Approaches to Decolonizing Settler Colonialism: Examples from Canada

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Abstract

In this Working Paper, we analyse attempts at decolonizing domestic relations in place in Canadian universities and museums. Canada is among the settler colonial states that confront their violence history and its present implications, *inter alia* with systematic research and evidence based policy recommendations: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada issued a report about its 7-years' long work in 2015, and the Canadian government declared the willingness to push through what the TRC recommended as calls to action, to foster post-colonial peace in the country. But what does that actually imply in a country that was built on the deep intrusions of settler colonialism? How have state institutions reacted to the call? Universities and museums are key state institution when it comes to spreading narratives and images of the violent past for the present and the future. We found a spectrum of initiatives and institutions with varying degrees of commitment. The data and most different examples from the spectrum illustrate how contested and ambivalent decolonizing work remains to be.

Zusammenfassung

Das Working Paper untersucht Ansätze der 'Dekolonisierung' in kanadischen Universitäten und Museen. Kanada zählt zu den auf Siedlerkolonialismus aufgebauten Staaten, die sich ihrer kolonialen Gewaltgeschichte und deren anhaltenden Implikationen ausdrücklich stellen; unter anderem mit Einrichtung einer Wahrheits- und Aussöhnungskommission, die Forschung, Dokumentation und die Entwicklung von konkreten Handlungsempfehlungen an Politik und Gesellschaft zum Ziel hatte. Die Kommission legte 2015 ihre Abschlussberichte sowie einen Katalog an Maßnahmen vor, die den Weg zu einem post-kolonialen Frieden im Land bereiten würden. Aber was bedeutet es, das Leben in einem Land zu ,dekolonisieren', das auf tiefgreifenden und nachhaltig wirksamen Strukturen des Siedlerkolonialismus aufgebaut wurde? Wie haben staatliche Institutionen auf diese Herausforderung reagiert? Die Universitäten und Museen, die das WP darauf hin anschaut, haben eine Schlüsselrolle in der Verbreitung von Narrativen und Bildern der gewaltvollen Vergangenheit für Gegenwart und Zukunft inne. Die Ergebnisse zeigen ein Spektrum von unterschiedlichen Ansätzen, das vor Augen führt, wie strittig und ambivalent das Anliegen der Dekolonialisierung ist.

Content

1. Introduction: The Presence of Canada's Colonial History

With this paper we aim to study decolonization attempts of a country's structures of settler colonial dominance. In particular, we will examine the ways in which representations of and interrelations between the descendants of settlers and the Indigenous are addressed by state institutions. This is – obviously – a field of action that is more easily accessible for research than grassroots activities from across civil society. Moreover, it is state institutions that are to be held accountable for the agenda of declared policies of decolonization and, therefore, their actions are the most pertinent in view of the – to be scrutinized – normative foundations of power relations in the polity.

Why Canada? There are many countries across the globe that were built on colonial intrusion. They share some historical (and more recent) similarities and are set apart by other traits. Our focus on Canada is hence neither singularity nor a defined representative status; either could only be attributed after a review of a large sample. Our study has chosen Canada as one exemplary case of those countries with the declared impetus to unravel their colonial histories for two reasons:

(1) Critical self-examination started relatively early in Canada, with the liberal project of a multi-cultural society being integrated into official policies by the 1970s-80s. With the affirmative recognition of multicultural diversity stemming from recent decades of immigration, the 'other' diversity within the country could hardly be ignored any longer: First Nations, Métis and Inuit also had to be considered as part of a diverse and multicultural Canada. The long process of struggling with normative self-image and state policies of power-sharing during these years provides rich material for research and promises to have rendered observable effects.

(2) In this vein of self-examination, the then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper officially apologized for some of the systematic atrocities that were committed in the context of the colonization in 2008. He also established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which concluded its work in 2015 with the publication of final reports and a catalogue comprising calls to action. This is a rare and rich fund of documents that contain detailed accounts of the commission's work and call on state and society, which were built on settler colonialism, to learn from the lessons that were derived therefrom, in order to transform hegemonic domestic relations for the better.

Both aspects make Canada a significant case for reviewing the postulated efforts towards working through colonial legacies: What is it that needs to be tackled? And how have state institutions become engaged in the unravelling of colonial legacies, which possess the power to play a key role in the re-assessment of the country's mindset, i.e. educational institutions and museums?

Canada was founded on a specific form of colonialism, i.e. settler colonialism, which established profound structures and institutions that still shape the reality and societal relations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today. Settler colonialism, as opposed to the broader concept of colonialism, creates an all-encompassing system with long-term effects on the social structure, economy, culture, politics, religion, health, education, historiography, and collective self-imagination. In settler colonialism, the Indigenous population is, after an initial phase, no longer required for the success of the colonial system and can therefore be attacked without negative repercussions. In short, "[s]ettler colonialism destroys to replace" (Wolfe 2006: 388) – it destroys the Indigenous populations to replace them with the settler population.

Lorenzo Veracini, likened the differences between colonialism and settler colonialism to the those between virus and bacteria: Colonialism functions like a virus, for whose

survival host-cells are necessary; but settler colonialism, like bacteria, will sustain itself beyond the downfall of the Indigenous populations. Like bacteria, the reproduction of the envisioned, i.e. white, society does not need "living cells to reproduce" (Veracini 2014: 623). Therefore, white settlers had no genuine interest in the success or the well-being of Indigenous populations but were focused on the appropriation of land and the associated resources. Although this may appear as a self-evident trifle, the implications are profound, especially regarding decolonization efforts.

> "Settler colonialism is a global and transnational phenomenon, and as much a thing of the past as a thing of the present. There is no such thing as neo-settler colonialism or post-settler colonialism because settler colonialism is a resilient formation that rarely ends. Not all migrants are settlers; as Patrick Wolfe has noted, settlers come to stay. They are founders of political orders who carry with them a distinct sovereign capacity. And settler colonialism is not colonialism: settlers want Indigenous people to vanish (but can make use of their labour before they are made to disappear). Sometimes settler colonial forms operate within colonial ones, sometimes they subvert them, sometimes they replace them. But even if colonialism and settler colonialism interpenetrate and overlap, they remain separate as they co-define each other." (Cavanagh/Veracini, 2013: 1).

To illustrate this profound complexity of settler colonialism, we will at the outset explain three dimensions in particular with a view to our example Canada: (1) the colonial legality that created a lasting system of rights vs. non-rights, (2) the remodeling of personhood by way of creating the category of the Indian, and its intersectional discrimination effects for Indigenous women, and (3) the residential school system.

All these dimensions – the treaties, the school system, the intersections of different areas of social discrimination – show how deeply and profoundly settler colonialism was and still is part of Canada, and how these dimensions are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. And yet, how can a state with so deeply entrenched colonialist legacies possibly 'decolonize'? We turn to that question in the third section of this paper. The process of decolonization has been debated in Canada for many years. Related efforts can be identified in several arenas of the Canadian public, e.g. in state institutions, in governmental and non-governmental organizations, or in statements made by politicians and representatives of public institutions. From among this variety, we took a closer look at decolonizing initiatives in universities and museums. The reason being that both are important agents of public communication and enculturation, whose tasks include the conveyance of Canadian history and, with it, the normative self-images of Canadian society. Museums and institutions of higher education have been part of the Canadian public structure since the establishment of the confederation and have consequently also contributed, to some degree, to the overall practice and legitimation of settler colonialism. In chapter three, we will describe our methodological approach to analyzing their observable activities in the field of decolonization, and our related findings.

2. RAMIFICATIONS OF CANADIAN SETTLER COLONIALISM

The first dimension of the settler colonial system that we will review, colonial legality, explores how judicial means – first and foremost the so-called Numbered Treaties – were (mis)used to establish and consolidate an asymmetric relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and how, as a result, settler colonialism entrenched the Canadian judiciary. The second dimension sheds light on the multiplicity of effects colonial discrimination has had for social status and personhood. We will show how settler colonialism had far-reaching consequences, especially for the legal, cultural,

and social realities of Indigenous women; that these consequences differ from those which impacted Indigenous men; and that this gendered discrimination differs from that which impacted white women. This section illustrates that colonialism, ultimately, is made up of a sum of several interwoven discriminatory dynamics. Lastly, we will briefly explain the system of residential schooling, which has now become known as one of the darkest chapters of Canadian colonialism, serving as a technique of cultural alienation and eventual genocide (see Mannitz/Drews 2022). Survivors pushed perseveringly for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). A special momentum manifested in the publication of the final report of the TRC in 2015. The report and the 94 Calls to Action that accompanied it were a milestone on the way to healing, reconciliation, and historical processing, which compose the official goals of the TRC (see IRSSA Draft, Schedule N 2006: 1).

2.1 Settler Colonialism Legality

Legality in general and treaties in particular are a fundamental dimension of settler colonialism. Treaties encompass aspects of trade, alliances, peace, property and land ownership and, generally, control (Miller 2009: xi). In what later became Canada, colonial legality was – like in many other cases – "by its very nature a plural legal order" (Benton 1999: 563), meaning that colonial legality was not just the imposition of European legal institutions over allegedly passive Indigenous peoples, but in fact an interaction (and challenge) of both settler and Indigenous legal systems (Whitehouse 1994: 32–36). However, due to the power asymmetry inherent in settler colonialism, treaties were often used "to sustain Indigenous dispossession and marginalization" (Starblanket 2019: 3). Treaty making in this sense was not exclusive to the Canadian case. Examples are found in many other former colonial states, e.g. New Zealand, the US, and India.

During the 19th century and the westward expansion of the Canadian federation, Canadian politicians concluded that "their plans for the West required peaceful relations that could best be secured through treaties" (Miller 2009: 156). The Indigenous people perceived the territory to be their own but they did not adhere to the same concepts of property as the Europeans. Many were open and cooperative towards the settlers and willing to share land and resources (Talbot 2019: 58). The combination of the ongoing westward movement, the desire to create a legal framework to base claims upon, and the cooperative nature of the Indigenous population led to the Numbered Treaties of the 19th and 20th centuries.

There were eleven Numbered Treaties, written between 1871 and 1921. The signing parties were the British Crown on the one hand and, depending on the territory of the specific treaty, the respective First Nations on the other. (Filice 2016a) The treaties secured territory for the Crown in exchange for special land rights, material and monetary compensation, and other promises, such as education and tools for the First Nations (Filice 2016a). It is important to note that the First Nations were not mere recipients of the treaties; in fact, the Numbered Treaties were "the product of Indian and government interactions, and not […] the result of the government dictating terms" (Whitehouse 1994: 27). This contradicts the harmful and inaccurate perception of Indigenous people as passive victims and correctly portrays them as active, albeit less powerful and less (in the British system) juridically skilled actors in the process we understand as colonisation.

Understandably, the motives that led to the Numbered treaties were different for both sides. The British Crown's intentions can be summarized in three parts: firstly, territorial expansion; this was closely connected to the second aspect, the industrial development using land and resources (Filice 2016a); and finally, the sociocultural absorption of the Indigenous population into a Euro-Canadian society (Whitehouse 1994: 28). This last

aspect is especially critical for this Working Paper, because it shows how legality is connected to the strategic violence applied to incorporate Indigenous into settler societies – to create instruments to make them disappear *as* who they were before colonisation. This is exactly the reason residential schools were built in the first place.

The Numbered Treaties, in combination with other legal institutions, such as the Indian Act of 1876, essentially gave the British the power to define what "Indigenous" meant and who would be put into this category (Lawrence 2003: 11). First Nations were aware of the long-term implications the British settlement would have and saw the Numbered Treaties as a form of regulation (Whitehouse 1994: 32); Miller called the step an "assistance in adjusting to the new order in the West" (2018: 181). The concrete motives for the Indigenous to engage include supplements (farm stock, money, supplies) as well as medical, education, and other services (Miller 2018: 181–182). The Treaties, therefore, can be seen as promise of a short- and long-term insurance against negative consequences of British settlement, and the concrete projection of inclusion in the emerging new citizenry.

The consequences of the Numbered Treaties are complex and ambivalent. Despite the perhaps partly well-intentioned, albeit patronizing, objectives of those who represented the British Crown, several factors compromised the outcome of the Numbered Treaties. The most obvious consequence was the transaction of land and new rights for signing parties (Filice 2016a). Secondly, and maybe even more problematically, the British increasingly decided who was considered a signing party of the treaties, i.e. who was Indigenous and would be granted those rights (Lawrence 2003: 10). This became even more visible in the Indian Act of 1867, which will be discussed in further detail in the next section. Thirdly, differences in the understanding of several crucial concepts, such as sovereignty or land ownership (Filice 2016b, Tesar 2016), led to severe complications. Additionally, some argue that it was not only linguistic and cultural barriers but "deliberate attempts to mislead the First Nations on the part of the government negotiators" (Tesar 2016). Furthermore, there are records of "Outside Promises", i.e. additional promises that were made orally but not materialised in the Numbered Treaties (Albers 2015). Oral agreements were an established convention among the Indigenous, whereas the step of written ratification, important to the settlers, was rather alien to their traditions (Tesar 2016). This divergence even produced, as the example of Treaty 3 shows, different versions of the same treaty (Filice 2016b). Therefore, First Nations were at best not adequately informed, and at worst simply tricked during the treaty making processes. Fourthly, many treaty agreements survived unchanged in spite of larger developments, which changed treaty prerequisites. The socioeconomic changes are a good example: the principle of nominalism was applied, which prevented the Canadian government from adjusting the annual treaty payments to inflation (Metcs 2008: 71)!

Miller defines the form of treaties as "formalized records of negotiated agreements between parties, usually states, but sometimes people" (2009: 3). In Canada, and prior to the treaty negotiations, both parties had agency over the legal aspect of the colonization process – the British settlers had interests as did the Indigenous, and both had specific means to press for their interests to be met. However, due to either incidental or intended miscommunications, the consequences of the Numbered Treaties contributed in complex ways to the deep intrusion of settler colonialism in Canada, and not less to its devastating legacy.

2.2 Citizenship and Intersectional Discrimination

Having outlined the legal mechanisms which enforced settler colonial rule in Canada, we highlight, in this next step, aspects of legal, social, and cultural discrimination that

affected Indigenous people on the whole as well as Indigenous women in particular. The reason for this approach is that intersectional discrimination directly targeted Indigenous women, their role within their communities, their agency, their rights, and their lives in such a way that their situation can be read as a dense description of colonialist intrusion. This pertains especially to the period of British colonization from the mid-18th century to the establishment of the Canadian confederation in 1867. Within this period, the colonizing strategy of the British started to discriminate against Indigenous peoples in social, cultural, and legal dimensions. There had been violence and discrimination before this phase of colonialization and during the French period, but discrimination became significantly more institutionalized under the British rule, illustrated, for example, by the Indian Act of 1867 (Byrne/Clarke/Rahman 2018).

Intersectionality offers an appropriate perspective to analyse ad illustrate the deep impact of colonisation: Indigenous women faced combined racial and gender discrimination that deprived them of their previous economic, social, and cultural capital. Women had occupied positions of power and authority in their communities (Kirkness 1987: 409ff.). During early colonial times, they worked as translators, diplomats, peacemakers, mediators (Van Kirk 1984: 9) and occasionally as warriors (Carter 2006: 90). Their relevance in the fur trade and the high number of intermarriages were direct contributors to the relatively peaceful cooperation between British settlers and Indigenous peoples during the first decades of colonialization (Van Kirk 1984: 9). In short, socially, economically, and politically speaking, Indigenous women were at the heart of both pre-colonial and early colonial societies and massively important for the survival of the first British settlers (Van Kirk 1984: 9–11).

Legal discrimination

Apart from the Numbered Treaties, there were several other judicial institutions that contributed to the power asymmetry between British settlers and Indigenous peoples in colonial Canada. The most striking example of this is the Indian Act of Canada of 1867, which is, after several amendments, still part of Canadian federal law. In its original form, the Indian Act reserved crucial rights and powers concerning Indigenous identity, government, culture, and education for the Canadian federal government (Parrott 2006). Specifically, the Indian Act regulated the "status Indian", reservation governance, and development. The Act had "grave effects on generations of Native women and their children materially, culturally, and psychologically" (Kirkness 1978: 414). One example, among many, is the implication of marriage between Indigenous women and white men. The *marriages à la façon du pays*, which were marriage customs between white men and Indigenous women, largely influenced by Indigenous matrimonial traditions and prominent during the early colonial phase, gave way to more and more Europeanised marriage laws because it was considered degrading for European men to marry Indigenous women on their terms (McManus 2004: 123). With the Indian Act, Indigenous women lost their "Indian status" when they married white men, consequently losing access to their home reserve and the right to be buried among their ancestors. Indigenous men, on the other hand, faced no particular consequences when marrying white women (Faith et al 1990: 170). This illustrates the intersectionally discriminatory nature of the Indian Act. Another example of the condescending nature of the Indian Act was the matter of identification: Indigenous individuals were "to be judged by white officials as to what they were" (Lawrence 2003: 10). The "Indian status" was extremely relevant for a number of rights, so the fact that Indigenous people were not allowed to self-identify was especially problematic. As was the case in the Numbered Treaties, the settlers not only controlled the rights but also controlled who had access to said rights.

Furthermore, as the Indian Act had severe consequences for the legal, social, and cultural realities of Indigenous women, it also contributed to the harmful "educational" system that later became the residential schools system. Rosemary L. Nagy argues that it even "formally created the residential school system" (Nagy 2013: 62), which started to be established about a decade after the Indian Act. All of these examples are in themselves testimony to the profound effects of settler colonialism in Canada, which are interrelated with wider social and cultural discrimination dynamics. In conclusion, the Act, much like the colonial judiciary in general, was "based on inherent racist and sexist assumptions that Indian governance, epistemologies, beliefs, and gender roles were irrelevant and invalid" (Barker 2008: 261).

Social discrimination

Scholars agree that European settlers "moulded a dominant society, a society to which Native people have been conforming gradually" (Kirkness 1987: 412). These societal assimilation pressures influenced Indigenous women's work, their mobility, and their general role in society most strikingly. In pre-colonial times, many Indigenous societies followed a matrilinear logic, meaning that issues of heritage and kinship follow the female ancestry of the family, as opposed to the patrilinear system, which was more common in Europe (Kirkness 1987: 410). Indigenous women worked in several different fields and, as mentioned above, held positions of power and authority, e.g. as high chiefs, due to the matrilinear kinship principles (Kirkness 1987: 409–411). Indigenous women were, in their leadership positions, also important figures in the fur trade that marked the entry phase of the European intrusion in later Canada. The rise of agriculture coincided with the fall of the fur trade and, consequently, with the power women lost within trade (Van Kirk 1984: 12). The tasks deemed to be appropriate for women gradually changed to domestic work, e.g. washing and cleaning. Most of these jobs were unpaid (which also applies to white women at the time) and were therefore ignored in terms of contribution and importance (Van Kirk 1984: 11).

Another strategy to foster assimilation and cultural alienation was the spatial restriction of Indigenous peoples, i.e. the establishment of reservations from 1850 onwards (Lawrence 2003: 7). Sheila McManus argues that "[r]egulating the spatial limits of Aboriginal mobility was connected at a fundamental level with a desire to regulate every aspect of the social and racial boundaries" (2004: 122). The mobility of Indigenous women was even more restricted (Carter 2006: 93) because white settlers, and increasingly also Indigenous men, became concerned about their supposed promiscuity (McManus 2004: 122–123). The emergence of this attitude of surveillance is directly related to the legal fortification of the patrilinear system that was established by the settlers. As a form of societal discrimination, this went hand in hand with legal and cultural discrimination: The Indian Act of 1876, eroded the matrilinear custom and changed bureaucratic practise to a more European patrilinear descendance (Barker 2008: 261). This was disastrous for Indigenous women (Kirkness 1987: 414) and had irretrievable effects on the Indigenous social fabric for generations: Women generally had no right to own a homestead – and the financial stability and personal autonomy that comes with it – until the 1930s (Carter 2006: 104). Indigenous men were hence enabled by the colonial authority to discriminate against their female peers (Barker 2008: 262) and Indigenous women were systematically side-lined.

Cultural discrimination

One example that makes the phenomenon of cultural discrimination tangible is the simultaneous sexualization and demonization of Indigenous women. The aforementioned *marriages à la façon du pays* were increasingly perceived as immoral and

potentially unlawful (Van Kirk 1984: 11–12). While Indigenous women represented crucial interfaces of brokerage in the first decades of colonization, their agency and role began to erode after the initial settlement phase was completed. Soon, Indigenous women were no longer considered to be appropriate wives for white European settlers. The immigration of European women into the Canadian provinces (McManus 2004: 126) went along with the degrading shift of the image of Indigenous women to "object[s] of temporary sexual gratification" (Van Kirk 1984: 12). The 19th century population goal of "sober, white, English speaking [sic] patriarchs who would be assisted by saintly, cultured, nurturing women" (Korneski 2008: 106) conceptually excluded Indigenous women based on the assumed "immorality because of their supposedly promiscuous Indian heritage" (Van Kirk 1984: 12). Negative stereotypes and demonization of Indigenous women were accompanied by dynamics of a gendered "positive racism", e.g. an exotification and sexualization of Indigenous women. Exemplifying this toxic combination, Sarah Carter quotes a (male) European artist, who described Natoyist-Siksina', member of the Káínawa Nation, as "one of the most beautiful Indian women […] excellent model for a Venus, ideal woman of the primitive race; a perfect 'little wife'" (Carter 2006: 88–89).

2.3 The Residential Schools

Another layer that intersects with the realm of socio-cultural discrimination is the education system, more specifically the residential school system. The residential schools were "a central element in the federal government's Aboriginal policy." (TRC 2015: 3). Between the system's establishment during the 1860s and 1870s and the last institution closing in 1996, over 150,000 children attended residential schools (Nagy/Kaur Sehdev 2012: 67). The Indian Residential School System (IRSS) was a "coercive system which entailed forced assimilation and cultural destruction" (MacDonald/Hudson 2012: 431). A typical school day was divided into studies and manual labour (MacDonald/Hudson 2012: 431), essentially making many residential schools to places of child-labour. Besides the rather poor education, children faced systematic neglect, malnutrition, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as unprotected exposure to widespread diseases, such as tuberculosis (Nagy/Kaur Sehdev 2012: 67; Mannitz/Drews 2022). The summary of the TRC Report provides detailed insights into the horrific and inhumane living conditions children had to endure in the majority of residential schools; as a matter of fact many did not survive this "school" system. The governmental intention behind the IRSS is summarized as follows by Canadian politician and Indian Affairs Agent Duncan Campbell Scott in 1920:

> "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continually protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this Bill." (D.C. Scott, quoted in Rheault 2011: 3)

The bill in question concerned the compulsory attendance for Indigenous children between 7 and 15 years, implementing residential schoolsin Canadian federal law (Rheaulth 2011: 3). Residential schools were also linked to the aforementioned Numbered Treaties and the Indian Act: In the summary of the final report of the TRC, it is stated that government officials used treaty payments as leverage, denying Indigenous parents the money if they refused to send their children to residential school (TRC 2015: 115). One First Nation, the Dene people, actually refused to accept treaty payments as an effort to protest against the disastrous conditions in residential schools in 1937 (TRC 2015: 117). The Indian Act, on the other hand, enabled residential schools to retrieve

children who ran away and to return them against their will (TRC Final Report Summary 2015: 118). These examples illustrate some of the interconnections of political, cultural, and legal shapes of discrimination and assimilation, i.e. residential schools, the Numbered Treaties, and the Indian Act were all interconnected; "residential schools are a story of colonization" (Nagy 2013: 67). Moreover, this institution of the settler colonial system, again, reflects the particular impact colonization rendered for the Indigenous women who had been agents of their societies' knowledge transfer and who found themselves deprived of any related authority.

In terms of the intersectional effects, it is important to note that both white teachers and Indigenous pupils were overwhelmingly female (Jensz 2012: 308). This led to an almost contradictory dynamic within the schools: they reinforced notions of racism and sexism and destroyed traditional educational systems, but they also provided white women with jobs, wages, and some degree of financial autonomy, and Indigenous girls with some degree of formal education. Jensz comments that "missionary education had both the potential to solidify and to disturb the categories of gender, class and race on the mission station as well as in broader colonial and British social settings." (2012: 310). Nevertheless, the schools are overall a strong example of intersectional cultural discrimination against Indigenous people, and Indigenous women in particular.

The fight for the recognition of the harm caused by the IRSS started during the 1980s, through efforts of former students and Indigenous communities as well as other non-Indigenous organizations (de Bruin 2013). During the 1990s, public attention began to grasp what had happened in the Canadian residential schools for over a century, when First Nations leader Phil Fontaine shared his personal trauma and, as a result, "catalysed the struggle for redress" (Nagy/Kaur Sehdev 2012: 67). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples from 1991 to 1996, the federal apology in 1998, and the Alternative Dispute Resolution in 2003 all led to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) in 2007, which in turn established the TRC (MacDonald/Hudson 2012: 432–433, de Bruin 2013).

3.   PROJECT(ION)S OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES TO DECOLONIZATION

The relationships between Canadian settler colonialism history, the struggle for reconciliation and truth, and the ambivalent results from seven years after the TRC lead to the question of how Canadian institutions, especially universities and museums, contribute to the politically declared effort of decolonization and reconciliation. The research design we used to analyse this question, as well as the results, are described in this chapter.

Our research proceeded in three steps: first, a descriptive data collection; second, a key-word search through the websites of Canadian universities and museums; and third, an in-depth analysis of selected museums' approaches. All of the research was conducted online, which inherently limits results but serves the purpose of obtaining an overview of this field very well. In the first step, we collected general data on Canadian universities, museums, archives, and galleries in English and French. The goal of this was to gain orientation in the vast institutional landscape and to identify those initiatives and structures in place that (a) concern education with, about, and for First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and (b) address the legacies of Canada's settler colonialism directly. Concretely, 77 universities and 44 museums were included in these analyses, comprising 236 individual initiatives and 120 structures. During this stage of the research, it became apparent that, considering our resources, an in-depth analysis could only incorporate selected institutions, as the sheer volume of all 386 institutions' representations would have

exceeded the limitations of our time and this publication. We did, however, conduct a systematic keyword analysis including all the university institutions in the second step, looking more closely at whether and how decolonization, truth, reconciliation, and the TRC are addressed. The results of this keyword analysis are summarized in section 3.2.

Finally, we focused on 19 museums in the third step, the in-depth analysis of strategies and narratives surrounding Canada's postcolonial situation. These 19 institutions were chosen on the basis of the first descriptions of relevant results, i.e. for instance the existence of special exhibitions about the colonial legacy or displays of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit art. The in-depth analysis assessed the museums' approaches with the help of a coding scheme of engagement categories: We checked whether the institutions acknowledged the territory they are situated on; whether and to what degree they referenced the TRC; whether and to what degree they critically reflected the Canadian colonial history and their own part within it; and whether a policy concerning restitution or repatriation was set in place. Additionally, we analysed the image the museums created towards the Canadian and international public. These results, as well as three exemplary cases, will be discussed in section 3.3.

3.1 The work of the TRC

The TRC was established with the overall goal "to contribute to truth, healing and reconciliation" (IRSSA Draft, Schedule N 2006: 1) as a direct result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), Canadas largest class action settlement to date (de Bruin 2013). The specific goals included, among others, the acknowledgment of and awareness for the IRSS and the establishment of a historical record and a report with recommendations (IRSSA Draft, Schedule N 2006: 1f.). From 2007 to 2015, the TRC was governmentally funded to collect witness reports and testimonies, as well as to open the discussion and ignite education about the residential schools. The commission collected data from over 6500 individuals, as well as over 5 million governmental records, which are all stored in the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In June 2015, the final report and the recommendations – the 94 Calls to Action – were presented to the Canadian public and government as a starting point for the process of healing and reconciliation[1]. Since then, there is an debate ongoing about the political impact of the TRC and the pace of implementation. Five years after the issuing of the final report, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and member of the Canadian federal government, Hon. Carolyn Bennett, stated that *a majority* of the calls concerning the government "have been completed or are well underway" (2020).

However, the Canadian researchers Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby attested on the basis of three years of annual research since 2019 that the calls are far from complete. According to their analyses, the number of completed calls only marginally grew from nine in 2019 to eleven in 2021, while in fact decreasing to eight in 2020 (Jewell/Mosby 2019: 4; Jewell/Mosby 2020: 5; Jewell/Mosby 2021: 6). According to them, the reasons for the (too) slow pace of implementation are fivefold: (1) structural anti-Indigenous racism, (2) paternalism among politicians and bureaucrats, (3) low interest for reconciliation among the non-Indigenous public, (4) insufficient resources, and (5) the exploitation of reconciliation in a performative way (Jewell/Mosby 2021: 12).

Therefore, the evaluation of the efforts to reconciliation and decolonization is debated heavily within Canadian academia. This is not only enhanced by the fact that the general impact of truth commissions, especially of non-transitional commissions like the TRC in

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1   https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525 (last accessed 29.05.2022).

Canada, is relatively under-researched (Hayner 1994: 609; Freeman/Hayner 2003: 138; Mani 2007: 103; Thoms et al. 2010: 24, Bakiner 2014: 6). One should also realize that current Canadian society stands firmly on the shoulders of the colonialist system and, for that reason, has internalised the status quo and its legitimatory structures and narratives as if matters of fact. Last, but not least, important normative multiplier institutions like universities and museums have only recently begun unravelling their mental loads and imagery of Canada and its past.

3.2 Universities

In our analysis, we included 77 English and French universities with 159 sub-institutions; the types of sub-institutions were clustered into categories (see Tabl. 1). Generally, we found that the most common type of university institution was concerned with the welfare of Indigenous students (respective centres and services) as well as with questions of and for Indigenous university policy (Offices), which, combined, made up almost half of all sub-institutions (49,68%). Leadership institutions (e.g. councils or circles, 14,47%), educational institutions (e.g. specific departments and faculties about Indigenous studies, 10,69%), and documents (e.g. Strategic plans, 10,69%) were the next most common types of sub-institutions targeting the issue.

Category of institution	= n	= % of all 159 sub-institutions
Centre/Service	44	27,67%
Leadership (Council/Committee/Chairs/Circles)	23	14,47%
College	4	2,52%
Department/Faculty	17	10,69%
Document	17	10,69%
Office	35	22,01%
Organisation	6	3,77%
Study Program	6	3,77%
Research unit	2	1,26%
Other (Funds, Initiatives, Spaces, Learning material, Networks)	5	3,14%

Table 1, own depiction

The keyword analysis was then used to search for the two main concepts of our research interest – decolonization and the TRC – on the homepages of the universities and on the separate pages of the sub-institutions. The concept of the TRC was further subdivided into truth, reconciliation, and the TRC specifically; the keyword analysis was done in English and French. The specific findings are depicted in Table 2, both numerical and relational to the number of universities, sub-institutions, and total.

The results suggest that reconciliation seems to be the most often used concept, whereas decolonization is the least often used. Well over a third of all institutions directly speak of both "reconciliation" and "truth", but only 16% of decolonization. A direct mention of the TRC was found in every fourth institution. Also, for decolonization, the difference between the main homepages of the universities and their affiliated sub-institutions is slightly greater than for the other three. One has to consider that the concept of decolonization – especially in the sense of unsettling societal and political structures, questioning established mindsets, shared narratives and collective images – is comparatively newer than concerns pertaining to reconciliation and truth about the past. Nevertheless, the rather low rate at which decolonization is mentioned is striking

when one realizes that this keyword stands for one of the most pertinent and highly topical political challenges in states founded on settler colonialism.

Concept	Decolonization		Truth		Reconciliation		TRC	
	= n	= %	= n	= %	= n	= %	= n	= %
Universities (n=77)	5	6,49%	23	29,87%	27	35,10&	14	18,18%
Sub-institutions (excl. universities, n=159)	33	20,75%	63	39,62%	69	43,40%	49	30,82%
All institutions (incl. universities, n=236)	38	16,10%	86	36,44%	96	40,68%	63	26,69%

Table 2, own depiction.

Generally, the main concept of the TRC (composed of truth, reconciliation, and the TRC itself) is significantly more present than the concept of decolonization, both for the main universities and their sub-institutions. Furthermore, the sub-institutions generally mention all of the concepts more often than the main university homepages, which could be explained by the fact the 159 sub-institutions that we included in the data were already, at least to some degree, concerned more specifically with matters of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Still it is interesting that of the 77 universities we analysed, only 5 speak directly of decolonization, and only 14 mention the TRC prominently on their main homepage. Less problem loaded concepts such as truth and reconciliation are more often used possibly due to the fact that both *can*, but do not necessarily have to, relate to the explicit context of colonial violence, residential schools and the TRC, and to a practice of critique.

3.3 Museums

As was mentioned in describing the research design, we conducted an in-depth-analysis of 19 individual museums of the 40 originally included in the data sample. The decision for the selected 19 museums was based on the popularity and position of the museums as important multipliers (i.e. the Royal museums), and on expected relevant results due to their special focus (i.e. the Canadian Museum for Human Rights). Furthermore, archives were also included. Archives are fundamentally different from museums and art galleries in that they do not speak to the same broad audience as museums, but they are relevant as authoritative infrastructures of knowledge. It is therefore extremely interesting for our analysis to see how the archived knowledge is framed and explained to be of concern, whose knowledge is in- or excluded, as well as if and how gaps are dealt with. The institutions, their locations, and the results, in relation to the analytical matrix, are depicted in Table 3. As was mentioned in 3.1, we initially checked whether the institutions (a) communicated a territorial acknowledgement[2], (b) referred directly to the TRC, (c) acknowledged the colonial settler history (and their own role within it), and (d) explicitly informed about policies concerning restitution[3] or repatriation.[4] The results are contained in a descriptive fashion in Table 3; however, the concepts and their implications cannot be caught with a mere numerical analysis. For this reason, we explain our findings in further detail and with some examples on the following pages.

Overall, we found that the museums, galleries, and archives were located on a spectrum from relatively high to rather low engagement with the topic of decolonization. According to our data, among the most engaged museums are, for example, the Canadian Museum of Human Rights and the Royal Museum of British Columbia. Among the least engaged

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2   A land or territorial acknowledgement recognizes the continued connection of Indigenous people to the respective territory.

3   An act of restoring or a condition of being restored, here especially the return of objects to their rightful owner(s), often individuals.

4   The act or process of restoring or returning someone or something to the country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship.

are, among others, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and the Museum of Natural History. Almost three quarters of our museum sample (73,68%) did acknowledge the Indigenous territory their institution is situated on, with varying degrees of prominence in positioning, either very prominent on the homepage or a little bit more hidden in subpages. Slightly less (72,22%) acknowledged the colonial history of Canada, again, in varying degrees which will be explored in more detail later. About two thirds (63,16%) directly mentioned the TRC in their explanatory sections, either when informing about the institution in general, their policy moving forward, or specific installations. The most ambivalent category was the presence of information about restitution or repatriation policies, which less than half of the museums (44,44%) addressed. The relatively low number in terms of restitution and repatriation policy could be influenced by the fact that museal institutions have varying amounts of artefacts and objects that could be considered for restitution and repatriation; for example, a modern art museum might not have any pieces of artwork that were not given consensually, which is why there would be no need for an explicit restitution policy. Also, such a policy clearly requires much more critical review of the own stock of exhibitions and the questions of provenance than territorial acknowledgement, which was done by three out of four institutions. In effect, restitution and repatriation does seem to be a rather ambivalent subject.

Institution	Location	(a)	(b)	(c)**	(d)**	Score
TELUS World of Science	Edmonton, Alberta	Yes	No	No	No	**1/4**
Royal Museum of British Columbia	Victoria, British Columbia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**4/4**
Museum of Anthropology	Vancouver, British Columbia	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	3/4
Canadian Museum of Human Rights	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**4/4**
Manitoba Museum	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	3/4
The Rooms	St. John, Newfoundland and Labrador	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3/4
Museum of Natural History	Halifax, Nova Scotia	No	Yes	No	No	**1/4**
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic	Halifax, Nova Scotia	Yes	No	Yes	No	2/4
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia	Halifax, Nova Scotia	Yes	No	Yes	No	2/4
Library and Archives Canada LAC*	Ottawa, Ontario	Yes	Yes	()	()	()
Royal Ontario Museum	Toronto, Ontario	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3/4
Canadian War Museum	Ottawa, Ontario	No	No	Yes	No	**1/4**
National Gallery of Canada	Ottawa, Ontario	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3/4
Canadian Museum of History	Gatineau, Québec	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3/4
Musée de la civilisation	Québec, Québec	No	No	Yes	Yes	2/4
Royal Saskatchewan Museum	Regina, Saskatchewan	No	No	No	Yes	**1/4**
Royal Alberta Museum	Edmonton, Alberta	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3/4
Art Gallery of Ontario	Ottawa, Ontario	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3/4
Remai Modern	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3/4

Table 3, own depiction.

* The LAC was found to be to different from the museums to analyse within the matrix, but still relevant enough for the in-depth analysis.

**Since the LAC is not included in categories (c) and (d), the percentages will be calculated with n=18 instead of n=19 for (a) and (b).

Several relevant aspects became apparent during our in-depth-analysis of the institutions' creation of images , relating to their perceived role within a postcolonial Canada and their legacies from colonial times, for both their Canadian and the international audiences. These aspects will first be described more broadly for all the 19 institutions. To further illustrate the most striking cases from the spectrum we observed, we will then discuss two examples in greater detail. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights will be presented as one of the most positive examples of reflective decolonial museums. The Royal Saskatchewan Museum can serve as an example that is, according to our data, hardly concerned with applying the topic of decolonization to its own practices and message.

Overall

There were several dynamics that we examined in the in-depth analysis that exceed the category scheme of our analytical matrix. We found articulations of policies in written documents, such as Strategic plans (e.g. from the Musée de la civilisation, Québec, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and the The Rooms, St. John's), reports (e.g. from the Royal Museum of British Columbia, Victoria, and Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa), and handbooks on repatriation and restitution policy (e.g. from the Royal Museum of British Columbia, and the Royal Museum of Saskatchewan, Regina). Among those examples, the report of the Royal Museum of British Columbia especially stands out due to the explicit apology made within the report. The board of directors state that they "apologize for the way the Museum treated the many individuals within our workforce, as well as the communities and Nations we serve" (RBCM Report 2021: 4). This is a rather exceptional incident, at least in our data set.

Connected to this element is the question of the chosen language used in the reports, statements, apologies, and general websites that we examined. The Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton stood out positively with their description of an exhibit, the Manitou Asinîy meteorite, which was stolen by a missionary in the 19th century, in the sense that the choice of words reflected a very critical understanding of colonial Canadian history.[5] Other institutions were less critical, for example in their description of themselves as caretakers of Indigenous culture. The Manitoba Museum for example describes its role as being "a trusted keeper of Indigenous artefacts, and as a partner in the sharing of Indigenous stories"[6]. The choice to speak of "immigrants"[7]rather than the "settlers", too, is a rather problematic example of a poor, unreflected choice of words – or maybe an intentional statement against the decolonization impetus.

Another interesting stance we found was the combination of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black discrimination strategies into one, e.g. the commitment of the Royal Ontario Museum to "deepen our relationships with Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities in authentic and sustained ways"[8]. Or the combined tribute to "Black and

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5   https://royalalbertamuseum.ca/cultural-studies/indigenous-studies/manitou-asiniy (last accessed 29.05.2022).

6   https://manitobamuseum.ca/about-us/indigenous-connections (last accessed 29.05.2022).

7   https://manitobamuseum.ca/about-us/indigenous-connections (last accessed 29.05.2022).

8   https://www.rom.on.ca/en/about-us/toward-greater-inclusion-and-equity-at-the-rom (last accessed 29.05.2022).

Indigenous voices [that] can be found throughout this major exhibition, acknowledging the slave trade and Dutch colonial project" in the National Gallery of Canada (Suda 2021). Additionally, some institutions follow alternative strategies to restitution and repatriation, namely loan procedures, eased access to Indigenous artefacts for the respective communities, and financial support for mobility to visit the museums[9]. While this can, of course, be criticized as a feebler option compared to full restitution, it does acknowledge the economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitors of Canadian museums and shows an effort to at least partially bridge this division. It may also be part of a conscious recognition policy to aim at the continuation of exhibitions, which comprise substantial elements from a diversity of Indigenous population groups, that may, in the case of full restitutions, be dispersed. We will now present selected institutions in more detail, in order to illustrate what the spectrum of commitment means concretely.

Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Winnipeg, Manitoba

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) was opened in 2014, is situated in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is "the first museum solely dedicated to the evolution, celebration and future of human rights."[10] Due to this extraordinary predisposition, we expected the museum to score high in our analytical matrix and our in-depth analysis; both of these expectations were met. The CMHR, its mission and work towards the decolonization of Canada, will therefore be discussed in more detail. It shows a constructive example of how postcolonial reconciliation work may be fostered by a museum.

The CMHR was, apart from the Royal Museum of British Columbia, the only institution of the 19 we examined that fulfilled all four criteria: the territorial land acknowledgement is not only present throughout the webpage, it is part of the museums history and architecture: "The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is located on ancestral lands, on Treaty 1 Territory. The Red River Valley is also the birthplace of the Métis. We acknowledge the water in the Museum is sourced from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation", it reads on the homepage.[11] The CMHR states that "[f]or thousands of years, Indigenous people followed its waterways for peacemaking, dialogue and trade. Today this ancestral land stands as a National Historic Site and the home to the Museum."[12] While the museum was constructed, a prior archaeological excavation, a thorough discussion concerning the treatment of the objects found in the unearthing, and a deposit of traditional medicine bags, were undertaken to ensure the appropriate construction of the building on the Treaty 1 territory.[13]

Both the TRC and the residential schools history are part of the education covered by the CMHR. A permanent exhibition called "Truth and Reconciliation" not only discusses the legacy of the IRSS, but contains items created by residential school survivors and ceremonial objects, such as the Bentwood Box[14] that was displayed at the CMHR until 2017[15]. Through this exhibit, the museum visualizes the process of truth seeking and finding as well as reconciliation, which helps integrate the work of the TRC from 2008 to

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9   https://moa.ubc.ca/indigenous-access-and-engagement/ (last accessed 29.05.2022).

10 https://humanrights.ca/about-us (last accessed 29.05.2022).

11 https://humanrights.ca/about/the-building (last accessed 01.06.2022).

12 https://humanrights.ca/about/our-history (last accessed 29.05.2022).

13 https://humanrights.ca/about/architecture (last accessed 29.05.2022).

14 "The Bentwood Box is a lasting tribute to all residential school survivors. The sacred box and the items in this collection are deeply personal symbols of their experience." https://nctr.ca/exhibits/bentwood-box/ (last accessed 29.05.2022).

15 https://humanrights.ca/exhibition/truth-and-reconciliation (last accessed 29.05.2022).

2015 into Canadian history, but it also educates Canadians and non-Canadians about the IRSS and the TRC. Several other physical exhibits and online sources add to this collection of knowledge and art, which exceeds the mere "referral to the TRC" that was our analytical criterion to find out about acknowledgements. In terms of the violent colonial history and its role within that history, the CMHR proved to be the most critical institution in our data set. In the code of conduct, the museum describes the colonial experience in Canada, which it understands as ongoing until today, as a genocide – not "just" as the cultural genocide the TRC certified but a genocide – in which the residential schools were "a key component"[16] (see Mannitz/Drews 2022).

CMHR curator Karine Duhamel describes the ongoing "abusive colonial relationship" and argues that although the museum is working towards reconciliation, it "will always be an unfinished journey" (Duhamel 2017). Furthermore, she mentions reparation as a means to facilitate the successful process of reconciliation (Duhamel 2017). In another piece, Duhamel explicitly states that "reconciliation is a collective responsibility and one that all Canadians share, regardless of background or outlook" and that Canada has "a moral responsibility to articulate its principles, in practice" (Duhamel). Furthermore, the museum acknowledges ongoing and systematic racism in Canada and within itself[17]; the CMHR has an extensive and transparent strategy as well as resources to combat this problem as an institution, through the aforementioned exhibitions and learning material, but also through policies such as content review systems, a Diversity and Inclusion Committee, anti-racism and inherent bias training, public apologies for mistakes, as well as reviews and regular reports about the progress achieved in these matters.[18]

We can conclude that not only the official museum mandate, but its practical way of addressing the museum's subject and the leadership within the institution thoroughly acknowledge and educate about the violence inherent in Canadian settler colonialism, and reflect on the CMHR's role within this context. The work is directed both 'inwards' to the Canadian society and 'outward' to the international audience, which is supported by curator Duhamel's argument that "the eyes of the world are on us" (Duhamel).

Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan

The Royal Saskatchewan Museum (RSM) in Regina, Saskatchewan, was founded in 1906 as *the* Provincial Museum; its mandate is the appreciation of and teaching about Canadian natural and cultural heritage. Specifically, the museum collects, interprets, and supports knowledge of natural history and Indigenous culture in Saskatchewan.[19] We include the RSM with a more detailed analysis because of its size and importance for Saskatchewan and Canada in general, but also because some of its initiatives, e.g. the Indigenous Studies program and the First Nations Gallery, indicated that the museum includes some pertinent initiatives. However, with our in-depth analysis we found that the RSM's attention to decolonial work is rather low compared to other institutions. We exemplify this by discussing in what ways the RSM lacks decolonial structures that other museums possess nowadays. It is important to note, however, that the RSM is far from representing an utmost "negative example" of a museum of natural history and culture. The TELUS, the Museum of Natural history, and the Canadian War Museum scored equally in our analytical matrix, and when measured against the CMHR approach, almost all of the institutions in our analysis could actually do a lot more in the fields of decolonization and reconciliation work.

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16 https://humanrights.ca/code-of-conduct (last accessed 29.05.2022).

17 https://humanrights.ca/about/toward-greater-inclusion-and-equity (last accessed 29.05.2022).

18 https://humanrights.ca/about/toward-greater-inclusion-and-equity (last accessed 29.05.2022).

19 https://royalsaskmuseum.ca/about (last access 29.05.2022).

The RSM does not have a territorial land acknowledgement prominently positioned on their website, which is rather unusual for such an institution. It does articulate that "the RSM's mandate falls within areas that are guided by Treaty Nos. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10" and that "[w]e [the Museum] acknowledge the land in an act of reconciliation to those whose traditional territories we are on".[20] However, this is merely written down under a subcategory in the area of Indigenous Studies, namely the "Job Opportunity" subpage. This is an unusual and quite odd placement for a territorial acknowledgement and appears as if it was an obligatory statement but preferred to remain hidden. The TRC is not explicitly mentioned throughout the website. The RSM did schedule an event for May 2022, called "Tanya Talaga: Reconciliation and Our Shared Future" in which Talaga "shares Indigenous stories from across Canada and the world, humanizing the legacy of residential schools and colonization and sharing her hope for a more inclusive and equitable future".[21] However, a single event about reconcile and residential schools differs fundamentally in terms of the educational impact and long-term decolonization efforts from, e.g. permanent exhibitions. Strikingly, throughout the areas of Indigenous Studies and the First Nations Gallery, not once is the term "colonization" (or "decolonization") used.[22] All of these features resulted in no score for the categories of territorial acknowledgement, referral to the TRC, and acknowledgement of colonial history.

The RSM does, however, have a rather extensive restitution policy. The "Repatriation and shared stewardship" policy acknowledges the importance of sacred and culturally sensitive objects and artefacts; furthermore, there are resources available about the policy and procedures as well as documents to request viewing and action (i.e. shared stewardship, repatriation, replication, or temporary storage)[23]. This extent of the repatriation policy is relatively high compared to other institutions in our analysis and exceeded our expectations in terms of accessibility and depth of restitution policy.

Generally, we found that the language used by the RSM when educating about Indigenous peoples and the process of the North American colonization was explicitly neutral and non-confrontational. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the treaty making process was far from unproblematic; however, the RSM speaks very little of the controversial aspects of colonial legality. Facts are mentioned without much comment as to how the Numbered Treaties and the Indian Act were integral to the settler colonial practise, and no information is given about the aftermath of settler colonial legality, the Indigenous struggle against it and the modern implications of both the Numbered Treaties and the Indian Act.[24] This creates, in our understanding, a narrative of colonialism (even without naming it) as if a past history, something that can be explained within a few paragraphs, rather than a lived and lasting reality. This is coherent with the non-existence of acknowledgement of the RSM as a truly colonial institution, which is in itself logical; if colonialism is not explicitly described, an acknowledgement of the own role within it can also be avoided.

The RSM does not position itself clearly as an institution with the mission to educate about colonial harm, neither towards Canadian, nor towards the international audience. In that, it differs significantly to both the CMHR and other institutions of our analysis. There

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20 https://royalsaskmuseum.ca/research/indigenous-studies/job-opportunity (last accessed 29.05.2022).

21 https://royalsaskmuseum.ca/visit/events/tanya-talaga-reconciliation-and-our-shared-future (last accessed 29.05.2022).

22 https://royalsaskmuseum.ca/research/indigenous-studies, andhttps://royalsaskmuseum.ca/visit/exhibits/first-nations-gallery (last accessed 29.05.2022).

23 https://royalsaskmuseum.ca/research/indigenous-studies/repatriation-and-shared-stewardship (last accessed 29.05.2022).

24 https://royalsaskmuseum.ca/visit/exhibits/first-nations-gallery (last access 29.05.2022).

is a lack of initiatives specifically about the TRC, the IRSS, reconciliation, and colonialism in general. Yet another interesting aspect that is unique to the RMS is the inscription on the front of the museum which became an issue "at the centre of talks about whether it 'whitewashes' the contributions of Indigenous people" (White-Crummey 2021) in 2021. The inscription reads, "This museum of natural history is dedicated to the honour of all the pioneers who came from many lands to settle in this part of Canada, a tribute to their vision, toil and courage which gave so much to Saskatchewan and this nation" (White-Crummey 2021). This is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, by focusing on "pioneers", i.e. settlers and colonizers, it simultaneously excludes peoples who lived in Saskatchewan before, i.e. the Indigenous. Secondly, it ignores the contribution and, indeed, the indispensability of Indigenous peoples for settler survival during the early phase of colonization. Thirdly, "visions, toil and courage" paints an incorrectly positive picture of the reality of the colonization of Canada, which was, at least partially, far from "courageous".

In conclusion, the RMS is surely not an antithesis to the CMHR; as was mentioned earlier, decolonization processes and initiatives do not take the shape of one-size-fits-all solutions but are a spectrum with various possible strategies. However, the RMS stands out to a remarkable extent insofar as there is no clear and prominent territorial acknowledgement, no reference to the TRC, no critical contextualization of Canadian settler colonialism, nor a reflective self-positioning within that history. These are substantial omissions for a state institution that is tasked with educating about Canada's natural and cultural heritage, that hosts a First Nation Gallery, and entertains an Indigenous Studies program.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Using the example of Canada, our study has firstly explained the deep and lasting impact of settler colonialism: The colonial system imposed by Britain onto the Indigenous peoples of Canada had severe effects on the social fabric, the culture, the religion, the political systems, and the rights of Indigenous peoples. This system, too, altered the gender norms and the agency of Indigenous women. We have secondly reviewed recent efforts to address the legacies of colonization in crucial Canadian state institutions, namely universities and museums, with an aim of decolonization and reconciliation.

Education institutions and museums represent important communication interfaces and production sites of collective narrations and self-images. As shown by Benedict Anderson (1983), states engage in the construction of particular "imagined communities" with the help of national histories and representations of the collective in order to legitimate and reproduce the existing political and social structures. In colonial states, and settler colonial states in particular, this regularly meant the construction of narratives that emphasise the greatness of the colonizers, their role as bringers of civilization, and the like. National holidays celebrating battles won against the Indigenous, monuments depicting successful military conquerors, or national museums which celebrate the spirit of the settlers are typical examples of how this has traditionally been symbolized and conveyed. The violence perpetrated in the context of colonization was usually left out from such images, or expressed in terms that conceal the intrusive conditions which led to, e.g. an uprising of local populations that was allegedly heroically put down, in the first place. This is the case in Canada as well. The traditional myth of the "'benevolent' colonization" (Nagy 2013: 63) stands in stark contrast to the structural racism and violence that became established with settler colonialism.

Such notorious euphemisms and blindness vis-à-vis the ugly sides of the own history have increasingly come under attack and were, in many cases, replaced with more

balanced, more honest, and more humble accounts. The sociology of race and ethnic relations and post-colonialism as a critical theory have raised discussions which contributed to this change. Tom Bentley explains the shift as one consequence of "an age of apparent cosmopolitan liberal empathy. That is the very narrative that once furnished the colonising state's desired national imagery are now out of tune with the liberal pitch for legitimacy. In this way, it seems, that former colonising states are torn (…) between two apparently irreconcilable impulses: the conventional propensity for aggrandising plotlines and the reassessment and denouncement of atrocity" (Bentley 2016: 3). It is important to note that this whole theme is not 'merely' an issue of storytelling but that it rests on the assumption that recognition of the moral wrongs and reconciliation are necessary to break cycles of violence and to develop more peaceful relations between groups and/or nations. To make this work it needs political action, institutional embedding, and a fundamentally different mindset from those which inform colonialism.

In his essay collection „Decolonising the Mind", Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981) precisely describes the violence of the colonial exploitation: colonialism as imposing its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. However, he stresses that the most important area of domination concerns the mental universe, the control through culture, of how people perceive themselves and their place in the world. When Ngugi was born, his homeland Kenya was a British settler colony. The country gained political independence in 1963. But does that mean it's been 'decolonized'? Ngugi's work points to the fact that national sovereignty is not the only dimension to consider when conceptualizing decolonization, but there are also the social, economic, spiritual, cultural, and lingual legacies (see also Ogot & Ochien 1995). Ngugi develops his argument on grounds of a former settler colony that was 'decolonized' in formal political terms: British rule in Kenya terminated 60 years ago. Decolonization attempts in countries where colonial perpetration has never been disrupted in that way partly require the same, but also distinct and additional considerations. This is exactly why our paper focused on a settler colonial state that has declared its willingness to do exactly that. This situation is now a task for Canadians to work on. As Justice Murray Sinclair said, reconciliation is a Canadian, not an Aboriginal, problem (Go/Douglas 2015).

With our review of the approaches undertaken by certain Canadian state institutions we wanted to explore what it means practically to decolonize the troubled relationships between Indigenous populations and the descendants of settlers. Given that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was active until 2015 and released a detailed catalogue of calls to action – seven years ago already – the results appear sobering. Higher education institutions have installed infrastructures that cater explicitly for Indigenous students, and in view of the social and economic divides that run along this boundary, this is not to be condemned but can be regarded an empowerment strategy. The more students from Indigenous backgrounds get access to higher education, the more likely they will be able to take part in Canada's world of employment, in bodies of political representation, and so on. Their inclusion in formal education tracks does, however, not per se imply a reassessment of Canada's colonial history, nor does it revalue the knowledge and heritage of their forebears. To what extent these dimensions are also addressed in university programs (e.g. by revised curricula, systematic inclusion of postcolonial theory and practice in teaching, construction of non-discriminatory history narrations etc.) lies beyond the scope of our exploration and would require extensive analyses.

The question whether reconciliation and decolonizing activities can be observed was easier to answer in the realm of museums; although, of course, with the reservation that an online research meets limitations. We found a spectrum of activities applied across the country that reflect different dimensions of the challenging task to confront Canada's violent history. We have also found project strategies dealing with this past and its

present consequences in such a way that it may lead to a more equal footing for different population groups. The wide variance that we illustrated, with more detailed analyses of the published policies of two museums, shows that the will to scrutinize the impact of settler colonialism is not a given but contested, also among curators and other responsible key actors. That is not surprising. The entangled history of violence, diverging historical narratives, struggles for power and other contested resources, structural imbalances, and conflicting social identities filter through all levels of Canadian society. In terms of a necessary practice research on the feasibility of overcoming the legacies from the past, it will be important to follow up on the everyday effects that the different strategies render for the envisioned project of reconciling relations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMHR	Canadian Museum for Human Rights
IRSS	Indian Residential School System
IRSSA	Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement
RSM	Royal Saskatchewan Museum
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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