Addressing Systemic Barriers to Truth and Reconciliation in Canadian Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Education served as a driving force for the colonization of Indigenous Peoples in what is now known as Canada. Today, education is essential for truth and reconciliation. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published 94 Calls to Action that demand change across the country, including in higher education. Academia's response has been slow due to systemic barriers in this inherently colonial system. The purpose of this study is to understand the systemic barriers to truth and reconciliation in Canadian higher education institutions and propose transformative solutions, in order to support the University of Waterloo's strategic response to the Calls to Action. Through a literature review, semi-structured interviews (N=10), and an analysis of strategic plans for reconciliation (N=49), four thematic barriers were identified. These include limited Indigenous leadership opportunities, poor understanding from the non-Indigenous community, and limited financial and human capacities. The barriers are amplified by poor strategic planning processes. The solutions are illustrated using a systems map that follows the *Shifting the Burden* Archetype, along with six recommendations to improve strategic planning for truth and reconciliation at the University of Waterloo and beyond. This study also contributes to a growing body of literature about settler allyism in academia and provides practical guidance for institutions to respond to the Calls to Action.

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1.0 Introduction

The following section may be triggering as it describes the legacy of harm from colonization in what is now known as Canada, specifically the residential school system. Indigenous peoples in Canada have been the target of injustices for centuries through colonization. Their colonization began when European settlers migrated to North America in the 16th century and asserted themselves over Indigenous peoples, dispossessing their land, cultural traditions, and seizing control over their resources and trade systems (Wilson, 2018). The colonization of Indigenous peoples, which has been cited as "cultural genocide," led to the destruction of Indigenous languages, ceremonial traditions, stories, and forced assimilation into colonial settler society (TRC, 2015a, p. 3). The residential school system was a driving force in colonization from 1831 to 1996, creating intergenerational trauma for residential school survivors, their families, and communities (TRC, 2015b). An estimated 150,000 children were forced into the system established by the settler government and Christian churches (Marshall & Gallant, 2021; TRC, 2015a). Records about the schools are incomplete, which only came to public attention in 2021 following the discoveries of more than 1,300 unmarked remains at nine residential school sites across the country, and hundreds more in 2022 (Bourne, 2022; Cecco, 2022; Deer, 2021). The residential school system represents a legacy of pain, mistrust, and loss for Indigenous peoples and their cultures. Colonial oppression permeates throughout modern society, continuing to disadvantage Indigenous peoples as they live, work, and study.

To address this dark chapter of Canadian history and its ongoing legacy, truth and reconciliation have become focal points in political and community agendas. Reconciliation is broadly defined as the process of "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples" (Sterritt, 2020). In their attempts at reconciliation, the federal government has issued formal apologies, compensation

packages to school survivors, and designated former schools as national historic sites (Marshall & Gallant, 2021; Sterritt, 2020). In summer 2021, they committed $320 million to support Indigenous-led, culturally informed initiatives, and marked September 30, 2021 as the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour survivors and educate the public about the ongoing legacy of injustice (CIRNAC, 2021).

While education has been used to promote assimilation and cultural genocide, Justice Murray Sinclair, the former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), believes education is "one of the greatest hopes" for reconciliation (P4E, 2016, p. 2). The TRC was established in 2008 as part of the federal Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to guide national truth, healing, and reconciliation. In 2015, the TRC released a report with 94 Calls to Action for addressing the legacy of injustice. The Actions urge settler society to foster inclusive, equitable, healing places for Indigenous peoples, calling on specific stakeholder groups while emphasizing the importance of collective action.

Given education's role in fostering truth and reconciliation, higher education institutions (HEIs) must lead this change because they help shape the next generation of leaders in Canada. As of April 2022, Canadian HEIs are at various stages of crafting institutional responses to the Calls to Action. These responses manifest in diverse ways, and are typically guided through a strategic plan (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pete, 2016; Samson, 2019; Schmidt, 2019). The diversity of responses, coupled with the brevity of definitions for "reconciliation," as well as "Indigenization" and "decolonization," creates uncertainty about what it means to be a reconciled institution. Moreover, only four Calls to Action (#11, 16, 62, and 65) explicitly mention HEIs; three (#11, 62, 65) call upon the government; only #16 specifically calls upon academic stakeholders. These Actions gesture towards Indigenization and decolonization, without describing how these processes differ or lead to truth and

reconciliation. Thus, there is a need for clarity about how the Calls to Action apply to higher education institutions and what it means to be a reconciled institution.

While institutions across the country have published strategic plans that address the Calls to Action, the University of Waterloo has yet to publish one. This plan is in the works, and there have been various isolated initiatives to advance truth and reconciliation, such as cluster hirings of Indigenous Faculty and courses on decolonizing curriculum. The strategic plan will help coordinate, synergize, and formalize these efforts. This research comes at a pivotal time to inform strategic planning decisions, leading to a robust, focused plan for truth and reconciliation at the University of Waterloo. The study supports the University's 2020-2025 Strategic goal to "promote and support Indigenous initiatives and a culture of equity, diversity and inclusivity for all" (2019, p. 21). It supports the goal's first objective, which is to embrace and act upon the TRC's recommendations and Calls to Action and build stronger relationships with local Indigenous communities.

Institutions like the University of Waterloo must fully embody truth and reconciliation so the next generation of changemakers are responsible, respectful, and inclusive leaders and citizens. Like the strategic objective mentions, it is also important for strengthening relationships with Waterloo's local Indigenous communities. The University of Waterloo is situated on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The main campus where I study is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. The University is home to the Office of Indigenous Relations, formerly the Indigenous Initiatives Office, which is the central hub for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students, researchers, faculty, staff, and allies. The Office provides guidance, support, and resources to promote reconciliation at the University. It is led by the Associate Vice-President, Jean Becker, an Inuk member of the Nunatsiavut Territory of Labrador. Becker joined the

University of Waterloo in January 2020 as Senior Director of the Indigenous Initiatives Office. Her role is to lead the University's strategic response to the Calls to Action and beyond. She took on the role of interim Associate Vice-President (AVP) of Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion in August 2020, and became the first AVP, Indigenous Relations in September 2021. The creation of the AVP role and the rebranding of Indigenous Relations reflects the University's growing interest in advancing truth and reconciliation.

To aid Becker in the strategic planning process, the purpose of this study is to understand the approaches that higher education institutions are taking to respond to the Calls to Action, and the systemic barriers they face. From those findings, recommendations are presented for navigating the barriers and creating a resilient, transformative strategic plan. The study uses a literature review to understand the status of truth and reconciliation in Canada, and to learn respectful ways to engage in this research as a settler ally. Second, semi-structured interviews were completed with ten Indigenous leaders at eight institutions across the country to understand the common responses to the Calls to Action in academia, and what gaps exist. Third, 49 existing institutional strategies that address truth and reconciliation were reviewed to identify ways to fill these gaps, based on the accomplishments of other institutions.

This work was guided by systems change theory and Systems Archetypes to help understand feedback processes, negative externalities, and leverage points to foster change. Two deliverables came from this study: a systems map that uses an Archetype to illustrate feedbacks, barriers, and opportunities for addressing truth and reconciliation in higher education; and six recommendations to incorporate into the University of Waterloo's strategic plan. These deliverables will be gifted to Becker and the interview participants in reciprocity for their time and contributions. This study also provides a narrative of how I, as a non-Indigenous settler student and novice researcher at the University of Waterloo, sought to

decolonize my research pedagogies and paradigms while working with Indigenous leaders to co-produce change.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Systems change theory

Fulfilling the Calls to Action demands a type of change that completely transforms the ways of knowing and being that govern society. In academia, this means fundamentally changing the settler or "Westernized" system that governs how institutions teach, conduct research, and engage with the broader community (Kilian et al., 2019; Ray et al., 2019). A system is a set of interconnected, organized parts that perform characteristic behaviours. These behaviours help fulfil the system's function or purpose (Cabrera et al., 2008; Meadows, 2009). Systems are the foundation of all physical and social processes. They are complex, dynamic, and filled with feedback loops that reinforce behaviours or patterns. To change a system's behaviours or the patterns, its parts must be reorganized or substituted. This can be challenging because a system's parts are deeply embedded and mutually reinforcing (Meadows, 2009). Removing one part will impact another, potentially in adverse ways. Truth and reconciliation demands changing the parts of the academic system that are embedded in colonial ways of knowing and being. These parts impact every aspect of academia, including: curriculum development, teaching, research and assessment methodologies, who is viewed as an 'expert' and thus an educator, who makes decisions, funding models, access to education, and more (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pete, 2016; Pidgeon, 2014; Ray et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2018; TRC, 2015c). Applying the Calls to Action to higher education means reimaging academia as a more inclusive and equitable system, one that incorporates different knowledge forms and worldviews and does not marginalize Indigenous Faculty, staff, and students (Ray et al., 2019). Creating this change requires finding "leverage points," a concept described by systems thinking scholar, Donella

Meadows (2009). Leverage points are specific parts in a system that trigger massive changes throughout the entire system, like the butterfly effect. Leverage points are sources of great power because they can fundamentally transform systems (Meadows, 2009). For example, railroad switches can be thought of as leverage points: they occur at specific points on a train track, changing a train's direction through a single shift in its own behaviour.

Transformative change is needed within the Canadian higher education system to foster truth and reconciliation (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pete, 2016; Smith et al., 2018). Leverage points must be located within this inherently colonial system to disrupt patterns of marginalization and discrimination against Indigenous peoples (Jacobs, 2019). While this study mainly seeks to help the University of Waterloo in its strategic planning process, the findings of this study can support institutions across the country because they possess similar parts and behaviours. Importantly, Meadows (2009) and Forrester (1968) argue that leverage points can push systems into an undesirable direction if change is not approached strategically. This can reinforce negative behaviours like oppression and marginalization. To ensure that the system is pushed in the desired direction, Meadows (2009) proposes twelve hierarchical measures. The more effective the measures are at creating the desired change, the harder they are to implement. With this study, I seek to find leverage points by using one of the most effective measures on Meadows' list: finding leverage points that change "the mindset or paradigm out of which the system – its goals, structures, rules, delays, and parameters – arises" (2009, p. 162). Such leverage points are necessary for fundamentally changing the system's colonial parts.

Systems change theory is a necessary conceptual tool for understanding complexity within Canadian higher education (McCarthy, 2006). Systems Archetypes help identify common patterns in systems that create problems, which can then be addressed through prescriptive actions. Created by William Braun (2002), there are seven Archetypes that reveal

common, fundamental structures and patterns within a system. These Archetypes help answer the question, "Why do we keep seeing the same problems recur over time?" (p. 1). When a system follows an Archetype, Braun says that "prescriptive action(s)" (p. 2) can be used to manage the negative behaviours of a system and shift those behaviours in a desirable direction. The findings of this study will be compared to the seven Archetypes to determine whether the Canadian academic system resembles one, and if so, Braun's prescriptive actions will be used to formulate solutions.

2.2 Known challenges of reconciliation at Canadian HEIs

Reviewing existing literature on the progress towards truth and reconciliation in academia is important for entering the interviews with a general background on the issues that interview participants may bring up. Despite the importance of education for truth and reconciliation, the Calls to Action do not explicitly state how to achieve them (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Ray et al., 2019). Action #16 states, "we call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages" (TRC, 2015d, p. 2). This Action does not have a timeline, benchmarks for measuring progress, or specific stakeholder responsibilities within the academic system. This holds true for the other three Actions that mention HEIs (#11, 62, and 65) that call upon government stakeholders. Many other actions can indirectly apply to HEIs but are equally as vague. For instance, Action #84 urges the federal government to restore and enhance Indigenous media coverage, which emphasizes the importance of enhancing Indigenous presence within institutional media platforms. Without clarity, it is unsurprising that five years after the Calls to Action were released, Kennedy et al. (2020, p. 3) found that progress towards truth and reconciliation in higher education is "idling."

Along with uncertainty about how the Calls to Action apply to HEIs, there is confusion about what truth and reconciliation means in academia. Journal articles, grey

literature, news platforms, and other media platforms appear to use the terms "reconciliation," "Indigenization," and "decolonization" interchangeably, with very few definitions (Bopp et al., 2016; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pete, 2016; Ray et al., 2019). This creates confusion about what actions are needed for truth and reconciliation, because individuals cannot adequately describe the actions they are currently implementing or want to implement. Clarifying this terminology will also help define what institutions need to respond to the Calls to Action, and where their current efforts are relative to the desired outcomes (Bopp et al., 2016).

That said, there is no single, unifying definition for any of these three processes. Sterritt's (2020) definition of reconciliation provided earlier is a generalization. Rather than try to establish a universal definition, it may be helpful to understand the relationship between these processes. Indigenous scholars like Jacobs (2019) and Pete (2016) describe these processes as separate entities to be achieved simultaneously. Similarly, Kennedy et al. (2020) characterize Indigenization and reconciliation as collaborative processes, while decolonization is a settler-focused process requiring deep self-reflection and humility. They argue that decolonizing Western paradigms is necessary for truth and reconciliation.

To summarize the interpretations of this relationship, Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) at the University of Alberta developed a conceptual framework whereby reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization exist on a continuum. In this framework, Indigenization is a foundation for action that has reconciliation and decolonization characteristics embedded at varying degrees. Their continuum includes three processes: first, Indigenous *inclusion*, whereby an institution increases its Indigenous representation, such as through cluster hirings and targeted student recruitment. This is the dominant approach in HEIs and is critiqued as the "easy way out" of responsibilities because the colonial parts of the system remain (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Kuokkanen, 2016, para. 4). Such "shallow changes…enable the

continued exclusion" of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in academia (Kuokkanen, 2016, para. 4). The other approaches, *reconciling* Indigenization and *decolonial* Indigenization, are more transformative. Rather than add things on to a pre-existing system, like Indigenous inclusion, they transform the system itself (Littlechild et al., 2021; Ray et al., 2019). As Meadows (2009) demonstrates, these approaches are essential for reconstructing the system in a more inclusive, reconciled way. Overall, the consensus is that reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization are connected and all three must be pursued when addressing the Calls to Action. Each process has unique characteristics, but the focus should be on the relationship and balance between each process.

2.3 Understanding positionality: the role of non-Indigenous researchers

The Calls to Action require personal commitment from every Faculty, staff, and student within an institution. Especially at the University of Waterloo, the involvement of the non-Indigenous community is critical. On one hand, this is because the Indigenous population is so small and would leave very few people to conduct this work. On the other hand, as part of the institutional community and colonial problem, there is a moral responsibility to engage in this work. There are approximately 200 Self-Identified Indigenous students study at the University of Waterloo, or 0.5% of the total student population (IR, 2022). There are even fewer Indigenous Faculty and staff members. Since the Calls to Action were released, scholars have explored the role that the non-Indigenous academic community play in fostering institutional truth and reconciliation. As non-Indigenous white educators, Hillman et al. (2020) argue that institutions should clearly articulate this role through strategic plans. Doing so will reduce uncertainty and foster accountability.

At the same time, there are risks to engaging in truth and reconciliation work when a non-Indigenous individual is unprepared to do so. The individual may unintentionally reinforce oppressive systems if they are unaware of their positionality and the privilege it

provides (Kilian et al., 2019; Meadows, 2009; Snow, 2018). For the individual to support truth and reconciliation at the institutional level, they must first engage in personal work to decolonize their own pedagogies and paradigms. Particularly for the white settler academic community, they may be ill-equipped to support truth and reconciliation because of their white fragility. DiAngelo (2011) defines white fragility as the feelings of defensiveness, anger, and shame that conjure up when a white researcher is asked to reflect on their positionality or decolonize their paradigms. White privilege insulates these individuals against race-based stress. Fine (1997, p. 57) describes this as being encased in "protective pillows," which block race-based stress. Over one's lifetime, the insulation breeds ignorance and vulnerability (DiAngelo, 2011). Removing the pillows results in overwhelming emotions and stress, which the individual lacks the capacity to process comfortably. The phrase 'ignorance is bliss' illustrates why they revert to their protective fortress, willingly or even unconsciously.

White fragility inhibits truth and reconciliation because white individuals may refuse to engage in the uncomfortable work necessary for reconciling and decolonial Indigenization. This impacts the ability of institutions and its non-Indigenous members to engage with the Indigenous community on and off campus. They may say or do things that are disrespectful to the Indigenous community or misinterpret Indigenous voices. Especially when this happens in research and strategic decision-making, Indigenous individuals may feel like 'subjects' for colonial prerogatives rather than respected, equal members of the institution (Kirkness, 1992; Smith, 2004).

Without doing the personal work, microaggressions are inevitable. These are "layered, cumulative and often subtle and unconscious forms of racism [and] are the everyday reflections of larger racist structures and ideological beliefs" (Huber & Solorzano, 2015, p. 302). Microaggressions are prominent in academia and research, manifesting as

segregation from decision-making, tokenism, and scapegoating (Huber & Solorzano, 2015; McGuire-Adams, 2021; Saloojee & Saloojee, 2018). Non-Indigenous individuals are responsible for recognizing and mitigating microaggressions in their research and decision-making processes. Co-production is one way of mitigating microaggressions. Co-production is about working together to foster a collective outcome, placing equal value on the diverse needs and interests of the stakeholders involved. It can uncover "invisible structural arrangements" (Smith, 2004, p.45) within institutional governance systems that perpetuate colonial hierarchies and silence Indigenous perspectives in the research process. Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) created the Four R's Framework to support co-production. Kirkness is a Cree scholar and Barnhardt is a non-Indigenous settler ally that has spent their career supporting Indigenous research. The Four R's, or themes, include respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. They must be fully embodied by non-Indigenous researchers to help decolonize their research paradigms and eliminate microaggressions in their collaborative activities. As such, I prioritized co-production and the Four R's in my research approach, working alongside Jean Becker to produce this study and engage in settler allyship.

2.4 Becoming a settler ally

From the perspective of Anishinaabe scholar, McGuire-Adams (2021), calling oneself a settler ally "is not about signifying if one is non-Indigenous. Rather, it ignites responsibilities that call attention to the decentring of whiteness, the disruption of privilege and the enactment of anti-racist relationships with Indigenous peoples, communities and territories" (p. 763). Becoming a settler ally involves "critical self-reflection, confronting white supremacy and implementing demonstrably anti-racist acts" (p. 761). This means addressing white fragility to decolonize personal paradigms that feed into the systems driving microaggressions within academia (DiAngelo, 2011; Fine, 1997; McGuire-Adams, 2021). McGuire-Adams (2021) stresses that settler allyship is a lifelong process, not a one-time

event or activity. It requires the continuous rewiring of internal colonial worldviews, actions, and behaviours. To meaningfully contribute to this space and provide guidance for future researchers like myself, this study provides a narrative of how I, as a non-Indigenous, white settler researcher, took part in this decolonization work to become a settler ally and effectively support truth and reconciliation.

To aid this process, Snow (2018) narrates their journey of decolonizing their research paradigms in their doctoral dissertation. As a non-Indigenous graduate student and novice researcher, they constantly questioned their positionality, legitimacy, and intentions. Snow was concerned about having "extreme insiderism," fearing that their colonial upbringing and white privilege prevents them from using decolonial research approaches. They "had neither the legitimacy of ancestry nor the experience of polished academics to advocate for [their] approach" and were accused of being "just another white girl with an agenda of her own, using [interview participants] to get her degree, and being ridiculous in her attempts to adopt an Indigenous-centred approach to her research" (p. 3).

With a similar background as Snow (2018), I resonate with these concerns. I felt like I lacked legitimacy to pursue this work, and that my rationale was invalid. Like Snow, at times, I felt like an imposter and debated quitting. However, this literature on settler allyism reaffirms my confidence, assuring me that my discomfort is rooted in my white fragility and is necessary to face. By following the Four R's framework and learning from experiences in the literature, this study contributes to the growing body of literature about settler allyism and collective action towards truth and reconciliation.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research questions and objectives

Four research questions were co-produced with Becker:

1) How do individual Canadian HEIs conceptualize the processes of reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization?
2) What initiatives are Canadian HEIs implementing to respond to the Calls to Action; are they related to reconciliation, Indigenization, and/or decolonization?
3) What barriers are HEIs facing when implementing these initiatives; how are they addressing these barriers?
4) Based on the needs identified in the interviews, what are the best or wise practices for institutions to respond to the Calls to Action?

3.2 Participatory action research for co-production

This study utilized participatory action research (PAR), a qualitative research method that enables co-production and empowerment of marginalized voices in academia. Attributed to Freire (1970) and Borda (1979), PAR facilitates the transformation of social systems by redefining research 'expertise.' Individuals that are directly impacted by an issue are deemed the 'experts' or key knowledge holders that should lead solution development. They are involved throughout the project's lifespan, from designing the research process to interpreting outcomes (Baum et al., 2006; Castleden et al., 2017; Dadich et al., 2019). PAR has been utilized by settler ally researchers engaging with Indigenous communities on research related to health (Cochran et al., 2008; Ginn & Kulig, 2015), environmental management (Castleden et al., 2017), and education (Ninomiya & Pollock, 2017). In this study, PAR was used to bolster the voices of Becker and the interview participants. Unlike the examples of PAR in practice, due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel and busy schedules, these individuals could not be engaged consistently throughout this study. Instead, they were engaged at key

milestones outlined in Table 1, so that decisions could be made collaboratively and transparently.

Table 1. Key milestones in the research process where PAR was enabled.

Milestone description	Time period	Individuals engaged
Crafting thesis topic	December 2020	Jean Becker
Creating research questions, desired outcomes, methodologies	May - July 2021	Jean Becker, Sara Anderson (Manager of Research Program Development and Partnerships, Indigenous Initiatives at the Office of Research)
Interview questions, recruitment, and consent letters	August 2021	Becker, Anderson, Research Ethics Board
Interview and literature interpretations	January 2022	Becker
Approval for use of interview quotes and examples	February 2022	Interview participants

3.3 Sampling method

A purposefully selected sample was used to conduct virtual, semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected based on two criteria: 1) the individual works at a higher education institution in Canada; and 2) the individual's work is related to Indigenous initiatives at the institution. Interview participants were not asked to identify whether they are Indigenous, but every individual stated their Indigenous positionality on their institutional website or during the interviews. The initial sample included the U15 Research Schools because they have similar governance structures and priorities as the University of Waterloo. Becker then recommended additional institutions to connect with. The majority of the HEIs were within Ontario. Education falls under provincial jurisdiction, so these institutions were assumed to resemble the University of Waterloo's governance structure the most. At least one HEI was contacted in each province, but no institutions in the territories were contacted due to limited online information. In total, 28 institutions were contacted through email by searching institutional websites for Indigenous departments, offices, or services and using the contact information provides on those sites. The First email was sent out in late October 2021, with a follow-up email sent to those who did not respond after two weeks. Four

institutions declined due to participate due to capacity limits. Eight institutions accepted (seven in Ontario), with ten interview participants in total because several institutions requested to have multiple representatives on the call. A 60-minute timeslot was booked for each institution on Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Interviews ran throughout November 2021.

3.4 Interview approach

An interview guide with seven open-ended questions was co-produced with Becker. This ensured that the questions were respectful, culturally appropriate, and targeted enough to obtain the desired information. The guide was sent to the participants at least 48 hours in advance of the interview. The questions covered three broad areas: 1) the participant's role and agency within their institution; 2) what initiatives they are implementing to respond to the Calls to Action, including the barriers and opportunities they are facing; and 3) their perceptions of reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization in the context of their institution. The full interview guide is available in Appendix A. The interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes long. Participants were encouraged to speak as much or as little as they were comfortable. Sometimes questions would be answered in a few sentences, whereas other responses took five to ten minutes. When the interviews ended, the audio recordings were coded anonymously and transcribed through Microsoft Stream. Recordings, transcriptions, and participant keys lists were stored on a password protected computer in separate, encrypted folder until the completion of this thesis, by which point they will be deleted.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis occurred from December 2021 to January 2022. NVivo was used to deductively code the interview data into categories based on trends in the activities and barriers to strategic action. To maintain confidentiality for interview participants that requested anonymous attribution, all interview participants were assigned a randomized, anonymous code from A1 to A10. Transcripts from the interviews were inputted into NVivo,

manually grouped by interview question and participant, and then coded to key themes that appeared in the literature review. Mentions of the terms “reconciliation,” “Indigenization,” and “decolonization” were coded. These codes were used when participants were giving examples of initiatives they were implementing and when they were asked to define the terms in their own words. The literature review was then used to identify themes for commonly discussed barriers to truth and reconciliation, which became categories for coding the interview transcriptions. Four themes, or categories, were created:

1) Leadership and authority: the ability to exercise power within the institution, through senior leadership roles with decision-making abilities; the support for Indigenous initiatives from non-Indigenous decision-makers on campus.
2) Non-Indigenous understanding: the paradigms and pedagogies possessed by the non-Indigenous university community that influences education, research, administration, operations, and staff/student engagement.
3) Capacities: human and financial capital possessed by the Indigenous staff and services on campus that are needed to implement Indigenous initiatives.
4) Planning: the formal structures (e.g., strategic plans) that establish institutional priorities, relationships between departments, responsibilities, and expectations.

The open-ended interview questions led to a narrative being created about the struggles and opportunities for fostering truth and reconciliation within HEIs. The stories told were multi-faceted, complex, and intertwining, which I believe cannot be captured fully in the discussion. I grappled with explaining these complex dynamics in drafting this thesis, rewriting sections multiple times. I relied on Becker and the interview participants to ensure the way I described these initiatives were respectful and accurate. A systems diagram was also developed to visualize these complexities, which are difficult to understand through

paragraphs of text alone. Using the principles of systems change theory, the diagram depicts feedback loops and leverage points for transformative change.

Initial research findings were shared with Becker in January 2022, when she confirmed that the interpretation was on the right track, that the data would meet her needs at Indigenous Relations, and that the themes used to describe the data were clear and appropriate. At that point, she requested that I review existing strategic plans for truth and reconciliation at HEIs. Doing so would help characterize a strong strategic plan for truth and reconciliation. From there, 84 Canadian university and college websites were searched for mentions of a strategic plan or framework that addressed the Calls to Action, or specifically focused on the terms "reconciliation," "Indigenization," and/or "decolonization." Strengths were determined based on the needs identified in the interviews. Upon completing this thesis, the recommendations and systems diagram will be gifted to Becker and interview participants in reciprocity for their time and support.

3.6 Conducting respectful, ethical research

This study was reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (#43469). Transparency was key throughout the research process with Becker and the interview participants. Study information was provided to potential participants from the start and throughout the study process. Participants were welcomed to ask questions or decline participation at any point. This ensured they had agency over their involvement. When conducting the interviews, verbal consent was obtained after introductions and a brief refresher on the study, prior to asking the interview questions. Participants were attributed anonymously to protect their identity. Quotes and examples from the interviews were reviewed with the attributing participant prior to publishing to address potential misinterpretations or withdraw specific/all answers. No one chose to withdraw.

To enable co-production, I followed the Four R's framework (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001) for research. I used the applications of the framework in Hillman et al. (2020) and Snow (2018) as guidance. I set the following expectations for myself: respect the identities and worldviews of the Indigenous leaders I engaged with; produce research findings that are relevant to the concerns voiced during the interviews; foster reciprocity in the relationships I established prior to, during, and after interviews; and take responsibility for my actions and biases, including any mistakes I made in the process.

To ensure I maintained alignment with the Four R's framework, I created self-reflection questions to visit at each research milestone from Table 1. These questions are show in Table 2. Inspiration for this came from Jimmy et al.'s (2019) book, *Towards Braiding*, which includes self-reflection questions to understand personal intentions when conducting research with Indigenous people as a non-Indigenous settler researcher.

Table 2. Questions for self-reflection to use the Four R's Framework, implemented at research milestones.

Self-reflection question	**Trait of the Four R's Framework**
Am I respecting the cultural integrity of those I am working with?	Respect
Did I come into these conversations having done my homework about Indigenous and colonial history, including the issues that interview participants may bring up?	Respect; responsibility
Am I coming into the interviews with an open mind that is receptive to learning potentially difficult or uncomfortable truths?	Respect; responsibility
Do I recognize the potential negative emotions and discomfort that may emerge because of the conversations I instigate, and am I equipped to handle them?	Responsibility
Am I learning from and using the work of Indigenous scholars and knowledge keepers in this research?	Respect; relevancy
Are the research findings aligning with Becker's needs?	Relevancy
Am I expressing genuine care for this work and the interview participants, recognizing that steps should be taken to make them feel comfortable and eliminate the risk of reprimand from their institution?	Respect; reciprocity; responsibility
Am I showing gratitude for the time and insights that Becker and the interview participants are sharing with me?	Reciprocity

This study was my first time engaging in co-production with Indigenous voices. Prior to connecting with Becker, I knew I wanted to focus my thesis on truth and reconciliation. However, I felt uneasy and irresponsible doing so alone because of my positionality. With

encouragement by my supervisor, Dr. Daniel McCarthy, I reached out to Becker to inquire whether she needed research support at Indigenous Relations. She met me with openness and interest. Together, we co-produced the thesis topic to meet her needs. For the first time in my undergraduate experience, I stepped out of the role of 'expert' so I could prioritize Becker's needs and amplify the voices of the interview participants.

Becker and I met numerous times thereafter, discussing the University of Waterloo's progress towards truth and reconciliation. I conducted a small-scale research project about academic Indigenization for her over the summer of 2021. Going back to the questions in Table 2, this activity served as valuable 'homework' that strengthened my understanding of the current strategic planning context in Canadian higher education institutions. After this, I returned to the study and crafted a draft set of interview questions and recruitment materials (see Appendix A), which Becker provided recommendations and feedback on. Once the interviews were complete, I presented Becker with a written summary of the findings to ensure they aligned with her interests. I then sent quotations and examples from the interviews that I wished to include in the study to the appropriate participants. This was done through email, attaching an anonymously named document for confidentiality. Once I addressed any of their concerns, the study was drafted. At the time of submission, the plan moving forward is to draft a summary document, which will be sent to Becker and interview participants in April 2022 in reciprocity for their time and contributions.

With my limited experience in co-production and collecting primary data from Indigenous voices, I also sought professional support. On Becker's recommendation, I met with Sara Anderson, the Manager of Research Program Development and Partnerships, Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Waterloo's Office of Research. Anderson provided me with a breadth of resources to expand my understanding of truth and reconciliation in academia and settler allyism. Using her extensive research background and personal

reflections as an Indigenous researcher, Anderson provided constructive feedback on my research approach. My supervisor, Dr. Daniel McCarthy, was also incredibly insightful throughout this process, with an extensive background in fostering respectful relationships and conducting ethical, collaborative research with Indigenous communities. While this study contributes to my completion of my undergraduate degree, it is more importantly contributing to truth and reconciliation at the University of Waterloo among other institutions across Canada. I am extremely grateful to Becker, Anderson, and the interview participants for their trust, openness, and involvement as I navigated this unfamiliar yet essential process of co-production and decolonizing my research pedagogies.

4.0 Results

Identifying leverage points within the institutional governance system first requires an understanding of the barriers to truth and reconciliation. By breaking down these barriers, leverage points can be created that specifically address and overcome them. These leverage points can be integrated into strategic planning processes so that institutions are equipped with the skills and knowledge to accelerate transformative change. These barriers are discussed in Section 4.1, then translated into recommendations for the University of Waterloo's strategic planning process in Section 4.2.

4.1 Barriers to reconciliation

Table 3 and Figure 1 illustrate the five barriers discussed in the interviews. These build on three themes pulled from the literature review: leadership, non-Indigenous understanding, and capacities. The latter theme was split into two sub-categories, human and financial capacities. A fourth theme was added for strategic planning processes, which amplify the other barriers. This data was pulled from coded transcripts.

Table 3. Frequency of barriers discussed by each interview participant.

Participant	Lack of leadership and authority	Non-Indigenous understanding	Limited human capacity	Limited funding	Poor strategic planning processes
A1	X	X	X	X	X
A2	X		X		X
A3	X	X			X
A4	X	X	X	X	X
A5	X	X	X	X	X
A6	X	X		X	X
A7	X	X	X		
A8	X	X	X	X	X
A9	X	X	X	X	
A10	X		X		X
Total (count)	10	8	8	6	8
Total (%)	100	80	80	60	80

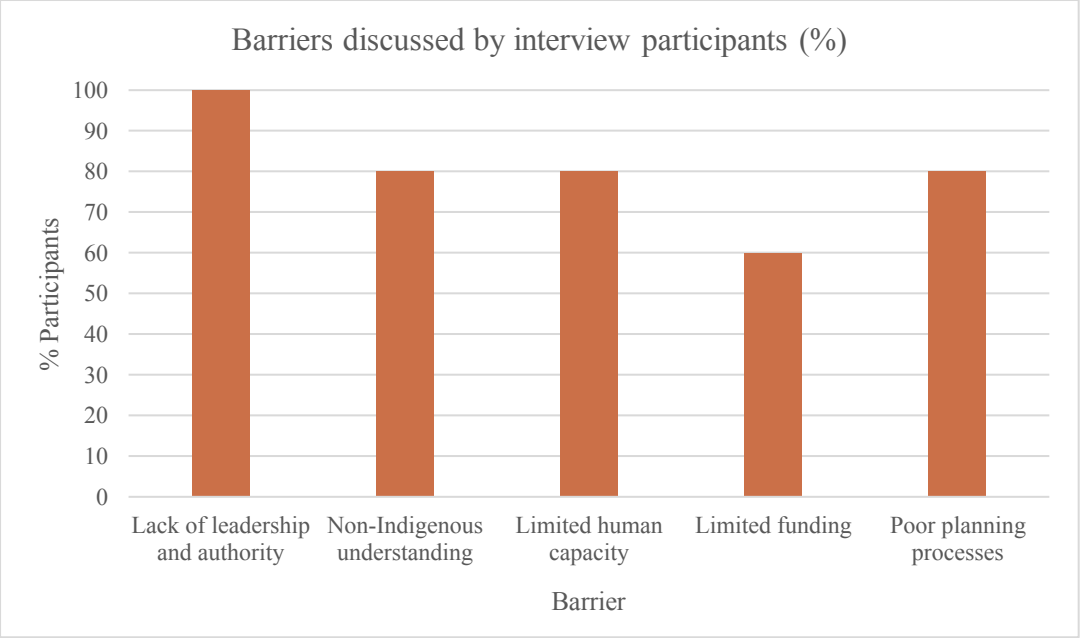

Figure 1. Percent of participants that discussed each barrier.

Every interview participant mentioned that leadership opportunities for Indigenous voices at HEIs are limited, which slows their work. Participants expressed that the Indigenous academic community often lack agency and influence in senior decision-making at institutions because they are not viewed as equals to non-Indigenous leaders. Participants recommended adding new senior leadership positions for Indigenous staff, redistributing power amongst senior positions, and improving the communication channels for Indigenous staff to share resources and concerns with academic units.

Second, 80% of interview participants said that the non-Indigenous academic community have a poor understanding of truth and reconciliation, which slows progress. They lack awareness about Indigenous history, colonial privilege, and how that influences decision-making. The participants said that the non-Indigenous community are hesitant to engage in truth and reconciliation initiatives at their institutions, largely due to their lack of awareness.

Third, 80% of participants described being overworked and understaffed. On top of their job duties, the participants and their colleagues are requested to sit on committees, attend events, facilitate ceremonies, and other tasks that are valuable but limit their time working on their official responsibilities. This challenge is amplified by the lack of financial capacity (which 60% of participants mentioned) for their units to carry out initiatives and hire staff. This traces back to the lack of engagement and prioritization by non-Indigenous senior leaders, who have a large role in the distribution of institutional finances.

Finally, 80% of interview participants described poor planning processes as a barrier to truth and reconciliation. Many institutions have or are developing a formal strategy for truth and reconciliation. Like the Calls to Action, they are often vague and challenging to implement and monitor. Initiatives may take place within informal networks, such as departmental collaborations across campus. Without a formal structure, these networks can be lost as priorities shift with staff cycles. The participants call for greater formalization of truth and reconciliation, with clear goals and roles to build accountability and longevity.

4.2 Review of strategic plans

After scoping the websites of 84 colleges and universities across Canada, 49 had a public strategic plan for truth and reconciliation and/or addressing the Calls to Action. The approaches varied, from standalone Indigenization strategies, to embedding Indigenization within academic plans, master plans, and university strategic plans. Based on needs expressed

during the interviews, several elements were identified as essential for a strong, actionable plan. While each plan did not possess every one of the strengths mentioned below, integrating as many of these strengths as possible into the University of Waterloo's strategic plan will maximize transformative change. These strengths are listed in Table 5 below, and the strategy review is in Appendix B. The list includes specific examples from other institutional plans, which can provide guidance for incorporating them into the University of Waterloo's plan.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Leverage Point 1: Indigenous voices in senior leadership

Every interview participant believes that having Indigenous voices at the senior decision-making table is critical for truth and reconciliation. Yet, this is not the reality at many institutions. Without a formal senior Indigenous position, such as an Associate Vice President (AVP), Indigenous voices are barricaded from decision-making that influences the entire university. To raise an issue to senior administration and push for change across the institution, Indigenous leaders must go through multiple levels and units. Participant A3 said, "if you're down a few layers then you're…out of sight, out of mind." Furthermore, Participant A8 warned that:

> "If you can't talk directly to the higher-ups in the university, you have to go through all this, you know, hierarchy and bureaucracy and all of those things that just slows everything down…your original message might not even get relayed properly to the right people."

Likewise, Participant A10 described examples of miscommunications that "could have been avoided had I been able to provide some input earlier on in the process." Participants said that establishing a senior Indigenous position ensures that Indigenous voices are equitably and accurately represented in institutional decisions. This reduces colonial power imbalances that trickle down into individual academic units. Participant A6

articulated, “part of decolonization is a sharing of power, in that not just do we need voices at the table, but they need to be viewed as an authority by the other people at the table."

Not only do institutions need Indigenous voices at the decision-making table, but those voices must be seen as equally valuable and legitimate as any other at the table. Participant A6 said there needs to be a sharing of power. Participant A3 affirmed this, stating, “to empower the marginalized, you have to convince those holding power to give it up." Otherwise, having Indigenous voices at the table feels tokenistic rather than transformative. This concern is prominent in the literature, particularly with Indigenous cluster hirings for positions that lack agency (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Hillman et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2019).

At institutions where senior Indigenous roles exist, interview participants confirmed how critical this has been for advancing their truth and reconciliation initiatives. That said, when there is only one Indigenous position in senior administration, it can feel isolating, and their voices may still be drowned out by the colonial majority. Participant A7 stated:

> “When [the Indigenous leader] went to Deans meetings, [they were] alone. A single voice. And that makes it much more difficult…it can become easy to say, ‘well, this person is just obstructionist’ rather than recognizing this person is filtering the input of a large number of Indigenous people on campus. And I think it's much easier to demonstrate that as a group.”

As a first step, institutions without a senior Indigenous leadership position should create at least one new role, with growing inclusion over time to strengthen and balance Indigenous voices at the table. To achieve this, interview participants highlighted how important it is to obtain the support of current, non-Indigenous senior leadership. Participant A1 said, “if the Provost had not followed through…it actually would have been easy for [our efforts] to fall.” The Provost was highlighted by several interview participants and Becker as an key player for advancing strategies, task forces, and other Indigenous initiatives. At the

University of Waterloo, the Provost oversees academic and financial affairs within the institution, working directly alongside the President and Vice-Chancellor in setting and executing academic priorities (Rush, 2022). They oversee the Deans, Faculty, and staff. With their significant role in shaping institutional priorities, the Provost is a critical stakeholder that can help advance truth and reconciliation. Likewise, the Deans are important administrative stakeholders to gain support from because they influence how the Provost's priorities are integrated into the Faculties. Becker said that the University of Waterloo's Provost, Deans, and other senior leaders are very supportive of Indigenous Relations, which is ideal. However, this may not be the case at every institution. Building these relationships and support for Indigenous leadership is necessary for advancing truth and reconciliation in higher education.

5.2 Leverage Point 2: Building awareness for the non-Indigenous community

Why are institutions slow to establish senior Indigenous roles? The issue is rooted in persisting racial microaggressions by the non-Indigenous community (Huber & Solorzano, 2015; Saloojee & Saloojee, 2018). Technically, "non-Indigenous" includes every group without a precolonial presence in what is now known as Canada. This discussion focuses on European, white settlers that benefit from colonial privilege, recognizing that other "non-Indigenous" racialized groups face race-based marginalization (Jimmy et al., 2019).

Participant A9 noted, "[senior leadership] don't want to see an Indigenous person get the position, where it might be [a] non-Indigenous person." Contrary to this, bringing more Indigenous voices into senior leadership is about adding perspectives and enhancing institutional equity. Such opportunities align with the strategic goals for many institutions across the country including the University of Waterloo, as found in the strategic plan review. These fear-based exclusions can produce microaggressions, even unconsciously, arising from a lack of awareness about Indigenous injustices. The majority of current Faculty, staff, and

students in a colonial, Canadian HEI received little to no formal education about Indigenous history and the ongoing legacy of injustice (Fellner, 2018; Milne, 2017). Those who did, including myself in the early 2010s, had a glossed-over version of what is now being understood on a larger scale through media and Indigenous activism. The concept of truth and reconciliation was never mentioned in my grade school education. Still, accurate formal training and curriculum is not a standardized practice in academia (Morcom & Freeman, 2018; Pidgeon, 2014). Without proper education and awareness about Indigenous injustices, the non-Indigenous academic community will continue to stall truth and reconciliation. Participant A4 stated, “if especially [non-Indigenous community members] don't feel comfortable enough, or that they have a good enough understanding of them of these terms and concepts themselves, then how do they do this work?"

Returning to Fine’s (1997) protective pillows concept, non-Indigenous administration and educators, particularly white ones, are insulated from discomfort and the realities of their privilege. For current educators to have conversations with students about Indigenous injustices and reconciliation in the classroom, they first need proper education and training. This means confronting their white fragility, which is intimidating and uncomfortable. Sometimes, white educators make the decision not to discuss these topics in the classroom with respectful intentions. This was a common concern voiced in the interviews, where educators were fearful of misinterpreting truth and reconciliation because of their own colonial education. Despite respectful intentions, failing to have these conversations because of their fragility perpetuates oppression and colonial pedagogies, passing fragility and ignorance onto uninformed students. This cycle will repeat until we have these conversations.

Interview participants believe that education and awareness are key for getting non-Indigenous individuals, especially those in leadership positions, involved in truth and reconciliation. It is also essential for students so they can engage in their studies and society

in a more respectful and inclusive way. Participant A4 emphasized that "if students leave [the institution] ...with no knowledge of Indigenous realities, and our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, then we've done them a disservice." Since education is central to HEIs, this knowledge-building is fundamental to an institution's academic mission. Participant A1 said that institutions should build a "critical mass" with "a baseline understanding." Truth and reconciliation will be easier to advance when there is a critical mass that understands why this change is important and how to support it. Without a critical mass, Participant 1 said, "you're building on no foundation and it's just not going to hold or will be superficial."

Encouragingly, some institutions have begun building their critical mass. Interview participants provided examples of the initiatives they are working on, such as Indigenized and decolonized curriculum and training programs for educators to help address fragility in the classroom. It is important that these initiatives are implemented across all Faculties and are included in mandatory training programmes for current and new employees. Training educators will prepare them to have tough conversations in the classroom. By doing so, the next generation of leaders will be better equipped to manage fragility and foster truth and reconciliation. Participant A6 said, "when those people finally get into positions of power and authority…we will truly see the fruits of reconciliation."

To avoid perpetuating microaggressions, Indigenous voices on and off campus must create and support the initial delivery of this training. A *CBC Radio* special by Deerchild (2018) illustrates the dangers of not creating space for Indigenous voices to lead this process. In the special, an Indigenous student at an Ontario university was denied the opportunity to educate their non-Indigenous classmates about Indigenous health issues for a class project. The topic was randomly assigned to a group of non-Indigenous, assumingly white students. The professor told the Indigenous student it was unfair and inappropriate to allow them to

select a topic since they were randomized. Yet, it was more unfair and inappropriate when the non-Indigenous students perpetuated stereotypes and racism in their presentation about Indigenous health. Even worse, the Indigenous student was reprimanded for calling out the microaggressions in the presentation. Evidently, without opportunities for respectful and accurate education, educators and students fail to recognize the microaggressions they produce, which pervade into their lives outside of the classroom.

Training and educational programming is only one piece of the puzzle. There must also be a willingness from non-Indigenous individuals to join the critical mass. Participant A7 said, "diversity work is a choice. You have to really choose every day to recommit to that work. Otherwise, the structures of society will let you wander along and not even think about it." Likewise, Participant A6 said, “walking down this road is not temporary.” This process of unlearning colonial worldviews and learning about truth and reconciliation is a lifelong process, which must be clearly articulated to non-Indigenous learners. The discomfort they can expect to feel should also be emphasized as a normal and necessary process. It would be useful to give individuals going through the process of dismantling their fragility a safe space to openly talk about their feelings and be reaffirmed that they are on the right track. Otherwise, they will reinstate their protective pillows and truth and reconciliation will not move forward.

5.3 Leverage Point 3: Too much work, too few people

When the non-Indigenous academic community does not engage in truth and reconciliation work, it is left to the limited number of Indigenous Faculty and staff at an institution. Indigenous units on campuses are small, sometimes with only one or two full-time staff members. Participant A4 argued, “there never has been enough people to do all the work that needs to be done.” Participant A9 agreed, saying institutions “overload

their…Indigenous staff" who have been "overwhelmed by requests" since 2015, according to Participant A10.

With only a handful of individuals to tackle Indigenous initiatives for institutions with tens of thousands of students and staff, the Indigenous academic community is "pulled in one hundred directions," according to Participant A1. They must complete their job-specific responsibilities while sitting on voluntary committees, speaking at events, and more. This culmination of expectations and limited institutional and community support is leading to Indigenous staff and Faculty being "burned out," (Participant A1) "overload[ed]," (A9) and "spread out too thin" (A10). It also leads to trade-offs. For instance, Participant A10 said, "I could spend a full 35 hours a week on other people's projects and initiatives, and while they're still supporting Indigenous students, they wouldn't be the services and programs that we think might be most needed."

There is no gradual easing into these intensive working conditions, either. Participant A8 commented, "I've heard from so many different universities that the Faculty gets sort of pounced on as soon as they start their work at the university. Everybody wants them on some Indigenous committee." While it is promising to hear about the new initiatives taking place where Indigenous voices are included and prioritized, institutions are not providing enough resources to protect Indigenous wellbeing. This work is not easy, either. Participant A9 said it is "very, very difficult and you cannot do it on your own." This work often brings up complex emotions, requiring reflections on traumatic experiences, not to mention frustration from pushing harder than the non-Indigenous community to have their voice heard. Without enough employees to share these roles and responsibilities, the same staff face these challenging, intensive experiences every day, without a break.

The hiring process also presents issues for Indigenous staff. An observation in Jimmy et al.'s book, *Towards Braiding* (2019), suggests that institutions will often hire Indigenous

staff that "embody familiarity" (p. 45), meaning they conform to colonial ways of knowing, speaking, teaching, and appearing. Jimmy et al. observe that institutions may hire Indigenous candidates that fit the ideal colonial 'look.' This includes light skin, thin, able-bodied, and heterosexual. Additionally, Participant A9 said that Indigenous candidates may be assessed differently than a non-Indigenous candidate during the recruitment process. A non-Indigenous candidate is reviewed for their full educational background and specializations, whereas an Indigenous candidate's background may not be reviewed as rigorously. Participant A9 said, "an Indigenous person may have received their Ph.D. at an outstanding university, but [the hiring committee] don't see that. They see an Indigenous person sitting there." These examples imply that Indigenous hiring can be tokenistic, checking a box to say that a specific number of Indigenous people work at the institution. For this reason, cluster hirings have been critiqued as tokenistic ways of Indigenizing an institution. In addition, the hired individuals may be chosen because they conform to the colonial system, rather than aspire to transform it (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Hillman et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2019). One should also question who is involved in the hiring process and whether current Indigenous employees have a say. Greater inclusivity, equity, and transparency are needed in the hiring process for Indigenous employees, including the decolonization of selection criteria and prevention of tokenism.

5.4 Leverage Point 4: Too much work, too little funding

Overwhelming workloads are even more challenging when not enough funding is available to support them. Referring specifically to Indigenous hiring, Participant A8 said, "one of the things we keep hearing back is, 'yeah, there's just not enough money to be able to hire all these new people.' And yet we hear of other hirings going on within the university." Like the rest of the institution, budgets for hirings and projects are colonial in design. Participant A6 explained that current budget models encourage investment into high-demand

programs, making it difficult to obtain investments for small programs focusing on Indigenous content, or for creating new programs that require additional start-up costs. This could make it especially challenging to address Call to Action #16 about creating new Aboriginal language programs. Participant A8 noted, “these budget models are pulling us in a more colonial direction.” This issue cannot be addressed when current senior leaders do not prioritize truth and reconciliation, and reconciliation priorities are not part of the selection criteria for executive candidates.

The proportion of Indigenous students at each institution is very small relative to the entire student population, ranging from 0.4-12% for the interviewed institutions, according to publicly available demographic data on their institutional webpages. That said, for the majority, less than 2% of students identify as Indigenous. When allocating funding, Participant A9 said that senior administration are looking “only at the numbers of Indigenous students and saying, ‘well it's not worth it.’” However, the resources and projects coming out of Indigenous offices, departments, and services benefit the entire institution. Participant 8 said, “we're not just there for Indigenous students…it's staff, faculty, students, and the community, really, that we're there for.” Indigenous initiatives require more financial resources, which are used for hiring staff and executing projects that advance truth and reconciliation. More fundamentally, budget models must change to recognize qualitative metrics, rather than just quantitative ones. Senior administration that are responsible for budgeting must recognize the importance of truth and reconciliation at their institution and allocate the appropriate resources to support these processes.

5.5 Shifting the Burden: understanding the system through its Archetype

Bringing this discussion all together, the barriers to truth and reconciliation in the academic system strongly resemble the Systems Archetype, *Shifting the Burden*. Braun’s

(2002) Archetype framework was used to design a systems map for these barriers and proposed solutions, which is shown in Figure 2.

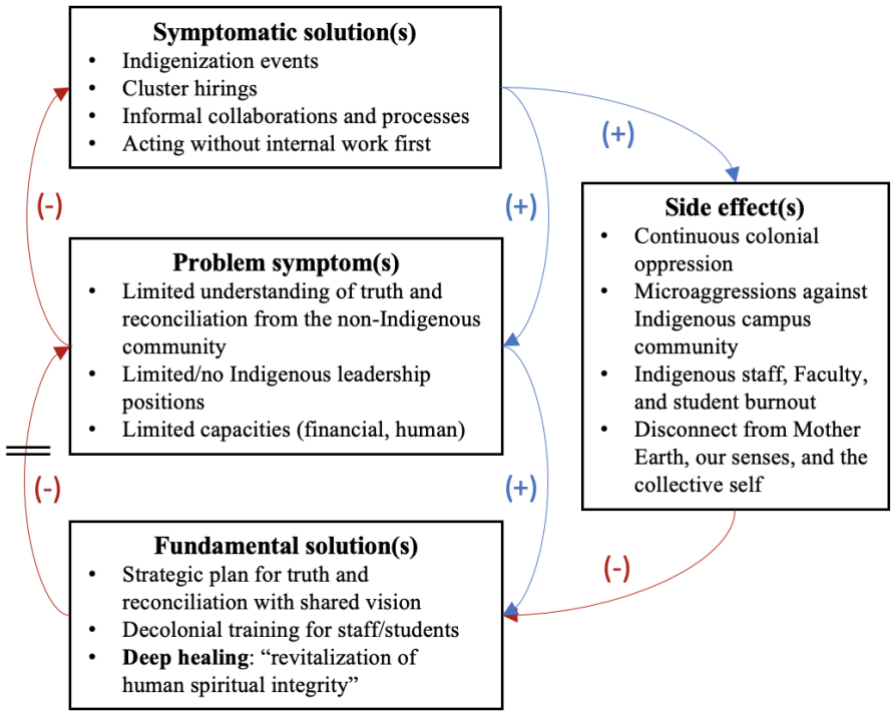

Figure 2. Systems map for the barriers to truth and reconciliation in academia, using the *Shifting the Burden* Archetype.

Modelling the system through this Archetype is valuable because Braun (2002) offers prescriptive actions, or guidance, for creating meaningful change based on common patterns. The *Shifting the Burden* Archetype is characterized by two tensions: "the attraction (and relative ease and low cost) of devising symptomatic solutions to visible problems; and 2) the long-term impact of fundamental solutions aimed at underlying structures that are producing the pattern of behaviour in the first place" (Braun, 2002, p. 4). Symptomatic solutions are prioritized, which allows the underlying problem to persist. It would be like applying a bandage to a chronic disease. The bandage temporarily mitigates a surface-level symptom without addressing the root issue. Avoiding the root issue may even produce new problems. This fits the challenges described by interview participants and the literature. Institutions implement surface-level initiatives like Indigenization events without doing the necessary decolonization work that targets the underlying colonial structures governing the institution.

Referring to Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), this is the inability, or unwillingness, to move beyond the attractive symptomatic solutions. Figure 3 from Braun (2002) illustrates how, over time, the root issue and its symptoms become more complex when left unaddressed. If an institution relies on Indigenous inclusion without committing to the deeper work of reconciling and decolonial Indigenization – and if the individuals within the institution do not willingly commit to this work– truth and reconciliation cannot be achieved.

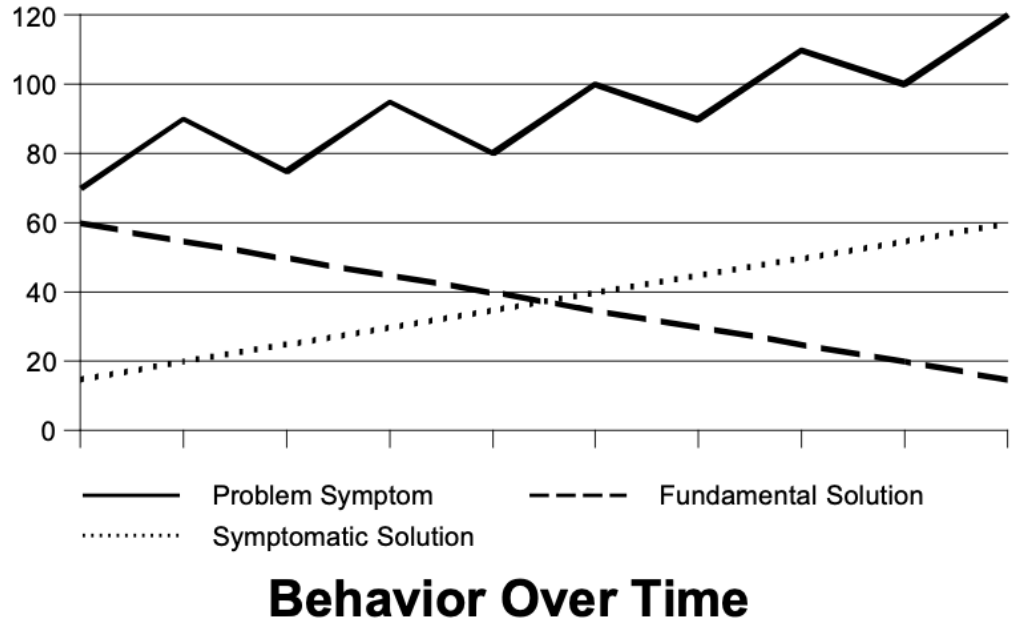

Figure 3. Behaviour of the system over time in the Shifting the Burden Archetype (Braun, 2002, p. 4).

How does an institution find and implement fundamental solutions, then? Braun (2002) proposes three prescriptive actions to address the fundamental problem in a system of this Archetype. First, Braun does not dismiss symptomatic solutions like Indigenization events. They can help buy time while working on the fundamental solutions that require more time and planning. However, having a plan and timeline for implementing fundamental solutions is pivotal for systems transformation, demonstrating the importance of a rigorous strategic plan for responding to the Calls to Action.

Braun (2002) then recommends involving multiple viewpoints to distinguish symptomatic solutions from fundamental ones. This study effectively achieved this, bringing

in ten perspectives from the interviews along with considerations by Indigenous and settler ally scholars. The systems map went through several iterations to ensure as many perspectives were integrated as possible. For instance, I initially wrote "decolonial events and training for staff and students" as a foundational solution. Then I realized that, first, the non-Indigenous community must be willing to engage in this paradigm-shifting work independently, outside of the pressures to do so during events or training sessions. It must be an ongoing, self-motivated process. Like Participant 7 said, individuals must choose every day to recommit to this work. According to Goodchild (2021), committing to this work is a "revitalization of human spiritual integrity" (p. 98). That is, deep healing is needed for *both* Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to foster truth and reconciliation.

What is healing for the non-Indigenous community? Goodchild and the Haudenosaunee elders that they interview describe it as obtaining "deep understanding, enlightenment, and wisdom; a high level of spiritual understanding" (p. 98). It involves reconnecting with Mother Earth on a spiritual level, connecting us to each other and the planet. Western society is disconnected from this spiritual way of being, focusing on objective science rather than subjective experiences through our senses. To enable deep healing within the non-Indigenous community, we must change how we perceive and interact with the world. Thus, deep healing is bolded in the systems map to demonstrate what I now believe to be a critical first step in truth and reconciliation in higher education.

Braun's final prescriptive action is to identify side-effects that may arise from a proposed solution. For instance, the burnout and stress that Indigenous Faculty, staff, and students face is because of their large workloads, limited resources, and the resistance of senior administration to hire more staff. Identifying these side-effects will help minimize trade-offs as foundational solutions are implemented.

Following the prescriptive actions, Braun shares seven steps for fostering change within the system being studied. These steps should be used to create a strategic plan for truth and reconciliation and should be reflected in the objectives of the plan. This is demonstrated in Table 4, which illustrates the steps I took to map the academic system in the context of truth and reconciliation. These steps can be used directly by the University of Waterloo as the strategic plan for truth and reconciliation is developed. It can also provide an example for other institutions that wish to apply a Systems Archetype lens for problem-solving.

Table 4. How Braun's (2002) action steps were applied in the study to develop foundational solutions.

	Action steps (Braun, 2002)	Study implementation and future steps
1.	Identify the original problem symptom.	The original symptoms were identified by the interview participants who are experiencing the symptom(s) first-hand.
2.	Map all "quick fixes" that appear to be keeping the problem under control.	Many of these initiatives have been described already, such as cluster hirings and Indigenization events.
3.	Identify the impact of the symptomatic solutions on other parts of the system.	This includes burnout, stress, ongoing oppression, marginalization, and so on.
4.	Identify fundamental solutions. Develop multiple perspectives.	The interview data and literature review findings helped develop fundamental solutions that enable decolonization and deep healing. More research is needed on the process of deep healing and how to encourage it in the non-Indigenous campus community.
5.	Map side-effects of quick fixes that may be undermining the usability of the fundamental solution.	Based on the interviews and literature review, the common quick fixes were mapped. Further discussions with Indigenous staff, students, and Faculty can help identify quick fixes that have been missed but will be important to consider when developing fundamental solutions.
6.	Find interconnections to fundamental loops. Find links between the interaction effects and the fundamental solution that may be causing gridlock.	This step was initiated in this study and should be continued in strategic planning processes. For instance, limited financial and human capital for Indigenous initiatives is closely tied to the lack of Indigenous leadership in academia, which is rooted in the white fragility of non-Indigenous senior leaders.
7.	Identify high-leverage actions from both perspectives.	In this study, Braun's (2002) prescriptive actions were used to create a framework for the fundamental solutions, which were supplemented by the advice from interview participants. As a settler researcher and student, I have limited first-hand experience with how academic institutions are governed. I have done my best to describe them in a general sense and propose interventions based on the research and conversations I had. Readers of this study are encouraged to modify actions to suit the unique characteristics of their institution.

5.6 Enabling foundational solutions through strategic planning

One of the underlying drivers that allows this Archetype to persist in academia is when actions to advance truth and reconciliation are not formalized. Without a formal

component, such as a policy or plan, these actions lack leverage or 'teeth' to foster change across the institution. Participant A10 said, "we need to actually have some formal practices and processes in place." Formalizing these practices and processes through a strategic plan has many benefits: it outlines the specific goals for truth and reconciliation; identifies key roles and responsibilities; and creates leverage for truth and reconciliation as an institutional priority. Participant A1 said that people start "pointing fingers" when roles and responsibilities are not clearly established. The work is left incomplete as finger pointing continues, so the Indigenous community ends up taking it on, Otherwise, it is forgotten about.

That said, when institutions create strategic plans to formalize their actions, but the plan focuses on symptomatic solutions, the root issues cannot be resolved. This was the case in many strategic plans that were reviewed, indicating that there are gaps in planning priorities and approaches. Based on the review of 49 strategic plans (see Appendix B), six actions were identified as 'strengths,' which address these gaps and help achieve the changes that interview participants demanded. These actions, summarized in Table 5, should be incorporated into the strategic plan for truth and reconciliation at the University of Waterloo, and other institutions creating or revising their plans.

Table 5. Recommendations for revealing leverage points through strategic planning.

Opportunity	Rationale	Example
1. Create a clear vision and mission for the plan.	This action outlines what the institution is working towards. It must reflect what the Indigenous academic community envision for an inclusive, decolonized institution grounded in truth and reconciliation. As such, it should be made in collaboration with the Indigenous community on and off campus.	The Centre of Teaching and Learning at Trent University publish annual reports with the following vision: "We foster an environment where Indigenous Knowledges are respected and recognized as a valid means by which to understand the world" (2020, p. 4).
2. Define terminology (as best as possible).	In the literature and interviews, HEIs shy away from promoting "decolonization," fearing it is too radical and uncomfortable. In strategies that mention decolonization, the goals still tend to focus on symptomatic solutions related to Indigenous inclusion. Differentiating between "Indigenization" and "decolonization" will help develop targeted, foundational solutions that embody Fellner's (2018) braided model.	Memorial University defines Indigenization through a two-pillar approach, which is used throughout their Strategic Framework for Indigenization (2021). It explicitly identifies what is and is not considered Indigenization at their institution, helping to direct efforts.
3. Identify key responsibilities.	Being explicit about responsibilities can prevent finger pointing, increase accountability, and emphasize collective action. This includes financial responsibilities for truth and reconciliation and improving budget models for Indigenous initiatives on campus.	McMaster's Indigenous Strategic Directions (2021) presents a list of key internal stakeholders like academic units and Vice Presidents, as well as community and government partners that can help advance their objectives.
4. Translate the Calls to Action into personalized goals.	Some institutions frame their plans as personalized Calls to Action that reflect the contextual needs of their institution. This approach can eliminate the uncertainty around the TRC's Calls to Action. This may require hiring an external consultant or establishing a Calls to Action Task Force to determine how to translate the broad goals into institution-specific ones.	Carleton University (2019) and the University of Toronto (2017) have established their own 41 and 34 Calls to Action, respectively, that support their unique institutional needs. They build on the TRC's Calls to Action, beyond the four that mention higher education.
5. Establish measurable indicators, benchmarks, and timelines to track progress.	Failing to monitor progress is a weakness in many strategies. Goals and objectives are established without clear, measurable indicators, so it is difficult to determine when they have been achieved (or not). Monitoring increases accountability and helps visualize the impact being made. It also transforms the plan from a static document into a living one. Institutions with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) goals tend to publish annual reports that showcase their progress and reflect on trends, barriers, and opportunities.	Queen's University developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure their progress towards the recommendations in their TRC Task Force Final Report (2017). The KPIs also have specific Data Sources. McGill's Final Report from Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Students and Indigenous Education (2017) sets immediate term (1-2 years), medium term (2-5 years), and long-term (>5 years) goals.
6. Embed stories and integrate cultural values to decolonize the plan itself.	Institutional strategic plans usually follow a traditional, Western framework. In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, these plans should integrate local Indigenous culture, values, and stories to create a deeper sense of meaning and strengthen the presence of Indigenous worldviews within institutional governance.	The University of Ottawa's (2020) Indigenous Action Plan is organized into four "Hoops," reflecting the hoop poles that support a wiigwaam, the traditional dwelling of the Anishinaabe people that the University is connected to. The values and goals of the plan are represented by the hoop poles, which support the overarching purpose of the plan.

5.7 Overcoming the fear of decolonization in academia

Exploring how institutions define and apply “Indigenization” and “decolonization” is important for understanding why progress towards the Calls to Action is idling (Kennedy et al., 2020). However, institutions should not focus extensive time and resources on defining these processes. Participant A5 warns, “we're being overshadowed by the terminology.” In other words, focusing too heavily on definitions will detract from the time and resources that can be put towards action. Rather than provide absolute definitions, the goal of this section is to articulate how these three processes are connected and can be implemented by higher education institutions.

Based on the strategic plan review and interview discussions, institutions appear comfortable using terms like “reconciliation” and “Indigenization” in their strategic plans, whereas “decolonization” is used far less. Participant A5 observes that in many cases, institutions focus on “staging an event that is clearly seen as an Indigenized.” In some cases, the words “decolonization” or “decolonize” are absent from plans. When asked to describe how their institutions are implementing decolonization, interview participants struggled to respond. The difficulties with conceptualizing and implementing decolonization can be understood through a systems lens, which will be disseminated below.

Fellner (2018, p. 284) defines decolonization as “the interconnected processes of deconstructing colonial ideologies and their manifestations, and reconstructing colonial discourse through Indigenous counter-narratives.” Building on this, the University of Alberta (2022) describes decolonization as a combination of four processes: deconstructing colonial ideologies of Western superiority and privilege; dismantling structures that perpetuate the status quo and power imbalances; valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge while eliminating settler biases; and for non-Indigenous people, self-reflections about personal biases and relationships with Indigenous people. Hence, decolonization requires shifting

paradigms because “paradigms are the sources of systems” (Meadows, 2009, p. 163). This shift threatens the colonial structure that an institution is built upon, which evokes hesitancy in the non-Indigenous community because of their white fragility and fear of change.

These concerns are valid but should not inhibit decolonization. Institutions cannot achieve reconciliation or Indigenization goals if they overlook decolonization because of how interconnected they are. One interview participant explicitly used Gaudry and Lorenz’s (2018) continuum to emphasize that decolonization cannot be avoided. Fellner (2016) describes decolonization and Indigenization as pieces of sweetgrass braided together so that “the strands are much stronger than they are alone” (p. 285), together advancing truth and reconciliation. Aligning with this braided model, Participant A3 said, “to take bite-sized pieces of reconciliation, you have to Indigenize, and you have to understand truth.” To uncover truth, the colonial paradigms masking it must be decolonized.

At the same time, decolonization cannot be an overnight process since it requires changing ways of knowing and being that have existed for centuries. Therefore, Participant A3 suggested, “[institutions] can start to decolonize practices in pieces.” Imagine a Jenga block tower: pieces can be pulled away from the foundation until it collapses, or can be substituted with new, Indigenized, and reconciled pieces one at a time. This shift happens carefully and methodically, sustainably using resources to transform (decolonize) the tower. The tower performs its fundamental functions in a new, decolonized way. It may be difficult to transform every colonial piece – some will be wedged into the tower tighter than others – but by transforming as many pieces as possible (ideally the majority), the system will behave in a transformed way.

To summarize, without strategic direction that includes clear definitions and expectations for Indigenization and decolonization, institutions struggle to foster change in their colonial systems. Differentiating these processes in strategic plans will reduce confusion

and time wasted on guessing, pointing fingers, and inaction. Institutions cannot shy away from decolonization if they genuinely want to advance truth and reconciliation, so the relationship between these processes must also be highlighted. The non-Indigenous community's fears are heard and valid, and so are the Indigenous voices that have been demanding justice for centuries but continue to suffer from academia's inaction. Following the wise words of Susan Jeffers, institutions must feel the fear and do decolonization anyway.

5.8 Navigating my settler-colonial positionality in the research process

Reflecting on this experience, the most challenging part of the research process was stepping into a supporting role for Becker and Indigenous Relations. Throughout my undergraduate degree, I have been the director of my projects and assignments – I chose the focus, the research methods, and the interpretations of the findings. This assumed agency comes from a place of privilege. Over the last ten months, I kept using my self-reflection questions in Table 2 to remind myself of my positionality and role in this research. It was an uncomfortable and intimidating process, but an enlightening one. I was fearful of receiving "just another white girl" accusations like Snow (2018). However, I did not face these accusations – hopefully because I was engaging in this work in a respectful way. After reading Fine (1997) and DiAngelo (2011), I know that this fear and discomfort is an essential part of decolonizing my research and worldviews. I will continue to face these feelings as I dismantle my internalized colonial biases. Rather than fear the discomfort, I now welcome it.

6.0 Conclusions and the path forward

The purpose of this study was to understand the common approaches and systemic barriers for responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action within Canadian higher education institutions. In doing so, it was discovered that the academic system resembles the *Shifting the Burden* Systems Archetype. A systems map was produced by using the Archetype framework, which helped uncover the root issues that institutions face

when addressing the Calls to Action. It also helped develop foundational solutions that can foster transformative change, which is necessary for truth and reconciliation. Six recommendations were produced to help implement these solutions through strategic planning processes at the University of Waterloo.

Truth and reconciliation demand change to many core elements of the academic system: Indigenous voices need greater representation and agency in senior decision-making processes; the non-Indigenous academic community must unlearn their colonial ways to support truth and reconciliation, and be willing to commit to deep healing; greater human and financial resources must be allocated to Indigenous initiatives on campus; and institutions must develop strong strategic plans or frameworks to formalize their goals, actions, and responsibilities for truth and reconciliation. By implementing the changes proposed in this study, institutions can accelerate their progress towards the Calls to Action.

6.1 Study limitations

Several limitations should be noted about the study's process. While preparation for this thesis began in early 2021, the short research timeframe limited how much data could be collected. Interview candidates had busy schedules. The five interview candidates who directly declined the offer said it was due to capacity limits. Three of them suggested reaching out months later, which was beyond the study's timeline. However, although the sample size (N=10) was small, the rich discussions provided high-quality insights that were supported by the literature. Furthermore, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring all communications to be conducted virtually. The pandemic could have contributed to the low response rate of interview candidates, whose email inboxes are flooded with new messages daily. I was also empathetic of Zoom fatigue with interview participants, Becker, and my supervisor. I offered as much flexibility with scheduling as possible so our conversations could be as lively without contributing to burnout among my collaborators.

Despite my best efforts, it is also harder to build relationships through virtual platforms. More broadly, the interviews occurred 1.5 years into the pandemic. The Indigenous initiatives described by interview participants may differ than what could happen in-person. As Canada proceeds with what will hopefully be its final reopening attempt, the results and implications of this research may not reflect the specific conditions and challenges of in-person activities. However, it is hoped that the findings of this study translate easily or can be adopted to in-person activities.

6.2 Study implications

First, this study contributes to the growing body of literature about implementing the Calls to Action in diverse organizations, particularly in education institutions. Further research that takes a case study approach at specific institutions can deepen understandings about common barriers to truth and reconciliation, as well as identify institution-specific ones and how they emerged. Second, the methodologies used in this study demonstrate what it means to be a settler ally, and how to begin the process of deep healing. My narrative can aid future non-Indigenous researchers that wish to support truth and reconciliation through co-production, and provides best practices for conducting ethical, respectful research. More narratives are needed from diverse voices to identify best practices for dismantling fragility. Lastly, through a blend of primary and secondary qualitative research, the study offers six tangible steps for formalizing strategic action for truth and reconciliation, bridging the gap between the TRC's Calls to Action and academia's response.

Truth and reconciliation are essential for healing and fostering an inclusive, equitable future in what is now known as Canada. Given education's critical role in this, higher education institutions can become trailblazers in truth and reconciliation by shaping the next generation of national leaders. The process of transformative change will be slow, requiring bite-sized pieces that are methodically considered and meaningfully implemented. Through

collaboration, deep listening, and personal reflection, this study provides a hopeful path forward. Truth and reconciliation in higher education starts with internal work that translates into institutional change. As Justice Murray Sinclair once said, education is one of the greatest hopes for truth and reconciliation, and an inclusive future. Let this study be a call to action for each of us. Together, we can transform higher education institutions into a home for all.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Opening script

Jenna: Hello **[interviewee's name]**, it's great to connect with you virtually. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to sit down with me. This interview is scheduled for one hour, although we may or may not need that amount of time. That said, if you need a break or would like to pause at any point, please do not hesitate to let me know.

The purpose of this thesis is to support the processes of decolonization and Indigenization at the University of Waterloo, led by the Indigenous Initiatives Office. More broadly, the outcomes of this thesis can support the decolonization and Indigenization efforts of other Canadian higher education institutions. Through this work I will identify ways to navigate these barriers and identify "best" or "wise practices" through literature reviews and interviews with Indigenous representatives at institutions across the country. More broadly, it will also contribute to a growing body of literature about what "reconciliation," "decolonization" and "Indigenization" mean, particularly in the contexts of higher education where there is so much diversity.

I have a few open-ended questions I would like to ask you. As a reminder, you may decline answering any of these that you wish. You can also choose whether you want your answers to be attributed or not. In addition, we can revisit any questions if you wish, in case you would like to elaborate on or change an answer you previously provided.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board.

[If using a platform like Microsoft Teams that automatically records video]. Please note, this platform we are communicating through automatically records video and audio. If you agree to be recorded, the video will be separated from the recording and deleted after this interview.

[review verbal consent form with participant]

Is it okay if we begin recording the interview? **[response: yes or no].**

Do you have any questions for me before we begin? **[allow to respond]**

Interview questions

1. Can you describe the role of your department/office/organization at your institution?
    a. What is your official title at your institution?
    b. How many full-time staff members, part-time staff members, volunteers, etc. are specifically working within your department/office/organization?

2. Can you describe the main initiatives taking place at your institution to promote reconciliation, Indigenization, and/or decolonization?

   a. Who are some of the key individuals involved in these initiatives within the institution (e.g., specific staff members, students)?

3. Has your institution faced any challenges while trying to implement your initiatives?
   a. Are there any institutional factors that you believe contribute to each of these challenges?

4. Have there been any opportunities or surprising "positive" outcomes during the implementation of your initiatives?

5. The terms reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization have no single, clear definition. From your perspective, what would it mean to:
   a. Reconcile your institution?
   b. Indigenize your institution?
   c. Decolonize your institution?

6. Do your institutional initiatives focus on one of the following more than the others? If so, why do you think this is the case?

7. If you could give a piece of advice to a colleague at another institution that is looking to begin similar processes of reconciliation, Indigenization, and or decolonization, what would that advice be?

Closing script

Thank you so much for participating in this interview **[insert interviewee's name]**. Your insight and perspective are critical for me to answer my thesis questions and would not be possible without your efforts. When my research is complete, I will share the findings with you. Does emailing a copy to **[insert email]** work for you? **[response: yes or no].**

Verbal Consent Form

By agreeing to participate, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #43469). If you have questions for the Board, you may find the contact information for the Office of Research Ethics on the information letter that was provided to you. For all other questions contact me, Jenna Phillips, at jmfphillips@uwaterloo.ca.

Have you read the information letter?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you have any questions?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you agree to participate in this study?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you give permission for the interview to be video/audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you agree to the use of quotations in any paper or publication resulting from this study with the understanding that you will not be identified by name or institution but that you may be referenced generally by your role (e.g., “Indigenous Initiatives Director”)?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you agree to the use of quotations directly attributed to your name, occupation and institution in any paper or publication resulting from this study?

☐YES ☐NO

Appendix B: Review of Institutional Strategic Plans

Table A-1. Summary of institutional strategies mentioning truth and reconciliation in Canada.

					Processes mentioned in plan		
School	**Title**	**Year**	**Mission/Purpose**	**SMART goals/targets?**	**Reconciliation**	**Indigenization**	**Decolonization**
Acadia University	Decolonization Strategy	2018	n/a	Yes	x	x	x
Algoma University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Athabasca University	Comprehensive Institutional Plan 2017-2020	2017		Yes	x	x	
Bishop's University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bow Valley College	Charting our course: Comprehensive institutional plan 2018-2021 Indigenization Strategy in progress	2018	Where people live and work, Bow Valley College will contribute to the vitality of communities and the strength of the economy through innovative adult education programs and services which equip people for successful living, lifelong learning, and work in a global, knowledge-based economy.	Yes	x	x	x
Brandon University	Campus Master Plan	2017	Promote excellence in teaching, research, and scholarly and creative activities.	No		x	
Brock University	Strategic Plan 2018-2025	2018	n/a	No	x		x
Camosun College	Inspiring Relationships: Indigenization Plan	2013	n/a				
Campion College	Strategic Plan 2019-2024	2019	Develop the whole person - intellectually, spiritually, and socially - for service within society, through an education in liberal arts and sciences in the Jesuit tradition.	Yes	x		
Cape Breton University	Strategic Plan 2019-2024	2019	Cape Breton University is committed to high-quality, accessible education; innovative research; and a vibrant, multicultural future for the Island.	No	x	x	

Capilano University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Carleton University	Kinàmàgawin Indigenous Reconciliation Strategy	2020	n/a				
Centennial College	Indigenous Strategic Framework Pillars	2019	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	
Concordia University	The Indigenous Directions Action Plan: Concordia's Path Towards Decolonizing and Indigenizing the University	2019	n/a			x	x
Conestoga College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dalhousie	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Douglas College New Westminster Campus	Douglas College Indigenization Strategy – DRAFT	2019			x	x	
Durham College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Emily Carr University of Art + Design	Eight Commitments to an Emergent Future: Strategic Plan to 2021	2017	1. Emily Carr graduates embody trans-disciplinary, inclusive, and socially engaged art and design. We create communities and solutions that foster social justice and ecological sustainability. 2. Our graduates are globally recognized as central to their communities of practice. Our graduate programs and research agenda shape new and emerging practices and scholarship. 3. Our experiential learning environment fosters creative exploration, change agency, and lifelong learning. Our education scholarship is co-created between faculty and students and	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	x

			demonstrates commitment to and respect for indigenous and diverse ways of knowing. 4. We create programming that builds learning channels. We are sought after by partners from diverse communities and environments for innovative research and art and design-based solutions to complex questions.				
Fleming College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
George Brown College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Georgian College	Strategic Plan 2016-2021	2016	Inspire innovation, transform lives, and connect communities through the power of education.			x	
Humber College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lakehead University	Ogimaawin Aboriginal Governance Council Nishtam Watabiin (First Roots) - Strategic Plan 2017-18	2017	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.			
Lambton College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Langara College	Indigenization Strategic Plan 2025		Langara College provides diverse learners with the academic and experiential foundation for further education, career success, and professional and personal development.	Yes	x	x	x
Laurentian University	Truth and Reconciliation Taskforce Final Report;	2020	n/a	Yes - also provide a living registry of projects contributing	x	x	

	Imagine 2023: Strategic Plan			towards each strategic value.			
Laval University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Loyalist College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
MacEwan University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
McGill University	Truth & Reconciliation at McGill: 52 Calls to Action in 5 Categories	2017	n/a	Yes - with goals of establishing more key metrics	x	x	x
McMaster University	Indigenous Strategic Directions	2021	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Strategic Framework for Indigenization 2021-2026	2021	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	x
Mohawk College	Mohawk College Strategic Plan 2022-2025	2022	We educate and prepare highly skilled graduates for success and contribution to community, Canada, and the world.	No	x	x	x
Montmorency College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mount Allison University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mount Royal University	Indigenous Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021	2016	Mount Royal University is committed to the academic and personal success of students by meeting the educational needs of all Indigenous Peoples.	Yes	x	x	x
Niagara College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Nipissing University	Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2015-2019	2015	To support Aboriginal student success, Enji Giigdoyang, the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives: 1. Provides programs and services for Aboriginal students to thrive; 2. Expands access to and facilitates culturally supportive academic and research opportunities; and 3. Builds meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal communities.	No	x	x	
Okanagan College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ontario Tech University	UOIT's Role in Reconciliation: Options and Opportunities in Indigenizing Curricula	2016	The purpose of this research report is to identify, explain and evaluate curricular initiatives available to UOIT in responding to the TRC's calls for action in education. Animating the report is a commitment to fostering a teaching and learning environment that contributes to facilitating respectful relationships between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples.	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	x
Queen's University	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, & Indigenization (EDII) Strategy & Action Plan	2021	n/a	Yes	x	x	
Royal Roads University	2021 RRU Anti-Racism Action Plan	2021	n/a	No	x	x	
Ryerson University	A Framework for Truth & Reconciliation: Yeates School of Graduate Studies	2020	The purpose of this report is to provide guidance for our journey towards making graduate studies at Ryerson the first choice for Indigenous learners with the passion and energy to lead the next generation of Indigenous creative and intellectual changemakers.	No	x	x	

Saint Mary's University	Strategic Plan 2017-2022	2017	The mission of Saint Mary's University is to: 1. Offer undergraduate, graduate and life-long learning programs. 2. Engage in research and disseminate its results. 3. Serve the community from the local to the international level.	Yes		x	
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Selkirk College	Indigenization Plan 2019-2024	2019	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	x
Sherbrooke University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Simon Fraser University	Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2013-2018; Report of the SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council	2013; 2018		n/a			
St. Francis Xavier University	Canada Research Chairs Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan	2018	n/a	Yes	x	x	x
St. Thomas University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The King's University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
The Ontario College of Art & Design University (OCAD)	Recommendations from the Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Learning - Fall 2018	2018	#1: Audacious and responsible pursuit: We nurture diversity and resilience, and practice equity, inclusion, sustainability, and respect for Indigenous voices and cultures.	No	x	x	
Thompson Rivers University	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Trent University	Centre for Teaching and Learning Annual Report 2020	2020	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	x
Université de Moncton	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Université du Québec en Outaouais	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University Canada West	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of Alberta	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of British Columbia	Indigenous Strategic Plan	2020	To guide UBC's engagement with Indigenous peoples and its commitment to reconciliation, as articulated and called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	
University of Calgary	Indigenous Strategy		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of Guelph	Indigenous Initiatives Strategy	2021	n/a	No	x	x	x
University of King's College	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of Lethbridge	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of Manitoba	Taking Our Place: Strategic Plan 2020-2025	2020	To create, preserve, communicate, and apply knowledge, contributing to the cultural, social, and economic well-being of the people of Manitoba, Canada, and the world.	No	x	x	
University of Montreal	Place aux Premiers Peuples Plan d'action 2020-2023	2020	n/a	Yes	x	x	
University of New Brunswick	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

University of Northern British Columbia	Aboriginal Service Plan 2020/21-2022/23 Indigenous Action Plan in Progress	2020	n/a	Yes	x	x	
University of Ottawa	Indigenous Action Plan	2020	n/a	Yes	x	x	
University of Prince Edward Island	University of Prince Edward Island Strategic Plan 2018-2023	2018		No	x	x	
University of Regina	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of Saskatchewan	Indigenous Strategy for the University of Saskatchewan	2021	n/a	Yes	x	x	x
University of Sudbury	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of the Fraser Valley	Lálém ye mestíyexw: Re-envisioning a Structure for Indigenization University of the Fraser Valley	2019	n/a	Yes			
University of Toronto	Indigenous Initiatives Annual Progress Report	2019	n/a	No	x	x	
University of Victoria	Indigenous Plan 2017-2022	2017	n/a	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x	x
University of Windsor	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
University of Winnipeg	Not found or in progress	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vancouver Island University	Vancouver Island University Aboriginal	2018	n/a	Yes	x	x	

	Education Plan Update					
Western University	Indigenous Strategic Plan	2016	Western University will elevate Indigenous voices and agency to engage all faculty, staff, students, and communities in advancing excellence in Indigenous research, education, and campus life.	No - specific goals but lack measurable indicators or benchmarks.	x	x
Wilfred Laurier University	In progress	2020				
York University	The Indigenous Framework for York University: A Guide to Action	2017	n/a	No	x	x