impacts traditional food sources and sustenance, and leads to major repercussions to health resulting from mercury poisoning such as premature mortality in adults (Philibert, 2020), and several chronic health conditions in youth (Ketonen, 2018). This is especially challenging for Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, such as communities in the Arctic, who rely primarily on land-based food sources, integral to their culture (Weaver, 2014).

Yet, the Arctic is the most climate-change-affected region of Turtle Island (Schibli, 2020). In these regions, infrastructure, and access to and from communities through ice roads and airports, are at risk of collapse due to drastic temperature changes, posing a major threat to human life in these areas (Schibli, 2020). Northern Indigenous communities are also filled with industry towns and resource extraction sites, colloquially known as 'man camps', that result in social instability and changes in traditional familial roles and structures, as shift work increases instances of familial dysfunction, abuse, and even breakdown (Koutouki et al., 2018). These extraction sites also increase the prevalence of substance abuse due to more disposal income (Koutouki et al., 2018), as well as violence against Indigenous women and girls, given the influx of men in the area, who are away from home, (The National Inquiry, 2019). These projects also clash with the spiritual and cultural connections of Indigenous Peoples to the environment (Koutouki et al., 2018). The Alberta Tar Sands, Wet'suwet'en (Shah, 2022), and Fairy Creek are among other examples where First Nation communities in Canada are facing non-consensual resource extraction and detrimental implications to the health and wellbeing of their waters, lands, ecosystems, Spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies.

Environmental racism is also evident in the prevalence of boil water advisories disproportionately affecting First Nations communities in Canada (Government of Canada, 2023). These communities encounter numerous challenges in addressing water and wastewater management issues, including high costs, inadequate infrastructure, limited local capacity, and insufficient funding (Black & McBean, 2017). As is proclaimed by Indigenous water protectors and water walkers, “water is life”; when one’s basic need for access to water is infringed upon, so too is one’s life. Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people are especially harmed by the ongoing rape and pillage of the Earth, such as where the newborn babies of life givers are at risk of water contamination in the womb (ICA, 2018). The connection between resource extraction projects and violence against Indigenous women emphasizes the persistent need for advocacy and exposure, demanding action from social workers despite ongoing efforts at various levels to address the issue.

These examples are among many other devastating impacts of environmental crises affecting Indigenous Peoples. Weaver (2014) stresses that environmental change—a product of enduring colonialism— means cultural change for Indigenous Peoples, which has significant and substantial consequences, ultimately representing the ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples. Weaver (2014) concludes that in addressing environmental change, “partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples must be strengthened and colonising societies must accept responsibility for the disproportionate burden placed on indigenous populations” (p. 70). Thus, supporting the Land Back movement, social work can facilitate these respectful settler-Indigenous partnerships, and encourage this societal acceptance of responsibility for the harms of the profession against the land, waters, and Indigenous Peoples.

Current Environmental Social Work

For more than 20 years (Coates, 2003; Coates & Gray, 2011), social work scholars concerned with the environment have stressed the need to make a paradigm shift away from the anthropocentric (human-centered) lens to an ecosocial lens (e.g., Boetto, 2019; Klemmer & McNamara, 2020; Powers et al., 2021; Rambaree et al., 2019). In the current anthropocentric worldview, dominating EuroCanadian / EuroAmerican societal discourse, and the profession of social work, "humans are considered above or outside of the ecosystem in which they exist. This perpetuates structures and practices of injustice, extraction, and destruction" (Powers et al., 2021, para. 1). Alternatively, ecosocial work, which is a form of environmental social work, "*is* social work, with all its depth and breadth, but it approaches the analysis of social problems, issues, and concerns with an ecosocial paradigm or lens, rather than an anthropocentric lens" (Rambaree et al., 2019, p. 205). Since this call first began, there have been many iterations of environmental social work, with ecological social work (see Coates, 2003), green social work (see Dominelli, 2013), and ecosocial work (see Boetto 2019; Powers et al., 2021; Rambaree et al., 2019) being among the most prominent. Environmental social work has focused on sustainable social work practice, intending to move towards sustainable futures for all living beings, where we honour the cycles of our ecosystems, as well as humanity's relationship with the natural environment (Coates, 2003; Powers et al., 2021; Rambaree et al., 2019).

However, in recent years, given the rising frequency of devastating impacts of climate crises on the environment as well as human health and wellbeing, environmental social work increasingly focused on addressing these impacts, understanding them as social and environmental justice issues, given that climate crises disproportionately affect under-resourced communities, and vulnerable communities globally (Dominelli, 2013). According to leading green social work scholar, Lena Dominelli (2013), environmental injustice is "the failure to share

the earth's resources equitably […] rooted in environmental degradation that is caused by the normal processes of industrialisation and disasters, whether natural or(hu)man made" (Dominelli, 2013, p. 431). On the other hand, leading environmental justice movement organization, The ENRICH Project (n.d.), has defined environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income with respect to the development and implementation of environmental regulations or policies" (para. 1) . Dominelli (2013) explains that environmental justice "relies on the equitable sharing of both benefits and the burdens involved in maintaining the healthy and sustainable environments that all living things can enjoy (p. 431). Dominelli (2013) goes so far as to position "environmental justice at the heart of social work practice" (p. 431). This is a major call for social work to commit to social justice action regarding all environmental concerns.

One critical previously mentioned environmental justice issue, resulting from colonial-capitalism and environmental degradation, is environmental racism. Environmental racism is "the disproportionate location of industrial polluters such as landfills, trash incinerators, coal plants, toxic waste facilities and other environmentally hazardous activities near to communities of colour and the working poor" (The ENRICH Project, n.d., para. 2). As a result, these communities are often left with high rates of rare cancers, and devastating impacts on their lands and waters (Page & MacNeil, 2019). Mental health is also impacted, as the loss and anticipated loss of species, ecosystems, and landscapes lead to severe feelings of mourning and sadness, known as *ecological grief*, as well as *eco-anxiety*, resulting in feelings of despair and hopelessness (Schibli, 2020), obsessive thinking, insomnia, and panic attacks (Wu et al., 2020). Youth are especially affected by climate crises. Eco-anxiety appears most prevalent among youth (Schibli, 2020), while chronic stress can lead to psychopathological challenges and permanent

brain structure changes (Wu et al., 2020). Children's high exposure to air pollution also raises susceptibility to neurological abnormalities (Schibli, 2020). Some school-age children today fear dying of climate crisis before old age (Taylor & Murray, 2020). Indeed, children and older adults are more likely to die than young adults during disasters (Dominelli, 2013). Finally, women and girls are also disproportionately burdened by environmental crises due to the pre-existing inequities they face resulting from colonial-patriarchal structures. For instance, women are more likely to be caretakers (Schibli, 2020), have higher rates of poverty (Alston, 2015) and lower rates of literacy than men globally (Dominelli, 2013), more susceptibility to fertility impacts (Koutouki et al., 2018), and violence and trafficking where community health is deteriorating from climate crises (Alston, 2015). As a result of this drastic increase in environmental crises, such as major wildfires, droughts, and flooding (Schibli, 2020), 200 million environmental migrants are anticipated globally by 2050 (Currie & Deschênes, 2016). This is a particularly major concern for social workers, who are frequently service providers in support of immigrants and refugees (Potocky & Naseh, 2019). Thus, with all these social justice issues at play, environmental social work discourse has been on the rise.

In their concept analysis of the term environmental social work, Ramsay and Boddy (2016) note that the publications on the topic had tripled twice between 2001-2016, suggesting a professional change. For their analysis, they considered various other terms that are considered forms of environmental social work, such as eco-feminist social work, spiritual and eco-spiritual social work, ecological social work, sustainable social work, and green social work, among others. From their analysis of 67 articles on these topics, they note the following common themes: "creative application of social work skills to environmental concepts"; "openness to different values and ways of being or doing", which includes "[shifting] practice, theory, and

values to consider the natural environment", "[learning] from indigenous cultures and spirituality", "[incorporating] the natural environment within social work education", and "[appreciating] the innate and instrumental value of non-human life"; "[adopting] a renewed change orientation" to "change society" and "critique hegemony"; and "[working] across boundaries and in multiple spaces", be they in multidisciplinary teams, communities or with individuals (p. 73).

According to Payne (2020), all environmental social work—or what Payne calls *eco practice*— involves the following five traits: (1) an awareness of the impact of human activity on the Earth's environment, (2) social justice as demanding environmental justice which focuses on resource use and the relationship between human wellbeing and that of the natural environment, (3) creating a way of human life that ceases to degrade the natural environment, (4) promoting human wellbeing in a manner that is interconnected with the natural environment, and (5) supporting the social transition toward political, economic, and social systems in human wellbeing based on respect for the natural environment.

In their discussion of ecological social work, Coates and Gray (2011) list ten broad arenas of ecosocial work practice: (1) disaster intervention; (2) drought intervention; (3) climate activism; (4) responses to toxic waste exposure, (5) "food security, including community gardens, urban agriculture and community-supported agriculture"; (6) "environmental justice where racism and poverty combine with pollution so communities endure multiple oppressions"; (7) sustainability, economic development, and social capital; (8) community education regarding the environment, ecology and spirituality; (9) "fossil fuels and housing adaptations with low-income communities"; and (10) responses to mining and industrial damage (p. 233).

Dominelli's (2012) discussion of green social work encompasses four central elements: peoples' interdependencies are the social organization of relationships; socioeconomic and physical environmental crises; interpersonal behaviours undermining the wellbeing of humans and the environment; and flora and fauna in their physical habitats (p. 25). Moreover, the green social work practice approaches are to "question exploitative production and consumption"; "tackle structures distributing power and resources unequally"; "eliminate poverty and oppressive 'isms'"; "promote global interdependency and solidarity in social relations"; "use natural resources for all, not people with privilege", and "protect the flora and fauna".

A more recent article in environmental social work by Powers and colleagues (2021) describe in detail the ecosocial worldview that they call on the profession to adopt, which includes the 4 principles of (1) "holism", whereby all aspects of life are interconnected within an overarching system; (2) the "interdependence of well-being", whereby progress occurs when the health of all parts of the Web of Life is improved; (3) "systemic connections and relationships", which involves "[ensuring] thriving and abundance for all in the Web of Life, including future generations", and (4) "ecosocially sustainable and inclusive communities", wherein humans do not upset the balance of the system, limits to economic growth are recognized, de-growth is understood as essential to wellbeing, and long-term considerations are emphasized (p. 8). Many environmental social work scholars have also written at length on the need for social work pedagogy and curricula to be altered to embrace environmental social work, providing case studies and practical examples of making this paradigm shift within education (See Findlay et al., 2017; Papadopoulos, 2019; and Melekis & Woodhouse, 2015, for some of many examples).

Overall, then, environmental social work is focused on the inextricable connection between human health and the health of all other living beings and the planet, emphasizing the

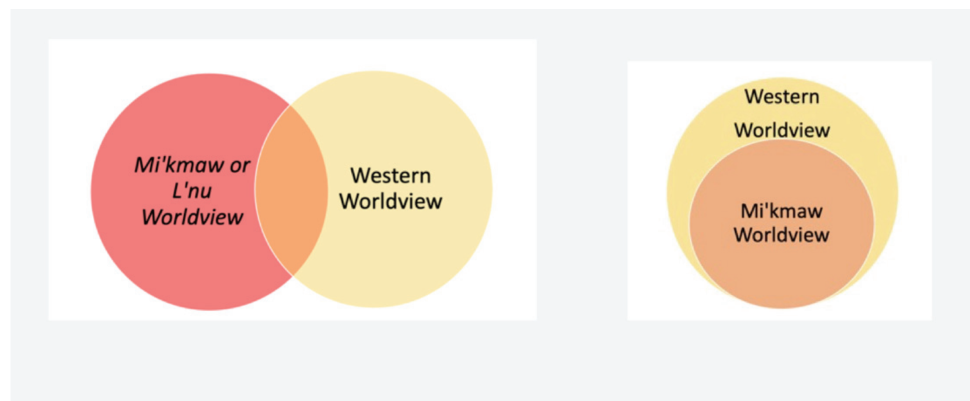
relationships between these connections, and the impact of those relationships on the wellbeing of the "Web of Life" as a whole. However, despite its potential for alignment with anti-colonialism and Indigenous Knowledge, as argued in the section that follows, much of the current literature on environmental social work is perpetuating land dispossession and settler colonial, white supremacist discourses, in tension with Indigenous worldviews.

Limitations of Mainstream Environmental Social Work

One of the greatest limitations of mainstream environmental social work so far has been the failure to centre the guiding philosophy of Etuaptmumk, wherein Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers could collaborate in environmental justice efforts, co-creating a sustainable future for all, with attention to the healing demanded by the settler colonial contexts at hand. Instead, as is evident in the next section, most environmental social work literature risks appropriation. The literature has acknowledged Indigenous perspectives as informing environmental social work perspectives in a way that suggests the "incorporation" of Indigenous perspectives and appears to coopt Indigenous models to advance an "ecosocial" worldview. This defies the principles of Etuaptmumk, in which each worldview is respected as distinct and equally valued, while the overlap and congruencies between the two are honoured, without one dominating the other (see Figure 1 for a visual of the difference between Etuaptmumk and appropriation, courtesy of Dr. Sherri Pictou).

Figure 1

Etuaptmumk vs. Appropriation



Note. Image Courtesy of Dr. Sherry Pictou.

It follows that the literature lacks collaborations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous social work scholars concerned with healing Mother Earth while failing to centre Indigenous voices, Indigenous sovereignty, and anti-colonialism. Often where colonialism and decolonization are discussed, it is performative at best. The literature also fails to centre Spirit, which is critical to decolonization (Absolon, 2019c). Unfortunately, despite environmental social work's attempt to shift away from anthropocentrism, this dominant worldview is largely reinforced through the literature, while white supremacy remains unchallenged. Here, I describe these limitations in further detail.

Appropriation. Most environmental social work literature risks appropriation. For instance, in Dominelli's (2012) popular book on green social work, which features a two-paragraph-long section on *Indigenous Peoples' Struggles for Land and Self-Determination*, she suggests that social workers "incorporate" Indigenous Knowledges "in their practice to support people better in local communities and both meet their aspirations for an improved quality of life and care for the environment" (p. 192). Yet, suggesting "incorporation" risk appropriation by repackaging Indigenous concepts and worldviews into "new" concepts like those attributed to "green" social work, or the "ecosocial worldview", which are then attributed to white settlers. Similarly, Powers and colleagues (2021) explicitly state that "we are not suggesting that we

appropriate other models, colonizing in a different way; instead, we need to examine these alternative models to advance an ecosocial worldview and move us to a sustainable new normal" (p. 11). If work was actively being done to disrupt the potentiality for appropriation here, this statement would not be necessary. Furthermore, Powers and colleagues (2021) explicitly state how ecosocial work is not new, rather it comes "from Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, prior to becoming a formalized profession of social work" (p. 6). Although this is an attempt at "crediting" Indigenous Knowledges as informing the ecosocial worldview, it risks portraying the ecosocial worldview as inherently compatible with Indigenous worldviews, thereby homogenizing these distinct perspectives, failing to give the necessary attention to what distinguishes them.

Performative anti-colonial discourse. While environmental social work literature is sure to criticize the patriarchy (Klemmer & McNamara, 2020), modernity, capitalism, and neoliberalism (Boetto, 2019; Dominelli, 2012; Powers et al., 2021); colonialism is seldom discussed. In the rare cases where decolonization is discussed, it is treated as a metaphor (see Tuck & Yang, 2012), given that land, land dispossession, Indigenous land rights, and reparations are not mentioned, exemplifying what Tuck and Yang's (2012) refer to as settler moves to innocence. Popular ecosocial work scholars such as Boetto (2019) and Powers and colleagues (2021) stress the need to decolonize the field of ecosocial work, promoting community mobilization, as well as the inclusion and recognition of Indigenous knowledge throughout their literature and their historical illustrations of ecosocial work. Powers and colleagues (2021) even stress that this paradigm shift within the field "will require true participatory methods, centering and valuing local and Indigenous knowledges for solutions, and creating space for decolonizing" (p. 12). Yet, there is no discussion on what this centering of local and Indigenous knowledges

looks like, or how to create this space for decolonizing. Without thorough attention to the action required for these decolonizing practices, these statements risk giving the impression of "checking the box", and performative allyship.

Also, in Dominelli's (2012) book on green social work, she names colonialism as having robbed Indigenous Peoples of their riches and environmental wealth by forcing industrial processes and ways of life onto pre-industrial societies, upsetting the balance that "indigenous peoples had achieved between people and nature" (p. 183). Dominelli (2012) then concludes by affirming that non-Indigenous social workers have much to learn from holistic Indigenous worldviews and ways of life. Yet, there is no mention of decolonization within this section nor elsewhere in her entire book on environmental social work. Moreover, Dominelli positions Indigenous people as "struggling", while failing to highlight Indigenous resilience and resurgence, and the profession's need to take accountability for these struggles, by actively supporting Indigenous land reparations and Indigenous sovereignty. Even Dominelli's (2013) use of words like 'riches and wealth' to describe the lands, waters, and all our relations depicts and reinforces the notion of land-as-commodity, and the dominant ego-centric, anthropocentric worldview.

Lacking Spirit. Moreover, while there is an abundance, and potential increase, of literature on eco-spirituality, which is a form of environmental social work, the fact remains that less than half (41%) of the popular scholarship in the field addresses spirituality and Indigenous cultures (Ramsay & Boddy, 2016). This reveals that environmental social work is not yet in a place where decolonization, Indigenous self-determination, and reconciliation are prioritized, as Spirit is integral to decolonization (Absolon, 2019c). As the Seven Fires Prophecy suggests, it is humanity's return to Spirit and faith that will heal Mother Earth.

Lack of collaboration and centring Indigenous voices and perspectives. Most environmental social work scholarship comes from white social work scholars who pay little attention to Indigenous social work scholars' and Indigenous community perspectives. Interestingly, some environmental social work scholars recognize these limitations. For instance, Powers and colleagues (2021) warn that alternative non-human-centric worldviews, such as Indigenous worldviews, are highly understudied in academia (Powers et al., 2021). Additionally, Boetto (2019) regrets that Indigenous worldviews and knowledges have been marginalized within the profession while naming a few Indigenous writers, social workers, and activists who advocate for the further indigenization and decolonization of social work. Boetto (2019) then states that their work will inform the ongoing development of ecosocial work practice. This latter statement risks perpetuating ongoing appropriation and puts the onus on Indigenous scholars for doing this decolonizing work which is a critical responsibility of settlers. If environmental social work is to enact true societal change, it must not become yet another settler-colonial project enacted in isolation from Indigenous communities and leaders.

Perpetuating anthropocentrism. In Ramsay and Boddy's (2016) concept analysis of the term environmental social work, out of the 67 articles they analyzed, only 41% discuss the need to learn from spirituality and Indigenous cultures, and only 32% addressed the need to appreciate the innate value of the more-than-human world[20]. Only 25% discussed integrating the natural environment into social work education. Firstly, 75% of the literature on environmental social work education did not incorporate the natural environment; this means students will continue to learn in a purely human-centric environment, inhibiting the paradigm shift to an ecosocial framework. Moreover, if 68% of literature does not appreciate the innate value of non-human

[20] In 1997, David Abram coined the term 'more-than-human world' in his book on *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

life, then the anthropocentric understanding of "human life as the only life with innate value" is being reproduced. Even terms such as "Web of Life" or "flora and fauna," although a shift away from anthropocentrism, have their limitations. For instance, "all our relations," used in Indigenous discourse, captures more than what might be considered a part of the "Web of Life". All our relations include more than just the "flora and fauna"; they consist of the rocks and even what might be considered "inanimate objects" to some, such as the wooden table I am working on or the air we breathe.

White supremacy remains unchallenged. As described earlier, white supremacist[21] ideologies are intertwined with the settler colonial agenda, which justifies the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous lands and Peoples and enables the continuation of environmental racism. Australian social worker Boetto (2019) challenges Euro-Western social workers to acknowledge the embeddedness of "white as normal" within the profession and euro-Western society and the powerful impact of colonial history and the ongoing colonial practices, shaping cultural identities in social work practice. While this is a start, there is no discussion on translating this acknowledgment into meaningful action and change. Furthermore, literature is finally becoming popularized regarding social work's necessity to respond to environmental racism (e.g., Forbes et al., 2023; Stein, 2022), although this discussion remains at the margins. If social work is to successfully play a role in protecting the lands and waters and taking a stand against environmental racism, the profession must work tirelessly to debunk harmful, supremacist rhetoric in society.

[21] Adrienne Maree Brown (2017) also problematizes systems of supremacy more broadly, which therefore encompasses all oppressive systems that are harming Earth Mother, including racism, anthropocentrism, colonial-capitalism, heterosexism, and other systems demanding dominance and superiority of one group over another.

Specific to the Canadian context, environmental education scholar McLean (2013) urges environment-related educational programs to challenge the following four tenants of dominant "Canadian nation building narratives": (1) "Whiteness as separate from colonial violence"; (2) Canadian identity as "goodness", "innocence", and "tolerant"; (3) "erasure of Indigenous histories and peoples from land"; and (4) "White-settler fantasies of Canadian landscape as wild, essentialized, empty space" (p. 354). McLean (2013) further argues that "the colonial relationship between white-settler society and Indigenous Peoples is foundational to land-based struggles" (p. 357). Besides Hiller and Carlson (2018), Canadian environmental social work literature has yet to challenge these dominant colonial narratives perpetuating climate injustices.

Anti-Colonial and Indigenous Perspectives on Social Work Climate Crises Response

Despite these significant gaps in the literature, Social Work for Land Back *is* possible, as exemplified by the exceptional anti-colonial and Indigenous scholarship described in what follows. This literature grounds and soils the discussions of Social Work for Land Back in the forthcoming chapters. Hiller and Carlson (2018), two white settler anti-colonial social work scholars, offer the following principles and practices for environmental social work that prioritize decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and reconciliation. First, social workers must challenge assumptions that assume there was "empty land" before settlement while proclaiming that Canadian soil exists within the context of ongoing colonial history, Indigenous resistance, and resurgence (Hiller & Carlson, 2018). Second, to centre Indigenous sovereignty, we must also be focused on Indigenous cosmologies and Indigenous understandings of land and land relationships in environmental practice (Hiller & Carlson, 2018). Third, we must engage in a substantial revision of our practice foundations, ensuring that we eliminate and reform social work discourses and practices that "justify settler occupation of stolen land, or encourage the

replacement of Indigenous Peoples and relations to land with settlers and relations of property" (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 8). Hiller and Carlson (2018) argue that "all environmental social work practice must be viewed. . . as either disrupting or *reifying* dispossession" (p. 60, emphasis in original); social work practice that does address this colonial context is reifying dispossession through silence and erasure. Hiller and Carlson (2018) urge social workers to move beyond the lens of "person-in-environment" or "person-in-place," to instead envision and realize our practice lens as "person-in-place-on-Indigenous-land-and-in-Indigenous-sovereignty".

Billiot and colleagues (2019), a group of Indigenous and settler social work scholars, have developed a framework of social work activities to address environmental changes through an Indigenous worldview while presenting various social work actions that support Indigenous resistance and resurgence. Through this framework, Billiot and colleagues (2019) call on social workers to move away from an emphasis on Western science and toward a holistic and ethical paradigm that creates opportunities for productive and effective collaboration. As such, the framework proposed by Billiot and colleagues (2019) is modelled after the medicine wheel with four interrelated, iterative, and nonlinear components: decolonizing the implementation of evidence-based practice and activities; coordination through community mobilizing; education of social workers incorporating Indigenous Knowledge (IK); and awareness of interventions as healing opportunities. Billiot and colleagues (2019) explain that for many Indigenous Peoples whose identities are embedded within a relational context, knowledge of and connection to place are often essential to health and wellbeing (Billiot et al., 2019). Ergo, wellbeing is relational and predicated upon the interdependent relationship of humans with all our relations, encompassing not only individual human wellbeing but also the collective wellbeing we share with all our relations. Billiot and colleagues (2019) thus emphasize that their Indigenous model for social

responses to environmental change is not only essential to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples but also to the health and wellbeing of all peoples and Mother Earth.

Bell and colleagues (2019), anti-colonial environmental social work scholars, advocate for an anti-colonial approach to ecosocial work by discussing their newly developed collective survival strategies (CSS) framework. Bell and colleagues (2019) explicitly connect climate change to colonization and examine the social work program at the Indigenous Knowledges Master of Social Work program at the University of Manitoba, which is founded upon anti-colonial practice and Indigenous knowledges. The CSS framework emerged from ecosocial work's emphasis on resilience in response to climate change, and recognition of the lack of consideration for historical and ongoing power dynamics, culture, and agency within dominant resilience frameworks. Instead, the CSS framework conceptualizes resilience through understandings of history, power, culture, and agency, while also focusing on the strengths of oppressed communities. The five components of CSS are: "(1) communal and cooperative, not individualistic; (2) rooted in place and existing cultural traditions; (3) focus on basic survival needs – food, water, shelter, protection, culture; (4) self-organized and autonomous – not reliant upon outside actors; and (5) address both quotidian and spectacular disasters – making everyday life better and reducing vulnerability to larger crises" (Bell et al., 2019, p. 287).

Bell and colleagues (2019) further argue that "in thinking about our futurity as a species, it is vital that ecosocial work attends to the ways that settlers have materially benefitted from the threat to Indigenous futurity" (p. 284). Similarly, Bell and colleagues (2019) urge ecosocial workers to follow the lead of Indigenous Elders and community members. As social workers, we are trained to bridge gaps between a variety of stakeholders to reduce power imbalances, but to do this ecosocial workers must also "examine their own role in colonialism and resist re-enacting

it in their practice" (p. 291). Eco-social workers must engage in continual critical self-reflection, recognizing that our profession is entrenched within oppressive systems of power, including colonization itself, which especially benefits white settlers (Absolon & Absolon-Winchester, 2016; Rowe et al., 2015). Finally, Bell and colleagues (2019) stress the need to support marginalized communities in "meeting their own needs in their own way" so as not to perpetuate the colonial "white supremacist economic coercion" currently at play (p. 291-2), thereby ultimately advocating for solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty.

Similarly, Indigenous environmental social work scholar Michael Yellow Bird, member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, reminds us that the most important aspect of decolonizing social work is to harness the strengths of Indigenous communities, and that "social workers have the opportunity either to support Indigenous Peoples' rights or continue with practices that further erode them" (2013, p. xxii). This project is focused on amplifying social work's opportunity to engage in the former, specifically through ecological practice and environmental sustainability efforts. Yellow Bird and settler anti-colonial social work scholar Gray (2010) envision a social work that breaks the boundaries of the settler colonial status quo by unsettling settler privilege and addressing the illegitimacy and injustice at the core of Canada's claim to land and sovereignty. Yellow Bird and Gray present a hypothetical job description where they dream of social workers who explicitly work for the actualization of Indigenous self-determination, and the return of Indigenous lands (see Chapter 7 for full quote):

> Wanted: social workers to assist Indigenous Peoples
> Indigenous Peoples are seeking highly motivated social workers to serve their communities' drive for self-determination, empowerment and complete return of their lands and other resources illegally stolen by colonial societies. the social worker will be required to develop aggressive programmes of decolonization that can be used to enlighten and reform members of mainstream society. (Yellow Bird & Gray, 2010, p. 60)

The fact that this job description may seem far-fetched and unrealistic, still 13 years later, is exactly the reason for this thesis. This is the type of social work practice that can and will bring healing transformation to the ways we as a larger society on Turtle Island relate to each other, the lands, and the waters. This is the type of social work that embodies true reconciliation.

It is also imperative to draw attention to the wealth of scholarship on Indigenous social work and worldviews more broadly that already inherently embrace land-based healing, ways of helping that are infused with the land and all our relations, while rooted in perspectives centring our interconnectedness and reciprocity that disrupt anthropocentrism and separation. Some especially influential works include Absolon (2019b), Coulthard (2010), Coulthard and Simpson (2016), Hart (2014), and Palmater (2013), to name but a few. There are also Indigenous writers who provide rich discussions of healing humanity and all our relations, that can help to root, ground, and earth social workers as they unlearn colonial white supremacist ideologies, and shift towards ways of knowing, being, and doing that honour ancestral wisdom and the harmony of all our relations. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer and *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change* by Sherri Mitchell are two critical examples.

Another example is naturopathic physician, scholar, and member of the Deninu K'ue First Nation in Denendeh Northwest Territories, Nicole Redvers, who writes about planetary health from an Indigenous perspective. After collaborating with a group of Indigenous scholars, practitioners, land defenders, water protectors, and respected Knowledge Keepers and Elders, Redvers and colleagues (2022) presents the following determinants of planetary health from an Indigenous perspective: Mother Earth-level determinants which are respect of the feminine and ancestral legal personhood designation; interconnecting determinants, which are human

interconnectedness within Nature, self and community relationships, the modern scientific paradigm, and governance and law; and the Indigenous Peoples' level determinants, which are Indigenous land tenure rights, Indigenous languages, Indigenous Peoples' health, and Indigenous Elders and children (Redvers et al., 2022, p. e158; see Redvers et al., 2022 for an in-depth discussion). Importantly, Redvers and colleagues (2022) emphasize that each one of these determinants is "crucial for human health and for the health of the planet", not just for Indigenous Peoples (p. e160). It is frameworks like these that can guide environmental social work in its anti-colonial, decolonization journey, in support of the survival of *all* our relations.

Conclusion: Calling on Environmental Social Work to Support Land Back

This thesis is a call for all social work to support Land Back, through its environmental social work efforts. This call for Social Work for Land Back is based on the following 3 premises: (1) much of the current literature on environmental social work is perpetuating land dispossession and settler colonial, white supremacist discourse, except some exemplary Indigenous and anti-colonial scholarship adjacent to this topic; (2) environmental social work would be most successful by supporting the Land Back movement in response to environmental crises; (3) environmental social work has a responsibility to support the Land Back movement as a form of accountability for the harms of the profession, and given the disproportionate impact of environmental crises on Indigenous populations. Thus, as illustrated by collaborators in the Findings Chapters that follow, Social Work for Land Back is both necessary *and* achievable.

PART 2 – WATERING THE SEED

Chapter 3: Research Design

Lucky stars above you,
Sunshine on your way,
Many friends to love you,
Joy in work and play.
Laughter to outweigh each care,
In your heart a song,
And gladness waiting everywhere
All your whole life long.
—Irish Blessing

I chose this Irish blessing to open this chapter because the project's research design and methodology have cultivated deep joy for both the researcher and collaborators, cultivating friendships and relationships to last a lifetime. Despite the heavy subject matter discussed in the sharing circles and conversations, laughter outweighed each care, and songs filled our hearts. This project has been infused with hope and gladness every step of the way.

I begin by introducing the guiding medicine for this chapter. Next, I provide an overview of the research paradigm and framework of this project. I then highlight the research objectives and questions, followed by an overview of the study's methodology. I then discuss the research collaborators, followed by an explanation of the research methods, data collection processes and protocol. From there, I describe the meaning-making procedures underpinning the work's analysis. Through the creation of this research project and the unfolding of its processes, collaborators and I began to water the seed of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk. The seed has been planted by the countless anti-colonial and Indigenous Social Workers for Land Back who came before us, inspiring this research project. Now, through our collaborations, we have watered the seed.

Guiding Medicine: Ginseng – *Miyaomahcihowin-maskih*

The Medicine guiding this chapter is American Ginseng. The Latin term for American Ginseng is Panax aquinquefolius, and in Île-à-la-Crosse Michif, it is known as Miyaomahcihowin-maskih. Miyaomahcihowin-maskih can support the body in resisting stress given that it contains multiple minerals, vitamins, and saponins (Belcourt et al., 2007). This medicine has been used for thousands of years, with some records indicating that Penobscot women would steep the plant's roots in water to increase their fertility. The plant is also known to be an aphrodisiac. Miyaomahcihowin-maskih "is considered a 'cure-all', and is often taken as a general tonic to improve mental efficiency" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 14).

The Indigenous approaches to research that gave life to this project, including sharing circles and the conversational method, have rooted this project in the 4 Rs of Indigenous research: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001), thereby supporting relief of the potential stressors that can come with research projects and procedures for both the researcher and participants, such as the risk of misrepresenting or extracting information from participants. Instead, the Indigenous research approaches guiding this project have allowed the process to revitalize and nourish all involved. Like *miyaomahcihowin-maskih*, Indigenous research methods have been used for thousands of years by Indigenous communities across the globe, given their fruitful nature in birthing new ideas, and in cultivating an evolution, a spawning, if you will, of *netukulimk*—the consciousness of knowing. Like *miyaomahcihowin-maskih*, Indigenous research approaches have also improved the mental efficiency of all research collaborators by enriching our ways of thinking, understanding, conceptualizing, and intellectualizing the topic of Social Work for Land Back.

Indigenous Research Paradigm

Many brilliant Indigenous writers have conceptualized Indigenous research over the years. Wilson (2008) summarizes it well, explaining that within an Indigenous research paradigm, "the ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships" (p. 70-71). Importantly, the ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology are understood circularly, as these aspects are inseparable, flowing and blending amongst each other, while the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Wilson, 2008, p. 70).

Indigenous ontology encompasses multiple relationships wherein reality exists in one's relationship with the truth; reality is a process of relationships and is equivalent to an Indigenous epistemology (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous ontology and epistemology are equivalent, as both are "relativist, relational; multiple, socially constructed realities, mutual reality based on multitude of relationships" (Held, 2019, p. 5). Thus, relationality is central in both Indigenous ontology and epistemology. Stated differently, our reality, and state of being, is shaped by our relationships; we come to understand our realities, and gain knowledge, through our relationships. Throughout this research project, in alignment with an Indigenous paradigm, I have drawn on my understanding of our interrelatedness with the natural world, viewing reality as embodied and connected, whereby the physical and spiritual worlds are interconnected (Rowe et al., 2015). I have gathered all the knowledge shared herein through my relationships with Spirit, Mother Earth, and research collaborators.

Through an Indigenous paradigm, research ethics are about creating, maintaining, and nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships (Rowe et al., 2015). Through an Indigenous research paradigm, self-determination is not individualized but is rather viewed through a collectivist lens (Grande, 2008). Indigenous axiology requires that one fulfills one's roles and

responsibilities within the research relationship respectfully and reciprocally, and is accountable to one's relationships (Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, an Indigenous research paradigm is committed to healing, empowerment, and moral praxis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

It follows then, that Indigenous methodology must involve processes conducive to relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). Simply put, it is the building of more relationships (Wilson, 2008). In this way, the researcher and the researched are partners (Rowe et al., 2015). Through Indigenous research methodology, Indigenous worldviews are distinct and vital to Indigenous life, Indigenous social traditions are honoured, historical, and sociopolitical contexts are emphasized, and Indigenous voices, experiences, and lives are centered (Rowe et al., 2015). Indigenous research methodology is ultimately rooted in relationality, liberation, transformation, and Indigenous knowledge systems (Chilisa, 2019).

Principles and Theories Guiding the Research

There have been multiple interconnected principles and theories that have guided this research: Etuaptmumk—Two-Eyed Seeing; Anti-Colonial Theory; Indigenous Knowledge Theory; Netukulimk—Consciousness of knowing; the principle that decolonization is connected to the land, the waters, and Spirit itself; as well as the principle of critical self-reflexivity.

Etuaptmumk

As described earlier, Etuaptmumk is a fundamental guiding principle of this project. Early in the project, my thesis advisor, Professor Gail Baikie, advised me to imagine I was putting on a pair of glasses, with one lens of an anti-colonial critical social work worldview, and one lens of an Indigenous worldview. Then she invited me to imagine I was wearing these glasses throughout every step of this project. For me, these were guiding words that shaped and continue to shape my approach to this project. As I see through both lenses, I am reminded of

Elder Albert Marshall's reflections on the importance of seeing the strengths of both views and imagining a world where they can inform each other respectfully, in balance and harmony. With that said, I have been guided by two analytical theories and frameworks in approaching this research design: anti-colonial theory, and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) theory[22].

Anti-Colonial Theory

Anti-colonial theory is rooted in Western discourses and understandings of systems of oppression and is an appropriate theoretical lens for settler researchers who seek to disrupt settler colonialism (Hart et al., 2017). Anti-colonial theory "critiques the historical and contemporary colonial suppression of Indigenous Peoples by Euro-western forces", while recognizing and upholding resistance, decolonization, and cultural reclamation (Baikie, 2009, p. 47). Thus, through a call for decolonization, anti-colonial theory problematizes settler colonialism and white supremacy. Decolonization seeks to transform land, places, and spaces towards the understandings of land-as-identity, and land-as-relationship, while rejecting the oppression, exploitation and domination of humans, the land, waters, and all our relations that have resulted from colonial-capitalist ways of knowing, being, and doing (Coulthard, 2010; Dei, 2019).

Anti-colonial theory also calls for place-based ethics of reciprocity. Inspired by his Dene Nation worldview, Coulthard (2010) describes place-based reciprocity as an understanding of humans as one with the land and waters, through which we have obligations to not only other humans, but also the plants, animals, lakes, and all our relations; thereby protecting the wellbeing and survival of all (Coulthard, 2010). Grounded in Indigenous cultural worldviews, anti-colonial theory embraces the notion that "the trees, plants, animals, stones, and creeks are alive themselves – [with] hearts, breath, memory, longing, patience, friendliness – the destruction of

[22] While aiming for a Two-Eyed Seeing perspective, I acknowledge my Western upbringing may have unintentionally prioritized the Indigenous worldview in this text, given the salience of my (un)(re)learning journey.

[which] is inseparable from the tragedy of the destruction of indigenous cultures and people" (Scholtmeijer, 2005, p. 320). Thus, anti-colonial theory sees human suffering as inseparable from environmental degradation, problematizing the prioritization of one at the expense of the other.

In essence, anti-colonial theory encompasses decolonization, resists colonial authority, and upholds the self-determination of colonized nations. Anti-colonial theory also calls for a shift in thinking and action towards broader social and political movements that challenge state authorities and agendas (Baskin & Davey, 2017). According to Dei (2019), "anti-colonial and decoloniality[23] are intertwined logics. Our political and discursive practices for change must be anti-colonial in outlook and orientation. This way the anti-colonial becomes the path to a decolonial future" (p. viii). Anti-colonial theorists also argue that oppressors and the dominant group who hold colonial power are responsible for supporting this transformational social change required for a decolonial future (Baskin & Davey, 2017). Through an anti-colonial lens, this project questions and challenges the present state of ecological social work education practice, while exploring how the profession can commit to change, to collectively imagine and arrive at a decolonial future for all that will lead us to more sustainable and ecologically sound existence.

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) Theory

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is a collective term that refers to the multitude of place-based knowledges that have accrued over generations within countless specific cultural contexts (Jessen et al., 2021). Informed by the land from which a community originates, IK is founded

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[23] According to Lang (2005), decolonization is the work that Indigenous Peoples might do to free themselves of oppressive control, whereas "decolonialism" is the work that the colonizers need to do to rid themselves of the desire for control and domination, which frequently exists within the colonizers' hearts, minds, and organizational systems.

upon a belief in the spiritual, intimate relationship of love and respect between humankind and the land itself (Billiot et al., 2019). This is unlike the Western understanding of humans' relationship to the land as being one of ownership (Billiot et al., 2019). At the core of IK is the understanding of nature and humans as interdependent for survival. As Billiot and colleagues (2019) explain, "IK was formed through generations of multi-disciplinary, empirical Indigenous observations of the natural world, is grounded in place and provides theory and the praxis of both politics and ethics for many Indigenous communities". Despite forced displacement and voluntary migration, Indigenous Peoples remain connected and knowledgeable of their original homelands, as IK understands that place-based knowledge is transportable and embodied (Billiot et al., 2019). Therefore, social workers must recognize the centrality of IK through connection to the land to address issues related to climate and environmental change (Billiot et al., 2019). This project is grounded in IK theoretical perspectives which uphold living by the ways of the land, as Indigenous Peoples have always known and done since this is integral to the Land Back movement (The Red Nation, 2021).

Netukulimk – Consciousness of Knowing

Related to etuaptmumk, is the Mi'kmaw concept of *netukulimk*, translated as "consciousness of knowing", wherein we recognize and honour our co-existence, interrelatedness, interconnectedness, and community Spirit, with each other, Mother Earth, and all our relations. (Marshall et al., 2010, slide 31). Netukulimk is a philosophy that is reflected in the tenets of anti-colonial and IK theory, in which one is fully conscious of humanity's interdependence and interconnectedness with the natural world, which is simultaneously embedded within one subconscious to the point where one is constantly aware of creating and maintaining balance (Marshall et al., 2010). This philosophy guides this project, infused in the

water that nourishes the seed, in that netukulimk is a perspective which I have aspired to embody, and is the philosophy that I dream will ground and lead the profession of social work.

Spirit, the Land, and the Waters

The Spirit, the land, and the waters, the body and blood of Mother Earth, are interconnected and foundational to survival. As mentioned, this thesis is guided by Spirit throughout. While more and more Western ways of knowing, being, and doing are coming to this understanding (Coates, 2003; Ramsay & Boddy, 2016; Powers et al., 2021), within an Indigenous worldview, Indigenous knowledge, as well as in Indigenous research methodologies (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012), humans are understood as having both bodies and Spirits (Marshall, 2010). We are Spirits having a human experience, Spirits with human bodies.

Furthermore, through netukulimk, knowledge itself is understood as Spirit (Marshall et al., 2010). In this way, knowledge is sacred, prayer and knowledge coincide. Indigenous Knowledge and understandings of the land see land-as-relationship (Coulthard, 2010), and that this relationship between humans and the land is infused with Spirit, intimacy, love, and reverence, rather than ownership (Billiot et al., 2019). Land is seen as alive, and interconnected with us and all our relations, given that “Spirit is in Creation and Creation is connected to the Creator” (Absolon, 2019c, p.44).

Given that this thesis is guided by anti-colonial theory, it thereby centres decolonization. Indeed, this thesis is particularly concerned with decolonizing environmental social work. As Absolon (2019c) highlights, decolonization is the very act of recentering Spirit in all that we do, as “Spirit is the antidote to colonization because colonization is devoid of Spirit” (Absolon, 2019c, p. 44). Absolon further connects this to the land: “colonization is and has always been about the exploitation and excavation of the land. A Spirit of decolonizing is a Spirit that calls

people back into respectful relationship with the land" (2009c, p. 48). As many other Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars remind us, decolonization is inherently about the land (Carlson & Hiller, 2018; Coulthard, 2010; Simpson, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Yellow Bird & Grey, 2010).

Ultimately, decolonization is concerned with the healing of all people and all our relations—as is this project. In honour of the many ways Spirit walks in this research, from the inception of this idea until now, and as I continue to cherish and share the stories shared with me throughout this project, I honour research as ceremony, as is described in the following chapter.

Critical Self-Reflexivity

An important and adjacent research principle of Western anti-oppressive and anti-colonial social work research praxis that guides this project is that of critical self-reflexivity. Critical self-reflexivity involves the examination of how one's daily interactions maintain or transform power relations and social structures, through a series of questioning ''the relationship between seemingly unproblematic, everyday behavior and structured outcomes'' (Kondrat, 1999, p. 468), and one's place within these relationships (Beagan, 2015). As Rowe and colleagues (2015) so eloquently state, the anti-colonial "quest to avoid the imposition of Western concepts and agendas inimical to Indigenous contexts and world views requires an acute awareness of the centrality of reflexivity to the process of knowledge production" (p. 303). This research project entails a constant process of unlearning and relearning for me as the researcher, who is simultaneously a collaborator, inseparable from the research (Wilson, 2008). Therefore, my self-reflexivity will be a core component of the research processes, as is critical when engaging in anti-colonial Indigenist research (Kovach, 2010; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Rowe et al., 2015; Wilson, 2008). These processes are described in detail in the methods section below.

Anti-Colonial Indigenist Framework

In honour of Etuaptmumk, my Nêhiyaw grandmother, Indigenous resurgence, as well as my mixed ancestry as both a settler-colonizer of European descent and a member of the Red River Métis Nation, this research will be grounded in an anti-colonial Indigenist framework. While the anti-colonial aspect of this Anti-Colonial Indigenist Framework confronts colonialism and resists "colonizer-imposed boundaries", the Indigenist aspect of the Anti-Colonial Indigenist Framework infuses this project with the honour and elevation of Indigenous aspirations (Hart et al., 2017). Wilson (2016) defines Indigenism as a shared philosophy and way of being,

> built upon understanding as we 'are' our relationships, with thoughts and concepts of science and spirituality, ideas and abstractions. We do not discover or claim ideas or concepts, rather we learn by making relations with the ideas shaping our being just as much as we shape the ideas in return. (p. 314).

Through this philosophy, we, and everything else in the cosmos, are not just in relationships, we *are* relationships (Wilson, 2016). In this way, relationships become the unit of analysis as opposed to the individual (Wilson, 2008). For this reason, the methods of this project centre collaboration and conversation throughout, where meaning is consistently created together.

Research Aim

Despite the social work profession's increasing efforts towards engaging in ecological practice and sustainability within both education and practice within Canada, these efforts have seldom considered decolonization, reconciliation, and supporting Indigenous self-determination. Furthermore, as has been argued in the previous chapters, colonialism has been a driving force behind the desecration and poisoning of the lands and the waters of our sacred Earth Mother, and the resulting climate crises on the rise. As discussed in Chapter 1, many Indigenous activists and environmentalists alike center Land Back, decolonization, Indigenous self-determination, and

reconciliation, as foundational actions to support when considering solutions in response to these harms. Therefore, social work's concern with the environment, sustainability, and climate crises, must also take seriously these foundational movements. The objective of this research is to demonstrate the criticality of these foundational movements within social work ecological practices and the profession's responses to climate crises, by expanding upon the strengths and potential of existing approaches to social work pedagogy and practice that are concerned with Indigenous self-determination, decolonization, and reconciliation. The research aim is to understand how social workers within Western education and practice settings can decolonize their responses to climate crises and environmental degradation by supporting Land Back.

Research Questions

In response to the work's overarching objectives, and before data collection, this research project was initially guided by the following research questions:

How can social workers in Canada interested in sustainability and the environment, come to understand the repatriation of Indigenous lands as the most rational environmental policy for the climate crisis, through social work education and practice? And, more precisely:

a) What does social work education look like when it disrupts colonialism and upholds reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and land reclamations through curricula on environmental sustainability and ecological practice?

b) What might social work ecological practice look like when it disrupts colonialism, upholding reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and land reclamations?

However, with the completion of each conversation, the language I used during the conversation to ask questions evolved to reflect the concepts and terminology that appeared to resonate most with collaborators. For instance, wisdom and insights shared by research

collaborators challenged the language of the research questions, and rightfully so. This research focuses on social workers who understand sustainability and the environment as core values, more than just ‘interests’. Further, collaborators discussed so much more than the ‘repatriation’ or ‘reclamation’ of Indigenous lands per se, providing a much fuller, richer, and more powerful understanding of ‘Land Back’. Additionally, the term ‘reconciliation’ was problematized by many collaborators for various reasons, such as how reconciliation is often taken up in a “ticking the box” manner through performative land acknowledgments, or where organizations and governments might implement some policy and consider this to be enough to reconcile all of the historical and ongoing colonial harms endured by Indigenous Peoples at the hands of the state and the profession of social work. Thus, terms like ‘solidarity’, ‘reclamation’, ‘Indigenous-settler relationships’, ‘reparations’, and ‘reconnection’ were used instead. ‘Self-determination’ was also referred to most often as ‘sovereignty’, possibly due to the more individualistic understandings of self-determination in Western discourse. Due to this learning around relevant language and terminology, emerging from the research processes, the research questions have been modified to the iterations presented in the introduction and conclusion chapter. These terms are also used interchangeably throughout the thesis to reflect the and nuances complexity of these matters[24].

Research Collaborators

Collaborators for this project are social workers, whether students, teachers, scholars, and/or practitioners, based in Canada, who are focused on decolonizing social work’s efforts to mitigate climate change and engage in sustainable social work practices. As was also specified

[24] The subject matter herein is complex, nuanced, multilayered, and multifaceted. However, some arguments and discussions are more concise due to the richness and vastness of the research data and questions. I invite readers to consider all arguments with a "yes/and" rather than an "either/or" approach in honour of the interconnected, infinite, and circular nature of society, the human experience, and life. I aspire to capture this intricacy and complexity more fully in the knowledge dissemination processes resulting from this project.

within the inclusion criteria, this project highlights the voices of those who see supporting reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and Indigenous land reclamations as an emerging and/or active focus within their social work career. These inclusion criteria were necessary to gather the diverse social work perspectives that live at this nexus. This nexus is where the understanding of social work's responsibility to decolonize the profession and society at large meets the understanding of social work's responsibility to respond to the impacts of climate crises affecting the health and wellbeing of the human and more-than-human world, as well as the environment. Stated differently, collaborators for this project *are* Social Workers for Land Back. Six to twelve collaborators were needed for this project. The aim was to have an equal representation of students, educators, and practitioners.

After an overwhelming response rate to recruitment efforts, six collaborators were initially involved in this project, six of whom identify as Indigenous, and six of whom identify as non-Indigenous. At the time of data collection, five of the collaborators were students, two of whom were actively working in the field, all of whom had social work adjacent practice experience. Four of the collaborators were both social work educators and practitioners, while two identified solely as practitioners. Collaborators were or had been studying, educating, and/or practicing social work across Turtle Island North, representing experiences in the Yukon, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and elsewhere. The 11 collaborators who remained in the project are introduced in Chapter 4.

Recruitment Method

In line with my intention to build relations in a good way throughout this project, I created a video for recruitment, beginning with a personalized introduction of myself and my intentions, as well as a summary of the project overview, research questions, inclusion criteria,

and hopes for the project. This method of recruitment was intended to reflect the oral tradition of storytelling, to emphasize the relationality aspect of the project, as well as to mirror the knowledge dissemination aspect of the project, which involves the co-creation of a documentary film. The recruitment video was distributed via email to various organizations in support of distributing recruitment materials for this project. The video included subtitles, for accessibility purposes, and the transcript for the video was attached to each email as a Word Document. The video was linked and available through YouTube as "unlisted". The recruitment email also included a brief write-up summarizing the recruitment details, as well as a recruitment poster.

After sending 29 emails to various social work regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and environmental activist organizations, approximately 14 appear to have distributed the recruitment materials. These 14 organizations include social work departments at the University of Manitoba, Dalhousie University, the University of Victoria, the Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition, Nova Scotia College of Social Workers, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education, Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network, and the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada, among others.

There was no formal screening procedure for recruitment beyond the self-identification of meeting the inclusion criteria. In response to any prospective collaborators who expressed interest in the study via email, those interested were asked to confirm their self-identification with the inclusion criteria via email, before being sent the informed consent form. Once recruitment emails to the larger organizations began, approximately 20 prospective collaborators reached out. Of these 20, 13 signed the consent form. Of these 13, 12 continued correspondence and participated in the study. Due to unforeseen personal circumstances, one collaborator had to

drop out of the study. This person was still compensated the same as all other collaborators and was also sent the results of the study.

Informed Consent Process

The study information was shared with potential collaborators through an informed consent form (Appendix A) distributed via email by the lead researcher. Collaborators had ample time to review the form and consult with a member of the research team before deciding on participation. The lead researcher was available for questions, as communicated in emails to prospective collaborators. Following each conversation, collaborators received a second Identifiability Consent Form (Appendix B), allowing them to choose whether to be identified in the data. This form was presented a few weeks after the conversation, giving collaborators time to reflect. They could opt for de-identification, with discussions about specific preferences for identifiers held individually. Consent, documented through a written signature, was obtained to ensure full understanding. Details of informed consent were reiterated verbally before the sharing circle and conversations. Collaborators had the option to withdraw up to 4 weeks after each conversation. See Appendix A for the Informed Consent Form with additional details on data storage, identifiability, and confidentiality pertinent to the study.

Research Methods

All collaborators involved in this project were invited to first attend a virtual sharing circle collectively, at a time arranged based on everyone's collective availability. Due to the navigation of 13 people's availabilities, two sharing circles were offered at different times. This was then followed up by a one-on-one conversation, recorded, between each collaborator and the lead researcher, at a separate time and location. One did not have to participate in the sharing

circle to do the interview, although it was encouraged. In the end, 8 of all 11 collaborators who engaged in one-on-one conversations had also participated in one of the sharing circles prior.

Sharing Circle Method

The sharing circle is a traditional Indigenous way of doing, wherein a group of people gather in a circle to share thoughts, feelings, stories, and reflections[25]. Sharing circles provide each person with an opportunity to share their story on any subject matter, with the option to pass. This traditional, culturally relevant approach to group storytelling often involves a symbolic object, like a talking stick, held by the speaker when it is their time to speak, and everyone else's time to listen. Participants can choose to pass, and the sharing order follows a circular direction, with the number of rounds determined by the facilitator and group dynamics. In line with the value of healing and relationships inherent within the Indigenous research paradigm, the "circle is a place of healing" (Elder Sarah as cited in Graveline, 1998, p. 148); "through the sharing you can strength and you can see a purpose for what you've gone through, that it's making a difference in somebody's life if you do share it" (Phil as cited in Graveline, 1998, p. 178); circle builds community, and "gives everyone a sense of worthiness and being valued and listened to, and respected" (Char as cited in Graveline, 1998, p. 176).

Tachine and colleagues (2016) describe sharing circles as an active approach to decolonizing research, in line with Indigenous resurgence. Using a sharing circle methodology provides an opportunity for intergenerational learning among the social workers involved in this study as well, as "in cultures with oral traditions, stories have a compelling utility as a way to pass knowledge from one generation to the next" (Tachine et al., 2016, p. 284). Furthermore, Tachine and colleagues (2016) and Kovach (2009) emphasize the importance of recognizing the

[25] Here, I draw upon my lived experience of attending multiple sharing circles over the past six years in a variety of different Indigenous-led community settings to describe sharing circle protocol and ethics.

relationships and responsibilities relevant to the Tribal cultural protocol of the research project at hand. Thus, the sharing circles were supported by Mi'kmaw Grassroots Grandmother, Water Walker, Water Protector, and Indian Residential School Survivor, Dorene Bernard, who was invited to guide the sharing circle processes. Grandmother Dorene also holds a Master of Social Work degree, with over 20 years of experience working in social work Child Welfare and Residential School Survivors' healing programs.

In the days leading up to the sharing circle, collaborators were asked to review the research questions, as stated above. The sharing circle took place online over Microsoft Teams Video. This allowed for ease of access, and the possibility of building connections across Turtle Island North. At each sharing circle's start, I acknowledged the land and shared my background, including where I've lived and studied. I explained my role in leading the research project and emphasized the importance of confidentiality. Participants were informed that their contributions might be reflected in the data due to the reflexive journaling practice as part of the methods, but that this practice would be done to maintain anonymity. Logistics, such as circle order, the virtual talking stick, and the closing water ceremony, were discussed. I reiterated the purpose, vision, and research questions.

After this introduction, Grandmother Dorene opened the circle with a smudge and opening prayer. Collaborators were then invited to discuss and share their reactions, thoughts, and feelings regarding the core research questions. Collaborators were welcome to share anything that came up for them in that moment of the sharing circle. In this case, with the circle sizes being 5 and 7 respectively, including myself and Grandmother Dorene, there was only time for two rounds. During the first round, collaborators were invited to introduce themselves, welcome in the territories they were with, share where they were from, welcome in their

ancestors, and share their hopes and intentions as a collaborator, reflecting on what led them to become Social Workers for Land Back. The first round involved introductions and deep personal sharing of what brought each person to the project. The second round involved a beginning discussion in response to the research questions. During each round, Grandmother Dorene also shared some personal and powerful stories, wisdom, and teachings. Finally, in the closing of each circle, Grandmother Dorene invited everyone to find a glass of water so that we could share a brief virtual water ceremony, where we all learned teachings passed along to Grandmother Dorene from the late Water Protector and Water Walker, Anishinaabe Elder, Grandmother Josephine Mandamin.

In honour of the intention for the sharing circle to be a closed space of connectivity and safety for participants, the sharing circle itself was not recorded. No notes, recordings, or other forms of documenting the engagement were taken during the circle. Afterwards, I engaged in reflexive journaling practices related to each sharing circle, and collaborators were invited to reflect on their experiences with the sharing circle during the subsequent one-on-one conversations wherein data was collected.

Overall, the sharing circles only just began to scratch the surface of the vast depths of the research topic at hand. Nonetheless, the circles provided collaborators with an opportunity to begin to consider these research questions collectively, in relationship. Situated in an Indigenous way of knowing, being, and doing, the sharing circle method embodied the intention of the project for creating space for connectivity, sharing, learning, and mutual support among social workers concerned with the environment, decolonization, and Land Back. The sharing circles also allowed for rapport building between the researcher and collaborators before diving into the one-on-one conversations. The circles also gave way to the emergence of a collective response to

the research questions, captured by my post-circle journal reflections, informing the collective voice presented in the finding chapters.

Conversational Method

Given that this research is concerned with decolonization and the land, it is imperative that the research methodologies, too, are place-based and grounded in decolonizing efforts. Thus, the main source of data collection for this project is the Indigenous conversational method, which Plains Cree and Saulteaux researcher Kovach (2010) describes as informal, dialogical, collaborative, flexible, relational, purposeful conversations—often with the aim of decolonizing, involving tribal protocol and knowledge situated in place. I use open-ended questions to instigate each conversation so that I, as the researcher, along with research collaborators could co-create knowledge (Kovach, 2010). See Appendix C for the semi-structured conversational guide.

In conversation, collaborators were invited to introduce themselves, where they come from, their role in social work, and to provide a territorial acknowledgment. Collaborators were then asked to respond to questions regarding their understanding of social work education and practice that disrupts colonialism and upholds reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and land reclamations. I also allowed collaborators to tell their stories in their own words on their terms, and I also shared my own story throughout the conversation, where relevant (Kovach, 2010; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). Every question was optional, and space was frequently made to deviate from the conversational guide. Time was respected, and the conversations ended between one and two hours, even if questions remained unanswered. However, I also provided the opportunity for the conversation to continue past two hours when desired by collaborators. Conversations were both video and audio recorded.

Film for Knowledge Mobilization

For knowledge dissemination, collaborators were also asked to either new film landscape footage or submit previously recorded landscape film footage where they feel connected to Creator/Mother Earth. This was done in honour of the Mi'kmaq understanding that "knowledge is Spirit" (Marshall et al., 2010, slide 23), as the knowledge and wisdom shared (i.e. the audio from the conversations) was paired with video footage of places on the land where the respective person feels most connected to Spirit. This film is also meant to honour the Indigenous understanding of land-as-relationship. Collaborators were asked to film video clips featuring outdoor landscape settings, in landscape/horizontal view, with each clip lasting at least 30 seconds to simplify the editing process. The film was an optional component of the project; collaborators were not required to submit footage and participate in the film. Collaborators who opted into the film were also invited to provide feedback on the first cut of the short film. Like the sharing circle, the film is not a form of data collection. Nonetheless, since collaborators who chose to be involved in the film have parts of their video and/or audio-recorded conversation included therein, the film was addressed in the Identifiability Consent Form.

The film will be made publicly accessible on YouTube, and all organizations with whom the findings will be shared through knowledge mobilization processes will be invited to post the video on their respective websites and platforms. The film is a particularly important component of knowledge generation and dissemination, as it captures the life and Spirit of the knowledge and wisdom shared by all collaborators, in a way that gives it animation and life, as opposed to static words on a page. This film is meant to honour and mirror the nature of Indigenous languages as well, by presenting collaborators and all our relations in relationship, motion, and action, as alive rather than inanimate objects. For instance, Wilson (2008) explains how in Nêhiyawêwin, the language reflects "multiple realities or upon one's relationships" and has

within it words that denote balanced relationships free of hierarchies (p. 73). Similarly, in Mi’kmawi’simk, “everything or every person is spoken of in relationship with something or someone else” (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 32). In Mi’kmawi’simk, the focus on the verb “makes the language adaptable, able to forge new expressions to meet life’s shifting and unpredictable realities, reflecting the nature of the universe as being in a continuous state of flux, ever changing and non-static” (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 29). Thus, the goal of the film as knowledge dissemination is to highlight multiple perspectives and the everchanging flux and flow of the universe, through a co-created motion film.

Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility

The methodological processes herein have been grounded in the ethics described by Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) as the ‘four Rs’ of Indigenous research: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. These ethics have been upheld through the inherent nature of the methods employed (sharing circles, conversational methods, collaborative film-making processes), measures implemented to ensure collaborators’ voices are shared in alignment with their personal preferences, the centring of cultural protocol, and the building of relationships throughout the process, communicating regularly before and after the circles and conversations.

Cultural Protocol. The fundamental distinction between Indigenous and other research approaches is the centrality of Indigenous knowledges and community protocols (Kovach, 2010; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Given my limited understanding of tribal epistemology specific to Mi'kma'ki, as well as Manitoba, I sought guidance from Elder Dorene Bernard who supported the sharing circle processes, as well as my Indigenous peers and colleagues, throughout the project. I also gifted the four sacred medicines of sage, cedar, sweetgrass, and tobacco, along with hand-made tokens of gratitude, such as thank you cards, for all of those who

supported this research project, as gift-giving is particularly in line with Mi'kmaq cultural protocol of reciprocal and respectful relations (Sable & Francis, 2012).

The partnering Elder for this project, Grandmother Dorene Bernard was also provided $600 for supporting the Sharing Circles, sharing knowledge and teachings, and holding this sacred space for ceremony. This was made possible by the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG). An additional $400 from NSPIRG went towards the purchase of card-making material, postal costs for mailing the gifts to respective collaborators across Turtle Island, and the purchase of red fabric for tobacco ties, and sacred medicines from the Winnipeg Trading Post, where they were not accessible through other sources. The collaborator who did not complete the study was also given a gift as a token of gratitude and respect.

Data Analysis/Meaning-Making

Kovach (2021) provides some guidance for analysis processes that honour Indigenous methodologies, suggesting that researchers can analyze their data through a focus on three core tenets of their theoretical frameworks. Returning to the guiding theories that come together to form that Etuaptmumk approach, to make sense of the data, I was guided by the following 6 assertions of Indigenous Knowledge theory and Anti-Colonial theory respectively: (1) nature and humans are interdependent for survival (survival as interdependent); observations of the natural world make up understandings of politics and ethics (place-based knowledge and place-based ethics of reciprocity); there is an intimate, spiritual, loving, respectful relationship between humans and the land (Spirit and relationship); problematizing settler colonialism and white supremacy, exploitation and domination of humans, the lands, and the waters (problematize domination of all our relations); uphold resistance, decolonization, cultural reclamation,

Indigenous self-determination (Indigenous resurgence); oppressors must be responsible and accountable for transformational change (settler solidarity).

Reflexivity. Lowan-Trudeau (2012) suggests that “a reflexive researcher examines their role in the research process, reflecting on their experiences throughout the research journey, the influence of their cultural and social positioning, and their interpersonal interactions with research participants” (p. 122). Using these suggestions, alongside the consideration of select prompts provided by Rowe et al.’s (2015) Multidimensional Reflexivity: A Guide for Non-Indigenous Researchers, Wilson’s (2008) questions for methodological reflexivity, and Baikie’s (2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015) prompts for decolonizing critical reflections, I engaged in a reflexive journaling exercise after the sharing circle, immediately after each conversation, as well as after returning to each conversation for analysis. See Appendix D for the Reflexivity Guide. Highlights from these exercises were then integrated into reflections on the research processes and the written findings, as presented in the chapters that follow.

Making meaning of the sharing circles. As aforementioned, the sharing circles were not recorded, nor were they intended for data collection. Rather, the purpose of the sharing circles was to build rapport with collaborators, and for collaborators to also gain a sense of solidarity and connection with other Social Workers for Land Back. However, reflexivity notes taken after each sharing circle were reviewed several times, and in this way have implicitly informed the shape and form of the findings, wisdom, and stories presented throughout the findings chapters. These notes were also scanned for salient points which were then collated with salient points from conversational reflection notes to provide the researcher with an initial sense of the overall findings, as well as to form a brief collective manifesto, as presented in the conclusion chapter.

Making meaning of the conversations. As for making meaning from the conversations specifically, a more extensive meaning-making process was engaged. Inspired by Lowan-Trudeau's (2012) Métissage data analysis process for conversations, after reviewing transcripts, each conversation's themes were organized in ways that respond to the research questions (1.a. and 1.b.). Then, when relistening to the transcripts, I used a colour-coded system to highlight elements of the conversation that answered the research questions, as well as elements of the conversation that evoked Spirit. I also engaged in a second reflexive journaling process, creating a summary response from each conversation, while also noting elements of the conversation that moved me emotionally, whether they evoked audible grunts of affirmation or full-body goosebumps. Here, I also made notes of timestamps of the conversation that would fit well into the film for knowledge mobilization. Once all transcripts were reviewed and a second reflection process was complete, I then amalgamated responses from all 11 journal reflections into a new document, to provide myself with an overall sense of the collective response to these questions. This led to the emergence of 4 findings chapters: Spirit, framework, education, and practice.

When turning to the writing process, responses from collaborators were woven together like a Métis sash, interspersed with voices from the literature, as well as my own responses as the researcher. Each collaborator's stories were condensed in a way aimed at preserving the context and voice of collaborators (Kovach, 2010). Drawing on my post-conversation notes and reflections of transcripts, where the findings include my own reflections, they highlight areas of key learning and teachings received (Kovach, 2010). These data analysis processes aim to reflect the oral storytelling tradition, dialogic, and reflexive nature of Indigenist research approaches.

Conclusion: An Anti-Colonial Indigenist Research Framework for Land Back

Combining Western anti-colonial and Indigenist research frameworks is an invaluable skill for social work researchers, wherein Etuaptmumk is a promising guiding philosophy for healing settler-Indigenous relationships so that we can collectively heal all our relations in response to the climate crises of our time through decolonization and Land Back movements. In the findings that follow, I share moments of stories that moved my Spirit, touched my heart, intrigued my thoughts, and evoked physiological responses. This is in alignment with Indigenous research methodologies, where relationships are central, and the wholistic nature of the world is honoured; I have made meaning through my relationship with the collaborators themselves as well as my relationships with their stories, and I have made this meaning through the impacts that the wisdom shared has had on every aspect of my being, in Spirit, heart, mind, and body.

Chapter 4: Honouring the Ceremony and Spirit of the Research Processes

This chapter acts as a bridge between the methodology chapter, and the findings chapters that follow, by articulating the processes through which this research project, grounded in an anti-colonial Indigenist framework, has been honoured research as ceremony, which has given way to Spirit manifesting through the research processes—a sort of findings in and of itself. After introducing the guiding medicine, this chapter begins with a brief overview of Spirit, the Spirit of this project, and Shawn Wilson's (2008) notion that research is ceremony. Then, I share how Spirit is centered in the research, through deliberate action and intentionality, attention to synchronicities, wellness, and ceremony. After introducing the collaborators, I then shift the discussion to ways that the centrality of Spirit has infused the research collaborations and processes—Spirit spreading like water. This chapter acts as the final rainfall to nourish the seed before turning to the subsequent findings chapters, where the seed begins to grow; Spirit and relationality are the life-giving elements of this work.

Guiding Medicine: Strawberry – *Frayz*

The guiding medicine for this chapter is *frayz*, or strawberry in English. Frayz is the Michif-Cree word for Strawberry, while the Île-à-la-Crosse Michif and the Nêhiyawêwin word for the fruit is "Otihimin(a) from the root 'mitih' meaning 'heart'" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 53). Similarly, the Anishinaabemowin name for the berry is Ode'imin, meaning "heart berry" (Belcourt et al., 2007). I chose this plant medicine to guide this chapter given frayz's sacred place in traditional Indigenous feasts and ceremonies. Frayz is also the most well-known fruit across Canada and is used in pies, jams, and preserves by all walks of life (Belcourt et al., 2007). In a sense, strawberry is universal, as is Spirit. Also, the translation for strawberry being at the "heart" is likened to how Spirit is at the heart and centre of this research. This metaphor also

connects to Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2013) chapter on The Gift of Strawberries in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, where strawberries represent the gift economy. The gift economy—where everything is treated as sacred and precious, and everyone has enough to survive, taking only what they need (Kimmerer, 2013)— is at the heart of what Land Back might look like.

The Spirit of this Research

Spirit is the inner fire of this project. Before I had even written my thesis proposal, the centrality of Spirit became evident through my thoughts, words, actions, hopes, and dreams regarding this project. There have been countless moments where Great Spirit has whispered words of love and affirmation, sparking the hatch of the seedling that came to be this project. Métis scholar Lowan-Trudeau (2012) explains that the centrality of spirituality, fundamental to Indigenous knowledge systems, is what differentiates Indigenous research methodologies from Western research methodologies. I had no idea just how true that was until I began this project. When I write about Spirit, I am referring to our spiritual selves, that inner fire within (Kimmerer, 2013), which is connected to all life force energy, beyond the material realm. As believed by many Anishinaabe Elders, "we are Spirits having a human experience" (Absolon, 2019c, p. 44). It is the oneness that unites all our relations, that sixth sense, that which tickles your pineal gland, that feeling you experience within ceremony, prayer, and sacred spaces—this is all what I refer to as Spirit, Great Spirit, Creator, Creation, Source, or The Universe.

Research is Ceremony

Wilson (2008) calls upon Indigenous researchers to continue rekindling the relationships between the inherent spirituality, and the everyday applicability of our research:

> The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between our cosmos and us. The research we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world. Through going forward together with open minds and good hearts we [uncover] the nature of this ceremony. (Wilson, 2008, p. 137)

Wilson (2008) further explains that relationships and accountability are at the crux of Indigenous methodologies, which are also integral to spiritual ceremonial protocol. In ceremony, we show respect to all our relatives, and Great Spirit through deep prayer and devotion, through presence, attention, and care. In these ways, and as Wilson describes above, research—which is ceremony—brings us closer to all our relations, and Spirit, that oneness.

Spirit and Ceremony Lead the Way

From this methodological approach, where research is understood as ceremony, I have learned that it is Spirit and ceremony itself that have led collaborators to this deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between sustainability, ecological social work practice, and the Land Back movement. For many of us, it was through Indigenous ceremony, cultural protocols, and teachings that were gifted to us that opened our Spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies to our responsibilities as settlers on Turtle Island. For many, it has also been one's connection to one's own Indigeneity and Indigenous relatives, or one's connection with Indigenous colleagues, and community members, that has allowed us to come to understand the necessity to heal the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, if we are to move forward in healing the waters, lands, humanity, and all our relations in a good way. Learning that research *is* ceremony early in the research process helped me realize the ways ceremony, prayer, and Spirit

had led me to this project in the first place. I knew I had a responsibility to deepen my relationship to Spirit through this project which led me to centre Spirit in the research processes.

Centring Spirit in the Research

Deliberate Action and Intentionality

Intentionality, and deliberate rituals, as well as seeking out activities and actions that bring me deeper into this space of honouring research as ceremony have been another important form of centring Spirit in this work. When we live with intention, and follow through on those intentions with action, we are showing Creator that we are ready for the commitments and responsibilities that come with ceremony—that deep respectful relationship building and accountability to all our relatives, to that oneness. My intentionality surrounding this project began with rooting it in the understanding and respect for the fact that we are living in the time of the prophecies. When this project first began, I was only aware of the Anishinaabe Seven Fires and Lighting the Eighth Fire prophecy. Throughout the project, I learned about several other coinciding prophecies, all of which speak to the criticality of this point in human evolution, where we must wholeheartedly and collectively commit to healing Mother Earth and all our relations and to choosing love, faith, community, and ethical reciprocity, over greed, materialism, consumption, and ego. Thus, from the beginning, I had infused this project with the intention of this seedling leading social workers—and all those we impact—across Turtle Island, to begin practicing in ways that will help to light the Eighth Fire.

Before doing writing or work for this project, I also do my best to smudge and pray first, similar to the ways I opened the circle in chapter one. Every conversation began with an opening prayer and smudge as well. If I cannot smudge, I physically brush off the energetic residue on my body before writing or by taking a few moments to focus on my breath and meditate. I have

also centered Spirit by grounding myself with Mother Earth, praying regularly to Creator, my ancestors, and my Spirit guides, at every step of the way of this project. Spirit was also centered in the meaning-making processes, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Additionally, the Spirit of this project is so strong that I cannot seem to work on it when I am not in alignment with my Spirit, heart, mind, and body. It is as if there is a block, some sort of wall, or force, preventing me from engaging in this work when I am not attuned to my own Spirit, and the deep-seated wholistic intentions of this project. Thus, instead of pushing through these blocks as I have with other school and work projects, I honour my need for breaks, as well as the strong spiritual force of this project that asks for my alignment and attunement.

In the year before writing my research proposal, I listened to the audiobook *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), mentioned at the opening of this chapter. One of my favourite chapters of this book is called *The Gift of Strawberries*, which speaks about the gift economy. Kimmerer describes the gift economy as one in which all resources are shared in ethical reciprocity. Everything is treated as sacred, and the fact that we live in a finite planet is deeply respected. Money is not needed in this world of a gift economy, and with that deep respect and understanding of the sacredness of our earth and all our relations, we also do not have this incessant drive for consumption and surplus. Rather, we only take what we need, and that is always enough. In this gift economy, land is not owned and is not objectified, rather land and water are alive; we are in relationship with and deeply care for land and water. Thus, in November 2022, shortly after submitting this project's ethics application, knowing the connection between strawberry and the gift economy, which I equate to Land Back, I got a tattoo of a strawberry—the heart berry—on my inner right wrist. In this way, I wear my heart on my sleeve. This project is similarly infused with that heart-centeredness. With this tattoo on my inner

wrist, the strawberry faces whatever and whoever I touch, and I see it as my way of engaging in reciprocity, lending a hand to all my relations, and being in service to those around me.

I have also sought out experiences and activities that I knew would connect me deeper and further into the roots of this seedling. For instance, on October 7, 20220, I attended a workshop facilitated by Mi’kmaw dance artist Sarah Prosper, called *Moving in Mi'kma'ki*, grounded in our land-based connection. This workshop was particularly impactful as most people who attended the workshop were settlers. This allowed me to see how important that land-based connection is for settlers to learn, ground, grow, and be in harmony with the land and Indigenous Peoples and teachings. This also allowed me to connect deeper to Mi’kmaq teachings and the territories here. The workshop was initially going to be indoors, but a power outage occurred in the building of the workshop. The group was small, with about twenty people in attendance, and the weather was gorgeous, so the workshop was moved outside. We were invited to take off our shoes, as we moved and danced on the grass, to earth and ground ourselves. I was the only one who did so, and I can still remember how powerful Mother Earth held me as I moved through the workshop. Words cannot describe how much this movement moved me—Spirit, mind, heart, and body, and continues to do so to this day. This experience has also naturally, subtly, and implicitly, influenced the way I have shown up in this project.

Since this project first began, I also learned how to bead flat stitch, including Métis flowers, as well as brick stitch, and make beaded fringe earrings. In September 2022, I learned how to bead an orange shirt pin for Orange Shirt TRC Day at the Dalhousie Killam Library. For a while, I was attending cultural events at the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre, called “We Are All Connected”, meant for settlers and Indigenous Peoples alike. There, I learned how to bead my first pair of fringe earrings, which I finally finished in December 2022. Then in the

winter of 2023, February, I went to my first ever Métis flower beading circle, back in my homelands of Winnipeg, Manitoba which I found out about through the Manitoba Métis Federation newsletter. There, I learned how to bead my first ever Métis specific beading design, a flat back stitch Métis flower. The first time I experienced a flow state while beading, the process suddenly felt so familiar that I wondered if it might have been a sense of blood memory.

Now, I am in the process of making my very own ribbon skirt with a group of women and Two Spirit people involved with the Dalhousie No More Stolen Sisters student group. The project is led by Anishinaabekwe artist Cheyenne Henri, from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Each participant in the project was given the opportunity to tell their stories through their ribbon skirts. I decided that my skirt would be different on each side, telling the story of my paternal and maternal lineages, respectively. I chose to honour the aspects of my mixed ancestry that I resonate most with on a cultural and spiritual level, that being my Celtic "Indigenous European"[26] ancestry, and my Red River Métis Indigenous ancestry. My Celtic side features a rich green colour fabric, with shiny silk golden bands, and a salmon eating a hazelnut as appliqué. My Métis side features a floral print fabric that resembles Métis beadwork, with a White Thunderbird symbol as appliqué.

Synchronicities and Serendipity

Given the intentionality that has guided the project since its inception, through a series of synchronistic events, Creator has assured me that these intentions would become reality. I once heard that synchronicities are whispers from the Universe/Creator. This notion resonates with me, and I see synchronicity and serendipity as reminders that we are on the path Creator and our

[26] See June (n.d.) for a powerful discussion of the Indigenous Cultures of Europe, the Medicine People of Old Europe, and the parallels between the genocide of Indigenous Europeans and Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

ancestors and Spirit Guides have intended for us—indeed, they are often exponentially present during ceremonial and sacred experiences. Thus, I paid special attention to any synchronicities that emerged in the research processes. In what follows, I offer one particularly salient example.

When I shared with my supervisors my intentions to collaborate with a Mi'kmaw elder for the project, my supervisor Gail Baikie suggested I connect with Grandmother Dorene Bernard, given her wealth of knowledge and wisdom in water protection, land defence, social work education, and practice. I was told the most practical way to reach out and connect was Facebook, but this did not sit right with me. Over the summer of 2022, I spent time going to powwows and other cultural events, hoping our paths would cross in person, but it had yet to happen. Then, on October 5, 2022, I was at a local coffee shop in Kjipuktuk I don't frequent often. Yet, on this day, as I was on video call with my supervisor Catherine Bryan, wrapping up my Ethics Proposal, to my surprise, I looked up and saw Grandmother Dorene Bernard walking outside the coffee shop. I told Cat excitedly and rushed off the video call to finish my edits in hopes I could take a moment to connect with Grandmother Dorene. Sure enough, she entered the coffee shop, ordered a meal, and sat down to eat. I introduced myself, asking if I could join her. Grandmother Dorene kindly welcomed me to sit. She was happy I could join her, as she shared, she did not want to sit alone. She insisted I share some of her lunch, in true kokum style. She had just come from leading a water ceremony at a corporate event nearby and decided to skip their networking lunch to enjoy lunch in the area instead.

We sat and talked for a while about everything from beading to making ribbon skirts, to police brutality in our community, water protection, land defence, and social work. I told her about this project, and she spoke words that have warmed my heart ever since: "people like you give me hope". I told her about my hopes of having a Mi'kmaw Elder support the sharing circles

for the project, and before I had the chance to ask, she said “it would be my honour”. At this moment, I learned how important it is to always have a tobacco tie ready to offer anywhere you go, as you never know who you might meet serendipitously. I offered my tobacco tie later by post and have since offered many tobacco ties in sacred and important interactions I have had with others, where they have offered a gift to the community, or I am asking for their support. When I observe these synchronicities, in the Spirit of reciprocity, I affirm to Creator, my ancestors, and guides, that I have heard their whispers, by engaging in deliberate rituals and actions to further honour this research as ceremony. Thus, a feedback loop emerges between intentionality, deliberate action, as well as synchronicities, in honouring research as ceremony.

Wellness and Ceremony in the Researcher’s Life

One cannot honour research as ceremony if one does not also honour ceremony more broadly. Further, to honour ceremony is to engage with ceremony. As such, over the past two years, I have been actively seeking out and increasingly participating in ceremonies. To me, infusing ceremony into my life includes receiving my first ever ribbon skirt, gifted to me for my birthday in January 2023, which allows me to honour experiences in my life that I perceive as ceremonial, with cultural regalia. Ceremony also includes many of the activities I have already mentioned, such as beading, or attending *Moving in Mi'kma'ki*. It also includes attending powwows, and the many sacred smudging circles hosted by the Dalhousie Indigenous Student Centre I attended bimonthly since this project first began. Here, I will share some very specific ceremonial gatherings I have experienced that connect deeply to the Spirit of this project.

First, since the inception of this project, I have had the privilege and opportunity to attend four sweat lodge ceremonies. The first was on January 1, 2023, in Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick/Mi'kma'ki. This was a Blessing of the Bundles ceremony, where we were invited to

bring in and bless all our sacred items. These are those same sacred items I pray with regularly to this day, carrying me through countless prayers regarding this project, including those prayers I later shared with all research collaborators. This was very special to me, as it was my first time sweating in Mi'kma'ki, where my host institution is located. I also prayed hard for this project in the sweat lodge three times in Saint Norbert Manitoba, Treaty 1 Territory, in February, March, and September 2023. In February, I was even gifted the blessing of speaking during the round of the bear, which represents courage in Anishinaabe teachings. I was sitting in the lodge, wearing my first ribbon skirt in ceremony for the first time, alongside residents of the addictions treatment facility where I worked years ago, and had first come to know colonialism as the culprit of the pain facing all our relations. On that day, I spoke the words "Social Work for Land Back" into existence, while praying in the lodge, with the community that had initially helped shape my understanding of this issue.

In February 2023, I also became involved with LIFE As Medicine: Circle of Indigenous Healing Arts. As a collaborator, I have since attended three LIFE As Medicine gatherings, two of which are eco-arts land-based healing events called Me as Tree: We as Forest (MaT:WaT), hosted in Likasutik, Mi'kma'ki (Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia), at the Deanery Project. At MaT:WaT, I learned to connect with Tree at depths I have never experienced before. I cried with Tree, prayed with Tree, sang with Tree, we became close friends. The event in April was my first land-based healing experience. Social work stakeholders must *embed* Indigenous-led educational experiences of this nature into social work education and practice. Indeed, LIFE As Medicine is founded by, and intended for social workers, therapists, healers, and helpers.

More recently, I have also attended the 36th International Two Spirit Gathering, which was hosted by the Wabanaki Two Spirit Alliance here in Meneskwe'k, Mi'kma'ki, colonially

known as Chester, Nova Scotia. This four-day gathering changed my life. First, I learned that I am not only Indigiqueer but that I am Two Spirit. At the beginning of the gathering, in the opening ceremony, I prayed and asked Creator to show me if I am Two Spirit. Throughout the week, I felt so seen, held, loved, and validated by my Two Spirit community. I began to unpack deep-seated layers of colonial blood quantum ideologies, and harmful colonial narratives circulating that gatekeep Two Spirit identity—as if I had to be explicitly told by an Elder that I am Two Spirit. Instead, I was shown through energy, Spirit, vibrations, and love by all 150 people at this gathering, that they see me as one of them, as a Two Spirit relative. During the gathering, I also learned that Two Spirit people hold very sacred roles in our communities, as we hold not only the water but also the fire within us, we are both water protectors and land defenders—we are both. Given this sacred role, of holding both the fire and water within us, I believe Two Spirit people also have a very particular place in healing Mother Earth and all our relations. This, coupled with the association of rainbow and Two Spiritedness, I firmly believe that all Two Spirit people are rainbow warriors. By the end of the gathering, I introduced myself as Two Spirit for the first time. As I continue to do so, being accountable to all my relations, I deepen my responsibility as a Two Spirit person to hold this sacred role within my community.

Since this project began, infusing ceremony into my life, reconnecting with my culture, and learning my responsibilities as both a settler and Indigenous person, have all become incredibly prominent parts of my life, more than ever before. In each experience, I have held my thesis, all collaborators, and all those this thesis would reach, close to my Spirit, heart, mind, and body. Overall, centring Spirit in this research led me to collaborators who also value Spirit in their lives as social workers, which allowed for Spirit to manifest manifold through these collaborations.

Introducing Collaborators

My first conversation was with M (pseudonym), a young mixed Mi’kmaw settler woman, and social work student, attending a distance Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in Atlantic Canada. M was in the final year of her program at the time of our conversation. M was born and raised in the traditional territory of the Beothuk and Mi’kmaw Nations. M had recently begun reconnecting with her Indigeneity as a Mi’kmaw person, which had historically been silenced in her family due to years of colonial impacts and assimilation into “White Canadian” culture.

My second conversation was with Walter Chan. Walter Chan is a Chinese Canadian man born in Hong Kong, China, who moved to Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish and Stó:lō lands, colonially known as Vancouver, British Columbia, when he was seven years old. For part of his childhood, he also grew up in rural Manitoba in a smalltown colonially known as Gilbert Plains, Manitoba, on the traditional territories of the Anishinabewaki, Očhéthi Šakówin, Métis and Cree Nations. Walter earned his undergraduate degree at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and completed his Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at the University of Manitoba, beginning with the pre-master’s programs for students without BSW degrees. Walter is now a social work educator at the University of Algoma, located on Anishinaabe territory, in Bawating, meaning “place of the rapids” in Anishinaabemowin, colonially known as Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Walter is also a social work practitioner, working as an online therapist. Walter also has several years of experience working as a social worker with non-profit organizations supporting Indigenous communities in Winnipeg. Walter is also an environmental activist and has been involved with several organizations, including Unist'ot'en Camp, 350.Org, RAVEN Trust, as well as the Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition, which is how Walter heard about this study.

My third conversation was with Leigh (pseudonym). Leigh is an MSW student at the University of Calgary, born, raised, and currently residing in Mohkinstsis Treaty #7 territory, colonially known as Calgary. Leigh is a young settler woman of Italian descent on her paternal side, and maternal settler familial ties linked to the traditional territories of NunatuKavut, Nitassinan, Beothuk and Mi'kma'ki, colonially known as Newfoundland and Labrador. Her father's family immigrated from Italy to Mohkinstsis Treaty #7 territory in the 1940s-1950s. Leigh has an educational and vocational background in outdoor leadership which eventually led her to her interest in social work. Leigh is early in her journey to learning about environmental social work, and she has also been actively working on understanding and actualizing her responsibilities as a settler. Leigh has also gained practicum experience working with a mental health clinician and supporting a community-based participatory action research project focused on older adults' experiences of homelessness. Through her practicum learning experience, she has sought to incorporate a decolonizing and environmental social work lens within her research.

My fourth conversation was with Tara-Lynn Rioux, a Mi'kmaw social work practitioner who has her own private therapy practice. Tara-Lynn is a member of the Listuguj Mi'kmaq First Nation through her paternal familial lineage, while her mother is of European descent. Tara-Lynn shares that she is a Sixties Scoop Survivor. She grew up raised by her biological mother and adopted by her white-Scottish stepfather, who she was told was her biological father until she was fifteen years old. Tara-Lynn did not grow up knowing about her biological father, or her Indigeneity until she was 16 years old. She shares that she was raised white and grew up with access to white privilege by association. Ever since she learned about her biological father and her Mi'kmaq roots, she has been reconnecting with and honouring her Mi'kmaw ways. Tara-Lynn completed her BSW at Dalhousie University in the distance program. She then went on to

earn her Master's in Counselling Psychology. Now, Tara-Lynn specializes in providing therapy through a decolonizing framework and way of life, infused with culturally relevant, land-based healing practices. Her practice is based in Epekwitk, meaning "lying in the water" mi'kmawi'simk, colonially known as Prince Edward Island. Tara-Lynn named her practice *Nepisultieg*, which means "we heal each other" in mi'kmawi'simk.

My fifth conversation was with a young woman named Summer (pseudonym). Summer is Syilx, while she grew up in Secwépemc territory, she currently resides in Syilx territory. Summer is the great-granddaughter of a survivor from the Kamloops Residential School. Due to the atrocities of the residential school system, and the impact it has had on her family, her family's Syilx roots had been silenced for generations. Summer shares that she grew up knowing she had status, but was taught to hide this, and was able to do so for the most part, due to the privilege she has as a fair-skinned person. However, she always knew of her roots and connections and felt it was wrong to hide this. Then, at the age of eighteen, she began the journey of reconnecting with her Indigeneity and her Syilx roots and culture, alongside her family. Since then, Summer has recently graduated from the University of Victoria's Bachelor of Social Work Indigenous specialization program. She also has work experience in the field, as at the time of our conversation, she was working at a local hospital supporting Indigenous patients.

My sixth conversation was with Jane (pseudonym). Jane is a settler person of mixed European ancestry, including Jewish ancestry. Jane is a mature Bachelor of Social Work student completing their degree at Dalhousie University. Jane has an educational and vocational background working for nonprofits supporting children and youth in connecting with seed, land, gardening, and farming practices, in both educational and therapeutic settings. This eventually led her to her interest in social work. Jane is a loving parent of two young children, residing in

Algonquin and Anishinaabeg Territory, where they also co-own a land cooperative with some likeminded settlers who together are eager to use their cooperative in ways that support the local Indigenous communities and contribute to the Land Back movement.

My seventh conversation was with Tomas Lang. Tomas Lang is a young queer Italian-Ukrainian settler who grew up on the West Coast, on Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, and Stó:lō lands, colonially known as Vancouver. As a youth, they were exposed to some outdoor programming, which eventually led them to cultivate more intentional relationships with the land and all our relations. Since his youth, Tomas has been exposed to advocacy for Indigenous sovereignty and anti-pipeline activism, which allowed him to begin understanding the unsustainability of dominant settler societal ways of living, doing, and being. Teachings shared with Tomas by Indigenous Elders, community members, scholars, and peers have deeply shaped the way they see the world and understand their place within it. Over time, Tomas has gained experience in outdoor education work, supporting youth and children, eventually leading him to social work, where he is completing his Bachelor of Social Work degree in Mi'kma'ki. He is motivated to support young settler youth in cultivating responsible relations with the land, waters, and all our relations, and supporting youth with their decolonizing journeys.

My eighth conversation was with Elizabeth (Liz) Carlson-Manathara. Liz is a settler woman of mixed Swedish, Saami, German, Scots-Irish, and English ancestry. Liz grew up in the United States, and while living in Minneapolis, she worked at an Indigenous alternative school and began making connections with Anishinaabe colleagues. Through a youth gathering, she became acquainted with a team from the Turtle Lodge in Manitoba. These connections eventually led her to make the move to Canada, where she completed her Ph.D. in social work at the University of Manitoba. Liz completed her dissertation on the topic of *Living in Indigenous*

Sovereignty: Relational Accountability and the Stories of White Settler Anti-colonial and Decolonial Activists. She has also co-authored a book, with Gladys Rowe, by the same title *Living in Indigenous Sovereignty* Liz. has over 20 years of experience in direct practice as a therapist, and several over eight years of experience as a social work educator. She now lives in N'Swakamok, colonially known as Sudbury, Ontario, the traditional lands of Anishinaabewaki, covered by the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850, where she teaches at Laurentian University. Liz strives to centre decolonization, settler responsibility, Indigenous sovereignty, and Treaty within her approaches to teaching wherever she can.

My ninth conversation was with Rose, who is a Nisga'a woman practicing and residing in Coast Salish Lkwungen territory, in the region colonially known as Victoria, British Columbia. Rose practices social work as a counsellor in hospital settings and within local First Nations communities, as a Crisis and Addiction Social Worker, and Mental Health Care healer. Rose was born and raised in Vermont, U.S.A., where she earned a Master's in Law, a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, and certification in nursing. Rose moved to Canada in 2015 and became certified through the University of Victoria's Indigenous mental health program. In 2022, Rose earned her Bachelor of Social Work degree with an Indigenous specialization. Rose identifies as both Black and Indigenous. Rose shares that she is also a Sixties Scoop survivor, and was adopted and raised by her Quaker mother, raised with White cultural influences. Thus, Rose also sometimes identifies as white. Rose began connecting more deeply with her Indigeneity later in life, with her educational experience at the University of Victoria being a catalyst for this reconnection.

My tenth conversation was with Darla-Jean Lindstrom. Darla-Jean is also a person of mixed Indigenous/settler lineage, who was born, raised, and currently resides in Carcross, Yukon, in Carcross/Tagish First Nation territory, which is her home community. Darla-Jean

shares that she is a product of the residential schools, as her mother is a Residential School Survivor. Grandmother and Knowledge Keeper Darla-Jean spent over 14 years working at a hospital as a social worker, in frontline work responding to overdoses and suicides, later turning to work in the maternity ward. Now, she is the Deputy Chief of her First Nation community of Carcross. Darla-Jean also works with social work students at Yukon University to offer cultural training regarding Yukon First Nations communities. The Yukon is a unique context wherein Yukon First Nations have modern treaties with self-governance and land claims agreements.

The final eleventh conversation I shared was with Jo (pseudonym). Jo is a white settler woman of mixed European ancestry including German, English, French, Irish, Scottish, and Dutch. Jo completed her undergraduate degree as a young adult. Shortly thereafter, Jo went on to work as a child welfare social worker within a First Nations Community on the West Coast. She remembers being guided by her Indigenous social work colleagues in this role, who supported her in decolonizing herself, and her practice. Later, she completed her Master of Social Work degree, where she noticed the gaps in service provision supporting Indigenous people specifically, through her practicum in cancer care. Eventually, Jo moved to the Northern Region of Canada, where she has since lived for over 20 years. When Jo first moved up north, she continued working in child welfare, putting her in touch with local First Nations people. She began learning about their culture, and the importance of building meaningful, enduring relationships with local Indigenous communities. Jo is now faculty in a social work program in Northern Canada, where she is passionate about collaborating with local First Nation communities and working in partnership to offer cultural camps for social work students.

Spirit Manifesting through Process, Relationships, and Collaboration

Through intentionality and deliberate actions centring Spirit, such as including opening and closing prayers, ritual, ceremony, and connecting to the land and relational spaces in the conversations, this gave way to Spirit manifesting in relationship with collaborators, through physical manifestations; shared synchronicities; sharing experience, knowledge, and wisdom; shared gratitude; and the relistening process involved in meaning-making.

Opening prayers, rituals, and ceremony

As each sharing circle and conversation began with either me or Grandmother Dorene praying and smudging, where possible, and calling on our ancestors for guidance, Spirit was welcomed in right from the beginning of all collaborations. Spirit showed up through collaborators' initial responses to this opening of the one-on-one conversations.

For instance, Tara-Lynn reminded me of how important it is to be grateful that we can smudge with ease, for not so long ago, our ceremonies were outlawed. Tara-Lynn also added a beautiful contribution to the opening prayer:

> I think I'll just mention our ancestors again because I feel them strong and I just wanna let them know I appreciate their coming in and helping. How they weaved our webs for our paths to cross, to be able to have this conversation, so, wela'lin.

In my conversation with Jane, they echoed this sentiment:

> I do feel that there is a web and a very purposeful one that brought us to talk together and that seeing your poster…maybe it was just really kind of cut through the noise a little bit.

The reminder of our paths all being intricately woven together by our ancestors resonated deeply with me then, as it still does today.

During my conversation with Walter, Spirit surrounded us as he was deeply impacted by the visual of smoke on the screen from the smudge. There were even moments when he asked me to relight the smudge to support his focus and balance in the conversation. Of course, the only thing missing from the experience for Walter was the healing smell of the sacred medicine.

My conversation with Tomas was especially memorable, as it was the only conversation that I was able to share in person. We had the opportunity to smudge together in person, smelling and sensing the same medicine unanimously, witnessing each other cleansing our whole beings to be present with each other in this conversation. I also had the chance to offer a tobacco tie to Tomas at the start of our conversation, in person, rather than mailing the tobacco tie after, as was the case with all other collaborators. I was also able to gift Tomas the rest of the sacred medicines, cedar, sweetgrass, and sage, as a token of gratitude immediately thereafter.

Of all 11 conversations, Rose was also the only person who was able to smudge with me simultaneously over video chat. It was such a sacred moment and beautiful experience to be able to see the smoke rise on our screens, knowing we were both sharing the sensation of smelling the sweet earthy sage medicines that were grounding and cleansing us simultaneously.

Connecting to the land and relational spaces

Spirit also emerged through intentional connection to the social, familial, and relational spaces and lands of the conversations, despite the virtual and distanced nature of most conversations. In each opening prayer, I would invite the teachings of the lands each of us was calling in from to come into our conversations in some way. I had been calling in from not only Mi'kma'ki, but also Treaty 1 territory, and Treaty 3 territory at times. I am hopeful that the Spirit and stories of these various lands across Turtle Island have weaved themselves into the project.

Before my conversation with Leigh, I took time to connect deeply with the lands I was on for this conversation, specifically Treaty #3 territory in the Keewatin, Ontario region. I went to Portage Bay, frozen over at the time, and prayed to all four directions, offering water similarly to how Grandmother Dorene had taught us during the sharing circle water ceremonies. I prayed for the teachings and stories of these lands to come through.

I then hosted the video call at my father's house, where my father, his partner, and my three foster brothers reside. One of my foster brothers is from Grassy Narrows First Nation, and I could hear him and my other brothers playing upstairs throughout the conversation. Grassy Narrows is one of the most salient examples of a First Nations community impacted by environmental racism in Canada. In the 1960s and 1970s, owners of a paper mill in Dryden, located upstream of Grassy Narrows, had dumped over 9000 kilograms of mercury into their water source (Porter, n.d.). My brother, along with most Grassy Narrows First Nations Peoples, now lives with chronic health conditions from mercury poisoning. Hearing his joy and laughter during this critical conversation about social work's duty to address environmental racism, in Treaty #3 territory, knowing he is in the child welfare system, was spiritually profound.

Spirit came through quite literally with Liz, as we realized we had both sweat in the same lodge multiple times. While not at the same time, we have prayed and sweat in the same place, specifically the lodge at the Behavioural Health Foundation in St. Norbert Manitoba, with connections to the same Elders and Knowledge Keepers who have cared for those grounds.

Spirit came through immediately with Jo, as when I asked Jo if she wanted to add anything to our opening prayer, she responded by honouring the cultural and spiritual protocol of the local First Nations Peoples of her area, through a hand gesture of lifting another, to welcome and honour them. Jo expressed deep gratitude for the generous Spirit of Indigenous Peoples who have cared for the lands she is in relationship with, ultimately allowing her to be where she is today. In these ways, Jo began by honouring the Spirit and the people of the lands.

In my conversation with Darla-Jean, Darla-Jean opened the conversation with prayer, instead of myself, which was a beautiful opportunity for me to learn from her Spirit and her practices and to sit back and listen. Additionally, instead of our conversation being rooted in

intellectual, academic rhetoric, like most of the other conversations, our conversation was full of personal and cultural stories, laughter, knowledge and wisdom transmission, teachings, and a much slower pace of conversing. These salient teachings and stories Darla-Jean shared will be elaborated on in more detail in the next chapter. Importantly, Spirit was at play here unexpectedly, as this was the only conversation where technological issues arose, leading us to shift most of the conversation to a phone call. I truly believe that focusing on Darla-Jean's voice alone allowed me to visualize all the stories she shared more vividly, rather than being distracted by the computer screen and our physical presentations. This technological glitch allowed my Spirit to tune into this conversation much deeper and more transformatively.

During my conversation with Tomas, Spirit also seemed to arise through our natural environment. For instance, when we began talking about the witch hunt that happened in Europe, impacting our Indigenous European ancestors, as well as while we discussed the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two Spirit People crisis in Turtle Island, suddenly the crows were cawing loudly and flying all around us. Furthermore, when our conversation shifted to talking about the youth and future generations, we could hear children playing street hockey, laughing, and enjoying life in the distance.

Physical manifestations of Spirit

Through deep listening, emotional resonance, tears, laughter, and goosebumps, many physical manifestations of Spirit arose through these conversations and collaborations. There were moments in conversation where I received full-body goosebumps, both in the present moment when the conversation was happening live and while relistening to the conversation. This embodiment of the powerful Spirit of the wisdom shared in those goosebump-inducing moments is ultimately how I decided which aspects of each conversation to highlight in the

following findings chapters. What moves my Spirit? How do I know what moves my Spirit? I know my Spirit is moved when it becomes a wholistic experience, resonating from the Spirit, through to the heart, and mind, manifesting in the body.

Like goosebumps is the experience of tears. As Dr. Raven Sinclair shared in her keynote presentation at the recent annual conference with the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW), “Creator gave us tear ducts for a reason” (Sinclair, 2023). I have had many moments of visceral crying and releasing while moving through the various processes of this project—tears of gratitude for the opportunity to carry this knowledge bundle; tears of grief for all of the suffering, loss, and pain done to Mother Earth, humanity, and all our relations; and tears of hope and faith, which have been strengthened by all of the experiences I have had through this project.

I also feel called to share two striking examples where tears emerged with collaborators. One such profound moment of spiritual emotional resonance with Walter was when we talked about Indigenous Peoples laying their bodies on the line to protect Mother Earth, and how it should and can be social workers and settlers who are doing this work as well. Wrapped up in mixed emotions emerging from what may have been senses of solidarity, grief, pain, and gratitude, Walter was moved to tears at this moment—giving me goosebumps at that moment, and once again as I rewatched the conversation’s recording.

Another pertinent moment where Spirit was present in my conversation with Jane was in our discussion of the importance of Land Back, healing Mother Earth and all our relations, for future generations—the leaders of tomorrow. Jane became emotional when considering the grave loss that is at stake for their children, given the increasing climate crises. This moment of a mother grieving for their children mirrors the grief that Mother Earth is showing to all of us—her children—now, manifested in these increasing environmental catastrophes. Mother Earth is

calling our Spirits to wake up, to live and be in harmony with all our relations again. Near the end of my conversation with Jane, their little one joined the video call, a sign of Spirit reminding us of who this project and these conversations are for—the next seven generations and beyond.

Synchronicities in Shared Experiences

Spirit had also manifested in collaborations through synchronicities in our shared experiences. For example, after I began by introducing myself to Summer, and sharing about my story and where I come from, Summer thanked me for sharing. She told me that "so much of [my] journey has resonated with [her] and [her] life journey as well". Like me, Summer is a mixed settler-Indigenous person. As Summer began to share her story of reconnecting with her Syilx roots, she spoke of the Spirit of her language, and how it is land-based, infused with the teachings, knowledge, and Spirit of her people's territories, which has fundamentally transformed her relationship with and understandings of the land. This transformation then led her to complete an Indigenous social work specialization program.

Spirit came through in an interesting way with Liz, quite literally, in that we realized we had both sweat in the same lodge, multiple times. While not at the same time, it is very significant that we have prayed and sweat in the same place, specifically the lodge at the Behavioural Health Foundation in St. Norbert, Manitoba, with connections to the same Elders and Knowledge Keepers who have cared for the onsite traditional grounds there.

Sharing Knowledge, Wisdom, Learning

Related to synchronicities, Spirit also guided moments I shared with other collaborators who are reconnecting with their Indigenous cultures and teachings, whereby we were sharing these sacred teachings. For instance, during my conversation with M, I opened our prayer using the Mi'kmaq medicine wheel teachings I learned in the lodge back in January, slightly different

from the teachings I opened this thesis and other conversations with. I did this because, over email, she had shared that she had very recently begun reconnecting with her Mi'kmaw roots. During our conversation, I offered to share those teachings with her in writing, which she gratefully accepted. It was a true honour to be able to pass along these teachings to her.

Another example of Spirit's presence through the transmission of sacred knowledge and teachings is when Rose reminded me of the importance of not only opening the conversations with prayer but also closing the conversations with prayer as well. When we open with prayer, we call upon our ancestors and guides, to ensure that those we call upon know that they can return to the Spirit realms or whatever realm they have joined us from once we are finished our prayer, conversation, or ceremony, we must thank them and invite them to go back to wherever they have come from. At the end of our conversation, Rose reminded me of this importance, and taught me, by example, how to close out the conversation in a good way, through prayer. After this, I prayed for the closing of all previous conversations and applied this teaching to all conversations that followed. Sharing sacred teachings in these ways emulates how Spirit flows like water and has ripple effects, affecting and uniting us all.

Sharing Gratitude

Another takeaway was the deep gratitude from collaborators in mutual recognition and honour for the ceremonial and cultural protocol infused into this project. Several collaborators explicitly named their gratitude for the opening circle and prayer at the beginning of each conversation, as well as for the (virtual) offering of tobacco ties at the start of each conversation, and medicines offered at the end, as a token of gratitude for their collaborations. Many commented on the desire to infuse more ceremony and Spirit into our practice as social workers, whether as practitioners, researchers, or educators, elaborated in the findings chapters that

follow. I hope that the gratitude for Spirit centered herein will transmute into the further centering of Spirit within the profession by all collaborators, and all those they may influence.

Relistening – Creating a Record of Spirit

One of the final powerful ways Spirit arose in the conversational process was through the review of transcriptions. When I would relisten to each of the 11 transcripts to review them for accuracy, I was also relistening to the opening and closing prayers, and therefore feeling the Spirit of these prayers wash over me all over again, bringing me ever more deeply into the present moment to truly be with the stories and wisdom shared in each conversation once again. Similarly, through deep listening, empathy, and sensing our interconnectivity, every moment where I shared a deep spiritual and emotional resonance with the words of collaborators—such as those described in the previous examples—became multiplied, as they were experienced not only live in the moment but also again when relistening to the transcripts.

Conclusion: Spirit and Ceremony is integral to Social Work for Land Back

As mentioned, all social work collaborators shared that it was their relationships with Indigenous Peoples, Spirit, and ceremony itself that led them to become Social Workers for Land Back. The embodiment of the notion that research is ceremony in this project also revealed how strongly Spirit resonates and is valued by all collaborators, as described herein. This is a critical finding: centring Spirit and ceremony in our social work practice is integral to Social Working for Land Back. This finding is further discussed in the following chapters, the first of which offers a guiding framework for teaching and doing Social Work for Land Back. Now that the seed of this project has been well nourished through a reflection of the literature that gave it birth; the shared tears of hope, gratitude, and grief; and the Spirit flowing through the research processes like water, we turn to growing the seed.

PART 3 – GROWING THE SEED

Chapter 5: A Guiding Framework for Teaching and Doing Social Work for Land Back

To embrace a decolonizing approach to ecological practice and sustainability by disrupting colonialism and upholding reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and land reclamations, social work practice must be focused on social systems and structures. Social work must transform the current white supremacist, patriarchal, and colonial-capitalist systems, while simultaneously building alternative systems, rooted in relationality, solidarity, and sustainability. To guide this transformative work, this chapter presents this thesis' core contribution—a framework for teaching and doing Social Work for Land Back, hereon referred to as the Land Back Framework. After introducing the guiding medicine, this chapter begins by drawing on the voices, experiences, and insights of collaborators[27], to offer a series of guiding principles and values for this Land Back framework: (1) compassion, (2) cultural humility, (3) unlearning and relearning, and (4) relationality and solidarity with all our relations. Importantly, collaborators emphasize that these values and principles must be adopted through life-long personal and professional commitment. Next, through collaborators' insights, this chapter gives critical attention to the detrimental logics of the current colonial-capitalist systems that continue to assert their dominance, while highlighting different approaches that undermine these logics in the service of the values and principles of Land Back. Finally, the collaboratively envisioned alternative systems at the heart of the framework are discussed.

Guiding Medicine: Wild Rose – *li rooz di no piyii, Lii bon tiiroozh*

[27] My ultimate vision is to co-create this Framework in collaborative, iterative, long-term processes with a broader network of Social Workers for Land Back, which was not feasible within the scope of a Master's thesis. Thus, the Framework presented herein serves as a starting point and proposal, where further collaboration, feedback, and contributions are strongly welcomed, invited, and encouraged. Like Earth Mother, this Framework is also living and breathing, meant to grow and evolve through time and space.

There are over 35 different native species of wild rose found across Turtle Island, known as *li rooz di no piyii* or *lii bon tiiroozh* in Michif-Cree (Belcourt et al., 2007). Lii bon tiiroozh is good for infections, colds, sore throats, and cleansing the body of toxins. The roots can be used to treat diarrhea, stomach, and liver problems, as well as colds and fevers (Belcourt et al., 2007). Two common medicinal phrases related to lii bon tiiroozh in Michif are that it "helps cleanse the body of toxins and wastes", and that it is a "tea used for heart trouble" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 62). Let us imagine then, that if social work were to adopt this Land Back Framework, social work could become a tea that soothes the heart troubles present in humanity due to society's dominant colonial-capitalist systems. This framework has the potential to "cleanse the body" of the social work profession of the toxins and wastes that stem from its colonial-capitalist roots.

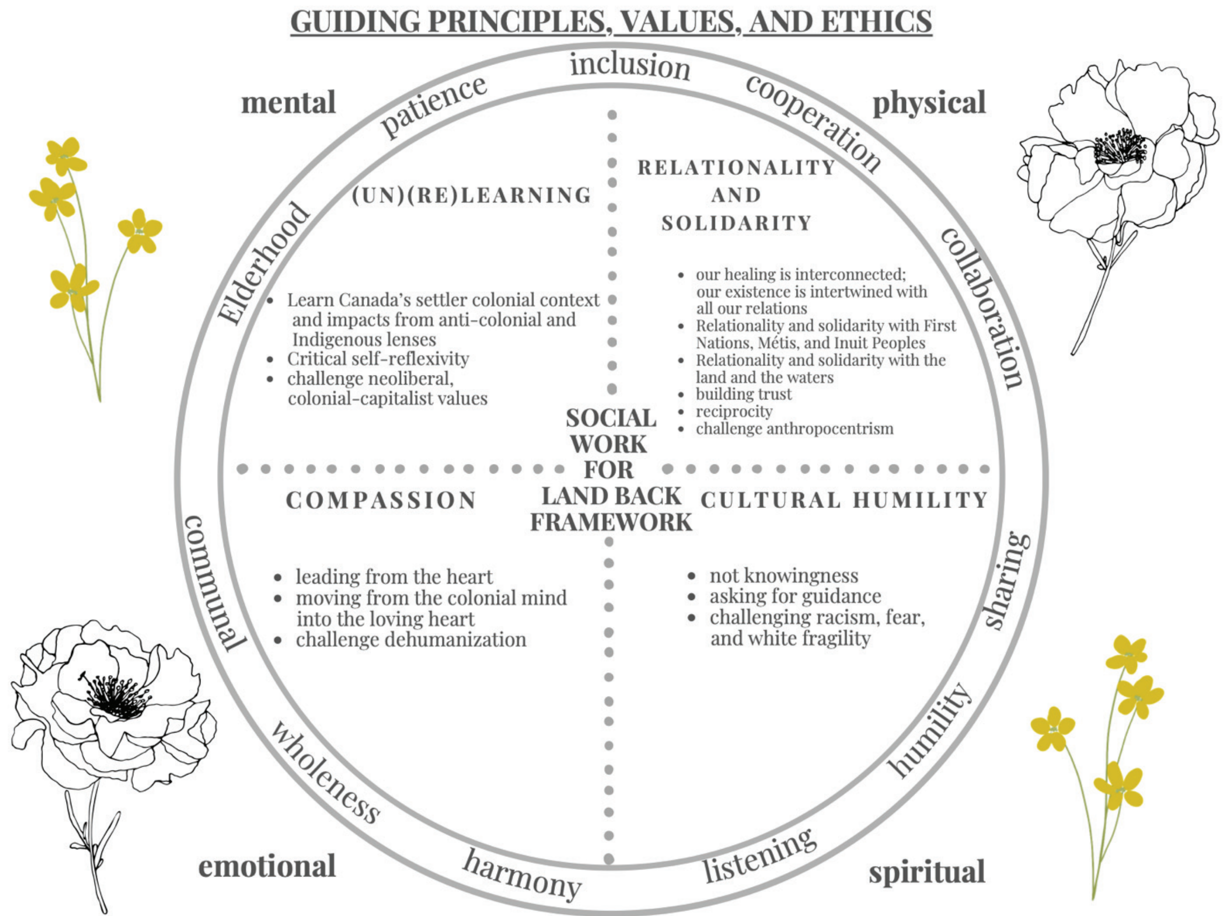
Social Working for Land Back Guiding Values, Principles, and Ethics

Circling back to the Eighth Fire Prophecy earthing this project, which calls for a return to the Sacred Instructions, Social Working for Land Back calls for a paradigm shift within the profession and broader society, that moves away from Western cultural values that have harmed all our relations, towards Indigenous cultural values of the Sacred Instructions that can restore the health of Earth Mother. Mitchell (2018) explains that this requires moving from valuing the individual to the communal; youthfulness to Elderhood; competition to cooperation; aggression to patience; speaking to listening; conquest to harmony; arrogance to humility; saving to sharing; exclusive to inclusive; fragmentation to wholeness; and winning to collaborating. Through our conversations, collaborators have suggested the following core social work values, principles, and ethics for the Land Back Framework, all of which honour the cultural values that Mitchell (2018) describes: (1) compassion, (2) humility, (3) unlearning and relearning, and (4) relationality and solidarity—with all our relations. For this transformation to happen, social

workers must also adopt both a personal and professional life-long commitment to these core social work values. Please see Figure 2 for an illustration of these guiding values, principles, and ethics of the Land Back Framework.

Figure 2

Guiding Social Work Values, Principles, and Ethics of the Land Back Framework



Note. This figure demonstrates the four central guiding social work tenets of Social Working for Land Back, which are placed within the medicine wheel, centering the four bodies of Spirit, Heart, Mind, and Body. The tenets are placed in proximity to each respective body intentionality; however, each tenet relates to all four bodies, and all four bodies of the medicine wheel are interconnected and interrelated. Additionally, the outer layer of the wheel includes the larger cultural values, as discussed by Mitchell (2018), that connect closely to the inner social work tenets. Each of the four social work tenets is described in some detail, including corresponding dominant societal values that must be challenged through social work pedagogy practice.

Compassion — lead from the heart

Ancestral wisdom and Indigenous Knowledge suggest that, in everything we do, we must lead from the heart, a place of compassion (Mitchell, 2018), which is also commonly known as a foundational social work value and practice skill. Walter speaks to this principle:

> I think **we have to start from the heart, like from the *Odayin*.** We start from the heart **and then we kind of go from there.**

In many ways, the Western world has become caught up in intellectualization, analysis, criticality, and thought; yet Indigenous worldviews and principles remind us to always lead from the heart, to lead with love. In fact, in Mi'kmawi'simk, the word for heart, *mkamlamun*, is more accurately translated to 'heart/mind', making the intuitive and intellectual inseparable; in the Mi'kmaw worldview, where relationality is central, there is no mind without heart (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 35). As Social Workers for Land Back, we must constantly ask ourselves, are we leading from a place of love, and compassion? Or are we allowing colonial ways of knowing being and doing—which tend to exploit, separate, judge, and criticize—to guide us in our work? We cannot decolonize ecological social work practices without being heart-centered in our ways.

Cultural Humility

In addition to leading from a place of compassion, we must also lead from a place of cultural humility. Cultural humility involves being open to learning about another person's culture through what they have shared about their personal expression of their culture and heritage (Moncho, 2013), and involves three core components: "lifelong learning" and "critical reflection"; "recognizing and challenging power imbalances for respectful partnerships"; and "institutional accountability" (Moncho, 2013, para. 6-8; Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998).

Jo speaks to her embodiment of cultural humility when she started working in child welfare at 22 years old within a First Nation community:

> There were two women who saw me coming a mile away, two Indigenous women who were family support workers… they really helped me learn and that was my first experience working alongside Indigenous people and to be honest, I don't think it was necessarily cultural humility that was my guide at that time, so much as that **I was just clueless. Thankfully they were able to really help me because how to work alongside Indigenous people and communities. Cultural humility had not been a significant part of my learning in my undergraduate degree.** I think **I was open enough** and because I didn't know what I was doing as a brand new social worker. I was like, **"whatever you've got, help me".** And so they helped and taught me… You know, they showed me how to enter into a community, how to enter into people's homes with respect and build relationship.

Here, Jo highlights an integral lesson in cultural humility: when we do not know, we must be honest about our not-knowingness to ourselves and others, and respectfully ask for and be open to guidance. As Tara-Lynn suggests, we can ask about culture in an assessment like so:

> **I may not speak your language but tell me about it. Tell me about your culture. Let me learn. And what can I learn from you?**

Both Tara-Lynn and Jo also provide examples of embodying the not-knowingness and openness to guidance when we are unfamiliar with Indigenous cultures. Tara-Lynn suggests:

> **If you're working on traditional land,** it's going and reaching out, even if it is to the band office or something, and being like, "Do you have any resources?" and making them your first stop versus "Ohh I have these ideas, and this is what you guys need" kind of thing. **It's kind of going in and being able and willing to learn, listen and to learn.**

As Jo expresses further gratitude for her Indigenous colleagues in child welfare, she explains:

> I learned about Fish Camp and its role in communities. The parents who had children in care would go to Fish Camp. A colonized mind would ask, "well, why aren't you, here visiting with your kids who are in care?", **what I learned very quickly was that going to fish camp was healing… that going to fish camps and engaging in traditional practices with your aunties, those were healthy places, those were places of healing.**

Jo describes this as her first "ah-hah" moment in this realm of cultural humility vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples. If Social Workers for Land Back are to support the healing of settler-Indigenous relations, or 'reconciliation' then cultural humility is paramount.

Unlearning and relearning

With that humility and not-knowingness comes the need for openness, and a commitment to unlearning systems of harm, including internalized racism, white supremacy, heterosexism, sexism, and other colonialist ideologies. We must also commit to unlearning the patriarchal saviourist version of Canada's history taught in the public system and media. Simultaneously, we must commit to (re)learning the truth of Canada's settler colonial history, and its impacts on Indigenous Peoples, debunking the notion of Canadianness as "goodness" and "innocence" (McLean, 2013, p. 355). Walter shares his personal experience of unlearning internalized racism, where an experience of being subject to racism by classmates was the catalyst:

> I was kind of traumatized by that situation. And I felt that, you know like every white person, or every white woman could be like, you know, just harbor extremely racist thoughts. And I really didn't know what to do with that, like it was kind of traumatizing for me. And… my counsellor advised me to maybe **go to a traditional ceremony and learn more about things.** […] "**I think I had quite a bit of internalized racism against myself as a Cantonese person, but I think I also had a lot of racism against Indigenous people.**

This reflection is poignant in noting that traditional ceremonies can support social workers in unlearning anti-Indigenous racism, while also amplifying the fact that racialized and non-racialized people alike are affected by internalized racism and must all commit to this unlearning process. Settler colonialism in Canada would not have succeeded without racism, given that it is quite literally founded upon white supremacist notions and racist ideologies (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; McLean, 2013; RAVEN Trust, n.d.).

Rose also spoke about her (un)(re)learning journey, as a Black and Indigenous person raised in a white environment:

> **I was raised in a white environment, so I could kind of see myself as almost white** as well because the teachings that were given to me as a white way **and at times I fumble and mistakes because I act white.** I come in a perception of a white person. And I realized that **Indigenous and black people look at me going "holy, we just see this white thing coming at us",** and I have to go. "Ohh yeah, I forgot myself**. So what am I doing wrong?" And then it's humbling. And it's painful because then I take it to self,**

> **going "ohh, that means it's my identity." No, it's not. It just means that you are taught a certain way.** […] **How do we do that [unlearning]? I think small movements. […] it also means walking the talk in what you're doing.**

Here, Rose exemplifies how the commitment to the unlearning of internalized racism and white supremacy is not a personal issue—it's not a threat to one's identity, rather, it is a threat to the harmful stories and narratives that we have been taught in society.

Understanding Canada's settler colonial context, and its impacts on all our relations. One of the harmful stories we are taught in Canada is the story that depicts the Canadian State as innocent and good (McLean, 2013). To counter this, we must (un)(re)learn about the Canadian State-Indigenous relationship and its impacts on all our relations. All collaborators have committed to this (un)(re)learning journey in both their personal and professional practice. For example, throughout our conversation, Tomas frequently referred to anti-colonial and Indigenous writers who discuss Canada's settler colonial context. Thus, to embody the Framework, one must actively seek to learn about the Canadian State-Indigenous relationship from anti-colonial and Indigenous lenses. Drawing on collaborators' perspectives, this principle is further described in both the education and practice chapters that follow.

Critical self-reflexivity. Central to this (un)(re)learning journey, is critical self-reflexivity[28]. Tara-Lynn illustrates how she employs this skill as a social worker for Land Back:

> And going through these conversations [like this], and conversations I have with clients…**There's a lot of healing that happens through… Just being able to be heard and be seen and reflecting back on yourself.** Because I think too, therapists, I think it's a responsibility in any role when you're working with clients and stuff is, reflecting back on **"this made me feel this way" or "where is that coming from? Why is that coming up? Am I feeling uncomfortable? Am I OK with it?"** And having those conversations.

Prioritizing and practicing critical self-reflexivity is integral to the principle of (un)(re)learning, as it allows for the learning to be integrated and cemented into one's worldview.

[28] This critical social work skill was described and defined earlier on page 60 in Chapter 3: Research Design.

Relationality and solidarity

Another foundational value in the Framework is that of relationality and solidarity—this means relationality with all our relations—the Web of Life and beyond, and this relationality is one of inherent solidarity and unity, an understanding that our healing is interconnected, and our futures are intertwined. This relationality and solidarity extend to future generations, the lands, and the waters, and must be the foundation for settler-Indigenous relationships. This guiding principle for the Land Back Framework is elaborated in what follows.

Our existence is intertwined. Correspondingly, Tomas draws attention to the importance of reimagining settler futurities as futures that are intertwined with Indigenous futurities, which is necessary before any authentic solidarity can be realized.

> We see in Mi'kma'ki, the resistance from settler lobster fishermen to the communities practicing fishing and, you know, engaging in their lifeways that are so necessary and that have been done time immemorial on these lands and I think, **I wonder what would it look like if […] that was *not* seen as a threat to settler futurities? And not seen as a threat to those people? and I think that would be a significant difference.**
>
> And **that would enable broad-scale solidarity building. If** we see futures, **if we see our futures as intertwined and, our wellbeing, kind of, all, as all peoples as intertwined and as inseparable,** then we might be able to step away and look at the ways that society is right now that inhibit that, that inhibit wellbeing and inhibit our futures. But right now, I think if **there's this idea of separation—which is so key to modernity, is all these separations between people, between species, between places—I think that that it becomes a lot harder to actually meaningfully build solidarity.**

As the famous Indigenous Elder and activist Lilla Watson states, "If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together". Social workers must shed their desire to "help" and lean into their desire for the liberation of all, in recognizing the impacts of another person's harms as one's own, honouring our interrelatedness and interconnectedness and the ways in which our healing and our existence are intimately bound; this is true, ultimate solidarity. Collaborators

express how this solidarity is necessary with all our relations, with Indigenous Peoples, and with the lands and the waters. Collaborators further emphasize how this relationality and solidarity must be rooted in a strong foundation of trust, built over time, and guided by reciprocity.

Our Healing is Interconnected with All Our Relations. The most central principle that must guide a decolonizing approach to ecological social work practice is the understanding that our healing as human beings is interconnected with the healing of all our relations. Ecosocial work understands this principle as the 'web of life' (Powers et al., 2021), which does not quite fully capture the essence of 'all our relations'. All our relations include the rocks, minerals, the air, and even the cosmos (Coulthard, 2010)—which may not necessarily be captured in the term 'web of life'. This understanding can be deepened through Etuaptmumk, where Indigenous Knowledge is honoured, lifted, and named. For instance, Tara-Lynn draws on the Mi'kmaw language to illuminate this:

> So I named my practice at ***nepisultieg*****, which means we heal each other.** And that kind of comes back to the trees, cause **the trees have that they heal each other underneath everything.** And I think **underneath everything, we have it within ourselves to heal, and to heal each other.**

Mi'kmawi'simk, like other Indigenous languages, reflects the relationality and solidarity between all our relations (Sable & Francis, 2012). Here, Tara-Lynn also illustrates our connectedness and relationality with our relatives, in this case, the trees, and how we mirror our relatives in our ways of wellbeing.

Darla-Jean further draws on Indigenous Knowledge to support the notion of our healing as interconnected with all our relations:

> my elders always tell us that **we're part of the land and part of the water and that you know, our journey in this life…**Pre-birth to post-death includes our environment and our environment and **our path to a better life is always on the land, or always on the water.** And it's kind of ironic that you know, **scientists are finally catching up to many of the ways that in doing of what the Indigenous knowledge has been taught for**

> **centuries** and you know the different medicines and you know… Just the vibration of being around the trees and the land and you know.

Darla-Jean's mention of how scientists are finally catching up to Indigenous Knowledge speaks ever more powerfully to the need for Etuaptmumk as a pathway to understanding the interconnectedness of our healing with all our relations. Kimmerer (2013) also discusses in detail the ways Western science has been 'proving' much Indigenous Knowledge to be true. Yet, Indigenous Knowledge should not require validation through the scientific method, as their truth is evident in millennia of lived experience (Billiot et al., 2019; Kimmerer, 2013). Indeed, Billiot and colleagues (2019) encourage environmental social workers to challenge the Western scientific understanding of 'evidence-based practice' and to turn to Indigenous Ways of Knowing as evidence, especially when working with Indigenous communities.

Relationality and solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. Many collaborators speak to the importance of building strong relationships with Indigenous Peoples if we are to heal the Settler-Indigenous relationship and Mother Earth. When asked about how she came to her place as a social worker for Land Back, Liz responded:

> So then how did I get there? Basically, through relationships with Indigenous People and communities.

Similarly, Leigh credits her knowledge in this realm to her Indigenous relations:

> …much of that learning and that development of respect and reciprocity has come from the Indigenous communities that have held me.

Honouring Indigenous relatives as teachers of Land Back values leads social work and society towards more sustainable, ethical, reciprocal, harmonious ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Relationality and solidarity with the land. Tomas takes this one step further, by connecting their relationships with Indigenous Peoples, to their relationship with the land, and their understanding of our healing as interconnected:

> **…through building relationship with the land,** and with Indigenous Peoples that were fighting for the same—that *are* fighting for the same. And I think that entry point helps me witness also the ways it's connected to everything else.

Summer also shared a quote[29] from Anishinaabekwe Leanne Betasamosake-Simpson, demonstrating the importance of building deep, meaningful, loving relationality with the land:

> So when **I think of the land as my mother, or if I think of it as a familial relationship,** I don't hate my mother because she's sick or because she's been abused. I don't stop visiting her because she's been in an abusive relationship and she has scars and bruises. If anything, you need to intensify that relationship because it's a relationship of nurturing and caring. And so I think in my own territory, I try to have that intimate relationship, that relationship of love. Even though I can see the damage to try to see that there is still beauty.

As Betasamosake-Simpson emphasizes, the land is our Mother—Mother Earth, and that mother-child relationship is integral to nurture if we, her children, *all* of her children—*all our relations*—are going to survive and thrive (as cited in Klein, 2013).

Notably, Social Workers for Land Back do not have to adopt the same types of relationships with the land as do Indigenous Peoples per se—it is the cultivation of a meaningful relationship that matters. Jo demonstrates this in the following reflection:

> And I remember going into people's homes. Sometimes, I was gifted dry fish. It's salmon dried using traditional methods. I got to know some of the families more, I started to understand the importance of the **relational part of social work.** Having tea in kitchens, I was told stories by people about being able to cross the creeks, walking on the backs of salmon, like just what the world was like way back when. At the same time, I had friends who were the settler people in those areas, the Irish and the Dutch, and they were potato farmers. And so, I had these two different sorts of historical notions of the area. There are Irish and the Dutch people who had been there a long time, there was a lot of intermarriage between the communities. And so there was some interesting kind of worldviews, and this mix of Western and traditional Coastal Salish lifestyle. So, I think that's when I first really, really understood in a somewhat deeper way—and **this is going to be a lifelong journey—but the depth of connection that people have to a place, and a different way of being. I don't have Fish Camp, but I certainly have my own places that are touchstones in my life where I feel good. And so that's how I could relate to it.**

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[29] Appendix E provides a list of specific references named by collaborators during our one-on-one conversations. In cases where the reference is not referred to elsewhere in the thesis, it is only listed in Appendix E.

Here, Jo portrays humility, (un)(re)learning, relationality, and the importance of cultivating meaningful relationships with Indigenous community members, all at once. She also gestures towards the criticality of committing to the values of the Framework for a lifetime.

Building Trust. Relational work starts with trust. Jo illustrates this in her example of how she would encourage a social work colleague to support Land Back:

> Hopefully, they understand cultural humility. I think I would encourage them to **participate in things and get to know First Nations people in a sincere way.** And I would want them to understand that **that's not going to be fast or overnight, and it's not a relationship that can be forced, it has to come from a sincere place.** I have Indigenous colleagues that I've known for a long time, we've helped each other, so it feels sincere and equitable when we ask one another for help or collaborate on something. I'm not just asking someone I don't know, "—can you come help me do my job and come and speak in the class?"

Tara-Lynn reiterates the importance of this trust-building:

> There is that trust building, you can't just walk into a First Nations community and be like, "hey, I'm gonna help you" because they're going to tell you where to go. *giggles*

Tara-Lynn circles back to humility here, demonstrating how all these values are interconnected, interwoven, and inherent to the Framework. This trust-building must also be extended to all our relations. For instance, when harvesting medicines or food, it is common protocol in Indigenous cultures to introduce ourselves to the plant before we harvest, to ask for permission to harvest it, and to offer tobacco, where possible.

Reciprocity. Speaking of offerings, Tomas highlights a powerful way that we can show up in solidarity and relationality, as Social Workers for Land Back:

> how can I stand alongside communities and create space for **resurgence?** Because that is not necessarily my place to go in and say, "OK, I'm here to help you **self-determine** or resurge". And so, I've heard some anti-colonial and Indigenous scholars and activists suggest bringing your gifts to the table. **Like what are the gifts that I hold that I can offer to communities?** And to offer those. And if they are helpful, to use them, to benefit the community. And so, I think of, like [pause] that aspect of seeing where, what can you offer? What can I offer, as a social worker, to communities, that will benefit them?

In his discussion of supporting Indigenous resurgence, Tomas depicts the guiding principles, values, and ethics of humility, critical self-reflexivity, relationality, and solidarity, integral to the Framework.

Similarly, while drawing on Etuaptmumk, Leigh illustrates how relationality that is authentically rooted in reciprocity and solidarity is also non-extractive:

> Sometimes I hear that from people like “white people have done too much. Like, we should just not do anything anymore”. It's like **I think we're just very responsible for this.** And so I think that Two-Eyed Seeing is like how can we use the basis of a relationship with Mother Earth…And…Yeah. Scientific or ecology or whatever it might be…But it's still from that basis of like…**We are all relations…. So we're not doing things to exploit or use land in a way that is not good for the next generations**. If there's that foundation with all these extra, you know, European sciences, great. But it has to have that foundation of **non-extractive and relational base.**

Here, Leigh insinuates that white social workers honouring the values of relationality and solidarity means fulfilling the responsibility one holds as white settlers, which requires building relationships that honour or interconnectedness with each other and all our relations, including past and future generations. Overall, then, reciprocity involves both giving and receiving, in an ethical fashion that considers equity along with what strengths, skills, talents, and qualities one has available to offer to all our relations, including to one’s ancestors and future generations.

Personal and Professional Life-Long Commitment to Values of the Land Back Framework

Liz emphasizes the importance of Social Workers for Land Back valuing social justice, Indigenous sovereignty, and anti-colonialism both personally and professionally while infusing these values into everything one does. Tara-Lynn speaks to a critical commitment in this work as well, which is to resist any work and treatment that is not in alignment with one’s values. For Tara-Lynn and other collaborators, this congruency is essential to their health, wellbeing, and endurance in the field. Tara-Lynn reminds us that this decolonizing journey is long-term, and will take several generations, as has colonialism; [the land] wasn't stolen in one day it was stolen

over generations. And to get it back, it's going to take that”. Tara-Lynn’s message here emphasizes that we must undo and transform the values, principles, and systems that got us here. Thus, to embody the values and principles of the Land Back Framework, we must understand the values, principles, and systems in place and work to transform and challenge these from within. This will allow us to make room for the realization of Land Back.

Social Work for Land Back Must Contribute to Transforming the Current System

As discussed in Chapter 2, social workers are integral to capitalist modes of welfare provisioning, which was created with a knowingness that the current economic and social system that of settler colonial, capitalist political economy would inevitably fail a certain proportion and class of citizens (Kuhnle & Sander, 2012). Critically, this failure is a measure of the current system’s “success” due to the intertwined and mutually constitutive nature of exploitation and accumulation. At the same time, and pre-dating the contemporary “welfare state,” social workers are vital actors in “child welfare”, a system which has consistently served the colonial agenda of the state, removing Indigenous children from their home territories.

With the increased managerialism of social work agencies, social workers, despite growing self-awareness, continue to uphold the status quo—today reflected in neoliberalism and its corresponding band-aid solutions to service provision. Thus, by and large, social work as a profession has failed to challenge the current systems, despite evidence of their unsustainable and harmful nature (Boetto, 2019; Coates, 2003; Dominelli, 2013; IPCC, 2022; Powers et al., 2021). In response, transformative social work emerged to make sustainable and enduring change within the current systems (Mullaly, 2017). However, for social workers to make changes within systems that centre Land Back, first, we must understand the values, principles, and

pillars of the current systems that we must challenge, and second, we must also know how we might strategize to move towards building and eventually living in alternative systems.

Challenging the Values of the Current System

The current context is discordant with the Land Back Framework values and principles, thus, social workers must challenge the values and principles of the dominant systems, such as dehumanization, anthropocentrism, racism, fear, white supremacy, neoliberalism, and capitalism.

Challenge dehumanization. When social workers are guided not from the heart but by the colonial-critical mind, Walter explains this often results in prejudiced assumptions against clients, including anti-Indigenous racist judgments, which impede Social Working for Land Back. This often results from a failure to have meaningful relationships with Indigenous colleagues and community members. Walter also critiques the profession for having dehumanizing bureaucratic and categorical processes, while normalizing the authoritative condemnation of clients. Walter then suggests that we as social workers humanize our ways of doing and being with clients. Thus, Social Working for Land Back means unlearning the authority-like modes of practice we may have been trained into, humanizing all clients, challenging our stereotypes and assumptions—which are mind-based—leading instead from a place of compassionate curiosity—from the heart, or heart/mind.

Challenge anthropocentrism. To understand our healing as interconnected with all our relations, we must also be prepared to challenge anthropocentrism. As Walter explains:

> In the Anishinaabe and the Nêhiyaw [worldview] the **humans are not the center of everything**, we humans are the least important of the living beings, because **the other animals don't really depend on us typically**—unless they've been acclimatized in Urban settings, they don't really depend on us. And we really depend on the plants and ones that crawl, and the ones that swim and the little beings, you know, like the bacteria**, we depend on those beings to survive.** We couldn't survive without insects; we couldn't have survived without plants. We need the photosynthesis to occur […] to clean water

> and [provide] the fresh air. So, you know, I believe learning that, you know, humans are not an apex situation, but **humans are just one part of it.**

So long as we continue to pursue our human-centered needs with little regard for its impacts on our relatives, we will risk an imbalance within our ecosystems and planetary wellbeing (Redvers et al., 2022). Ergo, challenging anthropocentrism is integral to solidarity and relationality.

Challenge racism, fear, and white fragility. Leigh explains that white settler Social Workers for Land Back have the specific responsibility of educating other white settlers about the Framework's values with patience:

> I think for me as a white social worker, I feel like… It is a little bit my responsibility to have…. A certain set of patience with that… Person. […] **If there's an Indigenous person that has the patience, great, but […] I feel pretty strongly that they don't necessarily *have* to**, and if they do, that's amazing. **But I think it's a little bit more… My responsibility as somebody who's come to this land.**

Jo similarly speaks to the importance of countering white fragility and taking responsibility as a settler, by striving to decolonize education and practice, as guiding principles integral to the value of relationality and solidarity:

> It's not just the responsibility of Indigenous people to [provide education on these topics]. So that goes into **that question of allyship.** […] And it doesn't matter if it's environmental, social work, or child welfare. **resting in their guilt, fear of doing wrong, White fragility—All of those things that I think could really stop the good work from happening.**

Here, Jo stresses that white fragility and guilt should not stop collaborations from happening, and she also cautions that there is still potential to cause harm in this work, as even "good intentions" can result in problematic outcomes. This is where self-reflexivity and accountability come in; through our relationship with collaborators and with ourselves, we can assess the impacts of our actions, seek ways to repair potential harms and learn from our mistakes, applying these lessons as we move forward. Leigh and Jo suggest that white settler social workers who

understand this Framework must, with patience, support white settler peers in overcoming the guilt, fear, and white fragility impeding their ability to engage in settler solidarity.

Furthermore, Tara-Lynn provides the example of calling out her professor who was perpetuating harmful anti-Indigenous racist rhetoric in the classroom, constantly asking Tara-Lynn to confirm her educational credentials, which he did not do with other students. Tara-Lynn highlights the disruption of racism as essential to the value of relationality and solidarity.

Challenging neoliberal, colonial-capitalist values. So long as competition and related White supremacist, colonial-capitalist, neoliberal individualistic ideologies are upheld—it will be impossible to imagine settler futurities that recognize the existence of all peoples, and beings, as intertwined. Liz shares that one way we can challenge these values is by countering the underlying tones of colonialism and colonial-capitalism within our educational systems, agencies, and in direct practice. She explains how, for instance, we might challenge the assumption that intervening in any interference with private property is of the utmost importance, for instance when youth are involved with shoplifting or arson. Instead, we must value life itself as the utmost value, while calling anything that interferes with life on this planet into question.

Strategies to Move Towards Alternative Systems

Re-imagining settler futurities. One essential strategy for moving towards alternative systems is to divest from the guarantee of settler futurities as we might think of them, and to re-imagine them instead as decolonial futures, where settler and Indigenous futurities are intertwined. In social work, there has been a movement towards supporting a framework grounded in 'reconciliation' (CASW, 2023; CASWE-ACFTS, n.d.). However, settler social work student collaborator, Tomas, warns that reconciliation, as defined by the government, is only in place to sustain the current systems. Thus, Tomas explains that social workers, and the

profession, must first divest from the current system that upholds "the guarantee of settler futurities, as we might think of them" if we are to create systems that heal all our relations:

> The changes in, you know, **we're always talking about reconciliation**, the TRC report is always thrown into social work classes. We're supposed to relate it to the calls to action. **But the material systems are not changing.** The material conditions, to some degree, are changing, but fundamentally**, those relationships, the power differential between State and Indigenous Nations is not changing.** […] What Glen Coulthard says is that reconciliation, for the State, is about reconciling Crown sovereignty—reconciling Crown sovereignty with Indigenous nationhood. **It's not about coming to the table and being ready to… And stepping away from all the things that are in existence right now.** It's about how to make sure that these can—that these structures can continue.
>
> And so I think, **social work in reconciliation…. I think it needs to divest from itself really, because social work is so deeply embedded in the structures of the Canadian state.** And it's, you know… Social workers who are well educated on Indigenous lifeways and Indigenous practices and community and worldview… Sure, the decision-making processes, the relationship building that they will do in community, will be so much less harmful and perhaps even positive. But, **the structure that they are in remains the child welfare system which was designed to take children from Indigenous communities, which was designed to erase Indigenous presence on land, and to destroy that very particular form of life, and those forms of life.** And so, **I'm not sure that, without changing the structure, we can actually address the issue** I think social work just needs to be very… Aware of the realities and. I think it's—I appreciate what I said in terms **of [social work] divesting from itself because I think, divesting from the guarantee of settler futurities, as we might think of them,** is so **necessary to be able to create space for the changes that need to happen.**

Tomas emphasizes that the current systems were built upon separation, and the severing of Indigenous Peoples and the land, which persists through the current child welfare system. In turn, the Framework must be aimed towards a complete transformation of our societal structures as we know them. Walter also challenges the profession to "come out of its doldrums", as social workers uphold bureaucracy and act as pillars of the Canadian-capitalist-settler State. Social Workers for Land Back are calling for radical change now.

Abolitionist Social Work. Jane envisions a social work divested from settler futurities through abolitionism:

> **we're operating under a system of white supremacy.** It's harming everybody. It's harming a lot of people more than it's harming some other people. […] So I'm interested in abolition and social work, and there's a network for the advancement of abolition. So abolitionist social workers. And it's really interesting because they're running webinars and saying, "Are we obsolete?" "Should we—can we reform something that's based on a system of harm? Is it possible?"

Questioning the foundations of the profession is necessary, for "we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them", as Albert Einstein so famously once said. A drastic shift is warranted. However, as explained above, it is not enough to simply tear down the current systems—we must have a vision and systems in place to turn to.

Overtaking the systems by planting seeds of change, mobilizing, and uniting. Rose describes the current system, and structures within it, such as the Indian Act, as lifeless, box-like entities, confining society, that social workers must play a role in overtaking:

> And to me, I'm a visual person, so I feel like it's like that, in the old-fashioned way, that cage that they would put the thief in and the sheriff would put them in this cage. And he's in this box and he can't get out. But he knows there's this way of getting out and that's where you have **this very living person in this structure that's non-living** and **that's what I envision the Indian act.** That's what I envision our politics is that you—we—have created **these boxes that are not normal, and we are living, breathing ecosystem of full, you know?** [And so now] **how do we overtake this box?** […] That's the framework of our challenge as social workers. [….] Now we're having to push that to the people who don't understand our social working.

Collaborators are overtaking this box by planting seeds of change within the current systems. Darla-Jean stresses the power of Indigenous Peoples being educated and understanding the colonizers' language and systems.

Understanding the systems allows one to 'play the game' to make changes within it:

> So, when I was going to school, in order for me to understand, because I never, ever thought I was the sharpest pencil in the cup so to speak, I had, you know, self-worth and self-doubt and you know everything **that Indigenous people, especially women, have—**

> **gone through the mill and back again, and somehow survived**. You know, I think it is vital, is important for us to… **It's almost playing a game** if you know what I mean. You learn how they think and how they do, and **you get into situations and places where you could make change happen… in a meaningful way.** You know what I mean? Yeah. **You get on the boards and committees and, […] you know, work in these places that can actually make change.**

Rose also echoes this sentiment:

> So this movement is, yeah, it's going to take a while, but there are pieces that **we can start building in my generation.** I'm 50. I'm not going to always be here, but I can teach them grant writing**. Condition your children now to start working with teaching them the old warrior way, which is now you're gonna send them to school.** You're gonna send them to get certifications. Have them come back and be the people replacing [what] the white people or the non-Indigenous people have put in there.
> **And then you're slowly changing that, you're creating, so the vine of Ivy going over the old house or that system, it totally goes over it. But then eventually it just squeezes and takes completely over.**

As we create alternative systems, making change within the current systems must also happen, since these current systems continue to have significant impacts on society in the present. Walter additionally reminds us to also be grounded—literally—as we move through this work:

> And you know, like Barbara Nolan was saying, you know, [we were not created] to be way up there and just lecture down to people […] Creator put us on Earth to do work like on the ground. **So, we have to start on the ground, maybe help people, small things, you know? Like planting gardens or planting seeds. You know if we start there that's how I feel we can reach people.**

Here, as is also underlined by other Collaborators, Walter is emphasizing the power of small changes coming together to create ripple effects—one might think of the butterfly effect. Walter's words here also relate to teachings I once heard about our ant relatives. Ant colonies work together in solidarity, as a unified force; each one carrying a leaf or a rock to their home. While we may only see one aunt carrying one small leaf, this may not seem to make a difference. Yet when we understand that there are hundreds of ants doing this very same action repeatedly, we see that eventually they collectively transform their environments entirely (Red Star

International, 2023). Every small action, every small metaphorical leaf that we carry, every seed we plant, as Social Workers for Land Back, makes a difference.

Rose goes on to demand social workers move beyond the current system and stand up united, in solidarity, to mobilize a movement for substantial change to our societal structures:

> …**when are we going to now start standing up as a unit and say well then, if we don't like it consecutively, we need to change it?** We speak about that. […] **That structure is always going to be there unless we dismantle it and it has to be a unionized thing.** It can't be something individual because the more I do individually, I'm tired. I'm burnt out, I'm broken down. […] **How do we consecutively get everybody in a union or a unified way, to create this movement?** Because it's not gonna happen individually, that's what the system likes. Burnt out social workers, they win. [30]

Yet, as we consider divesting from the guarantee of settler futurities, we must also dream of the alternative futurities that embody the values and principles of the Land Back Framework, thereby re-imagining settler futurities. What do we turn to when the current systems are abolished? What will the world look like once we've overtaken the system? In their book *Indigenous Action to Save our Mother Earth*, The Red Nation (2021) cautions that we are not ready to dismantle the current systems in our society, for we have yet to build the alternative systems that will replace them. As the famous Audre Lorde (1984) once said, we cannot dismantle the master's house using the master's tools. So long as social workers are *only* working within the current systems and structures to make incremental changes, we are continuing to use the master's tools. Thus, as we transform the system from within, we must simultaneously be building alternative systems from without, that rest upon the guiding principles and values of the Land Back Framework. The next section paints a vision of social work and society, should the Framework be fully embraced. Figure 3 illustrates collaborators'

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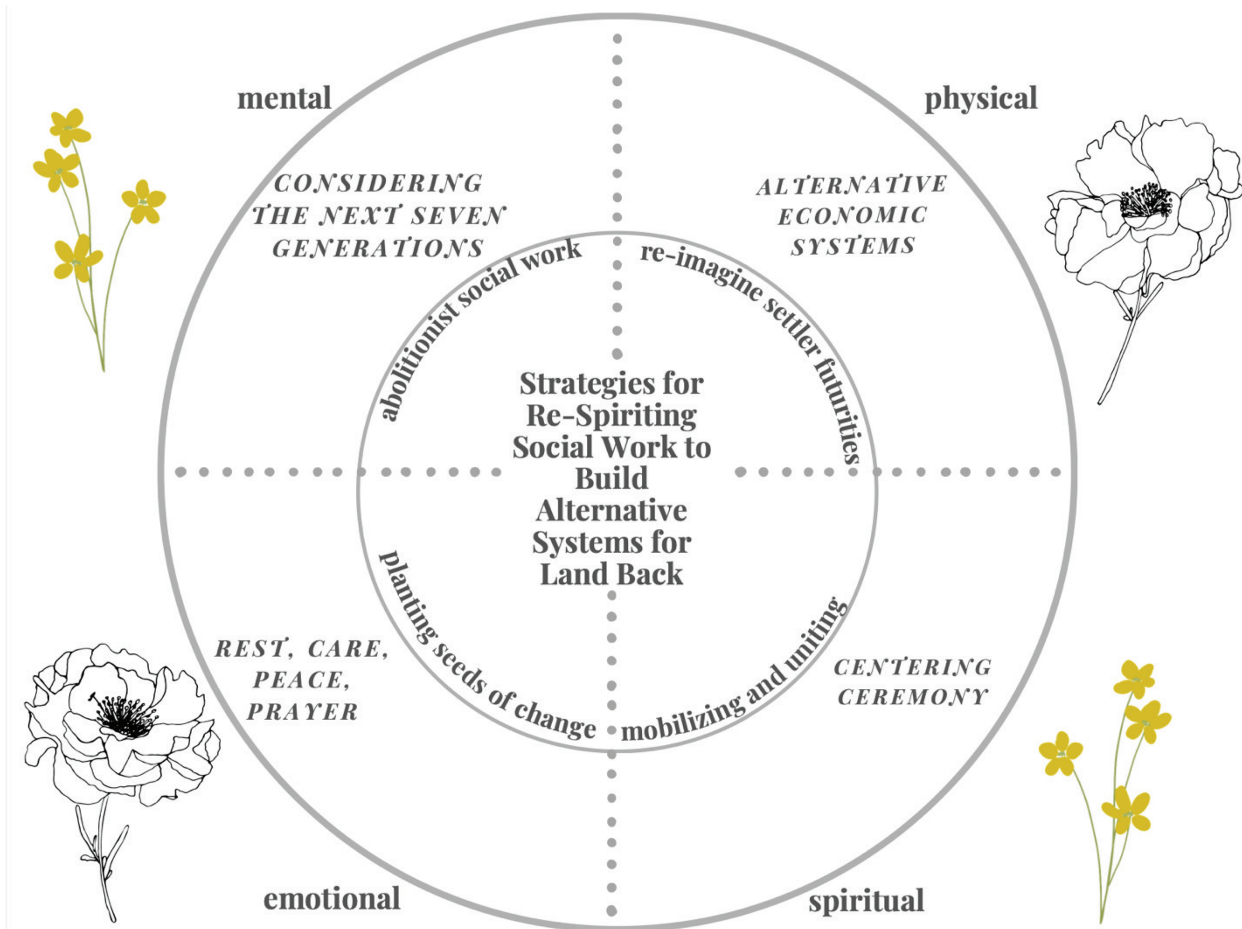
[30] In response to Rose's critical question and because of this powerful project, I have started a mailing list for a Social Workers for Land Back Collective, where we will have the opportunity to unite and mobilize, exactly as Rose is describing. Social workers interested in joining can email dani.sherwood@dal.ca.

collective vision of alternative systems that support Land Back, while also referring to the strategies for re-spiriting social work required to build these alternative systems.

Figure 3

Strategies for Re-Spiriting Social Work to Build Systems for Land Back



Building Alternative Systems that Re-Spirit our Work

This Framework is one of "re-spiriting" social work, returning to Absolon's (2019c) understanding that decolonization is recentring Spirit in everything we do. In response to the Eighth Fire Prophecy, as discussed in conversation, Jane shared:

> the idea that I'm hearing from you is like **re-spiriting the work that we're doing**. It's really beautiful and yeah…you're making me think a lot about how if we're disembodied…. That it makes it a lot easier for us to stay as objects and for us not to be effective. So, the thing within what you were asking about, is how do we take the

> principles that we hold dear? How do we have integrity? Or, in social work, they call it congruence, right? Within our decision-making and our values. What does that look like now? … And what came to me when you asked that question was…how do we exist in communities of care? And what does that actually look like?

What do these alternative systems look like? According to collaborators, they look like systems that centre ceremony; systems that consider the next seven generations; systems of rest, care peace, and prayer; and systems that embody alternative economic structures that honour our wholistic selves and interconnectedness with all our relations.

Centering Ceremony

Centring ceremony within the profession allows us to deepen our connectivity to all our relations, and our Spirits, which inherently connects us more deeply to the land and waters and heals us as a collective. Raine demonstrates the importance of social workers and social work agencies moving beyond considerations of Land Back in a literal sense of the term, as she provides an example of honouring the Spirit of Land Back through social work practice.

> I'm not saying give your building back, necessarily right now, we'd like to talk about that down the road. But right now, inside the [social service agency] building, you can change and hypothetically give this like an interpretation of the Land Back. I can give the Land Back to you by giving you smudge because I'm smudging and we're talking about the elements and we're talking about the land. We're thanking the Mother Earth for growing this and we're giving thanks for the fire that has come with it. And then I'm giving you a metaphorical piece of Land Back to you.

Here, Raine alludes to the honouring of ceremony and sacred cultural practices as integral to the Land Back movement—integral to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination. Raine also speaks to the power we hold as social workers in advocating for more regular access to these spaces and opportunities for clients.

Similarly, Jo also speaks to the importance of honouring ceremony—in its many facets—as Social Workers for Land Back:

> **when I think about disrupting things - it's that relational piece** that matters. I think one of the things that has to happen for Meaningful Land back or environmental, social work is again like **how you started with some ceremony.** There has to be time for R**elationship to be built**, whether that's ceremony, spending time together or whatever it means to build relationship between those particular groups of people. In order for meaningful Indigenous voices to come into the social work program, there has to be meaningful and real relationship with the First Nations people of this territory. That takes time and this work isn't necessarily recognized as 'scholarly activity' in academic institutions. I need to have that relationship before I can even begin to think, to ask somebody to come and share their wisdom in the class... **There has to be recognition by institutions of the time it takes to actually do this work well. And it's not fast.**

To advocate for the inclusion and space of ceremony within the profession, whether we are practitioners, researchers, students, or educators, is a way of decolonizing social work education and practice. Traditional ceremonies can also support social workers in unlearning the values inherent to the colonial-capitalist systems and re-learning the Land Back Framework values of compassion, humility, relationality, and solidarity.

Systems for the Next Seven Generations

As we begin to dream of and co-create alternative societal systems, rooted in relationality, solidarity, and sustainability, we must start from a place that considers the next seven generations to be. In a Dene worldview, place-based reciprocity means leaving the Earth as we found it, if not better, for the next generations—and not just the next generations of humans, but also of our other relatives (Coulthard, 2010). Of course, we still use the resources we need to survive, but we do so in a way that does not objectify these resources—we do so in a way that understands all resources as alive, with whom we hold relationships, with a recognition that what we receive from Mother Earth we must give back in some way—the ethics of place-based reciprocity, grounded normativity, and place-based solidarity (Coulthard, 2010; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016). These ways of being, rooted in relational love, are fundamental to Indigenous

ways of caretaking for and with the land. With concern for future generations, Jane dreams of a world rooted in radical relational love:

> **…**when I have two small children and I don't see—there's big, big emotion there, **I don't see a way for us to create a [different] world *tearing up* without restoring justice to people so that we can have—so that there can be a world. That can only happen with Indigenous stewardship, globally and locally.**
>
> And I really believe we have to—we have a lot of systems to abolish. And **a lot of [alternative] systems to create and I do see Land Back as a as an integral part of that**, that imagining. So [pause] That's a big part.*sigh/gasp* And it, and it's not just for my kids, of course, right? I'm not naive, you know? Around what is happening, in the choice to have kids in the world. And I also am**, I believe that love, relational love, that it can be radical and it can change, it can change and abolish systems.**

Here, Jane also stresses that justice for Indigenous Peoples—supporting Indigenous self-determination is a precursor to returning to these relational loving ways of being with the land, waters, and all our relations of seven generations from now.

Correspondingly, Tomas urges those doing care work to begin acting in ways that consider the next seven generations, offering a reminder that this transformation takes time.

> **I think that is a fundamental question for, how can we build alternative futures within the spaces we exist in already?** So, Glen Coulthard speaks of the concept of **prefigurative practice**, which asks, how do we make the futures that we want come now? And how do we embody those futures in the spaces we're in? [The notion of] p**lanning for seven generations [is] so central to many Indigenous worldviews and, in particular,** I believe it is Leanne Simspon who discusses **the notion that it's taken 7 generations to get to where we are and that will take that long to decolonize and to actually shift away from the systems.** And so I think of… Oh, this is so, and in terms of social work, in terms of expanding the scope of practice, I think you spoke earlier about how environmental degradation is a serious problem for our youth especially. And I think that **social work right now is, thinks only about, the present and the immediate future**. And I think, **what would it look like if social work, social workers, people doing care work, thought about, grew up on that understanding, and thinking that many generations ahead?** […] **What do we need to do so that we, 7 generations from now, people can survive and be well?** [I think] then **the scale of change and the magnitude of community building, relationship-building, becomes very different.**

As the magnitude of community building and relationship-building grows, so too does our need for systems of rest, care, peace, and prayer—which will sustain our global collective.

Systems of Rest, Care, Peace, and Prayer

Rest is resistance. Tricia Hersey, author of *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* and founder of The Nap Ministry has begun this visioning process of a world that centers rest and care, which was referenced by several collaborators as they envisioned a Social Work for Land Back. Tricia Hersey's (2022) manifesto is rooted in the Black liberationist movement and calls for the dismantling of colonial-capitalism and white supremacy while calling for the creation of a world where we take back our divine right to rest, where our mere existence is enough. The four tenets of the Rest is Resistance movement are as follows: (1) "rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy", (2) "our bodies are a site of liberation", (3) "naps provide a portal to imagine, invest, and heal", (4) "our DreamSpace has been stolen and we want it back. We will reclaim it via rest" (Hersey, 2022, p. 13). In short, Tricia's vision of society demands us to slow down. This sort of slowing down, and resistance to grind culture, would provide immense healing to the planet.

This also relates to Indigenous understandings of the necessity to slow down. As Métis Two Spirit Grandmother Fyre-Jean Graveline shares, her late father firmly believed that if humans could slow down and attune to the heartbeat of Earth Mother, we would all begin to heal (personal communication, 2023). This is already evident through the healing of the lands, waters and ecosystems that happened seemingly instantaneously when our global community was forced to slow down completely during the early COVID-19 global pandemic lockdowns. As Harvey et. al (2020) explain, one of the most noteworthy experiences during the spring and summer 'lockdown' in 2020 was that people were suddenly hearing the natural world around them again, the noise of cars and aeroplanes were replaced by birdsong" (p. 342). Slowing down and adopting the Rest is Resistance manifesto can support social workers in resisting burnout in

the field as we adopt the Framework. Social work licensing bodies in Canada, such as the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers, have already begun to share this with social workers (NSCSW, 2023). By embracing rest, we create the space to dream of these alternative systems.

Embodying care. In conversation, Jane referred to the tenants of Rest is Resistance, as they reference an email, I had sent them in which I paraphrased the book, reminding them that rest is their birthright, after they expressed remorse for having to reschedule our conversation:

> we need to abolish these systems and we need to **re-member,** we need to fully re-embody **systems of equity and care and kindness** that […] it is our birthright.

Jane also draws heavily on Sonya Renee Taylor's (2018) writing on community care, which discusses the criticality of forming intentional relationships with our neighbours and communities, to authentically support each other and embody systems of care as environmental crises increase.

Tomas mirrors Jane's call for these systems of care, connecting back to relational, communal ways of being that are central in Indigenous ways of knowing being and doing, at the heart of systems that are built with the next seven generations in mind, heart, Spirit, and body:

> I really appreciate **Chapman and Whither's notion of *social working* and recognizing that** the **collective, relational care practices**, that are needed to maintain wellbeing and health in a community, have been practiced by Indigenous Peoples, forever. And the same is true for many communities. And yet, now social work has claimed monopoly over that and has claimed that they're the only ones who are capable of that work.

Here, Tomas illustrates how the role of social workers, then, by leading with compassion and embodying systems of care, is not to impose ideas of care onto others—rather it is to build capacity within communities so that the systems of care that resonate and maintain collective wellbeing within those respective communities can be (re)created, embodied, and sustained.

Peace and Prayer. In alignment with rest, and care, and building upon centring ceremony, Darla-Jean emphasizes the need for peace and prayer to guide us in this Framework:

> **I'm grateful** for a **little Peace of Mind.** I don't even turn on the radio or anything. I'm usually… **Try to be in a prayerful space.** Because I never know in this seat that I sit in, what kind of issue somewhere is up against. So, **I'm always asking for guidance and protection and strength and courage and capacity,** you know?

She also shared the following example of embodying the values of the Land Back Framework through creating systems of peace and prayer within her self-care routines related to practice:

> You know, I often think about when I go harvesting blueberries in the mountains, I take 2 medicine bundles with me. One to give thanks to Mother Earth for allowing me to harvest the blueberries. And the other one is to, I mean when I work at the hospital, it was always two, because I was thinking about a patient. So, I would say a little prayer for them up in the mountains.

Here, Darla-Jean honours relationality, by praying for her client on the mountains, when she is connecting to her berry relatives, and offering medicines as part of spiritual cultural protocol.

While reflecting on decolonizing approaches to environmental social work, Tara-Lynn speaks to how social work education and practice can and should, through Etuaptmumk, adopt and honour Indigenous spiritual understandings of our connections to the land, as well as the seven generations who came before us, and the seven generations who come after us:

> In understanding that our ancestors prayed for us, for this moment, and prayed for the land, for this moment, and that [is] sustaining us too, but also understanding that we are praying for the next 7 generations. And [the] prayers [of non-Indigenous people] are also welcome to come into ours because we need it.

Again, we see the importance of re-spiriting social work to move towards embodying this Land Back Framework, by recognizing our ancestral ties, our relationship with land, respect for Indigenous cultural teachings, and prayer that unites all nations—all people—across all four directions of the medicine wheel. Darla-Jean also speaks to the importance of building systems that centre peace and prayer, to re-spirit social work education and practice:

> You know cause, bottom line, **spirituality is important to Indigenous people.** But every organization, governmental, legal, every organization… that does not have a spiritual component… Is not gonna work necessarily.

To be in right relations with Indigenous Peoples, social workers need to honour spirituality through education and practice, as an integral way of being in relations with the lands and waters that nourish us as we live, work, and play in Turtle Island.

Alternative Ecological Economic Systems

Shifting to these systems of rest, care, ceremony, peace, and payer as the main 'fuel' of society, will also allow for a major reduction in our consumption of 'fossil' fuels, as we learn to slow down and cultivate our relationship with all our relations. When we slow down, we suddenly have less of a need for consumption. However, we also need to shift the global economic system away from the current model rooted in the Growth Ideology wherein Gross Domestic Product (GDP), representing increased production and consumption, and affluence are indicators of a Nation's wellbeing (Powers et al., 2021). Imagine if rest, care, peace, and prayer could be indicators of societal wellbeing instead. Alternative, ecological economic systems—including Indigenous Economic Systems that have existed for millennia (see ICA, 2021; Kuokkanen, 2004)—is "the study of relationships and interactions between economies and the ecosystems that support them. It brings together research in economics, ecology and other social and natural sciences that aim to understand how environmental sustainability and economic abundance can emerge together" (ICA, 2021, para. 6). These alternative economic systems cultivate the more harmonious ways of being with all our relations, necessary to preserve Mother Earth for the next seven generations of humans and nonhumans alike. Thus, social workers must learn about ecological economic systems in curriculum and training, and they must also strive to build ecological economic structures and models through their practice.

Alternatives to the Growth Ideology. Powers and colleagues (2021) critique the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for a 7% target growth rate, measured by

GDP (see Powers et al., 2021 for an in-depth review of this critique). GDP is based on a growth ideology—inherent to colonial-capitalism and neoliberalism—which breeds competition, scarcity, and even violence in some cases, all in the ruthless pursuit of wealth (Powers et al., 2021). Instead, we can turn to ecological economic systems that support future generations, care, rest, peace, and prayer, "such as doughnut economy, degrowth or post-growth, diverse economy, solidarity economy, and community-based economy and commons", many of which come from Indigenous Knowledges (Powers et al., 2021, p. 8).

Gift economy. One of such alternative economic system is that of the "gift economy" described by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), in her chapter on the Gift Economy, in which "'goods and services' [are] not purchased but received as gifts from the earth" (p. 24). As Leigh implies, if we embraced economic shifts that were more in line with a gift economy, social workers would no longer be needed:

> Going back to Robin Wall Kimmerer like the gift of strawberries… Like that whole chapter on **reciprocity** […] If there genuinely was a gift economy… So many social issues, wouldn't we—social workers, some social workers would be out of a job. We wouldn't need to exist!

As Leigh articulates here, and as is echoed by many radical transformational social workers: our long-term goal, as Social Workers for Land Back, should be to eventually work ourselves out of a job. While it may not be possible to revert to a gift economy in its entirety, the tenets of a gift economy: reciprocity, honouring everything as sacred, and taking only what we need, are integral to the Framework.

Ecosocial Innovations. Some tangible ways to embody these tenets, even within the current economic system, is to initiate and support the creation of 'ecosocial' innovations, which are "social innovations that combine ecological and social goals" that "enable social work to promote [alternative] forms of sustainable economy" (Matthies et al., 2020, p. 378). Matthies et al. (2020) also demonstrate how ecosocial innovations decrease monoculture and increase cultural diversity. By centring ecosocial innovations that are simultaneously rooted in anti-colonialism and Indigenous Knowledges within the Framework, we can create incremental changes within the current system, with potential to eventually evolve into an alternative system.

Relatedly, M speaks to the importance of addressing the short-term and immediate needs of our clients as social workers, within the current system, to ensure long-term survival. She also stresses the need for social workers to address the barriers that may arise as costs go up as we shift to more sustainable practices, under the current capitalist economic system.

> OK, fast fashion, the food's gotta come over on boats and everything. Well, if we do start changing that, […] **one of the roles that social workers can play that is making sure that, yeah, low-income people can still have access to that stuff, even if it changes becomes more expensive** […] **why can't you just walk in [to a thrift store] and take what you need?** […] **Getting your short-term needs met is so important.** And oftentimes when you're low-income that's all you can think about. You can't think about the future. Unfortunately, though, I mean if in the future […] the climate gets so bad that we can't even meet short-term needs then […] that's why I think now it's that figuring out: **how can we meet people's short term needs right now, but also making changes so that [climate change] is not such a problem in the future?**

Here, M covers several critical points related to Social Working for Land Back. First, she emphasizes how our short-term and long-term needs are intertwined, and how we must consider the next seven generations in all that we do. Nothing that we currently do as social workers, to meet client's immediate needs, will matter if we do not have clean air to breathe, or water to drink. Second, M also touches upon the challenge we face as social workers, working with clients who struggle to meet even their most basic needs, and who do not have the capacity to

consider long-term future-oriented issues such as climate change, or even complex historical societal legacies such as settler colonialism and attempts at Indigenous erasure, which continue to impact society today. Thus, the challenge for us as social workers is to infuse these values of decolonizing and sustainable social working into our practice even when working with folks who may not have the capacity to share these values. Walter and Liz both discussed this challenge as social work practitioners for Land Back as well.

One way we can overcome this challenge is through the implementation of ecosocial innovations. For instance, the idea of creating a thrift store that is funded by social funding, where low-income people can choose from clothing without paying a price, but still experience the full choice model of a regular clothing store, can be seen as an ecosocial innovation. The funding could pay staff a living wage to operate the store. Meanwhile, all the clothing is second-hand, preventing clothing from being in the landfill. There could be a sewing room for mends, repairs, and alterations, providing an opportunity for skill-building. The staff could all be folks who were once low-income, while exclusively hiring Indigenous community members. Social programs could be offered for and by Indigenous community members at the store, such as community fashion shows, or designer-training programs, focused on Indigenized clothing and cultural regalia. In these ways, the innovation could support Indigenous cultural resurgence and sovereignty. Integral to the Framework is the creation of ecosocial innovations that are also rooted in supporting healthy settler-Indigenous relationships, rooted in decolonization.

Conclusion: A Land Back Framework of Sustainable Social Work Practice

Embracing the guiding principles and values outlined herein through social work education and practice can enable the profession to fulfill its role and responsibility in mitigating environmental crises through a decolonizing lens. This will require challenging current colonial-

capitalist systems and values while building alternative systems. These alternative systems consider the seven generations that came before us, and the seven generations yet to be, they centre ceremony, and they adhere to the three pillars of sustainability: the environmental—returning to sustainable Indigenous stewardship that considers all our relations across generations; the social—re-spiriting social work and therefore society to embody rest, care, peace, and prayer; and the economic—considering economic structures that counter the growth ideology, infusing anti-colonial ecosocial innovations into practice.

Social working within and outside of the current system to ultimately transform it and build alternative systems congruently allows for the possibilities of living beyond coloniality, returning to our spiritual selves, honouring or divine beingness, and living in ways that are in harmony and balance with all our relations again. As each voice herein has offered insights that radiate like sunbeams; together we have formed the sun that gives energy to grow the seed. This guiding framework for teaching and doing Social Work for Land Back is at the core of the sun's energy. The chapters that follow provide examples of how this energy from the sun (framework) is embodied through tending the garden of this seed, so that it can grow resiliently, through education and practice respectively.

Chapter 6: (Un)Learning for Land Back: Transforming Social Work Education

Now that we have established a Framework for Social Working for Land Back, this chapter demonstrates how social work education might support such a practice. This chapter argues that for social work to respond to Land Back's requirements, the education and socialization system that undergird the profession must be fundamentally transformed. To explore what this transformation might entail, by drawing on the insights from collaborators and my own lived experience as a social work student, I elaborate and critique the current state of social work education, focusing on the lip service paid to anti-colonialism, reconciliation, and indigenization. From there, informed by collaborators, I offer strategies for transforming social work education for Land Back, highlighting the following: transparency in education regarding the colonial harms of the State and the profession; cultivating Social Work for Land Back in the school environment; calling for and realizing a paradigm shift; teaching ecological education from Indigenous perspectives; considering interprofessional approaches; hands-on training on capacity-building, policy, and government work; and collectively dreaming and building alternative systems of the Land Back Framework within and beyond the classroom.

Guiding Medicine: Pipsissewa – *Amiskwâyôwipahk*

The guiding medicine for this chapter is commonly known as pipsissewa in English and *amiskwâyôwipahk* in Île-à-la-Crosse Michif (Belcourt et al., p. 39-40). Antibacterial disinfectant, stimulant, tonic are amongst its many medicinal uses. Amiskwâyôwipahk is a member of the winter green family. While it often treats chronic kidney diseases, it is also good for sore throats, colds, fevers, edema, female troubles, backaches, and soothing upset stomachs. The plant medicine can be applied externally to blisters and heal rashes and sores, as a poultice to foot and leg swellings, or to eyes to relieve irritation (Belcourt et al., p. 39). Education is the backbone of

our practice, which has been aching from the colonial harms of academia and the profession's colonial legacy. Applying the medicine of this chapter to the metaphorical foot and leg swellings may represent how transforming social work education can lead us to walk in a good way while applying the medicine to relieve irritation of the eye may represent how social work education for Land Back can relieve the one-eyed seeing still prevalent in the curriculum. Due to its commercial use in soft drinks, amiskwâyôwipahk is also endangered, similar to how decolonization has become a popular "buzzword" for promotional tactics within educational institutions. Thus, this chapter calls for decolonizing education through careful, deliberate action.

Critique of the Current State of Social Work Education

Embodying the Colonial-Capitalism Inherent within the Academy

Tomas warns that we cannot transform social work education to be inherently decolonizing if our educational programs continue to embody colonial-capitalism:

> I think right now, for me in academia and as a social work undergrad program, the **embodied ways of being are hyper-productivity, of suppressing emotion, so that you can be productive, of competition, of yeah… yeah, competition. And also, confrontation.** […] We can talk about all the things in very transformative ways, b**ut if we are embodied ways of being remain rooted in capitalist ideals, neoliberal ideals, we're not changing anything.** Because I think it will take so much unlearning for me to come out of a university program to be able to open myself up to different ways of being… That… **it will take a long time for me to be able to embody other ways. Like that unlearning process will be so drastic.** […] A university program or any kind of education program around how to help people**, if it's going to be supporting decolonial movements, supporting Indigenous resurgence, that will require it to be different, fundamentally.**

Jane further argues that the current educational systems demand a level of dissociation:

> Within capitalism, within neoliberal capitalism, within all this, all this stuff that we're getting taught in our degree is that **there's a requisite disembodiment**. There's a **requisite disassociation**. **There's a requisite disempowerment and objectification, right? Because we become, as bodies, just objects for labour production, right?**

This embodiment of colonial-capitalism inherent within the academy, demanding hyper-productivity, competition, confrontation, disassociation, disempowerment, and objectification, is arguably the most prominent barrier we face in transforming social work education for Land Back; the only solution that would overcome it entirely would be social work education that strays from the academy altogether. The neoliberal institution of the academy today requires the ultimate transformation.

Anti-Colonialism, Reconciliation, and Indigenization: All Talk, Little Action

Nonetheless, the profession has attempted to overcome the barriers imposed by the academy through commitments to decolonizing and Indigenizing education. This is evident by the CASWE-ACFTS Commitment to Change (CTC-EEC) Working Group struck in 2017, focused on decolonizing social work education and centring reconciliation therein (CASWE-ACFTS, n.d.), alongside the wealth of scholarship on Indigenizing social work education (e.g., Baikie, 2015; Absolon, 2019a), the availability of Indigenous social work specialization programs; and the recent establishment of the Centre for Indigegogy (n.d.) housed within Wilfred Laurier University's social work program. Still, for many collaborators, social work education continues to embody colonial-capitalism, partially due to the limited and failed efforts of instructors, schools, and faculty to translate this intention into action in a meaningful and collaborative way. Despite this decolonizing and Indigenizing rhetoric and an increased attentiveness to the social consequences of climate crisis across the field, many collaborators noted a lack of curricula on these topics, and where it does exist, it is done in a manner of 'checking the box', while tokenizing Indigenous scholars. Furthermore, collaborators problematize curricula for focusing too much on theory and not enough practice.

Most collaborators—even those currently studying or recent graduates—indicated that no social work courses were available at their schools dedicated to the environment, green/ecosocial work, or climate change mitigation, let alone available courses on these subjects from a decolonizing lens that supports Indigenous sovereignty. Many students also shared that Land Back is not discussed in the classroom; where it is, as was the case for M, it may appear in one short video with little discussion. Moreover, four of the students, Jane, M, Tomas, and Summer, explained how they have each attended schools that take the approach of adding one week of decolonizing and Indigenous-related content into one week of each course's syllabi, as opposed to infusing a decolonizing lens, and Indigenous perspectives, into each week's discussion topic. Student collaborator M also shared that in her social work program—as was my experience—the same few Indigenous scholars' readings are repeated across multiple courses' syllabi. In contrast, the few Indigenous faculty are tasked with teaching the courses on anti-colonial Indigenous perspectives. Of course, many Indigenous faculty likely want to teach on these topics, and it is most appropriate when Indigenous people teach courses on Indigenous perspectives. However, non-Indigenous curriculum developers and instructors are also responsible for educating themselves on these critical topics and gaining practice, familiarity, and confidence in teaching on these topics as well, just as they do with any other subject matter (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012).

Elsewhere, many students are concerned that they are not learning enough hands-on practice and are left wondering what anti-colonial environmental social work practice looks like in action. While referring to famous Inuk throat singer, songwriter, novelist, and visual artist Tanya Tagaq's book *Split Tooth*, Jane expressed concern that social work education overemphasizes ideology:

> There's still too much ideology. There are **still too [many] concepts for us to get to a starting place of meaningful praxis.** […] **[Are students] going to take it in and say**

this is what anti-racist, this is what anti-colonial social work looks like in practice, when we're still in our epistemologies? When we're still thinking, as colonizers? And we're still thinking and teaching colonially? How can we start practicing?

Tomas echoes this concern by questioning the effectiveness of essay assignments:

I'm constantly writing in English, using academic language, APA formatting, writing 2000-word papers about how to decolonize. I wonder, is that really decolonizing?

Jane and Tomas' student perspectives, combined with my own, lead me to argue that it is more important that social work students gain lived experience of anti-colonial and anti-racist praxis than it is that they can regurgitate theoretical frameworks in a 'practice' paper. While critical reflexive thought and moral considerations are integral to social work practice, a social worker's actions in the field is what will ultimately impact their clients and the greater community.

Arguably, checking the box, tokenization, and heavy theoretical approaches to education reflect the neoliberal colonial capitalist defaults to "quick fixes", "incorporation" strategies (Baines, 2011), and performative allyship (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Of course, this is not to discount the genuine constraints that academics face regarding time and energy—compounded by the institutional climate of academia more broadly. So, imagining that we cannot radically transform academia, what *can* be done to mobilize all social workers in building alternative systems, thereby actualizing the Framework?

Strategies For Embracing the Land Back Framework Within Social Work Education

Despite the colonial-capitalist, neoliberal constraints of academia, collaborators offer a variety of strategies of resistance that make space for embracing the Land Back Framework through social work education.

Transparency in Education Regarding the Colonial Harms of the State and the Profession

First and foremost, social workers must recognize the historical and contemporary harms perpetuated by the profession. Absent this recognition, there is no Social Work for Land Back. Several collaborators stress the necessity for students to be informed about the historical and contemporary harms of the profession. Indeed, Summer explains that UVic provides a review of the colonial harms of the profession, as taught by Indigenous Elders, right at the beginning of the program as part of orientation—for students across the regular and specialized cohorts:

> They were very blunt and clear about the **historical and contemporary destruction that social work has done, and as a profession, and continues to do to Indigenous communities, right?** And **how vitally important it is that we are decolonizing and we are trauma-informed so that, hopefully, we don't continue to perpetuate this colonial harm**.

Darla-Jean implies the importance of educating social work students on the Indian Act:

It's different policies that keep us stuck, like the Indian Act […] made us wards of the State.

Similarly, Rose states:

> White people to this day don't understand Indigenous people are still owned. They're still slaves. And that's not being discussed. That has to be incorporated […] if you say you wanna work [as a] social worker, you need to understand all the history of this.

Students, educators, and administration alike must gain a comprehensive understanding of the colonial impacts of the State and the profession that have harmed the health and wellbeing of the lands, waters, and all our relations by displacing Indigenous Peoples, disrupting knowledge transmission, and removing Indigenous children from their home territories and communities.

Cultivating Social Work for Land Back in the School Environment

For deans, directors, instructors, administration staff, and students at social work programs to feel supported in embracing the Framework, schools can adopt various strategies that cultivate an environment conducive to this shift. In what follows, collaborators describe several elements of social work schools that have been and would be conducive to cultivating

Social Workers for Land Back. Algoma University and the University of Victoria (UVic) were prime examples of schools maintaining this environment. Both Summer, who graduated from UVic, and Walter, who teaches at Algoma, explain that their universities have statements of intent deliberately and explicitly devoted to supporting Indigenous sovereignty and decolonizing their teaching and learning environments. But what's more important is that both shared concrete examples of these schools putting words into action.

For instance, at Algoma University, Walter shares that he and his fellow faculty members are encouraged to discuss and provide education to students regarding Land Back. Summer also describes the importance of decolonizing admissions processes, as is the case for the Indigenous specialization program at the University of Victoria, where the application process was very focused on decolonization and its importance within the field. If the profession is to become decolonizing and focused on healing all our relations, supporting Social Work for Land Back in a more widespread comprehensive fashion, I would argue that these sorts of admission processes should be implemented across all social work programs, not only those that are specialized. Many collaborators also stress the importance of Indigenous representation amongst the school's population, including among students, educators, and even administration staff. Strong Indigenous representation across the schools' faculty, staff, and students can also potentially reduce the risk of tokenization (Turner et al., 2008).

Moreover, Summer advises implementing and enacting ethical, respectful, and culturally relevant accountability processes to create space for healing the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples within and through Canadian social work education. Summer provides UVic's accountability processes as an example:

> There have been experiences with non-Indigenous white settler students where comments have been made that were not particularly culturally safe or appropriate. And the school

> has been very good at addressing these and **listening to Indigenous students and having circle to talk about this and to have our input and consultation on what accountability looks like and how we move forward** […] that goes a step **beyond just saying we're decolonial, but also actually practicing that and listening to Indigenous students and community**.

Creating protocols like these makes it possible for healing to happen while minimizing harm.

Furthermore, several Social Work programs across the country, such as UVic, Laurentian and Algoma, have now formed circles and spaces within their schools explicitly dedicated to creating a decolonizing space for Indigenous staff, students, and educators to come together in community, alongside settlers devoted to reconciliation, decolonization, and the support of Indigenous sovereignty. Creating these designated spaces within social work programs allows for relationship and trust building and the healing communal connectivity at the heart of the Framework. Creating a culture of Social Working for Land Back through the education system will not happen within the confines of classroom walls alone. Spaces in which Social Workers for Land Back can unite allow their shared visions to become closer to realization.

Both Jo and Liz explicitly mention that the core textbooks for their courses include books such as *Strong Helpers' Teachings: The Value of Indigenous Knowledges in the Helping Professions* by Cindy Baskin (2022)[31] and *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017). Walter also speaks highly of Michael Hart's (2002) textbook *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*. Another resource that institutions can utilize is a resource guide created by the organization Decolonial Futures called *Building Stamina: A Workbook on Decolonization for*

[31] Cindy Baskin identifies as Indigenous; however, her Indigenous relations are under question (see Lamers, 2021). This points to a broader concern around Indigenous identity within our current colonial context, confounded the colonial notion of "blood quantum" in tensions with the rise of "pretendians," who are people pretending to be "Indians" (i.e., Indigenous) to gain recognition, employment opportunities, and awards designated for Indigenous Peoples. A complete discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, it is imperative that Social Workers for Land Back carefully consider this identity issue regarding social work programs, employment, education, and grant opportunities designated for Indigenous Peoples.

Higher Education (see Stein et al., 2021). This workbook can be used at staff meetings, in the classroom, and within working groups across social work programs. Many collaborators spoke highly of Indigenous literature and media that transformed their worldviews and perspectives. Please see Appendix E for a list of resources mentioned during all 11 conversations for ideas on critical content to integrate into course syllabi that centre anti-colonial and Indigenous voices, knowledge, experiences, and teachings foundational for (un) learning for Land Back.

Other ways that colonial academic standards within social work programs can be challenged is by shifting to pass/fail grading systems, where possible, or, as collaborator Tara-Lynn suggests, less emphasis can be placed on literature reviews of 'peer-reviewed' articles. At the same time, cultural and experiential knowledge must be increasingly valued. This is especially important since Darla-Jean mentions how Western science is only now catching up to the Indigenous ancestral wisdom that has existed for thousands of years. It is imperative that these sacred instructions and teachings are equally valued within social work educational spaces if we are to heal the land and all our relations through the profession.

Teaching From a Paradigm That Considers All Our Relations in All Social Work Practice

To unlearn for Land Back, within social work, there must be a paradigm shift away from understanding human wellbeing as somehow separate from the wellbeing of all our relations towards understanding the land, waters, and all our relations as inherently interconnected to the wellbeing of humans. Our interconnectedness with Mother Earth must be centered at the heart of the profession. Darla-Jean describes this interconnectedness:

> So, when you talk about Mother Earth, we have to talk about ourselves, too, right? So, they, the trees, are Mother Earth's lungs. The water is her blood [and] for us to have clean air and such, we have to have clean water!

Darla-Jean goes on to explain how the contamination of water poisons the animals that drink that water, which are then consumed by humans, leading to rare cancers at high rates within those communities. This is one of many examples of the deep interconnection between human and planetary wellbeing.

Thus, as Tara-Lynn suggests in what follows, social work educators and administration must strive to highlight this connection in every module, in every assignment:

> There's a reason why we work with the land. And there's a reason why we put tobacco ties up in a tree. And there's a reason why, and these reasons why are because we're praying for our next seven generations. We're feeling the prayers from our past seven generations, and we're going forward, and it… kind of has to have that realization that everything is connected, because I think that comes back down to how **everything is connected.** So, if you're going to be working…. **With the environment in any way, shape or form, going back to the original environmental keepers, I think, Is the basis of everything. […] If the space is going to be allowed to be given to Indigenous people, then I think then we're finally going to be able to have that kind of… a natural incorporation. Instead of this conversation of trying to be like, "How can we incorporate it in?"**

Tara-Lynn stresses how considering the interconnectedness of our wellbeing must be at the root of every social work conversation in education rather than "incorporated" into the pre-existing anthropocentric worldviews and understandings. This relates to Figure 1 from Chapter 2, which depicts the problem of the current superficial incorporation strategy: domination remains.

Teaching on Ecological Education Centring Indigenous Perspectives

To learn for Land Back within social work, the curriculum on environmental social work must centre Indigenous perspectives and land-based teachings. Summer explains how this was integral to her experience at UVic, which differed from her experience at other schools:

> Every single course I've taken—and this includes in the general social work stream—there are Indigenous perspectives weaved into every single week's content.

Curriculum developers and educators must add at least one, if not multiple, required anti-colonial readings to each course's weekly module. To include more Indigenous perspectives within

students' educational experiences, Leigh suggests that students can be encouraged to pay special attention to the social locations of those voices they are including in their research and to search for literature, including grey literature, written by Indigenous voices. M also suggests that programs can be revised to be more condensed and cohesive, given the frequently repeated content across different courses. M adds that programs with courses spanning an entire academic year might be condensed to make room for courses on Social Work for Land Back to become mandatory and woven into each program.

Furthermore, settlers are responsible for providing education on these subjects and can do so by reciprocally collaborating with Indigenous colleagues and guest speakers. For instance, settler professors can ethically request that their Indigenous colleagues co-facilitate a course, or portion of a course, with them. Tara-Lynn, Summer, and Darla-Jean discussed the importance of frequently including Elders and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers' in the curriculum and student learning opportunities. Additionally, guest speakers can be partially funded by adding a small cost per student to the course's tuition, as is successfully done in Dalhousie's College of Sustainability's *Indigenous Perspectives on Resource and Environmental Management* course. However, ideally, this should be funded by the CASWE-ACFTS CTC-EEC-related initiatives.

Infuse language and place-based Indigenous cultural teachings into the curriculum. Several collaborators also speak to the importance of language and place-based Indigenous cultural teachings being infused into the core social work curriculum. This is because many Indigenous languages are derived from the land (Sable & Francis, 2012). Summer describes how learning her Nation's language shifted their worldviews:

> **By learning language we learn so much about our laws, and our relationships with others, and our relationship with the land.** And nsyilxcən, I think, like many Indigenous languages, it's very land-based, and so **it really kind of… changed my relationship with the land** and my relationship with my Syilx roots.

Tara-Lynn echoes Summer’s sentiment wholeheartedly:

> I really started diving into my language, too. **I’m a huge [believer of] language being an aspect of Land Back because** […] for me, language too isn't just being able to speak Mi’kmaq… it's that I can go outside and speak to the trees, and I can go outside and speak with nature, and I can go outside and speak with the water and hear those things too. **It's the language of our souls, of what we are connected to.**

Walter also amplifies this message and even woven several Anishinaabemowin and Nêhiyawak words into our conversation.

Not only is it essential to learn the local Indigenous languages of the lands we occupy, but the English language can also be shifted. For instance, Jo explains how she has started to shift her language surrounding the land, which has changed her relationship with the land. Jo explains that in Western cultural frames:

> There's also that relationship to the land and sort of that frontier mentality of, “I do things to the land, I'm on the land, I am changing the land,” as opposed to an Indigenous worldview, which I have heard expressed along the lines of, **“I'm with the land, I'm with animals who are part of the natural world”… when I start talking like that, it shifts my relationship to the land.**

Tara-Lynn also speaks to the impacts of shifting her use of the English language:

> I think decolonizing and thinking in that mind frame brought me back to being able to put language, even if it's in the English language, to my thoughts and into my feelings, and then kind of go into “how does this make me feel?”

Thus, the languages we use convey our worldviews, and once these languages are learned and used—even if only partially, this can allow for shifts in one’s relationship with and understanding of the land as well.

Teaching about Indigenous resurgence, Land Back, and decolonization movements. Liz explains that in her courses, she dedicates time to educating students on the histories of Indigenous resurgence and decolonization movements, such as the recent movements of Standing Rock and the Wet’suwet’en land defence. M problematizes that Land Back only came

up in one of her courses through a short 10-minute video, followed by little discussion. Thus, social work educators are responsible for more intentional educational content on this history and the relevance of Land Back movements today, as they pertain to each institution's respective traditional Indigenous territories and local Indigenous communities. Furthermore, this education must be coupled with lessons on the relevance of the Land Back movement in response to environmental crises and the values of the social work profession. Rose also suggests educating students on the example of her community of the Nisga'a Nation, who no longer have "Indian rights" because they successfully advocated to have full governance over their land, becoming the first modern-day treaty in B.C. (Nisga'a Lisims Government, n.d.). This could be a powerful way to teach about the State's colonial harms against Indigenous Peoples and how Land Back is achievable simultaneously.

Interprofessional Approaches to Curriculum and Program Design

Given the critical role that social workers play in advocacy and policy development, and our historical and often contemporary role as 'agents of the state', it is essential that social workers have an in-depth understanding of the legal system to 'play the game' that is necessary as part of the Framework. Many schools in Canada now have programs that fuse social work and law education (McGill University, 2023; University of Toronto, n.d; University of Windsor, n.d.). Rose, with her additional law degree, illustrates the necessity of this fusion:

> Every university social working program needs to have a law class in it, and you need to know law. Because you're going to be advocating for that. And **if you know your laws and the way the system works, you are more powerful.**

A wealth of literature within environmental, green, and ecosocial work (e.g., Findlay et al., 2017; Melekis & Woodhouse, 2015; Papadopoulos, 2019) demands social work education begin to partner with adjacent fields in this work. Ultimately, Social Work for Land Back and

healing Mother Earth and all our relations requires *all* professions and disciplines to engage in this paradigm shift, uniting forces to build change within *and* outside the current systems. As Leigh states:

> When you understand the huge impacts of climate change on every single person, it seems impossible to not see it as a social work issue and an every discipline issue…

Findlay and colleagues (2017), Melekis and Woodhouse (2015) and Papadopoulos (2019), among others, provide a wealth of detailed recommendations for offering curriculum on environmental social work across disciplines. Now, the added challenge for Social Workers for Land Back would be to offer this interprofessional education from a unified decolonizing lens.

Teaching and Hands-On Training on Capacity-Building, Policy, and Government Work

Jo shares that training on capacity-building in social work education is paramount:

> What I am hearing [from the Indigenous people I've spoken with] is **that there needs to be people who are healthy, educated, and able to take roles in Indigenous governments to develop policies and run programs that help people** So within the social work program, **I think about the role of social work to] work alongside communities** in their aspirations for self-government but **to [also] have the capacity to do all the things and achieve all of the goals that were outlined in the modern treaty documents.**
>
> **So, I think that social work has a role in terms of growing policy people, growing people who can work effectively alongside First Nations governments that know how to build relationship, and people who also have a sense of connection to a land through experience, through experiential feeling, and doing and being.**

As Jo explains, supporting decolonization, reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and land reclamations involves work at the mezzo-community and macro-policy-government levels. Thus, students require further training and hands-on experience in relationship-building with communities, writing policies, building capacity within communities to actualize their land claim agreements, and working to advocate for Indigenous sovereignty within the legal system.

Collectively Dreaming and Building Alternative Systems Within and Beyond the Classroom

Finally, one of the most important and impactful strategies for teaching and learning for Land Back is to create engaging assignments for students that align with the Land Back Framework while also allowing students to gain hands-on, immersive practical learning experiences that breathe life into the Framework. As Jane shares:

> That's the job of our program is to…help us think more meaningfully. Help us think in relationship. Help us think in terms of caring relationships, you know?

The social work education experience must be one where students and educators alike can collectively engage in DreamSpace, as Hersey (2022) calls it, to learn about, dream up, and collaboratively mobilize to create the alternative systems of society that will lead to Land Back—decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenous self-determination—returning to a state of living in harmony with the land, waters, and all our relations.

Between collaborators' suggestions and some ideas of my own, Appendix F contains toolkit of possible assignments for social work educations stakeholders. Here are a few powerful examples[32] of land-based learning and, ultimately, healing experiences that collaborators had engaged in as a part of their social work educational program.

In one example, Rose's professor had brought students into a forest and asked them to connect intimately with a tree. The professor asked each student to yell and scream into the tree, asking and trusting the tree to absorb all their sacred rage after introducing oneself to the tree and asking first for permission. This assignment supported students in releasing their own trauma, healing themselves—essential to social work practice journeys—and cultivating this deep, intimate relationship with our tree relatives, honouring our healing as interconnected.

Another example of land-based learning that Rose shared was that one of her professors had required all students to spend time connecting with nature for half an hour and to submit a

[32] These examples are repeated in Appendix F: Assignments for Land Back – A Toolkit for Educators.

photograph for proof. Rose explained that most students initially had the same idea: going to a park bench and sitting in the park for thirty minutes, waiting for the time to pass them by. When the professor saw that this was the students' approach, he clarified that the assignment was to become one with all our relations—as we are. Rose describes her experience after she went back onto the land with this new understanding:

> Suddenly I was like "Oh look it. There's a butterfly over there. Oh, look at that, it's a bird! And that… there's a slug there". And suddenly I was in the land, out and didn't—who—my God, I'm sitting on the ecosystem! […] But that's where we were then—suddenly realizing my part is bigger than just me coming in as a social worker.

This experiential assignment can cement the Indigenous worldview described above, where everything is understood as interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent.

Summer had a similar experience through UVic's Indigenous specialization program:

> Having the opportunity for […] students to actually spend time on the land and **to develop these relationships with the land and with our relatives will then positively influence how we relate with people in our work, too, right? And I think with our relationships with ourselves**. […] With my environmental justice class […], every week we had an assignment, we had to go outside to a sitting spot and spend 15 minutes undistracted on the land and share a photo from it […] and **even just that practice I think is so transformative.**

There is a wealth of opportunity for instructors to get creative in developing land-based connective healing learning assignments for students that cultivate relationships with the natural environment while breaking free of the colonized anthropocentric worldview engrained in Euro-Canadian Western society. These exercises allow one to honour our Spirit through connection to land and to honour emotions that arise through reflection exercises and even catharsis in some cases. They also invite us to quiet the mind and drop into our bodies, centring that wholistic perspective that Darla-Jean demands from the profession.

Conclusion: A Snapshot of Social Work Teaching and Learning for Land Back

What does social work education look like when it disrupts colonialism while upholding reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and land reclamations through curricula on sustainable and ecological practice? It looks like weaving Indigenous perspectives and voices into every week, across every course. It looks like centring a worldview that sees human health and wellbeing as interconnected with the health and wellbeing of all our relations—in every discussion, through textbooks written by Indigenous scholars, shifts in our language, teaching Indigenous Knowledges, and learning from Elders. It looks like teaching outside and beyond the classroom setting—being with and cultivating relationships with the land and community, creating decolonizing spaces, and implementing ethical, culturally relevant accountability protocols. These educational practices prepare and empower graduates to Social *Work* for Land Back. This next chapter illustrates examples of Social Working for Land Back in the field.

Chapter 7: Social Working for Land Back

Spirals of creation, spirals of light, you bring my manifestation to life! I trust in your wisdom and in your grace, help me be wise and keep the faith! **– Prayer by Alana Fairchild, 2014**

JOB DESCRIPTION
Wanted: Social workers to assist Indigenous Peoples
Indigenous Peoples are seeking highly motivated social workers to serve their communities' drive for self-determination, empowerment and complete return of their lands and other resources illegally stolen by colonial societies. The social worker will be required to develop aggressive programmes of decolonization that can be used to enlighten and reform members of mainstream society.

Required qualifications:

- Graduate degree from the Leonard Peltier School of Social Work.
- A complete belief in the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and an ability to successfully assert it on their behalf.
- Has been jailed at least four times for standing up for the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Can speak the language of the nation they want to work for.

Preferred qualifications:

- Successful completion of formal accredited programme in decolonization.
- Success at getting territories, rights, and dignity returned to Indigenous Peoples.

(Yellow Bird & Gray, 2010, p. 60)

This powerful prayer by Alana Fairchild (2014) speaks eloquently to the importance of trusting in the guidance and the wisdom of Creation as we walk this path of teaching, learning, and practicing Social Work for Land Back. Once we teach and learn for Land Back, social workers will enter the field prepared to apply their knowledge. Thus, this chapter provides practice examples of what Social Work for Land Back might look like in action. These practice examples can also be woven into social work education through field placement opportunities and class assignments. Moreover, the Job Description by Yellow Bird and Gray (2010), re-introduced above, so eloquently captures Social Work for Land Back in action; as such, it will be referred to throughout. Weaving together the voices of all 11 collaborators, along with my voice, and drawing on Indigenous scholarship, this chapter considers how social work practice can integrate the guiding principles and values outlined in the Land Back Framework through

practice in the field to dismantle the current system and build sustainable alternative systems. After introducing the guiding medicine for this chapter, I describe several examples of Social Working for Land Back shared by collaborators in direct practice, community work, and advocacy and policy work. The final section explores the potential of these practice areas in upholding land reclamations.

Guiding medicine: bitterroot – *wiisakibut*

Bitterroot, known as *wiisakibut* in Michif-Cree, is exceptionally nutritious; just 50 to 80 grams of wiisakibut is enough to sustain one's daily activity (Belcourt et al., 2007). Its tea has been used to relieve heart pain, and it can also counteract irritation from poison ivy rashes. One medicinal phrase in Michif about wiisakibut translates to "increase milk flow after childbirth and purify the blood" (Belcourt et al., 2007, p. 16). Like wiisakibut, Social Working for Land Back is nutritious, allowing us to revitalize humanity, the lands, the waters and all our relations.

The practices described herein allow us to relieve the heart pain that we are currently experiencing as humanity, which has hurt our Earth Mother. Colonialism is like the irritating poison ivy rash that Social Working for Land Back can help relieve. Social working for Land Back can allow the nurturing life-force energy (milk) that the profession has the potential to offer through action (practice), allowing us to purify the blood (waters) of Earth Mother once again.

Direct Clinical Practice

With the individualization, biomedicalization, and pathologization common within approaches to Western medicine, alongside the professionalization of social work, direct clinical social work practice has become increasingly common (Baines, 2011). Thus, actualizing the Land Back Framework through direct clinical practice with clients is essential as a starting point since this is the current reality of the systems in which we work. Through direct practice, session

by session, we can have incremental impacts that eventually allow the broader shift to alternative systems to become more possible. Here, collaborators provide examples of Social Working for Land Back in individual work with clients through decolonizing approaches to trauma-informed practice involving the natural environment, consciousness-raising, and resource sharing.

Decolonizing Approaches to Trauma-Informed Practice

Tara-Lynn illustrates that Social Working for Land Back can look like trauma-informed practice with Indigenous clients that considers the specific realities of Indigenous Peoples. First, she demonstrates the importance of considering clients' potential traumas associated with social work agency-like settings and seeking alternative practice settings where possible. Second, she reveals the importance of challenging the stereotype that all Indigenous Peoples use drugs. In these ways, Tara-Lynn embodies the guiding principles of compassion, unlearning/relearning—by practicing with consideration of Canada's colonial history and its impacts on Indigenous Peoples—and relationality and solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.

> **In terms of social work, it's… When you're the clinician and looking at that, how can you decolonize in this moment? No, you can't go back to the land. But what can you do?** Is it… **maybe it's not having the client come into the office, and it's—you are sitting outside on a park bench with them and having that moment out there.** It and still being able to provide the confidentiality and the aspects of the modern world that we like and still being able to do your job, but being in a comfortable environment because it's **coming from like a trauma-informed approach**… that OK agency buildings, her mother was a residential school survivor and had she was taken into childcare or into foster care and these brick stone buildings have meant a great deal of pain and loss to them. And if you're not approaching the client going in with that and having that kind of understanding that, **that could be part of why they're sitting there and shaking and nervous and not realizing, well, they're not withdrawing from drugs. That's anxiety.** And having that kind of knowledge, too…

Here, Tara-Lynn shows that having a deep consideration and awareness of the harms Indigenous Peoples have and continue to face through colonial institutional oppression and discrimination is

a necessary precursor to Social Working for Land Back. Tara-Lynn is Social Working for Land Back by supporting Indigenous self-determination and involving land in her practice.

Tara-Lynn further demonstrates the trauma-informed practice principle of meeting clients wherever they are—and starting there, letting the client lead:

> **I usually start each session with, like, whatever you need for the day. Sometimes it's a vent. Sometimes it's just… a gossip session of them venting that way, or sometimes like it's the weather.** Or **sometimes I've sat like 20 minutes in silence while they just breathe**, and that's what they need, because **nobody really gives them permission to be themselves.** And I think **Land Back is that. Coming back to ourselves and taking back that—if we can't take our physical Land Back, because we can't, it's like, "well, I can take myself back,"** and coming back into that.

Tara-Lynn's description here directly aligns with the ethic of rest as resistance as described in the Framework for Land Back in Chapter 5.

One of the four tenets of the Rest is Resistance Manifesto is "rest is my birthright" (Hersey, 2022). Tara-Lynn honours this tenet in her practice by encouraging her clients just to be—to breathe and sit for 20 minutes. She also describes the importance of simply giving clients permission to "be themselves," which Hersey echoes is at the crux of rest as resistance—we are enough now and deserve rest—just by simply existing as the inherently divine beings we are. By allowing clients to be themselves and to show up just as they are, we are disrupting the extractive colonial-capitalist ways of knowing, being, and doing that have fueled land theft. By coming back into ourselves—our bodies—we connect with our divine nature, which is inherently tied to that of Mother Earth and all our relations. This allows us to embody those systems of rest, care, peace, and prayer integral to the Framework alongside values of compassion and relationality.

Involving the Natural Environment

Echoing Tara-Lynn's decolonizing trauma-informed practice approach wherein facilitating sessions outside is infused into her practice, Liz similarly encourages reconnection

with the land in individual social work practice with clients. For example, Liz recommends having sessions outdoors, going on nature walks with clients, and encouraging clients to spend more time engaging, connecting, and being with the land. Engaging in therapeutic sessions with clients outdoors and encouraging clients to spend time outdoors is becoming commonplace across the health profession. For instance, there is an Association of Nature and Forest Therapy (Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs, 2021), and the option to offer nature prescriptions is also now available to healthcare practitioners. In Canada, PaRx is "Canada's first national, evidence-based nature prescription program" (BC Parks Foundation, n.d.). While these are steps in the right direction, encouraging reconnection with the land and the decolonizing lens to this work appears to be missing. Could there then be an opportunity for Social Workers for Land Back to prescribe nature prescriptions while encouraging clients to learn about the histories of those lands and the Indigenous Peoples who call those lands home? Could Nature and Forest Therapists, who may also be social workers, do the same? Social Workers for Land Back have an opportunity to get creative in decolonizing this increasingly popular approach to clinical practice.

Sharing Resources, Ensuring Access

One way this might be done is through a popular Social Working for Land Back strategy discussed by multiple collaborators: outsourcing and making referrals to resources on topics related to Land Back and its relation to sustainability. Liz shares that she supports her clients in direct practice who are eager to learn more about the interconnections between colonialism, Land Back, decolonization, and sustainability by sharing resources, whether that be films, readings, or referrals to relevant community organizations:

> Another way to do this is by sharing films and readings with service users that help them grow in their understanding. A third way is through referrals to community organizations and groups doing this work.

These referrals can also be done in ways that centre and lift Indigenous voices, activists, scholars, and organizations.

Similarly, Walter shares the resource of cultural wisdom and teachings by offering his limited knowledge on said teachings while utilizing videos and resources created by Indigenous knowledge holders:

> I try to bring some of the teachings; a lot of the men, even non-Indigenous guys, they really appreciate it. I bring in some of the teachings about people that we know to be miyo-pimâtisiwin [living in a good way] and about the *Wahkohtowin*, like the laws or principles of kinship, and around linking that with *Sakihitowin* around love and relationship reciprocity and *Niwhkmkanak*, all my relations. So, I bring that in as a base for the group. As a non-Indigenous person, I have to say I can only suggest these things, and I can offer some videos, too, for you to, you know, to watch and learn from it, and you can sort of, you know, for the Indigenous guys, they can guide the discussion if they're interested. Like, I'm not because I'm not—I say this to my class too—I'm not formally part of the Midaywen, like I'm not. I'm an amateur, and I'm not trained in ceremonies and things like that, so I can only speak about it as a layperson. […] Sometimes I talk about […] *Wahkohtowin* when I do talk about environmental issues.

Jo takes this a step further by encouraging Social Workers for Land Back, within direct practice and elsewhere, to take accountability for educating colleagues in these same ways, by making referrals to a variety of Indigenous-led resources:

> Luckily [where I live], as a non-Indigenous person, there [are] enough resources for me to draw from […] there are movies, there are films, there are websites, there are cultural centres, and there are events which really highlight the connection. […] I would invite them to learn about Salmon [in this territory] and the loss of salmon stock. I think I would invite them to learn about the history of [this] National Park and what happened there in terms of the placement of the park on top of people's traditional territory.

Collaborators speak to the importance of ensuring these resources are contextually relevant and shared appropriately in making referrals to relevant resources. For instance, Walter does not claim to be a Nêhiyaw knowledge Keeper; instead, he credits and thanks those relations

who have shared the teachings he now shares with his clients, primarily utilizing videos created by Indigenous Knowledge Holders to pass along teachings. Similarly, Jo provides references to stories locally relevant to the land she is practicing on and utilizes resources created by local First Nations Peoples, such as a podcast created by a local First Nation Elder that tells the stories of local historical sites in the territory from the perspective of her people.

Community Work

As Rose reveals, it is ultimately community work at Social Work for Land Back's heart:

> **And that's the piece of Land Back: You have to figure out within your system, within your nation, what do you—what does it mean to have Land Back then, as a social worker?** Me, coming in and being willing to give my mind, not being arrogant in the West and "I am the social worker. I know more than you". [Instead**] I am a tool of your nation that's Indigenous. I come and become your community**. "And that's a challenge because, as social workers, we're also **very strict in the policies of conflict of interest and not being involved**. (Rose, Nisga'a practitioner and collaborator)

Individualism and separatism are ideologies inherent to Euro-American colonial worldviews, as opposed to community and collective ways of knowing, being, and doing, inherent to Indigenous worldviews (Mitchell, 2018). While direct one-on-one clinical social work practice is still essential, if overemphasized, it can reinforce the separatism and individualism that fuel colonialism and capitalism, particularly when compared to social work practice in community settings that allows for relationality, communal connectivity, group healing, sharing, and storytelling, all of which revitalize Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing (Hart, 2014) that disrupt colonialism. After discussing the protocol required for this community practice for Land Back work, collaborators share the importance of interprofessional work, partnerships with knowledge holders, holding space for healing circles and support groups, consciousness-raising, and creating opportunities for land-based healing in community settings.

Community Work Social Work Practice for Land Back Protocol

There are various protocols, strategies, and actions required of community work Social Working for Land Back. For instance, social workers must listen and respond to the community's needs, seeking to understand the history of a community, place, and group of people from the community's perspective. This embodies all four Framework practice values of compassion, humility, relationality, and (un)(re)learning. Of course, listening and responding to come to a place of meaningful and accurate understanding can only be done through effective communication. Thus, as per the Job Description, social workers should put effort into learning the Indigenous languages of the communities they work with and the languages of the Indigenous Nations whose territories they work.

Furthermore, in reference to Rose's vision of Social Working for Land Back described above, she also emphasizes the importance of the guiding principle of relationality, solidarity, not knowingness and openness to guidance in this practice, as opposed to being governed by the current practice ethic of avoiding "conflict of interest," rooted in the colonial-capitalist Western cultural values of individualism, exclusion, and fragmentation. While boundaries and ethical practice are still central protocol in this work, the notion of 'conflict of interest' must be revisited and reconsidered to honour cultural values of harmony, collectivism, inclusion, and collaboration. Otherwise, the community work necessary for Land Back may not be possible.

Collaborating with Other Professions and Knowledge Holders

As a therapist who often works in one-on-one settings, Walter values this part of his practice. Simultaneously, when it comes to supporting Land Back and the healing of Mother Earth, Walter calls on social workers to engage in more mezzo-community work:

> …you know, individual work is great, but we also need to do **work that's on a wider basis.** And that's where I think social work does have some expertise and some knowledge as well—**linking up with other with other professions and with other knowledge holders.**

Here, Walter stresses the strength and necessity of ecological social workers collaborating with other professions across disciplines while also emphasizing the necessity of community collaboration with knowledge holders as we enact Social Working for Land Back. Again, this draws on the guiding principles of relationality, solidarity, and openness to guidance. It will take *all* professions, following the leadership of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, to support the Land Back movement as the solution to environmental crises.

Healing Circles and Support Groups

Tara-Lynn provides a unique example of ways she engages in Social Working for Land Back, moving beyond individual work alone:

> I do **some healing circles,** and then next week there's a **TRC event at one of the First Nation**s. So, I'm going there for **emotional support** and kind of like a **group healing ceremony** sort of thing. Or [if] people want one-on-one, [there's] an option for that too.

As a therapist who explicitly refers to her practice as decolonizing and land-based, Tara-Lynn prioritizes holding spaces for healing in group and community settings through ceremony and healing circles. Indigenous Social Workers for Land Back, like Tara-Lynn, have an opportunity to host Truth and Reconciliation events as healing spaces for Indigenous communities as well. This is particularly critical, given that the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system was one of the largest colonial projects in Canada that removed and displaced Indigenous Peoples from the land, facilitating land dispossession, disrupting teachings on relations with the land, waters, and nonhuman beings, as well as perpetuating extreme spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, and intergenerational traumas that continue to impact Indigenous communities today.

Liz similarly stresses the importance of providing healing in group settings, as she suggests that social workers could facilitate support groups that address climate anxiety and support environmental activists specifically, especially where activist work can be emotionally

challenging and even traumatic in some cases. Liz also highlighted that she had recently seen a news program where an environmental scholar shared that the best antidote to climate anxiety is action. Perhaps then, social workers could play a role in mobilizing action led by a group of clients with climate anxiety. To centre this work in the Land Back movement, social workers mobilizing these groups must teach about colonialism, encourage decolonizing actions, support Indigenous sovereignty, and partner with local Indigenous community members.

Consciousness Raising

Liz also speaks to the value and importance of infusing consciousness-raising into practice, which can be done in a group or individual practice setting:

> **Consciousness-raising** is part of many social justice approaches and is integrated into direct practice **when service users are interested** in pursuing this knowledge. This can be done through **critical questioning that leads service users to uncover environmental truths, pathways toward greater sustainability, and ways of disrupting colonialism and supporting Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence.**

Walter echoes Liz's approach here, where he also demonstrates that educating directly on the history of land dispossession—the reason for Land Back in the first place, is an opportunity that may necessarily come up in social work practice:

> Quite a few of the guys I work with are Indigenous, and sometimes I do have guys who [in] our therapy group, they'll say "Yeah, I think this is a confidential place, I can speak about it […] **why did the white people take, you know, steal our land?**" [He] just, you know, came around and said that, "Why did they do that?" So, these issues do come up, you know I do work on some of these issues too, but it really depends on the person. […] **It has to be relevant for the men that I'm working with.**

Both Liz and Walter stressed that when sharing this knowledge on Canada's settler colonial context, supporting Indigenous sovereignty and resurgence, it must be of interest to the client.

Land-Based Healing

As Indigenous Knowledge holders in northern Canada from Redvers' (2020) study remind us, "the land is a healer" (p. 95), hence the term, land-based healing. As described in the

Land Back Framework, building solidarity and relationality with the land, and all our relations, is one of the four core guiding principles. Thus, not only does land-based healing need to be at the crux of approaches for delivering social work education, but it also needs to be centered within practice approaches for healing. Social workers may have a role in creating spaces for land-based healing programming within social service agencies, in therapeutic settings.

Jane speaks to the profound healing that can happen for all human beings who are connecting with the land in a community setting—how this becomes inherently therapeutic, to physically connect with all our relations in this intimate way, dropping into, grounding, and earthing our bodies through this practice. Jane also discusses the opportunity to bring this into social work with clients in group settings, for instance, as child and youth workers, or as workers supporting clients with criminal justice involvement.

> **…all of our ancestors have a relationship to seeds and to land** […] So I used to teach kids about this, and so we would talk about seeds, and we can all kind of **find our pathways back to when we sewed seeds to nourish ourselves and to feed ourselves,** and [that] **crosses cultures, and that is part of so many of our bodies.** And so when I think about colonization, access, and disruption, I think that that was the very beginning—start of that—was deciding on my interest in agriculture and food and farming, and you know, gardening. And the work that I've done that crosses into social work is **working with youth, who are in conflict with the law but in a farm and garden-based setting, and seeing how powerful, without any Eurocentric language of therapeutics, without any of the like, the concepts coming in, or the ideologies coming in**. And without any of that, that, **there is an immediate relationship that you…** That is there. **That's in all of our bodies.** So that just by bringing, any person, anybody […] **whatever your identity, your positionality is, bringing somebody into a setting like that is profound**. And so [what] I'm often wondering about in the work that I'm doing is: **who and how and when and where does the knowledge come from? And who has that access? […]**
>
> I worked for a local, not-for-profit at a school board, and I taught kids and I would go into the schools as farmer Jane, and we would teach workshops that were all curriculum-based teaching. And **we would build the school garden**, we would bring in all the materials and we would teach. But through **the lens of a garden and plants.** And **the joy from the relation—the joy that can only exist in relationship, right?** […] And then decided to work for a **youth justice organization that had started a farm and a**

> **therapeutic approach […] everybody had a story to share about a plant or something […] it brought a story up from everyone [who came] into the garden.**

Through our shared humanity, we are all connected to the land and the waters, and honouring this connectedness heals us. Jane also speaks to how storytelling naturally emerges in group environments while being with the land, creating opportunities for community, connectivity, and healing—being with the land brings out stories that have the potential to heal us, as is understood within Indigenous Ways of Helping (Hart, 2014; Redvers, 2020). Jane's sharing here provides plenty of opportunity for social work practitioners to engage in Social Working for Land Back by infusing that connection to land into therapeutic practice without the need for talk therapy—instead, it is the land that is the healer. When we create space for everyone to have that connection to land, we begin to decolonize. For this sort of practice to be a form of Social Working for Land Back, we must answer Jane's question, "Who and how and when and where does the knowledge come from? And who has that access?". In these settings, Indigenous knowledge on how to grow and be with plants can be transferred by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, possibly through decolonizing ecosocial innovations (see Chapter 5).

Settler social workers, like Farmer Jane, could continue to facilitate land-based healing programs as well, with more deliberate partnerships with Indigenous community members. Additionally, these programs may also be designed to intentionally enroll a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members to facilitate the healing of settler-Indigenous relations. Stories on the histories of the lands of the farms and gardens at hand could also be interwoven into the programming.

Examples of organizations local to Mi'kma'ki engaging in this sort of Social Working for Land Back land-based healing work already exist. For instance, *LIFE As Medicine: Circle of Indigenous Healing Arts* is an Indigenous-led collaborative that offers a variety of eco-

sustainability-focused, therapeutic arts and land-based healing events. The organization is co-led by Red River Métis social worker and Knowledge Keeper Fyre Jean Graveline and Saulteaux Art Therapist Jean Tait. Recently, they have been offering eco-arts land-based healing retreats called *Me As Tree: We As Forest*, designated specifically for social workers, therapists, healers, helpers, educators, and environmental activists. They have offered these onsite at the Nova Scotia Deanery Project, a local settler-operated organization focused on ecological restoration. *LIFE As Medicine* is a prime example of how social workers can come together to create healing spaces and nurture communities that promote sustainability and ecological restoration, all the while supporting Indigenous sovereignty, and building healing and healthy settler-Indigenous relationships, and human-land-water-nonhuman-relative relationships.

Settler Education, Solidarity, and Engagement

Another extremely important practice modality of Social Working for Land Back—particularly those who are settlers themselves— is to educate and engage settlers around settler solidarity and engagement towards land reparations and supporting Indigenous sovereignty. This includes settler social workers committing to continuously educating themselves and committing to lifelong action in these areas. This work must happen in partnership with Indigenous communities if we are to work towards reconciliation—healing settler-Indigenous relationships. Tomas demonstrates how this practice modality can be actualized:

> Something that I think about is "How do I **create space for the resurgence of Indigenous communities?"** And I actually **witnessed a lot of that work being done within settler contexts**. And this is where I talk about**… helping settlers build positive relationships with land**. Because then, I think if they're exposed to that, then the experiences, the demands, the worldviews of Indigenous communities and Indigenous Peoples become so much more, relatable, become not threatening to… Your life but… **As a powerful way of moving into a future that actually feels inhabitable.**

Here, Tomas returns to the core strategy of the Land Back Framework by which we challenge the guarantee of settler futurities—shifting towards a future where our futures are intertwined. Thus, social workers can make spaces for settler communities to create positive relationships with the land, where Indigenous Peoples and worldviews are involved and support these processes. Teach-ins on settler solidarity and decolonization[33] inherently cultivate more positive ways of relating with all our relations. Thus, ecological social workers decolonizing their practice have a role to play in catalyzing such offerings for other social workers and community members at large.

Advocacy and Policy Work

Social work ecological practice can uphold reconciliation and Indigenous self-determination through advocacy work that explicitly supports Indigenous Peoples in terms of their wellbeing and their sovereignty over their waters, lands, and livelihoods. Indeed, for many Indigenous Peoples, one's wellbeing is intrinsically tied to one's ability to connect with the lands, waters, and all our relations, free of obstruction, contamination, or interference—in other words, in a sovereign way. By using the advocacy and policy navigation skills of "playing the game" to manipulate the system, understanding legal rights, understanding the treaties and history, supporting grassroots, Indigenous led-initiatives, and ensuring accountability in and

[33] Examples might include hiring Indigenous creators, like Sarah Prosper, to offer experiential educational workshops, such as *Moving in Mi'kma'ki,* in community centres, treatment programs, or workspaces. Partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations like LIFE As Medicine can also support non-Indigenous allies in their journey toward ethical, reciprocal, healing relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Another example in Mi'kma'ki is the *How We Thrive* online group, which has provided circles on *Decolonizing Relations* and *Unpacking Settler Narratives* for non-Indigenous community members. Finally, another example might be to hire trained professionals, supported by Indigenous communities, to host workshops on settler solidarity. One such workshop held by The Youth Project (2021) in Mi'kma'ki also focused on encouraging attendees to learn about the original native place names and peoples of the territories they occupy while providing education on local Indigenous-led movements for Land Back and water protection.

through state processes, social workers can support the healing of settler-Indigenous relationships, alongside supporting Indigenous sovereignty.

"Playing The Game" To Manipulate the System

Rose calls on social workers to humble themselves when entering Indigenous communities to offer support with Land Back through advocacy work, and further drawing on the strategy Darla-Jean referred to as "playing a game" as she emphasizes the importance of the "manipulation game" in advocacy work:

> You can be like. "No, no, we're not [doing the programming FNHA thinks we needs]. We're gonna have a sweat. We're gonna go out and do some hunting. We're gonna go out and"—they're like, "What? What? I'm. I'm sorry. I'm just a little nurse from [First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)], and I don't know how to hunt". "That's OK, lady. Leave the money here, and we'll do it". And that's what you manipulate. **You have to learn to—It's a manipulation game where you're going to have to have unified social workers that know how to manipulate that, know how to tweak what I'm doing to get what I need.** And that's an old-age social working tool. I read books from the 1960s and social workers were doing that. So **now, if we're gonna do Indigenous Land Back, you have to incorporate more of that.** I am Nisga'a, plus very Westernized. **I asked the Coast Salish, what do you do here? What do you want to be done?** Now with more nations becoming independent or demanding their own monies back, they just need that guidance. And **as a social worker, I can kind of guide them in that, not necessarily telling them but saying, hey, did you know that your rights are A, B, and C** as chief and Council, and you don't have to have that health services that is owned actually by the white people and by FNHA dictating your monies? You can actually implement Indigenous people in there. […]

This manipulation is, again, a way of transforming the system from within through social work practice. Transforming the system within allows us more time, energy, and resources to make changes from without so that we can eventually shift towards the cultural values and societal systems outlined in the Framework.

Understanding Legislation and Treaties to Advocate for Rights

Importantly, Rose once again emphasizes the importance of social workers having knowledge of legal rights and advocating in this regard as well. This pertains to advocating for

treaty rights and responsibilities to be respected. This first involves learning these rights and responsibilities and how they pertain to oneself as a treaty beneficiary and spreading awareness of this information to others. This also includes understanding legislation that may continue to perpetuate harm against Indigenous Peoples, the land, waters, and all our relations, such as the Indian Act and ongoing child welfare acts, while working with Indigenous Communities to create amendments to these acts that will cease to perpetuate these harms.

Advocating for and Supporting Grassroots, Indigenous-Led Initiatives

Walter calls on social workers to support grassroots, Indigenous-led initiatives:

> We do have training in advocacy. So, I think we can be good at policy work. But I think the whole thing has to be **led by the grassroots and led by Indigenous communities.**

Both Rose and Tomas suggest that social workers can engage in reciprocity by offering their gifts and becoming a tool for Indigenous communities while Social Working for Land Back. If we are passionate about law, policy writing, grant writing, and/or advocacy work, as social workers, we can offer these skills to Indigenous-led organizations and movements focused on supporting Indigenous sovereignty and healing the lands and waters. In many ways, this sort of advocacy echoes the 'required qualification' that Yellow Bird and Gray (2010) outline in their hypothetical job description entitled Wanted: Social workers to assist Indigenous Peoples, "a complete belief in the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and an ability to successfully assert it on their behalf" (p. 60).

Ensuring Accountability in And Through State Policy and Processes

In addition to tending to the social, Social Work advocacy for Land Back must fully encapsulate Indigenous principles binding the social to the environment and, more precisely, to the land. In response, social work advocacy must take seriously the implications and consistently challenge social, economic, cultural, and political systems that devalue and threaten the land.

Resource extraction offers an important example of the intersection of systems detrimental to localized Indigenous life but also generative of long-term, far-reaching crisis (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; The National Inquiry, 2019; IPCC, 2022).

In turn, social work advocacy in support of Land Back must ensure that Indigenous People, especially those who are impacted by resource extraction projects and environmental disasters, are still able to have their needs met and kept as safe as possible. As M argues:

> In the face of climate change and these problems, I think social workers need to […] look at doing more **policy work that can protect the people who are living in these communities [impacted by climate crises and resource extraction]**, which is often Indigenous people, especially up in Labrador with Muskrat Falls**, [to ensure] that there are safety nets.**

This localized policy work must be accompanied by larger-scale interventions into the policies and practices of state and capital vis-à-vis resource extraction, while also considering the social and cultural systems that reproduce contemporary capitalist political economy. While social workers can offer their advocacy skills, their work must be led by local Indigenous communities.

Offering even more specificity, Darla-Jean spoke of the need for social workers to ensure protocols, restoration, and relationships are honoured in agreements between parties engaging in resource extraction and the Indigenous communities of the territories subject to extraction, such as Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs).

> The last few days I have been attending a mining conference in Vancouver. Personally, I am so against what mining has done to Mother Earth, and yet [through my role as Deputy Chief] I feel like I am **opening the door for mining**—I am, but not without **protocols, restoration, relationships,** etcetera.

IBAs assess the anticipated social, cultural, and health impacts that resource extraction projects might have on a community and how these impacts will be monitored, mitigated, and addressed (Nightingale, 2017). However, the assessment is often complete, with little accountability to the commitments outlined regarding redressing potential adverse effects (Nightingale, 2017). Social

Working for Land Back can come in by holding corporations and governments accountable to the agreed-upon monitoring and mitigation mechanisms.

The reality is that humanity cannot suddenly completely stop extraction until—first and foremost—there is an effective reduction in human consumption, followed by a widespread transition to more efficient energy alternatives and resources. Thus, while the current extraction projects continue, it is imperative that it continue in a way that brings the least amount of harm to all—that being humans, Mother Earth *and* all our relations. This can be achieved through IBAs, and other similar processes, but most importantly, through the relevant accountability processes. Hoogeveen and colleagues' (2021) literature review on IBAs confirms that there is little regulatory follow-up and a lack of actual impact assessments that occur after the agreements are formed. This presents a critical opportunity for social workers to advocate for IBA accountability processes that support the protection of Indigenous communities and all our relations by ensuring these agreements are honoured by all parties involved in the IBAs. See Hoogeveen and colleagues (2021) and Levac and colleagues (2021) for suggestions on improving IBA processes, wherein social workers could get involved. Social workers may also be strong candidates to act as mediators during the development processes of IBAs.

There are several other ways that social workers can ensure accountability in and through State processes. For instance, there are policies and legislation that are already in place to support Indigenous sovereignty and reconciliation that Social Workers for Land Back can hold the federal government accountable to, such as the pre-existing treaties, the 46 articles of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action, as well as 231 Calls for Justice of The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Reclaiming Power and Place. Each of

these includes responsibilities that pertain specifically to the field of social work as well, which should be the starting point for Social Workers for Land Back. Moreover, most—if not all—of these responsibilities and calls to action will also inherently lead to healing Earth Mother.

Another space where social workers must hold the State accountable is education, especially that provided to both youth and immigrants and newcomers in Canada. Human beings are in their most impressionable states as young children, and they are also the future of humankind—thus, social workers must ensure that the government is educating youth on the cultural values of the sacred instructions, the histories and realities of colonialism, and what settler solidarity looks like, so that we can alter the fabric of Canadian society to be one that embraces Land Back as the most rational policy for the climate crisis. Similarly, with the anticipated influx of environmental migrants, settlers who may be completely unfamiliar with the settler colonial context of Canada and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples must be educated on their roles as settlers on these territories and how to be in ethical, reciprocal, healing relationship with the lands, waters, and all our relations, in accordance with Indigenous values.

Overall, advocacy and policy work is needed to support reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and resource management in realms including but not exclusive to the profession's governance system, direct practice with communities, and in matters related to resource extraction projects. In Social Working for Land Back, it is imperative that social workers bring their advocacy and policy skills in all areas that concern Indigenous Peoples, the lands, and the waters—regardless of their practice setting. Nonetheless, while advocacy is important, it continues to limit us to working within and responding to the current system. Thus, Social Working for Land Back must work outside of its typical practice realms to move society towards alternative systems, such as those required for the realization of Land Back.

Bridging the Gap Between Social Work Practice and Supporting Land Back

Despite the importance of Land Back to all collaborators involved, direct support of Indigenous land reclamations or engaging in land defence on the frontlines was not often discussed. Some collaborators had to pause to consider the potential of this involvement. Liz's response captures this sentiment well:

> I think it's really important. I just like you're talking about—I have such a hard time seeing how—I mean, I can see how **I want [social work practice and the support of Indigenous land defence and land reclamations] to be bridged, and I could probably think of some ways that the, you know, the bridging could happen, but I just don't see the will, right?** […] **They just seem so worlds apart**, eh?

We then discussed some potential ways to bridge this gap, such as by infusing social justice into one's practice. For instance, social workers can attend activist rallies led by Indigenous water protectors and land defenders. Social workers can also support the Land Back movements in a variety of ways, offering resources—financial and otherwise—and support where needed, and social service agencies that social workers are involved with can also potentially redirect resources to various local movements as well, and take active stances in solidarity with these movements.

Could agencies offer employees time off and additional support to workers who want to serve on the frontlines? This raises the question, who would be responsible for ensuring that agencies take this approach? Who is responsible for transforming practice at this mezzo-community level beyond the actions of the individual social worker working at the micro-level?

Putting Social Work Bodies on the Line to Defend the Land. With great conviction and passion, through teary eyes, Walter takes things one step further by encouraging social workers, including settler social workers, to put their bodies on the line for Earth Mother:

> For people brave enough, **social workers should go, when invited**—and only when invited— **to Indigenous territories, that actually put their bodies on the line to**

> **defend the land and to resist the pipelines like in the** Wet'suwet'en. I think that's—like my friends have done that, and I think that's so awesome because it's usually up to Indigenous people to put their bodies on the line and to, you know, put their livelihoods on the line, **to stop the attacks on the Earth**. And **I think settlers should also do that. So, I think social workers… Should do that, too**.

This was one of the most impactful moments in all the conversations shared, given the powerful emotions tied up in this call to action.

If social workers are truly going to support Land Back, they need to be willing to risk their lives and to risk incarceration in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, the land, the waters, and all our relations. Again, this resonates with one of the required qualifications of the hypothetical job description written by Yellow Bird and Gray (2010) where they call for social workers who "[have] been jailed at least four times for standing up for the rights of Indigenous Peoples" (p. 60). Without the protection of Mother Earth, we will no longer exist—and all that we stand for as social workers, such as health, wellbeing, safety, justice, and peace, will no longer matter. After this beautiful share, we discussed the potential of the Social Workers for Land Back Collective supporting one another in being on the frontlines. I dream that, someday, the Collective could even fundraise to support land defenders and form small groups that travel to support land defence camps on rotation.

Supporting Land-Back Initiatives. A final example of Social Working for Land Back in practice, related to supporting Indigenous land reclamations, could be the creation of land-based cooperatives working in partnership with local Indigenous communities. In the example described by Jane below, the land-based cooperative was created by a collective of individual settler community members, some of whom are social workers. With some variation from the example below, it is possible that the creation of land-based cooperatives could present as an

opportunity for ecosocial innovations rooted in reconciliation and decolonization if it were supported by social workers but ultimately led by Indigenous community members.

Jane is the only collaborator who spoke about the increasingly popular Land Back initiative where groups of people purchase land and turn it into a cooperative of some sort in hopes of partnering with local Indigenous communities to use the land in ways that support reconcili*action*, Indigenous sovereignty, and self-determination.

> Jane: I work with a land-based cooperative. […] A number of us who were core group, and has expanded now, have purchased a large piece of land, North of us… and **we are working in relationship to the Algonquin community… to be in their direction toward what Land Back of the place that we bought can look like.** We bought 700 acres, and […] we're doing that work right now. **And I can't say that it, you know, it's not our initiative, if it's Land Back or not because it's not at—we are a settler community. We're, we're talking—we're listening.**
> Dani: Mm-hmm
> Jane: **We're listening, and we're seeing how and what that can look like.** And I know that I think Rosanna Dearchild, she just did a really great she just did a really great broadcast about how, legally, we can—communities can start to do that, right? How can you start with that approach for whatever your project is looking like? […] We're a registered worker cooperative… So we have a website, and we have some interesting stuff happening there, and that's one of the guiding pillars for our work, is **that solidarity work**. […]
> So it's interesting. Three of our members are social workers…one is more clinical and one is more in policy, and then you have me, and there's actually another social work student in there. And we're a small group. We're about 15 people. […] The **first thing we learned is that we don't choose what Land Back looks like.** That was the first thing, right? The first thing we learned and we made that mistake. And we were like, that's our mistake. We fucked up, like we—that it's not—we can't say this—is what we can… [instead] we say what it looks like. We had to take that out and **start from that place of not knowing.**

Here, Jane is describing a key takeaway for social workers working for Land Back: despite one's best efforts, it is *not* up to *social workers* to determine whether one's efforts are supportive of Land Back—rooted in decolonization, reconciliation and supporting Indigenous sovereignty—it is up to one's Indigenous colleagues, community members, clients, and relatives to make this decision. It is up to us as social workers to commit to regularly respectfully,

ethically, and reciprocally collaborating with and listening to one's Indigenous relatives and adjusting one's practices accordingly. We must also be comfortable with that place of "not knowing," honouring the Framework practice values of humility and (un)(re)learning as a life-long commitment.

A well-known example of a Land Back initiative that resembles the one Jane describes here, local to Mi'kma'ki, is *Asitu'lɨsk*, meaning that which gives you balance, formerly known as *Windhorse Farm*. The Mi'kmaq nourished this land for thousands of years, yet from 1840-2021, the land was occupied by settlers. Nonetheless, these settlers had cared for and protected the lands through sustainable forestry and agricultural practices, and "at the end of 2021, as part of a historic land-back initiative, the Dreschers [who were the settler caretakers of the land at the time] brought their long-standing dream to life in returning Windhorse Farm to the rightful caregivers, the Mi'kmaq; the original people of this land, Mi'kma'ki" (Asitu'lɨsk, 2023, para. 6). The land is now in the care of Ulnooweg Education Centre (UEC) "[welcoming] all who wish to come and learn about culture, language, ecology, health, ceremony, and science" (Asitu'lɨsk, 2023, para. 1); through intergenerational connection, it is a place to grow and heal for all.

Another example of a Land Back initiative is the recent formation of an Indigenous-led urban reserve on Treaty 1 territory called the Naawi-Oodena project. Brayana Petti, an Anishinaabe social service provider and dear friend of mine, describes the project:

> …a lot of Land Back movements have focused on ancestral land reclamation, as opposed to urban land ownership. This is the very first urban reserve owned by multiple treaty one communities instead of just one. They are in the process of developing their own land use policies for land management instead of relying on Indian Act land claim policies where they have to jump through insane bureaucratic hoops to do their work. It's a huge undertaking but will provide many opportunities for economic development as well as Indigenous sovereignty. The project will provide office spaces, housing, retail spaces, as well as countless opportunities for Treaty One members and professionals to gain employment and build partnerships on urban Indigenous land.
>
> (Brayana Petti, personal communications, August 29, 2023)

This is a powerful example of Indigenous communities taking their power and territories back. Could social workers spread awareness and education about the possibilities of these sorts of decolonizing ecosocial and modern-day urban reserve initiatives? Could social workers mobilize community members while building their capacity to create similar initiatives within their home communities? Could social workers be a catalyst for settlers who want to support these causes by facilitating relationship-building and capacity-building? Could social workers utilize their skills by working for land-based learning experiential organizations like UEC? Could social work practitioners and agencies refer their clients to programs offered by organizations like these? If social workers support existing Land Back initiatives like these while mobilizing the creation of others, they will satisfy the Job Description requirement of having had "success at getting territories, rights, and dignity returned to Indigenous Peoples" (Yellow Bird & Gray, 2010, p. 60). Social workers have incredible potential to support forms of Indigenous land reparations like these, creating an alternative system within the current system.

Conclusion: Returning to the Sacred Instructions Through Social Working for Land Back

Community social work practice for Land Back is integral to actualizing the Framework and fulfilling the requirements of the hypothetical Job Description referenced at the start of this chapter. In many ways, community social work practice can also bridge one-on-one clinical practice and the advocacy and policy work required for Social Work for Land Back. As demonstrated, these practice modalities can work together to actualize the Framework. In many ways, direct clinical practice is needed as social workers continue to work within the confines of society's current colonial-capitalist system, which is rooted in Western values and provides an essential avenue for making incremental changes within the systems. Meanwhile, policy and advocacy work can allow us to "play the game" and ensure the State upholds legal rights and

responsibilities to respect the dignity of Indigenous Peoples, enact setter solidarity, and heal Mother Earth. Policy and advocacy work is also integral to building the legislation needed for the alternative systems we will turn to. All of this requires collective healing and community collaborations to truly embody the Framework value of relationality and solidarity, as well as the cultural values of the Sacred Instructions: communalism, learning from Elders, cooperation, patience, listening, harmony, humility, sharing, inclusiveness, wholeness, and collaborating. All these values are best cultivated in the community, and thus, community social work practice has a responsibility to cultivate these values within its practice approaches and society at large.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The future is not ours to know
And it may never be,
So let us live and give our best
And give it lavishly
(Nigro, 2018, p. 31)

The Call to Social Work for Land Back is far from reaching its "conclusion." While anti-colonial and Indigenous social work scholars who come before me have birthed and planted this seed of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk, the seed has only been watered through this project's research processes. The research collaborators of this project, alongside other anti-colonial and Indigenous Social Workers for Land Back, have given this seed plenty of sunlight, leading to the emergence of a Land Back Framework to guide education and practice, detailed herein, which will allow this seed to grow. In this chapter, I hope to provide a brief review of the issue—how ecological social work practice as it stands continues to perpetuate colonialism, which inherently harms Indigenous Peoples as well as the lands, waters and all our relations; and an overview of the research questions and proposed response—Social Working for Land Back, given that Land Back is the solution to the climate crises. In these discussions, I summarize the core arguments of this thesis. I then discuss implications for social work while addressing various key social work stakeholders. I then turn to the presentation of a manifesto created from the amalgamation of wisdom shared by collaborators, followed by final reflections on re-spiriting social work and the critical hope and faith necessary in this work. Finally, I close the circle with prayer.

Ecological Social Work Practice Risks Perpetuating Colonial Harms

Climate crises are on the rise, and social work needs to respond. Most of the ecological and sustainable practice discourse and modalities currently stand, with a few notable exceptions from anti-colonial and Indigenous scholars—are insufficient and have potential harm. Most

ecological practice discourse reproduces narratives of white Canadian settler futurities, colonialism, and land dispossession by disregarding the settler colonial contexts of Canada and the profession and the related violence against Indigenous Peoples, the lands, waters, and all our relations that continue to reproduce within these contexts. By and large, ecological social work practice has stayed silent on the issues of white supremacy, environmental racism, land dispossession, settler relations to the land, and the responsibility of the profession and society to develop meaningful and ethical relationships with the more-than-human world. Instead, ecological and sustainable social work discourse has been treated as separate, distinct, and piecemeal from the social work discourse surrounding colonialism, decolonization, and Indigenous Peoples. Given that Land Back is one of the soundest social, environmental, economic, and political responses to the climate crises, there is an imminent need for authentic collaboration between and across these critical social work discourses. The future of humanity depends on it, as we are now given a choice of "decolonization or extinction [and] that starts with Land Back" (The Red Nation, 2021, p. 7).

Land Back as the Solution to the Climate Crisis

The social work profession in Canada is showing promising evidence of the paradigm shift environmental social work has long called for. While the CASW states that social work is responsible for environmental and social justice and supporting the wellness of all living beings (Schibli, 2020), CASWE-ACFTS (2021) included environmental sustainability and ecological practice as a core learning goal. The learning goal consists of the following four sub-objectives: "a) understand the need to create ecologically sustainable communities, economies and natural and built environments, in which all life forms and eco-systems can survive and thrive; b) identify and challenge environmental injustice and racism, i.e. the inequitable burdens borne by

those who are socially and economically marginalized in relation to environmental degradation and hazards; c) advance environmental sustainability across individual, organizational and professional contexts; and d) embrace the role of social workers in advocacy for public policies and social practices that will ensure ecological health and environmental sustainability at local, regional, national and global levels" (CASWE-ACFTS, 2021, p. 16). The profession would most successfully achieve all four of these learning and practice goals by supporting the Land Back movement in response to environmental crises.

Indigenous Peoples have had the most experience being in relation with their respective home territories—at least 20,000 years of experience here in Turtle Island—and therefore, the deepest understandings of the ways of being with those respective lands that honour ethical reciprocity and place-based solidarity (Coulthard, 2010; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016). It is no wonder that Indigenous Peoples are responsible for caring for 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity, despite representing only 5% of the global population, while inhabiting about 22% of the Earth's surface (Tauli-Corpuz, 2016). Naomi Klein, white settler anti-colonial environmentalist and author, further states that "First Nations land rights and title—if robustly defended—represent the most powerful barrier" to environmental destruction and extractivism (Klein, 2015, pp. xi-xii).

Present-day justice and rights-based rhetoric have resulted from colonial-capitalist Western systems and worldviews (Yellow Bird, 2010) that do not recognize the inherent value of all life, distinct from Indigenous worldviews, which inherently value all life (Hart, 2014). Nonetheless, while these colonial-capitalist Western systems dominate, upholding Indigenous rights to sovereignty, self-determination, and land *within* these systems has been proven to benefit not only Indigenous Peoples but also the rest of the community—human and non-human

beings alike (IEN, 2021; Redvers et al., 2022). Social workers concerned with the environment must recognize that supporting Indigenous land defence is our best hope for the planet's survival (Hiller and Carlson, 2018; The Red Nation, 2021; Redvers et al., 2022). This will enable us to work within our respective collective communities—"inches wide" and "miles deep" (Brown, 2017)—to create alternative systems (The Red Nation, 2021) rooted in sustainability (Kimmerer, 2013), ethical reciprocity (Coulthard, 2010), place-based solidarity (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016), radical community care (Taylor, 2018), and love for *all* our relations (Mitchell, 2018; Powers et al., 2021; Redvers et al., 2022).

Research Questions

Thus, this research project was guided by the following research questions:
How can social workers in Canada who value sustainability and the environment come to understand Indigenous land reparations (Land Back) as the most rational response to the climate crisis through social work education and practice? And, more precisely:

a) What examples of social work education disrupt colonialism while upholding settler solidarity within Indigenous-settler relationships, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous land reparations through curricula on sustainable and ecological practice?

b) What examples of sustainable and ecological social work practices disrupt colonialism while upholding settler solidarity within Indigenous-settler relationships, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous land reparations?

Social Working for Land Back is Both Necessary and Achievable

Environmental social work should align itself with the Land Back movement to address ecological crises effectively. Social working for Land Back also allows the profession to take responsibility for the harms caused through its complicit collaboration in advancing the colonial

agenda of the Settler state, particularly given the disproportionate impact of colonialism and its resultant environmental crises on Indigenous communities. Ergo, social workers have an ethical responsibility and duty to work for Land Back. Through this project, collaborators have unequivocally demonstrated that social work for Land Back is necessary *and* achievable.

So, what *are* examples of social work education and practice focused on sustainability and ecological practice that disrupt colonialism and land dispossession while supporting Indigenous self-determination and reconciliation? Examples include education and training focused on creating collective communities of care and space for embodiment where we are encouraged to drop into our bodies and feel our emotions and experiences, connecting to Spirit and doing away with secular notions that rob us of our shared spiritual connection as living and breathing beings; honouring ancestral and cultural wisdom and teachings, adapted to our present circumstances; engaging in regular practice of self-reflexivity where we ask, "How can I show care, even more deeply, for myself and all those around me, inside and outside of my social work practice"? Ultimately, Social Working for Land Back involves the fundamental transformation of broader social, economic, and environmental systems, requiring dedication and action from *all* social work stakeholders.

Calling on All Key Social Work Stakeholders to Social Work for Land Back

Restoring and rebalancing Earth Mother and cleansing the profession of social work and society in Canada of the toxins and harms—warts, moles, and tapeworms—of colonialism will take plenty more than just a handful of seeds of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk. Now, it is time for social workers and communities to come together to nourish this seed of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk and give it even more water, sunlight, and care to allow it to propagate, thereby multiplying the seeds of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk. As the Irish Blessing at the opening of this chapter states, the

future state of this seed is not ours to know; in fact, as many collaborators have shared, the impacts of colonialism have happened over centuries, and it will take multiple generations to heal from them. Thus, we may never see a decolonial future in our lifetime, but what we can do is give life our best and give our best lavishly. Can we give life our best to live lavishly—or, in other words, extravagantly and generously- committing to authentic place-based solidarity and reciprocity? Could life, in this case, be each other, all our relations, and Mother Earth? Many assume it is 'too late' for us to solve the climate crises we face, leading them to do nothing. However, this inaction and lack of faith will prevent us from generously giving our best to Mother Earth—and she needs it—humanity and all our relations need us to give it our best **now**.

This paradigm shift within social work is long overdue, given that the call for this shift began over 20 years ago (Coates, 2003; Coates & Gray, 2011). I argue that one reason the paradigm shift has been slow to happen is that the call to action put forth by environmental social workers had yet to fully acknowledge and commit to repairing the harms of the profession's white supremacist and colonial-capitalist roots. The domination and exploitation inherent in these ideals have simultaneously harmed not only people but the lands, waters, and all other living beings—we are all connected. Thus, echoing calls from the many anti-colonial, environmental, and Indigenous social work scholars who come before me, I challenge the profession at large to move from the classic "person-in-environment" paradigm to a paradigm that recognizes humanity's interconnections with the land, waters, and surroundings. While Hiller and Carlson (2018) propose the impactful paradigm shift towards "person-in-place-on-Indigenous-land-and-in-Indigenous-sovereignty" (p. 61), given the findings of this research, this might evolve to "person-in-place-*with*-Indigenous-land-and-in-Indigenous-sovereignty." By drawing attention to humanity's relationship *with* the land, as opposed to understanding humans

as “on” or on top of the land, the sentiment shifts—and when the sentiment shifts, one’s ways of knowing, being, and doing can also shift.

As argued throughout this thesis, one’s practice paradigm cannot shift to a place where we authentically value and understand human health and wellbeing as interrelated with the health of all our relations if the profession continues to oppress Indigenous Peoples by denying the context of the lands and waters with which social workers are in relationship. With that said settler solidarity must be a core learning goal and value of social work education and practice. This means being in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and all our relations, supporting Indigenous sovereignty, committing to decolonization, and critically reflecting on the profession’s position as a settler-dominated and rooted profession.

One path to sparking this paradigm shift is to become Social Workers for Land Back—alongside the collaborators in this study—who mobilize, unite, and collaborate to influence and inspire other social workers to join this force. As discussed in the methods chapter, the purpose of this thesis was also to build a community among collaborators, as initiated by the sharing circles. This will continue through the Social Workers for Land Back Collective we have started. This research is happening within a context of decades of influential and pivotal scholarship and activist work by Indigenous, environmental, and settler allied social workers—social work ancestors and elders who have led the way, making this research possible. There are also dozens of organizations nationwide devoted to the Land Back project and plenty of ways to support the movement. This research is just a step in the process and one of the many paths that can spark that paradigm shift—eventually leading to the lighting of the Eighth Fire—within social work and broader society. Social workers can no longer overlook the settler colonial context of social work, especially where social work pertains to the environment. We must also collaborate with

other professions in this work, remembering the three pillars of sustainability while centering healthy settler-Indigenous relationships and Land Back.

Through knowledge dissemination, the research collaborators' messages will be shared with the next generation of social workers responsible for continuing this critical mission in a time of increasing global crises. Thus, this is also a call to all social work stakeholders to circulate this thesis's relevant chapters and appendices amongst your networks and to broadcast the forthcoming films created for this knowledge dissemination. Join the Social Work for Land Back Collective. Read CASWE-ACFTS's forthcoming Brown Paper on Social Work Supporting Indigenous Land and Water Sovereignty, which addresses specific stakeholders, and see how to implement the Brown Paper through action. Join the Brown Paper Task Force of the CASWE-ACFTS Commitment to Change (CTC-EEC) Working Group, whose purpose is to mobilize the brown paper. Get involved. Consider collaborating to create decolonial ecosocial innovations, support Land Back projects, or land-based healing programming. Read the forthcoming Handbook on Decolonizing Environmental Social Work, currently being written by myself, external reviewer Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, and collaborator Dr. Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara. Utilize the Land Back Framework and teaching and practice examples in your approach to teaching and doing social work; write about it, critique it, amend it, change it, and allow it to evolve. Social working for Land Back is meant to be a collective, collaborative effort. The Framework proposed herein is merely a starting place, and by allowing this work to evolve, this is how we propagate the seeds of maskosiy kâ-wihcikahk.

Recommendations for Environmental Social Work and Indigenous Social Work Scholars

Non-indigenous and settler environmental social work scholars must begin to reach out to Indigenous social work scholars to engage in meaningful collaborations that take up

environmental justice issues, climate crisis mitigation, sustainability, and ecological practice. While these collaborations must challenge the assumption of automatic compatibility or shared goals between the two fields, especially concerning green social work and environmental social work vis-à-vis Indigenous land-based social work, there is enough overlap in these respective fields to warrant partnerships toward the shared vision of healing the planet and its inhabitants. Environmental and Indigenous social work scholars could write about the nuances, complexities, and pitfalls of conflating these two fields while exploring their intersections with a cautious and critical approach. Reconciliation and relationship-building should be central themes, explicitly focusing on fostering meaningful relationships and dialogue between environmental and Indigenous social workers. Partnerships such as these are promising for addressing pressing issues like the anticipated influx of environmental migrants who will require education on the settler colonial context of Canada and their responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, as well as the traditional territories across Turtle Island.

Recommendations for CASW

Given the feat of decolonization and reconciliation one to last generations, it is essential to decolonize the core governing body of the profession in Canada, namely, the CASW. However, according to the CASW website (2023), even with the new code of ethics to be launched in 2024, the profession remains guided by the following six principles and values: (1) Respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons, (2) pursuit of social justice, (3) service to humanity, (4) integrity in professional practice, (4) confidentiality in professional practice, and (5) competence in professional practice. These values continue to centre humanity and "persons," with little regard for the lands, the waters, the animals, and our other relatives.

Thus, Summer emphasizes the power that CASW holds to transform the profession through its potential to decolonize and revise the code of ethics that governs Canadian social work practice:

> We almost need to start with the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and even **decolonizing,** I would say, the association registration… look at the **CASW Code of Ethics**… I don't really see a lot of even our **Indigenous perspectives and ethical decision-making included** in our code of ethics.

According to the CASW 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, a newly revised Code of Ethics will be launched soon, including goals and priorities focused on decolonization and reconciliation (CASW, 2023). Decolonization involves inherently shifting one's relationship with the land and all one's relations, which requires distinct attention to the more-than-human world beyond the anthropocentric language of the current Code of Ethics. Could social workers come together—Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers alike, to revise the Code of Ethics in a way that honours Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous-inspired ethical decision-making processes, throughout, as Summer suggests? Could the Code of Ethics be even further revised to consider the land, the waters, and humanity's roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis non-human relatives? Perhaps with reference to the framework outlined herein as a starting place, this could be possible. It is also essential that CASW provides professional development on the Social Work Land Back Framework and praxis for practitioners. CASW must also collaborate with social work colleges and licensing bodies across the country to support them in doing the same to ensure that this education is place-based and contextually relevant.

Recommendations for CASWE

To ensure that social work curricula on Social Work for Land Back is provided to all social work students, CASWE-ACFTS, responsible for accrediting all social work programs in Canada, should incorporate core learning objectives that focus on the support of Indigenous land

and water sovereignty, Indigenous self-determination, and infuse a focus on reconciliation and decolonization into all educational programs. Furthermore, Liz recommends that future standards for accreditation present the current learning goals that address colonialism, support Indigenous sovereignty, and promote engaging in sustainability ecological practice in a fashion that demonstrates their interrelatedness and the feedback loops between them. Summer also emphasizes the power that CASWE-ACFTS holds in creating a Social Work for Land Back:

> Incorporating an [Indigenizing and decolonizing code of ethics] into the accreditation process for universities [having] at least one Indigenous perspectives course throughout the program […] I think at that kind of top level, I feel would then maybe **trickle down into everything else.**

With the forthcoming Brown Paper on social work supporting Indigenous land and water sovereignty (CASWE-ACFTS, 2023), and the pre-existing CTC-EEC working Group, it is promising that CASWE-ACFTS will fulfill these recommendations.

Relatedly, social work educators must be prepared to teach on the subject matters outlined in this Framework if decolonizing environmental social work perspectives are to be included in all courses. Thus, there is a need to train-the-trainer. CASWE-ACFTS can lead in training the trainer, in partnership with the Thunderbird Circle Network of Indigenous Social Work Educators—by educating social work educators on the Framework and supporting educators as they begin to weave the following core educational material into their curriculum. CASWE-ACFTS must support its Institutional Members as well in the development of support for professors as they take on this work, especially since Social Working for Land Back must be contextually relevant to the local Indigenous communities and territories of each respective institution. This might look like developing a train-the-trainer online certification program and hosting regular teach-ins for discussion, question and answer periods, and knowledge-sharing opportunities, where educators, Deans and Directors can collaborate, consult each other, and

discuss strategies for taking up this work, supporting each other in the process. Similarly, CASWE-ACTS must strategize to increase field placement opportunities for students to gain hands-on Social Working for Land Back experience.

Social Working for Land Back: A Manifesto

At the heart of this research has been an opportunity for collective healing and relationship building among social workers who bravely lead the way for a social work that seeks to replace colonialism and colonial-capitalism with systems that honour the interdependent nature of all our relations. The following manifesto was created through the amalgamation of the key takeaways I noted after reviewing each conversation with all 11 of these brave collaborators, who are Social Workers for Land Back.

Question everything.
Question the frontier myth.
Look at the roots of settler colonialism and the destructive impacts this has had on the lands, the waters, and the people.
Understand the roots of capitalism, where this all began.
See the inherent interconnection between modernity and coloniality.
Consider that colonialism first began in Europe, colonizing the medicine people—the people of the land.
Understand the healing of Mother Earth and the healing of all human beings as interconnected.
Be open to connecting with Indigenous communities—build trust, cultivate, and nourish these relationships.
Attend ceremony, when welcomed and invited.
Settlers must take settler responsibility, stand in solidarity, and support other settlers in doing the same.
Begin by cultivating a meaningful relationship with the lands and the waters yourself.
See the reciprocity all around us.
Learn from Indigenous worldviews.
Support settlers in developing positive relationships with the land, infused with Indigenous worldviews, in partnership with Indigenous communities.
Consider alternative systems.
Seek to change the structures.
Consider, name, and act in recognition of the context of settler colonialism as we move forward in making these changes.
White social workers who understand this need to educate other white social workers who do not.
Listen.

Collective and community care, rest, prayer, ceremony, radical love for oneself and others, and solidarity are at the heart of this work.
Social workers have a responsibility to embody and advocate for all of this.
Right here.
Right now.

Re-Spiriting Social Work: Cultivating Critical Hope and Restoring Faith

To actualize this manifesto, critical hope and the restoration of faith are two key ingredients for social workers and humanity. Critical hope holds both the acknowledgment and critique of systems of oppression causing the mass injustices facing humanity and the world today, along with the hope necessary to enact change within our world; critical hope is "an action-oriented response to contemporary despair" (Bozalek et al., 2014, p. 1). Without hope and faith, change, and healing, cannot and will not happen. Thus, in addition to an appreciation for Spirit, hope was a key trait among collaborators, who spoke about what gives them hope throughout our conversations (See Appendix H for their responses).

If there is one message I hope you take away from this thesis, it is this: **if we all come together, in collective unity, with critical hope, to restore our faith—faith in the possibility that we *can* heal humanity, Mother Earth, and all our relations—then we *will* heal humanity, Mother Earth and all our relations. Our faith will infuse our Spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies, translating into physical manifestations through our actions, transforming the world and even the cosmos. As social workers, we have a vital role and responsibility to uphold in cultivating the critical hope and restoration of faith necessary for this healing. Sherri Mitchell (2018) refers to this** as the Law of Creation. This is also the message of the Eastern Door, Rainbow Warrior, and Eighth Fire prophecies. Re-spiriting social work is a necessary precursor to Social Working for Land Back.

In what follows, Darla-Jean captures another fundamental message of this thesis:

> Throughout the discussion, we talked about the spiritual connection to everything—the land, the water, everything, animals… and how we cannot separate. For our own health and wellbeing, we cannot separate those two. We are not on top of Mother Nature. We're a part of. And that it's vital to understand the holisticness of everything. The mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and that… the foundation of who we are is more of Spirit. And we, you know. Spirit doesn't die; it morphs. You know? Every living thing is connected. (Darla-Jean, collaborator)

To heal society and humanity, which social workers are mainly concerned with, social workers must also understand that humanity's healing is inherently and intimately bound with Mother Nature's healing and that Spirit connects all of us—*all* our relations. As social workers, we will fail to obtain true social justice for all, including the more-than-human world, so long as we continue to deny our spiritual selves and spiritual connection to all that is. When we honour Spirit, we inherently honour the land and the waters and all living beings—we cease to rape our Earth Mother, and we respect the original caretakers of the territories we inhabit, that being its Indigenous Peoples. When we honour Spirit, we intuitively return to the Sacred Instructions *all* our ancestors once lived by when the Earth was in a much greater state of harmony and balance.

Social workers have a responsibility to commit to a social work practice that honours Spirit and is led by the practice values of compassion, (un)(re)learning, humility, relationality, and solidarity while focusing on healing the settler-Indigenous relationship in Canada, supporting Indigenous sovereignty and land reparations, decolonizing both education and practice. We can use our social work skills to advocate, educate, mobilize, and build capacity within our communities to fulfill this responsibility—which will allow these values to cultivate and eventually flourish within the greater society. We can simultaneously use these same skills to support transformation within the current oppressive and dominant culture and engage collaborations across Nations in Canada to co-create and build alternative systems to (re)turn to cultures wherein humanity's healing is interconnected with the healing of Mother Earth—that

understand the futures of non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples as intertwined while infusing this relationship with reparations, mutual respect, and deep compassion.

Social workers must also hold space for us and our communities to grieve, as much irreversible damage has already been done. However, we also know that our planet, Mother Earth, can restore and heal herself, for she is resilient. We also know that if humans continue to disrupt her ability to do so—it is we who will suffer and perish, and there will be no future for the next seven generations, let alone the children of today. Through Social Working for Land Back, we can end the constant violence against Mother Earth and each other. This demands that we also restore faith in humanities' ability to live in harmony with all our relations again, as well as faith in the future of humanity—a decolonial future rooted in the cultural values of the Sacred Instructions: communality, Elderhood, cooperation, patience, listening, harmony, humility, sharing, inclusivity, wholeness, and collaboration (Mitchell, 2018). It is time to give Social Working for Land Back our best—and to give it lavishly.

Closing the Circle: Closing Prayer

With gratitude to the Eastern direction, Grandfather Sun, the fire, that inner fire, our guiding light, the spark within us, our Spirits, season of Spring, our crawler relatives, I burn tobacco.

With gratitude to the Southern direction, Grandmother Moon, the water, our Hearts, the oceans, lakes, and rivers that flow, emotions, our tears, the season of summer, our swimmer relatives, I burn sweetgrass.

With gratitude to the Western direction, Father Sky, the air, the stars, the planets, our Minds, our thoughts, season of autumn, our flyer relatives, I burn sage.

With gratitude to the Northern direction, Mother Earth, the earth, the soil, the grass that grows, the ground beneath us, our Bodies, the physical realm, our walker relatives, which includes us as humans, our plant relatives and all our relations, season of winter, I burn cedar.

With gratitude to the Good Grandmothers and the Good Grandfathers, all of our healed, well, and honourable ancestors, known and unknown, our Higher Selves, above and below,

And all other entities that chose to be with us throughout this reading,

Creator, Great Spirit,

Thank you all for your presence and guidance on this journey. With this, we express our deepest sincerest commitment to honouring the teachings you brought forth throughout the duration of this project. We also recognize and honour this project as living, and breathing, a seed that has been planted and is deserving of ongoing growth and nourishment, water, sunlight, nutrients, companions, and all else this seed should need to continue to grow, survive, and thrive. Thank you, Creator, for allowing this seed to grow. May we renew our commitment to supporting its growth, by planting new seeds by its side, and continuing to tend to it, and water it. May we continue to give thanks to this new life emerging from this sacred seedling that you have gifted to us, Creator.

And with that, I invite all sacred entities that we have called upon herein to return to their sacred realms, or wherever they may have come from, wherever else they may be needed.

Our abiding, eternal gratitude.

Go raibh maith agaibh, merci, thank you, maarsii, miigwetch, wela'lioq.

All our relations, Msit No'kmaq.

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Project title: *Social Work for Land Back: Environmental Social Work, Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Self-Determination.*

Lead researcher: Dani Sherwood, Master of Social Work student, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, dani.sherwood@dal.ca, 1-204-881-6494

Supervisors:
Gail Baikie, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, Gail.Baikie@Dal.Ca, 902-494-2070
Dr. Catherine Bryan, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, Catherine.Bryan@dal.ca, 902-494-1356

Funding provided by: The Nova Scotia PubIic Interest Research Group (NSPIRG). NSPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan social and environmental justice research and resource centre with funding rounds designed to support other grassroots initiatives with similar mandates to empower, educate, and inspire action on social justice and environmental issues.

Introduction
We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Dani Sherwood who is a Master of Social Work thesis student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether or not to take part in this research is entirely your choice. There will be no impact on your studies, nor your employment if you decide not to participate in the research. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Dani Sherwood. Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact Dani Sherwood.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study
This thesis will explore how social work, in its pursuit of ecological practice and sustainability, can simultaneously pursue the interrelated goals of healing the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, decolonizing society, upholding Indigenous self-determination, and supporting the return of Indigenous lands.

This study involves two parts: 1) a virtual sharing circle focused on building relations, prompting reflection, and potential inspiration (not intended for data collection) and 2) interviews wherein participants' voices and stories on the topic at hand are recorded via audio (intended for data collection). Participants will also have the option of having their interviews be video recorded (see Signature page attached), for the purposes of co-creating a short film for knowledge dissemination. For the purposes of this film, participants will also be invited to send in landscape footage of places where participants feel most connected to Mother Earth.

This research aims to contribute to the increasing scholarly discussion of Indigenous, decolonizing, and environmental social work, relevant to the accreditation standards for social work education in Canada. At the heart of this research is an opportunity for solidarity and relationship building among social workers who are paving the way for a social work that seeks to replace colonial-capitalist systems with systems that honour all our relations.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study
You may participate in this study if you are a social work student, professor/scholar, and/or practitioner, based in Canada, who is focused on decolonizing social work's efforts to engage in sustainable social work practices and mitigate climate change. You must also consider supporting Indigenous land reclamations as an emerging and/or active focus within your career. There will be no formal screening activities beyond your self-identification of these criteria.

What You Will Be Asked to Do
If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to attend a virtual sharing circle via Microsoft Teams supported by a partnering Mi'kmaq Elder. The sharing circle will be made up of other social workers who identify with the criteria outlined above and will likely consist of a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous/settler participants. This will take approximately 2 hours. At the partnering Elder's discretion, during the sharing circle, you may be asked to discuss and share your reactions, thoughts, and feelings regarding the core research questions, which you will have the chance to review well in advance of the sharing circle. After the sharing circle, you will be asked to partake in a 1-hour long interview, which can take place online, over Microsoft Teams, or in-person at a location of your choice if you reside in the Halifax or Winnipeg regional areas. During this interview, you will be asked a series of questions related to the core research questions, and there will be space to deviate from the questions, as the questions are meant only to serve as a guide. You can pass on your turn during the sharing circle, and you can also pass on any questions asked during the interview.

The intention is for all participants involved in this project to first attend the virtual sharing circle collectively, at a time arranged by the Lead Researcher based on everyone's collective availability. This will then be followed by a one-on-one conversation (interview) between you and the Lead Researcher, at a separate time and location.

The remaining features of the study are supplementary to the core components (sharing circle and interview). After the interview, you will be invited to partake in a 30-minute optional debriefing conversation, intended to take place up until one week following the interview in case any of the conversations that arise require some additional processing and integration. You will also be invited to record any landscape footage of places in nature where you feel most connected to Creator and Mother Earth for the purposes of a film that will be co-created because of this study, for knowledge dissemination. This could take up to 30 minutes of your time (travel, filming, and transferring the footage) although the footage itself only needs to be 30 seconds long. Finally, should you be interested in providing feedback on parts of the transcript from your interview that you would like to be included and/or omitted from the research products (e.g., written thesis, film, etc.), and should you be interested in providing feedback on a draft of the written narrative pertaining to your interview, as well as the film itself, this may require up to an

additional 2 hours of your time.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts
Benefits: Participating in the study might not benefit you, but there is the potential contribution to new knowledge. This study might present the potential benefits of networking, building relationships, and learning through relating with other social workers who have similar research and/or practice interests. Through the sharing circle, there is also the potential benefit of having a closed space, for collective sharing and community connectivity. Should your direct quotations be included through the knowledge dissemination processes, there is also the potential benefit for you to have your voice heard on a national scale.

Risks: The risks associated with this study are minimal, in that they do not exceed the risks that you may already be exposed to as a social worker involved in this area of study/research/practice.

For instance, there are the potential professional and reputational risks associated with having your identity known to other research participants (as you will all see each other in the sharing circle), as well as the potential professional and reputational risks associated with allowing yourself to be identified in the data, quotations, and research products, should you choose to be identified.

There may also be discomfort associated with the possibility of emotional or psychological distress caused by interviews, as well as the discomfort associated with possible subject matter that may arise during the sharing circle and interview. This possible subject matter includes settler colonialism, the ongoing genocide of Indigenous Peoples and occupation of Indigenous lands, as well as land degradation, all of which can be particularly challenging and potentially traumatic topics to discuss. In efforts to mitigate this potential discomfort, you will be provided with an opportunity for an optional debriefing conversation once your interview is complete.

Compensation / Reimbursement
As a thank you for your time and wisdom shared, you will be given a small non-monetary gift, whether you complete the study or not. There are no foreseen expenses that you are expected to incur because of involvement with this study.

How your information will be protected:
Privacy: Your participation in this research will be known only to Dani Sherwood, Gail Baikie, and Dr. Catherine Bryan, unless you choose to be identifying throughout the study.

Confidentiality: The information that you provide to us will be kept confidential. Only Dani Sherwood, Gail Baikie, and Dr. Catherine Bryan will have access to this information. The people who work with us have an obligation to keep all research information confidential. All your identifying information (such as your name and contact information) will be securely stored separately from your research information. Should you choose to be de-identified, we will use a pseudonym (not your name) in our written and computer records so that the research information we have about you does not contain your name. During the study, all electronic records will be kept secure in an encrypted file on the researcher's password-protected computer, with a backup

stored on Dalhousie's secure, password protected, Microsoft One Drive network. All paper records will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet located in the researcher's office.

Findings from this study will be described as part of the written thesis and knowledge dissemination (i.e., the short film, presentations, and journal articles). Your direct quotations may be included within these projects, as identifying or de-identified, as per your request on the Identifiability Consent Form, which you will receive upon completion of the interview.

The sharing circle may, to a certain extent, be reflected in the data, due to a reflexive journaling practice that the Lead Researcher will engage in after the sharing circle, which may then be woven into the written analysis. To protect your confidentiality, the Lead Researcher will not refer to you by name, nor will they refer to any of your words in a way that would link your identity. The Lead Researcher will focus specifically on their personal experience within the sharing circle for this journaling process.

Limits to confidentiality: Given the involvement of multiple participants in the virtual sharing circle, there is no guarantee that other participants will maintain confidentiality of who was present and what was shared during the sharing circle. Nonetheless, the expectation of maintaining the confidentiality of those involved in the sharing circle will be expected and requested of all participants.

Data retention:
Given the novelty of this study, data collected will be retained by the Lead Researcher indefinitely.
This data will be retained as either de-identified, or identifying, depending on your selection as per the Identifiability Consent Form, which you will receive once the interview is complete. This separate consent exists to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on what you have shared during your interview, so that you may better inform your decision regarding whether you wish to be identified.

Depending on whether you consent to being identified or not, your data will be handled and retained in the following way:

- If you agree to be identified in the findings of this project (including in the researcher's MSW thesis, and any publications or presentations that come out of this study), your consent form, contact information, and data (including transcript, audio recording, and, where provided, self-produced video recordings of nature) will be encrypted and retained on a secure, password protected computer that only the lead researcher has access to.
- If you wish for your identity to remain confidential in the communication of the project's findings, ONLY your de-identified transcript will be retained. This document will not include any identifying information about you. All other documents pertaining to your participation in this study, including the consent form, audio recording, contact information, and where provided, self-produced video recordings of nature, will be deleted after August 31, 2023.

If You Decide to Stop Participating

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to leave the study at any time. You can stop participating by emailing dani.sherwood@dal.ca at any point. If you decide to stop participating during the virtual sharing circle, you can quit the Teams meeting. If you decide to stop participating during the interview, you can ask for the interview to be stopped. If you decide to stop participating during the interview, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. After participating in the interview, you can decide for up to 4 weeks if you want us to remove your data. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will already be analyzed.

How to Obtain Results

The results of this study can be shared with you in the following formats: final written thesis, final thesis presentation slides, the ensuing open-access journal article version of the thesis to be submitted for publication, as well as the final cut of the short documentary film that will be co-created as a part of this project for the purposes of knowledge dissemination. If you are interested in receiving these results, provide your email at the bottom of the Signature Page.

Questions

We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Dani Sherwood (at 204-881-6494, dani.sherwood@dal.ca), Gail Baikie (902-494-2070, Gail.Baikie@Dal.Ca), or Dr. Catherine Bryan (902-494-1356, Catherine.Bryan@dal.ca) at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study (if you are calling long distance, please call collect).

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-3423, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file # 2022-6352).

Other

The lead researcher is a Teaching Assistant in an MSW class (SLWK 7002/7003) at Dalhousie University. Students from this class are welcome to participate in the study if they wish to do so. If a student from this class does participate, the lead researcher, Dani Sherwood, has arranged for the primary instructor for the SLWK 7002/7003 course to assume responsibility of grading the course work of any student participating in the study. This has been done to minimize potential of coercion, bias, or any other conflict that could result from this dual role.

Signature Page

Project Title: *Social Work for Land Back: Environmental Social Work, Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Self-Determination.*

Lead Researcher: Dani Sherwood, Master of Social Work student, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, dani.sherwood@dal.ca, 1-204-881-6494

I, a prospective participant in this study, have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to take part in a virtual sharing circle as well as one interview that will occur at a location acceptable to me, and that the interview will be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription and data analysis. I understand that I have the option of consenting to the interview being video-recorded as well (as seen below), for the purposes of the knowledge dissemination film. I understand direct quotes of things I say may be used without identifying me. I also understand that I will have the option to consent to being identified if I so choose, through a separate consent form (Identifiability Consent Form) that will be provided to me after the interview is complete. I understand that this separate consent exists so that I have an opportunity to reflect on what I have shared during my interview, to inform my decision regarding whether I wish to be identified. I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time up until 4 weeks after my interview is complete.

____________________________	____________________________	___________
Name	Signature	Date

Options (you can still participate in the research if you select no):

I consent to my interview being video-recorded, in case I later choose to consent to my footage being used in the knowledge dissemination film, once I am presented with the second consent form (Identifiability Consent form) 2 days after my interview. ☐Yes ☐No

I would like to be contacted regarding any future publications or presentations that result from this study ☐Yes ☐No

____________________________	____________________________	___________
Name	Signature	Date

Please provide an email address below if you would like to be sent the study results, in the formats outlined within the “How to Obtain Study Results” section described on the Consent Form.

Email address: _________________

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX B: IDENTIFIABILITY CONSENT FORM

Project title: Social Work for Land Back
Here, you are asked to indicate preference as to whether you would like to be identified, or de-identified throughout the duration of this project. You are being asked about identifiability after the interview has occurred, so that you have had an opportunity to reflect on what you shared during the interview, in hopes of better informing your decision regarding whether you wish to be identified in the data/research products.

Your interview has been audio-recorded and will be transcribed verbatim for data analysis. With your permission, direct quotations from your interview may be used in the research products corresponding to the current project (i.e., short documentary film, publications, presentations, etc.). **All quotations used would be either identified *or* de-identified/coded.**

Your interview may also have been video-recorded. With your permission, the video footage from your interview may also be used in the short documentary film intended for knowledge dissemination. Once the short film is edited, it will be sent to you for your review, and you will be given the opportunity to decide if there are any moments of the interview video that you wish not to be included within the film.

Please fill out the form below to indicate your preference and level of consent regarding your identifiability within this project.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dani Sherwood

Please read each one of the following options carefully, and select all that apply:

I hereby confirm I have completed the interview, have had time to reflect on what I have shared during my interview, and

_____ **I consent to the use of my direct quotations, identifying.** I understand that my words may be used, and my identity may be shared, in the research products (the written thesis, publications, presentations, etc.) related to this study. All direct quotations shared from my interview will be attributed to me.

By selecting this option, I understand that my identifying information, such as my consent form, contact information, and data (including transcript, audio recording, and, where provided, self-produced video recordings of nature) will be kept and stored securely and encrypted on Dalhousie's secure, password protected, Microsoft One Drive network until August 31, 2023, after which point it will be permanently deleted from One Drive. I also understand that, given the novelty of this research, by selecting this option to be identifiable, my identifying information will be stored indefinitely, securely and encrypted on the Primary Researcher's password-

protected computer, in a password-protected folder, that only the Primary Researcher has access to. I understand that by choosing to be identified, there is the potential for professional and reputational risks which are not expected to exceed the risks that I may already be exposed to as a social worker involved in this area of study/research/practice.

_____ **I consent to the use of my direct quotations, de-identified/coded.** By selecting this option, I understand that my exact words may be used but **will not** include my name or identifying features that would link my identity. I understand that my data will be stored with a pseudonym instead, and that any identifiable information will be permanently removed from my transcript.

By selecting this option, I understand that any of my remaining identifying information (e.g., consent forms and contact information, key-code linking my name to my data should I wish to be removed from the study) will be kept until August 31, 2023, and will then be destroyed and permanently deleted from the Dalhousie Microsoft One Drive Network as well as the Primary Researcher's computer immediately.

Consents around the Film for Knowledge Dissemination

_____ **I do *not* consent to <u>my audio nor my video interview data</u> being included in the film for knowledge dissemination.** Your video and audio footage will be destroyed immediately after this form is processed.

_____ **I consent to the use of the <u>audio</u> from my interview being included in the film** for knowledge dissemination. I understand that this film will be made available to the public. I understand that the film will be sent to me before it is published, and that I will be given the opportunity to decide if there are any moments of the interview audio that I wish not to be included within the film.

> _____ **I consent to being identified within the film through the use of <u>audio</u> from my interview (identifying).**
>
> _____ **I ask that <u>audio</u> from my interview be used in ways that would *not* identify me (de-identified).**

_____ **I consent to the use of the <u>video</u> footage from my interview being included in the film** for knowledge dissemination. **This means that I consent to being identified within the film.** I understand that this film will be made available to the public. I understand that the film will be sent to me before it is published, and that I will be given the opportunity to decide if there are any moments of the interview audio that I wish not to be included within the film.

Signature of Participant:___________________________________

Name of Participant: _______________________________

Date:________________________

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED CONVERSATIONAL GUIDE

OPENING PRAYER:
- Invite prayer/recognition of the land into prayer and any Spirit names

PURPOSE:
- This is project seeks to examine how environmental social work can move forward in a way that is more aligned, compatible, and consistent with Indigenous understandings of land, environmental degradation, and sustainability.
- During this conversation the goal is to highlight your perspectives on this and related issues!

LOGISTICS:
- You can pass on any question.
- we can stray from questions below — meant to be a dialogue/flexible.
- you can share anything you feel called to sharing.
- timing of chat: we have up to 2 hours and can chat for as little or as long as you like.
- feel free to bring in anything you notice in the natural environment around you.

QUESTIONS:
- Wonderful! First, I'd like to invite you to introduce yourself, where you come from, the land on which you're located right now, and a bit about your current role in the field of social work.
- So, would you say you identify as a student/practitioner/scholar/educator? all of the above?
- (how many years)
- As you know, we began the project with a sharing circle to create an opportunity for sharing and reflections on this work, which comes with it many unique challenges and hardships but also triumphs and blessings. I want to begin by inviting you to share any reflections you have on your experience in the sharing circle if you'd like to share!
- What brought you to this work, of focusing on decolonization and centring land repatriation in your career as a social worker concerned with the state of the Earth's environment?
- what keeps you motivated in this work?
- What challenges have you overcome through this work and how? How do we support Indigenous self-determination in this work? reconciliation?
- Do you have ideas for connecting teachings on colonialism, social work, Indigenous Peoples and communities, and ecological sustainable social work practice in social work curricula?
- What does ecological social work practice look like to you when it upholds Indigenous land reclamations?
- Do you have any messages to share with social workers who may be unaware of the interconnection of colonialism, social work, climate change and Indigenous land reparations?
- What is your recommendation to social workers who want to learn more or get involved?
- How do we reach social workers who hesitate to get involved because of statements like the following: "I don't want to make a mistake/I don't want to cause more harm/it's not my place" or "I don't know how to connect to Indigenous communities"
- At this time, I invite you to share any further thoughts, feelings, ideas, or reflections you have on the issues we've discussed so far, and any related issues.

APPENDIX D: REFLEXIVITY GUIDE

- How was the circle/conversation grounded in Spirit?
- What would you differently next time? Were there any noteworthy challenges?
- Immediate thoughts?
- Emerging themes?
- Take-aways?
- Resource mentioned?

1. What is the impact of my personal, social, cultural, historical, and political dimensions of self on the research process, on the production of knowledge? (Rowe et al., 2015, p. 304)

2. What is the impact of my relative power and privilege, and of my Whiteness on the relationship between the researcher and researched? (Rowe et al., 2015, p. 304)

3. Am I actively seeking to deconstruct and challenge the hegemony of western knowledge systems, and thus meaningfully participate in the project of decolonization? (Rowe et al., 2015, p. 304)

4. How can I relate respectfully to the other participants involved in this research so that together we can form a stronger relationship with the idea that we will share? (Wilson, 2008, p. 77)

5. Am I being responsible in fulfilling my role and obligations to the other participants, to the topic and to all of my relations? (Wilson, 2008, p. 77)

6. What am I contributing of giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is place reciprocal? (Wilson, 2008, p. 77)

7. How might I be diminishing, demeaning, or disempowering Indigenous Peoples and cultures? In other words, how might I be practicing in a culturally unsafe way? (Baikie, 2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015, p. 103)

8. How am I practicing in a culturally safe way by recognizing, respecting, and acknowledging Indigenous culture and rights? (Baikie, 2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015, p. 103)

9. What knowledges am I using to inform what I do or don't do? (Baikie, 2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015, p. 103)

10. What traditional and contemporary Indigenous wisdom am I using/not using? (Baikie, 2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015, p. 104)

11. How am I participating in or contributing to the oppression of Indigenous knowledge, identities, practices and priorities? (Baikie, 2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015, p. 104)

12. How am I resisting by addressing issues of importance to Indigenous Peoples, by recognizing and respecting Indigenous cultures and rights? (Baikie, 2008, as cited in Baikie, 2015, p. 104)

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APPENDIX F: ASSIGNMENTS FOR LAND BACK—A TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATORS

The following headings feature possible assignments that social work educators can utilize in the classroom with students. While here, the assignment descriptions continue to draw on collaborators' voices and reflections in a qualitative research narrative style, with careful attention to their perspectives and the many references they cite (see also Appendix E), one can assign the named readings to students, facilitate related discussion, and create course syllabi and curricula that reflect a multitude of the assignments alluded to below.

Assignment: Reflections on Early Colonization in Europe and the Witch Hunt

An essential part of the decolonizing journey for all social workers is understanding the roots of colonial-capitalism, which predate the colonization of Turtle Island and other continents. The first wave of colonization happened in Europe, to Europe's people, where the rise of Christian religions led to the massacre of people of Pagan—namely, land-based—faiths. This annihilation project is what Tomas refers to as "the witch hunt."

> **In social work […] we talk about capitalism, we talk about neoliberalism, and we interrogate those and we problematize them. We don't talk about why they started and I think that's also such an essential piece in that connects with so much for me as well in terms of, Eduardo Duran, Speaking of the *Soul Wound*, and how the *Soul Wound* started in Europe. It started between European peoples traumatizing each other and, through violence that happened in those lands, and then it was brought and sent out through the colonial project to other peoples, and Indigenous Peoples here on Turtle Island.**
>
> And, part of that process that led to the Soul Wound, and the formation the power structures we see today**, is the witch hunts, and that was an essential piece in the establishment of capitalism and heteropatriarchy, and also land as commodity, and the separation of humans from land.**
>
> And so that was such an essential pivotal moment in the power formations we see today. But we don't talk about it. And so we don't necessarily connect all of these structures, **these violent structures that we, see such as land as commodity, and such as dispossession of land from Indigenous Peoples, and the targeting of women, girls, Two Spirit people. And the exploitation of labor through capitalism, like we[34] don't see how they're all connected. And yet if we go back centuries to where these things started, it was all connected and it was all part of the same project. And I think that is an essential linking piece […] we have all been colonized. My ancestors were colonized as well.** […] **The targeting of women in power in those communities was a deliberate tactic to erase the knowledges held by those women. […]** in [the] **primitive accumulation of power, burning of knowledge and burning of books has been so important. And in the witch hunts, the knowledge holders were the women and so they burned the women.**

[34] Here, the "we" Tomas is referring to is mainstream EuroWestern social work academic discourse.

Here, Tomas has drawn on critical texts from Federici (2021), Simpson (2017), and Grosfoguel (2013), from which select readings can be assigned to students in preparation for this exercise. This history is particularly important to learn as it is at the root of the ongoing colonial project that made its way to Turtle Island. This history also allows social workers to understand that traditional ancestral wisdom had once existed and was widespread among Europe as well, and that this wisdom is ultimately what unites us all, as humans and as all our relations—a wisdom interconnected with the land, the waters, and Mother Earth. Importantly, Tomas stresses that this history is also integral to understanding that violence against the land is inherently violence against women, and vice versa, as is prevalent within eco-feminist approaches (Klemmer & McNamara, 2020). He also draws the parallel between the Witch Hunt and violence against Indigenous women, children, and Two Spirit People, weaving in an Indigenist feminist lens. Importantly, Indigenous scholars, communities, leaders, and activists have pointed to these interconnections and parallels for generations (Simpson, 2017). Teaching about these parallels can encourage solidarity within future social workers.

Cultivating a Social Work for Land Back Learning Environment: Decentring Whiteness and Becoming the Imperfect Ally

Students must also continue to be taught about white privilege, white fragility, and intersectionality, as well as anti-racism and anti-colonial frameworks and modes of practice. Importantly, students can also be taught the concept of the "imperfect ally", as Summer refers to an article by white settler activist and scholar Vikki Reynolds, who focuses on a "decolonizing and Justice-Doing framework". Summer explains that it is better to have social workers who act with intent to stand in solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty and land back, make mistakes, be open to learning, and improve in the future, rather than expecting oneself to be perfect, and being closed off to growing in this work, which can potentially breed fear and inaction.

> It's normal and expected to make mistakes, right? All we can do is try our best and listen. And be open to feedback and… step away from this kind of defensiveness. And when you've caused harm, you know, acknowledge it and… **Make the appropriate reparations for who you may have caused harm to, and just continue that kind of path. I think […] that's so much more powerful [than inaction].**

Furthermore, Liz speaks to the importance of educating students on whiteness:

> because the majority of the students in the courses that I teach identify as white—they, I do some work around like white fragility and and things like that and also **around decentering whiteness. And like the hero mentality,** so we try to put that all kind of at the beginning so that people start to understand that if they don't already know.

However, not all assignments should be written in ways that assume all students are white. M shared that this was a barrier she experienced as a student of mixed settler-Mi'kmaw heritage. Although she is white-passing, she did not feel that every assignment prompt was relevant to her, as they were often written in ways that addressed the students as white, and coming from background of economic privilege, which she did not relate to.

The classroom environment must also be structured in a way that minimizes the chances of students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) becoming burdened by the (un)learning of white students, bearing the brunt of the unintentional harm and discrimination that often comes with white ignorance (Mbakogu et al., 2021 Social work educators involved with the Dalhousie School of Social Work Diversity and Equity Committee have overcome these barriers by having a variety of assignments available for students of varying social locational backgrounds, which positively influence students' (un)learning needs greatly. Another way to overcome this is by creating cohorts for students from designated groups and having certain courses that are taught to each respective cohort, and others taught to all students, as was the case in Summer's educational experience at UVic.

Activity and Follow-Up Assignment: KAIROS Blanket Exercises: Reflections, Class Discussions, and Sharing Circles

Another recommendation for core curriculum is that all students participate in a KAIROS Blanket Exercise. Dalhousie University's distance BSW program includes a mandatory 'residency' program for all second-year students where they are required to attend a KAIROS blanket exercise. As the teaching assistant for this course in May 2023, I had the honour and privilege of attending 3 of these exercises, co-facilitating the third alongside elder Gerri Leblanc. KAIROS is an organization sponsored by the United Church of Canada, that seeks to educate Canadians on Canada's colonial history, and the impacts this has had and continues to have on Indigenous Peoples (KAIROS Canada, 2023). It is called the "blanket exercise" because the exercise is an immersive experiential exercise where blankets represent the land of Turtle Island, and over time, facilitators remove the blankets to indicate what little land remains under Indigenous sovereignty. The exercise evokes visceral responses in participants, and profoundly opens participants' Spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies to the contextual colonial realities of so-called Canada, inspiring students to learn more and take action to support Indigenous sovereignty and wellbeing. At the end of the exercise, all students were invited to share in a sharing circle facilitated by Elder Gerri. This experience could be further strengthened by inviting another sharing circle one week after the experience to further integrate and cement the learning experience, and students could also be required to write a reflection paper on this specific exercise. Further, I would recommend that all schools of social work across the country integrate this educational experience as a requirement for all students going through all BSW and MSW programs. Educators should be mandated to participate in this exercise as well—which could potentially be mandated by CASWE-ACFTS.

Assignment: Learning Alternative Ecological Economic Systems

Considering the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental) social work education must also be infused with considerations of alternative ecological economic systems rooted in social and environmental care. Social work education is filled with literature, discourse, and education concerning the devastating impacts of the current neoliberal colonial-capitalist systems—built upon a pathological drive for expansion and extractivism (Coulthard, 2010). Social work classrooms are often filled with critiques of capitalism, and the problems of poverty, and how social workers are there to support those who fall through the cracks. Indeed, this is the

origin story of social work—it was created as a part of the welfare system after the First World War when the elites realized that there would, indeed, be those who “fall through the cracks”.

However, what social work classrooms fail to take up is a discussion of how we might eliminate these so-called cracks altogether. How can social workers envision alternative systems, that might ultimately work us out of a job? Instead of focusing so much energy on discussing all the problems of the current systems, and how to create temporary solutions for the masses, more efforts could be devoted to collective brainstorming and strategizing for envisioning, creating, and implementing alternative economic systems. For instance, students can be taught about Indigenous economic systems (ICA, 2021), and other ecological economic systems such as doughnut economies, degrowth economies, and solidarity economies (Powers et al., 2021). Additionally, students should be taught that a multitude of ecosocial innovations within the current systems which has the potential to lead to the eventual creation of alternative systems altogether (Matthies et al., 2020).

Thought Experiment Assignment: Contemplating the Giving Up of Privileges

Similar to Kimmerer’s (2013) discussion of the Gift Economy, and Powers and colleagues (2021) discussion of their alternative economies, Land Back requires that people who benefit from white supremacy and economic power must be willing to give up their unearned privileges. In order for society to live sustainably, and in order for us to return to Indigenous ancestral sacred instructions where we live in harmony with all our relations (Mitchell, 2018)—we can no longer exploit the Earth’s resources and take more than we need. We must be willing to give up the colonial-capitalist drive for incessant expansion, extraction, excess, greed, and surplus. We have to be willing to reduce our consumption and shift our lifestyles away from the fast-pace of grind culture, towards a slower pace of life where all resources are understood as sacred, and life is savoured—rest is prioritized. As Jo puts it:

> I also think [Land Back] means, “what does it mean in terms of how I'm living, according to sustainable values”? And **I think that shift in paradigm is not going to come easily.** [as we go forward, **what are people actually prepared to give up? If we are doing things in a good and sustainable way, things might cost more and people will have to think twice about what they are going to buy.**

This contemplation can be considered through thought-experiment exercises in the classroom, and through readings on this topic, such as reading the book *Rest as Resistance* by Tricia Hersey, or the *Gift of Strawberries* chapter in the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013). There can also be units where alternative economies are explored, and students are encourage to envision what it would take for society to change to these economies, and what role social work might play in making this shift.

Assignment: Social Movements

Collaborator professor Liz, at Laurentian University, includes involvement in a social movement as a core course assignment in her course on *Social Justice and Equity in Social Work Practice*. In the assignment, she has students either attend a social activist movement demonstration

relevant to their local community or start a movement of their own. The assignment also requires that students complete a reflection paper on their involvement. After infusing her curriculum with textbooks written by Indigenous scholars, and content on Land Back movements such as Standing Rock and Wet'suwet'en, she has found that students many students end up choosing to be involved with local decolonizing movements for their assignment.

Circling back to solidarity and intersectionality, Liz adds:
I try to really teach them too about **intersectionality**. That whenever you're involved with, are committed to, a particular social movement, that you're doing things in a way that doesn't place a barrier for people who are dealing with a different system of oppression for a different social movement, so that they're **all working together and supporting one another.**

Through this assignment, Liz is teaching students that involvement in social movements, as social workers for social and environmental justice, is essential to our practice as social workers. This assignment also centres the collective and community in our work as social workers—which is central to Indigenous ways of helping (Hart, 2014).

Assignment: How Does Indigenous Sovereignty Makes the World a Better Place?

Adding to Liz's emphasis on the importance of intersectional approaches, Jo provides a beautiful example of a thought-provoking discussion question for students, as she illustrates in her question that Land Back is not just about Indigenous Peoples, it is about our global community:
My worldview has been that everybody does better with Indigenous sovereignty and land claims and Land Back [….] I also would invite students to think about, like, **"why will everybody do better with Indigenous sovereignty and land? What are the possibilities?".** [It] invites a worldview that is deeply connected to the land with a very forward and backward looking span of time […] I feel that that worldview is a very helpful one in terms of responding to like climate change and ecological crisis.

Here, Jo is considering the guiding principle of considering both the seven generations who came before us, and those who come after us. Jo also ensures her students understand that Land Back is not the reproduction of the colonial 'us and them' 'divide and conquer' mentality. Rather, it is about healing our relationships with the lands, waters, and each other, all as living beings, and honouring the stories of our relations that (have) nourish(ed) us over generations.

Assignment: Defining and Explaining Land Back in a Way that Disarms

Another key role for social workers is to educate our colleagues, peers, community members, and even clients about what Land Back is, and how it can support everyone—Mother Earth and all our relations—in surviving and ultimately thriving. Leigh alludes to this:
Leigh: And so I love the language of Land Back […] but I do think that that can be challenging for some people to grasp. And so, **maybe the learning is like I want to be able to explain Land Back well enough to disarm.** So that's maybe like the homework post the Land Back sharing circle, I need to explain Land Back in a way that will disarm… many.

Inspired by Leigh's thoughts, perhaps a final assignment in a course focused on the Framework would be to have students prepare a definition of Land Back that disarms. Students might try out their definitions with a friend or family member who may be unfamiliar with the term. What is important is that social work students—future practitioners—can successfully hold a conversation with others about Land Back, i.e. explaining Canada's ongoing colonial history; decolonization; supporting Indigenous sovereignty and land governance; how it can heal the environment and promote sustainability; and why this matters to social work and society.

Land-Based Learning Assignments

Land-Based Learning Activity: Connecting with Tree

Rose's professor had brought herself and her fellow students into a forest where they were asked to connect intimately with a tree. The students were asked to yell and scream into the tree, asking and trusting the tree to absorb all their rage. This assignment was meant to support students in releasing their own trauma, and to heal themselves—essential as we embark on our journeys as social workers—but also to cultivate this deep, intimate relationship with our tree relatives.

Land-Based Learning Activity: Out on the Land for 30 Minutes to Become One

Another example of land-based learning that Rose shared was that one of her professors had required all students to spend time connecting with nature for half an hour, and to submit a photograph for proof. Rose explained that at first most student had the same idea, going to a park bench and sitting in the park for thirty minutes, waiting for the time to pass them by. When the professor saw that this was the approach students had taken, he clarified that the assignment was to become one with all our relations—as we are. Rose describes her experience after she went back onto the land with this new understanding:

> suddenly I was like "ohh look it. There's a butterfly over there. Ohh, look at that, it's a bird! And that… there's a slug there." And suddenly I was in the land, out and didn't who—my God, I'm sitting on the ecosystem! […] But that's where we were then suddenly realizing my part is bigger than just me coming in as a social worker.

Land-Based Learning Activity: Out on the Land for 15 Minutes Weekly with Photo

This is an experiential assignment that can cement the Indigenous worldview described above, where everything is understood as interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent.
Summer shared a similar example in her experience at the Indigenous specialization program at UVic's BSW program:

> Having the opportunity for […] students to actually spend time on the land and **to develop these relationships with the land and with our relatives will then positively influence how we relate with people in our work too, right? And I think with our relationships with ourselves**. […] With my environmental justice class […] every week we had an assignment, we had to go outside to a sitting spot and spend 15 minutes

> undistracted on the land and share a photo from it […] and **even just that practice I think is so transformative.**

In all land-based learning these examples, it is evident that there is a wealth of opportunity for instructors to get creative in developing land-based connective healing learning assignments for students that cultivate relationship with the natural environment, while also breaking free of the colonized anthropocentric worldview that is engrained in Euro-Canadian Western society. These exercises allow one to honour our Spirit through connection to land, and to honour emotions that arise, through reflection exercises, and even catharsis in some cases. They also invite us to quiet the mind and drop into the bodies. In these ways, these exercises centre that wholistic perspective that Darla-Jean demands from the profession.

Core Curriculum Component: Cultural Camps

One powerful way to integrate hands-on learning experiences, rooted in ecological connection to the land, and building meaningful relationships between settlers and Indigenous Peoples, is the inclusion of cultural camps. In the program where Jo works, cultural camps are a part of the core curriculum offered to social work students. Jo has co-facilitated the cultural camps with a local First Nations Elder for several years now, after cultivating respectful relationships local First Nations community members, rooted in care and reciprocity, over time. Jo describes the impact of the cultural camps:

> So we do the cultural camp. But we also do a lot of other land-based learning where students are spending time with First Nations people on the land and actually feeling **what it's like to be on the land and valuing it and valuing the people who have connections to the land.** […] when you're out there and you're perhaps at a Fish Camp and you are welcomed you in and you're sitting with an Elder by a fire. You are hearing stories such as yes, our family has been coming here for however many hundreds, thousands of years." […] it just hits in a much deeper way. […] feeling the impact of when people don't have sovereignty over land. "What happens? Will you lose fish stocks?" Students have seen the impact of the loss of salmon at traditional Fish camps and what it means in terms the challenges of engaging in cultural practices and being able to pass that information along to youth So to me, really seeing that direct impact and seeing somebody cry because this loss is a grief, it is a *huge* grief. So that's one of the things that I think, umm, when I think about like disrupting things. I also think about the opportunities to learn within the context of a community, the strength and resiliency that comes from connection to the land and all the ways in which this is practiced and utilized for health and wellbeing.

It may not have to be a camp that is 2 weeks long such as this, even infusing hands-on culturally relevant Indigenous-led land-based learning experiences into the classroom can be similarly impactful. For instance, the Indigenous Perspectives on REM class partnered with *Reclaiming Our Roots: Land Based Learning and Community Stewardship* to offer a fish skin leather tanning workshop virtually for all students, led by Mi'kmaw couple, James Doucette and Chenise Hache.

APPENDIX G: COLLABORATOR'S VOICES ON HOPE

M:
I think that something that makes me feel better sometimes than that there is progress towards it is like when there's news that a territory has successfully been defended, some land has been given back to a nation. Things like that. It makes me feel better. It's like, OK, there's some. There's some progress there. Yeah, it's slow moving. Maybe it's not as fast as it needs to be, but it it does help in those moments where it just feels like it's almost pointless like. You know, like it's all gonna go downhill, but yeah, those kind of moments, they do help.

Leigh:
Like how do we not lose hope? How do we not become jaded? How do we? You know, not just give up because it's too hard and I think I would say that my answer to that has been like looking to Black Indigenous and other people of colour who are a lot wiser than me, like, for example, Robin Wall Kimmerer, or […] Tricia Hersey. Yeah, exactly like it's people like these that this, that are pointing out that colonial capitalist way of thinking where you have to do it all and you have to give it everything you got and you can't rest and you can't take a break until… You get 100% and you get it perfectly right.
And that's usually what…It makes it feel like it's impossible or that like it's too hard, whereas I think when you…Think about kind of like…The gentle…the sometimes like more feminine and slower ways of approaching challenges. Umm. It feels a lot more manageable. And I I I think like I am such a can be such an overachiever, people pleaser, kind of like, have you know, those those traits that are actually like really negative but have been generally like kind of praised in. At least where I grew up was like…You work so hard, you get really good grades and like. Which is not a bad thing, but it is kind of leads you to being like I have to be perfect all the time and I need to do all the things and I need to not take a break.
And so I think coming back to… These two women and other like people that I follow through Instagram or on their books or whatever. I think that's been it. When it's hard, it's like coming back to how do I take care of myself so that I have the capacity to… Continue to. Walk gently…But forcefully or like but…Consistently, yeah.

Darla-Jean:
When you look at the… human development. You know, we go through the phases and you know pre-birth to infancy, to you know a little child to, you know young youth Uh, a young adult, adult and then elderhood and you know, as we go through these states, we learn hopefully from… Right from wrong and we mature and I believe that… society as a whole, both through that development too. So I think society right now is like these rebellious teenagers, where everything is about me. I want that I want that brand name. I want the newest phone.
Umm so society… doesn't know when to say when
And that, you know, we're coming of age and I say that with great hopes in our youth. Because they're our future leaders and those who have like… Not very many like it wasn't. It's only been like a couple of generations, I think, that many Indigenous people have become educated.
And that, we have some traditional knowledge and teaching and virtues and values, and the educational system… many of our Indigenous people are becoming aware, and want to take care

of the land and the water with these, knowingly or unknowingly, teachings that came from our elders.

Tomas Lang:
Yeah. And I suppose, for context like, also that I saw social work as a tool to enable me to work with youth on the land, in therapeutic ways. And so my intention being… to, I suppose in thinking of where I can use my gifts to create the most change possible, I I see a a strong piece that is needed as supporting settler youth, in particular, in building positive relationships with the land. And because as a as a settler youth growing up, the only narrative was that… My existence on the land is bad. Is, you know, thinking about carbon footprint. You just try and shrink it. And so at what point do we say, “well, I just shouldn't exist?” And that can be really deeply impactful for youth. And so witnessing that myself, but also in the youth I've worked with.
Learning from Indigenous relationships and with land, for example, like on the Lekwungen Territories, I did some work in ecological restoration. And learned a lot from the powerful relationships to the land, with the Lekwungen people. And the ways that those ecosystems and those ecological food systems were… so enmeshed, sustainable, reciprocal. Provided me an insight into, “ohh there can be something else. I'm not just—humans are not just bad”.
And so I think… Being able to work in a context where I'm doing, I'm working with youth, to actively provide and give back to the land, through ecological restoration, in a therapeutic context, because recognizing that that is healing for us as well, as humans. And that's known. That's been known for so long by Indigenous Peoples. And yet there's no mention—or there's very little mention of it—in any kind of Western healing approaches.
So I think that provides a lot of hope and healing for youth, and the possibility for different futures than the ones we have right now.

Jo:
Ohh what gives me hope. Oh, lots of things give me hope. I am a huge believer in maintaining a hopeful stance in social work. I think what gives me hope is like I could just look around and see, for every sad thing that has happened recently in this territory—and there have been a plenty—there have also been many positive things.
I've had the opportunity to see Young First Nations people speak in leadership roles. I see innovative and collaborative Two-Eyed Seeing research happening in this territory and I see First Nations governments working to get their government and their citizens to where they would like to be. I see modern treaties, I see celebrations, I see self-government. Elders give me hope. My students give me hope. So, I think all those things give me hope.

APPENDIX H: COLLABORATORS DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

DEFINING LAND BACK

Tara-Lynn
Dani: OK. There you go. That's like can you speak a little bit more to that? Like what does Land Back mean to you? and what the heck does social work have to do with it?
Tara-Lynn: Land back means to me like…Coming back to and I look at it through like a decolonizing lens too, Land Back to me is more than just….Taking our Land Back, it's how can we take it back in these little ways? and 'cause the baby steps add up… It wasn't stolen in one day it was stolen over generations. And to get it back, it's going to take that. And it's realizing that… The land can't go back to the way it was before contact. . .
it's recognizing the knowledge that is within that land and the knowledge that we carry within us and in the knowledge that Indigenous ways kept the world sustainable for thousands and thousands of years. And then looking OK, well, since you got since settlers came, there's been all this shit happened. Why wasn't that happening for thousands of years? What were they doing to keep the world healthy? How did they keep the world this healthy to sustain it from with all the scabs we're putting on it?

Liz
Discussing Patty Krawec's book, *Becoming Kin*
this is our this is all already Indigenous land, right? And that, as non-Indigenous people, we need to start behaving as if it is right? So—because it is. It's just that the government doesn't always think it is, right? *scoffs* Some of the other non-Indigenous don't always think—but [Patty] said, you know, she framed it as like that's part of Land Back too is you know like, the way that you live. Like the way that you live is part of Land Back, because it's acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty and that it's like working towards that reality of Indigenous jurisdiction over Indigenous lands, you know? […]
And then, you know, like I was hearing people talk more about the different kinds of Land Back, right? And then people will say from an Indigenous perspective, "Land Back is returning to the land" you know? Like, so it's like coming back to the land, not just… receiving land or like repatriating matriating land, you know? it's not just that, right? And then other people, too, would talk about it as land sharing, the way that the Treaty was intended to be, that that's Land Back too, right?

Leigh
Dani: And so yeah, I think that the notion of property is a big thing that needs to shift. And I and I also wanted to share, that I remember I'll never forget to go into this one. It was like a like a rally of some sort. And it was in Kjipuktuk, Halifax and there was this speaker, an Indigenous speaker who was Two Spirit. I'm sharing that because Two Spirit people are so powerful… And they were just like "We are. You tell us to go back home. [***they stomped their feed and stood in place***] We are home. This is our home. We're not telling you to go back home. We are here to share the land. If you look at the Treaties, that is always been our intent and our story. But you know the like you. You need to understand that, you know, we've cared for these lands for… For, since time immemorial and you're you are here, and we want to share with you. But we need to do this in a way that is reciprocal." And you know like it's that was really powerful. It's like

we're not telling you to go back home because that's the biggest thing I think that triggers people when they hear Land Back.
Leigh: Mm-hmm.
Dani: Well, where do I go? This is my home. It's like no one's saying that this isn't your home. But this is your home on native land, right?
Leigh: Well, then, start treating it like your home. But like.
Leigh: You know, like if this is your home, start treating it like it's your home like this is.
Dani: Exactly, Yeah
Leigh: Yeah, I think that's a big—
Dani: Like your home like. ***places hands over heart***
Leigh: Like your home. Exactly. ***places hands over heart***
Dani: Your home ***places hands over heart***, not your, not your home. ***gestures a box (house) that is then placed to the side***

Jane
I'm a Jewish person, identify as Jewish. My family is Jewish. So my personal connection would be to see the way that colonization and Land Back and that struggle is manifesting within Jewish culture and Jewish communities, specifically in Israel and in Palestine. And knowing that decolonization and Land Back is a part of, and, and that it's happening at different stages in every part of the world. So that would be something that I had been thinking about since we first started talking was, Land Back is part of a global, is global work, for every, everywhere.

DEFINING RECONCILIATION

Summer
I think it's really about action. I work in healthcare and so I think about cultural safety. At its foundation, only the people receiving care can decide what is culturally safe because no one else can tell you how something made you feel. And so, when I think about that in terms of reconciliation it is only Indigenous Peoples who can determine what reconciliation looks like. It's not for others to decide.

I think in social work it is important to have that ongoing and dynamic approach to working towards reconciliation. I think about this in the way I view healing as being a journey and not a destination. I don't think we ever get to a point of ever being fully healed, and I think reconciliation can be the same way as it's always going to be a journey and ongoing relationship. I think especially within the social work profession which has and continues to cause damage on our communities that it is so important that we continue to work towards actionable change.

I guess I think of living in harmony and interconnection. When I think of Syilx and various Indigenous teachings I've received about our reciprocal, interconnected, and ongoing relationships with the land. And to me, I think that's what reconciliation would look like, is having those meaningful, reciprocal, and interconnected relationships amongst all of us.

Darla-Jean
Yeah, 'kill the Indian and save the man.' And that, yes, these atrocities that happened to us. And and we are not responsible for it. And This is why I don't like that word 'reconciliation' because

we didn't do anything to be reconciled. . [pause] We're reclaiming, we're reclaiming who we are as Indigenous people.

However, saying that, when you look at the teachings of the medicine wheel—or some of the medicine wheel teachings that we're taught to me, and I've had many teachings—that when we say all our relations, we are related to the non-Indigenous people too… You know the yellow, the black and the white and it and the, you know, the red race, and that each race was given a gift. And the world will not be balanced until these gifts come together, which means we have to learn from each other.

DEFINING DECOLONIZATION

M
For me, I guess decolonizing has been… kind of looking at how—what are other ways that the world could run? It doesn't have to just be capitalism and these structures that we have that we're comfortable with because that's what we grew up in. It doesn't. It's not the only way. There are plenty of other structures, political structures and stuff in the world that are different from ours and you know they have their problems and stuff too. But yeah, it's kind of realizing that There are other perspectives and.
I think that decolonization is also critically analyzing what you've been taught.
And what you believe and what your values are and where did they come from? Why do I have these values and beliefs?
Who taught me them and What was the reason for them choosing to teach me this? Like is there…some sort of agenda here? What are they gaining, if anything, what does it taking from someone else?
And of course a lot of the times that was What are? What are they? A lot of times, what they're taking is from Indigenous people. So yeah, I feel like decolonization at the end of it is just trying to shake that perspective that we were all raised in this colonial capitalistic society.
M goes on to provide the example of her decolonizing journey regarding her education, where she had to unlearn the anti-Indigenous rhetoric taught in public school, such as the mercenary myth.

Jane
When you start to decolonize, or when you, I don't know if I the language is decolonizing, when you start to, I almost want to say when you start to become embodied again when you come back to yourself and you start to see the history and the stories and the harm that allows us to come to where you are, I wanted to keep digging.