

Deconstructing Colonial Practices in the Federal Public Service

by

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Deconstructing colonial practices in the Federal Public Service

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Abstract

As a Government of Canada priority, Reconciliation has become a common topic among Federal Public Servants. However, how many know what Reconciliation means and looks like? Many examples indicate that governments, academia, and the private sector are making efforts to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. In this paper, Reconciliation, decolonization, and the use of Indigenous knowledges in the Public Service are explored. The focus is on how Executives, deemed to be positional leaders in the Public Service, can deconstruct colonial practices and take meaningful action toward Reconciliation. Based on the research and data collected from Federal public servants, barriers were identified and recommendations that Executives can implement to become Reconciliation leaders in the Public Service. The research indicates that far too many public servants remain ignorant of Indigenous Peoples' reality despite Canada's commitment to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Executives ignorant of these realities can create barriers that hinder Reconciliation efforts. Further, the Public Service system and its culture also hinder Reconciliation. These factors make for a challenging work environment for Indigenous public servants and negatively impact relationships with Indigenous Peoples. It was concluded that Reconciliation has become politicized, decentering Indigenous Peoples from the narrative. Unfortunately, the Public Service cannot effectively address large-scale change efforts like Reconciliation; however, Executives play a critical role in influencing change in the system as they set the tone and culture in the organization. Therefore, they are a vital ingredient in the success or failure of Reconciliation in the Public Service. Decolonization of the Public Service is

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also a necessary step toward Reconciliation, which includes a culture change inclusive of Indigenous knowledges. It is recommended that clear direction by the Clerk of the Privy Council to the Public Service on Reconciliation would spur Executives into action to decolonize the Public Service creating a culture shift that normalizes Reconciliation and the utilization of Indigenous knowledges in the workplace. Adopting new leadership skills, including non-Western and Western theories, will support Executives in their Reconciliation and decolonization efforts. Actions such as these create a safe and inclusive environment for Indigenous public servants while also improving the relationship with Indigenous Peoples more broadly.

Keywords: Reconciliation; decolonization; Indigenous knowledges; wâkôtowin; leadership; Public Service; Executives; culture; systems thinking.

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Acknowledgements

I undertook this journey to prove to myself that I could because I was never a studious student. I put it off for two years due to work commitments; however, I have come to believe that those delays happened for a reason. I wasn't meant to start this journey then as I needed to experience more. I was meant to start it during a time of great societal upheaval. I do not think I would have gotten what I needed out of this journey had I started when I was "supposed" to. Like most things in the journey of life I would not have been able to accomplish what I have if it wasn't for the support of others around.

To my community, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and to Opaskawayak Educational Services who sponsored me on this higher-learning journey. I would not have been able to take it without the assistance of my community.

To my supervisor, Dr. Michael Lickers, who has supported not just myself, but the entire class during our journeys. Thank you as well to all of the professors who encouraged me to challenge the academic status quo throughout this journey.

To my family and friends who have put up listening to me use big words, usually mispronounced, and go on and on about my learnings. You've been my cheering squad throughout and I'm thankful for that. A huge thank you to Seetal Sunga and Belinda Smith for reading my rough drafts and providing feedback.

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Ekosi.

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Executive Summary

The research was conducted through the methodology of wâkôtowin utilizing Indigenous methods to gather data. This paper is not written in a traditional academic manner, rather I incorporate my own reflections and lived experience throughout and in storytelling fashion I start with context of my past and present and end with my possible future. The area of inquiry was focused on the Federal Public Service and how Executives can best support Reconciliation efforts in the Public Service by deconstructing colonial practices. The Public Service comprises over 206 departments, agencies, and Crown corporations with over 300,000 employees. The central inquiry question was: How might Federal Public Service Executives support Canada's Reconciliation efforts by identifying and deconstructing colonized practices in the Public Service? While this paper is critical of the Public Service, this was not intentional, rather the intent was to identify barriers and offer solutions that Federal Public Service Executives can implement to eliminate these barriers.

Reconciliation has been a Canadian government priority since 2015. As Executives have positional power and authority in the Public Service, they have a crucial role in the success of Reconciliation. However, they also have a role in the ongoing colonization of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, Executives were the primary population for whom I engaged in this research. The research allowed all niwâkomâkanak (my relatives) to share their truths about working in and against a colonial system while also offering recommendations on addressing the systemic barriers in the Public Service system.

Reconciliation and decolonization are deeply complex topics, particularly within the Federal Public Service context, where the use of Indigenous knowledges is not normalized.

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Therefore, I chose to apply a two-eyed seeing approach to topics in the literature review to provide the reader with an understanding of both Indigenous and Western knowledges. As a result, executives and public servants can utilize these knowledges in tandem and coexist. In this context, it was important to not just consider the literature on Reconciliation and decolonization but also on systems thinking, Indigenous knowledges, the Public Service system, culture and change in the Public Service, and leadership.

Storytelling and talking circles were used with niwâkomâkanak to share their thoughts and experiences. The storytelling sessions were used to identify barriers in the system that hinder Reconciliation, while the talking circles were used to identify possible solutions to address the barriers identified. In addition, niwâkomâkanak had the opportunity to review the transcripts, and the Executive niwâkomâkanak were provided with the opportunity to give feedback on the data, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Finally, thematic analysis was used in the data analysis process while not losing the context of what was shared. Through these methods, a great depth of information was shared. Although I could not include all the data in this paper, utilizing thematic analysis, I was able to narrow the information down to eight findings:

1. Meeting the TRC's Call to Action #57 has been insufficient;
2. People in critical positions can create barriers and hinder change and progress in the Public Service;
3. The Public Service is a colonial system that hinders Reconciliation efforts;
4. The Public Service and Executive cultures hinder Reconciliation efforts;
5. Indigenous Peoples have become an industry both internal and external to the Public Service, which acts as a Reconciliation disincentive;

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6. The political arm of government hinders large-scale and long-term change in the Public Service;
7. The Public Service is a challenging work environment for Indigenous Executives and employees; and,
8. The Public Service has difficulties building trust and relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Eight conclusions were gleaned from the findings:

1. Executives set the tone and culture of the Public Service; therefore, they play a crucial role in prioritizing meaningful Reconciliation actions;
2. The Public Service system cannot effectively address large-scale complex problems such as Reconciliation due to its current structure;
3. Clear direction is needed by the Center, specifically the Clerk of the Privy Council, to Deputy Ministers across Departments for a consistent prioritization of Reconciliation;
4. The meaning of decolonization is static and is a non-politicized process;
5. Decolonization of the 150-year-old plus colonial system is a necessary step towards meaningful and true Reconciliation;
6. Reconciliation has been politicized;
7. Culture change requires utilizing change management strategies, new leadership skills, and becoming comfortable with experimentation and taking risks; and,
8. Normalizing using two-eyed seeing will create a shift in the perception of public servants at all levels regarding Indigenous Peoples.

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Eight recommendations have been provided based on the data received by niwâkomâkanak and the literature review. The recommendations are two-fold. There are immediate steps that Executives can take individually, and there are recommendations that require long-term investment and government-wide commitment. The recommendations are as follows:

1. The education of Executives on Indigenous culture and history requires a more robust strategy that also includes experiential learning;
2. A Public Service system reform to the hierarchical and colonial structure is needed to address today's complex issues such as Reconciliation;
3. Release a Reconciliation Call to Action by the Clerk of the Privy Council that includes Executive accountability to Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees;
4. Executives need to action a culture shift that encourages the disruption of the status quo, colonialism in the Public Service;
5. Public Service Executives need to develop and utilize new leadership skills, which include both non-Western and Western theories which support long-term and complex change such as Reconciliation;
6. The Public Service needs to begin the process of decolonization to create a truly inclusive working environment for Indigenous Executives and employees starting with antiracism and diversity and inclusion initiatives in the Public Service;
7. To build trust and improve the relationship with Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees, the Public Service needs to implement conclusions #1 through #6; and,

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8. Separate Reconciliation from the political arm of government to ensure its non-partisanship, long-term investment, and commitment to the Public Service.

There was much information shared that I could not include that could be areas for further research. I have included three topics that I feel would be valuable areas to explore further and contribute to the overall transformation that is sorely needed in the Public Service.

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Opening Narrative

Tânisi, nitisinihkâson Jolene Head. I am a bi-racial woman consisting of Cree, Scottish and English backgrounds. Opaskwayak Cree Nation, located in Northern Manitoba, is the First Nation community that claims me. I want to share a story with you. My story is about my journey existing in two worlds, two worldviews, two cultures that are often in conflict. My mother is Scottish/English, and my father was Cree. The impacts of colonization were realized early in my life though this realization did not come to me until adulthood. My father attended an Indian Day School and was an alcoholic. My grandfather was a residential school survivor. My mother broke many social conventions when she married my father and moved to his community. Unfortunately, she is also a domestic abuse survivor, though she has never talked about it to me. As a result, my father was absent from my life.

During this thesis journey, I realized just how much the history of Indian Residential Schools had impacted my life and the realization that I do not know what led to my father's alcohol addiction. Unfortunately, my anger towards my absentee father caused me to reject my Cree culture until I found my way back through a round-about and surprising way; working for the department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) as it was called then. This story reflects how this history has led to me becoming an Indigenous advocate, a non-conformist, and a challenger of the status quo in a Federal Public Service where these behaviours are not rewarded, particularly from individuals who are not part of the dominant population. I was first employed as a summer student in the Winnipeg regional office of INAC. Admittedly I sought employment with INAC because it was easy, and the salary was better than I could receive

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elsewhere. However, it was never my goal to work for the Federal Public Service, and I certainly did not want to work on anything related to Indigenous Peoples. Fast forward twenty-some years to find me today, a fiercely proud Cree woman festooned with Cree-styled tattoos with a passion for leadership, improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples, and working in the National Capital Region with Public Services and Procurement Canada as a Special Advisor on Reconciliation and Indigenous Engagement.

The National Capital Region is where I have experienced first-hand the systemic barriers in the Public Service that have acted as roadblocks to career progression. Where over the past three years, I have come to experience and witness the challenges of advancing Reconciliation in one department in a massively complex system where ignorance is high, implementing large-scale transformational change is extremely difficult, and where authentic Reconciliation leadership is hard to come by. My lived experience in the Public Service and observations are not unique to me and are shared by many Indigenous employees. One just needs to read the *Many Voices, One Mind* report (Government of Canada, 2020) or the latest media articles on the lawsuit launched by Indigenous employees against Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) (Ryckewaert, 2021). It is for these reasons that I have embarked on this research as I have questioned many times the authenticity of the Federal Public Service's Reconciliation efforts, and I have become convinced through this research that it is the Executives in the Public Service who have the most significant role to play in its success or failure.

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Chapter 1: Reconciliation in the Federal Public Service

As a Government of Canada priority, Reconciliation has become a common topic amongst Federal Public Servants. However, how many know what Reconciliation means and looks like? Many examples indicate that governments, academia, and the private sector are making efforts to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. And yet, according to Jewell and Mosby (2020 & 2021), Canada is failing, having implemented no actions in 2020 (p. 4), three in 2021 (p. 5) for a total of eight of the 94 Calls to Action. As an Indigenous woman advocating for the equitable treatment of Indigenous Peoples is deeply personal, and as a public servant, Canada's actions cause internal turmoil. As I observe Canada's efforts to reconcile the past and present actions towards Indigenous Peoples, I question what this looks like inside the Public Service. I question whether Reconciliation is politically driven and is further entrenching colonialism rather than dismantling it. In this chapter, I will present my thesis question and begin to outline my research process.

A note to the reader; I utilize Cree words and government acronyms throughout this paper. A glossary of these terms can be found in Appendices A and B.

The Government of Canada and Reconciliation

Over the years, I have closely watched current events involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Most recently, I have watched racism and systemic racism in action during the Covid-19 pandemic and the "Freedom Convoy" occupation in downtown Ottawa. Jewell and Mosby (2021) summed 2021 up,

Amidst a global pandemic, and despite promises to the contrary, clean drinking water is still not guaranteed for many First Nations communities. This is a scourge that is, in part,

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the outcome of generations of chronically underfunded infrastructure. The successive Liberal government continues to battle St. Anne's Residential School Survivors in court and appeal Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders to compensate First Nations children for being discriminated against by the federal government. Industry continues to violate Wet'suwet'en law, forcing construction of natural gas infrastructure through their pristine lands and waters without the consent of hereditary chiefs. Finally, as the country reeled from the discovery of hundreds of children's graves outside former residential schools, the Prime Minister went on vacation. As one survivor put it, 'His words don't match his actions.' We find this to be an apt description of Canada's engagement with the TRC Calls to Action. (p. 4)

These alarming and disappointing situations have been directed towards Indigenous Peoples. Over the course of my career, I have watched the challenges the Government of Canada has in meeting its legal obligations to Indigenous Peoples, as demonstrated through numerous legal decisions. If the Government is challenged in consistently meeting its legal obligations, how can it reconcile? Reconciliation has been a government priority since 2015, which is the same year the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action were released (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples have caused me to question whether Canada can truly reconcile and, if so, will it improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples? For this reason, I have chosen to focus on the Federal Public Service as my partner organization and how Federal Public Service Executives can influence Reconciliation efforts.

Thesis Question

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Narrowing down the scope of research on Reconciliation has been a struggle. Utilizing Berger's (2012) "How might we (HMW)" (p. 2) formula to create my question, I developed the following question: how might Federal Public Service Executives support Canada's Reconciliation efforts by identifying and deconstructing colonized practices in the Public Service? In addition to the overall thesis question, I have also compiled several sub-questions:

- What does "decolonization" mean, and is there a place for it in the Federal Public Service?
- How might we affect change towards Reconciliation while changing the system to make it less "colonial"?
- How might we create a cultural shift in the Public Service regarding Reconciliation and public servant perception and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples?

Importance of Reconciliation

As Reconciliation is a government priority, it remains very topical in the Public Service. The Public Service has been challenged to determine what changes to implement for the greatest positive impact. Reconciliation should be important to all Canadians as it acknowledges Canada's true history and the impacts that historical and present-day decisions and actions have had, and continue to have, on Indigenous lives. While Ministers are responsible for the administration and policy decisions of the many departments and agencies, it is done so at the political level. Whereas Public Servants are responsible for creating, revising, and implementing legislation, policies, practices, and processes that impact all Canadians and are charged with doing so from a non-partisan perspective. A Public Servant's role is to serve all Canadians; therefore, it is their responsibility to ensure that all Canadians are treated equitably by the

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system. Intervening in that system to bring equity will not only improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples and the lives of all Canadians, but also help create an environment that respects the self-determination aspirations of Indigenous Peoples. For this reason, the focus of the research will be on the perspectives of Public Servants, on the perspectives of those most impacted by the system, and on the Public Service system.

Niwâkomâkanak and Others

Niwâkomâkanak means my relatives in Cree. I have chosen this term to refer to the participants I engaged with because it emphasizes relationships and the fact that all humans are related. This helped ground my research around the Cree concept, wâkôtowin, which I will describe later. It was necessary to engage niwâkomâkanak who had diverse perspectives as well as an interest in the topic. The challenge was engaging with enough niwâkomâkanak to get as complete a story as possible while staying within scope and time. I sought to engage with the following niwâkomâkanak:

- Federal Public Service Executives, Indigenous and non-Indigenous;
- Federal Indigenous public servants; and,
- Indigenous Elders, leaders, or advocates.

There are different reasons why these three groups were chosen. First, Public Service Executives occupy positions of authority and influence in the Public Service and, as a result, can affect the most change. Second, Indigenous public servants work within a colonial system and are impacted by this system, providing unique perspectives. Finally, Indigenous Elders, leaders, and advocates have lived with and observed the impacts the Public Service has had on their communities' lives, making it essential that their perspective is captured.

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Niwâkomâkanak had the opportunity to identify colonial practices that still negatively impact Indigenous Peoples in the Public Service that could be deconstructed, dismantled, or unraveled. Addressing colonial practices in the Federal Public Service should improve the lives and communities of Indigenous Peoples. Outcomes could include wide-spread recognition of Indigenous Peoples' truths, recognition of their unique relationship to Canada, and their right to self-determination. The independence to take control over the day-to-day decisions and decide what is best for their own Nations could have positive social and economic impacts leading to a reduction in the need of social services, economic independence, resurgence of culture and language, and most importantly, healing. Thus, positively impacting society. Canadians' understanding of the reality of Indigenous Peoples and Canada's true history, which I hope will lead to a reduction of racism in Canada and the beginnings of decolonizing the Public Service.

Finally, this research provided me with the opportunity to further connect with my culture. It provided an opportunity for me to give back to my community in a meaningful way while also helping me reconcile the multiple roles I occupy in society. Conducting this research during a tumultuous time in society has led to many truths, to forgiveness and to healing, but it has also been very heavy. This research provided the opportunity to dig deeper into the Federal Public Service system and understand how it can truly become inclusive for all Canadians.

Public Service System

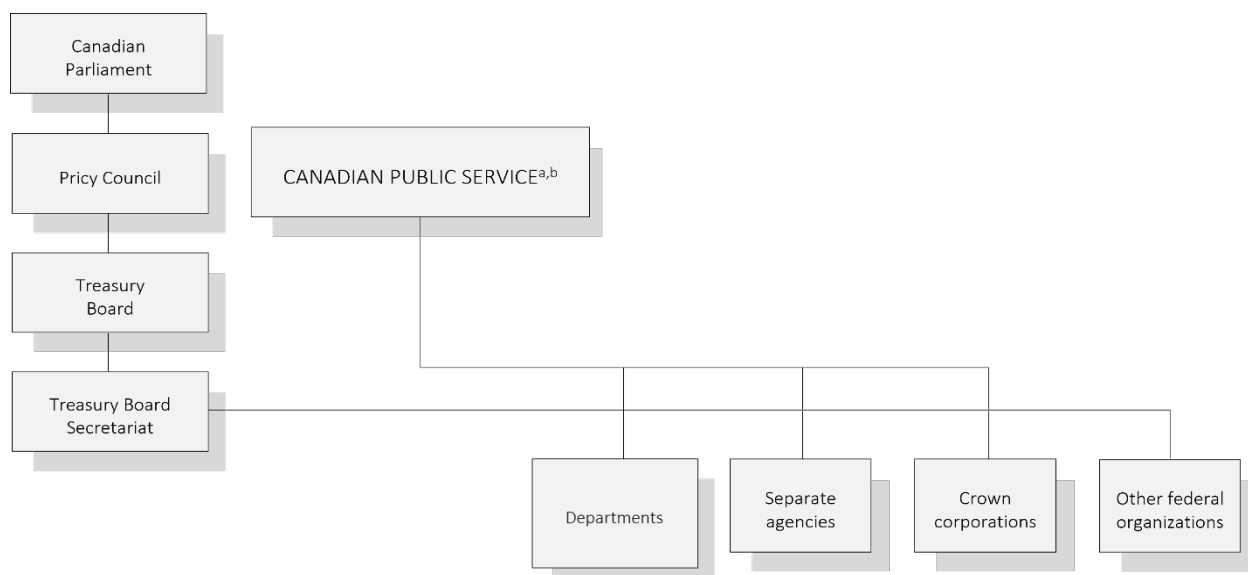
As one arm of the Government of Canada, the Public Service is a large and complex colonial system where transformational change is challenging at the best of times. Lundy and Morin (2013) developed a broad representation of the essential components of the Public Service

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as shown in Figure 1 below. They noted, “The decision-making process of the federal public administration follows a firmly established, hierarchical, bureaucratic structure” (p. 53).

Figure 1:

The Public Service



^a Canadian Public Service: Where the Treasury Board (via the Treasury Board Secretariat—TBS) has the authority for management (administration and organization) of the Canadian public service.

^b There are more than 206 departments, agencies, commissions, Crown corporations, and other federal Canadian organizations. Departments are established through legislation; their mandates typically cover broad areas of public policy, such as industry, justice, and health. Separate agencies are organizations of the federal public administration in which the separate agency is its own employer. Crown corporations are government organizations that operate following a private sector model but usually have a mixture of commercial and public policy objectives. Other federal organizations hire independently from (or are not governed by) the Public Service Employment Act.

Adapted from: Valerie Lundy and Pierre-Paul Morin, *Project Leadership Influences, Resistance to Change: the Case of the Canadian Public Service* (Project Management Journal, 2013)

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The Public Service is an enormous bureaucracy. According to van der Voet (2016), “bureaucracy can be defined as an organization in which operations are to a large extent predetermined and predictable. This is achieved through the formalization of organizational behaviour” (p. 664).

The Public Service is a system comprised of many systems working within it. While these systems work independently, they are also interconnected. It is essential to understand those systems, their interconnectedness, and the relationships within the systems. Lewis Thomas remarked, “If you want to fix something, you are first obligated to understand...the whole system” (as cited in Stroh, 2015, p. 14). Part of understanding the whole system also requires an understanding of the relationships in the system. Burns (2015) noted,

for our purposes we can envisage a system as an interconnected set of relationships between which issues that we are concerned about play out. Thus, it is not only about the things in the system (people, resources, etc.) it is also about their dynamic relationships and the patterns that emerge from them that either enable or constrain agency. (p. 2)

The system has almost 300,000 employees with 206 government departments, agencies, and crown corporations. Each department and agency operate their systems within the larger government system. However, the central agencies (i.e. Privy Council Office and Treasury Board) play the role of overseeing the core public administration (Lundy & Morin, 2013). The central agencies operate with two roles: first, providing the Public Service with government-wide direction, and secondly, acting as the centers for change (Roy, 2008, p. 543). More specifically, the Privy Council Office (PCO) provides support to the Prime Minister on government-wide policy questions and operational issues faced by government and is under the leadership of the

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Clerk (Government of Canada, 2017). The Treasury Board, on the other hand, is a cabinet committee of Ministers responsible for accountability, ethics, financial, personnel and administration management, comptrollership, and approving regulations and some orders-in-council (Government of Canada, 2021). The Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) is the administrative arm of the Treasury Board providing advice and making recommendations to the Treasury Board committee. It fulfils statutory responsibilities through spending oversight, administrative leadership, and employer and regulatory oversight (Government of Canada, 2018).

It must be noted that I describe the Public Service through Western based concepts such as systems thinking and systems analysis, which may not readily integrate into an Indigenous research process; therefore, I will be using two-eyed seeing to bring together in co-existence both Indigenous and Western knowledges. In the next chapter I will review Reconciliation and related topics in the literature, comparing, and contrasting what other scholars have tested and theorized.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I explore several topics relevant to the thesis question, Reconciliation, decolonization, systems, system thinking and Indigenous knowledges, the Public Service and the Westminster model, culture, and change, and finally, leadership. This chapter is noticeably longer because I felt it was necessary where appropriate to apply two-eyed seeing; therefore, the reader will have both Indigenous and Western concepts explored. As this paper is centred on Reconciliation it is appropriate to begin here first.

Reconciliation

While many academics have written about Reconciliation, there does not appear to be substantial literature explicitly related to Reconciliation in the Federal Public Service. Instead, much of the literature focuses on academia, health care, and education. Therefore, inferences from the literature will be necessary to apply this to the Public Service.

What does Reconciliation mean in the Canadian context? I have often argued that you could ask multiple Indigenous People, and you would get a different response from all of them, which underscores its complexity. The term Reconciliation does not have general agreement in the Indigenous community. Some argue that there was no diplomatic or respectful relationship to begin with that needs to be reconciled instead, it is about conciliation (Daigle, 2019). Daigle (2019) argued that this is an era of “the spectacle of reconciliation” that shines the limelight on the pain and suffering of Indigenous Peoples along with colonist shock and recognition, which “secures, legitimates, and effectively reproduces white supremacy and settler futurity in Canada” (p. 706). Henderson and Wakeham (2009) shared similar sentiments noting that the term lends

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itself to “cooptation by governments seeking to cleanse the national image through more symbolic measures” (p. 15). Some scholars argue that Reconciliation has become politicized, centring the narrative on the colonial voice rather than the Indigenous voice. It is essential to recognize and acknowledge the cynicism amongst the Indigenous population regarding the authenticity of Reconciliation, resulting in general disagreement on its definition. However, for this paper, I will use the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) definition of Reconciliation as it forms the basis for the Public Service’s Reconciliation efforts. The TRC stated that Reconciliation is about,

Establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 114)

Reconciliation is not a new concept in Canada; however, for most Canadians, Reconciliation is most closely associated with the 2015 TRC’s report. Less well known amongst the Canadian population, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report was released (Library & Archives Canada, 2016), which also speaks to Reconciliation. That same year Minister Jane Stewart released a statement of Reconciliation in response to the report (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009). She publicly stated,

As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining

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nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. (Nunatsiaq News, 1998)

Even though the recognition in 1996 of the detrimental impacts government policy and actions have had on Indigenous Peoples, it has taken 17 years for Reconciliation to become a priority for the Canadian government and the Public Service. Reconciliation was spoken of in the 2015 Speech from the Throne and subsequent throne speeches since (Parliament of Canada, 2022). All Ministerial mandate letters since 2015 also include Reconciliation statements (PM Trudeau, 2015, 2019 & 2021). Despite this prominence, many Indigenous academics, leaders, and advocates argue that the government's, and by extension the Public Service, efforts have been symbolic and performative at best (Daigle, 2019; Louie, 2021; Wilson-Raybould, 2021; Jewell & Mosby, 2020 & 2021). Jewell and Mosby (2021) who have been tracking Canada's progress on the TRC Calls to Action since 2019 noted that in 2020 the government did not complete any of the Calls to Action. In 2021, the government completed three Calls to Action shortly after the announcement by Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc of the recovery of unmarked graves at the Kamloops Residential School in the Spring of 2021. They further noted that although the actions were symbolic rather than actions leading to substantial change, it was the most the government has completed in the past three years. In contrast, the government has indicated that "80% of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action involving the government of Canada are now completed or well underway" (Trudeau, 2021). There has indeed been much undertaken that has improved the lives of Indigenous Peoples such as the lifting of water advisories or the passing of the Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Children, Youth

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and Families (FNIMCYFA), or the Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPA). However, history has also shown that entering into legally binding agreements doesn't necessarily mean Canada will uphold its obligations.

Understandably, there is a great deal of cynicism regarding the government's efforts on Reconciliation.

Much of the government's focus has been on implementing the TRC's Calls to Action and renewing the nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples because no relationship is more important to Prime Minister Trudeau (PM Trudeau, 2015, 2019 & 2021). Some scholars and Indigenous advocates have argued that the government's focus on Indian residential schools is merely a ploy to take the attention away from ongoing colonial actions (Jewell & Mosby, 2020 & 2021; Henderson & Wakeham, 2009). For example, actions such as the violence and surveillance of Indigenous land and water protectors, the ongoing violence and overall apathy towards Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), the astronomical rates of Indigenous children in the Child Welfare System and Indigenous inmates in the prison system (Daigle, 2019). Canada has undertaken various actions deemed to be Reconciliation actions: government commitment to implement the TRC Calls to Action, and the MMIWG Calls to Justice; the passing of various legislation such as the FNIMCYFA and UNDRIPA; and the government commitment of forty billion dollars to compensate Indigenous children adversely impacted by the Child Welfare System (Trudeau, 2015; CIRNAC Mandate Letter, 2021; Taylor, 2022). However, these actions resulted from years of advocacy or in response to losing class-action court cases. The forty billion dollars, for example, resulted from a 16-year lawsuit and the Canadian Human Rights Commission's ruling that Canada has discriminated against Indigenous

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children (First Nation Caring Society, 2016). One of the analogies I use to illustrate the government and Public Service approach to Reconciliation is the expectation that buffing the body of the old jalopy in the back quarter will make it roadworthy to take us from Halifax to Vancouver. The old jalopy needs to be taken apart, all the rotten parts discarded, and the frame and jalopy rebuilt and redesigned. Then we can take it from Halifax to Vancouver. The government and the Public Service hang their hats on incremental change because these changes can be completed in a shorter period, are more accessible for the Canadian public to accept, and give the semblance of Reconciliation. I do not want to discount the difference these changes are making to individuals, communities, and Nations; however, they do not address the large-scale change to the system required for true Reconciliation to occur. Jewell and Mosby (2021) stated, “once again though, the pace of real substantive change remains glacial” (p. 30). Many other scholars and advocates echo this sentiment, arguing that transformational changes to the system itself are required (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009; Daigle, 2019; Louie, 2021; Wilson-Raybould, 2021; Craft & Regan, 2020; Macdonald, 2020; George, 2021). Arthur Manuel (2017) underlined this problem most succinctly when he said, “you cannot deal in a spirit of cooperation and kindness with a system designed to steal everything from you and destroy you” (p. 147). I would be remiss if I did not also share the always colourful and blunt words of Chief Clarence Louie (2021),

I hate it when I hear white government, business or school officials say, ‘We gather here today in the spirit of reconciliation...’ And then allow Indians to drum a song or do a prayer or fly a flag at municipal hall. Those are nice gestures, but they are baby steps, and cheap ones at that. After one hundred years of abuse and injustices at the worst human

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level, it's time, Canada, for 'adult steps.' Time to grow up and put on adult pants and do some real reconciliation! (p. 192)

Many scholars and advocates argue that the government and the Public Service are not addressing the colonial system that has led to detrimental legislation and policy decisions contributing to ongoing colonial action. On the other hand, there are some who think Canada has done too much for Indigenous Peoples and have created what Rubenstein (2021) described as "Indigenous exceptionalism" (p. 158), a cycle for which Indigenous Peoples think they are unique and deserve special treatment, including ongoing reparation from the Canadian government (Rubenstein, 2021; Clifton & Dewolf, 2021; Widdowson, 2021). Clifton and Dewolf (2021) acknowledged that the integration of Indigenous Peoples into dominant Canadian society was the government's goal. However, the claim that these policies were designed to eradicate Indigenous Peoples' cultural identity and racial entities go too far "and is hardly wise, especially if reconciliation is truly desired. Reconciliation requires respectful interaction rather than condemnation" (p. xix). Unfortunately, colonial thinking permeates this argument. It disregards the fact that the very act of colonialism eliminates the possibility of respectful interaction and denies the truth of the impacts of government actions. Further, Widdowson (2021) argued,

Calling the schools an instrument of 'cultural genocide' that destroyed 'flourishing societies' prevents an understanding of the fact that integration into a more productive economy and complex political system required the teaching of English and/or French, opposition to Indigenous spirituality, and socializing Aboriginal children to defer to legal authorities like teachers and Indian agents. To not do this would actually have delayed preparing Aboriginal people for the changing society within which they were going to

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live. Aboriginal people could not have survived by clinging onto their unproductive hunting and gathering traditions in an increasingly industrialized country. (p. 87)

Widdowson clearly supports colonization and believes that Indian residential schools were necessary and beneficial to the much-needed assimilation of Indigenous Peoples to best prepare them for the forced occupation of their lands and acceptance of what is a superior economy and political system. This paternal and colonial perspective disregards the fact that Indigenous Peoples occupied these lands for millennia, had their own economies and political systems, were surviving (and thriving) in balance with the environment around them. Clifton and Dewolf (2021) and Rubenstein (2021) also appear to hold close to the argument of terra nullius as justification for Canadian sovereignty. While Rubenstein argued that the assertion of Indigenous nations as Nations is the epitome of Indigenous exceptionalism and we seem to be more concerned about our sovereignty than the well-being of our communities (p. 158), Clifton and Dewolf criticized the acceptance of the UNDRIP as a loss of Canadian sovereignty that should be a concern for all settlers (p. 60). It appears they disagree with the multiple judgements made by their own far superior colonial justice system, which has clearly, and on multiple occasions, recognized the sovereignty and inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples as the first rightful occupants of these lands. Further, it is difficult to take their arguments seriously when they use colonial language and demonstrate their colonial subjectivity, despite their claims that the TRC Report was not objective in its analysis and recommendations. For example, in the quote above, Widdowson (2021) claims the superiority of the European economic and political system and the inferiority of Indigenous spirituality compared to Christianity. On what findings are these claims founded? I argue that Widdowson's argument is based on the inability to

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imagine different worldviews and value systems of what makes a good life. Dewolf (2021) also asserted the following,

Were we to stumble today across a previously unknown tribe in the Amazon jungle, we like to think we would not deal with them as settlers and government officials dealt with our First Nations and Inuit in past centuries. We are more cautious now in our assumptions of rightness and the inevitable march of progress, and we pay some more attention to the needs and concerns of human beings who are in some way different from us, even if they paint their faces, live in shelters made of leaves or animal skins, and, as natives of Papua New Guinea still do on special occasions, ‘dance naked...[calling] on the spirits that protect them.’ (p. 193)

Here again, colonial language is used in addition to the subjective judgment of Eurocentric society's superiority and paternalistic thinking. How nice it must be that today's Western society pays “some more attention” to populations that are different “even if they paint their faces” and live in homes that are not up to the standard expected by Dewolf. Dewolf's paternalistic thinking is also evident in the use of possessive terminology like “our First Nations and Inuit.” As Ahenakew (2016) asserted, “the denial and denigration of non-Western ways of knowing” is the foundation of colonialism and has been used by DeWolf, Rubenstein, Widdowson, and Clifton, to rationalize the “dispossession, destitution, and genocide of populations who were perceived to be lacking knowledge [and sophistication] of universal worth” (p. 327). The blatant hypocrisy makes it impossible to give these scholars the critical space they are seeking and instead stands as an example of how pervasive colonial thought is in Canada. Reconciliation is a complex topic

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that continues to be unwrapped and analyzed. The topic of decolonization is equally complex, and I will turn my attention to it next.

Decolonization

We are one of the most stable regimes in history. There are very few countries that say for nearly 150 years they've had the same political system without any social breakdown, political upheaval or invasion. We are unique in that regard. We also have no history of colonialism. (PM Harper, G20, 2009, as cited by Ladner & McCrossman, 2014)

What is colonialism? According to the Merriam-Webster (2022) dictionary, colonialism is the “domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation: the practice of extending and maintaining a nation’s political and economical control over another people or area.” It is important to highlight that colonization in Canada is not a historical phenomenon, rather, it has evolved into what Barker (2009) described as contemporary colonialism. He contended,

In Canada’s case Indigenous peoples have already experienced the direct physical aspects of colonization, even if only in the sense that they have been disempowered within a state, which relies upon the monopolization of territory and force for legitimacy. They have also experienced mental and emotional colonization in residential schools, government programs such as enfranchisement, and the false images portrayed by educational systems and mass media and embedded in racist attitudes of Settler peoples. (pp. 326-327)

I would argue that it is a fact that Canada is a colonial country despite what former Prime Minister Harper would like the world to think.

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Many scholars note that both colonialization and decolonization are a process (Laenui, 2006; Sium, 2012; Iske-Barnes, 2008; Corntassel, 2012; Lawrence & Dua, 2005) and Laenui (2006) further argued that they are social processes more than they are political processes. In Canada, colonialism,

Includes territorial dispossession; the imposition of colonial education, justice, governance, and other systems; Indian residential school; the Sixties Scoop; Indigenous imprisonment; other forms of structural racism; and, more generally within Canadian settler society, Nagy and Gillispie say, ‘deeply ingrained colonial attitudes and patterns of behaviour.’ (Macdonald, 2020, p. 27)

Colonialism is ongoing in Canada, and some scholars argue that many of the government’s actions are mechanisms to complete colonization or further entrench colonial power and control under the guise of actions such as Reconciliation, antiracism, multiculturalism, and diversity and inclusion (Laenui, 2006; Corntassel, 2012; Ahenakew, 2016; Lawrence & Dua, 2005). The Mohawk scholar Alfred (2009) explained that colonialism,

Is best conceptualized as an irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation – a disconnection from land, culture, and community – that has resulted in political chaos and social discord within First Nations communities and the collective dependency of First Nations upon the state. (p. 52)

While Sium et al. (2012) asserted that colonization is, “Like a cornered animal, it will fight until the last breath in defending the privileges of colonial governments and extractive industry” (p. ix) and Iseke-Barnes (2008) argued that “a major source of colonization is government

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ideologies and structures” (p. 135). I assert that colonialism begins and ends with the government and the Public Service making the process of decolonization imperative in the Public Service system. What then does decolonization mean under the backdrop of colonization?

The jury seems to be out on one definition of decolonization. Sium et al. (2012) stated that decolonization is diverse and unique to context and place but does try to define it as “the urgency of land struggle and by the restoration of traditional territories now separated by state borders” (p. v). Whereas Laenui’s (2000) explanation of decolonization is a force to resist “ongoing colonization and ‘remake’ ourselves as Indigenous peoples” (as cited by McGregor, 2018, p. 818). Despite lacking consensus on the definition of decolonization, there are common themes and characteristics many academics do agree on. As noted earlier, most agree that decolonization is a process. I would assert that most have the elements of what Sium et al. (2012) and Corntassel (2012) called a resurgence of Indigenous consciousness through Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. In other words, a reclamation and practice of our cultural and spiritual ways of being, reconnection to the land and breaking free from colonial structures (Sium et al., 2012; Corntassel, 2012).

Laenui (2006) asserted that decolonization has five phases: rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment, and action (pp. 1-2). I will not go into the details of each phase other than to note that Laenui indicated that each phase is essential for true decolonization, and this process takes time. He further argued that decolonization includes “the re-evaluation of the political, social, economic, and judicial structures...and the development, if appropriate, of new structures which can hold and house the values and aspirations of the colonized people” (p. 4). Smith (1999) also noted that decolonization is a long-term process which involves “the

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bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (as cited by Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 123). Sium et al. (2012) added that decolonization is a messy, contradictory, and dynamic process, and Corntassel (2012) outlined that the process occurs at multiple levels and moves “from an awareness of being in struggle, to actively engaging in everyday practices of resurgence” (p. 89) which has a marked similarity to Laenui’s (2006) five phases. I would further argue that decolonization is a singular process that needs to occur parallel to other social justice initiatives and actions such as antiracism, diversity, and inclusion.

Canada, and the federal Public Service, became seized with antiracism actions and in its efforts to combat antiracism, racism towards Indigenous Peoples has been included in many of these initiatives (Shugart, 2021). I argue that there is a risk in including Indigenous Peoples in pan-antiracism efforts. The antiracism discourse does not consider that Indigenous Peoples are the first peoples, and to make Canada a state, land dispossession and the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples needed to occur. Lawrence and Dua (2005) argued that,

Antiracism is premised on an ongoing colonial project. Rather than challenging the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples, Canadian antiracism is furthering contemporary colonial agendas. Antiracism theory participates in colonial agendas in two ways. First, it ignores the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples in the Americas; second, it fails to integrate an understanding of Canada as a colonialist state into antiracist frameworks. (p. 123)

One could ask, how does this relate to decolonization? The challenge with antiracism efforts is that Canada’s “basic policies of assimilation and destruction remain unchanged” (Alfred, 1999, p. x) and ultimately, Canada continues to hold “onto [Indigenous] land base and resources,

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redefining without reforming, and further entrenching in law and practice the real basis of its power” (Alfred, 1999, p. x). While Canada and British Columbia have passed legislation to adopt the UNDRIP, based on B.C.’s handling of the Wet’suwet’en protests, it is evident that Indigenous sovereignty still takes a back seat to the Canadian economy and capitalism. Most recently, Canada has publicly recognized Ukraine’s sovereignty, condemning Russia’s invasion while essentially ignoring Indigenous sovereignty over territorial lands such as Wet’suwet’en. While antiracism actions galvanize Canada, it is still working to retain the status quo of colonial order, which according to Lawrence and Dua (2005), continues to target Indigenous Peoples “for legal and cultural extinction, while undermining the viability of communities through theft of their remaining lands and resources” (p. 125). Similar arguments have been made by Ahenakew (2016) regarding inclusion efforts in Canada, arguing that efforts to include Indigenous knowledges are made in such a way that the dominant norms and peoples define how and what can be said. He asserted, “When Indigenous knowledge is recognized by mainstream knowledge production mechanisms, it tends to be presented through the frames of Western epistemology rather than on its own terms” (p. 327). Ahenakew further stated, “Within this logic, if this group perceives Indigeneity as desirable, it will also define what is desirable about Indigeneity” (p. 331). In the Federal Public Service context, I have observed this occurring.

Significant effort is being made to make the Public Service more diverse and inclusive. However, it is grouping all equity-deserving groups under one umbrella rather than addressing the uniqueness of each population. Without recognizing that the Public Service system itself is based on colonialism and needs to be decolonized, true inclusion of Indigenous Peoples will not occur. Again, Ahenakew (2016) explained this well,

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A commitment to inclusion may ironically and paradoxically be used to prevent the transformation of systemic racism within institutions because it reinforces the naturalization of the 'norm' and prevents diversity or Indigeneity from becoming habitual (p. 331).

Frankenberg and Manual (1992) also support this thinking. They argued that larger social justice initiatives such as antiracism, diversity, and inclusion “marginalize decolonization struggles and continues to obscure the complex ways in which people of color have participated in projects of settlement” (as cited by Lawrence & Dua, 2006, p. 131). In other words, these initiatives refrain from recognizing that other marginalized populations in Canada have also contributed to the (ongoing) colonization of Indigenous Peoples and have not adjusted the narrative to reflect this. Until the Federal Public Service is ready to decolonize its system and move away from the status quo, inclusion actions aimed at Indigenous Peoples will be performative at best. As Sium et al. (2012) stated, “if we are serious about decolonizing, we must be able to untangle the knots and respond to colonial oppression at all levels” (p. x).

What does it take to decolonize? I argue that decolonization is multi-layered. There is a need to decolonize oneself in the way one thinks, the language and expressions one uses, and the ability to see colonial characteristics in the systems one interacts with daily. However, it is not enough to only decolonize ourselves individually. Scholars such as Tuck and Yang (2012) and Cabral (1966) have argued that decolonization is often singularly reduced to the decolonization of the mind (as cited by Sium et al., 2012). Most of the scholars reviewed agree that decolonization cannot occur without centring Indigenous sovereignty, restoring traditional territories, self-determination, disrupting colonial power and ideologies, and as noted earlier, the

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resurgence of Indigenous culture, traditions, and language (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Sium et al., 2012; Corntassel, 2012; McGregor, 2018). Lawrence and Dua (2005) explained how the Charlottetown Accord, had it moved forward, would have taken Canada forward into a true decolonization process because it “proposed constitutional changes that contained important features for Aboriginal peoples; recognition of Aboriginal governments as a third order of government in Canada, a definition of self-government in relation to land, the environment, language, and culture, as well as representation in the Senate” (p. 135). Not only does decolonization need to occur at an individual level, but it also needs to occur at a systemic and societal level. The Federal Public Service is an ideal place to start because it sets the tone and culture of Canada through legislation and policy development. Like Reyes Cruz (2012), I find myself wondering whether colonial institutions such as the Federal Public Service can decolonize. Further, I find myself struggling with whether, in my role with the Public Service working on Reconciliation, I am further entrenching colonialism in the Public Service, and I find myself asking whether Reconciliation and decolonization are opposed.

According to Corntassel (2012), Reconciliation is only supporting the status quo because it is being “framed according to the logic of the legitimating state authority rather than offering meaningful restitution for harms committed against Indigenous communities and homelands” (p. 96) and “isn’t holding anyone accountable for ongoing injustices” (p. 93). Taiaiake Alfred (2005) argued that Reconciliation will “permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice” (as cited by Corntassel, 2012, p. 152) if it does not include restitution in the form of land, financial transfers, and other means of restitution for past and present harms. Clark et al. (2016) also supported this argument noting that Reconciliation contains an assimilationist

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agenda (p. 3). They further argued that Reconciliation is merely a politically driven initiative.

Politicizing Reconciliation means that the politicians and the Public Service are driving the narrative instead of centring it on Indigenous governments, Nations, and communities. Strakosch (2016), on the other hand, asserted,

In seeking to naturalise their existence as the sole legitimate authority over a particular area, settler states mobilise different political strategies. These can include entering into highly sophisticated forms of political engagement with Indigenous people that recognise some kinds of land ownership, past colonial violence and Indigenous culture in exchange for an extinguishment of political difference and legitimisation of the status quo. For example, official reconciliation processes are underway (or stalled) in many settler-colonial contexts such as Australia and Canada. While these may facilitate important grassroots conversations and opportunities for healing, in their current limited forms they remain driven by assumptions about ‘moving on from a colonial past to a post-colonial present. (p. 19)

While Strakosch viewed Reconciliation as ideological rather than political, she does agree that it appears to be limited to addressing colonial tensions rather than resolving the colonial structures that create an environment that Lee (2016) described as one of “ongoing colonial violence that still suffocates Indigenous lives” (as cited by Strakosch, 2016).

Perhaps Canada has gotten Reconciliation all wrong and instead should be centring its work on decolonizing the Public Service system and begin to recognize and embrace the “co-presence of other systems” (Ahenakew, 2016, p. 328). Public servants would be able to, as Andreotti et al. (2012) explained, “support both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to

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expand their frames of reference and open new possibilities for co-existence” (p. 235). Concepts such as two-eyed seeing need to be put into practice in the Public Service. However, I am not sure if I will be able to resolve the internal conflict that I now find myself in regarding my role in the Public Service. I can say for certain that I am already observing a change in my narrative as I speak to colleagues about Reconciliation in the Public Service. However, what is clear from the literature is that it is the system itself that needs to change.

Systems, Systems Thinking, and Indigenous Knowledges

The Public Service is a large and complex system which I described in Chapter one. In this section I will focus on systems thinking; a skill that I would argue is not generally practiced in the Public Service. One must first understand what systems are before talking about systems thinking. Donella Meadows, as cited by Stroh (2015), defined *systems* as “an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something” (p. 16).

Understanding the whole system requires an understanding of the relationships in the system.

Burns (2015) noted,

For our purposes, we could envisage a system as an interconnected set of relationships between which issues that we are concerned about play out. Thus, it is not only about the things in the system (e.g., people and resources) it is also about their dynamic relationships and the patterns that emerge from them that enable or constrain agency. (p. 2)

Changes to systems can be simple, complex, complicated, or chaotic (Burns, 2015; Snowden & Boone, 2007). I contend that the Public Service manages all four types of changes. In the case of Reconciliation; however, I argue that the change required in the Public Service is complex.

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Therefore, I will only focus on complex change here. Burns (2015) defined *complex change* as non-linear. He theorized that the relationships within the system may not be apparent and have “seemingly intractable problems which do not have a ‘right’ solution or resolution, which lie amid complex power relations and competing interests, and which are characterized by non-linear change processes” (p. 9). In government, policies are developed, and decisions made based on the Westminster model as explained in Chapter one (Roy, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2008). This system is antiquated making transformational and large-scale change challenging. It is also a system saturated by colonialism and colonial thinking. I believe that leaders in the Public Service equipped with skills such as systems thinking will be better able to tackle this much needed systems change. A simple example of this is the language used in the Public Service. I can no longer count the number of times I have read or heard “Canada’s Indigenous Peoples” or “Our First Nations, Inuit, and Metis.” The stories shared by niwâkomâkanak in Chapter four also illustrates similar experiences.

Systems thinking provides leaders with the skills to tackle complex, large-scale changes such as Reconciliation. Stroh (2015) defined systems thinking as “the ability to understand these interconnections [in the system] in such a way as to achieve a desired purpose. One of the benefits of systems thinking is that it helps people understand the purpose that a system is accomplishing” (pp. 16-17). Senge (2006) added that it is “a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively” (p. 7).

The Public Service is modeled on the Westminster organizational structure. It is a model of the world that is mechanistic and “predicated on linear thinking, control, and predictability”

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(Regine & Lewin, 2000, p. 2). A mechanistic approach to a complex non-linear change such as Reconciliation will not achieve the desired results. Thus leaders, or Executives, in the Public Service must adapt and learn new skills such as an organic approach that addresses “the complex and interdependent elements and relations of a system as they function in the whole” (Regine & Lewin, 2000, p. 4). In other words, taking a holistic approach is more appropriate to the realities and complexities in today’s world, which is very similar to the interconnectedness, holistic, broad, and long-term elements described in systems thinking (Stroh, 2015, Senge, 2006, & Sterman, 2006). Willis et al. (2014) outlined five key components present when applying systems thinking to a large-scale change such as Reconciliation,

A focus on the value of relationships: understanding, fostering and supporting interdisciplinary and inter-organizational connections; a long-term vision that seeks to understand the lasting changes associated with transformation; a recognition of context (local and historical) and the impact this has on transformative initiatives; an emphasis on the practical rules that promote successful self-organizing behaviour that will most likely lead to significant system transformation; and, an explicit effort to better identify, distil and use knowledge. (p. 117)

Interestingly, Indigenous concepts have existed well beyond the fifty-year life span of the Western concept of systems thinking. One could argue that for many Indigenous populations, the idea of systems thinking, or organic approach has been embedded into our worldviews and forms the foundation of our cultures and way of relating to the world. I contend that Indigenous knowledges have influenced the Western concept of systems thinking. As Glynn-McDonald (2021) argued,

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Systems thinking is a term that has been colonised by Western disciplines of social change and systems change theory since 1987. It is important to remember that First Nations communities are the original systems thinkers, and we continue to exhibit deep knowledge in the way we apply systems thinking to the way we analyse, act and communicate. (para. 7)

In Canada's efforts to reconcile with Indigenous Peoples, it is essential to decolonize Western concepts and theories such as systems thinking and turn instead to Indigenous knowledges.

Wâkôtowin is a Cree word that means kinship; however, it is also Cree natural law, expanding the concept of kinship to include all human and non-human relationships (Buhler et al., 2014; 6). It affirms the interconnectedness of all things physical and spiritual and emphasizes the responsibilities each individual must uphold (LeBlanc, 2018; Wildcat, 2018; Smith, 2019). Wildcat (2018) described *wâkôtowin* as having three parts. First, everything is related, human and non-human alike. Second, its worldview holds that everything is animate and has spirit, further emphasizing that all things are interconnected and in relation. Third, humans have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a way that minimizes negative impact and maintains good relationships (Wildcat, 2018, p. 14). One can see how the Cree concept of *wâkôtowin* is like systems thinking.

O'Rielly-Scanlon et al. (2004) asserted that *wâkôtowin* is a concept that incorporates "Indigenous ways of knowing within academic discourses and methodologies" which, when applied in the Public Service, achieves collective responsibility rather than individual benefit (p. 30). In 2014, Buhler et al. undertook a *wâkôtowin* class to examine the justice system with participants who were lawyers, students, and criminal offenders. The course conduct was centred

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on the concept of wâkôtowin, and the goal was to bring together a diverse group of individuals to discuss the challenges Indigenous Peoples face in the justice system. Wâkôtowin provided a safe space for participants to develop trust, relationships, and kinship amongst each other (LeBlanc, 2018). Buhler et al. (2014) argued that “wâkôtowin-centred pedagogy intervenes, even in a small way, in neo-colonial assumptions about knowledge, power and justice, and is thus a small example of a decolonizing practice” (p. 186). They further argued that decolonization, at its core, is about “creating communities, creating spaces in which Aboriginal people are safe to be Aboriginal people” (Comack et al., as cited by Buhler et al., 2014. p. 186). Would it not make sense then, if the Public Service is serious about Reconciliation, that it would also utilize Indigenous concepts such as wâkôtowin in its Reconciliation efforts? One non-Indigenous participant, LeBlanc (2018) noted,

The open dialogue and safe space at wâkôtowin fostered the conditions of truth. I heard things that were very uncomfortable for me. I heard things I did not want to hear. I heard things that were very painful, and from which I wanted to look away. It hurts to hear stories of another human being harmed in these ways. Though difficult, hearing from these lived experiences has made me more reflective and critical. Hearing them has done some work to change the political into the personal; now we are talking about my family members. (p. 256)

While wâkôtowin is like the Western concept of systems thinking, it takes the concept of relationality, interconnectedness, and holism to a much higher level, becoming a cultural concept that guides the daily lives of the Cree. Another Indigenous example that has similarities to systems thinking is storytelling.

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Storytelling is the mechanism by which Indigenous Peoples share their knowledge and teachings with others. Traditionally this was done orally but now also includes the written word. Iseke (2013) explained,

Storytelling is a practice in Indigenous cultures that sustains communities and validates the experiences and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples. Storytelling provides opportunities to express the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Indigenous languages and nurtures relationships and the sharing of Indigenous knowledges and cultures. (p. 559)

Archibald (2008) determined that storytelling, or storywork as she described it, is comprised of seven principles: respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, wholism, interrelatedness, and synergy (p. 372). She argued that the four Rs are the Indigenous values that are held within the story but also demonstrated towards the storyteller and the listener, while the remaining three principles “shape the quality of the learning process” (p. 373). Storytelling is relational (Penak, 2018; Iseke, 2013; Archibald, 2008). As Thomas King (2003) noted,

While the relationship that Native people have with the land certainly has a spiritual aspect to it, it is also a practical matter that balances respect with survival. It is an ethic that can be seen in the decisions and actions of a community and that is contained in the songs that Native people sing and the stories that they tell about the nature of the world and their place in it, about the webs or responsibilities that bind all things. (pp. 113-114)

Storytelling, like wâkôtowin, emphasizes the interconnectedness and the relationality of all things in the story. Storytelling emphasizes the importance of relationships, both within the story (or system) and between the teller and the listener. Elders and cultural keepers are usually

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the storytellers and “their stories express...interrelationships and teach them to the next generation. They educate...about the living systems of which we are part” (Iseke, 2013, p. 561). Archibald (2008) used an analogy of Coast Salish basket weaving to describe learning through stories. She said, “during the basket making process, the pieces of cedar sometimes stand alone and sometimes they lose their distinctiveness and form a design” (p. 373). Traditional Western thinking breaks problems down into their individual components (Little Bear, N.D.). In the case of systems, often only one part of the system is examined rather than examining the whole basket to look for the patterns and their relationship to each other. Systems thinking shares many of the characteristics of storytelling. I assert that storytelling can be used to understand a system and the relationships in that system.

Another Indigenous concept that aligns with systems thinking is the Nuuchahnulth belief of heshook-ish tsawalk, “meaning everything is one or everything is connected,” uses origin stories and traditional ways of life and experiences (Umeek, 2004, p. 117). Postnikoff (2005) stated, “used as a guiding principle, the application of this worldview by the Nuuchahnulth contributes to a lifestyle that recognizes the need to respect the earth. Furthermore, their understanding that everything is interconnected aids in bonding a fragile ecosystem with humans by recognizing that everything is one” (p. 2). While heshook-ish tsawalk expresses the unity of all things, it also recognizes the separate existence of individuals, and both are celebrated and recognized (Umeek, 2004). In other words, heshook-ish tsawalk looks at the whole system while recognizing its individual parts. According to Umeek (2004), heshook-ish tsawalk “consequently provide an orientation to life and reality that, prior to the onset of colonialism, allowed the Nuuchahnulth to manage their lives and communities for millennia” (p. 5). It guided the Nuuchahnulth

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nulth, emphasizing the need to balance the system, which enabled them to live a sustainable life that protected the land, water, and animals around them for millennia.

I contend that our cultures have been embedded with Indigenous concepts such as wâkôtowin, storytelling and heshook-ish tsawalk for millennia (Donald & Stewart, N.D; Smith, 2018; Wildcat, 2018, King, 2003, Penak, 2013, Umeek, 2004). Whereas Senge (2006) acknowledged that the Western concept of systems thinking was developed over the past 50 plus years as a conceptual framework and body of knowledge (p. 7). Both Senge and Scharmer (2021) recognized the need to decolonize this Western concept. Scharmer shared, “Decolonizing systems thinking starts with decolonizing and rehabilitating our senses. Because there is a knowing in our senses that we need to uncover and cultivate” (pp. 88-89). One of the benefits of systems thinking is that it helps people understand the purpose that a system is accomplishing (Stroh, 2015, pp. 16-17). In the wâkôtowin class, LeBlanc (2018) noted that as they discussed the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in the justice system, they moved from understanding the system to changing it and,

In part for these reasons, I experienced wâkôtowin as deeply shaking to my understanding of myself as a human in the world. It not only increased my knowledge and efficacy in activist pursuits; it was fundamental to my developing sense of self. I experienced it as Paideia, or deep learning, as opposed to cheap schooling. It was Paideia in that it caused me to rethink my place in the world, reassess my privilege, and think more deeply about what it means to be an “ally.” (p. 253)

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Unlike systems thinking, Indigenous knowledges such as wâkôtowin, storytelling and heshook-ish tsawalk are multi-dimensional and include the spiritual world. LeBlanc demonstrated how impactful this knowledge is to the entire being.

In systems thinking, Burns (2015) and Willis et al. (2014) highlighted the interconnectedness and importance of relationships between the parts and the whole system. In comparison, Regine and Lewin (2000) emphasized that an organic approach addresses the interconnectedness of the various elements in a system, including people, and how they function, emphasizing the need to focus on people's relationships in the system. Therefore, it seems that in the Public Service's efforts to reconcile with Indigenous Peoples, these efforts would also include tackling this complex problem from an Indigenous lens as opposed to a Western one. As Goodchild et al. (2021) argued, "A journey to the nexus of Indigenous wisdom and Western thought begins with an important realization, that both are equal but differentiated" (p. 81). Concepts such as wâkôtowin and heshook-ish tsawalk are solid foundations for the large-scale transformational change needed in the Public Service to achieve Reconciliation and a means to understand the public servant relationship with the Public Service system. As Buhler et al. (2014) noted, it is a decolonizing practice that both academia and the Public Service could benefit from further exploration. Hopefully, approaching Reconciliation and decolonization based on both Indigenous and Western knowledges will provide the space for an Indigenous solution rather than a colonial one.

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The Public Service and the Westminster Model

Change in the Public Service starts with understanding the Westminster system under which the Public Service operates. According to Roy (2008), the current model of Westminster-based government is dependent on three core traditions,

First, representative democracy as the compact between the public and elected officials; secondly, ministerial accountability as the compact between elected officials and the government, on the one hand, and the appointed public service, on the other hand; and, thirdly, hierarchy and loyalty as the main organizing principles within the public service for assuring that government plans and policies are executed and implemented. (p. 545)

This has resulted in a system that operates in a hierarchy with a command-and-control culture. Much of that command and control comes from the central agencies, the Privy Council Office (PCO), Treasury Board and, by extension, the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). I would argue that the central agencies have focused more on maintaining the status quo than being catalysts for change. The central agencies are subject to the political priorities of the prime minister as well as the direction of the Clerk of the Privy Council, which results in the loss of inclusivity and public dialogue on new approaches to governing (Roy, 2008, p. 543) and can be a tension point between the political direction and Central Agencies resistance to change. Clark and Swain (2005) have argued that central agencies systemic command-and-control approach discourages innovation and rewards conformity (as cited by Roy, 2008, p. 550). This command-and-control culture needs only a handful of leaders to maintain the status quo. According to Roy (2008), it will only change if the country is persuaded that a new approach to governing is needed, is realistic and if Canadians play a significant role in designing a new approach. Indigenous

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Peoples have long expressed the need for a change in the system and have asserted their sovereignty as Nations. The government and public service need to redesign the current governing approach with Indigenous Peoples to recognize their sovereignty. Roy stated, “systemic change will only come about through a new partnership between those inside and those outside the system” (p. 544). After all, the Westminster system is a colonial construct that requires significant structural changes if the government is serious about Reconciliation.

There are two main concerns that Roy (2008) has raised with the current Westminster model governance structure: accountability and transparency. In the Public Service, public servants are accountable to who? Are they accountable to their respective Ministers? To the Clerk of the Privy Council? Canadians? Indigenous Peoples? The current system lays most of the accountability on the Ministers. However, Roy (2008) has argued that this ministerial responsibility does not meet today’s reality of modern governance models. He argued that the organizational boundaries are fluid, and there is a need to re-balance independence and inter-dependence with governance structures capable of managing multiple forms of accountability. Britain’s Institute on Public Policy Research (IPPR) also concluded, “that it is no longer even possible for ministers to effectively hold public servants to account through the traditional lens of ministerial responsibility” (Roy, 2008, p. 550). Transparent and direct forms of accountability are needed in the Public Service, particularly amongst Executives who occupy the decision-making positions in the Public Service hierarchy. In 2008, Stephen Harper tried to change the accountability of Deputy Ministers by passing the Accountabilities Act making them accountable to Parliament (Van Dine, 2022). However, according to Van Dine (2022), “One of the

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unintended consequences was to reinforce a deputy's compliance with rules and procedures....as a measure of performance, rather than how well he or she has served Canadians" (para. 15).

In Britain, the IPPR has recommended a governance model with an American orientation or redesigning the Westminster system to establish new accountability mechanisms that support "a greater delineation of responsibilities between ministers and public servants" (Roy, 2008, p. 551). Increased accountability to Indigenous Peoples also means removing colonial laws, policies, and practices in the Public Service "that run counter to [Indigenous] nations rebuilding" (Wilson-Raybould, 2021, p. 143). This includes recognizing and affirming Indigenous rights as set out in the UNDRIPA and section 35 of the Constitution (Government of Canada, 2022). The government, including the Public Service, has a history of ignoring its legal obligations to Indigenous Peoples through the treaties, court decisions, Section 35, and needs to be held accountable (Wilson-Raybould, 2021; Louie, 2021; Ladner, 2001). The system has difficulty adapting and holds tight to secrecy; therefore, a higher level of transparency is also required (Roy, 2008). However, Canadians, particularly Indigenous Peoples, demand more transparency from their government and the Public Service, leading to diminishing trust in the system (Roy, 2008, p. 551). On this Roy further underlined,

Reliance on secrecy begins at the apex of power, where Cabinet meets in the closed confines of a forum designed to contain but also paradoxically share information and insight. Secrecy was originally viewed as a means to facilitate open deliberation among ministers in order to generate consensus on actions and policies that, in turn, would be presented to Parliament for further debate prior to legislative adoption – often in modified form – Cabinet secrecy has since become less deliberative, more dictated by prime

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ministerial direction...and the need to package decisions for subsequent communication – not to Parliament but rather directly to the electorate as a whole. (p. 552)

This secrecy has trickled down into the Public Service culture, which further reduces the accountability of the public servants. The reluctance of government and the Public Service to “embrace bolder reforms” (Roy, 2008, p. 556) has led to a culture that loyally implements rather than one that is transparent and embraces creativity and innovation. Roy (2008) has suggested that it could simply start with equating “transparency with some degree of openness to those with either a right or an expectation of being able to scrutinize and understand government action” (p. 552). In other words, having more, not less, involvement of Indigenous Nations, communities, or governments in Public Service decision-making leads to greater transparency and direct accountability of public servants to Indigenous Peoples. However, to create a culture of transparency and accountability, public servants also need more autonomy and a culture that allows for experimentation. Senge (2006) argued that creating a learning organization provides the conditions for innovation, creativity, and experimentation. While Roy (2008) asserted that leadership skills that rely “less on control than on collaboration, less on representation than on direct engagement, and less on public service anonymity and loyalty than on an outward-looking cadre of professional managers empowered to achieve outcomes within the contours of policy and service agendas” are also required (p. 564). Creating this environment and working jointly with politicians, senior public servants, and Indigenous governments will lead to better long-term outcomes. Achieving this could be done by training Indigenous legislators to serve on oversight bodies (Roy, 2008) or even more daring, through an Indigenous Senate, creating shared and collective accountability,

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By 1) facilitating the participation of [Indigenous Peoples] in policy-making processes, 2) providing oversight to public sector departments and agencies, and 3) collectively debating and fashioning policy and service ideas as a basis for executive branch agendas much more openly crafted than is the case at present. (Roy, 2008, p. 561-562)

This background context is essential to better understand the Public Service and how this impacts leadership and change in the organization.

Culture and Change in the Public Service

The Public Service has a distinct culture or established traditions, as Rhodes et al. (2008) described it. According to Rhodes et al., this culture consists of two administrative traditions,

The generalist and specialist traditions – that are couched in the normative aspirations of a constitutional bureaucracy. These, in turn, created professional administrative bureaucracies with strong norms, precepts, and values. In addition, bureaucratic organisations also develop distinctive agency traditions based on their internal inherited beliefs, their continuing relationships and collective memories, their discrete training, and types of expertise, and their professional values and codes. (p. 463)

The Public Service culture is passed onto new generations of public servants by those who train and mentor them. The literature and formal training provided transmit the dominant ideas or beliefs (Rhodes et al., 2008). Public servants are asked, particularly Executives, to provide fearless advice and implement loyally. However, I would argue that the Public Service has created a culture that punishes or discourages fearless advice and rewards loyal implementation. As Shergold (2004) noted, Executives in the public sector lack the fearlessness and courage of their predecessors. Instead, they have adopted a desire to please the politicians (as cited by

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Rhodes et al., 2008, p. 467). Shergold's assertion seems to hold true as Van Dine (2022) noted of current Deputy Ministers, "But is the public interest truly served when one is being marked mostly on how well one follows instructions or colours within the lines? This doesn't lend itself to inspired leadership or a culture of innovation and intelligent risk-taking" (para. 16). This creates a culture that dissuades innovation, creativity, and experimentation. Instead, it creates a risk-averse culture, maintains the status quo, and is complacent with the system's shortcomings. From my perspective, this is the kind of culture that will kill Reconciliation because the Public Service is historically slow to change, does not incentivize efficiency, and does not develop the leadership skills required to face the challenges of today (Rhodes et al., 2008, p. 468).

Reconciliation requires a commitment to change, which is defined as a "desire to provide support for the change based on the belief in its inherent benefits" (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475).

Reconciliation in the Public Service requires sustained momentum, the willingness to challenge the current system, experiment and do things differently, and reflect on our perspectives and actions while also critically looking at the system itself and addressing the barriers in a meaningful way. Reconciliation also requires a shared vision and collaborative approach by Indigenous Peoples and all departments while recognizing the uniqueness of the communities and departments. In other words, Reconciliation requires large-scale transformational change. As Jody Wilson-Raybould (2021) noted, "the progress that has been made does have important elements and touches on critical issues, but it is piecemeal and not comprehensive" (p. 173). What is required to create enough motivation and willingness for a large-scale change to the level of magnitude required with Reconciliation?

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According to Regine and Lewin (2000), leaders, or in this case Executives, need to insert a bit of chaos into the system to act as a catalyst for change by creating uncertainty and ambiguity, which leads to a breakdown of current structures. However, for large-scale change to occur, Executives need to build trust, work collectively and collaboratively, and be flexible and open to experimentation while not knowing where the journey might take them (Regine & Lewin, 2000). In a system that has been built for control, stability, and the known, this is scary for everyone. Kotter, as cited by Lundy and Morin (2013) argued that change is associated with a multi-step process that “creates power and motivation sufficient to overwhelm all sources of inertia” which “is never employed effectively unless driven by high-quality leadership, not just excellent management” (p. 46). Effectively, for Reconciliation to be genuinely successful in the Public Service, it requires Executives to acquire the leadership skills that are most effective for large-scale change. While this type of change may be challenging in the Public Service due to its complexity and the complexity of the Public Service system, it is not impossible. The Public Service’s handling of Covid-19 is a recent example of chaos acting as a catalyst for significant, large-scale change. Over 300,000 employees transitioned to work from home essentially overnight, with policies and processes changing to accommodate this new reality. It was not without mistakes as it took time for the technology to catch up, but it created an environment that required experimentation and learning from what worked well and what did not. The chaos of Covid provided the Public Service with the opportunity to reinvent its work ‘space,’ and all indicators point to a hybrid work environment post-Covid allowing employees to choose what work arrangements work best for their lives. I argue that Reconciliation is similar in that it requires systemic changes and needs to be centred on those most impacted, Indigenous Peoples.

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It requires a certain level of chaos to shake up public servants' inertia and complacency to create an open environment to conduct its work differently. Granted, the Public Service has tried large-scale change related to Indigenous Peoples in the past; the White Paper, Gathering Strength (the response to RCAP), the Charlottetown Accord (Thomas, 1993), which all failed. There are likely lessons to be learned through a critical analysis of these initiatives, why they failed and what went wrong or right.

I contend they failed because they were either developed in the absence of Indigenous Peoples, were not in their best interests because they did not meet the needs of Indigenous Peoples, perpetuated the colonial landscape, or simply because the Public Service could not handle such large-scale change. Lundy and Morin (2013) noted that systemic changes are “long-term, continuous engagements organized in phases, linked in unrestrained time frames” (p. 46). Perhaps it provides a hint about why past attempts have failed. Systemic changes go beyond the three-to-four-year election cycle and require a holistic approach that addresses the interrelationships in the system rather than addressing parts of the system in a piecemeal fashion. In a culture where, generally speaking, Executives are more focused on loyal implementation, maintaining the status quo, lack accountability to Indigenous Peoples, and have a myriad of priorities to meet, how can anyone expect Reconciliation to succeed at a systemic level? Many understand that the system needs to change, but many actively and passively resist changing it. According to Lundy and Morin (2013), “two thirds of change projects fail, and resistance is often identified as a reason for failure” (p. 47). Based on my experience engaging with employees on Reconciliation, I would argue that resistance also rears its ugly head due to a lack of knowledge, understanding, and leadership.

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Leadership/Onîkânîw

I have engaged in group sessions over 3,000 people in one department, discussing what Reconciliation means in the Public Service, why it is crucial, sharing examples of the colonial system they work in, and the adverse impacts decisions have had on the lives of Indigenous Peoples while also sharing my own lived experience. I have encountered resistance, but through dialogue, open and respectful communication and sharing the impacts of colonialism on my own life, I have been able to open peoples' hearts which has led to the opening of their minds, effectively eliminating resistance. However, even though I have been able to reduce resistance amongst the individuals I have engaged, the department I work in has over 16,000 employees. It is next to an impossible task for one person or a small team to engage all employees to educate and break down resistance. Not only that, it has also taken an emotional toll on me as I have shared highly personal details of my life with 3,000 strangers. What was missed in this equation was leadership. In their study, Lundy and Morin (2013) found that participants noted it did not matter how effective a project manager is; without clear senior management support, their impact is significantly reduced. I assert a direct correlation between this and the limitations in the Public Service culture and hierarchy as described earlier. Kotter (1996) argued leadership is critical because "successful transformation is 70% to 90% leadership and only 10% to 30% management" (as cited by Lundy & Morin, 2013, p. 48). Van der Voet (2016) also supports Kotter's assertion, noting how vital leadership is for overcoming difficulties in organizational change. I will now discuss the types of leadership styles, or skills Executives require to effectively address Reconciliation in the Public Service.

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From a Western view of leadership, there are a few leadership styles and skills which others have found to be the most effective for large-scale change. For example, Podsakoff et al. (1996) articulated that,

Research on leadership styles indicates that certain styles are better equipped to handle situations of change than others. The core of transformational leadership theory is that ‘by articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and providing individualized support, effective leaders change the basic values, beliefs, and attitudes of followers so that they are willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization.’ (as cited by van der Voet, 2016, p. 665)

A commitment to change is created by going beyond individual motivations and interests (van der Voet, 2016). However, van der Voet has also found that transformational leadership is not a sought-after leadership style in the Public Service. Instead, he found that due to the bureaucratic nature of the public sector, there is a low reliance on transformational leadership styles amongst Executives, and the bureaucracy of the Public Service may also impede the utilization of leadership styles such as transformational leadership or change leadership.

Change leadership behaviours, as outlined by Fernandez and Rainey (2006), include “the need for change, providing a vision and a plan, building support and commitment for change, and monitoring the implementation process” (as cited by van der Voet, 2016, p. 661). Change leadership also promotes a high level of communication and employee engagement in implementing change, which leads to a higher level of commitment amongst the entire organization (van der Voet, 2016, p. 661). Transformational leaders can transform the values of public servants from individual interests to the collective interests of the organization, clearly

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articulating the vision of the future, leading by example, and intellectually stimulating public servants (van der Voet, 2016, p. 665). Change leadership has similar characteristics and, when implemented with transformational leadership, has a positive impact related to the commitment and participation of employees. “The analysis indicates that a transformational leadership style strengthens the relationship between change leadership behaviours and the participation of change recipients” (van der Voet, 2016, p. 675). The commonalities in both leadership styles are clear and frequent communication, reduction or elimination of red tape, and full participation and engagement of employees. I would further assert they are also characteristics needed to create a Reconciliation culture in the Public Service.

On the other hand, Regine and Lewin (2000) are proponents of paradoxical leadership. The characteristics of this approach, I argue, are human-centred, emphasizing communication, relationships, and trust, values that cultivate a condition of care and connection (Regine & Lewin, 2000). One of the industry CEOs, Regine and Lewin (2000) spoke to stated, “relationships are the most important thing in a complex system. If you do not have strong relationships, none of this works” (p. 12). Much like systems thinking and the Indigenous concepts of wâkôtowin, heeshook-ish tsawalk, and storytelling, this approach recognizes that everything is in relationship with everything else, human, and non-human alike (Regine & Lewin, 2000). One CEO noted, “before they will give more, people need to know that the community is interested in them as individuals” (Regine & Lewin, 2000, p. 17). In other words, employees need to feel a part of a community where they matter, leading to higher levels of loyalty, adaptability, and a willingness to change. They asserted that paradoxical leadership fluctuates between the traditional, mechanistic leadership style of command and control and a

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more organic leadership style between structure and less structure. Thus, leaders who utilize this leadership type let things emerge, unfold, and self-organize, giving room for experimentation and failure. A strong sense of direction, high self-awareness, clear values, can let go and be open-ended are some of the characteristics of this leadership style (Regine & Lewin, 2000). These leaders recognize the importance of making time to build relationships with their employees and to be not just physically accessible but also emotionally accessible, viewing vulnerability as a strength as advocated by Brene Brown (2018). Regine and Lewin (2000) argued that all these characteristics create an environment that can respond to change in an effective and human-centred way and is the most effective way for change in a complex system.

One of the characteristics of paradoxical leadership is being human-centred. This has become its own leadership theory in the past decade or so, mainly in the health care field. However, human-centred, or person-centred leadership is an important theory as it relates to Reconciliation because it is “a complex, dynamic, relational and contextually embedded practice that fosters healthful relationships and growth” (Cardiff et al., 2018, p. 3067). These are characteristics that enable a leader to “engage in the relational processes...become more responsive and better able to support associate and own well-being” (Cardiff et al., 2018, p. 3067); important characteristics to emulate when leading social-justice changes like Reconciliation. Howard (2015) argued that human-centred leadership focuses on people and “in the midst of change and transition, we build more human governments, businesses and communities” (p. 5). If the Public Service wants to build a better Canada Howard explained that people need to be kept at the forefront for every decision and action. In other words, Reconciliation actions cannot succeed without the collective, particularly the Indigenous

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collective. When thinking about leadership and Reconciliation it is also crucial to the well-being of Indigenous Peoples that leaders acknowledge the trauma that we have endured both past and present because of decisions by leaders. Therefore, trauma-informed leadership has also become an important leadership skill that I will briefly describe next.

People internalize events differently depending on their past experiences. What is a traumatic experience for one person may not be for another person (Koloroutis & Pole, 2021). The Public Service has over the past number of years been investing time and resources on destigmatizing mental health and normalizing seeking help. However, very little has been shared on becoming trauma-informed leaders. Koloroutis and Pole (2021) described trauma-informed leaders as leaders who recognize that everyone struggles with trauma and understand that “teams need to feel heard, protected, prepared, and seen by organizational leaders” (p. 30). They argued that trauma-informed leaders need to prioritize their own self-care to best support their teams. They outlined the practices of (1) attuning – being present in the moment, (2) wondering – curiosity in what is happening with self and others, (3) following – the practice of deep listening, and (4) holding – creating safe spaces for others (p. 33). In the context of the Public Service, trauma-informed leaders can appreciate and understand why Indigenous employees or Indigenous Peoples may be triggered by certain language, actions, decisions, or behaviours of other public servants and respond with compassion and empathy. They will try to create a safe environment while destigmatizing emotional expressions. They are emotionally accessible and model self-care (Koloroutis & Pole, 2021). These are critical characteristics when undertaking social justice actions such as Reconciliation and leading teams with individuals who have historically been subjected to trauma.

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It is interesting how the new and emerging leadership studies highlight inherent characteristics present in many Indigenous cultures. Indigenous beliefs, ways of being, and knowing have existed for thousands of years. These cultural characteristics influence Indigenous leadership. Unfortunately, there is not much research on Indigenous leadership practices (Turner et al., 2019); however, the research that is taking place is being led by New Zealand and Australia, with some in the United States. I argue that to create a Reconciliation culture in the Public Service, Executives need to learn and utilize the leadership skills of new emergent Western leadership styles and those contained within Indigenous knowledges. In the words of Jody Wilson-Raybould (2021),

Along the way, it became clear that the government of Canada had something to learn from our Indigenous cultures and ways of being that have survived for millennia. To address the legacy of colonialism in this country, the colonizers are going to need to learn a lot from those they sought to colonize. Not just to confront their own actions, ignorance, and systemic racism, but to actually make Canadian institutions and modes of governing better by learning the different values, principles, and practices that uphold Indigenous governments and societies and which I was, at that moment through ceremony, experiencing. (p. 265)

Jody makes a valid argument that decolonization needs to happen on both sides particularly for public servants who work directly with Indigenous Peoples, manage Indigenous employees, or work with Indigenous colleagues. Her point also reminds me of a short story that Chief Clarence Louis (2021) shares in his book, *Rez Rules*,

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At a winter dance mouse sang and Grizzly Bear gave mouse a long tail – mouse said – one day I will help you, even big people need help – Grizzly Bear said – you’re too small, you could never help me – the animal people found Grizzly Bear sleeping and tied him up – mouse knew Grizzly was in trouble and went looking and found him tied up – Grizzly asked for help and mouse climbed on top of Grizzly and chewed the bindings – Grizzly got free and stood up and thanked mouse and said – If it had not been for you I would have died. From now on we are always friends. (p. 266)

In this context of leadership and the Public Service, I see Grizzly as the dominant form of leadership currently utilized in the Public Service and the mouse representing Indigenous leadership. While Indigenous Peoples may be a minority population in Canada now, there is much to learn from the knowledge gained over centuries of living these lands and the leadership skills gained by living life through a different worldview.

As noted earlier, while there is not much academic literature on Indigenous leadership, what does exist demonstrates that there are commonalities of Indigenous leadership worldwide. Indigenous leadership is linked to Indigenous culture and spirituality (Cajete, 2016; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016; Gambrell, 2016; Gladstone & Pepion, 2017; Little Bear, N.D.). Some of the characteristics identified in Indigenous leadership includes connection to culture and ceremony; collective and consensus decision making; distributed leadership; commitment to the collective; shared leadership; an emphasis on relationships; and a high standard of personal ethics (Gladstone & Pepion, 2017; Cajete, 2016; Young, 2006). As Cajete (2016) outlined,

Indigenous leadership is not viewed as the result of a position, appointment, political prowess, or a college degree, but the result of a dynamic cultural and personal process

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that brings forward characteristics of individuals that show them to be good thinkers, culturally aware, honest, fair, ethical with a readiness to serve the needs of their families and communities placing the needs of their people above their own. (p. 374)

Marshall (2008), who studied the leadership characteristics of Crazy Horse, highlighted some of the personal characteristics that Crazy Horse shared with many other great Indigenous leaders, reflecting the many teachings of Indigenous Peoples. Selflessness, morality, experience, honesty, responsibility, compassion, humility, spirituality, a deep love for the land, knowledge of oneself, knowledge of one's friends, and a willingness to take the lead were the personal characteristics he identified (Marshall, 2008). Characteristics similar to what has been identified by the other authors. Two prominent Canadian First Nation leaders echo the difference between Indigenous leadership and the Western leadership style. Chief Clarence Louie (2021) noted that one of the best decision-making tools is ceremony and the need to look to the past, to our ancestors, to figure out how to go forward. He further noted that "sometimes the best thing you can do is go out on the land and listen to the wind. Listen to all the sounds of nature" (p. 262). Chief Louie emphasized the importance of the connection to culture and ceremony, the relationships to the land, and our ancestors to help Indigenous leaders make the right decisions. However, he also emphasized the need for education in today's modern society and understanding the Western world. In other words, the need to have two-eyed seeing. He quoted Sitting Bull, who said, "I have advised my people this: when you find anything good in the white man's road, pick it up; but when you find something bad, or that turns out bad, drop it. Leave it alone" (pp. 269-270). Grambell (2016) further emphasized this point in his research on Lakota women leaders' attributes stating, "having a strong sense of Lakota cultures and traditions, becoming educated at

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levels above a high school degree, and being able to understand not just the Lakota people, but also having the aptitude to operate within the mainstream world as well (p. 300). Jody Wilson-Raybould (2021) pointed to the connection to culture and the importance that has had on her leadership. She shared how the learnings from her grandmother and father shaped her leadership career and applied that more broadly to Indigenous leadership,

This understanding of leadership, and how it is embedded in our culture and community, is also why Indigenous modes of decision-making are so different. For many Indigenous peoples, decision-making is communitarian and consensus-based, though there are many differences and distinctions between peoples and nations in how decision-making operates. We are always working to build that consensus from which a decision will emerge...The spark of truth comes from everyone contributing, sharing, and building the best decision together. (Wilson-Raybould, 2021, pp. 36-37)

The leadership characteristics of Indigenous Peoples are a stark contrast to the traditional Western style of leadership, which has, and continues to, dominate leadership studies (Cajete, 2016; Gambrell; 2016; Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; McGregor et al., 2018; Lickers, 2016). When it comes to Reconciliation in the Public Service and the role Executives play in its success, to be genuinely inclusive, Executives need to recognize, learn, and accept alternative leadership worldviews and give them just as much space in the Public Service as Western styles of leadership are given (Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016). Non-Indigenous Executives also need to learn and use two-eyed seeing, particularly those who work with or whose work impacts Indigenous Peoples. Nichols (2004) echoed this as well. She argued that leaders working with Indigenous Peoples need to have “culturally appropriate techniques” (as cited by Grambell, 2016, p. 182)

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and further argued for teaching Indigenous leadership instead of Western methods in Indigenous communities. The burden of understanding and manoeuvring between two worldviews should not rest on the shoulders of Indigenous Peoples alone. This is not Reconciliation; the burden needs to be shared. More non-Indigenous leaders should learn about and utilize Indigenous leadership theories. I assert that it would improve the relationship between the Public Service and Indigenous Peoples while also instilling more trust.

Further, the inclusion of Indigenous leadership styles in the Public Service would also benefit the Public Service, creating a culture where leadership is shared, employees are cared for, decision making is done collectively and from a holistic perspective. It is one step towards decolonization and supports Reconciliation in a meaningful way. Some Executives may be uncomfortable with the idea of Indigenous leadership; implementing new Western-style leadership models such as transformational leadership, change leadership, human-centred leadership, and trauma-informed leadership would complement Indigenous leadership styles and equip Executives with the skills required to successfully tackle Reconciliation and the decolonization of the Public Service.

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Chapter 3: Research as Reconciliation

As my thesis is based on wâkôtowin, it guided the lens I applied to my research and guided my behaviour. Elder Whitstone shared,

What we do, and how we act in the world, has a direct effect on everything around us. This is wâkôtowin, too, and it means that we have to consider our relations with everything as we walk upon the Earth. Each step must be meaningful, and ideally, positive. Each action must reflect our responsibility to all creatures, and the future. (as cited by Smith, 2019, para. 22)

Using wâkôtowin with the Indigenous methods of storytelling and talking circles, I reflected Indigenous voices and provided the Public Service with a non-colonial perspective. It also created more space within academia for Indigenous scholars utilizing non-Western research paradigms, methodologies, and methods. Reconciliation is an act of taking up colonial space in academia where, historically, other knowledge systems have been excluded. Furthermore, it provided the opportunity to take a holistic, collective approach based on wâkôtowin. Finally, it created a platform for Indigenous Executives, employees, Elders, leaders, and advocates to share their story in a safe space by respecting Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing through storytelling and talking circles.

Indigenous Methods

Storytelling and talking circles were the primary methods used to collect data from niwâkomâkanak. Kovach (2009) indicated that stories hold our knowledge while also signifying relationships and cannot be decontextualized from the teller (p. 94). She further asserted, "story

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as method elevates the research from an extractive exercise serving the fragmentation of knowledge to a holistic endeavour that situates research firmly within the nest of relationship" (Kovach, 2009, p. 99). I relate storytelling to a spiderweb; if you pluck a strand on one side of the web, it can be felt throughout the web. It emphasizes the interconnectedness present in stories and emphasizes why storytelling aligns with the concept of wâkôtowin.

Talking circles are, as I perceive them, storytelling in a group setting. Kovach (2009) affirmed that sharing circles are "an open ended method that invites story" (p. 124). A talking circle provides those participating with the time and space to share their story in their way. Wilson and Wilson (2000) described talking circles as providing a space that "represents the holism of Mother Earth and the equality of all members" where each speaker is given space through the passing of a sacred object to speak their truth while everyone listens in silence and without judgment (p. 11). Creating safe space for niwâkomâkanak to share their story was essential for undertaking the research.

Implementing the Research

Earlier I noted that the Public Service is a complex system. This system is influenced by and impacts many different stakeholders. In the context of Reconciliation in the Federal Public Service, stakeholders include Federal and Provincial governments, Public Service employees, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, and Canadians. It also includes Indigenous communities, Nations, and governments and Indigenous Peoples as partners. Due to the research scope, it was impossible to include all these stakeholders and partners. As a result, I narrowed the field and only included the Federal government, Public Service employees, and Indigenous Peoples. In

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this way, I narrowed the research scope and focused on contributing to positive change in the Federal Public Service.

Number of Niwâkomâkanak

Both the stakeholders and niwâkomâkanak have already been identified; however, further detail is required. While I would have liked to expand the scope of niwâkomâkanak engaged in the research, the time constraints of the research forced me to exclude other potential individuals. Reconciliation requires all Canadians' participation, but the population most impacted by Reconciliation efforts are Indigenous Peoples. It is for this reason that the majority of niwâkomâkanak were Indigenous. In total, I engaged 12 Executives, 11 Indigenous employees, and three Indigenous individuals external to the Public Service. I kept the numbers lower to enable more manageable talking circles for Executives and Indigenous employees. Executives were selected based on existing relationships and represented a cross-section of departments in the Public Service. Executives were Indigenous and non-Indigenous and ranged from the Executive introductory level (e.g., EX-01) to the highest level a public servant can obtain (e.g., DM-04) and represent seven different departments as well as different geographical areas in Canada. Individuals were chosen based on their work with Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation. The Indigenous employees work in various departments and represent various geographic locations in Canada; however, most of the individuals worked for either Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) or Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). All who volunteered were both Indigenous and work directly with Indigenous communities. Indigenous employees were accepted based on a "first come, first served" principle. It was not feasible to engage a larger number of Indigenous Peoples working outside of

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government; therefore, I engaged a few Indigenous individuals who work for a community, a National Indigenous Organization, and a provincial government and were chosen based on their Reconciliation efforts outside of government. As many of the individuals I wanted to speak to were extremely busy, it was necessary to have enough potential individuals to contact to ensure I could get the numbers I required. Appendices C to F outline the materials provided to niwâkomâkanak prior to participating in any of the sessions. To effectively recruit willing niwâkomâkanak I developed a robust research plan which I will explain next.

The Plan

Niwâkomâkanak were recruited in a few ways. Public Service Executives were invited by way of an email. Indigenous employees were recruited by posting an invitation on the Government of Canada GC Connex site, where the Indigenous Employees Federal Network hosts a page. Indigenous leaders, Elders, or advocates were also contacted by email. An invitation letter with an information appendix was sent electronically in all three cases, and responses collected. Once individuals confirmed their interest, consent forms were provided in advance of any storytelling or talking circle session.

I conducted the storytelling sessions with Public Service Executives and the Indigenous individuals outside of government. The storytelling sessions informed the talking circle discussions. These sessions took one to two hours each and were conducted both virtually and in-person. A preliminary data analysis identified themes that were then presented to niwâkomâkanak who participated in the talking circles. Two talking circle sessions were arranged, one with the Executives and one with Indigenous employees. Each talking circle included two rounds around the circle and the duration of each was three and four hours

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respectively. I would have preferred to conduct the talking circles in-person due to the power in-person circles generate, but due to the Covid environment at that time both were conducted virtually. Each method was tested using the inquiry team before engaging any niwâkomâkanak to test the questions. Appendices B to F outline the inquiry questions, invitations, information letters, and consent forms.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is one of the most important steps in a research process. Storytelling and talking circles are not rigid structures for data gathering; while the data was rich, it was also difficult to pull out the relevant information related to my research question. Identifying themes in the data was one of the first steps. Nowell et al. (2017) suggested that thematic analysis is a data analysis method that brings rigour and trustworthiness to the data analysis process. They described thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). Ryan and Bernard (2003) outlined several techniques to use when conducting a thematic analysis,

An analysis of words (word repetitions, key-indigenous terms, and key-words-in contexts); a careful reading of larger blocks of texts (compare and contrast, social science queries, and searching for missing information); an intentional analysis of linguistic features (metaphors, transitions, connectors); and the physical manipulation of texts (unmarked texts, pawing, and cut and sort procedures). (para. 4)

However, I prefer Nowell et al.'s (2017) simplified and more practical approach to thematic data analysis: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report (p. 4). In conducting a

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thematic analysis of the data, critical care was taken to keep it grounded in wâkôtowin and ensure the context of the data was not lost or misrepresented. Historically this was often the case when research was undertaken on Indigenous phenomena. While I was looking for themes, it was also important to note that “an Indigenous style of analysis has to look at all those relations as a whole instead of breaking it down, cause it just won’t work” (Wilson, 2008, p. 119). This approach further ensured that the stories shared were handled with respect while also ensuring intellectual rigour. It was equally essential that niwâkomâkanak were provided the time to verify the data that was gathered which was achieved by adapting the collective consensual data analytic procedure (CCDAP) (Starblanket et al., 2019). As Starblanket et al. (2019) noted CCDAP seeks to analyze the data by reaching “group consensus which reduces the possibility of biases that any one person could bring to the research” (p. 1). Through the talking circle sessions, niwâkomâkanak were actively engaged in the development of recommendations and reviewing the themes that were generated from the storytelling sessions. To reduce any other potential impact on the data analysis resulting from personal biases, the okiskinôtahiwêw played a critical role in mitigating this by assisting with the analysis. I will speak about okiskinôtahiwêw next.

Okiskinôtahiwêw

It would be nice to think that I could complete this research solo. I contend that the end product is richer with the support of the *okiskinôtahiwêw* (guide). My okiskinôtahiwêw come from various areas; one was a school colleague, one a friend, two were employees in my team, and last, an Elder from my community. In asking my employees for support, I ensured they understood that it was voluntary and were not obligated to say yes. Both employees volunteered

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because they wanted to learn about the research process and hear what niwâkomâkanak had to share. Appendix G outlines the roles of okiskinôtahiwêw.

In much the same way that power over dynamics was considered with involvement of employees in my research, the ethics of conducting research, particularly with Indigenous Peoples, was also critical.

Research with Indigenous Peoples

The Tri-Council principles of respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice are important considerations for all research (Government of Canada, 2018). Chapter nine is solely dedicated to research with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis People and expands the definitions of respect, concern for welfare, and justice from an Indigenous perspective. However, this chapter is small and does not provide the depth of ethical considerations required when researching with Indigenous Peoples.

The First Nation Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) is an organization solely dedicated to ethical considerations of research with First Nations. It has developed the OCAP principles of ownership, control, access, and possession related to data gathered (FNIGC, 2021). In the context of ownership, niwâkomâkanak and I had a relationship to the data and information collected and as such it was imperative that I engaged and shared with them throughout the research process. Niwâkomâkanak also had the right to control all aspects of the research and information as well as access to that information requiring engagement early and often throughout the process. I was prepared to adjust my approach and incorporated their feedback throughout the research. Last, the data collected is owned by niwâkomâkanak, I am merely a vessel to share their stories (FNIGC, 2021).

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Writing a thesis that includes recommendations which are actionable allows niwâkomâkanak to utilize the information as they deem appropriate. As evidenced throughout this paper, these principles were integrated through ongoing engagement and verification with niwâkomâkanak throughout the research. Niwâkomâkanak were able to withdraw from the research at any point, however, none chose this option. I have done my best in representing their information accurately, respectfully, and I hope I have lived up to these principles. Also, Indigenous Executives and employees can use the research to support their own Reconciliation efforts. In addition to considering these ethical principles, it was equally important that I recognized and managed my own personal biases and assumptions to ensure as much objectivity as possible. For example, I assumed that the Public Service system has many barriers and gaps that need to be identified and corrected and I have my own opinions about Reconciliation and decolonization in the Public Service. Conducting myself through wâkôtowin further ensured that ethical principles became lived behaviours.

The Product

I have chosen a thesis because I believe contributing to the academic research on Reconciliation and decolonization is essential, particularly as it relates to the Public Service. In keeping with Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being, the knowledge gained, and recommendations provided need to be shared with a larger audience. A thesis enabled me to contribute to Reconciliation broadly. Senior Executives will also be able to share the thesis recommendations with their colleagues across government for their consideration and potential implementation. Furthermore, other public servants can use the research results at the federal,

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provincial, or municipal level, and it could equally apply to academia and private sector organizations committed to Reconciliation.

And Now What?

As much of the literature is currently focused on academia, health, and education, this research will add to a new area of focus, the Federal Public Service. I hope this information and the recommendations will contribute to a growing body of Indigenous knowledges for use by both the Public Sector as well as academia. I believe it will be of benefit to the Public Service by providing a better understanding of the problematic discourse surrounding Reconciliation, decolonization, antiracism, and diversity and inclusion actions. It underlines the need to change the colonial Public Service system to create equitable conditions for Indigenous Peoples and Canadians while also recognizing the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination. Further, it is hoped this could also lead to discussions about changing legislation, policies, practices, and culture in the Public Service. In the era of Reconciliation, it is our responsibility to take on this challenge boldly. The following chapter will provide the findings and conclusions of the research.

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Chapter 4: Inquiry Project Findings and Conclusion

The niwâkomâkanak who participated in this research totalled twenty-six individuals utilizing two Indigenous research methods: storytelling and talking circles. The questions posed to the Executives participating in storytelling sessions were: tell me a story about a time when the system you work in hindered your Reconciliation efforts and why this occurred? Why do they create barriers to Reconciliation? In addition to the Executives, the Indigenous individuals external to the Public Service participated in storytelling sessions to provide an external perspective. The questions posed to them were: tell me a story about a time when you worked with Federal Public Service Executives on an initiative that could contribute to Reconciliation in Canada? What was that experience like? The questions posed were developed to identify the barriers in the Public Service that hinder Reconciliation efforts and require closer examination and potentially deconstruction.

Ten of the 12 Executives participated in a virtual talking circle. They were asked: based on the themes and stories which emerged from the storytelling sessions and building on the concept of wâkôtowin, where are the areas of the Public Service that could be dismantled or unravelled and how? What is needed for Public Service Executives to take personal responsibility for these efforts? The question posed to the Indigenous employees in their virtual talking circle were: based on the themes and stories which emerged from the storytelling sessions held with Executives and external participants, what could Executives do to dismantle or unravel the system to move Reconciliation forward in Canada? What is needed for Public Service

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Executives to take personal responsibility for these efforts? The intent was to gather data on solutions for deconstructing colonial practices in the Public Service.

For anonymity, I have assigned Cree names to the niwâkomâkanak, whom I directly quote or paraphrase. Where appropriate, I have included square brackets within direct quotes to either ensure the anonymity of individuals or provide clarity to the statement. I will explore the data findings next.

Study Findings

Reconciliation is full of complexities and intersects with all aspects of the Public Service. As a result, I found myself veering down many different paths of inquiry where further research is required. Therefore, while the findings were broad, I have attempted to narrow them down to eight findings:

1. Meeting the TRC's Call to Action #57 has been insufficient;
2. People in critical positions can create barriers and hinder change and progress in the Public Service;
3. The Public Service is a colonial system that hinders Reconciliation efforts;
4. The Public Service and Executive cultures hinder Reconciliation efforts;
5. Indigenous Peoples have become an industry both internal and external to the Public Service which acts as a Reconciliation disincentive;
6. The political arm of government hinders large-scale and long-term change in the Public Service;
7. The Public Service is a challenging work environment for Indigenous Executives and employees; and,

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8. The Public Service has difficulties building trust and relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Finding #1 - Meeting the TRC's Call to Action #57 has been insufficient

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. - Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action number 57 (2015, p.64)

In partial response to the TRC Call to Action number 57, the Canada School of Public Service developed an Indigenous learning series that provides federal public servants with the opportunity to increase their cultural competency and awareness about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Canada (Government of Canada, 2021). The learning series offers six courses as self-paced online courses and videos, and other supplementary tools as well as six available in-person courses, which have not been available due to Covid.

Despite these course offerings, most niwâkomâkanak in the storytelling sessions identified the lack of understanding of Indigenous Peoples as a significant barrier in the Public Service. Many indicated that the online course curriculum, while well developed, does not go deep enough, arguing it is too easy for individuals to scroll through without really learning anything. Mâkêsiw (2021) noted,

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But even when confronted with education, they still do it. Right, like, it's not enough to teach them about the school system, about the pass system, about any of the legacy issues. That's not what's going to do it. It's got to be something far deeper than that...I think the way of getting past that lack of education was about, frankly, spending time in communities. (personal communication¹)

Niwâkomâkanak noted that there are no incentives to learn in some areas of government because they do not work directly with Indigenous Peoples. For example, niwâkomâkanak pointed to Finance, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Privy Council Office, Justice, and the Finance and Human Resources branches in departments as needing education but are not incentivized to learn. However, it was noted that this adversely impacts decision making, policy advice and development, and legal and financial advice. For example, Mâkêsiw (2021) shared an experience about an internal document,

And that paper, I think, in some ways, it just embarrassed a whole lot of people because that paper which is, you know, would never be made public, but that paper, which was an internal piece, I would say ignored the last 15 years of jurisprudence. (personal communication)

Yâpêw (2021) also shared his experience with a Justice lawyer,

He didn't understand the history. He didn't understand what the Residential school was. We talked about that; he was not aware. He was not aware of the economic status of a lot of communities, why they're so poor, why development is extremely difficult. Why the fact that their reserve, what's the impact on their development. (personal communication)

¹ Permission from the original speaker received for all "personal communications."

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The external Indigenous niwâkomâkanak explained that they felt burdened to educate public servants which delays progress on key initiatives, creates frustration, erodes trust, and gives the impression that the public service does not prioritize work with Indigenous Peoples (Kamâmak, 2021, personal communication).

Indigenous employees also noted it makes for an unsafe work environment, and they too feel burdened to educate their peers or superiors. Ocêw (2021) shared this experience,

I was brought to the DG's [Director General] office and more or less told, like, you know, we didn't really find an Indigenous manager or somebody that knows about Indigenous issues. So we found this really good person. She's super nice. Can you just train her in terms of understanding your culture and what it means and understanding what she should and shouldn't do? And I was like, no. (personal communication)

While the Public Service has begun implementing the TRC's Call to Action #57 and some departments have mandatory training for all employees (Kâkâkiw, 2021, personal communication), the training is not sufficient for public servants to truly understand Indigenous realities or their legal obligations to Indigenous Peoples. Nor is there a consistent training strategy across Departments to ensure all public servants increase their knowledge. The lack of personal responsibility to learn and overworked Executives are a challenge and points to the importance of the people in the system, the topic of the next finding.

Finding #2 - People in key positions can create barriers, hinder change, and progress in the Public Service

Given the hierarchical structure of the Public Service, Executives have much positional power and authority. Many niwâkomâkanak, particularly the Executives themselves, shared how

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one Executive in a critical position can make it impossible to move an initiative forward, particularly if it challenges the status quo or sets a precedent.

It is fundamentally about individuals in certain positions that have a lot of influence over something, and, you know, they, in essence, are what sets the frame for what that institution is doing and thinking. And the more senior you go, the deeper and broader that sphere of influence is. (Mâkêsiw, 2021, personal communication)

As a result, the lack of self-awareness, individual biases, and knowledge of the Crown's obligations to Indigenous Peoples become punitive to them. The maintenance of colonial constructs and the status quo has resulted in an environment where Executives are afraid to stick their necks out to challenge the status quo for fear that it will impact opportunities to promote.

Wapeskwe maskwa (2021) shared,

You got to have a willingness to be different and to just take the system on and try to move the yardstick, and many public servants don't have that desire. It's either not in their nature, or they're too worried about a promotion. (personal communication)

Nikik (2021) further underlined this point, "One of the ways I'm lucky in that I kind of reached my career goal six years ago when I became a DG. And so, you know, since six years ago, I'm not trying to impress anyone or climb a ladder or anything" (personal communication).

Further, the Indigenous employees noted that Executives create the culture and tone in the Public Service and as there is a lack of Indigenous Executives, this means those voices are not at the table. When they are, they may be silenced as Wapeskwe maskwa (2021) explained,

I remember experiencing sitting around a Deputy Minister's table, and they were talking about the design of the Inquiry. And [Pakosênimowin, an Indigenous woman] was at that

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table. [Pinêsîs], a racialized woman, was at the table. And our DM was at the table, those were the only three women, and all the rest of them were white men. And they were talking about the Inquiry, and you know, can't do this, can't do that. No, we don't want to do this. And you know, Pakosênimowin tried to speak up, Pinêsîs tried to speak up. Both of them were silenced by the guys. (personal communication)

Makwa (2021), an Indigenous Executive shared their own experience of being silenced,

We were trying to call a meeting, we were sending up briefings, it was being ignored. They really didn't want to deal with anybody who actually knew what they were talking about when it came to Indigenous women's issues. It was all these white older women bureaucrats who thought they knew best...and they knew what was best for the Indians. And frick, it was frustrating. (personal communication)

These experiences point out several barriers that individuals can create: White individuals predominantly occupy Executive positions; paternalistic colonial thinking is still the norm, and Indigenous Executives, particularly Indigenous women, may be marginalized and silenced. It is an environment where non-Indigenous Executives generally have more influence and power than Indigenous Executives. Amisk (2021) explained,

I'll just throw a name out there like [mônîyâsnâpêw], kind of, Irish background. You know, if he were to stand up and take the cause and take a risk or something, I think it'd be, wow. If [Pakosênimowin] does it, it doesn't have the same impact because at least with [mônîyâsnâpêw] it would like, it would stand out. People ask questions. They take notice...they...some would emulate and what not. (personal communication)

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Essentially, occupying a key position conveys much power to either kill an initiative or to champion it; however, some Executives have more influence than others. What also became apparent are the barriers in the system itself, which is the topic of the following finding.

Finding #3 - The Public Service is a colonial system that hinders Reconciliation efforts

As outlined in Chapter two, the Westminster model is the basis of the Public Service system. As a result, “the vision of Canada is based on an Anglo-Saxon, English, Protestant uni-culture,” according to Amisk (2021, personal communication), which does not give space for other perspectives or worldviews, thus perpetuating the ongoing colonialism of Indigenous Peoples. Other Indigenous niwâkomâkanak corroborated this noting the colonial approach is hard wired into the Public Service system making it very challenging to change the way the Public Service works. Amisk (2021) further noted that the purpose of the Westminster system was to control the relationship with Indigenous Peoples through a paternalistic approach that supports capitalism, individual rights, and corporate culture.

The hierarchal nature of the Public Service creates a system where Executives, particularly those in the National Capital Region where most Executives work, are far removed from Indigenous governments leading to a lack of accountability. For example, Kâkâkiw (2021) shared, “some of the public servants who are probably, that I’ve encountered that are the most resistant to change in this area also don’t ever have to actually answer to Indigenous People” (personal communication). This centralization in the National Capital Region also impacts policy development. For example, Paskowimostos (2021) noted that policy is mainly constructed in the National Capital Region, restricting the inclusion of voices from across the country (personal

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communication). The siloed approach present in the Public Service has also resulted in a lack of collective responsibility, inconsistent use of tools, and a lack of one government voice.

Further noted in Chapter two, the Central Agencies have an oversight function for all departments and agencies. Niwâkomâkanak have indicated that this creates a high level of control, slowing down the work and perceive that their mandate is to say “No” to everything (Amisk, personal communication). For example, Kâkâkiw (2021) stated broadly, “We own too much control as a government in those acts when it comes to Indigenous Peoples. And we’ve never thought about how we could give control up” (personal communication).

Many niwâkomâkanak felt that the system does not treat Indigenous Peoples fairly and has more rigorous controls attached to Indigenous Peoples than for others. Maskwa (2021) pointed to proposal-based funding as an example, noting that it results in competition between Indigenous governments and more red tape is attached to funding due to the paternalistic views (personal communication). Indigenous employees are also negatively impacted. For example, Indigenous niwâkomâkanak pointed to the Official Languages Act and human resource practices as barriers to their career progression and promotion. Many niwâkomâkanak expressed an aversion to being forced to learn another colonial language for career progression while being denied their languages. Wapeskwe maskwa (2021) shared,

I don’t begin to understand in this day and age why we have a mandatory requirement for someone to achieve a level of fluency in French that is way beyond what’s ever used in the Public Service that someone has, you know, created in some backroom as to the...this is the level you must have. I think it’s just antiquated, frankly....and yes, it is time for that to change. (personal communication)

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In addition, the perception of Executive niwâkomâkanak is that large-scale change is too complicated and takes too much time. In contrast, incremental changes can be accomplished in shorter periods making them more palatable to public servants, politicians, and the Canadian public, as shared by Nikik (2021, personal communication). However, for those external to the Public Service, incremental change is seen as a band-aid solution and may not lead to systemic changes. Kamâmak (2021) explained, “as soon as you get like, really serious, and at the heart of what the problem is, which is the system. It’s like, ‘Oh, I can’t do that, cannot touch that’” (personal communication). The system influences the culture of the Public Service while the culture maintains the system. I will turn to this next.

Finding #4 - The Public Service and Executive cultures hinder Reconciliation efforts.

As demonstrated in Chapter two, there is a distinct organizational culture in the Public Service; however, there is also an Executive subculture. In this section, I will address each of these separately.

Public Service Culture

According to some Executive niwâkomâkanak, public servants view the Public Service as infallible and good. However, the reality is far from that. Instead, all the niwâkomâkanak universally viewed it as a risk-averse culture that maintains the status quo. They also felt that some areas of the Public Service are more risk averse than others such as the Central Agencies (i.e., Privy Council Office and Treasury Board), the Departments of Finance and Justice, and the Human Resources and Finance Branches in departments.

Niwâkomâkanak argued that the status quo is not working; it does not create change in the Public Service and creates a perception that innovation is more expensive than maintaining it.

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They also noted that it is a culture of litigation, particularly when it comes to Indigenous Peoples. It is focussed on loyal implementation that does not reward fearless advice. For example, public servants often take advice from Human Resources or departmental lawyers as a directive instead of advice for consideration with all other pertinent factors. Amisk (2021) explained, “I felt like I was obligated to take their advice...you get it embedded in your head that you can’t break the rules” (personal communication). Kâkâkiw (2021) further shared,

We need to learn how to use our brains here and take actual legal advice, HR advice, procurement advice, political advice as advice, and then put them all together, think and analyze like a good [policy analyst] would and then give the best recommendation.
(personal communication)

Kâkâkiw argued that the Public Service had created a culture of self-imposed behaviour resulting in false constraints impacting the willingness to provide fearless advice while risking a punitive response. Maskwa (2021) shared a story of leaked information that gave a non-Indigenous consulting company a heads up on funding for First Nations. The company began soliciting to support them in completing funding applications. Maskwa raised their concerns in writing, “and so I was told to cease and desist. I was not to put anything else in writing” (personal communication). The situation went unaddressed. Not only does fearless advice seem to be actively discouraged, but Executives are also often prevented or discouraged from using the tools they have available for maximum creativity, innovation, and flexibility. Their use is not encouraged, particularly in areas like hiring and promotion. Kâkâkiw (2021) noted,

I can invoke my staffing delegation and say, ‘Sorry, I’m going to go against HR advice here.’ But the reality is then that something goes on my file for always going against HR

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advice...we have the tools, and they're so easy to use, and we're just not using them.

(personal communication)

Colonial, Western-centric, and paternalistic thinking dominate the Public Service culture and is “cooked into the entire system” (Amisk, 2021, personal communication). Several niwâkomâkanak also suggested there is a culture of control, of white saviourism, of Ottawa-centric thinking, of complacency to changing the system, of not being “client-focused” (Indigenous Peoples is the client in this case), and of perpetual under-funding related to Indigenous Peoples. Interestingly, Kâkwa (2021) suggested that the lack of funding is used as an excuse not to find creative and innovative solutions or for taking risks (personal communication) which was contrary to what many of the other niwâkomâkanak shared.

Niwâkomâkanak also raised that the Public Service culture lacks a government-wide vision and coordination on Reconciliation. The lack of direction from Senior Executives causes inertia amongst employees. A lack of accountability on Reconciliation efforts reduces it as a government priority as reporting to Parliament has not yet been made part of the annual reporting cycle. Further, niwâkomâkanak raised the lack of a shared vision and the siloed approach contributes to the lack of consistency in the interpretation and implementation of policies and practices across government and within individual departments. I will now turn to the Executive subculture.

Executive Subculture

Executive niwâkomâkanak confirmed the existence of an Executive subculture in the Public Service and according to some, Executives primarily focus on achieving good results on the priorities outlined in their performance agreements. A punitive versus reward-based culture

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disincentivizes Executives to challenge the status quo or go against advice provided even if it is within their authority to do so. “In the ASE, we have clients who have people-centric superiors. Unfortunately, many of our clients have superiors who tend to use fear as a leading tactic” (APEX, 2021, p. 15). The Executive niwâkomâkanak and the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) Annual Report demonstrate that thinking and doing things differently is generally not rewarded. Mâkêsiw, who is non-Indigenous, shared, Executives are seen to have gone “native” and “drunk the kool-aid” when trying to disrupt the status quo for Indigenous Peoples (personal communication). One Indigenous Executive shared their experience working in this culture. Maskwa (2021) stated,

I’m getting tired of that analogy ‘death by a 1000 cuts’ because actually it’s more like, I’ll stab you. I’m going to stab you here. And I’m not going to hit any of your vital organs. I’m just going to keep stabbing you, and you’re going to like not die from it. I’m going to injure you and injure you till you just stop getting back up and fighting me because I’m not gonna, you know, I am not going to stop, you know, stabbing you, stabbing you in the back for the most part. (personal communication)

Mâkêsiw (2021) noted that, like themselves, most Executives come from a place of privilege, making it challenging for them to understand the system which has benefitted them, can hold others back (personal communication) making it difficult to understand their Indigenous colleagues.

Many of the niwâkomâkanak also shared that the Executive culture is focused on career progression, creating a culture focused on taking positions that are ‘sexy’ and will lead to promotions rather than focusing on the importance of the work. Most concerning is the

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perception from niwâkomâkanak that Executives tend to tow the party line on the surface when in the company of Indigenous colleagues or employees but reveal their real perspectives when there is no Indigenous person in the room. Mâkêsiw (2021) underlined this point,

When the Indigenous person isn't in the room, there are those who feel that they are now more free to speak. Like it's scary. And they don't even recognize what that connotation is when they say that. So you feel more comfortable to express a view that in the presence of an Indigenous person, you wouldn't feel comfortable to express. Now you're putting that on the Indigenous person as making you feel uncomfortable to be able to express that view. (personal communication)

Further, some Executive niwâkomâkanak felt that the Deputy Ministers are paying lip service to Reconciliation and lack the motivation to challenge and change the status quo because there is currently no accountability such as is in place for diversity and inclusion and antiracism.

Building trust with Indigenous employees or Indigenous governments is difficult as a result.

It was generally agreed amongst the Executive niwâkomâkanak that Executives are over-subscribed and overworked with too many priorities resulting in the need to pick and choose what priorities to focus on. The APEX Report further confirmed this. The report found,

The toll of health and mental health of all executives will continue to be very high if we do not tackle workloads of the EX-01's and EX-02's (in particular) head-on. Impacts may be devastating if the conversations with senior management remain one-sided and solutions are not sought, and where the human side of executives is neglected. (p. 24)

While not directly relevant to the thesis question, the next finding raises one interesting aspect.

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Finding #5 - Indigenous Peoples have become an industry both internal and external to the Public Service which acts as a Reconciliation disincentive

Indigenous Peoples have become an industry in Canada for lawyers, consultants, organizations, and public servants as raised by some niwâkomâkanak. While an exciting area for further study, it is not directly related to the overall thesis question, with one exception, the Indigenous industry internal to the Public Service. A few niwâkomâkanak pointed out that public servants profit from career development and promotion because working in areas related to Indigenous Peoples is seen as complex, challenging, and at times are, “sexy files” (Maskwa, 2021, personal communication). I assert this results in Executives and public servants using this work to pad their resumes rather than a genuine desire to support Indigenous Peoples’ journey towards self-determination. Kamâmak (2021), who is external to the Public Service, was quite dismayed by an experience they had with a public servant who had never worked with Indigenous Peoples before and shared how excited they were because this experience would benefit their resume (personal communication). Kamâmak noted that this erodes the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the Public Service because communities and organizations cannot trust the Executives and public servants they are working with. They further noted that when Executives assign individuals who have no experience working with Indigenous Peoples, it conveys that they are not a priority. Niwâkomâkanak shared their experiences working with lawyers and consultants who work for Indigenous communities. For example, they shared details about how one lawyer purchased a plane or organizations that push for funding for themselves rather than recognizing Indigenous governments’ self-determination (Yâpêw & Wapeskwe maskwa, 2021, personal communication).

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If Reconciliation means that Indigenous Peoples attain self-determination, however that may look to each Nation, and increase their internal capacity to take on the work of the lawyers, consultants, and public servants, an industry collapses, and companies, organizations, and individuals lose a source of revenue, jobs, or lose their ability to purchase a private plane. What incentive is there then to achieve Reconciliation if, as a Public Servant, you are working yourself out of a job? For some Executives and public servants, this may contribute to resisting change and reforming the Public Service to enable true Reconciliation. Politicians also influence how public servants address Reconciliation which is the topic of the next finding.

Finding #6 - The political arm of government hinders large-scale and long-term change in the Public Service

While not as many niwâkomâkanak raised politics and politicians as a barrier to Reconciliation, it is worthy to note. As stated previously, Reconciliation is a long-term goal and cannot be achieved in one, two, or five election cycles. It requires long-term commitment and momentum, which the stability of the Public Service “should” provide. However, the elected political party’s agenda establishes Public Service priorities and initiatives, which impacts departmental budget allocations. Several Executives raised the tension between political commitments and what the Public Service can accomplish. Kâkwa (2021) shared that politicians and their political staffers often make promises that the Public Service cannot action, resulting in over-committing and underperforming, further eroding the trust of Indigenous Peoples (personal communication). They asserted that, much like the Public Service, most elected officials are not knowledgeable about the relationship between the Government of Canada and Indigenous Peoples resulting in Cabinet decisions that prevent movement towards Reconciliation. Kâkwa

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noted that new Ministers unfamiliar with the Public Service machinery might also unknowingly make commitments that the Public Service cannot deliver on (personal communication).

Executives also noted a tension between not investing in the areas that would make the most difference for communities and the desire to deliver on political commitments quickly. On the one hand, the Public Service is not investing where needed most and, on the other hand, trying to ram priorities through with no regard to the time it takes to engage meaningfully or co-create with Indigenous Peoples. Again, this goes back to the timing of election cycles and the desire for politicians to be re-elected or deliver on election promises. The Public Service is representative of Canadian society. Therefore, some public servants, at all levels, may not support the political party of the day and, according to some niwâkomâkanak, will resist and delay delivering on political mandates, commitments, or priorities as a result. At the same time, if politicians do not make Reconciliation a priority in their day to day, this has a trickle-down effect on public servants. Why would they make it a priority if the politicians are not? Kâkwa (2021) also observed that the relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada ebbs and flows because of the politicians. For example, National Indigenous Organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations may align themselves with a political party that they think will prioritize Indigenous Peoples (personal communication). An antagonistic relationship with an opposing party can result when they come into power, impacting work in the Public Service related to Indigenous Peoples. The subsequent finding focuses on how findings one to six make for a challenging environment for Indigenous employees.

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Finding #7 - The Public Service is a challenging work environment for Indigenous Executives and employees

The Executive niwâkomâkanak also raised the challenges and difficulties Indigenous Executives and employees face in the Public Service. Many of the points they raised pointed to a lack of inclusion in the Public Service impacting the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees while also eroding the relationship with Indigenous Peoples. In addition to this, Indigenous Executives and employees shared how working in the Public Service impacts their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Many of the Executives I spoke with acknowledged the difficulty Indigenous employees face when working in areas directly related to Indigenous Peoples. As explained in a previous finding, Indigenous employees are often burdened to educate. For example, Kâkâkiw (2021) shared,

I've just had to give seven presentations in the last number of months because I took that one thing on because I found it was a serious barrier. And I find the burden always falls on Indigenous employees to be the educators in the Public Service. (personal communication)

Some niwâkomâkanak shared that Indigenous employees must face the perception that they cannot be objective on work related to Indigenous Peoples. Despite the goal of the Employee Equity Act, they feel questioned about their competency and capacity and are either seen as tokens or feel tokenized. "The problem is the way the Employment Equity Act was implemented created the system of tokens" (Kâkâkiw, 2021, personal communication). Indigenous employees shared their experiences of systemic racism, lateral violence, and micro-aggressions in the

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workplace while at the same time having to manage their intergenerational trauma and shared that they do not feel Executives have the leadership skills to support them or Reconciliation.

In addition, some Indigenous Executives and employees were exposed to ill-informed or colonial discussions in the Public Service. Nikik (2021) noted that they have stopped asking Indigenous employees to attend meetings where these discussions may occur to reduce the trauma (personal communication). Indigenous niwâkomâkanak often have obligations to their communities (for those still connected) while simultaneously navigating the very system that has oppressed their communities, enfranchised many, and tried to eliminate their cultures and languages. All these factors create tension for Indigenous employees. Some Indigenous employees in the Talking Circle noted it is a tension that many Indigenous employees cannot manage. Wînipacâp (2021) shared their experience joining the Public Service through an Indigenous leadership program and noted that some of their colleagues could not transition into the Public Service. For one, it ended tragically through suicide (personal communication). Recently a class action lawsuit was filed by Indigenous employees against Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), with some plaintiffs indicating they have had thoughts of suicide because of their experiences in the Public Service (Ryckewaert, 2021). Clearly, the Public Service has been unable to create a safe environment to work in, which wears individuals down leading to complacency, performance issues, and mental and physical health issues. The Many Voices, One Mind (MVOM) report (2017), which “sought to better understand the challenges and barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples within the Public Service” (Government of Canada, 2020, p. x) confirmed these experiences. Ocêw (2021) stated, “it gives rise to a sense of defeatism in fighting the system and people to do something different and leads to giving up the effort for

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positive change” (personal communication). The findings here are concerning and demonstrate how the other findings contribute to a challenging work environment for Indigenous Executives and employees. The last finding focuses on the Public Services’ relationship with Indigenous governments, Nations, and communities.

Finding #8 - The Public Service has difficulties building trust and relationships with Indigenous governments

The common element that all niwâkomâkanak identified that creates a barrier in the relationship with Indigenous governments is trust or the lack of it on both sides. Indigenous Peoples do not trust the government and the Public Service due to the harmful impacts legislation, policies, and practices have had on the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Many times, Prime Minister Trudeau has stated that “no relationship is more important than the one with Indigenous peoples” (Trudeau, 2017). However, repairing this relationship cannot occur if there is no trust. This lack of trust leads to skepticism on the part of Indigenous governments, Nations, and communities towards the intent of the Public Service.

The niwâkomâkanak I spoke to from outside the Public Service held the perception that Indigenous Peoples are not welcome in the Public Service, particularly in the Executive ranks. Wapiti (2021) felt that Executives think Indigenous governments cannot make their own decisions and manage their affairs (personal communication). They also noted that stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples abound due to an under-educated Public Service as it relates to Indigenous culture, history, and reality. They also felt this ignorance leads to an expectation that Indigenous organizations and communities will conform to the Public Service system and

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operate similarly instead of public servants taking the time to learn and understand Indigenous worldviews and governance structures.

Kamâmak (2021) indicated that assigning public servants with little to no experience working with Indigenous Peoples on Indigenous related work is seen as disrespectful, erodes trust, and indicates the lack of importance the Public Service puts on this work (personal communication). They also noted that communities and organizations, much like Indigenous public servants, feel the burden of educating public servants if they want to make progress on important issues, significantly slowing down progress. Kamâmak remarked that the high turnover rate in the Public Service also erodes that trust as communities and organizations must start all over again to educate and establish relationships with new public servants.

The Executive niwâkomâkanak also raised the perception that there is no incentive for First Nation communities to leave the Indian Act. Kâkâkiw (2021) felt that the Public Service system incentivizes communities to continue with the Indian Act by providing more funding than they would receive through modern treaties and self-government agreements. The concerns raised were because Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) was created to devolve services to the jurisdiction of Indigenous governments. Essentially Executives and other public servants who work for ISC are there to work themselves out of jobs. However, Kâkâkiw (2021) felt that ISC employees are working to hold onto these services rather than devolve them to justify their jobs (personal communication). They argued, “They hold onto the programs that they own with such ferocity; it’s scary. I don’t see anything there for them wanting to get rid of their programs” (personal communication). Finding five also reflects this and the feeling of self-preservation of

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one's position in the Public Service. It could also reflect Wapiti's earlier argument that public servants have a paternalistic view of Indigenous Peoples.

These findings highlighted the many layers present in the Public Service that impact Reconciliation efforts, success, or failure. More importantly, they emphasize how interconnected the findings are to each other and begin to tell the story of why incremental change may not be the most effective Reconciliation path as plucking one strand will reverberate throughout the entire web. Executives have a key role in understanding the public service and the integral part they must play in redesigning it. The next section will focus on the research conclusions.

Study Conclusions

Each niwâkomâkanak shared much data. Therefore, I have reached eight conclusions based on the literature review and what they shared. The conclusions are as follows:

1. Executives set the tone and culture of the Public Service; therefore, they play a crucial role in prioritizing meaningful Reconciliation actions;
2. The Public Service system cannot effectively address large-scale complex problems such as Reconciliation due to its current structure;
3. Clear direction is needed by the Center, specifically the Clerk of the Privy Council, to Deputy Ministers across Departments for a consistent prioritization of Reconciliation;
4. The meaning of decolonization is static and is a non-politicized process;
5. Decolonization of the 150-year-old plus colonial system is a necessary step towards meaningful and true Reconciliation;
6. Reconciliation has been politicized;

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7. Culture change requires utilizing change management strategies, new leadership skills, and becoming comfortable with experimentation and taking risks; and,
8. Normalizing using two-eyed seeing will create a shift in the perception of public servants at all levels regarding Indigenous Peoples.

Conclusion #1 - Executives set the tone and culture of the Public Service; therefore, they play a crucial role in prioritizing meaningful Reconciliation actions

The literature review confirmed much of what was shared by niwâkomâkanak regarding the Executive role in the Public Service. The higher the level of Executive, the more influence an individual has on the system and the organizational culture. The hierarchical nature of the Public Service also provides a high degree of authority on individual Executives. As niwâkomâkanak noted, situations occur where one Executive can be either a barrier to progress or a catalyst for change. Those lower on the organizational chart look to Executives to set priorities, allocate resources, and provide direction. Executives, as positional leaders, are also responsible for modelling expected behaviours. In other words, employees take their guidance from Executives.

No Executive plays a more pivotal role than that of the Clerk of the Privy Council and Deputy Ministers of each Department. The system is impacted if these individuals do not prioritize an initiative or demonstrate the leadership skills required to address complex problems. As noted in Chapter two, a Deputy Minister who does not create the space for fearless advice and expects only loyal implementation will have this behaviour reverberate throughout a Department, and results in a culture that maintains the status quo unless otherwise encouraged by the Deputy Minister.

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Conclusion #2 - The Public Service system cannot effectively address large-scale complex problems such as Reconciliation due to its current structure

In Chapter two, I explained some of the shortcomings of the Public Service designed on the Westminster style, making it ill-equipped to address large-scale complex problems.

Niwâkomâkanak, particularly Executives, used language that confirmed this input. They showed a preference for incremental change in the Public Service, sharing that the palatability of incremental change is more acceptable and easier than large-scale change. I argue that the system is antiquated and has seen few substantial structural changes over generations. Andrew Caddell (2022) recently published an editorial in *The Hill Times*. He noted,

The Glassco Commission reported in 1962 and suggested government ‘let managers manage.’ It proposed dismantling central agency controls over the day-to-day administration of departments and giving managers discretion to manage within a framework of guidance and accountability. Of course, that did not come to be, as government became more centralized from Pierre Trudeau onwards. (para. 10)

Sadly, the Glassco Commission found similar challenges in the Public Service that present-day scholars have also underlined, as presented in Chapter two. Unfortunately, this signals how little structural change has occurred over the past 60 years. Instead, it highlights the centralization of control while further entrenching the hierarchical nature of decision making. It has been 43 years since the last critical analysis of the Public Service was completed and 60 years since the Glassco Commission. Caddell further noted that there had been no recent studies on the Public Service; the previous study was the Lambert Commission in 1979 and argued “the actual machinery of government has ceased to function” (para. 5).

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The private sector over the decades has been an excellent area of study regarding innovative organizational structures designed to meet the needs of current realities. The private sector can be more nimble and take risks experimenting with new organizational structures and culture changes. The Public Service can learn much from Private Sector examples. Many scholars have demonstrated that flatter organizations that create the conditions for experimentation and innovation have increased productivity. Leaders in these organizations also utilize the skills of emerging leadership theories such as distributed leadership, transformational leadership, and human-centred leadership to increase employee satisfaction, further increasing productivity. Like any organization, the Public Service has evolved; however, the rate of evolution has not kept up with changes in society and has effectively maintained the same colonial system since its inception.

Conclusion #3 - Clear direction is needed by the Clerk of the Privy Council, to Deputy Ministers across Departments for a consistent prioritization of Reconciliation

The Public Service has 206 departments, agencies, crown corporations and special operating agencies and over 300,000 employees, making coordination across government extremely difficult. However, that is one of the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Privy Council Office, and the Treasury Board's roles. The Clerk holds the highest leadership position in the Public Service before reaching the political arm and has the positional authority to direct all 206 entities that make up the Public Service. While the Clerk has delivered a Call to Action on diversity and inclusion, they have yet to deliver a Call to Action on Reconciliation, leading to

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inconsistent approaches and investments for this work despite it being a political priority in every Minister's mandate letter.

Based on the investment of resources, the numerous panels and events, the mandatory subconscious bias training for Executives, the Clerk can bring departments together in a coordinated fashion if the motivation is there while still providing the flexibility for autonomy. The Clerk's Call to Action on diversity and inclusion raised the priority level of this work, making it one of the central priorities of all government departments, agencies, crown corporations, and special operating agencies. I do not know why Reconciliation has not received the same level of care. The Call to Action has also served to make diversity and inclusion a Public Service priority rather than a political priority, as all social justice initiatives should be. Reconciliation should not be any different. Instead, it has become a politicized initiative rather than non-partisan at the cost of Indigenous Peoples.

Conclusion #4 - The meaning of decolonization is static and is a non-politicized process

When considering the frequency of language use, decolonization is used less frequently than Reconciliation in the Public Service, nor is it regularly used by Executives, likely because Parliament has driven the Reconciliation narrative. In contrast, decolonization appears to be the narrative of Indigenous scholars and grassroots activists. Therefore, decolonization has become more of an intellectual and grassroots pursuit with numerous variations to its meaning; however, it has at its foundation similarities across those definitions.

I mused earlier whether these two actions exist in opposition to each other. Through this research, I have concluded that Reconciliation cannot occur without decolonization. However, decolonization can exist without Reconciliation. Reconciliation will not happen until the Public

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Service undertakes a decolonizing process. Until the systemic issues are addressed, Reconciliation will continue to be performative and symbolic. As it is presently, Reconciliation allows Canada the appearance of reparation while maintaining the colonial status quo. Initiatives such as diversity and inclusion and antiracism further entrench the colonial status quo because they fail to recognize this colonial framework and decenter Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty in these narratives.

Conclusion #5 – Decolonization of the 150-year-old plus colonial system is a necessary step towards meaningful and true Reconciliation

If the leaders in the Public Service are genuine in their commitment to Reconciliation, the decolonization of the Public Service is a necessary step. Based on what was shared by niwâkomâkanak, the decolonization of Executive thinking is the first step towards a large-scale decolonization effort. The experiences shared by niwâkomâkanak demonstrate that the Public Service has a long way to go in this regard. All Executives, from the Clerk to the Directors, need more profound educational experiences than what is currently provided by the Canada School of Public Services Indigenous Learning Series. Increasing the cultural competencies of Executives provides them with the understanding and capacity to shift the Public Service culture. As well, it provides them with the ability to analyze the Public Service system critically.

The Public Service system is antiquated and 60 years overdue for significant restructuring. As Caddell (2022) argued, “a reworking of the public service is long overdue” (para. 13). Given this, what better time to reinvent the Public Service? Reinventing the Public Service ensures that public servants can meet the needs of all Canadians equitably. Undertaking a decolonization process while also addressing all of the other flaws of the system could ensure

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this. The Public Service is not equipped to respond to today's demands. Either the will is not there, or it is simply not nimble and flexible enough. Tweaks and band-aid solutions are not meeting the modern challenges the Public Service faces; as a result, it needs a complete overhaul. There is no better time to decolonize it than during a reinvention.

Conclusion #6 - Reconciliation has been politicized

As noted under conclusion four, the politicization of Reconciliation means politicians are driving the narrative of Reconciliation in the Public Service. While Reconciliation is a priority, it has not become a priority in the true sense of the word in the Public Service, not in the way that antiracism and diversity and inclusions initiatives have been. Achieving Reconciliation will not happen in accordance with election cycles. Nor should it be used as a political ploy to gain votes as was done in the previous election. For example, Mike Blanchfield (2021) wrote, "Singh made the campaign's first stop in an Indigenous community with a visit to the Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan, which announced in June a preliminary finding of 751 unmarked graves at the location of a former residential school" (para. 2). While Amanda Coletta (2021) quoted Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond as saying, "It is a conundrum of Canadian politics that virtue signaling is one of our favorite stances and global exports, while the meaningful work with Indigenous peoples lags with an intransigent bureaucracy" (para. 16). It is a human rights issue that requires sustained effort and investment. Reconciliation should be a non-partisan initiative undertaken in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Reconciliation requires the whole-scale change of the way the Public Service operates.

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Conclusion #7 - Culture change requires utilizing change management strategies, new leadership skills, and becoming comfortable with experimentation and taking risks

The literature and the stories shared by niwâkomâkanak demonstrate that the current culture is not conducive to successful Reconciliation actions, and Executives are not equipped with the skills and knowledge to enact a culture change that better supports Reconciliation and other social justice initiatives. The culture of the Public Service supports the current organizational structure of the system, further demonstrating the interconnectedness of the relationships in the system. It explains why the culture does not effectively support Reconciliation because it continues to support a colonial foundation.

Additionally, as explained in Chapter two, Executives' use of emerging leadership theories is not the norm. Somewhat more traditional leadership methods make up the Executive subculture. As a result, Executives are not equipped to lead large-scale changes, nor can they support the unique needs of Indigenous employees and Indigenous Peoples in general. As the APEX Report (2021) surmised, the culture leads with fear. These cultures are stereotypical Western in nature with mechanistic and linear thinking, characteristics ill-suited for today's complex problems like Reconciliation. While Public Service leadership programs such as the one I participated in, the Aboriginal Leadership Development Initiative, teach new emerging leadership culture, you quickly learn that the Executive culture does not support new leadership theory. Nor does it leave room for non-Western leadership theories or practices such as Indigenous leadership. The Executive key leadership competencies and the Public Service Executive services' theories are based on Western concepts (Government of Canada, 2016). It is little wonder then that there is little room for non-Western leadership theories. The literature was

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clear on what leadership skills are best suited for transformational change, such as human-centred leadership, change leadership, transformational leadership, trauma-informed leadership, Indigenous leadership and knowledges, and systems thinking. Skills and practices that are sorely lacking amongst Executives.

Further, experimentation, innovation, and taking risks are not encouraged in the current cultures despite indications otherwise, as was demonstrated by both niwâkomâkanak and the literature. These factors afflicting the Public Service culture and the Executive subculture make it difficult to enact large-scale change management actions. Therefore, I contend that Reconciliation, in many ways, is a change management exercise that requires strong leadership to ensure a successful transition from the old-world order to the new, as noted in Chapter two.

Conclusion #8 - Normalizing using two-eyed seeing will create a shift in the perception of public servants at all levels regarding Indigenous Peoples

As I stated in conclusions four and five, if the government and the Public Service are authentic in their Reconciliation efforts, decolonizing the Public Service is necessary. Part of decolonization is introducing and normalizing non-Western knowledges into the Public Service. Indigenous knowledges see the world through a different lens than Western knowledge. In chapter two, I demonstrated that the Western world has much to learn from Indigenous knowledges in many ways. In Western knowledge, many of the new and emerging theories align closely with Indigenous knowledges. Rather than colonize Indigenous knowledges by Westernizing them, decolonization occurs when acknowledged in their own right. The co-existence of Indigenous knowledges and Western knowledge in the Public Service would act as a catalyst for culture change as it would normalize the use of the most appropriate knowledge,

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behaviour, and practices for a given situation or problem. For example, normalizing the use of 7 generation thinking by all public servants, particularly Executives, would lead to a shift in the Public Service.

Shifting the culture also leads to individuals shifting their thinking, combined with deeper learning about Indigenous Peoples changes individual behaviour, subsequently influencing those around them. Change can happen organically in this way, and government and the Public Service are catalysts for culture change in Canadian society. The use of seatbelts is a good example of this. In the 70s provincial governments began passing legislation making it mandatory to use seatbelts in vehicles. Journalist John Zazula (2016) cited CBC's Bill Lain's interview with one Albertan who said, "I don't believe that anybody should tell me what the hell I have to do" (para. 2). While there was resistance from some, over time it created a shift in behaviour by Canadian drivers and normalized seatbelt wearing behaviour. For the most part, Canada has a seatbelt-wearing culture. Seatbelt laws are merely a small example of how governments and the public sector lead cultural shifts in society. It underlines the critical role Executives play in creating the environment for a culture shift in the Public Service. Normalizing the use of Indigenous knowledges in leadership, decision-making, and policy development by Executives is an essential step.

Scope and Limitations of Study Inquiry

Reconciliation is a complex problem that requires many actions for success. Given the broadness of the topic, it was necessary to narrow the scope of the research. This research focused on Public Service Executives' role in creating an environment conducive for breaking down colonial practices in the Public Service to support Reconciliation actions. The intention

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was not to repeat other reports such as the RCAP, the TRC, or the MVOM, nor was it intended to repeat other academic studies on Reconciliation.

Several factors limited niwâkomâkanak participation in the study, which I found somewhat challenging to overcome; for example, Executive niwâkomâkanak availability was limited due to their hectic schedules. In addition, I was conducting my field research when Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc announced the recovery of potential unmarked gravesites on the land near the Kamloops Indian Residential School, and there was a federal election. These events made it challenging to recruit external niwâkomâkanak as these two events occupied many individuals' time. There are also limitations for applying the research findings, particularly the willingness and commitment of Public Service Executives to implement the recommendations, the availability of funding and employees to support the implementation, and the overall motivation to undertake large-scale changes that requires a long-term commitment.

Fortunately, I did not experience any significant irregularities in my research. However, I did have a couple of technical issues with two storytelling sessions, for which I did not record one session correctly and lost the recording of another session. This mishap did not impact the research as much of what was shared was also shared by others. However, in retrospect, I should have ensured the technology was working correctly prior to commencing the sessions.

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Chapter 5: Inquiry Implications

Embodying wâkôtowin means that one must understand their role in the system and understand the system. With this comes the responsibility to ensure your actions do not negatively impact the system, the relationships in the system, and look to the future. Therefore, the circle would not be complete if recommendations for improving the system were not provided. It is also important to outline the potential impacts of implementation while also exploring areas for future research. Much like the research findings and conclusions, I have put forward eight recommendations.

As a reminder, the thesis question I have attempted to answer is: how might Federal Public Service Executives support Canada's Reconciliation efforts by identifying and deconstructing colonized practices in the Public Service? I also had three sub-questions:

- What does “decolonization” mean, and is there a place for it in the Federal Public Service?
- How might we affect change towards Reconciliation while changing the system to make it less “colonial”?
- How might we create a cultural shift in the Public Service regarding Reconciliation and public servant perception and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples?

Study Recommendations

Niwâkomâkanak and the literature review provided many recommendations. Therefore, I have attempted to highlight only those fundamental to the thesis question and the sub-questions.

I have narrowed down the research recommendations as follows:

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1. The education of Executives on Indigenous culture and history requires a more robust strategy that also includes experiential learning;
2. A Public Service system reform to the hierarchical and colonial structure is needed to address today's complex issues such as Reconciliation;
3. Release a Reconciliation Call to Action by the Clerk of the Privy Council that includes Executive accountability to Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees;
4. Executives need to action a culture shift that encourages the disruption of the status quo, colonialism in the Public Service;
5. Public Service Executives need to develop and utilize new leadership skills, which include both non-Western and Western theory which support long-term and complex change such as Reconciliation;
6. The Public Service needs to begin the process of decolonization to create a truly inclusive working environment for Indigenous Executives and employees starting with antiracism and diversity and inclusion initiatives in the Public Service;
7. To build trust and improve the relationship with Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees, the Public Service needs to implement conclusions #1 through #6; and,
8. Separate Reconciliation from the political arm of government to ensure its non-partisanship, long-term investment, and commitment in the Public Service.

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Recommendation #1 – The education of Executives on Indigenous culture and history requires a more robust strategy that also includes experiential learning

Overall, Departments need to have a comprehensive strategy for fully implementing the TRC Call to Action #57. What specifically stood out is the need to educate public servants on their obligations to Indigenous Peoples and the public service's role in colonialism and systemic racism. Niwâkomâkanak generally agreed that Executives require a high level of cultural competency, which the current CSPA course curriculum cannot provide. The deeper learning can only be gained by spending time in communities, on the land, and dialoguing with community members, leaders, and Elders. Niwâkomâkanak recommended that Executives spend time in Indigenous communities talking to community members, Elders, viewing the conditions of homes, schools, infrastructure to appreciate the realities that Indigenous Peoples face every day. A high level of cultural competency would help create a safe work environment for Indigenous employees while enabling Executives to support Indigenous employees and Indigenous Peoples in general. One niwâkomâkanak suggested creating cultural competency levels, and the position an individual occupies would dictate what level of cultural competency is required.

In addition to cultural competency, Executives need to understand the constitutional framework of Canada, including their obligations under Section 35 (Government of Canada, 2022). This knowledge extends to fully understanding and meeting the Public Service's legal obligations to Indigenous Peoples. Executives have very charged schedules; however, if Reconciliation is a government priority, the investment in time is required. Non-Indigenous Executives need to learn, understand, and adopt two-eyed seeing to understand Indigenous

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worldviews and the potential impacts resulting from Western-centric thinking and normalize the utilization of Indigenous knowledges in the Public Service.

The bottom line is that education needs to go beyond awareness to understanding and action. Education of Executives is the foundational step for all Reconciliation and decolonization actions. Executives are the key ingredient in changing the Public Service system.

Recommendation #2 - A Public Service system reform to the hierarchical and colonial structure is needed to address today's complex issues such as Reconciliation

As there have been no studies of the Public Service since the Lambert Commission in 1979 (Government of Canada, 2013), it is well overdue for one. In chapter two, I explained that the current model of the Public Service is not equipped to tackle complex and large-scale change needed for Reconciliation. Therefore, I propose that the Public Service requires a structural reform to address its colonial foundation and overly hierarchical nature.

Most niwâkomâkanak recommended that the most impactful areas to focus change are the Central Agencies and the Departments of Finance and Justice. Niwâkomâkanak shared their belief that these areas are the most resistant to change and Reconciliation efforts. In Chapter two, I noted that Central Agencies have a central function as the hubs of the Public Service; therefore, they are critical departments that require systemic change. Undertaking systemic change in a phased approach by tackling these departments first will enable the Public Service to experiment, take risks, and learn, which can then be applied to the rest of the Public Service. It may also be more palatable to politicians, Canadians, and public servants.

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Recommendation #3 – Release a Reconciliation Call to Action by the Clerk of the Privy Council that includes Executive accountability to Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees

Structural reform takes time, and Reconciliation actions need to continue simultaneously while undertaking system changes. Therefore, I recommend that the Clerk of the Privy Council release a Reconciliation Call to Action that includes Executive accountability to Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees. Department heads would also be required to report on their Reconciliation actions and commitments annually.

Further, Wînipacâp (2021) recommended the creation of a Reconciliation Ombudsperson. Building upon this, I recommend creating a Center of Expertise (COE) on Reconciliation. The COE on Reconciliation could support Reconciliation efforts government-wide to ensure coordination and sharing of best practices and lessons learned. An Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak recommended creating a shared Reconciliation vision or distinctions-based visions. The COE on Reconciliation could take on this task co-developing it with Indigenous Peoples.

Part of the Clerk's Call to Action could also include directing TBS to incorporate accountability measures into Executive performance agreements and key leadership competencies. Taking this further, TBS could initiate negotiations with Unions to include Reconciliation language in the collective agreements, which the province of British Columbia is exploring (Pôsis, 2021, personal communication). Niwâkomâkanak raised the lack of accountability to Indigenous Peoples. Putting these recommendations in place would ensure increased accountability amongst Executives for Reconciliation, including eliminating their

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colonial perspectives and personal biases, which may hinder progress. Executive niwâkomâkanak agreed that without incentives or disincentives for Executives, Reconciliation is not likely to be the priority it is meant to be.

Finally, TBS requires its own accountability. For example, Mâkêsiw (2021) argued that developing policy in the Public Service needs to be examined, particularly policy that potentially impacts Indigenous Peoples (personal communication). However, that requires TBS, as Paskowimostos (2021) noted, to get out of their boxes, engage with Indigenous Peoples directly and needs to “get out there sincerely and authentically at all levels” (personal communication). In this way, reformation of policy development would also recognize the actual nation-to-nation relationship government has with Indigenous Peoples by developing policy in partnership.

Recommendation #4 - Executives need to action a culture shift that encourages the disruption of the status quo and colonialism in the Public Service

Both the literature and niwâkomâkanak demonstrated that there is a distinct Public Service culture as well as an Executive subculture. Executive niwâkomâkanak acknowledged this subculture, and many argued it needs to change. The desired Executive culture was described as one that rewards challenging the status quo, promotes change, encourages fearless advice, is supportive, transparent, inclusive, and encourages experimentation. Many of these are key ingredients for developing what Senge (2006) described as a learning organization. It is a culture that empowers public servants to voice their perspectives and recommendations and encourages grassroots-level change. It is a culture of accountability that integrates Reconciliation into all aspects of Executive-level work, which Recommendation three would address. It is a culture that provides the support and space for Executives to take the time to learn about

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Indigenous Peoples, to meet them where they are, and to have the space to make Reconciliation a priority. An Executive learning culture does not view failure as a negative outcome but rather an opportunity to take risks, learn and improve. Areas such as human resources, finance, and legal also have a significant role in a culture shift by supporting Executives in exercising the flexibility that their delegated authorities provide instead of trying to limit those flexibilities.

Further, a culture shift would include culturally appropriate support services for Indigenous employees with an Elder Advisory Circle in each department and agency. An Elder Advisory Circle could not only support Executives and employees with coaching but also become a part of the decision-making process on decisions impacting Indigenous Peoples as recommended by Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak. These actions, if implemented, would shift both the Executive subculture and the Public Service culture and would help smooth the way for recommendation two.

Recommendation #5 - Public Service Executives need to develop and utilize new leadership skills which include both non-Western and Western theory

In chapter two, I demonstrated that traditional leadership styles dominate the Public Service, do not effectively support large-scale change, and do not equip Executives with the leadership skills to meet today's complex problems. Therefore, I recommend that Executives develop and utilize new leadership skills, including both non-Western and Western leadership theories. Executive niwâkomâkanak noted that leaders in the Public Service must lead by example, including the type of leadership styles encouraged in the organization. Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak stated more substantial efforts on anti-racism and teaching new leadership skills to Executives are required. Based on chapter two and niwâkomâkanak input,

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leadership styles that are the most effective for transformational change, meeting modern complexities, and encouraging a supportive culture include transformational, change, paradoxical, trauma-informed, and human-centred leadership, as well as systems thinking. Moving away from the more traditional leadership styles would better support employees in the Public Service; they also provide Executives with the most appropriate skills to undertake transformational systems and culture change.

Further, to support the decolonization of the Public Service, Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak shared that they would like to see the co-existence of Indigenous leadership styles and qualities. Characteristics such as collective decision making, distributed leadership, and seven-generation thinking are just a few qualities described in chapter two. Also described was the connection to culture and ceremony as important Indigenous leadership qualities. While non-Indigenous Executives would not be able to appropriate Indigenous culture or ceremony, they could help normalize it by supporting and encouraging their Indigenous Executive colleagues by participating in cultural and ceremonial practices when appropriate. In addition, non-Indigenous Executives would expand their cultural competency literacy by learning and utilizing Indigenous leadership qualities and practicing two-eyed seeing. Finally, normalizing the co-existence of non-Western and Western leadership knowledges is also a decolonizing act that would contribute to recommendation six.

Recommendation #6 – The Public Service needs to begin the process of decolonization to eliminate the system’s colonial foundation

The process of decolonization will be complex in such an extensive system as the Public Service; however, if government is authentic in prioritizing Reconciliation, decolonizing the

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Public Service must occur. Many of the recommendations outlined contribute to the decolonization of the Public Service. I would argue that applying a decolonizing lens to the implementation of the UNDRIPA and the TRC's Calls to Action will begin the decolonization process of the Public Service. Decolonization, like Reconciliation, must occur by centering Indigenous voices and can only occur in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. I will outline one example where decolonization is sorely needed, which the majority of niwâkomâkanak raised, Public Service human resources policies and practices.

Decolonizing Public Service human resources could include such activities as co-developed recruitment and retention strategies that involve Indigenous employees and Indigenous Peoples external to the Public Service. Co-developing culturally appropriate strategies take a holistic, community-based view that encompasses the entire lifecycle of an Indigenous employee from recruitment, retention, development, promotion to retirement. For example, human resource Executives with high levels of cultural competency gained from the implementation of recommendation one would understand why capacity gaps exist for Indigenous employees. They would also recognize the need for direct support and coaching for potential Indigenous hires on the government staffing process, which does not reflect Indigenous culture or perspectives. Better yet, Executives in Human Resources would address the capacity gaps and examine the entire hiring process cycle, address the policy, and process barriers, and create a culturally appropriate and more inclusive process. One model which could also be adopted for First Nations and Metis is Pilimmaksaivik which is a Federal Centre of Excellence for Inuit Employment in Nunavut, created in response to Canada's obligations under the Nunavut Agreement (Government of Canada, 2021).

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The current staffing process reflects Western human resource practices and values which have been noted as a barrier in the MVOM Report (Government of Canada, 2020) and repeated by Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak. Decolonizing the staffing process could result in a completely new way to promote employees. For example, one Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak, recommended promotion through Indigenous mentorship programs where mentors groom Indigenous employees to take over their position. Paskowimostos (2021) also raised a similar idea, suggesting incumbent-based promotion based on applying to move to the next level rather than applying to a particular position (personal communication). Promoting this way better reflects how Indigenous Peoples traditionally gain their roles in a community through apprenticeships with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Healers, and community leaders. Revising education criteria to recognize other forms of learning outside the Western academic worldview is another decolonizing action. Indigenous employee niwâkomâkanak would like lived experience recognized as an education criterion. One example put forward was recognizing two years of lived experience working for an Indigenous Nation, community, or government as equivalent to a Master's degree.

Indigenous employees want to see themselves reflected in the Executive ranks. For example, one Indigenous employee noted that they prefer to have an Indigenous manager or Director to report to because they understand and “get it” (personal communication). To prepare Indigenous employees for Executive roles reviving and investing in Public Service Indigenous Executive programs such as the Aboriginal Leadership Development Initiative could be one way to prepare Indigenous employees for Executive roles in a culturally appropriate manner.

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Human resource policies and practices are one of many areas in the Public Service that need to be decolonized. Implementing recommendation six and recommendations one to five begin to create a Public Service that Indigenous Peoples can trust, which is the following recommendation.

Recommendation #7 – To build trust and improve the relationship with Indigenous Peoples the Public Service needs to implement conclusions #1 through #6

Niwâkomâkanak raised issues of trust, also outlined in Chapter four. The lack of trust has been due to historical and current decisions, which have had negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples, resulting in a fractured relationship. A central theme to the TRC's definition of Reconciliation was relationships. Implementing recommendations one through seven would do much to begin repairing the relationship between government and Indigenous Peoples. It would demonstrate the commitment and authenticity of government in its Reconciliation efforts. Of course, these recommendations cannot be implemented without Indigenous Peoples, whether they be Indigenous employees or Indigenous Nations, communities, or governments.

Niwâkomâkanak noted that co-development is a way to overcome the colonial barriers present in the system and normalizing co-development as a standard practice as opposed to an anomaly. There are already many examples of co-development to model, such as the self-government fiscal policy, the child and family services legislation, or the U.S./Canada/Akwesasne border agreement (Government of Canada, 2019 & 2022; Hale, 2020). These should not be exceptions to the rule of precedents; they should be the norm. Implementing the recommendations presented in this paper would create the conditions for repairing relationships in a decolonial system, thereby increasing trust. A decolonial Public Service would recognize that, as some

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niwâkomâkanak raised, internal operations and the fiscal calendar need to adjust to Indigenous reality instead of expecting Indigenous governments to conform to the Western fiscal calendar.

Kâkâkiw (2021) raised an important point in the Executive Talking Circle.

Reconciliation, co-development, and other initiatives cannot be forced on communities; they need to be equal partners in this work (personal communication). According to some niwâkomâkanak, the Public Service needs to rebuild and maintain the trust of Indigenous Peoples by working as one government and focusing more on the relationship than on the outcomes and outputs. A Reconciliation Ombudsperson or Centre of Expertise could serve this function in addition to the other activities outlined in recommendation three. Prioritizing the work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples is essential to focus limited resources and capacity on both sides, resulting in the most impactful changes.

Recommendation #8 – Separate Reconciliation from the political arm of government to ensure it is non-partisan and receives long-term investment and commitment in the Public Service

Many scholars have argued that Reconciliation has become politicized, resulting in mainly performative actions instead of systemic actions. As a result, many question its authenticity and usefulness. Firmly embedding Reconciliation into the Public Service could be a means to turn it into a non-partisan goal that is not dependent on election cycles and political support. Of course, political support is needed; however, it should not be the driver. Perhaps it would also have the unintended consequence of reducing the tension between politicians, political commitments, and Public Service delivery.

Finally, some niwâkomâkanak felt that large-scale change is possible in the Public Service when there is political will. I beg to differ. Suppose the Public Service undertook the

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hard work of implementing these recommendations. In that case, I believe a reformed Public Service system could support large-scale, transformational change even in the absence of political will. Further, I have observed that when there is a need for large-scale change resulting from political direction or unanticipated emergencies such as Covid, the Public Service finds workarounds in the system to make it work. Unfortunately, these workarounds often address the symptoms of the problem rather than the problem itself (Louie, 2021), which is the system.

The recommendations presented have been chosen because they would have the most positive impact and demonstrate the Public Service's commitment to Reconciliation; however, the recommendations are not inclusive of all the recommendations shared by niwâkomâkanak. In the next section, I will be discussing the organizational implications of the research.

Organizational Implications

In this section, I will discuss how niwâkomâkanak and the organizational partner were engaged in the findings and recommendations, what actions may be taken, what the research means to the Public Service, the challenges in implementation, and implications if not implemented.

Executive niwâkomâkanak and the organizational partner were provided with the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for their review and feedback. The wording and content were adjusted accordingly. There was no apparent disagreement; instead, suggestions were made to strengthen wording, suggesting examples of areas of success and prioritization of the recommendations. I chose to engage with only Executive niwâkomâkanak for two reasons: (1) the Executives are the most implicated by this research, and (2) due to timing, I had to narrow down the final engagement to accommodate the thesis deadlines.

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However, I do intend to share the final thesis with all niwâkomâkanak. I did not undertake a “make-it-happen” session with Executive niwâkomâkanak due to their heavy workloads and instead provided the information via email. Throughout this process, Executive niwâkomâkanak have shown a keen interest in the research outcome and the actions to be taken by themselves and their Executive colleagues.

There are already many actions in progress in the Public Service related to Reconciliation to implement the TRC Calls to Action, MMIWG Calls to Justice and the MVOM Report. I have tried to build upon these recommendations and add new thoughts and actions, which Executives specifically can implement. For example, the education of Public Servants per the TRC Call to Action #57 is underway; however, as demonstrated in Chapter four, it is insufficient. Leadership training has been offered to Executives for decades; however, it has focused on Western leadership theory, has not been delivered from a decolonized lens, and does not include Indigenous leadership theory. Departments are working on building trust and strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples; however, it is not consistent across departments. Similarly, the implementation of the MVOM Report recommendations has not been consistent. While the recommendations have not been actioned yet, the organizational partner has recommended several fora where this information can take root. For example, the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) has an opportunity to action recommendations one, five, and six. APEX may be interested in recommendations one, two, four, five, and six. The Institute of Governance may be interested in the entire paper, and departments heavily focused on policy development are likely to be less resistant to the recommendations. However, it is equally essential that the Office of the Privy Council and the Treasury Board are made aware of the

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paper. The organizational partner has committed to supporting the dissemination of this information to the various fora, which will either be interested or need to be made aware of the research. An interdepartmental working group on Reconciliation asked that I present the findings to members, which could lead to additional presentation requests in the Public Service.

Additionally, other Deputy Minister allies and Executive niwâkomâkanak may be able to raise awareness of the research amongst their peers.

The research findings and recommendations implicate the entire Public Service, not just a particular department or agency. Reconciliation continues to be a political priority as outlined in the Minister mandate letters (Trudeau, 2015, 2019 & 2021); however, this is an opportunity for the Clerk of the Privy Council to make Reconciliation a Public Service priority, not just a political priority. Many departments and agencies are developing strategies for Reconciliation; however, it continues to be an uncoordinated effort across the Public Service. Therefore, this research is timely and needed as it could allow departments and agencies to course-correct their efforts if necessary and reconsider their actions. Most importantly, recommendation three would coordinate the efforts taken thus far and bring more accountability and attention to the effort. Many niwâkomâkanak had shared that they felt many Executives were paying lip service to Reconciliation efforts. Implementing the recommendations of this paper would effectively eliminate this challenge ensuring all Executives take Reconciliation seriously. As the Public Service prepares for the implementation of the UNDRIPA, continues to implement the TRC Calls to Action, the MMIWG Calls to Justice, and the MVOM Report, these recommendations will help build a foundation that will support their successful implementation.

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Executives can action some of these recommendations relatively quickly, while others like recommendation six are long-term change management exercises. Short-term and long-term changes are critical to ensure long-term sustained commitment. The success of short-term changes motivates sustained effort over the long term and provides an opportunity to celebrate success along the way to the long-term goal. The recommendations require financial and human resource investment that will likely result in resistance by some in the system. Direction from the Clerk of the Privy Council could alleviate any resistance by using the hierarchical nature of the Public Service to advantage with clear direction to all departments. However, the reality is that there are limited resources and capacity available; therefore, it is critical to work with Indigenous Peoples to prioritize the recommendations as noted in the previous section.

Should the recommendations not be implemented, the barriers described in Chapter 4 will continue to plague the Public Service making Reconciliation impossible. As noted previously, Executives, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, are the key to Reconciliation success in the Public Service because they set the tone and culture in the organization. Executives have positional authority; as a result, their sphere of influence is large and gets more significant the higher an Executive is. It is time for Executives to become the leaders they are meant to be, exert their influence on the Public Service system and create the transformational change needed to bring the Public Service into the modern age. Executives are instrumental in creating a Public Service system and culture that can effectively address today's complex problems like Reconciliation.

The Clerk of the Privy Council also has the honour of being the most senior leader in the Public Service. Therefore, the Clerk's sphere of influence is the entire Public Service. Without

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clear direction from the Clerk, Reconciliation efforts will continue to be piecemeal, inconsistent, and uncoordinated leading to check box exercises and the duplication of effort across departments and agencies, further eroding the relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

Reconciliation has been a government priority since 2015; it is time it truly became one in action and not just in words.

For myself, I do not know what my role will be. I do not know if I will have a direct role in Reconciliation if I leave my current position. I do not know if my sphere of influence will increase due to this research, and I do not know if I will remain a Public Servant. Regardless of what the future holds, I will continue to advocate for: (1) an equitable system, (2) an inclusive culture, (3) the co-existence of Indigenous knowledges, (4) the education of Public Servants about Indigenous Peoples, and (5) the decolonization of the Public Service. Due to the limitations of my thesis question, I was not able to explore many exciting findings. In the next section, I will briefly address areas that could benefit from further research.

Implications for Future Inquiry

Many findings were beyond the scope of this research, and further research in these areas could lead to exciting results and contribute to the growing body of Indigenous academic research. This section will highlight three topics I believe could benefit from a research study. The experiences of Indigenous women Executives in the Public Service were an interesting finding demonstrating the intersectionality that they must navigate, which Indigenous men do not due to a system that men built for men. Maskwa (2021) spoke in detail about the lack of support when dealing with very challenging issues (personal communication). They spoke to micro-aggressions they experienced from their colleagues and superiors, the lateral violence

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experienced by male Indigenous leaders, being silenced when questioning unfair processes, and the lack of recognition when something was done well. A study conducted through an Indigenous feminist lens on the experiences of Indigenous women in the Public Service could highlight unique barriers only faced by this population, lead to a better understanding of their experiences, and lead to unique strategies to resolve the challenges they face.

Finding five highlighted the fact that Indigenous Peoples have become an industry both in the Public Service and the Private Sector. Yâpêw (2021) was particularly concerned about Indigenous communities' reliance on outside lawyers and consultants and recommended that the Public Service do more to support the education and training of Indigenous governments to reduce this external Indigenous industry of specialists (personal communication). Conducting further research on the Indigenous industry could lead to a better understanding of why resistance to Reconciliation exists within the dominant society, what areas of investment are needed in Indigenous Nations, governments, and communities to reduce their reliance on lawyers, consultants, and specialists, and why investment is suitable for all Canadians. This research could also include the role of Indigenous institutions in building capacity, or it could be a stand-alone research project. Nikik (2021) was a strong proponent of institution building and argued that creating Indigenous institutions through legislation could be an effective way to support smaller communities that lack capacity, thus reducing the reliance on non-Indigenous “experts” and providing an effective way to transfer services from Indigenous Services Canada to Indigenous governments (personal communication).

Finally, should Executives and the Public Service take on the challenge of decolonizing the Public Service system, a study on the process, progress, successes, failures and realized

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outcomes could support the decolonization process and provide a road map for decolonization efforts in other Public Sectors both in Canada and internationally.

Conclusion

In this paper I attempted to provide a Reconciliation path for Federal Public Service Executives to follow to begin the process of deconstructing the colonial processes in the system. This includes transforming the system itself. In using Indigenous methodology and Indigenous methods I hoped to conduct the research through an Indigenous lens. However, I also felt it was necessary to utilize two-eyed seeing where appropriate to include both Indigenous and Western knowledges. Although the research was focused on the Federal Public Service, it has wide application and the recommendations could easily apply to other levels of the Public Sector, including internationally and in academia and the Private Sector.

Practicing wâkôtowin through my research provided myself and Executives with an opportunity to center Indigenous perspective in the research. Wâkôtowin also grounded me and reminded me of my responsibilities to the research and niwâkomâkanak ensuring that I conduct myself in a good way. Additionally, the use of storytelling and talking circles teased out the system's intricacies and located potential intervention points where meaningful change might happen. Hopefully, this research will provide Executives and other leaders with concrete actions they can undertake to disrupt public sector systems leading to systemic changes and decolonial actions. At the very least, it provided the space for an Indigenous-led solution rather than a colonial one.

I carried much apprehension as I embarked on this journey, I also had much excitement. I undertook this research during a very difficult period in society. I was hit hard by the potential

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recovery of unmarked graves at Indian Residential schools across the country. It came with the realization that I too have been personally impacted by intergenerational trauma. It led me to some hard truths, which ultimately led me to forgiving my father for not being a father to me. It has also led me to question my role in the Public Service and whether I have a place in its system and culture.

The actions of Executives will decide the fate of Reconciliation in the Public Service. The fate of Reconciliation will be decided by their commitment and motivation to change their thoughts and behaviours. The fate of Reconciliation will be decided on how they motivate employees with their courageous actions. The fate of Reconciliation will be decided by how they engage Indigenous Peoples in this work. I was watching the most recent episode of Picard and an exchange between himself and Guinan reminded me of this research. Admittedly I am Guinan in this exchange. Guinan said, “You say change is coming? Well, it’s too damn slow and the cost way too high. Being forced to watch it, hurts.” To which Picard responded, “History’s darkest moments can be a tipping point for change. There’s still good here” (Thompson, 2022). While my skepticism often overtakes my optimism, I too believe that as a society, we are on the cusp of significant change. My hope is that Executives take this opportunity to influence change for the good of all people in Canada.

There is an old African saying that it takes a village to raise a child. This saying emphasizes the network of support that parent(s) rely on and how society also shapes that child. The knowledge that I had a village behind me supporting this work, including niwâkomâkanak and okiskinôtahiwêw, brought a sense of calm and peace that when I stumbled, as inevitably I did, there was a village behind me to help me back up again. Ekosi.

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Appendix A - Glossary of Indigenous Terms

Amisk	Beaver
Kâkâkiw	Raven
Kâkwa	Porcupine
Kamâmak	Butterfly
Mâkêsiw	Fox
Maskwa	Bear
Mônîyâsnâpêw	White man
Nîkîk	Otter
Niwâkomâkanak	My relatives
Ocêw	House fly
Okiskînôtahiwêw	Guide
Pakosênimowin	Hope
Paskowimostos	Buffalo
Pinêsîs	Bird
Pôsîs	Cat
Wâkôtowin	Kinship/Natural law
Wapeskwe maskwa	Polar bear
Wâpiscân	Marten
Wapiti	Elk
Wînipacâp	Raccoon
Yâpêw	Bull moose

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Appendix B – Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal	Is the legal name embedded in the Constitution Act, 1982, Part II, Section 35(2) to describe Indian, Inuit, and Metis people in Canada
APEX	The Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada
CIRNAC	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
Indian	An outdated term first used by explorers as they thought they had reached the Indian continent. The term is now enshrined in the Constitution as well as in the Indian Act
Indigenous	Has been used internationally to describe populations considered the first peoples of a particular area. The United Nations has described the term as “distinct peoples who, through historical processes, have been pursuing their own concept and way of human development in a given socio-economic, political and historical context. Throughout history, these distinct groups of peoples have tried to maintain their group identity, languages, traditional beliefs, worldviews and way of life and, most importantly, the control and management of their lands, territories and natural resources, which allowed and sustain them to live as peoples” (UN, 2008).
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada

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MMIWG	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
MVOM	Many Voices, One Mind Report
Native	An outdated term used to describe the first peoples in North America. Some First Nations view this term as derogatory while others continue to identify with the term
PCO	Privy Council Office
PSPC	Public Services and Procurement Canada
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
TBS	Treasury Board Secretariat
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDRIPA	Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Appendix C - Email Invitation Letter

Dear Jane Doe,

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master's Degree in Leadership, at Royal Roads University. This project has been approved by Public Services and Procurement Canada, DM Bill Matthews and I have been given permission to contact potential participants for this purpose.

The purpose of my research is focused on the role of Public Service Executives in identifying and changing colonial practices in the Public Service. This research will focus primarily on the perspectives of Indigenous Executives and non-Indigenous Executives who work in this area as well as Indigenous Public Servants. Participants are from various departments. I will also be including some external Indigenous leaders, advocates, or Elders. The objective of this research is to identify areas of the Public Service that may continue to negatively impact Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees in the Public Service. I hope this research will conclude with recommendations Public Service Executives can implement to have a greater impact on Canada's Reconciliation efforts.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant for a storytelling session because you are:

An Indigenous Executive or non-Indigenous Executive who has experience in the area of Reconciliation.

An Indigenous leader/Elder/advocate with special interest in Reconciliation.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant for a talking circle session because you are:

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An Indigenous Executive or non-Indigenous Executive who has experience in the area of Reconciliation.

An Indigenous employee working in the Public Service.

This phase of my research project will consist of two methods:

Method A - storytelling session/a talking circle session. For the storytelling session, I will meet with you one-to-one for one to two hours. There is one question; however, I may provide additional prompts to encourage you to tell me your stories related to Reconciliation in the Federal Public Service.

Method B – talking circle session. For the talking circle session, up to 20 people will gather and take turns responding to one overarching question. This session could last anywhere from three to four hours and will focus on ideas and recommendations for change.

The session you have been identified for will be taking place on [insert date, time, and location].

Appendix E Email Information Letter contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. This document outlines some of the benefits, risks, and any perceived conflicts of interest that I might have as the researcher. Please review this information before responding.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Jolene Head

Email:

Telephone:

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Sincerely,
Jolene Head

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Appendix D - Email Information Letter

Project Title: Reconciliation in the Federal Public Service

My name is Jolene Head, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master's of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. You can confirm my registration at Royal Roads University by contacting the Program Head, Dr. Niels Agger-Gupta.

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The purpose of my research is focused on the role of Public Service Executives in identifying and changing colonial practices in the Public Service. This research will focus primarily on the perspectives of Indigenous Executives and non-Indigenous Executives who work in this area as well as Indigenous Public Servants. Participants are from various departments. I will also be including some external Indigenous leaders, advocates, or Elders. The objective of this research is to identify areas of the Public Service that may continue to negatively impact Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous employees in the Public Service. I hope this research will conclude with recommendations Public Service Executives can implement to have a greater impact on Canada's Reconciliation efforts.

Your participation and how information will be collected

The research will consist of Indigenous storytelling for one-on-one sessions with Executives and Indigenous leaders/Elders/advocates. Indigenous talking circles will then be used with Executives and Indigenous employees. The storytelling sessions are anticipated to last one to two hours. The talking circles are anticipated to last three to four hours. The anticipated questions are outlined below.

Storytelling:

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- Executives – Tell me a story about a time when the system you work in hindered your Reconciliation efforts and why this occurred? Why do they create barriers to Reconciliation?
- Indigenous leaders/Elders/advocates – Tell me a story about a time when you worked with Federal Public Service Executives on an initiative that could contribute to Reconciliation in Canada? What was that experience like?

Talking Circles:

- Executives – Based on the stories which emerged from the storytelling sessions, where are the areas of the Public Service that could be deconstructed and how? What is needed for Public Service Executives to take personal responsibility for these efforts?
- Indigenous employees - Based on the stories which emerged from the storytelling sessions held with Executives and external participants, what could Executives do to dismantle or unravel the system to move Reconciliation forward in Canada? What is needed for Public Service Executives to take personal responsibility for these efforts?

Benefits and risks to participation

The research is focused on how the Federal Public Service might identify and deconstruct colonial practices in its effort towards Reconciliation. As a result of this research, the Public Service could address the areas identified by changing these practices to be more inclusive and less colonial and more aligned with Indigenous culture and beliefs. The potential and anticipated benefits can be broken down by the participants, the sponsor, society, and the researcher.

Participants will have the opportunity to contribute to identifying areas in the Public Service that have the potential to be deconstructed from both overt and covert colonial practices

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that are still negatively impacting Indigenous Peoples. Based on this participation and the data analysis, recommendations will be provided that Public Service Executives can implement to make changes in the system. This will result in improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples as it relates to their relationship with the Government of Canada, this includes Indigenous public servants as well.

The sponsor has a vested interest in this topic as Reconciliation continues to be a priority for the Government of Canada and for all Public Service departments. This research will give the sponsor the opportunity to influence further change in the Public Service which will benefit Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous employees.

Addressing the colonial impacts on Indigenous Peoples will improve their lives and their communities. This could have positive impacts on their socio-economic conditions allowing Indigenous Peoples to become more actively engaged in Canadian society in an equitable way, with a recognition of their relationship to Canada. This will in turn reduce the draw down on social services, thus positively impacting society as a whole. It will also provide the opportunity for society as a whole to better understand the reality of Indigenous Peoples, the true history of Canada, and hopefully lead to a reduction of stereotyping and racism in Canada which will also benefit other racialized populations.

Finally, this research will provide me with the opportunity to further connect with my culture while also providing an opportunity to dig deeper into the Public Service system and understand where there is room for a more inclusive public service. It will provide an opportunity for me to give back to my community in a meaningful way. It will improve my life as an Indigenous person in Canada and as an Indigenous public servant. As the researcher, I will

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maintain your confidentiality, but I cannot promise this on behalf of other participants. However, I will request that all participants respect the confidential nature of this study and not share identifying information with others.

Despite the benefits, there are also potential risks related to this research. The recommendations based on the data and literature review could show the Public Service in a negative light which could impact its reputation. While the outcome of the research cannot be predicted, I will share a draft copy of my thesis with my partner for their awareness and feedback. There is also a risk that the recommendations, if made public through publication, could raise expectations of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous employees that the recommendations will be acted upon. To mitigate this risk, my partner and I can negotiate an agreement on the publication of the thesis beyond the Royal Roads requirements. In addition, anonymity cannot be guaranteed for those who choose to participate in the talking circle sessions, however participants will be asked to respect the confidential nature of this research and not share identifying information with others.

Inquiry team

Inquiry team members will consist of student colleagues, family, friends, and some members of my work team. Inquiry team members may be asked to support any of the following activities: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, or assisting storytelling sessions or talking circles, taking notes, reviewing analysis of data, and/or reviewing associated knowledge products to assist the Student and the Public Service's change process.

Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest

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As an Indigenous public servant who is working on Reconciliation for Public Services and Procurement Canada, I inherently have a perceived conflict of interest in researching Reconciliation in the Public Service due to having a vested interest in seeing Reconciliation move progress in a good way. I have also observed and experienced the impacts of colonialism and systemic racism. This could also be perceived as a conflict of interest in that I could be seen as not objective with regard to the research topic. I disclose this information here so that you can make a fully informed decision on whether or not to participate in this study.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with electronic copies (e.g., consent forms) stored on a password protected computer on my home computer. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer. Information will be recorded in hand-written format, audio or video recorded and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Data obtained as a result of the research will be destroyed after 2 years as per the Public Service's policy on information management. Data obtained by any participant who chooses to withdraw from the research will be withdrawn except in the circumstances of the talking circle sessions. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for those who choose to participate in the talking circle sessions, however participants will be asked to respect the confidential nature of this research and not share identifying information with others. Please note that your valuable ideas and opinions will appear in the report itself. However, no

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personal information such as your name or personally identifiable information will be used to attribute those comments to you unless you explicitly request this.

Sharing results

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master's of Arts in Leadership, I will also be sharing my research findings with my partner and may publish the research in academic journals, books, or conference presentations. My research will also be shared with all participants who will receive both a draft and a final copy.

Procedure for withdrawing from the study

Participants can withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice by contacting myself. Any data collected through storytelling sessions will be discarded and not used for the research. I will do my best to remove data from the talking circle, though I might not be able to link each comment to the original speaker in order to remove it.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation or signing the consent form you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

The project has received approval from the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board and that any questions can be addressed to [RRU Ethics].

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

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Appendix E - Storytelling Consent Form

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project and have data I contribute used in the final report and any other knowledge outputs (articles, conference presentations, newsletters, etc.).

- I consent to the audio or video recording of our storytelling session
- I consent to quotations and excerpts expressed by me through the storytelling sessions be included in this study, provided that my identity is not disclosed
- I understand the risks of participating in this research during the Covid-19 pandemic
- I acknowledge that I understand and agreed to the safety protocols
- I absolve the University of any liability in the event that I contract Covid-19 as a result of participation in this research
- I have read the **Appendix E Email Information Letter**

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix F -Talking Circle Consent Form

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project and have data I contribute used in the final report and any other knowledge outputs (articles, conference presentations, newsletters, etc.).

- I consent to the audio or video recording of our talking circle session
- I consent to quotations and excerpts expressed by me through the talking circle sessions be included in this study, provided that my identity is not disclosed
- I consent to the material I have contributed to and/or generated through my participation in the talking circle session to be used in this study
- I commit to respect the confidential nature of the talking circle by not sharing identifying information about the other participants
- I understand the risks of participating in this research during the Covid-19 pandemic
- I acknowledge that I understand and agreed to the safety protocols
- I absolve the University of any liability in the event that I contract Covid-19 as a result of participation in this research
- I have read the **Appendix E Email Information Letter**

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

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Date: _____

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Appendix G - Inquiry Team Letter of Agreement/Privacy Agreement

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Jolene Head (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry study in the Public Service to identify and deconstruct colonial practices in the Public Service. You can confirm the student's registration at Royal Roads University by contacting the Program Head, Dr. Niels Agger-Gupta.

Inquiry Team Member Role Description

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role will be:

- Masters of Arts in Leadership colleagues will support my research by providing advice on my inquiry questions, letters of invitation, consent forms, etc. and provide support on data gathering methods and analysis.
- Undergrad students will assist with the talking circle logistics of organizing, supporting participants, and if in person, helping with the offering of food and supporting the Elder(s) and assist with the data analysis.
- Graduate student will support by reviewing products and providing guidance on my use of methodology and methods.
- The Elder will support and guide me with the use of the Cree concept of wâkôtowin and ensure that I am implementing wâkôtowin in a good way.

In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

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Confidentiality of Inquiry Data

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Jolene Head, the Student.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

Jane Doe

Signature

Date