

**The Residential School Settlement with Yukon First Nation  
Survivors: A Positive Form of Relationship Renewal?**

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THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SETTLEMENT WITH YUKON FIRST NATION  
SURVIVORS: A POSITIVE FORM OF RELATIONSHIP RENEWAL?

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**Dedication**

*This master's thesis is dedicated to the White River First Nations.*

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## **Abstract**

Reconciliation attempts have occurred world-wide, i.e., Australia and South Africa. Recently, Canada has initiated a reconciliation process with its First Nations people for the historical injustices and their experience with residential schools. The purpose of this study was to explore the current Canadian reconciliation process and to determine whether it was considered by First Nations participants as an effective approach to relationship renewal. This study was completed with the White River First Nations in the Yukon Territory. Using an exploratory descriptive design as a qualitative approach, with person-centered interviewing, eight participants were interviewed twice. The data revealed that the current reconciliation process was driven by political expediency rather than anchored by a desire to improve relationships. The findings suggest that Canada's reconciliation model is unsuitable and may be at risk for failure in the near future. Finally, participants revealed that they wanted more healing as a step towards reconciliation.

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## Chapter One – Overview

This thesis is written out of a desire to know and to help. It was completed ‘close to home’ in the Yukon, Canada, working with First Nation individuals. I am a non-First Nation individual beginning my own path of education and understanding, and acknowledge that I have just a basic grasp of First Nations culture and traditional ways. What began as a project driven by personal interest has, I hope, evolved into something that might help and show respect toward Native American people by facilitating cross-cultural understanding.

During the last eight years I worked selling recreational vehicles at my father’s business, and in doing so met many northern First Nations people. I have along the way learned the ‘when and where’ First Nations hunt and fish, what kinds of work the First Nations are pursuing, and sundry albeit fascinating facts about the local communities generally. It was within this context that I learned about the residential school settlement process, specifically what folks thought about the process and the accompanying distribution of monies. From my vantage point as a sales person it was apparent that after the settlement process began many First Nations individuals started spending significantly at my father’s business. I began to hear about how the money was being used both constructively and negatively. In one case, during the summer of 2010 a First Nation man after receiving his settlement from the government bought a boat, an all-terrain vehicle and a dirt bike for a southern Yukon family outfitting company he was starting. We spoke of his heritage and his connection to hunting, and he spoke about how the outfitting business affects his immediate family, and the community in which he lives. He believed his business would be profitable since people regularly come into this



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community to spend several days hunting and socializing. This business could not have been started without these settlement monies.

Unfortunately, not all of the stories I heard were so positive, especially in the case when individuals used their settlement to feed their addictions and to purchase expensive items that they were not able to maintain in the long term (Reimer, 2010). I heard stories of “Johnnie drinking himself to death” and “Joe getting back into drugs”. It was apparent that the settlement monies were utilized variously depending on the individual. It was at this point that my interest was sparked and I decided to pursue my thesis. It was also at this stage that I started to comprehend the importance of the reconciliation process and the value of such a study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

First Nation residential schools remain a dark point in Canadian history. Religious agents such as the Anglican, Catholic, Baptist and United Churches operated these schools under the Canadian government’s close watch, and the results were for many catastrophic: generations of First Nations slowly lost key aspects of their traditions, their languages, and arguably their cultural orientation. The associated trauma can be traced intergenerationally and often involves substance abuse and emotional problems (Miller, 1996). Although experiences at these schools varied according to cultural, regional and ironically ecclesiastical variance, most First Nations children were regularly subjected to physical, mental and emotional harm. Residential schools administrators embraced the philosophy of ‘killing the Indian to save the child’, and through western curriculum and religious teachings aggressively sought to prepare the children for assimilation into mainstream Canadian culture. Families that resisted soon found regional Indian agents

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aided by the Northwest Mounted Police (and later the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) forcibly removing their children. When the last school closed in 1996 (Milloy, 1999), the residential school legacy at point almost 120 years and is one of if not the most overt of Canada's various assimilation policies.

The Canadian Government announced in 2006 that it along with the associated Churches, and others involved with residential school operations, were the target of the largest class action settlement filed in the country's history. To wit, residential school survivors sought compensation for harm experienced as students (Court of Canada, 2011). Interestingly the involved parties agreed to establish an advisory committee made up of residential school survivors rather than pursue costly and time-consuming litigation. Consequently, in an attempt to improve First Nations-Canada relations the focus shifted from an adversarial approach to seeking conflict resolution vis-à-vis dialogue. In theory, at least.

As a result the Common Experience Payment (CEP) and the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) were developed. The CEP was distributed to survivors based on how many years a First Nation individual had spent in a residential school (Canada had valid records detailing who had spent time in these schools). The IAP however, was distributed according to the type (i.e., physical, emotional or sexual) and extent of abuse an individual endured, or in instances where an individual could demonstrate income loss related to their forced confinement. Unlike the records detailing who was a student, few records existed detailing these abuses, for the most part, which in turn forced residential school survivors and their descendents to prove the claimed abuse or loss of income occurred. The innovative approach rooted in mutual dialogue now compelled residential

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school survivors and their families to publicly reveal and witness tales of abuse, which was a long, difficult and frequently challenging process. Opening old wounds for most survivors was painful, while Canadian officials quietly observed from a distance. It is likely that this process further placed residential school survivors in emotional peril by adding to the trauma they had already experienced. Survivors had to publicly relive these personal events, all for the purposes of determining a financial payout. In the meantime, it would be 2008 before the Canadian Government, led by Prime Minister Steven Harper, officially apologized for the residential school abuses.

Knowledge of these events combined with my personal experiences with people who patronized my dad's store further stoked my interest in examining the residential school experience. Originally, I wanted to explore how Yukon First Nations people used the settlement monies from both positive and negative perspectives. Further investigation revealed the complexities associated with the reconciliation process. It became apparent that the issues related to the settlement monies overshadowed how individuals spent their settlement monies. More importantly it also seemed that the process of reconciliation itself was imparting harm on the very people it had been established to help in dealing with their trauma. The process was also intended to rebuild a relationship harmed by the imposition of the residential school model. Consequently, I explored the reconciliation process among survivors of the residential schools, including their perspectives on the settlement monies. My primary question thus became: Is the reconciliation process a positive means of relationship renewal as claimed by the Canadian Government? I never lost sight of the importance of the settlement monies; however, this was a secondary focus of the study and determined to warrant its own distinct research project. Research

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needed to be conducted on the process itself prior to studying the impact of the settlement monies. That is the research niche this project seeks to fill.

### **Rationale for Study and Research Site**

In June 2010, the Yukon Territory's estimated population was 34,984 (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Just less than one quarter of the population was Aboriginal (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009). Many of the First Nations retain traditional lifestyles that embrace being out on the land for the purposes of hunting and fishing, and ceremonies, for example. Many retain their language, family, friends, and the elders continue to play a central role in the communities. First Nations people have slowly emerged as important local economic drivers and their cultural practices are regularly showcased. Currently the majority of First Nations children travel to Whitehorse to attend many of the culturally integrated schools. The K-12 curriculum includes First Nations history, cultures, spirituality and beliefs. Older First Nations individuals are encouraged to and often visit the schools to tell their stories. Sometimes this involves telling traditional stories, such as, Raven and Coyote. Other times the stories that reflect a difficult past, in particular residential school survivorship.

The White River First Nation is a small community of roughly approximately 100 people (Government of Yukon, 2012). The community is a six-hour drive from any of the next largest municipalities (Whitehorse, Yukon and Fairbanks, Alaska) to which community members regularly travel to shop, despite limited funds in a region known for its high cost of living. It is therefore not surprising to learn that most community members were struggling financially when the settlement process was announced. Many individuals spoke of their hopes attached to the money. Yet reconciliation was not really

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understood, nor was it effectively described by Canadian officials, but the promise of financial compensation got those in need quickly involved. Soon however, the idea and process of reconciliation overtook the community, and once again residential schools became a dominant local force.

### **Thesis Overview**

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the secondary source materials related to residential schools, which operated in the Yukon until 1967. Chapter 3 elaborates on the thesis methodology. Specifically, person centred interviewing was used to tease out the meaning of the residential school reconciliation process from a personal and community-based perspective, the ultimate goal being to understand this experience. Chapter 4 explores this process in greater detail, by providing a brief history of its evolution while also exploring the various international frameworks Canada consulted during the creation of its process. It is important therefore to situate the Canadian framework in comparative context to highlight where officials succeeded and failed in both their interpretation and attempts at integrating aspects of foreign reconciliation processes into their domestic model. Chapter 5 includes a qualitative analysis based on the participant interviews, and explores the personal and collective concerns with the existing reconciliation process. Importantly, this chapter also explores the participants' beliefs concerning what needs to be done to improve the reconciliation process. A conclusion follows summarizing the key themes and offers suggestions for improving the existing reconciliation policy.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study explored the perspectives of First Nations people who survived the residential school experience - and who participated in the reconciliation process.

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Participants spoke of the settlement monies and considered whether they were sufficient compensation for years of abuse and hardship. Arguably this thesis will provide an expanded understanding of the importance of reconciliation that in turn can aid service providers, professionals, policy makers and observers seeking to establish similar processes. Finally, this study in part seeks to give voice to First Nations people who participated in the reconciliation process and who have received settlement monies.

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## **Chapter Two – Review of the Literature**

Literature related to Canadian the residential school system is explored in this section, as it is vital to understand the history of what led to the schools' imposition, which in turn provides the context needed to comprehend the modern reconciliation process. This review explores the schools' role in challenging First Nations traditional ways and the current debates concerning the intergenerational trauma attributable to the residential school experience. The majority of the literature is over 10 years old, but many of these works also represent the seminal works detailing the history of residential schools. Less work in recent years is focused on the residential school experience, which once again highlights the importance of this thesis and how it contributes to our knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon.

### **Residential Schools**

The creation of modern residential schools in Canada dates to 1892. In keeping with the Indian Act, which was implemented in 1876 to guide the Indian acculturation process, the government's goal was to aid in transitioning 'Indians' into productive and civilized Canadian citizens (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Dionne, 2005; Grant, 1996; MacDonald, 2007; McKegney, 2006; Miller, 1996; Trevithick, 1998; Wasserman, 2005). According to the Assembly of First Nations (2010), the national Aboriginal political organization representing the First Nations chiefs, the residential schools were founded to permit the various church groups that would be contracted to operate the schools to assimilate 'Indian' children into mainstream society. As such dominant non-Aboriginal cultural values, language and style of dress—but not contemporary school curricula—were emphasized to prepare them to interact more easily with the European settlers.

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Initially it was assumed that First Nations parents would volunteer their children as students. It quickly became evident that this was not the case. The ongoing lack of attendance led Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, to advocate for Indian Act amendments, and in 1920 the legislation was altered making attendance compulsory for all children aged seven to fifteen (Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999; Wasserman, 2005; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Upon the threat of jail, parents were forced to step aside as the Indian Agents scooped up the children for travel to schools intentionally constructed substantial distances from the local First Nations. Often, the children were sent away for months if not years at a time. This policy remained in place until 1951, when the Indian Act was once again amended this time permitting Native children to attend integrated public schools (Wasserman, 2005).

Watching from Ottawa and rarely entering the field to observe first hand, Canadian officials monitored the residential school operations run by an assortment of Anglican, Catholic, Baptist and the United Church representatives (Miller, 1996). As long as budgets were met, church officials were granted the freedom to administer. This at the time was deemed a reasonable approach. More importantly, from a Canadian perspective who better to operate the residential school than church officials who had a long history of interacting with Indians? Looking back, the missionaries tended to dismiss First Nations spirituality, languages and cultures in an effort to civilize. This likely meant that most school administrators saw First Nations as little more than little primitives and savages (Claes & Clifton, 1998, Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999; Titley, 1992). Others considered First Nations people as lacking a concomitant moral and/or ethical compass. Accordingly, these non-Christians souls required saving (Claes & Clifton,



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1998, Miller, 1996; Titley, 1992). Therefore, in lieu of offering modern curricula to the students, and the associated educational opportunities, most residential schools became a mechanism of religious training and accordingly tools of assimilation and missionization.

Not surprisingly residential schools exacted a tremendous impact on many First Nations. In some of the schools, individuals were beaten for speaking their native languages (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Others died from diseases, homesickness and malnourishment (Miller, 1996). Physical, sexual and emotional abuse was quite common (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Macdonald, 2007; McKegney, 2006; Miller, 1996). This legacy left many individuals, families and communities in shambles, and for those survivors, life is at best challenging and at worst unbearable. This legacy resulted in substance abuse, suicides, and the intergenerational transmission of poor parenting habits and other dysfunctional behaviours (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 64). Residential schools, as an important component of the government's overall assimilation policy, remained in place until the Government of Canada started their slow dismantling in the 1960s (Miller, 1996). The Gordon Residential School of Saskatchewan, the last of the schools, was closed in 1996 (Assembly of First Nations, 2010).

### **Residential Schools in the Yukon Territory**

A total of 134 residential schools operated in Canada, albeit not simultaneously (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2010). Five in total operated in the Yukon Territory: the Aklavik Anglican Indian Residential School (started in Shingle Point, Yukon), the Baptist Indian Residential School, the Carcross Indian Residential School, the St. Paul's Indian Residential School and Yukon Hall. Many First Nation children also attended the Lower Post Residential School in northern British Columbia, which borders the Yukon.

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Many of these children lived with their families in the bush in wall tents or other forms of accommodations prior to being removed to school (Nadasy, 2003). The last school to close its doors in the Yukon was the Carcross Indian Residential School in 1969 (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2010).

Interestingly, very little academic attention had been paid to Yukon residential schools. In his history of Yukon First Nations, Coates (1984) examined clerical and government intentions while paying close attention to the Carcross Indian Residential School, the Yukon's first Residential School (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2010). Opened by William Bompas in 1891, the school strictly adhered to the Anglican clergy's program of 'Indian' moral and cultural improvement. In his attempts to create better Indians, curriculum was devised emphasizing "health, hygiene, motivation, Christian social mores, Protestant work ethic and the requisite skills of the northern harvester" (Coates, 1984, p. 33). Nadasy (2003) concluded that "Residential Schools in the Yukon were aggressively concerned with assimilation and many First Nation children were physically, emotionally and sexually abused" (p. 41). He further pointed out that prior to the 1940s very few Aboriginal children actually attended these schools, which coincides with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's policy of enforcing attendance. Coates concluded that residential schools were a failure in that the students were provided with no guidance concerning how to assimilate into Canadian society, or how to reintegrated into their home communities should moving to the cities prove difficult. Deaths from disease and abuse further scarred the children.

Both Coates' and Nadasy's works provide the most comprehensive overview of the Yukon residential schools and the students' experience. Several other works briefly

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mention or allude to the residential schools. Coates (2005) once again included a couple of paragraphs in 'Land of the Midnight Sun', information that expands minimally on his previous work. Other grey literature about Yukon residential schools is available on websites from the Territorial/Federal governments, the Anglican Church and/or First Nations (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2010; The Anglican Church of Canada, 2010; Yukon Archives, 2005).

### **Reconciliation**

According to Cornassel and Holder (2006, p. 466), reconciliation processes around the world impact some 350 million indigenous peoples residing in 70 states. Yet the literature about reconciliation focuses largely on the South Africa experience (e.g., Gibson, 2002; Kaminer, Mbanga, Stein & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Murithi, 2009; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2000). What is apparent from the literature is that the more progressive reconciliation processes include an acknowledgement of a wrongdoing, an apology, truth telling by both sides, and monetary restitution (Borneman, 2002; De Graff, 2007; Murithi, 2009; Wilson, 2000). Borneman (2002) for one explored the conditions making reconciliation possible following violent conflicts, and concluded that survivors of an ethnic cleansing, for instance, suffer from despair, and a sense of disconnectedness from others and reality. Recuperation in such cases is only possible when the truth is exposed and those who perpetuated the aggression come to the table to listen rather than justify their actions. Only then is an apology deemed effective, and proper legal avenues and reparations possible.

Dionne (2005) details how the Canadian residential schools resulted in the dehumanization and destruction of individual spirits, and the importance associated with

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personal and collective healing from the associated trauma. By doing so healing programs could aid people in “processing and developing [their] human spirit, [and develop] a transcendent awareness that all things progress and move forward” (Dionne, 2005, p. 176). Reconciliation is in no way considered an attempt to assist with this healing, making it vital to discuss its procedural exigencies and intended outcomes to help us better understand reconciliation’s role in intergovernmental and cross-cultural negotiations. Reconciliation, for the purpose of this project, is best described as two or more groups agreeing to coexist at the end of some form of wrongdoing (Borneman, 2002; De Graff, 2007; Doxtader, 2003; Gibson, 2007). Gibson (2007, p. 277) concluded that “racial reconciliation is difficult to achieve without interracial interactions. Such “interactions do not necessarily produce more reconciled attitudes, but they certainly make them possible.”

What is evident is that most scholars disagree about reconciliation’s worth. More importantly, no agreement on a common definition has emerged. Much of the difficulty lay in our failure to understand, as Gibson (2007) might describe it, complex interracial histories, how they continue to inform our current interactions, and how we understand one another. For example, while most Canadians may have heard about residential schools, or even the reconciliation process, few fully comprehend the schools’ impacts or why we are engaging in this process. As John Ralston Saul (2008) argues in ‘A Fair Country’, this is somewhat surprising considering that the first Europeans to North America regularly embraced concepts of relationship and renewal the goal being to facilitate contact and positive economic and social relationships with the First Nations. Reconciliation consequently is a historic process central to the First Nations-Canada

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relationship. Without it things would have devolved into animus long ago. The break with reconciliation—which was an important aspect of renewal, which itself demanded each party in the relationship reflect on the past and future and adjust their actions to ensure ongoing peaceful relations—is traced to the broken promises characteristic of the numbered treaties, as an example, and the imposition of the residential schools. Saul is optimistic that we in Canada can once again embrace renewal thus incorporating First Nations perspectives and beliefs into our socio-political processes. He is blunt in his assessment that to do so will only improve our overall ability to comprehend how residential schools did and continue to impact First Nations from the perspectives of those who experienced the trauma. It may also aid Canada in reconciling its own identity crisis while assisting Canadian society to acknowledge the First Nations-French-English constitutional foundation.

Barsh (2003) likewise advocates returning to a more dialogical approach based on the original compacts. Unlike Saul's more philosophic writings, Barsh embraces a quantitative approach reliant on Statistics Canada data to measure Canadians' potential ability to re-integrate historic processes into (what were at the time) future reconciliation processes. Disturbed by Canadians' writ large lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues, Barsh concluded that a change in societal attitudes was required prior to improved political relationships with Aboriginal peoples occurring. This Barsh admitted was a difficult proposition for he identified what he described as an ideology of 'whiteness' in Canadian society, or a general desire to see Aboriginal assimilation occur. In total, his analysis determined that 71% of Canadians believed that Aboriginal people would be better served by fully assimilating. It is interesting to note that whereas Saul suggests that

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our history of interface provides the formula for reconciliation, Barsh states that we have effectively revised our history to erase First Nations from our national narrative. Both however do identify discussion and relationship as key ‘Canadian’ values, and both advocate for a reconciliation process based on a return to those very values.

It would appear that Saul (2008) is far too optimistic and that he tends to romanticize the past, whereas Barsh (2003) is less convinced that Canadians’ have the ability take off the blinders and accept that unpalatable historical events occurred. Importantly, despite these variances both identify the need to explore how past relationships were structured, how they led to mutual advancement, and the importance of reflecting on this history—the history of British, French and First Nations—when devising a reconciliation process. Both also agree that such a process needs to be formulated with all parties in mind. Otherwise a one-size fits all process will emerge that will remain one-sided and deemed by First Nations to be little more than an exercise in political expediency.

Both men produced their work prior to the existing reconciliation processes implementation. Reflecting on the Canadian Government’s approach, First Nations people only account for a minority of the population (Hutchinson, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2001). Hence, First Nations lack the political and demographic leverage needed to influence the process. An apology to First Nations people has transpired, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established for the purposes of developing a funding formula to ensure financial reparations to First Nations People via the Common Experience Payment Form (CEP) and the Individual Assessment Process (IAP).

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However, the goal of exploring the truth from multiple perspectives and relationship rebuilding has to this point not been formally identified as important steps.

### **Apology, Monetary Restitution and the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation**

#### **Commission**

Apologies that encourage the process of reconciliation must be properly framed (Weyeneth, 2001). Matt (2007) defines a true apology as requiring the wrongdoers to take full responsibility for their actions by acknowledging its wrongfulness and promising not to repeat it. He has identified several government apologies, and explores efficacy. For instance, the Law Commission of Canada in 1998 identified the schools “genocidal intent” (Matt, 2007, p. 140). Government officials at the time considered this admission an apology, whereas the First Nations did not. The Canadian government then established a \$350 million dollar healing subsidy that was initiated and targeted for registered ‘Indians’ (Cassidy, 2009). Matt (2007) is critical of the government’s stance, and concluded that this was not a true apology for several reasons. One, Prime Minister Jean Chretien was not in attendance at the apology ceremony. Two, the monies were only designated to governmentally registered First Nations. And, three, the apology was vague and did not acknowledge the residential schools’ ongoing effects (i.e., historic trauma), such as mental illness, alcoholism and other hardships being experienced by survivors.

After an apology, the next step is to ensure that financial restitution occurs, which is widely defined as returning belongings that were confiscated, seized or stolen (Barkan, 2001). This can occur in the form of money for belongings when the latter cannot be located (Siegal, 2009). In Canada, restitution is provided in the form of settlement dollars provided for residential school attendees, something Corntassel and Holder (2006, p.,

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470) argue “has to occur before any discussion of rebuilding relationships can take place.” Alfred (2009, p. 181) argues that “without massive restitution made to Indigenous peoples, collectively and as individuals, including land, transfers of federal and provincial funds, and other forms of compensation for past harms and continuing injustices committed against the land and Indigenous peoples, reconciliation will permanently absolve colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice.” He also notes that restitution on its own is not satisfactory, and that it will mean little without radical change associated with deconstructing colonial institutions. Reconciliation is not achievable until state deconstruction, or more appropriately, formal decolonization has occurred—even if settlement monies are flowing in communities nationally.

Unfortunately, associated with financial restitution are several negatives. For one, some First Nations people see the money as disrespectful and believe that it betrays the loss that has occurred, and the memories of those who died as a result of their experience (Hamber, 2000; Hutchinson, 2007; Reimer, 2010). Yet paradoxically without these monies, proper reconciliation cannot occur (Borneman, 2002; De Graff, 2007; Murithi, 2009; Wilson, 2000). Arguably the ongoing combination of truth, justice and survivor support may one day be sufficient to make some survivors feel at ease with the idea of accepting restitution as a symbolic replacement for what was lost (Hamber, 2000). But until citizens the state or the governing elite has taken the proper steps, First Nations people will not be viewed as equals either socially or politically (De Graff, 2007).

### **Settlement Process**

Literature on the First Nations residential school settlement process is limited. In 2010, for example, The Aboriginal Healing Foundation released ‘The Indian Residential



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Schools Settlement Agreement's Common Experience Payment and Healing: a Qualitative Study Exploring Impacts on Recipients' (2010). Authors of this national study collected data from 281 First Nations people to determine the CEP's impacts; its effectiveness at promoting healing; and to gather insights regarding the roles of support services that were designed to assist them during the compensation process. The report concluded that those individuals just beginning their healing journeys are more likely to conclude that the settlement process promoted healing. Those who have not started their healing journeys are more likely to say that it made no difference, or that it hindered their healing. During the settlement process, most of this study's participants relied on friends, family and/ or the local band office. Some of the participants also described the benefits of support and assistance received from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Reimer (2010) on the other hand encouraged in a focused study of individual healing during the compensation process. It was specific to CEP recipients, and explored the question: should occur before allocating compensation? Similarly, Reimer found that those who have begun their healing journeys are more likely to say the settlement process promotes healing in some way, whereas those who have not started their healing journeys are more likely to say that it made no difference, or that it hindered their healing.

Corntassel, Cha win-is and T'lakwadski (2010) conducted seven in-depth interviews with the Nuu-chah-nulth male First Nations participants. Each individual was asked to focus on the "community, family and individual impacts of Residential Schools on their lives" rather than reconciliation with Canada (Corntassel, Cha win-is and T'lakwadski, 2010, p.4). One of the themes identified as 'family' mentioned the intergenerational effects of the Residential schools. The participants in this study

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identified the need for all who were affected by Residential schools to be part of the reconciliation process. There was a concern of the suffering across generations. The authors also focused on the CEP process and critiqued the TRC. They found that residential school survivors considered the CEP process flawed, and their payments to be substandard in relation to the abuses suffered. One informant mentioned that the monies “do not begin to account for the cultural loss” (Corntassel, Cha win-is and T’lakwadski, 2010, p. 22). The authors also reviewed how the monies were spent, and found that substance abuse was a direct outcome in several cases. Importantly, the monies were deemed a form of “on-going oppression” (Corntassel, Cha win-is and T’lakwadski, 2010, p. 25).

Additional insights can be found in the grey literature such as newspaper articles. The Calgary Herald (2009) published, “Residential School Cash has a Deadly Fallout”. Despite its non-rigorous approach, this important piece provided an understanding of the often-negative use and impacts associated with the settlements. The article details how deaths (oftentimes suicides), and alcohol use and drug use were directly attributed to the CEP. It also noted “that there were many people who were happy to receive their common experience payment”, and that “others who weren’t prepared for such a large sum of money ... ended up using drugs or alcohol.” There were even “reports of people who died as a result of that.” The IAP monies were not mentioned in this article, which begs the question asked in the article, “Were all of these deaths, alcohol use and drug use just from the CEP monies or were they from the IAP as well?” The review of the literature, and a quick scan of the available media sources suggest to date that there is an emphasis on CEP monies, which are earmarked for the time spent in the schools, whereas

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the IAP is designated for the amount and kind of abuse. Also, the IAP monies can often lead to a much larger settlement, which may exacerbate poor spending.

### **Conclusion**

The lack of extant literature is in distressing. But it also offers me the valuable opportunity to add to our knowledge of the residential school reconciliation process.

There are some important emergent themes from the literature, which inform the following study. Many residential schools nationally, and in the Yukon Territory more specifically, had abusive administrators who sought to assimilate their charges into mainstream Canadian society. Despite these abuses reconciliation is a fairly new concept that has to date received a mixed reception from First Nations, in particular because it was devised in Ottawa; it does not acknowledge the traumas experienced by residential school survivors, nor how these traumatic events can be rekindled by forcing people to relive their experiences; and it does not properly compensate people for abuses suffered. It must be noted that no absolutely perfect reconciliation process exists. However, I identified some criteria central to the more successful models, while also showing that they have not been implemented. It is important to now determine why they have not been integrated, how this has impacted the process and people, and ultimately whether this can be overcome.

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## Chapter Three – Reconciliation

The Canadian Government appeared on the cusp of renewing its relationship with Aboriginal peoples when it adopted reconciliation in 2006. Reconciliation can be defined as a process where two or more groups of people agree to coexist with one another in the aftermath of a wrongdoing, and given cultural complexity it is different in each country (Borneman, 2002, Gibson, 2007). But beyond that, we don't know what reconciliation has come to mean to multiple participants, and how these ideas have been actualized in policy or reflected in political interface. Ottawa presented its reconciliation process as a means of improving dialogue and understanding by issuing an apology, ensuring truth telling and by providing monetary restitution. What federal officials did and continue to fail to offer is a specific definition for reconciliation; the various criteria guiding how its negotiators and politicians are to pursue reconciliation; or what the intended outcomes are. For a process predicated on two parties coming to the table to resolve outstanding differences, the reconciliation process was developed unilaterally by Canada with little Aboriginal input. It is in sum an amalgam of what officials believed to be the most effective components drawn from various reconciliation processes implemented by former colonial powers seeking improved relations with indigenous peoples. In the Canadian context we need to explore how the reconciliation process emerged, which in turn demands we further examine the various international reconciliation processes that informed its development.

The literature review encompassed a variety of issues and involved a macro analysis of the literature. A more detailed exploration of Australia, South Africa and Canada will be explored to determine more precisely the key principles of reconciliation

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in a comparative context. This helps break up what could become a potentially large literature review. The following chapter provides greater context, enables more specific analysis and helps with the readability.

### **Reconciliation Defined**

Several countries internationally have established national reconciliation processes; however, scholarly consensus seems to suggest that South Africa and Australia are the two leading examples. The process developed by these two countries will be discussed in greater detail below. Acknowledging the cultural dynamics of each country being investigated, the idea of reconciliation must be recognized as contextually unique. It would appear therefore that a universal model is not achievable, and that there are common elements in each model that when combined could be described as a best practice. Bashir Bashir (2008) for one has distilled the various reconciliation processes into a condensed three-step approach deemed a best practice: (1) there is a need to voice the collective memory of exclusion; (2) there is a need to acknowledge historical injustices; and, (3) it is imperative that an apology is offered, and that the deliberative party takes responsibility for all injustices committed. As general guidelines they are adaptable, and subject to change. But they offer an excellent starting point for analyses of existing models or for countries seeking to implement a reconciliation process.

The first stage seeks to voice the collective memory of exclusion so as to challenge “the dominant views, stories and narratives, and past and present political arrangements” (Bashir, 2008, p. 55). By doing so colonized and oppressed voices are heard, which in part is cathartic. However, this moment of empowerment permits people to tell their stories to their oppressors and is required to ensure that the emergent narrative

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reflects all stories as opposed to a one-sided, apology-driven justification. In such cases, “[m]odes of speech, such as story-telling, testimonies, and greetings, as legitimate modes of political deliberation, [are] necessary to overcome biases in conventional understandings” (Bashir, 2008, p. 68). However, these memories need to be not only revealed but also formally acknowledged.

Bashir Bashir (2008) notes that the second step—the acknowledgement of historical injustices—is frequently overlooked, and he warns that the oppressed groups’ voices and stories need to become part of the national narrative. This can be achieved through legislation that acknowledges these shared histories (historically oppressed and dominant group) and equal citizenship. It is clear that the recognition of opposing worldviews is an aspect of reconciliation, and that reconciliation processes must first reconcile these varied perspectives if the outcome is to be beneficial to all involved. As Saul (2008) suggests, European views about reconciliation tended to be contractual and based on a negotiated outcome. This is problematic for several reasons, not the least of which had to do with the fact that Aboriginal people sought relationships and outcomes that embraced the two row wampum: two separate vessels (nations) travelling parallel to each other down the river of life (Miller, 2007). The two row wampum (also known as (Gus’wen’tah) acknowledges that the two vessels/nations have their own cultures and ways of life, and that the start of any negotiations reflects the start of a relationship that needs to be regularly renewed (Borrows 2002). In this way two groups can live side-by-side without interfering with the other. In this sense as opposed to a final product, First Nations envision reconciliation as relational by maintaining a conversation (Saul, 2008).

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The third step seeks the historically dominant group take responsibility for past transgressions. Acknowledgement includes commemoration ceremonies or remembrance days highlighting injustices. For example, proper consultation in developing educational curricula and programming can lead to the elders' voices being excluded by substantially informing the narrative. Importantly, there also needs to be a sincere apology issues. Take for example Steven Harper's apology to Chinese Canadians, for the injustices they endured. Many deemed the apology insincere and therefore ineffective because "they (the government) took spurious responsibilities that fail(ed) to understand the claims of the previously oppressed peoples" (Bashir Bashir, 2008, p. 58). Secondly the Canada-Chinese reconciliation process led to no significant transformation. This did not lead to what Kymlicka and Bashir (2008) described as the need to work towards creating a new "we", which requires seeking out new possibilities that previous did not exist (Kymlicka & Bashir, 2008, p. 19). Or, more specifically, each citizen must pursue reconciliation to help develop a new relationship. As is often the case, the group reconciling for their historical injustices assumes neutrality that is untenable considering existing systemic power imbalances. Kymlicka and Bashir argue that conscious efforts are required to ensure fair recognition, otherwise the process is open to critique as yet another form of domination over an oppressed group.

Providing compensation for past wrongs is also considered an important step forward, and is recognized as symbolic of admitting wrongdoing. Reparations and/or compensation can take the form of money, lands or resources (Alfred, 2005), and can be considered part of reconciliation's transformative dimension. Specifically, Kymlicka and Bashir (2008) explain that the money needs to be transformative—funding healing

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programs, for example—rather than restorative, for the latter can lead one to avoid the deeper questions related to racism. Such a one-time payment “would close down rather than open up possibilities for a new and inclusive polity” (Kymlicka & Bashir, 2008, p. 20-21). These monies, lands or other forms of compensation need to be more significant than a ‘wiping of the hands’ after unresolved injustices. The country as a whole needs to take part and change together, making sure all forms of injustices (even racism) are being reconciled.

### **Australia: History**

British explorers arrived in Australia in the mid to late 1700s to find the lands occupied by Aborigines embracing their own governing systems, land use practices, spiritual and cultural beliefs (Short, 2003). To the English, these Aborigines were inferior and in need of colonization, and they employed the terra nullius (land of no one) doctrine to justify Indigenous dispossession in the wake of expanded settlement and resource utilization (Short, 2003). These actions were further rationalized by proclamations that the non-farming Aborigines had no claim to lands better assigned to farmers who understood proper land use (Short, 2003). This is the reason that no treaties were signed with the indigenous people of Australia—treaties were signed with groups of people considered politically equal, and who valid claims to the lands (Short, 2003). Upon the Britons’ arrival the estimated indigenous population was 300,000 to 1 million (Short, 2008). During the next 150 years, the population decreased quickly, with only 60,000 Aboriginal people located in all of Australia in 1909 (Short, 2003). In 1910, boarding schools were implemented in Australia. Not unlike the Canadian residential schools, the Aussie boarding schools were structured to house Aboriginal children away from their



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culture/parents and teach them how to become more like the white Europeans. These schools operated for the next 50 years, after which they were decommissioned in 1960. Not unlike in Canada, these schools had lasting effects as many of these children were disconnected from their own culture and not welcomed into white culture (Short, 2003).

### **Australia: Process of Reconciliation**

The move towards reconciliation subtly began in 1949 with government recognition of Aborigine citizenship. Following the national boarding schools' decommission, reconciliation gained momentum in 1962 when the Aborigines were granted right to vote (Australian Electoral Commission, 2006). By previously lacking the vote Aborigines were, similar to the Indian caste system, considered untouchables (non citizens). With the franchise they were now legally citizens, a distinctive group of people for which reconciliation could potentially occur. It would however be 1991 before the government implemented the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, which acknowledged Indigenous occupation "thousands of years, before British settlement at Sydney Cove in 1788" (Commonwealth Numbered Acts, 1991). The Council also recognized that in spite of the wrongdoing directed at Aborigines, there had been no formal reconciliation process. The Council agreed, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to:

... seek an ongoing national commitment from governments at all levels to co-operate and to co-ordinate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as appropriate to address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law and justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and any other relevant matters in the decade leading to the centenary of Federation, 2001. (Commonwealth Numbered Acts, 1991)

Despite its promising beginning, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation produced very little.

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In 1997, the Australia government tabled a report 'Bringing it Home', which was intended as a tribute to the thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders impacted by the forcible removal from their families (Indigenous Law Resources, 2003). One outcome was the creation of Sorry Days, a government-acknowledged annual remembrance day set aside as a reminder of those affected by the boarding school project (Asmal, 2000; Australian Government, 2011). However, no further movement in the reconciliation process occurred until 2000, when, building on the Council's momentum, the government implemented the mandatory Racism Noway! Project. Intended to assist Australian educators to both recognize and address racism in the classroom, K-12 children are taught the values deemed the bedrock of a harmonious, racism-free society (Racismnoway, 2012). Part of their curriculum includes colonial Aborigine history. Soon thereafter the government launched Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan, which sought out corporate citizens to advocate acceptance in an effort to close the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and other Australians" (Reconciliation Australia, 2011).

To date, there are many corporate and community organizations participating in this plan. One example is the Clayton Utz Corporation which doubled funding for Indigenous students of Australia (Reconciliation Australia, 2011). Finally, the Australian Parliament issued a 2008 apology for the boarding schools debacle, which nationally is acknowledged as the "Stolen Generations" (Australia Government, 2011). There has not been any further progress in the reconciliation process since the apology in 2008.

### **South Africa: History**

The internationally known South Africa apartheid regime dates to the 1948 National Party victory. Characterized by the physical, legislative, and political separation

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of people based upon the race (i.e., skin colour), for the next five decades people of colour were not legally considered equal with white people (Worden, 2000). This led to strict rules regarding where people of colour could travel and restroom restrictions, for example. Embedded racial tensions led to events such as the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, when upwards of 7,000 people who converged on the Sharpeville police station seeking to turn themselves in for arrest for not carrying their pass books (black populations were required to carry pass books with them when outside their compounds or areas for travel purposes) were fired upon by police. In total 69 people died (Seidman, 2000). Similarly in 1976 a 1976 student uprising in Soweto aimed at removing 'Afrikaans' from school curriculum (a primarily Dutch language that evolved as a limited language to Aboriginal students in South Africa), eventually turned violent followed by police once again opened fire upon the crowd (Asmal, 2000). Many people were killed and/or hospitalized.

After the Sharpeville massacre, several individuals including the well-known anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela were forced into hiding. The African National Congress (ANC) emerged during this period, and governing authorities sought out all associates. Mandela was captured in 1964 and remained imprisoned until 1990. Under increasing international scrutiny, President Frederik W. De Klerk released Mandela and lifted the ban on the ANC (Asmal, 2000). Upon Mandela's release, the ANC and the White National Party began discussions on forming a national multi-racial democracy; and in 1994, South Africa became a democratic republic following the ANC's electoral victory. It was clear leading up to the 1994 election that in the event of an ANC victory substantial changes were on the horizon, and that bringing former colonists and colonizers to the table would be required if stable governance was to develop.

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### **South Africa: Process of Reconciliation**

From 1990 to 1994 South Africa was in turmoil. Sensing its political hold was weakening nationally, the White National Party attempted through aggressive legislative changes and force to remain in power. It was a brutal time period punctuated by “hit squads [and] attacks on innocent commuters” guided by a governing regime that “funded and fuelled a war which it presented to the world as ‘black-on-black’ violence” (Asmal, 2000, p.10). After the ANC took power the new leadership seized upon the opportunity to establish a reconciliation process to stabilize the country. In 1995, Nelson Mandela and former Archbishop Desmond Tutu established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine the events from colonization to apartheid’s abolition in 1994 (Muldoon, 2003). Rather than producing a handful of reports and recommendations, the TRC provided a neutral environment that stressed confession, absolution and forgiveness (Muldoon, 2003). “The Commission was mandated to pronounce on what had been done by whom to whom, why, and what was to be done about these past abuses in our calmer present times” (Asmal, 2000, p. 11). To improve local understanding and stress a common historical experience, all discussions and events were broadcast publically on the radio and television. Afterward Mandela, Tutu and Frederik W. De Klerk, South Africa’s last apartheid president, offered a public apology and reaffirmed their hopes of working together.

Three committees comprised the TRC: the Human Rights Violation Committee; the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee; and the Amnesty Committee. Notably this was the first commission to grant amnesty to perpetrators (Wilson, 2000). In doing so, the commission was successful in establishing an accurate narrative from the testimony of

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victims and perpetrators (Asmal, 2000). The TRC recommended individual reparations totaling \$3,500, although they were never paid out. This was likely due to the lack of public financial resources at that time (Wilson, 2000). Finally, the Public Holidays Act, 1994 initiated a series of national holidays intended as remembrance days. Heritage Day commemorates and honors South African culture and identity: “the day’s events ... are a powerful agent for promulgating a South African identity, fostering reconciliation and promoting the notion that variety is a national asset as opposed to igniting conflict” (South African Government, 2012). Other holidays included the Day of Reconciliation, Human Rights Day and Freedom Day.

### **Evaluating Reconciliation in Australia and South Africa**

It is interesting to note how each country discussed above initiated reconciliation. In Australia for instance little work has been directed at ‘voicing a collective memory’. This is a complicated step admittedly. Many Aboriginal people who suffered historical injustices are not alive to tell their stories, even if their affected ancestors are willing to tell their family. Yet attempts to counter racism by integrating the collective memory into anti-racism curriculum are promising. This further demonstrates conflicting worldviews, whereby Australian officials are hesitant to accept oral traditions in the same way they would written documents, which counters Bashir Bashir’s (2008) model and hinders these stories inclusion in the national narrative. Yes, school children will learn about these events, but what of the current generation’s role and culpability? Arguably Australia also needs to engage the adults to expedite the reconciliation process. Australia has considered establishing its own Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but for now they continue to make minor albeit incremental strides towards reconciliation.

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Australia has apologized for the boarding schools and established Sorry Days.

This is a unique outcome as is the government's attempt to engage the corporate sector to develop and establish programs to improve Aboriginal health and education. Such strategies and programs are as much educational as they aim to redistribute wealth in the spirit of social egalitarianism. The apology however was for just the boarding schools, rather than for more than two centuries of oppressive colonial control. What is missing is a timeline to reconciliation; greater social involvement in reconciliation; and financial compensation for abuses suffered in the boarding schools. Until these last three criteria are dealt with, the current reconciliation process will lack meaning and transformation into the collective we will not occur.

The South Africa reconciliation process was far more extensive, and has been completed based on a much shorter time period of abuse (1960-1994). The collective memory of the people affected by historical injustices was publically broadcast, as were the oppressors' stories. The process has led to a collective story that validates both sides of the country's history. Apartheid's formal abolition signaled an end to the systemic discrimination codified in policy and legislation. White South Africa has in many ways accepted responsibility for its oppressive role and offered a formal and sincere apology, and several national days of commemoration have also been established. The promised reparations have not been delivered, however, and the use of a religious model to guide reconciliation has fostered its share of dissenters. But beyond the ideological difficulties experienced, the model of confession, absolution and forgiveness was both healing in nature and transformational in scope. In this case, although it does not in any way reduce

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its effectiveness, it is not necessarily transferable to other national reconciliation processes (VanAntwerpen, 2008).

As is apparent reconciliation is a fluid concept, and that makes it difficult to establish a universal model. Each country's history informs what reconciliation will mean; hence, each must develop its own processes based on this and its cultural complexion. Notably the existing reconciliation process did not emerge out of vacuum, and it is normative to study other models while adopting certain operational pieces. As the South Africa and Australia reconciliation processes developed early, Canadian officials gravitated to them in their attempts at establishing a process. The following section reviews Canada's historic interface with indigenous populations, and the evolution of its reconciliation process.

### **Canada: History**

'Indians' first contact with Europeans was traumatic. After Jacques Cartier landed amongst the Haudenosaunee nearby Quebec City he kidnapped several 'Indians' for display in Europe. It would be seven decades before Samuel de Champlain would return, and with his starving crew he introduced new epidemic diseases, political processes and economic ideologies. Within decades colonial settlements dotted the eastern seaboard extending into Quebec, and by the late 1600s numerous French and British inland colonies were firmly established. A resulting demographic imbalance compelled the new mainstream society of European settlers to position Aboriginal people on the physical followed by the ideological periphery. Yet Europeans depended on Aboriginal people's knowledge and skills if they were to survive in this new country. Winters were harsh, the land was difficult to navigate and failing good relations with the Native Americans

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survival was tenuous. Despite these early positive interactions soon the combined stereotypes depicting Indians, as both bloodthirsty and noble savages became the lenses by which the colonists evaluated their Aboriginal neighbours, the word savage of central importance. As early as the 1620s in Sillery, Quebec, schooling had been promoted as a means of civilizing 'Indians', and even though the experiment was abandoned the philosophy remained. From this transition point would evolve residential schools.

In 1857 Aboriginal people were formally legally codified as savage with the tabling of the *Gradual Civilization Act*. This is another step and major relationship change between the white European settlers and the Aboriginal people of Canada. In addition to formally identifying 'Indians' as state wards, it defined whom an Indian was for the purposes of determining who was prepared for citizenship. The slow pace of assimilation led to future amendments, and the eventual passing of the *Indian Act* in 1876. The Indian Act included a process of enfranchisement where Indians could obtain Canadian citizenship by relinquishing their ties to their community (Dickason, 2006). This involved abdicating ones culture and traditions, and any rights to land. This would eventually impact who could participate in the modern day reconciliation process. Canada's residential schools were established in the 1880s as a response to the slow pace of Indian assimilation, and a formal policy established in 1892. As discussed in Chapter 2, school administrators forcibly removed children from their communities and preached assimilation. In sum, the schools housed the 'uncivilized' until such time they were deemed acceptable for Canadian citizenship. This betrayal was the break in a relationship that once embraced regularized reconciliation as an aspect of renewing social, political,



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and economic relationships; and one that ironically would demand a new reconciliation process to mediate in the future.

Residential schools continued in this capacity until the 1970s, when control of Indian education was slowly devolved to the respective First Nations, although they continued to operate until 1996. In 1960 with an amendment to the Indian Act, all Natives in Canada were now able to vote in federal and provincial elections. Several important events occurred in this time, which included Canada's recognition, and affirmation of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada, and the recognition of the Aboriginal inherent right to self-government in 1995. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) struck in 1991 studied the historic relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canada, and recommended in 1996 that Canada redistribute political authority and economic resources to reform the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Also, the report recommended that Aboriginal rights be recognized and emphasized a shared ownership and jurisdiction over land (Hurley & Wherrett, 1999). In sum, reconciliation was identified as both a historic theme and a contemporary process worth pursuing.

### **Canada: Process of Reconciliation**

The first attempt at federal reconciliation with Aboriginal people occurred in 1998 when then-Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Jane Stewart acknowledged the residential schools' "genocidal intent" (Matt, 2007, p. 140). The federal government followed by creating a \$350 million dollar Healing Fund. Prime Minister Jean Chretien did not attend the ceremony, however, and did little more than offer a vague apology without acknowledging government culpability. Finally, the Healing Fund was only

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accessible by registered Indians as Canada refused to acknowledge non-registered Indians, Métis and/or the Inuit who attended residential schools (Matt, 2007). Admittedly this failed attempt at an apology presaged the Residential School Settlement Agreement in 2006. So did the nine class action suits filed against the government and its agents for the mistreatment experienced in the residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was then implemented in 2007, led by an advisory committee of residential school survivors. And with South Africa, perpetrators of the past atrocities were granted amnesty. The TRC was provided a \$60 million budget, and the following mandate:

The truth telling and reconciliation process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people and the need for continued healing. This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation.

The TRC was established to formally acknowledge residential school survivors' experiences. This would occur through a process of interviews with and acceptance of written testimonials from former students, their families, community leaders and all interested participants. The TRC's findings and materials are filed with the Library and Archives Canada to not only preserve but also provide public access to this database (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2010). It is vital to record these stories if the healing process is to continue and have any impact, while also offering first hand insights to non-Aboriginal Canadians of the residential school experience.

Reparations have also been disbursed. There is a general formula. Common Experience Process payments of \$10,000 were allocated for the first school year (or part

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of a school year that a First Nations child attended); and an additional \$3,000 allocated for each school year (or part of a school year) after that. The Independent Assessment Process follows whereby First Nations individuals who suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, or other abuses that caused serious psychological effects may be awarded compensation. Payments range from \$5,000 to \$275,000 each or more if individuals could establish a resulting loss of income (Court of Canada, 2011).

Canada also introduced measures to support healing programs such as the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program; in addition to providing an endowment to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009). The Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program” also provides mental health and emotional support services to former Indian Residential School students and their families before, during and after their participation in Settlement Agreement processes” (Government of Canada, 2010). A hotline/helpline was established for those seeking immediate help during the settlement process (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada, 2012). Finally, in 2008, Prime Minister Steven Harper officially apologized and which was recorded in the parliamentary record. The residential schools lingering impacts were acknowledged during the public ceremony and healing measures implemented. This apology has had some lasting impact. For instance, in 2011 University of Manitoba president and vice-chancellor David Barnard apologized to First Nations people for his institution’s historic role in the residential school process, specifically for mentoring clergy who would be working as residential school administrators, and for “failing to recognize or challenge the forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples” (University of Manitoba, 2011).

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### **Evaluating Reconciliation in Canada**

Opinions about Canada's reconciliation process to date are a mixed bag. Stories were recorded from the accounts of residential school survivors' experiences during the truth telling process, but to date most of these stories remain housed in the national archives out of public sight. Former administrators stories and those of others involved in with residential schools have not been recorded and therefore cannot be made public. The collective memory stage of Canada's reconciliation model is fairly weak, and will only be successful when all stories are made publicly available. Further, acknowledgement of these collective memories cannot be achieved until the stories of all residential school survivors and the school administrators and their agents are also made public.

Despite the Prime Minister's apology, TRC commissioners have suggested that Canadian citizens have yet to formally apologize, or more importantly to accept any responsibility in the residential school process. Public awareness is growing, but as the TRC has reported events like the University of Manitoba's president's apology are few and far between, and the general public remains woefully uninformed about this key issue. No national days of recognition such as the Sorry Days have been established, although the distribution of monies to those who applied to the settlement process is a notable strength. What the payments mean to the recipients, and the process leading to the payments is explored in greater detail below.

Finally, transformation is complex and takes years if not decades to complete. Yet Canada set a strict five-year limit on individuals to apply for settlement dollars and have their stories recorded. The timeframe also anticipated healing occurring. As suggested above, the general public is not included in this transformational process, which is a

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substantial weakness considering that healing and resolution, involves two parties. If an individual First Nation person goes through the settlement process, counseling/healing services are provided during and after the process. Counselors and healing services are not provided to families affected by the residential schools and generational trauma is not acknowledged. In sum, Canada's reconciliation process is imperfect albeit not irreparable. Nevertheless, the speed with which the government has tried to complete the process of reconciliation can be seen as political expediency. This is ineffective and a major weakness.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has evaluated three separate national reconciliation processes, the goal being not only to highlight the complexities of reconciliation, but also to critique the existing models to expose weaknesses and to respond in kind with clearer, more finely delineated procedures. With the exception of South Africa, the Australian and Canadian models are incomplete and incremental in scope. To be fair the highly touted South African reconciliation process is unique for several reasons. When the reconciliation process was implemented, it occurred, as apartheid was being phased out and the country was transitioning from a dictatorship to democratic governance (Gibson, 2002). By the time the reconciliation process was fully operational, a government representing those who had been harmed by colonization was driving the process (Gibson, 2002; Kaminer, Mbanga, Stein & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Murithi, 2009; Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2000). Nevertheless, few studies of alternate models for the purposes of establishing best practices exist. In the Canadian context (this is also evident in the Australian context), officials have adopted a product-focused approach to reconciliation that is more

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concerned with meeting arbitrary timelines as opposed to promoting healing and relationship renewal. Such is the nature of political expediency. Saul (2008) and others have argued that First Nations adopt a more holistic approach to reconciliation that is rooted in relationship and renewal, and that a representative reconciliation model will embrace these ideas. This will be explored in more detail below.

What is evident is that previous definitions that stressed reconciliation as two or more groups agreeing to coexist after some form of wrongdoing (Borneman, 2002, Gibson, 2007) are no longer completely accurate. Rather, based on the previous evaluation, reconciliation can now be defined as making up for historical mistakes and actions, recognizing the present as a result of the past, and looking towards a future that evolves from the process required to fulfill reconciliation. However at this point, the Canadian reconciliation process is government driven—perhaps in the hopes of temporal expediency and a quick resolution to the process. Relationship does not appear to be a guiding principle, nor does reanimating historic processes for the purposes of engaging one another. As will be discussed below, and as highlighted by the project participants, the product/non-relational approach to reconciliation is not acceptable, thus calling into question the efficacy of the current process.

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## **Chapter Four – Methodology**

Working in a remote community was both fun and exciting. It required philosophical reflection on my part and preparation, before I could enter the field. The purpose of this project was to gauge the effectiveness of the current reconciliation process for Yukon residential schools survivors and to determine if it is considered a positive approach to relationship renewal. It is evident from the literature review in the previous chapter that Yukon First Nations views about and stories of the reconciliation model have not been explored. Consequently, an exploratory descriptive design as a qualitative approach were chosen for this study. In this chapter, the methodology is discussed, and the research setting and participants described. Following data collection techniques, the process of data analysis, identification of ethical considerations, rigor and dissemination of results follows.

### **Exploratory Descriptive Design as a Qualitative Approach**

An exploratory descriptive design as a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate due to the lack of knowledge about the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000), that is, whether the current residential school reconciliation process is considered a positive form of relationship renewal. As there was little existing literature on this issue, qualitative research was warranted to better understand the issue (the underlying reasons, issues, needs, and barriers). The exploratory descriptive design offered an opportunity to hear about the survivors' experiences, the impact felt by the loss of family and culture, and opinions about the current reconciliation process. Filling in this gap in the literature will help guide future research.

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This approach permits the researcher to opportunity to focus on the participants' experience and to draw out the meanings attached to these experiences (Field and Morse, 1985). Studies of this nature traditionally take place in participants' natural environments (Uys & Basson, 1991). The land defines the Yukon Territory, and this oneness with what can at times be a severe environment deeply affects the people. As a Yukon native, a common connection existed between the researcher and project participants. Exploratory descriptive research design is also flexible in that it provides an opportunity to examine all aspects of the problem under investigation (Uys & Basson, 1991). This was an important consideration for I had little idea of what I might discover heading into the field. The exploratory descriptive design's openness to new information resonated with the researcher and participants, and helped to both identify and describe "a problem area never previously studied or known" (Brink, 1998, p. 309). This research also relied on a descriptive approach, which is best suited in situations where limited existing information is available on a topic (Uys & Basson, 1991). It was also deemed necessary because the experience of residential school survivors with the settlement process is unique for each region, community, and family and individual.

A qualitative exploratory descriptive design allows for a wide variety of research questions to be posed in seeking answers to key questions, and for data interpretation (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, the philosophic framework of exploratory descriptive research provides the capacity to explore the underlying beliefs and meanings individuals attach when interpreting their social world (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009). As per exploratory descriptive design, working with individuals in their natural setting helps them describe their thoughts more readily (Uys & Basson, 1991). Lastly, qualitative



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approaches enable participants to reach deep down and develop rich, detailed answers (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009).

In qualitative research, the underlying beliefs, meanings and interpretations are best “captured through face to face interaction and observation in the natural setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In-depth interviews are frequently utilized to elicit deeper, richer data. For instance, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews that helped to draw out previously unknown details and insights about the reconciliation process. The project participants were interviewed in their homes, offices, out in the bush, wherever they felt comfortable. Qualitative methodology allows for the gathering of information that fits well within the First Nations oral tradition. Trust and rapport generated amongst potential participants was established with the help of my community guide (a local individual who agreed to facilitate contact and guide me in the cultural norms associated with interviewing folks in the community) prior to my arrival in Beaver Creek. The community guide also helped me secure the participants and took the time to introduce who I was to the community members, and also explain the substance of my project before I arrived to begin my interviews. Finally, I had a two-month timeframe to complete the data collection as the hunting season started at the end of August.

### **Person-Centered Interviewing**

Person-centered interviewing is a qualitative method of gathering and collecting data that engages the interviewee as a knowledgeable person who can inform us about the culture and behaviour about his/her community (Hollan, 2005; Levy & Hollan, 1998). In addition, the interviewee acts as a study respondent and offers insights into his or her life’s experiences; in this case personal insights on the residential school settlement

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process. The interviewer moves back and forth between the informant and respondent modes to “illuminate the spaces, conflicts, coherences and transformations” (Levy & Hollan, 1998, p. 336). As qualitative research is designed to explore, describe and obtain an in-depth understanding of human phenomena, it generally entails a smaller but more focused sampling of participants. The person-centered interview method provides the flexibility needed to obtain in-depth stories, which explore participants’ experiences (Hollan, 2005; Levy & Hollan, 1998). The participants are locally contextualized and describe their friends’ and community experiences—in this instance within the settlement process, including the impact of the introduction of the residential school monies into the local political economy.

Person-centered interviewing was an appropriate research method technique for this study. Participants were interviewed in their natural setting (as per exploratory descriptive design). They were interviewed in their homes, in the bush, in short where they felt most comfortable. It was a drawn out process that required patience on my part and sometimes repeating questions to elicit the community experience. In such cases, questions posed tend to be open ended to capture deeper perspectives of the participant’s interpretations of a situation (Levy & Hollan, 2005). For instance, I asked was “What were people’s experiences with applying for the settlement dollars?” (Appendix A). Then to generate more information, additional probes for this question included “your friends, family and other individuals in the community” (Appendix A). Open ended questions and probing allowed participants to reveal additional aspects relevant to their individual experience.

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First Nations in their respective communities are the ones who truly understand their culture and traditional lifestyles. They are the experts. In this case, my one basic assumption was that the individuals and their culture have experienced debilitating outcomes associated with the residential schools. However, because the settlement process had such a negative impact on many residential school survivors, eliciting information about others' experiences in the community were difficult. Participants were wary at the thought of discussing others.

My final interview questions are located in Appendix A. I included general questions to ensure that the participants were in fact from the Yukon, had been in a Yukon residential school, and had received a settlement from the Canadian Government. It was not my intention to precipitate difficult memories from residential schools. It is likely however that even speaking about the settlement and its impacts sparked very painful memories. When this happened, I stopped the interview and asked if the interviewee could continue. In all cases, the interview continued. After asking general questions, more specific open-ended interview questions were provided in the second section of Appendix A. The more specific questions elicited information needed to answer the research questions.

### **Reconciliation as Theoretical Framework**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate (2011) is:

The truth telling and reconciliation process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people and the need for continued healing. This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation.

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This process is not finished and will continue for some time until healing is complete. For some, healing and reconciliation may never occur for their immediate family. Many who have experienced residential schools have died, and healing takes time. Due to the mistreatment of individual First Nation children, this may never happen. However, it does need to be addressed to recognize the wrong done to First Nation children and supported by the Canadian Government through residential schools.

The main objective and use of reconciliation as a framework was to see what Yukon First Nation people thought of the reconciliation process. I used the Canadian approach to reconciliation for my research, which was: apology, truth telling and monetary restitution. Here are four questions I used in my interviews that relate to these processes:

- 1) How do/did you view the apology (good/bad)?
- 2) Do you think that the settlement monies were a good thing for you? Why or why not?
- 3) Do people in your community believe that the Government of Canada/churches have completed the process of truth telling with residential school survivors?
- 4) Do you believe that the Government of Canada/Churches has completed the reconciliation process with yourself?

### **Personal Situatedness**

Working with First Nations people required consideration of my own bias and where I situated myself in society. I am a third generation Yukon resident. My personal credibility and honesty were known regionally. That being said, the lens through which I surveyed the world was from middle to upper class, young, well educated, physically and

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mentally able perspective. My middle class standing alone meant that interviewer and participant were coming at things from a different perspective. In contrast, the participants interviewed were all older than me, the majority White River elders. For the most part their education was limited to residential schools with the exception of two participants who had post-secondary education. All participants were however physically fit given their lifestyle, and all participants were mentally alert.

It is important to be aware of the biases internal to First Nation societies. Some First Nation individuals were hesitant to allow a non-Aboriginal male to interview them, based on Canada's colonial past and residential school experiences. Some saw this as a betrayal of trust. Also, previous negative encounters with researchers who left the community with valuable data never to return to share their findings have left many hesitant to work with white individuals (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007). After reflecting on my data gathering process, the only difficulties experienced occurred when I first arrived in Beaver Creek. Some individuals tried to avoid me and were hesitant to talk to me. This did not last very long and these individuals soon opened up.

### **Setting**

Interviews took place in two communities in the Yukon:

- 1) Beaver Creek, Yukon
- 2) Whitehorse, Yukon

The traditional language of these peoples is Upper Tanana. The majority of White River First Nation individuals lived in or nearby Beaver Creek. Participants were interviewed at their choice of location, which were their homes, the band office or in campsites. Some individuals who have resettled in the territorial capital of Whitehorse

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were interviewed as well. In such cases, I delivered the interview as per their request. I have included a map to show the locations of the interviews.



(Come Explore Canada, 2006)

There are no treaties in the Yukon; hence there are no treaty reserves. Most First Nations have attained self-governing powers through various federal devolution schemes and have completed land claim settlements. The White River First Nation (WRFN) participated in similar negotiations, but was unable to reach a final agreement. Today, still in negotiations with the Federal and Yukon governments they remain under the Indian Act (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2011). The Yukon population is largely integrated, meaning that I was able to enter Beaver Creek without much notification. I did notify the Band Office as per my arrival for good measure (they were welcoming). These issues were discussed with my community guide at length and the time of my entry into the community was agreed upon.

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### **Access and Recruiting Participants**

Participants were recruited with the help of a community guide located in Beaver Creek. This individual is well respected and knows the community and its residents. I made met this individual in Whitehorse, where s/he reviewed my work plan to ensure awareness of my intentions and to recommend suggestions to the research model. I have known this individual for several years and s/he has been a customer/acquaintance of my family for more than two decades. S/he was provided with notes on my study for later clarification, if needed (Appendix A). Engaging in this review process prior to entering the community ensured that proposed study participants fit the pre-determined inclusion criteria. The initial meeting with my community guide lasted roughly one hour as we planned recruiting and meeting strategies.

The community guide signed and dated an oath of confidentiality (Appendix B) and agreed to pinpoint potential project participants and offer them, on my behalf, a Letter of Invitation (Appendix C). The letter: (1) explained my study in detail; and (2) provided my contact information (email and phone number) in case the individual had any more questions (all individuals were able to access me through email through the band office and Yukon Library. Those chosen to participate were provided with my current phone number). In many cases I had to provide individuals a new letter of invitation because they did not fully understand my study (after arriving in Beaver Creek) or had lost the previous one. I read the letter of invitation to the potential participants to ensure they understood the study prior to conducting the personal interview sessions. I travelled to Beaver Creek in the first week of July 2011. The date did not correspond with important ceremonial or cultural events. I initiated the interviews at this point, all of

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which were scheduled at the participants' convenience and took place in their preferred location (e.g., their home or other mutually agreeable locations).

When I was in Beaver Creek, in order to gain acceptance in the community and secure a warm place to stay and the occasional free meal I stained the local restaurant-hotel's deck, I washed some dishes and hauled equipment for the owner. This provided me with a base of operations, if you will, where I could store my supplies and not have to worry about packing and unpacking my truck each day. Second, in order to heighten my local presence, I arrived daily at the Band Office at 8:30 a.m., remaining all day. I was allowed to stay in the kitchen/common area, which faced the common entrance door and hallway. This was a fantastic location especially since, everyone used the area for food preparation and for getting their coffee and/or tea. I developed relationships and regularly had long conversations with various individuals. In this way I also found out about community events, which were going to take place and often found myself invited to participate and observe.

The first event I was invited to was a land management meeting. Then there was a fish camp, feast and a gathering for many community members. Each time I met band members who agreed to an interview. After this experience, I was determined to attend all of the events, trips or other experiences with the White River First Nations people. I also believe that I was accepted more after this experience. For the next two weeks I learned how to look for and gather edible mushrooms and to find and use traditional herbs for tea. I was shown beading techniques from which I made a glove. I had the privilege of being shown White River First Nation's oldest art pieces such as potlatch spoons, fishing nets and general carvings. I was allowed to go out on the land with my



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community guide and attend other meetings including the Premier's travel meeting throughout the Yukon. At this event, I sat with the White River First Nations people while the government representatives sat at their own table and was acknowledged by the minister.

These experiences led me to other participants. In one such case, I was told of an individual living in Whitehorse who loved Beaver Creek water, so I filled two four liter jugs and brought the water to the individual who agreed to an interview. Securing other interviews was not as easy. Many were difficult to locate and pinpointing an exact time and place to meet was challenging. Based on individual schedules, I often had to reschedule interviews. Also, people would just forget and/or leave their community at any given time. In some cases I had to break one interview into two separate meetings due to other pressing community matters.

Finally, participants received \$50, as per ethics approval, in recognition of the participants' time and effort. The participants deemed this amount reasonable and it was used for purchasing gas, groceries, or other expenses. The participants were White River First Nation individuals who were 50 years of age or older (the youngest they could have been the last Residential school in the Yukon was operating). I interviewed eight White River First Nation individuals twice, which achieved my goal of 5-10 participants. Each interview was different in focus, although I did ask questions from the first interview in the beginning of the second interview.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

The participant:

- Was an enrolled member of the White River First Nation

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- Resided in one of two communities (Beaver Creek or Whitehorse)
- Attended a Yukon residential school (for over a year)
- Received residential school settlement money
- Was over the age of 50 years (youngest they could have been when the last school closed in the Yukon)
- Was willing to participate and be interviewed
- Was willing and able to provide informed consent
- Agreed to be audio recorded
- Was comfortable speaking English

### **Data Collection Techniques**

In-depth semi-structured person-centered interviewing was the primary data collection strategy. Two confidential interviews were conducted in English with eight White River First Nation individuals. The interviews were digitally recorded (with the participants' permission) and later transcribed by a transcriptionist who signed and dated an oath of confidentiality (Appendix D).

Each interview lasted between 30 and 80 minutes after which a repeat interview was delivered (n=2 per participant) to obtain sufficient details of the interviewees' experience. Sufficient time was allocated to learn about the participants' experiences. Following each interview, I verbally debriefed with and thanked each participant for her/his time (I also asked them if they wanted to add more clarification to some points, verified how they were feeling after discussing this issue, discussed when we would conduct our next interview). The next interview date and time was established according

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to the participant's convenience. Some of these interviews were conducted immediately one after the other.

My interview guide (Appendix E) contains open-ended questions to cover general topics, which were explored throughout the interview. This guide was developed with the help of my supervisor and committee. The interview guide was pilot tested with a First Nation individual, who was not included in the study. The intent was to assess the clarity and relevance of questions and to establish face validity of the interview guide. I was also able to gather demographic information from each individual (Appendix F).

Study participants were offered the chance to read over their interview transcripts. This was intended to both foster a comfortable research environment and establish a transparent research process, in an effort to secure trust. After completing the transcripts, I delivered them to each individual by their choice of medium (email or by Canada Post). I followed up and personally contacted participants to ensure their receipt of materials. After an agreed upon time period, I called each individual to determine whether they believed that the transcripts adequately reflected what was stated during the interviews. I then proceeded with my analysis. Those not satisfied with their transcripts were provided an opportunity to offer solutions (i.e., discussing removing the problematic sections). This only happened with one participant and it was resolved by making changes to this transcript.

### **Data Analysis**

I used thematic analysis for my data, a method used for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This directly relates to the exploratory

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descriptive design as a qualitative approach given the in-depth exploration of this topic.

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis seemed to be the most appropriate data analysis method for this project. It was clear and a more understandable and effective method of analysis.

In this method of analysis there are six steps. The first phase is to familiarize oneself with the data. My conducting the interviews and reviewing the transcripts with my participants facilitated this process. After the transcripts were prepared, I commenced with phase two which was to generate the initial codes. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89) explain that the researcher has to "systematically work through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identify interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data." Step two generated well over 80 codes on my initial run-through, which I completed using Nvivo 9.

Phase three requires the researcher to search for themes and to consider how different codes may combine to form a larger theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After the coding process was complete, themes became apparent. I was then able to go through my themes and review them, which is phase four. Some of the now identified sub themes were collapsed into existing themes or they were deleted (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Once they were identified, I explored these themes and describe them in chapter 5, which is phase five. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 92) write that each theme needs to have a detailed analysis about what is interesting with that theme and what the story is for each theme and its relationship to other themes.

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Finally, phase six entailed producing a report after constituting a set of completed themes. This step involved a final analysis of the data. “The task of the write-up of a thematic analysis is to tell the complicated story of your data in a way that convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 93). I found the program Nvivo 9 useful for analyzing my data, specifically the speed and the ease of use. I felt comfortable with the program and believed I did a better job of analyzing the data.

### **Ethics: Maintaining Confidentiality of the Data**

The respect and protection of research participants was maintained through an assurance of confidentiality. The digital recordings and transcripts are identified by a code only known by the primary researcher. The consent forms and master list of code numbers were stored and locked in a filing cabinet at the University of Lethbridge. The transcription data was stored in a different filing cabinet at the University of Lethbridge and only my supervisor and I had access to all these interview data.

The digital/audio-recorded interviews were destroyed as confidential waste after they had been transcribed. A password-protected folder on my computer was created for all electronic materials and will be deleted from the hard-drive 5 to 7 years after this study’s completion. The electronic copies of transcribed interviews do not contain any identifying information regarding the participants and the primary researcher is the only individual who knows the secured password. It is important also to note that some participants used their own names for the interview. To protect their identities, I have changed their interview names. Although excerpts of the transcripts were included in the final study, no direct identifying information was used.

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The hard copies of anonymous transcribed information will be disposed of as confidential waste 5-7 years after completion of the study. Participants were informed that the interviews were performed for research purposes only and that any information released into the public domain was not attached to any specific individual. However, they were also informed that there is a risk that their identities could be surmised based on the findings.

In compliance with ethical standards, a letter of consent (Appendix G) was provided to all participants prior to interviews. The consent form included relevant information on key elements of research such as purpose, procedures, time period and a clause stipulating that participation was voluntary; and that the participants had the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without negative consequences (none of the participants withdrew). It also indicated that the interviews were to be digitally audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewee and later transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist. Participants would be excluded from the study if they did not agree to recorded interviews (I had no cases of participants not agreeing to be interviewed). To ensure participants fully understood what the letter was saying, it was read aloud to them prior to the first interview, after which another copy of the letter was provided for their files.

Participants signed and dated the bottom of their consent forms. All participant questions were addressed prior to obtaining his/her signature on the consent form. Once it was signed, one copy was stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Lethbridge and one copy was given to the participant. When I was in the Yukon, these forms were placed in a duo tang envelope and were stored in my locked vehicle. Following each

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interview, the participants were verbally debriefed and thanked for their participation. All study participants appeared to understand and provided full informed consent. Each participant understood both the nature of the study and their involvement. I provided my community guide with notes (Appendix A). This script helped enable free and informed consent.

My supervisor, Dr. Yale Belanger, had access to transcripts; however, he only had the “code number/name” and no participant’s real names were listed on the transcripts. The participants had the ability to choose a pseudonym for themselves at the beginning of the first interview, which was used within the transcript. When choosing an identity, one participant mentioned that code numbers were not suitable. This is what they were referred to as in residential schools and the numbers had negative connotations.

It should be noted that I was working with participants from a small community (Beaver Creek) and/or city (Whitehorse). Although I took every reasonable precaution to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, it is possible that members of the community may know participants. For example, a participant may identify their contribution and as such their participation in the study. Or, interview details may allow readers to unintentionally identify a neighbour’s participation. Accordingly, each participant was informed that absolute anonymity would not be guaranteed.

Furthermore, the community guide also had knowledge of who had been interviewed. This individual was also involved in the interview itself and in the analysis. Please note that the transcriptionist lived in Red Deer, Alberta and does not have any connections to the folks who were interviewed. Both the community guide and the transcriptionist signed an oath of confidentiality.

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### **Trustworthiness**

Guba and Lincoln (1985) propose that the criterion trustworthiness is more appropriate than traditional scientific criteria, for assessing the quality of qualitative research. Their trustworthiness criterion is explained with the following points: credibility, transferability, auditability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln 1985, pp. 236–243).

Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a “credible” conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Therefore, credibility is established when people who have had the experience are able to recognize from the descriptions or interpretations of the data by the researcher, the experience as their own (Sandelowski, 1986).

I was able to conduct two interviews with each participant. This was to ensure adequacy, accuracy, appropriateness, and to add depth to the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Field notes were struck prior to and following each interview describing my observations, recording my thoughts and comments of the interview experience, as well as future areas of exploration. During this time I was in contact with my thesis advisor to ensure my findings were reasonable. Finally, the transcripts of each participant were reviewed by member checks. Each participant was given the chance to review his/her transcripts to change and/or omit any information.

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of this inquiry can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Sandelowski (1986) refers to this concept known as fittingness, which suggests that transferability is closely aligned with the degree to which findings fit situations outside of the study are considered



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meaningful. In this thesis research, an accurate account of data and findings were recorded, and in-depth, thick descriptions of the First Nation residential school survivors' experiences with reconciliation were sought (as cited in, Bryman, et al., 2009b, p. 133).

Auditability refers to the dependability and consistency of qualitative research. It is an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. Accurate and complete record keeping is essential. Any potential research conclusions were supported through thorough documentation of the research process and decisions using memoing and journaling. The final thesis document created an accurate record of decisions made throughout the research.

Confirmability refers to the researcher "acting in good faith" (Bryman, et al., 2009b, p. 133). It is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to meet the confirmability criteria, I used the participant's own words to substantiate the research findings. In addition, regular meetings and conversations with my thesis advisor and committee members helped shed light of any bias on my part.

### **Dissemination of Results**

I followed the OCAP principles presented by the National Aboriginal Health Organization (2007) for this study. These principles are ownership, control, access and possession. Under these guidelines, First Nations people must be recognized as owners of the knowledge gained through research. There must be ongoing communication between the researcher and the people providing the knowledge, so that these data are accurately represented. First Nations people should have access to the data, not only the study findings but also copies of that data upon request. The perspectives of those participating

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in the study must be respected, even if they do not coincide with the perspectives of the researcher, as the research has been built on the relationship of trust.

I addressed these principles in a few ways. Participants wishing to obtain a copy of the summary of the findings of the research were provided an opportunity on the informed consent form to offer a mail/e-mail address. From here I will send them the summary via mail or e-mail upon completing the thesis. I will follow-up with an e-mail or phone call to those participants seeking feedback regarding the final product and the contained findings. This was for my own knowledge and will not impact the research.

A research summary of the thesis was circulated among the interviewees, my community guide, to relevant communities/First Nations, Council of Yukon First Nations, Assembly of First Nations, Yukon College, Yukon Archives and Yukon Territorial Government (Executive Council Office). Any other groups or individuals who may express interest in the thesis project will be considered in the future. I also acknowledged White River First Nations for their help in completion of this project.

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## Chapter Five – Research Results

This study sought to understand eight White River First Nation participants' experience leading up to and their participation in the residential school reconciliation process. This chapter offers an analysis and a summary of the findings. Four central overarching themes emerged from the data, which reflected: 1) the collective memory of historical injustices; 2) preparation inadequacy; 3) paradox regarding monies; and, 4) healing. In addition, all four these themes have subordinate categories described by participants in their interviews (See Appendix H).

### Theme 1: Collective Memory of Historical Injustices

This first major theme describes each participant's life history before, during and after residential schools, and sets the context for understanding the settlement-reconciliation process. The residential school survivors in this study were removed from their families and placed into Lower Post Residential School. Participants identified this isolated residential school as brutal and one in which the children were treated poorly. All of the study participants were subject to some form of abuse: physical, emotional or sexual. In sum, the aftereffects of attending this school were devastating to participants.

Life was quite different prior to residential schools, where people lived in and around Snag, Yukon with their families. Alena elaborates on these living conditions: "We had our grandpa, grandma and our parents and relatives that lived away from the highway. We lived in a remote area. Traders, trappers and gold miners would go through, but we all lived our traditional lifestyle. We hunted, we fished, and we camped out." This could be described as a traditional lifestyle compared to the increasingly dominant non-First Nations cultural norms. For instance, Dianne describes the rite of passage in her

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culture as being “the most powerful thing we (young women) had [or experienced].” To explain, this was a sacred event, which was hidden away and dismissed with disgust by residential school instructors. The community was closer and individuals more reliant upon one another for well-being. For instance, whereas moose were a large provider of meat it also took several individuals upwards of two weeks’ time to track, capture, dress and transport the large animal back to the community. Relationships were important, as was the need for a coordinated effort, as Alena describes: “Oh yes, there was a lot of sharing. In my parents’ and grandparents’ days things were tough; life was tough. Everybody shared with each other. If you got a moose you shared with everybody, because everybody would be in need at that time.”

How precisely did the residential school experience upset this equilibrium?

Previous to the residential schools none of the study participants experienced corporal punishment, nor did they report physical, emotional or sexual abuse. None of them recounted a positive residential school experience. Richard for one explains how he was sexually abused at Lower Post Residential School.

All I know is I was sleeping, the first time, and somebody put their hand over my mouth and told me to keep quiet and lifted me out of my bed and carried me. That’s not willing, I don’t even know what it was called. Offering cigarettes, I don’t smoke, offering me candy, no don’t want candy, I want to go to my bed, I’m tired, I want to go to sleep.

Fortunately not all of the study participants experienced similar encounters. Yet in keeping with the government edict that all Indian children must be removed from their families and taken to residential schools, they were uprooted and taken away. Alena describes being very scared during her time at residential schools.

When I went to residential school, even remembering being very young, being scared, not being able to talk to other people about how I feel and as the years

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progressed, probably from 6 years old to 10 years old, I was actually a scared child. I didn't really interact with people.

Barry explains the difficulty of residential school living after being stripped of his family and the attendant stability. Upon being picked up he traveled by car for the next 12 hours, and would see his family infrequently for most of the year. Punishments were meted out to children who often had no idea what they had done wrong:

And in that school ... it's two months at home and 10 months away from your family ... we were punished ... I would say very severely ... I know of times where my friends were put in the corner because they did something wrong. They were put in the corner and told, don't say nothing, stay there until you are told you can go. I remember this one time, where this young guy, he stood in the corner until he turned around and told the supervisor he needed to go to the washroom. He got into trouble for that ... he was punished more for that ... he had to stand in that corner until he peed himself.

Those operating Lower Post sought to "kill the Indian and save the child", not unlike most residential school administrators nationally. This required aggressively substituting new Canadian norms for what were deemed antiquated traditional ways. This included prohibitions on speaking languages or making reference to culture. As Dianne described how her period was sacred in her culture, she was now subject to humiliation for her body's natural processes.

When we turned to be a woman that was the curse of us. That's a curse on a woman they told us. They just treated me like I was a whore or something...they just really looked down on girls who got that ...I mean God, that's natural. They were just so against girls having their monthly, they were just mean to us.

The collective memory of life after post-residential schools explores participants post residential school lives. These memories tend to be focused on the loss of what could be described as traditional ways, or the building blocks of stable societies. With a limited K-12 education under their belts, and little hope for progress in non-First Nations society, the study participants found upon returning to their communities that they had limited to

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no knowledge of hunting, fishing, gathering, traditional ceremonies, or their language.

Tracey discusses how “Most people don’t know their language. I think they probably understand a lot of it, but they can’t speak it. We were all sent to residential school for years, so most of us lost our language.”

The decades separating their residential school experience had not softened the memories, and for many some of the more difficult memories lingered. Many still deal daily with the after effects, and several have turned to various chemical supports in an effort to suppress or escape these memories. Richard describes his post-residential school life below and the constant memories:

Twenty-four hours a day it’s in my mind. For the last sixty-five plus years. Since then to now. Taking drugs to try to forget it, soften the thoughts, taking alcohol, trying to pass out, forget it, smoke cigarettes, try to do something to forget. I go to sleep, wake up in the evening, watch TV, it’s there. I hate people who say “Just forget it”. I’d like to forget it. It’s impossible to forget. It was such a traumatic thing that happened without you asking for it. And you’re stuck with it until your last breath.

The outcome was a substantial disconnection with family, which many study participants suggested, still influences local relationships. Now that families were no longer as close as previously it was difficult for folks to communicate and ‘open up’ to one another. The common life experience that previously informed relationships, and from which appropriate healing strategies were developed, no longer existed. Alena explains:

Today, I don’t really cry ... I am beginning to now, after 50 I was able to start talking, start interacting with people, but yet I was withdrawn. I never really had any relationships and one thing that I regret was that not knowing how to raise my own children, because we were never taught that. We were sent to one school, we come home 2 months and we didn’t even interact with our parents at that time. I don’t really recall how our relationship was ... it was distant. I had a close connection with my mother, but my father was still distant from all of us. He did provide for us ... but we didn’t have that family connection any more.

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## **Theme 2: Preparation Inadequacy**

The fieldwork demonstrated that individual preparation for reconciliation appeared to be limited, and for most people it was a destabilizing experience. Although it had been 40 years since residential school attendance, the memories remain. So do the broken relationships. Upon further review, most of the participants were disturbed at the process's cold and distant nature. This would suggest not only that the study participants were not fully prepared to engage government officials in the process of reconciliation, but that there were two culturally-distinctive concepts of reconciliation at play that in turn impeded mutual understanding from developing. It is therefore important to explore briefly a few aspects of the process itself to determine where the breakdown in communication occurred. For one, many expressed concern about the apology. But did participants view the apology as a good or bad thing? Was it considered sincere? Further, several participants discussed the need for better consultation with First Nations people prior to formally implementing the reconciliation process. Most pointed to the lawyers' involvement in the settlement process as evidence of this issue. Many identified a need for assistance with financially managing their and other survivors' settlements. Finally, participants revealed that both First Nations Governments and the Canadian Government require better preparation, and needed to prepare the survivors for the reconciliation process.

The data revealed what the survivors identified as the process's impersonal nature, and the feelings of abuse experienced by those who suggested it was they who were on trial. Even worse, many believed that it was up to them to validate their claims even though the reconciliation process was ostensibly intended to resolve abuse the

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federal government already agreed had occurred. For those who experienced brutal abuse this was difficult to accept, as was the adversarial nature of the process that compelled folks to re-live their experiences in public fora. Understandably, many were as a result frightened by the process, as Diane explains:

But I'm pretty sure about what I want, that I do not want to go back and have to talk about what happened to me to a bunch of lawyers and judges that wouldn't even understand what went on there and they're just trying to make sure that we don't get more money ... I don't want to go through that. Why rehash it? It's like being re-traumatized again by a bunch of white people. And I'm totally against. No money's going to cover that. No money's ever going to cover what happened to me in residential school. Basically they just abused, physically abused me.

Alena indicated that the Truth and Reconciliation process was a negative experience. There were a lot of empty promises for ceremonies and healing, and the truth telling in Inuvik was a disgrace. First Nation Elders were flown in to tell their stories, but the hotels' nicest rooms were assigned to government officials from Canada and Germany while the elders were put up in run down motels, many of which had mice:

They were supposed to have a commemoration ceremony here, by the Catholics ... the church offered ... and maybe the people just got too busy and didn't apply or whatever, but nothing happened. They had every other place, like Inuvik, but even that turned out pretty negative to survivors that attended that event.

The study participants all received Harper's apology differently. Most considered the apology to be insincere. Richard for one felt good about the apology at first, but upon further reflection he became increasingly frustrated, in particular at the Prime Minister's lack of emotion. He and others believed that the Prime Minister farmed out the task of writing the apology, which then was presented for the sake of political expediency—just to say “we have apologized”. Richard explains:

It was good to hear [him], but it just tickled me for a while, it didn't do nothing for me really, it gave me frustration. He's a person, I'm a person. Because they voted in such ways that they voted, he's still here, I'm still here. But I've got ...



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abused. And if he did, he's hiding it. Just because he's above me doesn't mean he's got no feelings. He's got the same feelings as me. I'll tell him, I'll see if I cut him we'll see what kind of blood we've got, I bet we're both the same colour.

There was also consensus that the Prime Minister—or at the very least a ranking government official—should personally visit each community and apologize in person. To the study participants, the apology was cold and distant and failed to respect First Nation's protocols stressing the importance of face-to-face interaction and relationship building. Alena discusses how she and her family viewed the apology.

You mentioned about the apology, me and my brothers and my husband just sat there and we didn't know how to respond to what they were saying ... then my brother said, look at him, he doesn't even look sad, the Prime Minister, with what the native people went through and he's apologizing. If you want to be sorry, you should come and see us and tell us. Don't be sitting in Ottawa and say I'm sorry for all your suffering.

To make matters worse, some people didn't witness it on television for many at the time were in the bush. Geraldine suggested that the apology “should have [been] done in person, not over the news” and that “lots of people don't have TV.” Although seven out of eight participants would eventually see the apology, they all deemed it as insincere.

Tracey explains:

The fact that I don't think he used the word ‘sorry’ or apologized when they did the Japanese one, but they did use those words for the Native one. I thought that was really different. I do feel that he was influenced by Australian apology. He wanted to look good. I didn't mind the actual wording in the apology, I was really impressed with it ... considerate. You have a government saying all that they've done wrong.

The majority of participants stated that they had should have been consulted prior to reconciliation occurring, for many felt as though the terms of reconciliation were being dictated by federal officials. In this instance, the reconciliation process was not a moment of personal or community empowerment, but rather the continuation of federal hegemony

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over all things Indian, which in this case included how the apology should be viewed at the community level—simply put, we apologized, now it's done! The speed of the reconciliation process was also overwhelming, and as Blain explains, the apology did not signify that the perpetrators of the abuse had been punished, something most residential school survivors deem an essential aspect of the process:

It really burned me up because everyone in this community and Burwash got burned. That's why I'm trying to rally everyone and say look, we need to get back to the table. Why weren't we consulted? They think, well, in the sixties they weren't bad so we're just going to give you this much. Nowadays, you touch somebody on the tit, you're going to fucking jail. Or you get fired, lose your job and you'll never get another, you're a sexual predator. But these kids here, they get raped every day some of them, and they just got this much, holy fuck, that's not right.

In lieu of substantial systemic alterations, money became the symbol of First Nations-Canada reconciliation. One could postulate that money generally has become an important symbol of political and cultural interaction dating to the land claims processes of the 1970s. What was unexpected was what could be described as the imposed but all the same relevant 'hidden' costs associated with settlement monies, in particular the attendant lawyer's fees. This was another blow for many felt as though they were now being forced to pay for a reconciliation process designed to renew a broken relationship that the Prime Minister admitted was Canada's fault. Dianne for one paid a lawyer nearly half of her settlement believing she would get the full amount:

When our lawyer ... we were supposed to get from the compensation 100% ... this lawyer, his parents went to residential school in BC and here he gives us ½ of ... like I got the settlement ... I sued them for \$100K and all I got out of there was ... he took \$47K.

Richard also wanted to avoid lawyer's fee and keep the full amount in light of his experiences: "I wanted the ... money to myself. I didn't see him in my school at all. I

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didn't see him across from me eating. He and I didn't get into fights. Didn't see him at all. He didn't experience one hour of what I went through. So, but who am I? I try to get the rest of them to understand, I tried my best with everything with them." Finally, Betty suggested that the lawyers were an unwelcomed third party invited by federal officials to participate in a process that should have been exclusive to First Nations and the Canadian government:

I don't think they (Lawyers) should have been allowed to be part of it. It was like a shark feed, to me, you know. When the residential school survivors were given that right to go for compensation. There should have been some sort of safety net or some sort of process where they kind of keep that shark thing from happening with the lawyers. 'Cause the lawyers made a lot of money from the court cases.

Another hidden cost was related to personal financial management. Betty was concerned that no plans were established to help those survivors who were unprepared for a sudden influx of cash. In addition, most of the community members had never dealt with that kind of money.

Some sort of financial management plan should have been in place before the money came in, well this is another case where I think the counseling and you know, something should have been in place for people before even the money was given out. Because people weren't ready.

This could be described as an ethical issue, for what good is the settlement if people spend poorly or are potentially traumatized by their windfall? Such problems should have been anticipated. But Tracey explains that many First Nations members believed that each was personally responsible for their spending habits, and consequently no one intervened with another's spending:

That was a problem you know, when they gave the money, you can't really tell someone how to spend money. Probably could have been lots of financial advice given, but I think some of the people who were involved...I can't remember what government department it came out of or if it was the Indian Commission, or what, but that could have been done, but there weren't ...you know, we agree that

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compensation was warranted for the abuse and for being taken away from families, but we can't tell people how to spend that. So that was a big problem.

Making it all the more difficult: individuals often ignored all financial advice, especially, as Dianne described it, counsel from members of the non-First Nations community:

Yeah, but now, we still got this thing about white people, connected with Lower Post, they were white. So when they come in and try and tell us invest in my company ... like, you can go to hell. We still don't have that trust, 100% trust with white people to this day and I left in 1962.

Acknowledging the Canadian government's absence in this process, several study participants suggested that the White River First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) needed to develop workshops to help people develop better financial management skills. The CYFN did travel to White River to distribute pamphlets to try and encourage locals to consider seeking guidance. Unfortunately, most members, Barry included, did not make the meeting even if many did want to participate. The meetings were limited affairs, where people were told what they "could invest in ... mostly they leave it up to us to decide what we want to invest in. I know we had a couple meetings, I don't know if it was more than that, but I didn't have time to go." Alena suggested that the workshops could have been positive personal and community building events where the survivors could come together to educate themselves on financial management, thus ensuring greater spending power, while also supporting one another. But, "they just let people spend their money as they saw fit, because they felt it was their compensation. The only ones that offered to come out was CYFN, but they just sent support workers that it was their job to do that, just to talk to the community about looking at how they should look at spending some of their compensation dollars. That was it, there was no

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workshop, it was just a talk, information.” She added, it “would have been a smart thing to do. There’s ways that you can invest your money to make it last longer, or start businesses. I think it would’ve been a very smart thing to do, and they didn’t do that”.

Study participants revealed that the First Nations should have been prepared to help each applicant manage their settlement monies. A lack of English proficiency and an absence of local legal professionals meant that most did not fully comprehend the scope of their settlements. Greater First Nations participation would have helped, according to Alena:

A lot of the people didn’t really understand, like the elders, they didn’t understand the process and they didn’t know how to read and write very well, so they didn’t understand a lot of it. Quite a few times, I myself went out of my way to assist elders, I wrote for them to get their records and they did send it to the individual, but I put my name on there because I am just a reference person, I was just helping them.

The Government of Canada’s lack of preparation was also evident, which was a source of concern. For one, rather than grounding the reconciliation process in relationship renewal and ensuring personal healing, finalizing a financial transfer was emphasized. Closure was then expected to have occurred upon receipt of the settlement. For Betty and many others, the monies should not have even been mentioned before a process of healing had been initiated:

What would have helped is the counselling and the people should have been given the opportunity to go to trauma recovery programs wherever, and have counseling prior to even talking about the money, but everyone wanted the money so much. As soon as they started talking about it, you know, compensation, compensation, compensation. And there was just a big rush for the money. And unfortunately a lot of people are being re-traumatized, and people actually have lost their lives because of that.

Others suggested that the government should have moved the process out from behind closed doors, thus ensuring public education and procedural transparency. Instead,

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all steps occurred rather secretly between the individuals and government officials. This was disrespectful. It is disconcerting that those who benefitted greatly from the First Nations abuse experienced—the non-Native Canadian public—were neither participants nor privy to the process. This was considered simply improper for the federal government under the watch of mainstream Canadians was perpetrating the acts being discussed.

Accordingly, Canadians in general should have had a role in the reconciliation process.

This, Richard explains, would have been beneficial:

I think it should've been advertised on the newspaper, TV, radio. Should have made the people realize that what you did wasn't wrong, what happened to you wasn't wrong, wasn't your fault. If that was said, if people heard, they would have come out a lot sooner.

Both Alena and Blain were concerned with how the process privileged those who were better able to explain the scope of their claim to the commissioners. In such case, the more you said, and the clearer you stated it, the higher your settlement. On the flip side, those who were quiet or were unable to speak as efficiently lost out. And, as Alena identified, they were residential school survivors who were the most traumatized by their residential school experience and should have been privy to higher settlements as a result:

We all went to Lower Post Residential school, some are very quiet, some have suffered a lot. Because they say very little and they hold things in... I guess what I am saying is, the more you say, the more you get. Some of them are so shy, they are very scared women. They could talk to me, one on one, but if they go to a lawyer, they ask what happened to you? They say, Oh, this happened; oh, I got hit ... so, not too much happened to you?

Blain expressed similar frustrations, specifically the disturbing procedural informality. His one example was how ill-prepared those transcribing his experiences were to handle what they were hearing:

You talk to people from when they started that new process, and you have people in their answering phones who don't know jack shit about it, or weren't even

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prepped to talk to people with that sort of experience. They weren't some of them, just like machines, fill out this, fill out this, call your lawyer.

### **Theme 3: Paradox Regarding Monies**

Although many deemed the financial settlement as problematic, paradoxically many study participants' initially deemed these monies to be a blessing. To most, it would help with their poor financial situation thus enabling them to leverage a better life. Yet the money was also considered tainted, and as such many believed that nothing good could come from what was deemed blood money. Quickly the anticipated and actual settlements altered and shifted relationships with both loved ones and friends. In sum, a tension existed whereby the settlement money was seen as good and evil, constructive and destructive, and interestingly portrayed not as a static entity but rather as an animate force one had to properly respect given its potential destructive nature. More to the point, in each context the money's meaning changed. This did not stop people from evaluating their settlement in relation to their experiences, and in the end many study participants perceived their settlement to be low. Making matters worse were the common albeit false rumors that similar apologies and settlements resulted in better outcomes for Chinese and Japanese victims. Why was this? Many First Nations asked why did not they receive more money. Also, some of the participants wondered why the government did not pay for those predeceased relatives who also attended residential schools.

Initially upon receiving the monies the participants were skeptical of its personal value, and this helps highlight the tension between anticipating and actually receiving the settlement. Ironically as a symbol of reconciliation in the beginning, the money was deemed a positive force. After receiving it the money took on a more sinister force by altering various relationships. Blain describes his feelings:

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I held off for a few years and finally they said well, maybe a settlement. And when I got the money, I didn't really want it. Bad luck and everything that was associated, bring all that shit back. Most of the people who got the money they went back to drinking again. Some of them had been sober twenty, thirty years. Bad memories, they started drinking again.

Furthermore, the money in many ways became a physical reminder of his experiences as long as it remained unspent. Once it was gone, so too were the associated memories thus leading to what Blain described as a sense of normalcy:

When we did a little travelling here and there, just got rid of the money. Once the money was gone, it was just phew, man. Then everything went back to normal again. To us, normal. There was just something there that I associated with that money.

Richard elaborated on the negative connotation associated with the settlement monies, specifically how it influenced local relationships:

Oh yeah, some started more alcohol, with vengeance. "I got money and nobody can tell me what to do with it." So they're buying with a vengeance and negativity, not realizing they were killing themselves. I saw, thirty years, just coming to March 16<sup>th</sup>, saw more drugs, alcohol, smoking.

Dianne's view of money as no good came from her father:

NO, no ... my father brought me up ... Billy brought me up that money was nothing. He said it was like toilet paper, you could wipe your butt with it, but I found that out ... but I still need money to pay my bills and that, buy a little food and I am happy with that and I just give my money away. If people need it, I give it to them, but not for alcoholic beverages.

'Blood money' was the phrase frequently employed to describe the settlement monies. For example, as Dianne graphically stated, "I just wanted to get rid of it, like I ... like I explained the other day, it was like blood money. I had blood running from my body ... so I just considered it blood money. I wish it never came up, because I wasn't thinking of that part of my life. I had gone ahead with my life and here it comes up." She added,



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You know, with the welts on our back from a strap. Welts on our hands ... they strapped us with a horse strap until we bled. They did the same thing with our back and our bum. And with this one here...and with my head when it was all full of sores, they took an electric razor and pushed sores and pus and everything ...opened the whole ...my head was running with pus and blood. And they didn't care, they wouldn't even give me aspirin. So I shed a lot of blood there.

Geraldine also spoke of blood money:

Through other people and also for themselves, because they feel sorry for themselves, because they know what that money is for ... where it came from ... and the memory of it I guess. Lots of them ... not all of them, but lots of people do that.

Oftentimes the settlements caused relational rifts in families, which led to several emotional responses when the issue of the settlements was raised. Arguably older beliefs about the need to share and notions of reciprocity still informed community norms, which suggests that family members anticipated a share of the settlements. Substantiating this point were the study participants' fears and worries of how to embrace the past, and their corresponding inability to determine precisely how to use the money or to clarify what it meant personally. Blain for one discusses the tremendous tension that resulted from his settlement:

It was just bad karma associated with it. Some people who had been married for thirty years, they spent the money and blew the family apart. Everyone who got some money ... when I got it, I just, you know, here, here, here, here, just gave it to them. Whatever they wanted. Then I bought a truck, car, snowmachine, four-wheeler. I had about, I don't know, sixty, seventy thousand left. Didn't know what to do with it. I told my wife that it was really getting to the point where it was bad. We'd been together for twenty-some years, thirty years, and just holy man, it was unreal. What it brings with it. I mean, I was working highways and I got money, pension and everything saved up there. Had a lot of money, but it never affected us, because you work for it. But when this money came in, she was just like, spend it, get it out of here.

These and other tensions extended beyond his own family. Blain noticed these conflicts in other residential school survivors' families as well, stating that "Everybody

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just didn't want to keep the money as a lot of things were associated with it; so there was a lot of break ups, there was a lot tension between the families, people wanting money.”

Finally, many of the participants felt like some people would try and take advantage of settlement receivers. This was only while the survivors had money. Betty discusses this issue:

As for others that were just given money and people took advantage of them. People that would never even offer you a car ... a day in your life, they didn't even know you, but as soon as you got compensation, you were their best friend. “Hey, I've got a car for you”. And after that all their money is spent like that. I've seen people go into the bars and people would just be their friends. They had tons of friends. Today they are down and out, and do you think the same people would even look at them? No.

As suggested above most of the study participants considered their settlement to be substandard. Alena explained that in her opinion the government capped the amount of money available to each individual. Despite the significant amount of money disbursed, she also noted that per capita payments were quite low. Ideally, she would have liked to receive more money due to her abusive experience:

I thought it was good that the government had stepped up and AFN had fought to at least get compensation for First Nation people. Because there were so many, the amount was so low. They said there was a lot of money given, but that's the whole population of native peoples throughout Canada. That's a high amount of people.

The money however was not seen as a personal reward so much as a means of enabling the community to establish language and culture revitalization programs. This made sense to Blain, who deemed it an inequitable exchange for the loss of language and culture from the residential school experience:

They get away with everything ... then they come back and they give the survivors a few \$100K and we were supposed to be happy. I think they should have listened to what I said, a \$1M to begin with and then \$500K every year until that language is back up and the cultures are back up in the community and then

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they can just fade that program away.

Geraldine likewise expressed her unhappiness with her settlement. Furthermore, she was uncomfortable with her lawyer, and did not wish to divulge her abuse. Reflecting on the entire process, she believed her experiences entitled her to a higher settlement. Bluntly stated, “I would have expect to get ... not ... instead of \$20K I should have gotten about \$60K or something. Because of them I lost most of my teeth when I was there. I never told a lawyer that, I should have.”

Some of the study participants noted that individuals who had died from their residential school experience should also receive retroactive compensation payments. Some family members wanted this and others did not. Dianne’s view is as follows:

My brother went to Lower Post residential school, I mean, good Lord, am I going to profit from his death? That’s what I think, and yet I look at other people and they want their brother or sister or aunt’s money. But their gone! Leave them alone.

Blain countered Dianne. Others spoke about predeceased friends and family members who deserve compensation. The living relatives could receive the settlement. It should be noted that ancestors have an ongoing place in First Nation communities—their names are passed on and their stories are remembered. Blain’s viewpoint illustrates these points:

Canada should have gave them a settlement regardless if they are dead or not. The abuse that they put the kids through was the same abuse that they put their families through, they destroyed families. The family went home and to them they weren’t no good parents...how many years we raised our kids in the community setting and they just took that away. I think that Canada should have settled with the people, even they are deceased. That’s why I never accepted that apology, I told government I will never accept your apology until you deal with those elders and the people that died from that abuse they’re the ones that should have gotten the settlement. First, before the people are living ... they should have got it ... because they died because of that. It’s like pre-meditated murder.

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The issue of former residential school attendees who died as a result of their trauma, weighed heavily on many of the participants. Geraldine's view is not necessarily about receiving money for the dead, but about despair for how many people died.

And to me, any sensible approach was just wiped out of the way, and it was kind of a push for the money. Unfortunately nobody really thought about all the lives that were going to be gone, I know a few people, I could maybe count, who passed away because of getting their monies. Well, getting their monies affected their deaths.

There was a common discussion topic on the fairness of the settlement. Rumors that the Chinese and Japanese had received better compensation packages were rampant. Following some research Blain reflected on the two experiences. Despite the dreaded head tax, in his opinion the Chinese experienced less abuse than the residential school survivors. He also compared his experience to the Japanese men he believed were paid much more for far less abuse suffered.

You know the way they categorize your trauma that you got into money. Like if you got spanked, verbal abuse, etc, if you add all that up—they had it there—I don't think it was the amount that should've been. Let's use the Chinese guy. He got verbally abused, never got sexually abused, but he got verbal abuse and he got 9 million dollars. And we've got 20 other issues compared to 2 or 3 that the Japanese had. We had every category you can think of. And if you sat there and said sexual abuse would be top priority, and it was in 2004, and they turn around and give us a little bit of money ... that physical, mental abuse that affected you forever. And they come down, give you 150,000. I just don't see it.

Richard felt as Blain did, that they deserved more compensation especially if other groups were receiving much more money for far less abuse.

We probably should've asked for more. And I heard the Japanese people were getting a million dollars for what they went through and I went through worse things than what they did. You know? So. Oh well. Over and done with now.

Finally, Alena explained that she believed the Chinese process of application was far less troublesome. She notes that people received a sum of money for abuse. To her,

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this is how the application process should have been prepared for residential school survivors.

Well, receiving compensation for our residential school suffering, I feel that ... it actually isn't like ... if you look at other people getting compensations for abuse, they had gone through, when they put the encampment of the Chinese people in Canada into a camp, and each one received \$250K and no complaints. No questionnaire, nothing, just gave it to them for their suffering. For residential school children to suffer more drastic effects on them, I feel that it wasn't fair.

### **Theme 4: Healing**

The fourth and final theme identified is healing. This was considered by the survivors to be the most important step on their path to reconciliation. Everyone was clear that the only true path to reconciliation is to first become healed, and that because healing has not occurred, most are not prepared to reconcile. Those further along the healing path are able to articulate their experiences and pursue reconciliation. This extended to the survivors' parents and children, all of whom must also heal from what is a collective experience.

Participants envisioned healing as the first step towards reconciliation. For all of the abuse and the years of regret and sorrow experienced, it is not easy to simply say, "I am ready to reconcile". Help is needed to gently guide folks to realization that what occurred was not right, and more importantly that it was not their fault. Participants highlighted the need for a better reconciliation process not reliant on compensation. Alena emphasized that healing should have been sought after first: "So receiving that compensation, in a way it should have been a different system. It should have been kind of set up a little different, where someone could actually help them seek healing". Richard explained that those who are already partially healed tend to be more open minded and adaptable to change.

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Others are already out of alcohol and all that, they're more open minded, 'cause I think the healing had already started all along with them, they started to help others, and help their kids, help their wives or husbands, but then they had control.

Participants explained that meeting other survivors and being able to discuss what happened at the schools with others is very important. Alena explains that is important for healing.

I believe there is a way they could do that. It's a new process...when it came out about healing, forgiving...people have to be able to heal first, get together, meet and talk ...usually the information didn't come from the government, it came from the First Nation government.

The participants suggested that discussing their experiences with other survivors would be easier and more constructive. Alena explains:

I think a lot of us suffered a great deal at residential school. We lost our language, our culture, our heritage, our identity ... actually, a lot of us didn't have no pride or feel happy that we are native, because that's what we were taught. We were taught native people is no good and it still goes on today. But I think if more was done, more healing programs, more counseling to the person that's a survivor I think it would have helped a lot of people, going that route, or at least providing a little bit more extra funding.

Some survivors had begun their own healing prior to Canada initiating its reconciliation process, thus beginning their healing journey, a commonly used term describing a journey from sickness, injury, difficulties and addictions, into better health. The other term that is often used is healing path. Healing is a process that begins with a first step. This can entail going to a hospital and healing from injuries to checking into addiction centers, to pursuing counseling to develop strength and resilience. Telling your story and grieving the difficulties you have had in a community workshop setting is another important part of the participants healing journey. Every healing journey will be unique: every journey is a personal story. Alena explains how "some [individuals] were

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fortunate enough, and most that do that are people that are already on their healing journey. So they are the ones that would make the best decision possible with their funding”.

Betty supports Alena’s views: if an individual is on his or her healing path they will make better decisions. To her, if the monies were released after an individual had begun this journey, the monies would be used more wisely.

It would fall under that group I’m talking about, there’s people who are addicted and not on their healing path, and so any leftover monies go back to that lifestyle. But there are probably a segment of residential school survivors who were on their healing path and who gave a lot of the money away and may have started businesses. I haven’t heard of it myself, but I do know of people who are survivors who run businesses in the Yukon that may have benefited from the monies. And they’re successful businesses.

The next few quotes are further examples of my participants healing journeys. Again, all of them tell a different but related story. It depends on the individual. Blain discusses how his journey was riddled with alcohol and remorse. He managed to escape this reality by a sudden change in his thought processes.

I would have died like that too, but I was strong enough to say I am not going to die like that. I was drinking a bottle of vodka a day and I was teaching school, I was teaching physical education, I was teaching kids. I think about it today and I think that was really stupid on my part. I drank a bottle a day, I had a big thermos, I would put vodka in there in the morning, mix it, and I would drink that all day. One day I woke up and it was just like...I heard some more people died in Whitehorse, they were drinking Lysol and stuff like that...this was people I went to school with. This one guy, Gerald Joe, we called him Elvis because he had a crooked mouth, he was good natured, he was an “A” student, he was just really highly intelligent, he died on the street, drinking Lysol. When I found that out, I woke up one morning ...asked ‘What the hell am I doing?’... killing myself just because of them? That was what they wanted us to do, they wanted us to die. So I woke up and said, no, I am not touching that shit no more and I walked away from it and never touched it again.

Betty’s method for her healing journey was a trauma recovery program. There are programs available in Canada for victims of a difficult past. However, they are not solely

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designed for residential school survivors. This program included other Canadians who had suffered wrong in different ways. She also mentions other ways individuals have or could begin their healing paths.

Individual healing programs, yeah. But like I say, not everybody's ready, so you can't force people to become well. Some people do different things. Stan did the religious way. I did mine through a trauma recovery program, years of therapy. Other people do it through music maybe. It's when you get into the addictions, like the workaholics, shopaholics, alcohol and drugs, when you're in that environment, and you're offered a huge amount of money, it's dangerous.

Residential schools affected several generations. The first two generations became the grandparents and parents of the children taken away to attend residential schools. The children of the first two generations of survivors comprise the subsequent generations. In this process residential school survivors never learned how to raise their own children, which often resulted in parents who were distant and emotionally unavailable.

Betty discussed how her parents/grandparents were so badly traumatized by their children being taken away. She was one of the youngest children whose older siblings had already attended the schools. At this point, her grandparents had learned to dull their pain with alcohol, which had significant impacts.

Impacts, you know, when I talk about, when I was taken away, and then after that, what do people do? They drink. Alcohol came in, mental illness began, and coping, how to cope, kill the pain. Basically, when I was born, that's what my grandparents and parents were doing. I remember, they would drink, and when they drank, it was like being in hell, they'd just be trying to kill each other, fighting each other, and then they'd sober up, and it would be like paradise again, until they got more money. And then vicious cycle of addiction would start again.

Emotional pain caused by separation from their families, the rules to not touch each other or talk in their own language, made it so residential school survivors did not know how to bond and connect with their children. Alena discusses how she had a difficult time at the schools, which also did not prepare her for parenting duties. In



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response a second-generation healing program was developed at beaver Creek, and Alena provided the rationale for insisting that her children participate:

Some of the community members were healed already and they brought up the idea of starting to heal our children. For myself, I had three children and I wanted them to see ... at least a clearer picture of what happened to me as a survivor. I wanted them to see exactly what happened. Its fine and good that I explained it to them, but with this workshop, they are beginning to see. They just had their second meeting and they are beginning to feel positive. They haven't really talked to me about it, but maybe in later years they will. But they are beginning to see where the survivors are coming from, what happened to them and why they are the way they are.

Dianne expands on Alena's views of the second generation healing program by explaining how her parenting was not suitable after the residential schools. This program may be the healing her children need. She believes strongly, that healing needs to be started with her children and this program is the way to accomplish this goal.

That's all I live for now, because I did so, so wrong ... just some of the things I did to my children, the way the nuns taught me. I thought that was the way to be a mother and it wasn't. I beat them to within an inch of their life, if they didn't do what I told them. I apologized to my children, they forgave me, but now I want them to start healing.

It was evident that the main study participants remained caught in the pain of the past, but how they had moved beyond reconciliation. Their terrible histories with residential schools have made it so that the Canadian government, no matter what they do will never make up for the past. Barry explains:

I mean that ... I mean there was a lot of us that went to a residential school, but like the people I went to school with, I would say about ¾'s of them or us, are already dead. The money didn't have very much meaning at all, really. Because, I mean they pay us for ... the wrong that they did...the things that they did with us, we gonna keep it ... we gonna have it ... they can have the healing programs and whatever else, but it's not going to go away. It's ... to us, it's never going to go away. We are going to die with it. We can spend all the money they give to us, but it's not going to change.

Dianne reiterates that the government will never make up for the past

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mistreatment of the survivors. “They will never make up for what happened. That’s the way things happen to kids, bad things”. Finally, Blain explains how he is unsure if survivors such as himself will ever forgive the Canadian Government and if reconciliation will ever work with residential school survivors.

I don’t know if that will ever happen. I don’t think it will ever happen. Not to the point where we say oh, okay, we forgive you. Sure, some of them will put their names on the newspapers and say oh, we forgive these people. That’s bullshit. You’ve never ... It’s just some people. They don’t give a shit. They have their name put on a piece of paper saying ... you know. Saying, okay we’re now going to accept our apology and all that stuff. I don’t know. I don’t think it will ever work out.

Others who have gone down the healing path are beginning to move towards reconciliation. This seems like the plausible starting point for Canada’s reconciliation process. Betty admits that she and other Canadians may never fully reconcile. However, she also notes that there needs to be healing. To her, if healing is pursued with not only the survivors, but subsequent generations as well, reconciliation may be possible in the future.

I don’t think they can ever give us back what they took, I don’t think they can ever give me back what they took, but I know, I think that, with the healing that I’m doing for myself, I can try to get well on my own, but I think the only good that they can do, like I say I don’t think they can ever fully reconcile what they did to us, but I think they should be responsible for putting money into healing programs. They have the money, they’re very rich, the churches, the government ... well, it’s our tax money, they’re very rich, but that’s something that they can do, I think and I think they should continue working with my generation and maybe two or three generations ahead. In the future.

### **Conclusions**

The reality and experiences presented in this chapter on reconciliation are stark. Residential school survivors’ testimonials actively challenge our collective view of Canadian history as one of benign nation building and of ourselves as culturally

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accepting. After voicing their residential school-related histories, participants explored their experiences with the reconciliation process. Many explained that this process was ill conceived, and that the Canadian government was not properly prepared. This lack of consultation was a sticking point for most participants, who contended that the process would have run smoothly had the latter occurred, and that the First Nations should have been provided with more support in this process as well. Handing out money at the beginning of the process was deemed unsuitable and created more problems than benefits. Healing was identified as the more appropriate and respectful starting point. Had this been accomplished, many of the money-related difficulties, such as the money taking an animate form, could have been avoided. As I suggested above, it is evident that reconciliation is government-driven and product-oriented, whereas it should ideally be between two groups of people for the purposes of rectifying wrongdoing and rebuilding damaged relationships.

On a more personal level, the project participants in many ways transcended these issues to focus on community healing. Suspicion of the Canadian government never dissipated, but that was considered one issue in a larger process. Community members also engaged in the process to have their voices heard, to challenge a sordid history, and to make peace with their demons. Many sought the settlement monies for the purposes of starting new economic chapters. Healing was vital, both personal and community. The frequent interface and close proximity of First Nations to the mainstream Yukon population suggests that awareness of the residential schools is greater, and so too is understanding about the attendant problems. Yukon schools and the territorial counseling community actively engage the survivors and their families through healing programs

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and local reconciliation.

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## Chapter Six – Conclusion

The original purpose of this study was to identify the positive benefits of the residential school settlement monies use, and I entered the field naively thinking that the study participants would simply emphasize these issues by regaling me with tales of the settlement's positives. However, it became clear rather quickly that most of the study participants were not prepared for the resulting influx of money, and that I would need to spend time unpacking this complex relationship. A second line of investigation came to dominate this research process, specifically the study participants' attitudes about the federal reconciliation process and whether it was considered an effective approach to relationship renewal. Employing person-centered interviewing, the research questions guiding the study were as follows:

- 1: How have Yukon First Nations used residential school settlement monies to revitalize their traditional ways?
- 2: How has the residential school settlement money been used by Yukon First Nations in other ways such as economic development, education and sports?
- 3: How did participants view the reconciliation process presented by the Government of Canada?

As is common with most projects, these were not the original questions I started with, but rather it is a set of reformulated questions that reflect the issues the study participants both sought to discuss and have me investigate. Whereas I was more concerned with how the settlement monies were being utilized, as explained in Chapter 5, had I ignored the deeper dynamics associated with both the settlement monies and the process itself I would have overlooked the complexity of meanings that emerged. By

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altering my approach, the participants had the opportunity to express what was meaningful to them.

As has been identified residential schools were an incredibly destructive force for many First Nation in Canada (e.g., Miller 1996, Milloy 1999). And, as demonstrated above, the trauma experienced by residential school survivors is not only lived out daily, but the federally-developed processes seeking to bring closure were not well thought out, were ad hoc in most cases, and had the potential to exacerbate distress and ultimately do more harm than good. This thesis is important in that it provides one of the first in-depth explorations of the Truth and Reconciliation process, and it provides a community-based perspective into the aftermath of a process of resolution and its continuing impacts. While it was difficult to explain from the study participants' perspective precisely what they experienced, and ultimately what was personally stripped from them in the process, I believe this work has offered a glimpse into First Nations perspectives about the existing reconciliation process, and the systemic issues undergirding what was presented as a flawed process.

Finally, the thesis exposes two working perspectives of reconciliation. The first is the First Nation perspective, which seeks dialogue and relationship renewal in addition to financial remuneration for abuse suffered. The second is Ottawa's approach, which stresses financial payments as a salve for abuses suffered and fails to consider the need to renew damaged and disordered relationships. Not unlike how First Nations and the first settlers had a common understanding of treaty (albeit not a nuanced cross-cultural appreciation of what the other party was seeking ultimately to acquire from negotiations), the two approaches to reconciliation while on the surface appearing somewhat similar are

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indeed irreconcilable. This suggests that true understanding cannot occur according to the existing model. Hence reconciliation cannot occur.

Yet Canadian officials publicly promoted their reconciliation process as a means to resolving historic injustice by bringing together First Nations people and the general population into a neutral forum to resolve their differences. The outcome, as Kymlicka and Bashir (2008) contend, is to build a new and collective “we”. Flaws are immediately evident. For one, the elected representatives representing the Canadian public have a limited understanding of the residential schools’ true horrors, as do most Canadians (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012). This suggests that the general population has not actively participated in the reconciliation process, suggesting further that from Canada’s perspective relationship renewal is not the primary outcome. Instead a quick resolution characterized by a financial payment for pain and suffering is deemed appropriate. Generally ignored are the heartbreaking stories conveyed by the study participants: the tales of abuse and separation from family, of returning to families lacking the knowledge and language and parenting skills needed to advance the community according to traditional ideas. These stories not only expose individual and collective hardships, but they also indict an uninformed Canadian public under whose watch these events transpired. Hence to simply speak events to commissioners is not sufficient. The public really needs to hear the stories to fully appreciate their role, something the study participant identified.

It is disconcerting to evaluate the Canadian government’s approach to reconciliation, specifically its failure to investigate and implement existing and successful models being utilized internationally. For example, the South Africa reconciliation model

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employed public broadcasts to convey stories of apartheid's lingering effects to the general population thus connecting the two groups that needed to be reconciled (Asmal, 2000). Arguably had this type of information been made readily available across Canada, residential school survivors may have felt that they were understood and respected. The lack of face-to-face interaction however was debilitating to most study participants, who believed that the process was not about working to resolve historic injustice so much as it was about political expediency to cast an ugly episode to the dustbins of history. This is best characterized by the Prime Minister's apology, which many in this study did not initially see on television. In fact, most were forced to seek it out after the reconciliation process had been initiated. Although most Canadians may have been exposed to brief media reports, the fact that Canadian officials did not even take the time to visit First Nation communities to personally deliver the apology in many ways set the stage for the reconciliation process. Since the apology was considered insincere, the attendant policies related to reconciliation were deemed likewise insincere.

This barrier to reconciliation in the Yukon is likely being played out regularly across Canada, making it difficult if not impossible to improve First Nations-Canadian relationships given the perceived insincerity of one of the two parties. Although it is not reasonable to suggest that the process needed to be perfected prior to being employed, it is also not unreasonable to suggest the Canadian government take additional time to work out some of the more substantial weaknesses. For instance, the process itself—from the apology to applying for the monies followed by cataloguing personal hardships in public fora—appears limited if not potentially damaging. That no consideration was given to the need for support and healing, and the federal government demanded the involvement of



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third-party lawyers thus stripping folks of a portion of what were identified to be already lacking settlements, further highlights a lack of consideration. In the same way that the money became a symbol of the settlement process, federal officials' demands that one process be adhered to is also telling.

Finally, once the process was completed and the cheque was cut, as it were, study participants cited a lack of education regarding financial management as a further destabilizing influence that negatively impacted the survivors. Many stated that until the money had been spent it was a constant reminder of their residential school abuse, as was the secondary abuse heaped upon them by an inconsiderate Canadian bureaucracy utilizing a flawed reconciliation model. First Nations leaders were not immune from criticism, as many study participants highlighted a need for educational workshops to both prepare survivors for the influx of money and the financial management skills required to effectively invest and spend. However, upon further reflection the traumatic experience of reconciliation combined with the negative symbolic value of the settlement monies suggests that these workshops would have likely had limited utility.

It is suggested that the complexity of the process was exacerbated because the money itself took on an animacy that had the power to affect local relationships, something neither the participants nor the government anticipated. This had the effect of complicating how study participants approached reconciliation, which in turn became a significant distraction. This in many ways resonates with Duran and Duran's (1995) discussion about the life force associated with alcohol, and the protective measures people need to take when alcohol is near or inside one's home. The message here is that money is a potentially destructive force and one must take precautions against offending

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the money. One also must remain mindful of money's power to create power over others in the relational network, which in turn could lead to instability affecting all. This was seen in the resulting arguments between relatives and people who sought to try and take advantage of the survivors. A *Calgary Herald* (2009) article entitled "Residential School Cash has a Deadly Fallout" highlighted some of these issues, focusing specifically on the alcohol and drug use, deaths and harm associated with the Common Experience Payout and the participants' negative experiences.

As Corntassel and Holder (2006) have concluded, monies should be given before any discussions of rebuilding relationships can take place. But, as described above, Canada does not consider relationship building to be an integral component of reconciliation. And according to the study participants, healing is required prior to either relationship building occurring, or people being properly prepared to accept the responsibilities associated with the settlement monies. In either case, Alfred (2008) has argued that massive restitution payments for lost land, and other forms of compensation are required to help remedy past injustices. Lacking this massive restitution reconciliation is impossible. Many study participants echoed Alfred's concerns, albeit from a personal perspective suggesting that even though the money could be potentially harmful they deserved financial compensation for their residential school experience. After all, how could individuals reconnect with family, friends, and the land without proper and culturally appropriate programming in place? The expense here would be high, and settlement dollars were deemed appropriate to fund such programming. The issues surrounding the financial compensation were both paradoxical and painful as the term 'blood money' attests.

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Corntassel Chaw-win-is and Tlakwadzi (2009) have concluded that programs to facilitate healing are perhaps more appropriate than a lump sum payout. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently released several recommendations emphasizing healing in the form of programs for survivors and later affected generations. The results of this research indicate that healing programs for First Nations survivors and those subsequent generations affected. As the study participants identified, reflecting the academic literature examining First Nations healing, people need to reconnect both with themselves and their community. That said healing is also required prior to First Nations being able to actively participate in improving their relationships with non-Native Canadians. Consequently reconciliation is not possible prior to healing. Those who have begun their healing journeys are more likely to say the settlement process promotes healing in some way, however, whereas those who have not started their healing journeys are more likely to say that it made no difference, or that it hindered their healing (Reimer, 2010). It seems that a more positive approach towards reconciliation occurs when healing among First Nation individuals has begun. Finally, the process is not considered a personal issue, but rather a community issue that is also intergenerational in scope, in that the harm perpetrated against grandparents, for instance, has ramifications for the current generation.

### **Limitations of this Study**

This study has some clear limitations. First, it was centered on one group of First Nation in the Yukon Territory. Had I conducted interviews with in other First Nations communities the results would have likely been different. This was also a very small First Nation (population wise). Their perspectives could be different than another First Nation

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individual who lives in a First Nations community with a larger more dense population.

As there were so few people to interview participation in my study was not random: it was convenient and purposeful. I was very fortunate to get both males and females to provide gender balance. The participants attended Lower Post Residential School, which was a very long distance from their homes. They only usually went home in the summers. Their perspectives may be different than individuals who lived closer to their residential schools and could go home a few times a year. All of my participants had very negative experiences at Lower Post Residential School. Had they attended a different residential school, in which all participants did not have negative experiences, their perspective on reconciliation may have been different.

Finally, I am a non-First Nation individual. Had a First Nation member completed this study, maybe they would have been able to interview more individuals or received deeper answers. Lastly, I did offer \$50 cash to participate in the study. This may or may not have influenced participants to be part of this research. In my view, it was an incentive to sign up for the interviews, but once the interviews began, I did not see any evidence of influence.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study is unique as a qualitative exploration of the residential school reconciliation process with White River First Nation individuals. It contributes to the growing body of literature, which establishes the significance of reconciliation with Canadian First Nations for historical injustices. It opens the door for additional studies, which could refine and expand upon what has been learned. Participants in this study put the issue of healing forward. It became one of the central themes. Unfortunately, I could

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not explore the need for healing before reconciliation in great detail. Further studies, which solely focused on healing before reconciliation, are a warranted asset to the knowledge base. Another interesting by-product of this research that is worthy of future studies is the trauma associated with the settlement money.

This study's findings are specific to the setting and the individuals I was privileged to interview. If other studies were conducted with a different First Nations group, the findings would differ, reflecting the truths and stories of another community and a different setting. More research would provide a basis for conceptual comparison and contrast with identification of commonalities and differences. A better understanding of reconciliation in Canada could be developed. I strongly recommend that a study be conducted with non-First Nation individuals about their part in this reconciliation process. Do they know the history? Are they involved in understanding their part in the reconciliation process? Are they ready to engage in the reconciliation process with the First Nations of Canada?

Qualitative studies such as this provide a depth of understanding and description. More studies, which complement qualitative data with quantitative data from surveys and questionnaires, would enrich what is known. This study was completed just after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its recommendations. It will be interesting to see what happens in the future with the reconciliation process for residential schools. To add to the knowledge base, future studies should be conducted in later years to see if perspectives of the reconciliation process have changed based on progress or lack thereof. This thesis work is part of a beginning. It contributes to a framework of

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knowledge, which could guide the reconciliation process in Canada and elsewhere.

Future researchers will build upon what has been learned.

### **Recommendations and Implications**

Cross-cultural research focusing on reconciliation and residential schools survivors is needed. In the spirit of Bashir Bashir's (2008) work it appears that on base terms Canadians with First Nations, are trying to build a new and collective "we". Yet there is so little known about the actual process and the beliefs fuelling its evolution nationally. Mainstream Canadian perspectives for one are currently lacking, and it is vital to ensure that all Canadians are better educated about this difficult and shameful period. In this context, healing needs to be not only promoted but better studied as we move toward developing taxonomies of healing that can be applied or at least inform regionally- and culturally-specific healing strategies. As demonstrated by the study participants' words, healing needs to be integrated more forcefully as an essential aspect of the reconciliation process. This is required to ensure that trauma does not accompany the receipt of settlements. This would allow the dollars to be utilized for more proactive programming. Only then can the reconciliation process become meaningful and true bridging occur.

Although Prime Minister Steven Harper, on behalf of the Canadian Government, has already apologized, a more sincere and perhaps as importantly a more personal apology is warranted. Clearly many Yukon First Nations, and by extension First Nations in Canada have yet to witness the apology on television. They may have heard about it, may have been told about it, or even read it in the newspaper or online, but the distinct lack of personal interaction suggests that most First Nations will remain unconvinced of

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the apology's intent. The value of face-to-face interaction cannot be overlooked in terms of its historical significance in First Nations communities and its political utility. As this study shows a visit from a local MP or a ranking cabinet official to convey Canada's sorrowful message could initiate relationship building and the type of positive reconciliation occurring in other colonized regions such as South Africa. These proposals resonate with the recently released TRC's (2012) recommendations for improving the existing federal reconciliation process with residential school survivors. A central theme was the need to improve reconciliation by improving national education to ensure that the general public learns and acknowledges the history of residential schools. Updating K-12 curriculum is needed, but then so is political will. If the latter is there education and understanding will improve leading to an improved sense of reconciliation.

Finally, and in relation to the concerns expressed about improving and ensuring healing the TRC also suggested that: 1) plans be developed and resources allocated for a sustainable, northern, mental health and wellness healing centre, with specialization in childhood trauma and long-term grief; 2) culturally appropriate early childhood and parenting programs be established to assist young parents and families affected by the impact of residential schools and historic policies of cultural oppression in the development of parental understanding and skills; and, 3) establish health and wellness centers and the appropriate programming specializing in trauma and grief counseling and treatment aimed at the experiences of multi-generational residential school survivors.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

What appears lacking at this point is a mutual desire to ensure historic injustice is addressed for the purpose of not only offering a sincere apology, but to promote

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improved First Nation's health, self-respect, family connection and cultural renewal. As the study participants implicitly and explicitly identified, this process will take time and cannot be informed by political expediency. An apology and settlement dollars are not enough. Healing and public education is needed if a healthy and respectful relationship among the First Nations, the Government of Canada, and the general public to develop and bring about reconciliation.



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**Appendix A**

**Notes for Community Guide**

Residential School Settlement Monies and the Revitalization of Yukon First Nations

Hello, (Name of Community Guide)

- I am looking for Yukon First Nation individuals to participate in my study. The purpose of my study is to see how First Nations have used the settlement monies in beneficial ways. These may include: stronger connections to the land such as hunting and gathering activities; rejuvenating language, customs, rituals and art and sharing with family, friends and the community. Secondly, I am interested in knowing how these monies may have revitalized the First Nations in other ways including education, economic development and sports.

-I am looking for Yukon First Nation individuals to participate in my study who: Attended a Yukon Residential School, Received Residential School settlement money and who are willing to be audio recorded

-I will offer a total of \$50 to participants, for participation in this study

-I will offer you \$250 for your valuable time and hard work

-Participants will be interviewed 2 times

-I am hoping to start these interviews in early July and end before hunting season is underway (October)

-all information that is gathered will be kept strictly confidential

-My supervisor is Dr. Yale Belanger and he can be contacted by email at [belayd@uleth.ca](mailto:belayd@uleth.ca) or by phone at (403) 382-7101

*The researcher is Spencer Edelman, I was born and raised in Whitehorse. My family owns Listers Motor Sports in Whitehorse. I am currently attending the University of Lethbridge in Alberta and am taking my Masters Degree. You can contact me by email at [spencer.edelman@uleth.ca](mailto:spencer.edelman@uleth.ca) or by phone at (403) 795-6138.*

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**Appendix B**

**Oath of Confidentiality-Community Guide**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do state that I will not, directly or indirectly, without authority disclose to any person any information in the research study titled, Residential School Settlement Monies and the Revitalization of Yukon First Nations.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Witness)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

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**Appendix C**

**Letter of invitation**

Study Title: Residential Schools and the Revitalization of Yukon First Nations

Dear Prospective participant,

My name is Spencer Edelman. I am a graduate student in the Master of Science (Health Sciences) program at the University of Lethbridge. I am doing a research study as part of my degree in Health Sciences. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

I am interested in your experience with the Residential School settlement and how you have used your settlement monies for beneficial outcomes for you, your family and possibly your community. If you are interested, you will be interviewed two times about how you have used your money and how you have put it to good use. You will also be asked about how you viewed the settlement process and how you view how the money was spent. Interviews will last sixty to ninety minutes each.

You will receive a total of \$50.00 cash at the beginning of the first interview for your time. If you leave the study anytime before the end, you can still keep your \$50.00 cash.

If you are interested, please contact me at the number below. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. The interviews will take place wherever you wish (e.g. in your home). I will call you within the next week to see if you are interested in this study.

Thank you,

Spencer Edelman

MSc Student  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
University of Lethbridge  
403-795-6138  
spencer.edelman@uleth.ca

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**Appendix D**

**Oath of Confidentiality  
Transcriptionist**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do state that I will not, directly or indirectly, without authority disclose to any person any information in the research study titled, Residential School Settlement Monies and the Revitalization of Yukon First Nations.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Witness)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SETTLEMENT WITH YUKON FIRST NATION SURVIVORS: A POSITIVE FORM OF RELATIONSHIP RENEWAL?

**Appendix E**

**Interview Questions**

Interview #1

1. Are there traditional activities/lifestyles that take place in your community? *Probes= ceremonies, feasts, hunting, fishing*

2. Do people in your community participate in these activities/lifestyles?

3. What kinds of traditional activities/lifestyles do you participate in?

4. How do you see the settlement money reconnecting people in your community to traditional lifestyles? How about those that received settlement cheques? Is there a difference?

*Probes: language, skill development*

5. Has the settlement money helped with financial stress in your community?

6. Has the settlement money helped with your financial stress?

7. What kinds of things did others in the community spend their money on?

8. How do you see their spending?

9. Did their spending benefit the community?

10. What kinds of things did you spend your money on?

11. Was there a difference between male and female spending?

12. If yes, what was the difference? How did males spend their money? How did females spend their money?

13. Has any of this benefited you, your family or your community? Can you see immediate benefits? What do you think the benefits might be in the long term? Is there anything you would have done differently?

14. How has the settlement money helped you re-connect or partake in traditional lifestyles?

15. How has the First Nation been helpful with investment advice and or planning with the settlement money to those in the community?

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16. How has your First Nation been helpful to you with investment advice and/or planning?
17. Have any of the dollars others received with the settlement money gone into programs that are put on by your First Nation? Can you tell me about these programs?
18. Have any of the dollars you received with the settlement money gone into programs that are put on by your First Nation? How?
19. Do you think that the settlement monies were a good thing or a bad thing for your community?
20. What have the monies “done” to improve things in your community?
21. What do the Elders think of these monies?
22. Do you think that the settlement monies were a good thing for you? Why or why not?

Interview #2

23. Do you think that the settlement dollars were spent differently depending on people’s experiences in the Residential Schools (good or bad experience)? Can you give me any examples?
24. How was your experience in Residential Schools (good or bad)? \*\*\*
25. Do you think that your experience in the Residential Schools affected the way you spent your money?
26. What were people’s experiences with applying for settlement dollars (your friends/community members)?
27. What was your experience applying for settlement dollars? Was the process long? Was the process meaningful?
28. What could have been done differently in the application process?
29. How did your friends and the community view the apology?
30. How do/did you view the apology (good/bad)?
31. Do people in your community believe that the government of Canada/churches have completed the process of reconciliation (apology, truth telling, settlement dollars) with residential school survivors?

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32. Do you believe that the Government of Canada/Churches has completed the reconciliation process with yourself?

33. What other actions do you believe the Canadian Government/Churches can do to complete the process of reconciliation with Residential School Survivors?

34. Do you think it is possible for the government of Canada/Churches to reconcile with Residential School survivors?

\*\*\* At the beginning of interview #2, the participant will be informed of this question. If he/she does not feel comfortable answering, this question will be skipped.

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**Appendix F**

**Demographic Sheet**

1. To what First Nation do you belong?

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2. Where do you live in the Yukon?

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3. Do you have any family who live in this community?

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4. Were you in a Residential School in the Yukon?

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5. If Yes, which one?

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6. How long were you in the Residential Schools?

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7. Did you receive a Residential School settlement cheque?

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8. Can you speak your traditional First Nation language?

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9. What is your age?

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10. Are you married?

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11. Do you have any children?

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**Appendix G**

**LETTER OF CONSENT**

*Health Sciences*

*Residential School Settlement Monies and the Revitalization of Yukon First Nations*

*(Insert Date)*

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a study about how Yukon First Nations have used Residential School settlement monies in good ways. For example, has the money been used for hunting, gathering activities, fishing, to support language, customs, rituals, art, sharing with family, friends and the community? Secondly, I am interested in knowing how these monies may have helped in other ways including education, economic development and sports.

You are invited to participate in two interviews because you have done something good with the settlement money. With your permission, I would like to record your interview. I also believe you are able to discuss, from your perspective, how the money has affected both you and others in your community. Interviews will begin in July 2011 and end in October 2011.

As the interview unfolds, you can choose not to answer any question. The interview should take only take 60-90 minutes of your time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, simply leave the room. There are no consequences for not answering a question or leaving the study.

There are no known physical risks for participating in this study. However, you may sometimes feel emotionally uncomfortable thinking about and talking about an unpleasant experience. If this happens, simply let me know and we will take a break from the interview. We will then resume when you are ready. I can also provide you with names and contact information of counseling services available to you—if you would like this support.

I will offer you \$50 for being in this study. If you leave during the interview or do not answer all of the questions you will still receive the money. You will provide me with valuable information that will show the positive or good benefits that have come from the Residential School survivors' settlement payouts.

Before starting the session, I will remind you about the confidential nature of the discussion. As well, I will try to protect your identity. For example, all identifying information like your name will not be used in the study and will not be made public. I will ask you for a made-up name and I will use this name in the study. Your interview will be identified by a number and not by any names. However, because of the small size

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of your community people may be able identify you from information you give in the interview.

I will send you your transcripts, to allow you to read over your interview once I have it typed up. I will also contact you by phone or email to discuss your transcripts as needed. If there is something you do not like in the transcript, I can remove the information and it will not be used. Once your interview is typed up I will destroy the taped interview. All transcripts from the study will be stored in a locked cabinet located in my locked office. Information from this study (data) will be kept for 7 years and destroyed at this time. Only my thesis supervisor and I will have access to the data. My supervisor is Dr. Yale Belanger at the University of Lethbridge. If you need to speak to him his number is (403) 382-7101 and his email is belayd@uleth.ca.

Findings from this study will be presented at conferences and published in relevant journals. I will share a summary of the findings with you and the person who approached you to participate in the study, your First Nations, the Yukon College, Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Archives, and Yukon Territorial Government (Executive Council Office) and any other groups or individuals who may express interest in the thesis project.

If you require any information about this study, or would like to speak to me personally, please contact: (*Spencer Edelman, (403)795-6138 and [spencer.edelman@uleth.ca](mailto:spencer.edelman@uleth.ca)*) at the University of Lethbridge. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge (phone: 403-329-2747 or email: [research.services@uleth.ca](mailto:research.services@uleth.ca)).

I have read (or have been read) the above information regarding a study about the benefits that have come about as a result of the Residential School settlement monies in the Yukon, and consent to participate in this study. I will also give my contact information to be able to receive my transcript and discuss them with the researcher and, to receive a summary of the findings when the research is complete.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Address)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Email)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Phone Number)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature for interviews)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature for audio recording)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

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**Appendix H**

**Themes and Categories**

<p><u>Theme 1: Collective Memories of Historical Injustices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Life Before Residential Schools</li><li>B. Life During Residential Schools</li><li>C. Life After Residential Schools</li></ul>
<p><u>Theme 2: Preparation Inadequacy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Respect</li><li>B. Assessment of Apology as Sincere</li><li>C. Better Consultation with First Nations</li><li>D. Lawyers Involvement with Settlement</li><li>E. Need for Help</li><li>F. Preparation of First Nations Survivors</li><li>G. Preparation of Government</li></ul>
<p><u>Theme 3: Paradox Regarding Monies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Money as No Good</li><li>B. Blood Money</li><li>C. Shifting Relationships</li><li>D. Settlement as Low</li><li>E. Receiving Money from the Dead</li><li>F. Comparing Settlements to Other Peoples</li></ul>
<p><u>Theme 4: Healing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Healing As First Step</li><li>B. Healing Journey</li><li>C. Generational Healing</li><li>D. Reconciliation</li></ul>