EXPLORING LEARNING WITHIN A DECOLONIAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP: IMPACTS ON EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS AND RECONCILIATION IN A CANADIAN CONTEXT

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

Conservation partnerships are projects with various goals around management of protected areas, species, capacity building, education, or financial and technical support that can involve Indigenous Peoples, non-government organizations, the Canadian state, the public, and researchers. Conservation partnerships are becoming increasingly interested in respecting and affirming Indigenous Peoples' rights and activities that promote Indigenous Peoples' reconnection and relationship to their territories. Relational aspects, such as trust, power dynamics, and how conflict is handled, are important for partnerships to be effective. As Indigenous-led conservation initiatives increase and efforts toward Reconciliation are made, the relationships of those involved continue to change, thus, learning around relationships must be examined. Social learning theory is a useful tool to examine learning since it focuses on what was learned and how learning happened. This study focused on the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) as a case study to examine what kinds of shifts in relationships are taking place as this partnership embodies learning and generating knowledge to support Indigenous-led conservation. This study used social learning to explore the learning outcomes and processes of relationships and relationship-building of those involved with the CRP. The following objectives guided this research: (1) identify the SL processes and outcomes that emerged from relationships developed among those individuals involved with the CRP, and (2) explore if and how individuals' learning outcomes from engagement with the CRP inform relationship-building practices outside the CRP, and (3) explore how evolving relationships between CRP participants are impacting personal and organizational understandings and actions of reconciliation. Fourteen people engaged with the CRP were interviewed following a semi-structured format. The results found many relationship outcomes and processes that allowed the CRP to be a positive and collaborative space and combined with the relational aspects of strong leadership and facilitation, which allowed trust to be fostered throughout engagements. Only a few participants' learning outcomes were brought back to their organizations due to power, such as job role and who is perceived as being able to change social norms. Participants also shared diverse perspectives about reconciliation and what changes are needed on a personal, organizational, and societal level. Many shared the importance of relationship building within the CRP as key to helping them learn or recognize spaces where reconciliation may not be as accepted. A few participants shared criticisms about reconciliation and the colonial undertones of the term and conservation might undermine relationship efforts. These findings demonstrate the importance of examining the relational aspects of partnerships so they can be equitable and as reconciliation continues to be advanced within Canada.

List of Abbreviations Used

CoP	Community of Practice
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CRP	Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership
ICE	The Indigenous Circle of Experts
IPCA	Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KCP	Knowledge Co-Production
MLML	Multi-loop Model of Learning
PA	Protected Areas
SLT	Social Learning Theory
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Statement

I am a non-Indigenous researcher who grew up on the rural lands of the Abenaki peoples (Maine) and am an uninvited guest in Kjipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, in what is now known as Halifax, Nova Scotia. Growing up on Abenaki lands, I was fortunate to be able to access the outdoors uninhibited and always had access to transportation. My upbringing cultivated my passion for the environment and made me appreciate my surroundings. I was further fortunate enough to study abroad in Cambodia, which helped me learn from the lived experiences of locals.

My identity and upbringing as a Cambodian Adoptee of white parents have shaped my understanding of colonization and the intersections of oppression, which my research is focused around. As an adoptee, I lost access to my first language, culture, and family. My lived experience also impacts my empathy and understanding of the people in my research. While I am not Indigenous, I understand how my oppression is linked through colonization and assimilation to Western standards. Although I was brought to Abenaki lands, I am still a settler and do contribute to the ongoing impacts of colonization and own this. I have been continually reflecting on how I bring myself to this research and have a strong moral and ethical imperative to be in relation with my partner organization, the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP), and participants. As a member of the CRP, my study design is strongly influenced by this relationship, so I must uphold and respect Indigenous worldviews and paradigms throughout my research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Globally and across Canada, Indigenous Peoples have been removed from their lands and excluded from decision-making and management schemes in protected areas (PA) (Hockings et al., 2004; Moola & Roth, 2018). Canada's conservation policies have been rooted in colonial policies, disregarding Indigenous rights and treaties, and removing Indigenous Peoples from their lands in the name of conservation (Moola & Roth, 2018). Global and Canadian shifts within conservation have recognized the importance of Indigenous Peoples in PA management (Artelle et al., 2019; Kothari et al., 2013) and increased support for Indigenous-led conservation models (Moola & Roth, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). Alongside these advancements, Canada has been engaging in advancing reconciliation efforts within conservation (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). With increasing Indigenous decision-making power and Indigenous-led conservation models, relationships among Indigenous Nations and organizations involved in conservation continue to evolve. With these shifts, partnerships within conservation have emerged in recognition of Indigenous Nations' knowledge and importance (Artelle et al., 2019; Conservation through Reconcilation Parnterhip, n.d.; Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE), 2018; M'sɨt No'kmaq et al., 2021; Ostashewski et al., 2020; Reid et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020). Relationships are important to examine in conservation partnerships because they dictate how well the partnerships can work, how conflict and power sharing are managed, and if all parties will be willing to engage in ongoing collaborative learning (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bowie, 2013; Conley & Moote, 2003; Zurba et al., 2012).

Conservation and PA management in Canada have historically mirrored the development and values of the Canadian state (Goyes & South, 2019; Johnston & Mason, 2021) and what the state has deemed to be valued for protection (Fisk et al., 2021; Moola & Roth, 2018; Youdelis et al., 2021). Canada removed Indigenous Peoples from their traditional lands and waters so the land could be used for state desires of what the land should be used for, such as recreation and resource extraction (ICE, 2018; Johnston & Mason, 2021; Moola & Roth, 2018; Youdelis et al., 2021). The removal of Indigenous Peoples from their lands and waters was to maintain the narrative of the Canadian wilderness (ICE, 2018; Johnston & Mason, 2021) and to maintain the control of natural resources as the Canadian settler state was established (Bernauer & Roth, 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021). This idea of wilderness has perpetuated the separation of humans and nature (ICE, 2018; Shultis & Heffner, 2016), which runs counter to the Indigenous worldview that humans are part of the landscape through a reciprocal relationship (Artelle et al., 2019; M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020b). While conservation and PA management schemes have evolved, Indigenous Peoples still have limited power and roles within these schemes and many of their cultural practices are still not allowed (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Youdelis et al., 2020).

In response to Indigenous Peoples' activism and assertion of rights from local to global spaces, international standards and frameworks have shifted conservation and the valuation and championing of Indigenous Peoples within PA management (Corson et al., 2020; Norman, 2017; Reimerson, 2013). One important global framework was the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP was passed by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007 (UN, 2007). It formally

recognizes Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights to their lands and livelihoods under formal or informal structures (UN, 2007). UNDRIP has been important in showing global and formal support for Indigenous Peoples. Canada did not recognize UNDRIP until 2016 (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016) and formalized UNDRIP into Canadian law in 2021 (UNDRIP, 2021) as Bill C-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIP, 2021). Formal Canadian recognition is the bare minimum to recognize Indigenous Peoples' rights and further actions stemming from this law are needed (Mansuy et al., 2023; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Additionally, even at these global spaces (CBD, IUCN, etc.), Indigenous Peoples' power and ability to enact change are limited (Corson et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2024; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

As part of the Pathway to Target 1 initiative in 2017, the Canadian Federal government invited the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) to explore equitable conservation and what Indigenous-led protected areas would look like to help achieve Canada's Target 1 conservation goal by 2020, as well as in the spirit of reconciliation (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). The ICE (2018) was led by Two Indigenous co-chairs and seven core members of First Nations and Metis representation who have PA or governance. There were nine government employees representing provincial and territorial governments as well as federal government departments and agencies like Parks Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ICE, 2018). In 2018 ICE released their report, *We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation*, describing their process of engagement across Canada, defining what Indigenous-led PAs are in Canada, and what

possible governance schemes could be. The ICE named these types of PAs as Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and defined them as "…lands and waters where Indigenous governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems" (ICE, 2018, p. 35). The ICE found IPCAs to share three common characteristics: they are Indigenous-led, represent a long-term commitment to conservation, and elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities (2018, p. 36).

IPCAs as a process and part of reconciliation have become increasingly popular since ICE's (2018) work in 2017. During the ICE's (2018) work on IPCAs, reconciliation was at the core of their engagements and outcomes, demonstrating the importance of reconciliation within conservation. The ICE (2018) drew on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) definition of reconciliation as "…an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships..." (p. 16) and added that, "…a critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change" (p. 16). Thus, those within the conservation field need to reckon with the dark history of conservation that removed Indigenous Peoples from their lands and simultaneously criminalized their knowledge, language, and cultural practices associated with the land (Goyes & South, 2019; Johnston & Mason, 2021; Youdelis et al., 2020). The consequences of these policies and practices can be seen in the reservation system and residential boarding schools (ICE, 2018). At the same time, those within the conservation field must work towards restoring and engaging in new relationships to engage in reconciliation. With reconciliation at the forefront of

conservation since the ICE's (2018) work and Canada formalizing UNDRIP into law as Bill C-15 (UNDRIP, 2021), Canada is committing to engaging in reconciliation. Without meaningfully engaging in reconciliation, effective partnerships and meaningful relationships in PAs will continue to be hindered (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Moola & Roth, 2018).

In tandem with the focus on reconciliation within conservation, there has been the resurgence of Indigenous culture, language, and law through Indigenous Peoples reconnecting with their territories and culture. Indigenous resurgence is generally articulated as the reclamation of relationships that are grounded in land, culture, and community and promote the health and well-being of Indigenous Nations (Artelle et al., 2021; Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019). This resurgence is becoming evident within conservation through the implementation of Indigenous ways of knowing into planning and managing, governing through Indigenous law, and the implementation of cultural and relationship-based practices wth the land and other species within PAs, IPCAs, or other Indigenous-led initiatives across Canada (Artelle et al., 2019, 2021; Buscher et al., 2021; ICE, 2018; Littlechild & Sutherland, 2021; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020a, 2020b; von der Porten et al., 2019; Youdelis et al., 2021).

With these global and Canadian conservation shifts, there has been an emergence of partnerships focused on centring and valuing the knowledge and connection Indigenous Peoples have with their territories. There have been increased calls for the ethical imperative of collaborating and working with Indigenous Peoples within conservation (Artelle et al., 2021; H. E. Castleden et al., 2017; David-Chavez et al., 2024; Mulrennan et al., 2012; Reid et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2020). Within these partnerships,

Indigenous Peoples are more often treated as rights holders instead of stakeholders (Mansuy et al., 2023; Reid et al., 2022; Reyes-García et al., 2022). These partnerships are increasingly incorporating Indigenous knowledge within accepted conservation practices for a more holistic approach rooted in respecting Indigenous worldviews (Artelle et al., 2021; Beveridge et al., 2020; Dickson-Hoyle et al., 2022; Diggon et al., 2021; Hessami et al., 2021; M'sɨt No'kmaq et al., 2021; Reid et al., 2021, 2022; Steel et al., 2021). Knowledge co-production has also become a viable way to respectfully and meaningfully share and produce knowledge within these partnerships (Muhl et al., 2023; Zurba et al., 2021). Even with these advancements, Indigenous People across Canada remain cautious and still hesitant to engage in conservation and relationships due to Canada's wrongdoings in PAs (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a).

Learning is important for collaborative decision-making and partnerships within conservation. Social Learning (SL) as a lens has become a popular theory to examine environmental partnerships and arrangements due to its collaborative nature (Cundill & Rodela, 2012; Feist et al., 2020). SL is an interactive and dynamic process occurring within a defined social interaction, space, or community of practice (Reed et al., 2010), whereby those involved can deliberate about issues, reflect and share values to culminate in social action (Andrade et al., 2023; Eastwood et al., 2022; Keen et al., 2005; King et al., 2023; Lumosi et al., 2020). SL can provide insight into how collaborators relate and interact with each other within partnerships (Jacobi & De Souza, 2021; Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Prutzer et al., 2021). Relationships are crucial to collaborative endeavours, as trust, power dynamics and how actors can handle conflict are dictated by relationships (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Prutzer et al., 2021; Zurba et al., 2012). SL also provides the tools to

examine changing relationships and the specific processes driving the relationship changes (Jacobi & De Souza, 2021; Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Prutzer et al., 2021). Therefore, SL is useful in providing the framework to examine how relationships are changing within partnerships formed with the intent of reconciliation or decolonizing conservation practices and to help inform new partnerships as they continue to emerge.

Learning is important for collaborative decision-making and relationship-building in partnerships in Canada as stakeholders continue to work toward reconciliation and new IPCAs continue to be created (Bishop et al., 2025aa; ICE, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Reconciliation within IPCAs calls for new relationships and rethinking around Indigenous rights and land and bringing together Indigenous and Western systems of knowledge (Bishop et al., 2025a; M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021; Tran, et al., 2020b; Zurba, Beazley, et al., 2019). Thus, new frames of reference will need to be established, individually and as part of organizations for this social change to happen. SL provides a framework for understanding how relationships are changing at different scales to guide the change necessary for partnerships to be successful as reconciliation advances and Indigenous-led conservation continues to be supported. To engage successfully in reconciliation, those involved in partnerships must continue to learn to enact meaningful change within the conservation field in Canada.

Although there has been Canadian and global support for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives (Moola & Roth, 2019; Zurba et al., 2019a), there continue to be systemic barriers impeding IPCA creation and supporting other Indigenous-led initiatives (King et al., 2023; Mansuy et al., 2023; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Current governance structures, knowledge systems, and embedded power within

institutions have not fully supported Indigenous People (Mansuy et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2020; Youdelis et al., 2021; Zurba et al., 2019a). This continues to play out as trouble reconciling Indigenous and traditional law with the Western system (M'sɨt No'kmaq et al., 2021; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b), IPCAs needing recognition by the Canadian government for funding and being included in Canada's area-based conservation targets which conflicts with the idea that IPCAs are for Indigenous Peoples and exist no matter whether they are recognized by Western governance systems (Corson & Campbell, 2023; ICE, 2018; Youdelis et al., 2021; Zurba et al., 2019a), and creating and meaningful relationships (ICE, 2018; M'sɨt No'kmaq et al., 2021; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Thus, resources and government support may not be given to certain Indigenous-led initiatives, further jeopardizing ongoing and future partnerships and impeding reconciliation efforts.

After the conclusion of the ICE's work in 2018, new initiatives around supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, such as IPCAs, have formed. One important group formed by several key ICE members has been the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP). The CRP is hosted by the IISAAK OLAM Foundation, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, and the University of Guelph (UoG) and is led by the leadership circle made up of five Indigenous Peoples and two academic leads at the UoG. Each of the host organizations had support staff to support the CRP. This national research partnership was awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Grant with available funds up to $2.5 million over seven years focused on research and knowledge mobilization (CRP, n.d.; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2025). The partnership engaged with a variety of Indigenous Peoples

and Nations, Indigenous leaders, scholars, conservation and other organizations, federal, provincial and territorial governments, and youth and elders across Canada (up to 30 organizations and 300 people (Bishop et al., 2025b) and see Bishop et al., 2025a for a list of some identified organizations involved in funding and development as all those involved is not publicly available), all "united in the goal of supporting Indigenous-led conservation in Canada" (CRP, 2024a, b). An Elders Lodge, comprised of four knowledge holders of diverse geographies, helped to provide cultural and spiritual information to the CRP in the first half of the partnership and co-created a governance framework based on seasons (Bishop et al., 2025a; CRP, n.d.). Engagement was largely with First Nations and some Métis and Inuit people due to previous relationships formed during the ICEs work (Bishop et al., 2025a). The CRP had three main objectives: (1) Creating a network for conservation through reconciliation, while supporting the establishment of IPCAs and transforming current PAs through the incubation of the Canadian ICPA Alliance; (2) Ensuring there is ethical and collaborative research being conducted by ensuring research is abiding by Ownership, Control, Access, Possession (OCAP)® guidelines (First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.), therefore supporting the transformation of conservation in Canada; and (3) Increasing capacity amongst Indigenous Nations and communities, the conservation sector and public by hosting dialogues, gatherings, and co-creating multi-media knowledge mobilization tools and other knowledge dissemination tools (CRP, 2024a).

Among those engaged with the CRP, there was a wide variety of how much people were involved and the motivations behind joining, either for personal reasons or their jobs required them to be involved. One of the main ways people were involved was

through the seven-stream model of work and these were: Ethical Space, Knowledge Systems, Conservation Governance, Domestic Law and Policy, Biocultural Indicators and Outcomes, the IPCA Economics, and Infrastructure and Finance stream (CRP, 2024d). In addition to these, there was an IPCA co-learning circle and other groups created around shared topics of interest, such as conservation financing and land trusts (Bishop et al., 2025a). There was also an informal space for student researchers to collaborate and get support. The CRP also hosted webinars and other learning opportunities, such as workshops, for its owner members and education for those outside of the CRP. Engagement sizes ranged depending on the focus, from special trainings for learning circles (less than 10 people) to up to 300 people at yearly gatherings or webinars of popular topics like establishing IPCAs. There were several opportunities a year to engage with the CRP, depending on the stream or other spaces of engagement (CRP, n.d.). In 2023, the CRP reached its halfway point of the partnership and held a virtual meeting to discuss the new direction of the partnership. It was announced that the streams of work would be ending and resources would now be put into its three legacy projects: the IPCA Knowledge Basket, the IPCA Innovation Centres, and the IPCA Alliance/Network (CRP, 2024c). In May of 2025, the CRP held the final gathering online where CRP hosts, leaders, and elders reflected on the work, gratitude, and future work and partnerships that grew from the CRP.

1.1 Purpose

This research aims to build insights into the evolving relationships between Indigenous leaders and the Canadian government and other applicable jurisdictions within

the governance of IPCAs. I aimed to understand how relationship building has the potential to influence governance and reconciliation by exploring the learning process and outcomes of those involved in the development of IPCAs. CRP members who are involved in governance or IPCA or Indigenous-led conservation planning work broadly were interviewed, as they are a pertinent group that embodies a decolonial partnership with the broader goal of supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives across Canada. This research contributes to the social learning literature by examining relationships instead of treating them as an outcome of learning.

I was invited to participate with the CRP as a student researcher since my supervisor Dr. Melanie Zurba was a co-lead for the Conservation Governance Stream and my interests around relationships and reconciliation within IPCAs in Canada were well aligned with the CRP's work. Additionally, I had previous research conducted through the CRP since my Honour's thesis examined the work of the ICEs governance process, which was completed in May of 2020. My Honour's research was invited through the relationship Dr. Zurba's relationship with the CRP and then accepted after my initial proposal was reviewed by the CRP. As a student researcher within the CRP, I followed the norms and guidelines around engaging respectfully with Indigenous Peoples in research. As such, this research is engaged in decolonizing research practices and frameworks. The following objectives guided this thesis.

Objectives

1. Identify the SL processes and outcomes that emerged from relationships developed among those individuals involved with the CRP;

2. Explore if and how individuals' learning outcomes from engagement with the CRP inform relationship-building practices outside the CRP;
3. Explore how evolving relationships between CRP participants are impacting personal and organizational understandings and actions of reconciliation.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This thesis is comprised of six chapters as well as a reference list and appendices. Chapter 2 provides detailed context for this research of relevant literature areas. Chapter 3 describes the methods and approaches used to conduct the research. Chapters 4 and 5 provide in-depth results and findings, formatted as articles for submission to peer-reviewed journals. As such, chapters 4 and 5 include an introduction, methods, resulting in some repetition of content from previous chapters. Chapter 4 aims to explore objectives one and two, describing the social learning outcomes and processes of participants. Chapter 5 explores the third objective about relationship building changes impacting reconciliation. Chapter 6 contextualizes the research and gives recommendations about further research that is needed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section reviews the literature in five main areas. The first section will examine the conservation paradigm shift and its influences on Canada. The second section will provide more information about Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and the different types that currently exist in Canada with examples of each. The third section will focus on reconciliation in Canada and what reconciliation has looked like within PAs and IPCAs. The fourth section will discuss Indigenous Peoples relationships with federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments actors within IPCAs and PAs. Finally, the last section will cover social learning (SL), the multi-loop learning framework for evaluating SL, and Indigenous ways of learning.

2.1 Conservation Paradigm Shifts

Historically conservation and PA management in Canada have mirrored the development and values of the Canadian state (Goyes & South, 2019; Johnston & Mason, 2021) and what the state has deemed to be valued for protection (Fisk et al., 2021; Moola & Roth, 2019; Youdelis et al., 2021). Canada has had a state approach of enclosing areas for tourism and pleasure (Johnston & Mason, 2021), while simultaneously removing Indigenous Peoples from their traditional lands and waters (ICE, 2018; Johnston & Mason, 2021; Moola & Roth, 2019; Youdelis et al., 2021). The purpose of the removal had two goals: to maintain the narrative of the Canadian wilderness (ICE, 2018; Johnston & Mason, 2021) and to maintain the control of natural resources where Indigenous Peoples lived as the Canadian settler state was established (Bernauer & Roth, 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021). This idea of wilderness ignored the fact that Indigenous Peoples

have managed and, when able to, maintained a reciprocal relationship with their lands and waters since time immemorial (Artelle et al., 2021; Zurba et al., 2019a). This idea of wilderness has also perpetuated the separation of humans and nature (ICE; 2018; Shultis & Heffner, 2016), which runs counter to the Indigenous worldview that humans are part of the landscape through a reciprocal relationship (Artelle et al., 2021; M'sɨt No'kmaq et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020).

PA designations have followed this approach, which is maintained by the IUCN and internationally recognized (Dudley et al., 2010; Zurba et al., 2019a). The IUCN is a globally recognized authority on conservation composed of stakeholders representing a variety of sectors to help organizations and nations make informed decisions about conservation (IUCN, 2019). The IUCN is composed of four member categories that provide expertise for best practices and international guidelines (IUCN, n.d.): the state and government agency members, subnational government members (created in 2021), national and international non-governmental organizations, and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (created in 2016 to recognize the importance of their rights and voices) (IUCN, n.d.). Different committees are responsible for different areas of conservation (IUCN, 2019). There are seven categories of PAs based on management and usage: strict nature reserve, wilderness area, national park, natural monument or feature, habitat/species management area, protected landscape, and PA with sustainable use of natural resources (Dudley et al., 2010). These are global guidelines that countries can use for guidance on their own classification of PAs (Dudley et al., 2010). The IUCN updated their guidelines in 2010 to include a human dimension (Dudley et al., 2010), showcasing the global support for people and Indigenous Peoples in managing landscapes.

In recent decades there has been increased global support for Indigenous Peoples within the conservation field and in managing their lands. These shifts have been the result of decades of activism and work of Indigenous Peoples and organizations asserting their rights in their territories and in settler organizations like the IUCN (Corson et al., 2020; Norman, 2017; Reimerson, 2013). These shifts have led to increased inclusion and championing of their rights and knowledge within PAs (Corson et al., 2020; Norman, 2017; Reimerson, 2013; Zurba et al., 2019a). While Indigenous Peoples have gained more rights and access to global spaces which dictate PA norms like the IUCN, these spaces are still colonial and largely prioritize Western and scientific knowledge (Reimerson, 2013; Zurba et al., 2024; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Indigenous Peoples continue to face many barriers in global, federal, territorial and provincial spaces, which only barely tolerate their presence for optics and filling a quota for inclusion (Reimerson, 2013; Zurba et al., 2024; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

The Aichi Targets provided another important global shift. These were adopted at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010 with the adoption of the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011- 2020* (Jonas et al., 2014; Woodley et al., 2012; Zurba et al., 2019a). The 20 Aichi Targets are designed to meet five larger goals towards conservation and sustainable biodiversity use (Jonas et al., 2014; Zurba et al., 2019a). These targets were aimed at stopping global biodiversity loss and creating more areas of protection for nature in the form of PAs, both marine and terrestrial (Jonas et al., 2014). Included in the Aichi Targets was the addition of the term other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM), specifically named in Target 11 (Jonas et al., 2014). The addition of OECMs recognized area-based management

practices that contribute to biodiversity conservation but do not necessarily meet any criteria for the IUCN PA designations (Woodley et al., 2012). The OECM wording also signified global support for Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCAs)[1] (Woodley et al., 2012). Nations that are signatories to the CBD, including Canada, had until 2020 to achieve these targets, though these targets were not legally binding (Zurba et al., 2019a).

More recently, there were further advancements in global support for Indigenous Peoples at the COP 15 2020 UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, Canada in December of 2022. *The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (GBF) was adopted at the conference and is made up of four long-term goals for 2050 and 23 targets that should be achieved by 2030 to help reach the 2050 goals (CBD, 2022). The 23 targets are grouped into three major areas: (1) reducing threats to biodiversity, (2) meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing, and (3) tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming (CBD, 2022). There was new language added to targets to specifically address and show respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, achieved through the efforts of Indigenous Peoples and organizations at the conference (International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), 2022). This new language makes explicit the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and is present in 6 of the 23 targets (CBD, 2022). This language is especially apparent in

[1]Community Conserved Territories and Areas and its subsequent acronym (ICCAs) do not match. The IUCN had accepted CCAs initially for conservation designation, whereas Indigenous protected areas do not have the same designation and are not as the same spaces as local communities (Smyth, 2015).

Target 3 when talking about conservation size goals to be achieved by 2030 (CBD, 2022; emphasis added). Target 3 states,

> Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, **recognizing indigenous and traditional territories**, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, **recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories** (CBD, 2022).

The phrasing in Target 3 recognizes Indigenous Peoples and local communities' rights and traditional territories in conservation and further elevates the importance of Indigenous Peoples in conservation at a global scale. The GBF has made it clear that signatory countries to the CBD must continue to work with and support Indigenous Peoples equitably to achieve conservation goals.

Through Indigenous Peoples' activism and shifts at the global level, the Canadian PA landscape has attempted to be more inclusive of Indigenous Peoples. One notable shift was from the Canadian adoption of the Aichi Targets in 2015 called *the 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada* (Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), 2016). As part of the efforts toward Canada Target 1 to conserve 17 percent of

land and 10 percent of the sea by 2020 (ECCC, 2016), the Federal government created the Pathway to Target 1 initiative (Zurba et al., 2019a). As part of the pathway, the ICE was convened in 2017 to give recommendations around how this target could be met equitably and amid reconciliation efforts (Zurba et al., 2019a). The ICE (2018) had two co-chairs, one male and one female to bring a balance, and the other seven core Indigenous members represented a range of First Nations and Metis with various expertise relating to PAs and governance (ICE, 2018). The nine government ICE committee members were from FPT governments, as well as governmental agencies such as Parks Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) (ICE, 2018). This pathway from the perspective of the ICE gives greater insight into the spirit of good faith the ICE entered when taking on this challenge from the Federal government (ICE, 2018). The ICEs' (2018) work was a clear step by the Canadian government in supporting Indigenous-led conservation and the subsequent adoption of the term Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs).

2.2 IPCAs in Canada

Indigenous protected areas (IPAs) are not a new concept in Canada, but the official name coined by the ICE in 2018, IPCAs, is relatively new (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). The ICE (2018) found IPCAs across Canada to share three common traits: they are Indigenous-led, represent a long-term commitment to conservation, and elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities. Language and culture are also at the core of IPCAs (ICE, 2018), highlighting the cultural values that many Indigenous and local populations place on their lands rather than a Western view of biodiversity or ecological value.

Additionally, specific characteristics and goals of IPCAs are specific to the Canadian context, especially around reconciliation (ICE, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Zurba, Beazley, et al., 2019). IPCAs are a broad category, so many types of PAs can be categorized or have the possibility of being recognized as IPCAs in Canada (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). According to the IUCN's classification of PAs, IPCAs can fit into different categories based on their function and governance structure, or may not even be considered a PA at all in some cases if the main purpose does not align with the IUCN's definition (Zurba et al., 2019a). Ultimately, it is up to the Indigenous Nation and People whether their declared IPCA should be counted towards the conservation targets of settler governments (ICE, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Zurba et al., 2019a).

There are many reasons Indigenous Nations wish to engage in creating IPCAs. IPCAs present new opportunities for land management that align with their ways of knowing that the state has not recognized until this point (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b). IPCAs can also be spaces where commitments to Indigenous sovereignty and rights can be upheld, such as reconciliation and UNDRIP (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b). Ultimately, IPCAs can be spaces where Indigenous Peoples can reconnect with their territories in their own terms, but with the support of FTP, non-governmental organizations, and academics if needed (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b).

The ICE (2018) envisioned four governance and partnership types of IPCAs in their report: solely Indigenous-led; Indigenous and Crown; Indigenous and NGO; and hybrid (ICE, 2018). In a solely Indigenous-led model, the IPCA is governed by the

Indigenous Nation or government (ICE, 2018). This means the Indigenous government makes the key decisions and manages its land, such as treaty, reserve, or Aboriginal title lands, for protection or conservation purposes (ICE, 2018). Indigenous and Crown models are where partnerships with FTP or municipal governments are established to work in cooperation and agreement to recognize, establish, or manage a PA (ICE, 2018). Governance models with NGOs are partnerships with industry, land trusts, or conservation organizations and work well when private property is acquired for conservation purposes (ICE, 2018). Hybrid partnerships are where multiple parties, government and non-government, enter into partnerships to manage PAs with all parties having a clear role in contributing to the successful collaboration (ICE, 2018). There are currently no hybrid or Indigenous and NGO governance types of IPCAs in Canada (Youdelis et al., 2023). Although the ICE (2018) envisioned that sole Indigenous governance is the way forward, this may not be viable due to political constraints and the capacity of the Indigenous Nation or organization (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b; Youdelis et al., 2023).

While IPCAs are a step forward in Indigenous-led conservation and equitable inclusion, at its core, these are still colonial constructs of putting boundaries around territories and species. PAs are not aligned with how Indigenous Peoples view the world around them, although Indigenous Peoples have more decision-making and governance power in IPCAs than other types of PAs. IPCAs do not fully interrupt the settler states notions of how nature and its resources should be managed (Bernauer & Roth, 2021; Shultis & Heffner, 2016; Youdelis et al., 2021) but have been identified by ICE (2018) as

the best model for Indigenous-led conservation working within the Canadian colonial state at this time.

2.3 Reconciliation

Reconciliation has different meanings and proposed outcomes to people (Bishop et al., 2025a; Townsend & Roth, 2023; TRCC, 2015b). Therefore, it will be important to provide some key perspectives and framing. Within Canada, it is important to note that reconciliation has been influenced by Indigenous Peoples' continued assertion of rights to their lands and waters in opposition to the states model of managing land and natural resources (Bishop et al., 2025a; Townsend & Roth, 2023).

Canada's first national effort to advance reconciliation began with the 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* that outlined a national process of reconciliation (TRCC, 2015b). The report was largely ignored by the government and most recommendations were not implemented (TRCC, 2015b). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC) was formed in 2008, in response to the harm of the Indian residential school system (TRCC, 2015b). The then-prime minister, Steven Harper, also apologized to survivors in 2008 (TRCC, 2015b). These both reignited national attention on reconciliation. The residential school system was created to "kill the Indian in the child" across Canada to assimilate Indigenous Peoples through legal, social, cultural, and religious means (Corntassel et al., 2009; TRCC, 2015b). Through the residential school system, Indigenous children were taken from their parents and sent to live at these schools where their language, dress, food, and other cultural and spiritual aspects were banned (Corntassel et al., 2009; TRCC, 2015b). The Indian Residential

School Settlement Agreement was also created for survivors after a class action lawsuit by survivors was filed, though there has been little support for the reunification and regeneration of families and communities that were torn apart by the trauma of the schools (Corntassel et al., 2009; TRCC, 2015b).

The TRCC (2015b) completed its investigation of the harms of the Indian Residential Schools system, releasing a number of reports including the report, *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation,* in 2015. The final report stressed the importance of knowing the harms inflicted in residential schools and being able to capture lived experiences through oral histories as being central to being able to provide justice and healing (TRCC, 2015b). Among the reports the Commission (TRCC, 2015a) released was its report titled, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. The report includes 94 Calls to Action to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (p. 1). The Calls to Action are split into two sections – Legacy and Reconciliation, with 42 dedicated to the former and 52 to the latter (TRCC, 2015a). Some of the subsections under reconciliation are around adopting and implementing UNDRIP, the Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation, the settlement agreement and UNDRIP, equity for Indigenous Peoples in the legal system, the creation of the National Council for Reconciliation, professional development and training for public servants, church apologies and reconciliation, education and reconciliation, youth programs, museums and archives, missing children and burial information, and more (TRCC, 2015a). The Calls to Action request concrete actions that various parts of society can enact to ensure justice and education are taken so ramifications of past harms can be fixed.

The Commission defined reconciliation as "… an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" and "establishing respectful relationships also requires the revitalization of Indigenous law and legal traditions" (TRCC, 2015b, p. 121). The Canadian government has maintained the use of this definition as it continues to push and support reconciliation efforts across the country in a variety of sectors being mainly guided by the UNDRIP Calls to Action (UNDRIP Implementation Secretariat and Department of Justice, 2023). The ICE (2018) drew on this definition to support the TRC survivors. The CRP used reconciliation to honour the TRC and the ICE but saw it as a relational interaction with the state and other actors to enact decolonial change (Bishop et al., 2025a).

With this state-led push towards advancing reconciliation, many argue of being cautious and maintain criticism that these kinds of efforts remain colonized and ultimately do not allow fully for Indigenous systems of knowledge and governance to be fully enabled (Corntassel et al., 2009; Daigle, 2019; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; McGregor, 2018; Sium et al., 2012; Whyte, 2017). Others blame settlers for not fully confronting and making changes to contend with their privileges that are needed to advance reconciliation (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Mackey; 2016; Slater, 2019). This is similar to the ongoing discourse surrounding decolonization which Tuck and Yang (2012) argue has become a metaphor for settlers to remain innocent because they only confront their privileges without taking any meaningful action. People argue that reconciliation needs to happen between and among various actors (between Indigenous Nations, settlers and Indigenous Peoples, and the original treaties signed during confederation) between the land and living and non-living beings with settlers and Indigenous Peoples (Asch & Borrows,

2018; Corntassel, 2012; Corntassel et al., 2009; Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019; Coyle & Borrows, 2017; Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Poelzer & Coates, 2015; Sium et al., 2012; Snelgrove et al., 2014; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). Similarly, others maintain that reconciliation will not happen if truths about past wrongdoings are the only things revealed and there is no focus on the future or solutions (Bishop et al., 2025a; Townsend & Roth, 2023; TRCC, 2015b).

Indigenous resurgence has been articulated as the path forward--instead of or alongside reconciliation--and is about promoting the well-being and health of Indigenous nations through reclaiming relationships between land, culture, and community (Artelle et al., 2021; Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019). Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson sees resurgence as looking at the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the state that are ongoing and being critical about settler colonialism (2017). Although reconciliation and Indigenous resurgence are seen and practiced as separate academic streams of knowledge, in practice people may use these terms interchangeably and literature is recognizing these two terms as being able to work together towards a future that Indigenous Peoples seek (Bishop et al., 2025a). Both reconciliation and resurgence see relationships as an important piece of the path forward. Reconciling relationships and a return to right relations was brought up by survivors in the TRC (2015b). Elder Stephen Augustine brought up the importance of silence and negotiation in Mi'kmaw law, in combination with listening, contemplation, mediation, and deeper internal deliberation, while also making space for dialogue (TRCC, 2015b). Elder Stephen Augustine also pointed towards the relationships with the earth and living things are important for working toward reconciliation as well (TRCC, 2015b). Elder Reg Crowshoe emphasized

the importance that Indigenous Peoples' worldviews, oral history traditions, and practices can teach about how to establish respectful relationships and that "learning how to live together in a good way happens through sharing stories and practising reconciliation in our everyday lives (TRCC, 2015b, p. 122). This sentiment is corroborated by Jeff Corntassel and Tiffanie Hardberger (2019) of the Cherokee Nation when speaking of Indigenous resurgence. They state: "a significant part of everydayness is a political awareness of acting in contention with ongoing colonization and the intentional, daily processes undertaken to renew relationships with homelands/waterways, cultural practices and communities" (p. 91).

2.3.1 *Reconciliation and Resurgence within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas*

Within many of the Calls to Action laid out by the TRC, Indigenous lands and resources are mentioned several times (TRCC, 2015a), showing the importance of land to the reconciliation process. ICE co-chair Eli Ennes (with Tla-o-qui-aht and Dutch Mennonite heritage) stated in a news article speaking about IPCA developments in Canada,

> So an IPCA is a land-based model of reconciliation where it can role model what healthy relationships look like — between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, between civil society and the private sector, and between human beings and the rest of creation (Chadwick, 2022, r13).

This statement shows the importance of IPCAs as models for reconciliation and how the ICE (2018) envisioned them throughout their work.

As stated earlier, reconciliation was at the core of the ICE's (2018) work on IPCAs. The ICE (2018) viewed IPCAs as spaces where nation-to-nation and other relationships can be forged, as Enns expressed in the above quote. As part of the reconciliation process, original treaties between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples must be revisited (Coyle & Borrows, 2017) since treaties are relationship-based and serve as the moral basis for these relationships (Poelzer & Coates, 2015). Treaties were also intended to be a legal document between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples, but there were misunderstandings on both sides resulting in confusion and the ensuing and ongoing violence (Zurba et al., 2019a). Revisitation of treaties could be done by looking at the original intent of treaties and abandoning concepts like the Doctrine of Discovery (Hoehn, 2016; TRCC, 2015a). Indigenous Peoples' relationships with their territories must also be restored (ICE, 2018). In restoring Indigenous people's relationship with their land, the space for Indigenous law and social practices can be created and address the long history of expulsion and appropriation (Townsend & Roth, 2023; UN, 2007; Zurba et al., 2019a).

Many of the ICE's (2018) recommendations included aspects of reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be ignored when discussing ICPAs, as land is central to the Canadian settler system. Many declared IPCAs since the release of the ICE (2018) include aspects of reconciliation in their declaration announcements. For example, the Mamalilikulla First Nation (MFN) declared the Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala (Lull Bay/Hoeya Sound) on November 29, 2021 (MFN, 2021). The declaration document states, "This Declaration demonstrates the Nation's commitment to advancing reconciliation with Canada and British Columbia and their implementation of the United Nations Declaration

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a meaningful way" (MFN, 2021), showcasing the importance of reconciliation as part of the IPCA. Although IPCAs can be spaces of reconciliation, there should not be pressure or expectation for Indigenous Nations wanting to create and engage with this new designation (Townsend & Roth, 2023).

Reconciliation is also important within PAs as the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and Canada have been fraught and full of mistrust, with the mistrust still ongoing for many Indigenous communities (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). As discussed throughout this chapter, this is due to Canada's dark past of PA management and the taking of Indigenous lands (Goyes & South, 2019; Zurba et al., 2019a). Marilyn Baptiste, former Xeni Gwet'in chief and a member of the CRP leadership circle, says,

> Since my dad was chief, as far as I've always learned, governments in Canada have reserved parks for their own benefit for later use. And, as a reflection of that, a couple of years ago, B.C. passed, with Christy Clark, Bill F4 to open parks to [mining] exploration. So that's the reality of that (Plotkin & David Suzuki Foundation, 2018).

This sentiment shows the hesitancy that many Indigenous Peoples feel about PAs, especially in the face of Canada's extractive practices (Bernauer & Roth, 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021). As many Indigenous Nations are engaging in the creation of IPCAs, they remain cautious as IPCAs continue to evolve (ICE, 2018; Plotkin & David Suzuki Foundation, 2018; Tran et al., 2020a; Zurba et al., 2019a). This hesitancy must be taken into account when conversations and planning about PAs and IPCAs happen with Indigenous Peoples or nations.

Beyond reconciliation, IPCAs are one way that Indigenous Peoples and nations are enacting resurgence within conservation. The Nation or Indigenous Peoples involved decides on the governance scheme of their IPCA and can decide to revitalize their Indigenous governance and laws (ICE, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b; Youdelis et al., 2023; Zurba et al., 2019a). For example, the creation and planning of the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nations IPCA has allowed them to revitalize and practice their Indigenous law (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b).

IPCAs can also be spaces to revitalize language and cultural practices associated with being on the land. These activities can be stewardship and other ecological monitoring methods and can be solely reliant on Indigenous ways of knowing or can be combined with Western ways of practicing conservation (Artelle et al., 2019, 2021; Ban et al., 2020; Buscher et al., 2021; Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; D. Littlechild & Sutherland, 2021; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020a; Tran et al., 2020b; von der Porten et al., 2019; Youdelis et al., 2021). Through revitalizing ways of engaging and being in relationship with lands, Indigenous Peoples can also heal and renew their responsibilities to their lands (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Tran et al., 2020b). Through this renewed relationship and resurgence of Indigenous ways of knowing, these practices and relationships extend beyond conservation.

2.4 Important Relationship Qualities in Conservation Partnerships

There are different relationship qualities and aspects that can make collaborative governance schemes effective or ineffective. The literature says the starting conditions have an impact on whether actors are willing to engage and how well the collaboration

will go (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Nikolakis & Hotte, 2022). Power and resource imbalances, the incentive to participate, and a pre-existing history of cooperation or conflict are the three factors that can dictate the start of the collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008). It is suggested that before the collaboration begins, a process to set up the start of the relationship and establish limitations and get everything out in the open will enable the relationship among actors to be more successful and build more effective relationships in the future (ICE, 2018; Murray & Burrows, 2017; Robinson & Wallington, 2012; Siddiki et al., 2017; Zurba et al., 2012). For example, a pre-existing history of conflict can undermine trust-building if not properly addressed (ICE, 2018; Rapp, 2020). This further demonstrates how the deliberate setup of the collaboration is important in increasing the success of relationship building and collaboration. The importance of the following relationship traits will be explored in more depth: trust, willingness to learn, compromise, adaptability, reciprocity, and accountability.

Trust and trust building are key to effective relationships. Trust can be placed in a person, an organization, an object, or a process (Hotte et al., 2019; Rapp, 2020). Individual, interpersonal, and institutional qualities all influence trust of actors in a partnership in various ways at different levels, acting independently and in conjunction with each other at times (Hotte et al., 2019; Rapp, 2020). Within the conservation space, the four types of trust often used to measure and evaluate trust are dispositional, rational, affinitive, and systems-based (Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015). Dispositional trust refers to individual predispositions to the context and/or entity which usually dictates the other types of trust (Dietsch et al., 2021; Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015), whereas rational trust concerns the perceived outcomes and behaviours

of others in being able to achieve goals and alignment with personal goals (Dietsch et al., 2021; Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015). Affinitive trust focuses on shared values and other social characteristics developed through positive social interactions (Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015). Systems-based trust is focused on the overall trust in a system or process and other forms of trust and confidence can be more easily developed if this aspect of trust is high (Saif et al., 2022; Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015). Shared value perceptions, technical and moral competence, responsiveness, honesty, consistency, strong work ethic, a commitment to collaboration, and time spent meaningfully engaging all positively impact overall trust with other actors (Hotte et al., 2019; Rapp, 2020). Factors that can improve trust at an institutional level are fair representation, considering all perspectives, meaningful engagement, clear two-way communication, commitment to collaboration, and considering and integrating all perspectives (Hotte et al., 2019; Rapp, 2020; Reo et al., 2017). When trust is cultivated at all three levels, relationships are improved, but may not necessarily translate to actionable collaborative changes (Hotte et al., 2019; Rapp, 2020). These dimensions of trust and how they are woven throughout all aspects of a partnership demonstrate how important trust is.

Power is another key aspect of relationships and partnerships. There are four common approaches to defining power in conservation: actor-centred, institutional, structural, and discursive. Actor-centred examines how this “force”, as a group or an individual, can be exerted (Shackleton et al., 2023) and who makes the decisions which impact and determine social action, processes, and policy outcomes (Dietsch et al., 2021; Shackleton et al., 2023), whereas the institutional approach examines how systems, such

as informal and formal rules, organizations, and norms, impact social behaviours (Shackleton et al., 2023). The structural approach sees how political-economic systems, like capitalism, colonialism, and class, impede people's choices and agency (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023). Discursive looks at power as a force to shape social norms and individuality through knowledge and narratives, often seen in conservation as practices shaped by institutions and groups (Dietsch et al., 2021; Shackleton et al., 2023). These are all prevalent in partnerships as they determine who has decision-making power (Bowie, 2013b; Hotte et al., 2019), how much power an individual has, the acceptable forms of knowledge and truth, and going with or against the status quo or dominant systems.

The willingness to learn in relationships has been demonstrated to increase the effectiveness of the partnership in collaborations involving Indigenous Peoples. When non-Indigenous partners take the time to learn about the culture, language, and even ethics of their Indigenous partners, relationships can improve as the Indigenous partners' worldview is respected and included in all processes (Artelle et al., 2021; Bataille et al., 2020; Ens et al., 2012; Hill, 2011; Zurba et al., 2012). This cross-cultural learning can also allow Indigenous practices to be accepted within the partnership. It surpasses education and promotes practicing changes that welcome and uphold Indigenous knowledge and worldviews (Artelle et al., 2021; Bataille et al., 2020; Bishop et al., 2025a; Ens et al., 2012; Hill, 2011; Zurba et al., 2012).

The ability to compromise is also an important aspect when engaging in relationships. All relationships require some sort of compromise and relationships with Indigenous Peoples require other stakeholders to align morally and ethically if partnership

outcomes are to be successful (Berman Arévalo & Ros-Tonen, 2009; Premauer & Berkes, 2015). Although compromise may happen, it does not necessarily mean that it can mitigate all conflicts (Premauer & Berkes, 2015). (Premauer & Berkes, 2015). Being adaptable in relationships allows partners to be flexible and change in complex situations. For complex collaborations, adaptability is key (Artelle et al., 2021; Hoffmann et al., 2012; Zurba et al., 2012). Adaptability is especially helpful for long-term relationships engaging in ongoing learning partnerships (Artelle et al., 2021; Hoffmann et al., 2012; Zurba et al., 2012). In the case of the long-term decolonial partnership over managing grizzly bears in BC, all the partners were continually adapting to help make the initiative successful (Artelle et al., 2021).

Reciprocity is another aspect of relationships that is important as it allows multidirectional benefits for all involved (Artelle et al., 2021; Castleden et al., 2012; Maclean, 2015; Tran et al., 2020). It also means the relationship is not extractive for the Indigenous Peoples involved and includes tangible benefits for the community involved. For example, in the case of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation, the relationships with researchers and other partners were reciprocal as the research work being done benefited those doing the work for external reasons but the final work was for the benefit of the development of the Green Inlet IPCA (Tran et al., 2020). Accountability is important in making sure those involved are responsible for what is expected of them. This is important so partners, particularly Indigenous Peoples who may not have the same capacity as others, do not shoulder the unnecessary burden and work in a partnership (Artelle et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020).

While the above relationship qualities discussed are important in making sure collaboration is successful, there are also barriers and relationship qualities that can hinder effective collaborations. When there is miscommunication and a lack of transparency, relationships are not effective (Gonzales Tovar et al., 2021; Murray & Burrows, 2017; Thondhlana et al., 2015). When partners are unable to compromise, the ensuing relationships and collaboration are hindered (Gonzales Tovar et al., 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021). Another factor is whether Indigenous Peoples have true decision-making power in collaborative schemes and their inherent rights are recognized (Bowie, 2013; Haalboom & Campbell, 2012; Hotte et al., 2019; Johnston & Mason, 2021; Nursey-Bray, 2011; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). In the case of Jasper National Park (JNP), Parks Canada has been trying to rectify its bad history with Indigenous Peoples but so far, the Jasper Indigenous Forum has been more advisory in nature and provides recommendations that JNP ultimately does not have to follow (Johnston & Mason, 2021).

2.4.1 Changing relationships

As more IPCAs are emerging and increased support for Indigenous-led conservation is expanding across Canada, relationships between Indigenous Nations and actors involved in conservation are changing. Increased shared governance and co-management agreements are giving Indigenous Peoples more decision-making power, though there is still a long way to go for true devolution from the Canadian government (Artelle et al., 2019). Additionally, reconciliation efforts across various jurisdictions have been working to rectify and improve relationships (ICE, 2018; Johnston & Mason, 2021).

2.5 Knowledge Co-production in Partnerships

Knowledge co-production (KCP) has emerged as a framework for how to respectfully produce and share knowledge within research partnerships, especially with the rise in collaborative research working to bridge diverse ways of knowing with Indigenous Peoples (Artelle et al., 2021; Ban et al., 2018; Latulippe & Klenk, 2020; Muhl et al., 2023; Reid et al., 2021; Westwood et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2021). KCP emerged when it was first used by Elinor Ostrom and collaborators in 1970 within economics examining how the public and government interact when resources are distributed (Bremer & Meisch, 2017; Norström et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2021). It is now used in many fields of study with varying definitions for different contexts (Mach et al., 2020; Norström et al., 2020; Wyborn et al., 2019) and can encompass a wide variety of relationships and partnerships (Wyborn et al., 2019). KCP can be defined as processes which iteratively combine different ways of knowing and acting which lead to mutual reciprocal transformation of societal outcomes (Wyborn et al., 2019). It is important to note that KCP is just one interpretation of what knowledge means and to make the most of diversity and perspectives within partnerships (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020) and is just one possible approach a partnership can take (Muhl et al., 2023; Szetey et al., 2023).

Researchers have developed many approaches and frameworks when applying KCP to their work. Different scoping reviews have tried to summarize and group the many approaches and applications within and across the different disciplines (Bandola-Gill et al., 2023; Bremer et al., 2019; Bremer & Meisch, 2017; Djenontin & Meadow, 2018; Jagannathan et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2021; Wyborn et al., 2019; Zurba et al., 2021). These can be useful for practitioners and researchers as they begin to approach

how KCP can benefit their work and how to approach KCP itself (Zurba et al., 2021). With a particular focus on KCP partnerships and research with Indigenous Peoples, many have embedded KCP within frameworks and practices, showcasing the diversity of research and those involved (Zurba et al., 2021). Similarly, this research focuses on acting from the science and transformational change (Beier et al., 2017; Greenaway et al., 2022; Jagannathan et al., 2020; Mach et al., 2020; Muhl et al., 2023). These approaches have also been on either side of the divide between Western knowledge and Indigenous or local knowledge (Zurba et al., 2021), while some have worked to bridge or weave the two knowledge systems together (Hill et al., 2022; Johnson et al., 2016; Rathwell et al., 2015).

Zurba and colleagues (2021) also identified some guiding principles found across the KCP literature. The first was that the research relied on context dependency to drive the KCP (Norström et al., 2020) with the research overall conforming to the proper contexts present for the specific research and collaboration present (Kettle, 2019; Rathwell et al., 2015). Another theme found in the literature was the idea that ongoing and early engagement with Indigenous Peoples improved the KCP (Westwood et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2021). Early engagement and even before the research started was key (Chapman & Schott, 2020; Huntington, 2000) to ensure the research was culturally appropriate (Huntington et al., 2002; Maclean & Cullen, 2009) and pay attention to the power dynamics and different worldviews (Pohl et al., 2021; Westwood et al., 2020; Zurba, 2009). Much research aimed to make the KCP process itself a reflexive and iterative process (Armitage et al., 2011; Dale & Armitage, 2011), while others sought to make the space for Indigenous Peoples to lead (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020; Sidorova, 2020). Another big theme found in the literature was that a shared understanding around

KCP and project goals improved the research (Zurba et al., 2021). Familiarity with KCP ensured placed-based and actionable knowledge and science (Beier et al., 2017; Reed & Abernethy, 2018), with the shared understanding and commitment allowing people to play the roles best for their skills (Pohl et al., 2021). This shared understanding and commitment sets the stage for an iterative and reflective process and evaluating KCP as a process. The last major theme was about empowerment being prevalent in KCP research (Zurba et al., 2021). Research identified it as an implicit or explicit part of the project or an extra benefit (Djenontin & Meadow, 2018), while others see it as an ethical value of the process (Bell & Pahl, 2018; Bremer et al., 2019; Turnhout et al., 2020). Some even saw empowerment as a pre-condition or outcome of KCP itself (Klenk et al., 2017) with empowerment at the forefront of more KCP research (Chapman & Schott, 2020; Muhl et al., 2023).

There are many benefits of using KCP within research. It has been linked to building trust, capacity, and the flow of knowledge, further helping to build networks and learning within partnerships (Arnott et al., 2020; Greenaway et al., 2022; Maclean, Woodward, et al., 2022; Muhl et al., 2023; Norström et al., 2020; Westwood et al., 2020). KCP has also been highlighted as a reflective and iterative process so collaborators can navigate approaches and principles together (Mach et al., 2020). The diversity of actors within is also improving outcomes of the research to be more reliable and representative of science and knowledge (Armitage et al., 2011; Beier et al., 2017; Bremer & Meisch, 2017; Dale & Armitage, 2011). The inclusion of diverse ways of knowing can also shift power relations (Muhl et al., 2023; van der Hel, 2016). Additionally, the process of working to bridge and bring together different cultures and knowledge systems will force

collaborators to reflect openly on colonization and their positionality within the research space (Hill et al., 2020; Maclean, Greenaway, et al., 2022; Maclean, Woodward, et al., 2022; Muhl et al., 2023; Westwood et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2019b), with some even working to question who is a knowledge producer (Bandola-Gill et al., 2023). These are all important for engaging in partnerships and ensuring equity as partnerships and research with Indigenous Peoples continue.

There are also common challenges to using KCP within research. Much of the literature has focused largely on the process itself rather than working to engage in the underlying power structures inherent in research and place-based research (Muhl et al., 2023; Szetey et al., 2023; Turnhout et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2021). Although research has sought to integrate and validate Indigenous and diverse ways of knowing, there continues to be caution as some see this integration as a political ploy or false inclusion and role within the KCP process (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020; Muhl et al., 2023; Reid et al., 2021; Sidorova, 2020). Others felt that KCP would continue to politicize or be deemed as false inclusion without true leadership by Indigenous Peoples in partnerships (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020; Sidorova, 2020). Researchers must continue to grapple with these challenges to ensure that power imbalances are addressed for increased equity within KCP and partnerships.

Chapter Three: Methods

3 Overview

This chapter will cover my research approaches of Western and Indigenous methodologies that guided the chosen approach, methods, and analysis. I chose to analyze the CRP, since it was an important partnership that focused on supporting decolonial change within conservation at a key time in Canadian history and in nature conservation. I utilized a case-study approach since I identified the CRP as an interesting partnership of inquiry and could provide lessons for future partnerships that want to engage with reconciliation or decolonizing practices. Other ethical considerations will be discussed related to decolonizing research and the limitations of the research.

I utilized qualitative methods as they allow the perspectives of participants to be represented and allow multiple perspectives and worldviews to exist (Cross & Galletta, 2013). Qualitative methods also provide opportunities for more engagement between the participant and researcher, bringing in more relational aspects to the research that are aligned with my guiding methodologies (Elder & Odoyo, 2018; Goulding et al., 2016; Kovach, 2009). Qualitative methods are also complementary to many Indigenous methodologies, as qualitative methods can also be relational and value the process and content of the research as much as the outcomes (Kovach, 2009, p. 25).

3.1 Research Approaches

3.1.1 Case Studies

Case studies provide powerful inquiry into key events or spaces that have happened in the past and are still impacting current practices or contexts (Emmel, 2014; Yin, 2009). Case studies also allow multiple ways of knowing to exist concurrently (Yin, 2009), which aligns with the other research approaches in this study. Although my research was not collaboratively created with the CRP, I had some opportunities to share my research topic at a couple of meetings where the leadership team of the CRP met with the students connected to the CRP. Additionally, when recruiting CRP members to participate in the research and reaching out to CRP leadership, they were receptive and interested in possible outcomes since I wished to engage with people who have participated with the CRP.

3.1.2 Indigenous Methodologies: Resurgence and Decolonization

Research has had and continues to have detrimental impacts on Indigenous Peoples. Unethical and extractive research and medical experiments were done on communities (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008) and on those who could not advocate for themselves, such as children in the Indian Residential School system, and research continues to engage in harm (TRCC, 2015). This harm is still perpetuated throughout research today (Castleden et al., 2017; Daigle, 2019; Littlechild et al., 2021) even with academic advancements, such as the inclusion of Chapter 9 on research involving Indigenous Peoples in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research (Canada)

et al., 2023). One of the early inspirations in decolonizing methodology started with Maori scholar Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith in New Zealand. Smith (2012) defines decolonization as a theoretical and physical move beyond imperialism defining it as "the long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" (p. 175). Decolonization is therefore not a rejection of the West, but about positionally (Smith, 2012). Smith (2012) argues that decolonization is about centring Indigenous values and perspectives and then coming to understand the world. Eve Tuck (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang (2012) argue that settlers try to "move to innocence" (p. 9) when working through decolonization to absolve their guilt or maintain colonial frameworks without true action. Researchers (settlers) must be cognizant of what is guiding their true intentions and actively engage in Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonization within research will continue to impact how research is conducted in academia (McGregor, 2018; Townsend, 2022; Wilson, 2008). Other Indigenous scholars argue that decolonization still focuses on colonization and we must move into an Indigenous resurgence of research, language, culture, and laws (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

After the work of Smith (2012) articulating decolonization, different types of Indigenous methodologies and methods have been named and articulated by many scholars globally (Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Hughes, 2019). Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux Scholar Margaret Kovach (2009), says that Indigenous methodology and methods are informed by tribal epistemologies, so this knowledge is inherently not Western knowledge. Kovach (2009) also says that Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers can engage with Indigenous frameworks to honour Indigenous knowledge systems. As noted

above, positionality as a non-Indigenous researcher would be key. With research having roots in serving the state and harming those most marginalized and extractive in nature (H. Castleden et al., 2012; H. E. Castleden et al., 2017; Smith, 2012; Youdelis, 2016) questions about who it is serving and who must be hurt continue to be questioned as research is aiming to be increasingly community-based with Indigenous Peoples values and goals at the centre of the research (Artelle et al., 2019, 2021; Castleden et al., 2017; Koster et al., 2012; M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021).

The next sections will review the overarching methodological approach guiding this research. These Indigenous methodologies align with the CRP and enabled me to meet the CRP members in their worldviews better. The three main Indigenous methodologies are relational accountability, Ethical Space, and Etuaptumumk (Two-Eyed Seeing).

3.1.2.1 Relational Accountability

Relational accountability is informed by the work of Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson which is described in his book *Research is Ceremony* (2008). This methodology is informed by the Indigenous concept of relationality. Wilson states, "Indigenous reality is relational: we are our relations with family, ancestors, environment, ideas – with everything" (Wilson & Hughes., 2019, p. 6). This statement shows how Indigenous Peoples relationships manifest with all beings, including land and non-human entities. This understanding is based on relational ontology – how things are and how things are known – that reality is relationships (Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Hughes, 2019). Wilson also states, "When we realize that reality is relational, we also become

accountable to all our relations" (Wilson & Hughes., 2019, p. 6). This statement shows how the relational ontology then moves into relational accountability and how your connections impact others and how to respect those connections (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). When this reality is understood, within research we must act beyond what is expected from academic ethics and in accordance with our own values (Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Hughes, 2019). Relational accountability is important due to ongoing colonization in and through research and to learn we must relate properly, therefore being accountable (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Relational accountability is then part of the entire research process (Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Hughes, 2019) where the researcher must be thinking about fulfilling relationships, constantly being attuned and truthful to their own values, and if the chosen approach taken is in care and respect (Wilson & Hughes, 2019).

The information I gather will be a result of how I present myself and I have a responsibility in how I use and present the information. I tried to engage in member checking throughout the interview and reached out to participants when quoting was salient. Member checking is useful for ensuring I am not misinterpreting my participants and imposing my worldview onto their knowledge. Beyond the two papers to be published through the peer-review process (chapters 4 and 5), a short report will be created for the CRPs Knowledge Basket so people can read about my research in a more accessible format.

3.1.2.2 Ethical Space

Another important methodology is the idea of Ethical Space. While Ethical Space has existed since the time of treaty-making between Canadian settlers and Indigenous governments and nations (ICE, 2018), spaces in Canada were not poised to use Ethical Space and instead Western dominant forms of learning and understanding knowledge and truth were imposed (Littlechild & Sutherland, 2021; TRC, n.d-a.). Formal recognition of the term in a Western context was first employed by psychologist Roger Poole in 1972 and brought further beyond the Indigenous purview by Cree scholar and Elder Willie Ermine in 2007 (Sinclaire et al., 2021). This concept is used in several fields, including health, psychology, and conservation (ICE, 2018; Sinclaire et al., 2021). Within the conservation field, Ethical Space became elevated when it was brought to the ICE (Figure 1) by Dr. Reg Crowshoe, a member of the Piikani Nation and the National Advisory

Panel of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 Initiative, and the ICE Co-Chair Danika Littlechild (Conservation 2020, 2020; ICE, 2018).

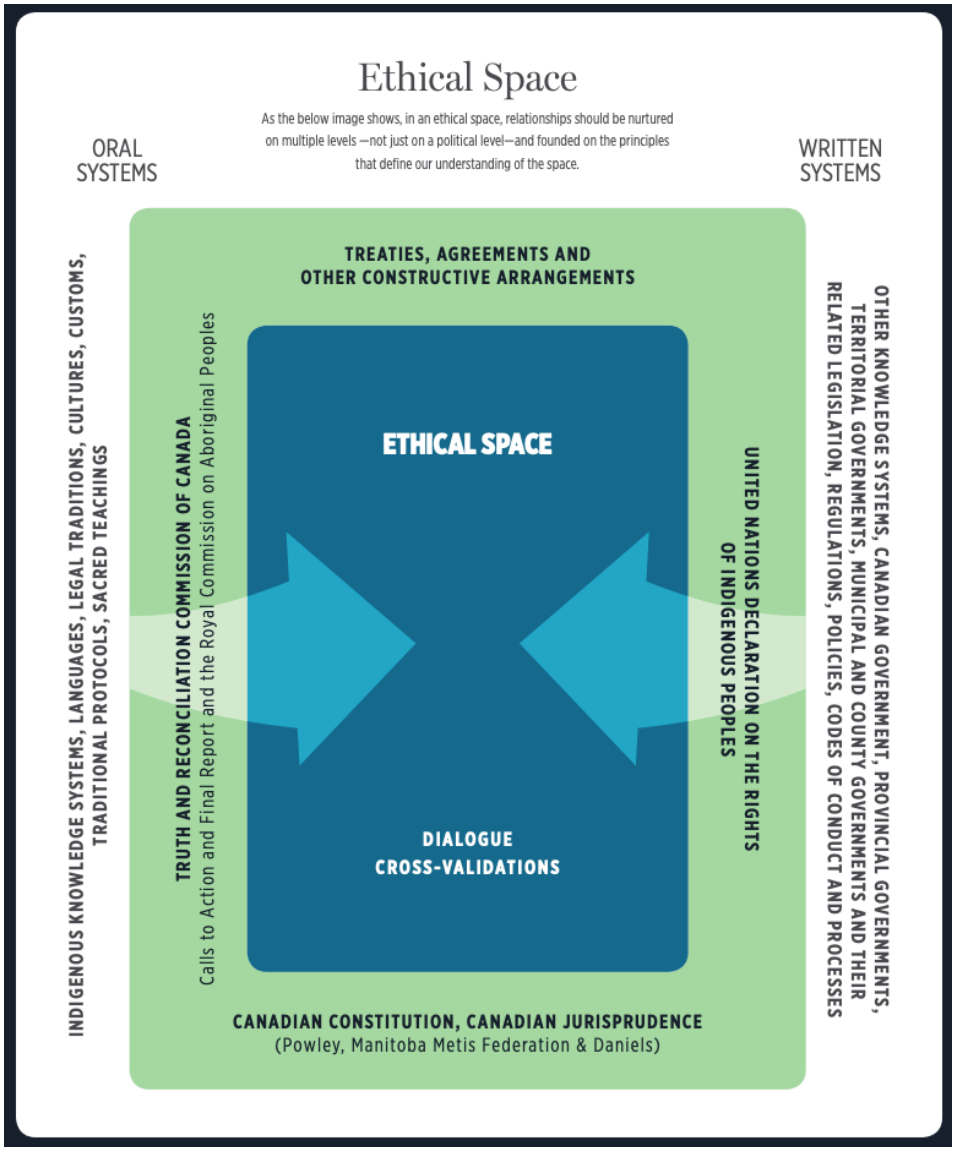

Figure 1 Graphic from the ICE report that shows the different interactions within Ethical Space (ICE, 2018, p. 18).

Ethical space is about engaging in respectful dialogue amidst ongoing relationships with flexibility and learning in mind (Ermine, 2007; ICE, 2018). The ICE (2018) outlines the following principles to consider regarding Ethical Space within

conservation: (1) creating a space of mutual respect, kindness, generosity, and other basic values and principles, (2) all knowledge systems are equal, (3) one knowledge system does not need to validate the other, (4) engaging in this space will require flexibility and changing attitudes and sometimes norms, and (5) engaging in Ethical Space is not a consultation process (p. 17). Ultimately, Ethical Space is not about an end goal but an ongoing cyclical process in which all parties confront their bias and worldviews and enter spaces for true respectful relationships.

Engaging in the Ethical Space means that I understand my worldview and positionality when I enter a dialogic state with CRP members. It also means that I am cognizant of the ongoing power structure, which includes the researcher/researched and settler/Indigenous dynamic.

3.1.2.3 Etuaptumumk / Two-eyed seeing

The last guiding methodology to be discussed is Etuaptumumk in Mi'kmaw or Two-Eyed Seeing. It is a guiding methodology coined by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall and his late wife Murdena Marshall in 2004 regarding their work around Indigenous knowledge within the curriculum at Cape Breton University in Sydney, Nova Scotia (Bartlett et al., 2012; Sinclaire et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2019). This concept was developed over several decades with roots in Mi'kmaq (Bartlett et al., 2012) and has since been integrated into a variety of fields, such as health, education, and resource management (Reid et al., 2021; Sinclaire et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2019). The ICE (2018) also integrated Two-Eyed Seeing into their work, which was brought into the CRP with the addition of Elder Albert as part of the Elders' circle (CRP, n.d.).

Etuaptumumk is about weaving Indigenous knowledge with Western knowledge in a respectful way that places both on equal footing and draws from the strengths of both worldviews (Bartlett et al., 2012) and is "understood as the gift of multiple perspectives" (Unam'ki Institute of Natural Resources, 2020). Mi'kmaw Elder Albert states,

> Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of western knowledges and ways of knowing – and learning to use both these eyes together for the benefits of all (ICE, 2018, p. 57).

Mi'kmaw Elder Albert stresses the importance of knowing how to "weave back and forth between our knowledge (p. 335)" since the situation and context will dictate what aspects of each worldview are necessary to solve the problem at hand (Bartlett et al., 2012). This methodology can be understood visually in Figure 2 from Reid et al. (2021), showing the

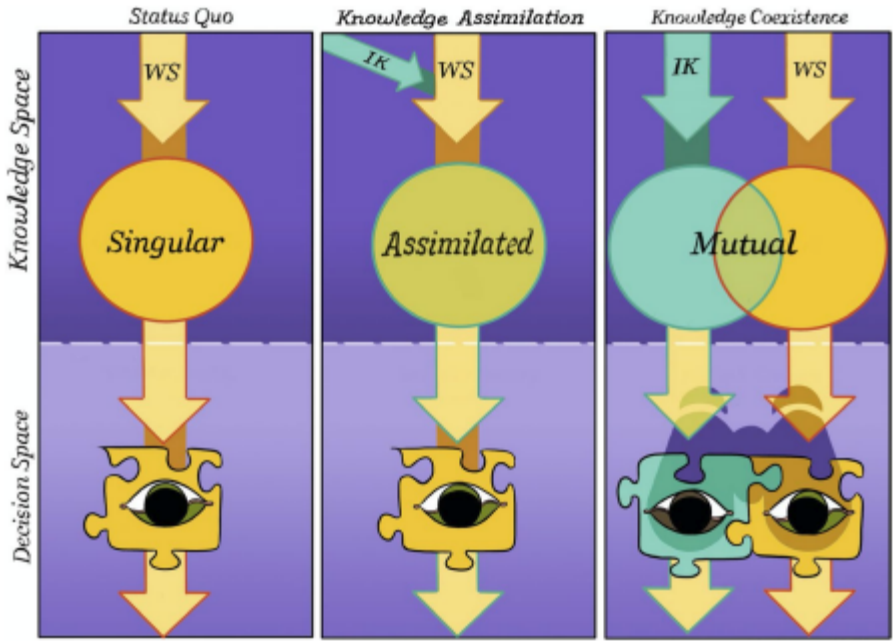

Figure 2 Visual representation by Nicole Burton of how the Two-Eyed Seeing approach can be applied to research with the two eyes symbol (Reid et al., 2021, p. 254)

way that two eyes representing Western and Indigenous knowledge can be woven appropriately.

Using this methodology means I consciously make the effort to balance Western knowledge and Indigenous knowledge and that both are respected equally. This is why I will be coding for specific types of Indigenous learning separately, as pushing Indigenous knowledge and lived experience into a Western framework (social learning) would be irresponsible and not accountable.

3.1.3 Learning

This section will cover the learning theory I am employing in this research, social learning (SL), the multi-loop model of learning, and Indigenous ways of learning.

3.1.3.1 Social Learning

Within the SL literature, focusing on partnerships or governance arrangements as a social unit to examine change has become increasingly popular. This literature has drawn on the idea of partnerships and collaborations as communities of practice (CoP) (Andrade et al., 2023; Folke et al., 2005; P. King et al., 2023; Lumosi et al., 2020). CoPs are comprised of three main components, their domain, practice and community (Wenger et al., 2002). The domain is where the group shares a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic (Wenger et al., 2002), whereby engaging together in an ongoing relationship (community) to act or generate knowledge (practice) (King et al., 2023; Koliba & Gajda, 2009; Wenger et al., 2002). CoPs link to SL since one's actions and learnings are influenced by individual and shared group identity through participation in the CoP, with collective learning at the forefront and integral to adapting to

environmental change (Ananda et al., 2020; Crowley et al., 2018; Folke et al., 2005; King et al., 2023; Lumosi et al., 2020).

SL is a beneficial theory to employ within collaborative partnerships to examine relationships. Relationships are often considered a relational aspect of SL and social interactions (Baird et al., 2014; Cundill et al., 2019; Lumosi et al., 2020). Relational features are aspects that impact how personal and organizational interactions evolve (Cundill et al., 2019; Lumosi et al., 2020). Therefore, relationships can be considered a key attribute in facilitating and supporting SL within partnerships. Partnerships require collective decision-making that reflects the meaningful engagement of all parties, which is a conducive environment for individual and collective learning (Eriksson et al., 2019). Partnerships allow for collective learning where all actors learn to relate and may discover new shared values together (Ananda et al., 2020; Eriksson et al., 2019; Folke et al., 2005; Gould et al., 2019; Schusler et al., 2003). SL allows the crossing of many boundaries (jurisdiction, social, and cognitive) to facilitate necessary collaboration across the boundaries for successful social action (Medema et al., 2016; Schusler et al., 2003). The next section will describe this framework in more depth.

3.1.3.1.1 Multiloop model to evaluate learning

The multi-loop learning model has been borrowed from the organizational change theory as a framework to measure and evaluate the learning processes and outcome types and levels (Bullock et al., 2022; Eastwood et al., 2022; Medema et al., 2015). The multi-loop mode is comprised of single-, double-, and triple-loop learning. Although there are three different levels, learning can happen simultaneously at multiple levels and there is

no certain order to be followed (Medema et al., 2014). Each loop of learning will be further described below.

Single-loop learning is characterized by changing routine actions (Armitage et al., 2008; Bullock et al., 2022; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). This level of learning looks at changing actions that do not require changing assumptions or the system, but small actions that can be done to help achieve current goals (Pahl-Wostl, 2009). Of the three levels of learning, single-loop is the most common, as it is encouraged and easily adopted (Johannessen et al., 2019).

Double-loop learning was developed by Argyris and Schön (1978) from organizational change theory (Pahl-Wostl, 2009) and is interested in evaluating and changing a system's underlying norms (Armitage et al., 2008; Bullock et al., 2022). This reframing looks at how goals, problems, and assumptions of how to achieve those goals can be reflected upon and changed (Pahl-Wostl, 2009). For double-loop learning to happen, actors must engage and explore the current system's full restraints, thereby facilitating the need for SL (Pahl-Wostl, 2009) when presented with new challenges that cannot fit into the current framed system (Johannessen et al., 2019). Although new structures or processes may be able to be achieved, they could still be stopped due to the system or contextual structural constraints that are needed to stabilize dominant frames (Pahl-Wostl, 2009).

Like double-loop, triple-loop learning emerged from organizational change theory and was popularized by the work of Argyris and Schön (1978; Armitage et al., 2008). Triple-loop learning seeks transformational change of the entire system rooted in the single- and double-loops (Armitage et al., 2008; Bullock et al., 2022; Pahl-Wostl, 2009).

In other words, this level of learning requires changing the structures and context of the system which determine the frame in which governance decisions are being made (Pahl-Wostl, 2009) and investigating the guiding norms, values, and paradigms of the system (Johannessen et al., 2019; Medema et al., 2014). While this level of learning may happen, it is unlikely that an organization would critically question their own purpose and goals (Argyris and Schön, 1978).

3.1.3.2 Indigenous Ways of Learning

As this thesis is focused on a partnership which spans across Canada, the approaches to learning will not be Nation or Tribal specific. This section will outline learning approaches that are common across Indigenous Nations on what is largely referred to as Turtle Island. While Indigenous ways of learning could be used in the SL model, I largely researched these types for inductive and deductive coding in case people described these ways of learning as an outcome or processes that facilitated their learning. SL is a Western model and I determined the cases where usage of these types of learning could fit within the model or not.

3.1.3.2.1 Land-based learning

As mentioned previously, Indigenous Peoples identities and cultures are strongly tied to their territories' lands (ICE, 2018; Simpson, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson says our knowledge comes from the land (Simpson, 2004) and “intelligence flows through relationships between living entities”(Simpson, 2014, p. 10), showcasing Indigenous Peoples’ relationship with the land. The move to land-based learning is one where engagement happens with the land

and on it physically, socially, and spiritually (Wildcat et al., 2014). Simpson argues that it is imperative that we allow and find ways to put people into relationships with and on the land as a mode of education (Simpson, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014). Matthew Wildcat (Cree), Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox (settler), Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), and Mandee McDonald (Maskîkow, Swampy Cree) (2014) argue that land-based education "acts in direct contestation to settler colonialism and its drive to eliminate Indigenous life and Indigenous claims to land" (p. III). Many land-based programs are emerging across Canada as acts of resurgence and reconnection in the face of colonization. The purpose, delivery, and who is teaching depends on the Nation and whom the program is intended for. For example, Bang and Colleagues (Ojibwe, Lakota, Choctaw, Little Shell Band of Chippewa-Cree, Miami, and Navajo) (2014) work was centred around restorying Chicago and took the lead from Elders through programming with families and youth. In this case, Elders were central to the learning, but Elders are often accessed for learning on the land because of their high cultural knowledge and can ensure ongoing respect and relationship with the land are maintained (Bang et al., 2014). Lastly, land-based learning can contribute to ongoing resurgence and everyday acts of resurgence (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019). The CRP may provide opportunities of land-based learning or the developments of such programs as part of its mandate to support Indigenous-led conservation initiatives across Canada.

3.1.3.2.2 Storytelling

Another key method of learning is the act of listening and telling stories. Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson says,

> Stories direct, inspire and affirm ancient code of ethics. If you do not know what it means to be intelligent within Nishnaabeg realities, then you can't see the epistemology, the pedagogy, the conceptual meaning, or the metaphor. You can't see how this story has references to other parts of our oral tradition, or how this story is fundamentally, like all of our stories, communicating different interpretations and realizations of a Nishnaabeg worldview (Simpson, 2014, p. 8)

The quote shows how stories are used to provide learning into a Nation's worldview and how one should act. Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel, Chaw-win-is (Nuu-chah-nulth) and T'lakwadzi (Kwakwaka'wakw) corroborate Simpson saying, "Indigenous storytelling is connected to our homelands and crucial to the cultural and political resurgence of Indigenous nations" (Corntassel et al., 2009, p. 137). Storytelling is also a relational process between the teller and the listener and it is up to the listener to elicit their own meaning from stories presented to them and learn how to incorporate it into their identity and lives (Simpson, 2014). Stories are relational in this way when the diversity of relationships is valued (Simpson, 2014).

3.1.3.2.3 Ceremony

Indigenous ceremony is also an important avenue for learning. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) says "the process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature" (p. 7). This shows how spirituality is a central part of Indigenous culture and personal identity and how one must navigate the world. She also explains how Nishnaabeg-Gikendaasowin (Nishnaabeg knowledge) comes from the spirit realm through dreams, visions, ceremony and "through the process of gaaizhi-

zhaawendaagoziyaang – that which is given lovingly to use by the spirits" (Simpson, 2014). To gain access to this knowledge, the person must be in alignment with the forces through ceremony, rituals, and embody the teachings one already knows (Simpson, 2014). This further shows how knowledge and learning are embedded within ceremony and that the spirituality of Indigenous Peoples cannot be dismissed in spaces any longer (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Doetzel, 2018).

3.2 Data Collection

My research utilized semi-structured interviews, which are commonly used in the SL literature (Ernst, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative method that allows participants to explicitly state what they have learned aligned with theory while allowing flexibility in expressing their lived experience (Cross & Galletta, 2013; Medema et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews use an interview guide (Bernard, 2006), but still allow the researcher to deviate from the set questions to ask appropriate follow-up questions, eliciting a richer and more comprehensive participant view to gain deeper insight into participants' views (Cross & Galletta, 2013). This is especially important as learning outside of explicit observation during the moment of learning and administered tests or surveys (Leys & Vanclay, 2011; Prutzer et al., 2021) is best captured directly from participants' feelings and thoughts. Finally, less structured interviews align more with the Indigenous worldview of sharing knowledge (Kovach, 2009).

CRP members were recruited through my supervisor's and my existing relationship as part of the CRP. CRP leadership and manager gave me CRP member emails whose work broadly involves governance or IPCAs since I wanted to see if these

people were making changes to governance around IPCAs and the conservation field. Therefore, this study used purposive sampling since I sought the specific expertise of a group of people within a case study (Emmel, 2014; Yin, 2009). The CRP generously provided honoraria of $150 to Indigenous individuals who chose to participate in the interview. People who had engaged with the CRP for a year or more were eligible to participate due to the objectives around learning over time. When reaching out to CRP members through email, the consent form was attached for review before the interview. Non-Indigenous (Appendix D) and Indigenous (Appendix E) individuals received different consent forms due to the honorarium Indigenous People would receive. CRP members could also verbally consent before the interview started.

While I tried to contact 20 CRP members, I was only able to interview 14 people due to others declining or not answering my email. People were asked and consented to being identified by name or no names but quotes could be used. Three are Indigenous with two belonging to the CRP leadership circle (who consented to be named) and the other works for an environmental NGO, and 11 are non-Indigenous. Of the non-Indigenous people, four are federal government employees, three are environmental NGO employees, and four work for Indigenous Nations or organizations. Of the participants, four federal government employees, two who work for Indigenous organizations, and two environmental NGO employees were involved with the CRP because of their job duties. The remaining six participants chose to engage with the CRP voluntarily. There was also variability in how each participant engaged with and how much time was spent engaging with the CRP.

Interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams, recorded for transcription purposes, and lasted approximately 45 to 75 minutes. Participants were given the option to be namedor anonymized and could still be used for quotes to illustrate themes even if they did not want to be named. Using my interview questions as a guide (Appendix A), CRP members were asked about two broad areas during the interview. The first set of questions were around relationship qualities and building relationships. I first asked participants how they were engaged with the CRP and what their job was for context. Then I asked about relationships that allowed them to collaborate well with people within the CRP, asking they made connections and build relationships. It was more organic if participants could describe qualities or processes without me giving them examples. I would then ask if they learned to how build better relationships engaging with the CRP and if they brought any practices back to their organization or not. The second half of the interview would focus on reconciliation. If the participant did not bring up reconciliation before, I would ask if discussion about ongoing and past harms of conservation initiatives and when discussions of reconciliation happened during time spent engaging with the CRP. I asked if these discussions impeded or contributed to relationship building within the CRP. Afterwards, I asked participants if their organizations had similar discussions to transition talking outside of the CRP. This was more important for participants who were Non-Indigenous and working in Federal agencies and NGOs. Finally, I asked if learning within the CRP about relationship-building changed how they and their organization are engaging in reconciliation advancements. I would bring up IPCAs or upholding commitments that recognize Indigenous rights if participants were having trouble thinking about this question.

3.3 Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed to address each of the research objectives. A mixture of deductive and inductive coding (Bernard, 2006) was followed using the NVivo 12 software. The deductive codes for analysis around social learning (SL) and reconciliation were developed from the literature reviewed in Sections 2.4 for relationship characteristics and Sections 2.3 for reconciliation. Single-loop learning entails changing routine actions, while double-loop learning looks at changing a system's underlying values and policies. Triple-loop learning looks at the transformation of the structural context of a system (Armitage et al., 2008; Medema et al., 2015; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). The pre-determined themes for SL were the following:

- Learning and acquiring new skills within the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) around relationships and building relationships with the integration into personal practices (single-loop learning);
- Bringing learning around relationships and building relationships from the CRP back to their respective organizations to implement organizational change (double-loop learning) and;
- Organizational and system-wide restructuring of practices and values based on learning from the CRP (triple-loop learning).

Indigenous learning was coded separately from the multi-loop learning model around the pre-determined themes of land-based learning, storytelling, and ceremony. Emergent themes were also inductively coded to fully capture the learning and

experiences of all CRP members amid the changing landscape of relationships and the broader ongoing work of reconciliation. See Appendix F for a full list of codes. A full explanation of analysis and codes will be in the relevant Methods sections for Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter 4: Examining the Social Learning of Relationships through Participation in the Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership

Author Contributions: Sophie Boardman, Dr. Melanie Zurba, and Dr. Noella Gray contributed to the design and implementation of the research. Sophie Boardman completed the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript. Dr. Melanie Zurba and Dr. Noella Gray contributed to reviewing and editing the manuscript.

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4 Introduction

Throughout the world, conservation has disenfranchised Indigenous Peoples' access to, decision-making for, relationships with, responsibilities for, and rights to their territories through the protected area (PA) regime (Hockings et al., 2004; Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE), 2018; Moola & Roth, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). Similarly, in Canada, the development of PAs removed Indigenous Peoples from their territories for new areas of tourism and pleasure (Goyes & South, 2019; Johnston & Mason, 2021; Shultis & Heffner, 2016; Youdelis et al., 2020) and so Canada could also control natural resources as the settler state grew (Bernauer & Roth, 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021). In response to Indigenous Peoples activism and assertion of rights from local to global spaces, international standards and frameworks have shifted conservation and the valuation and championing of Indigenous Peoples within PA management (Corson et al., 2020; Norman, 2017; Reimerson, 2013).

Conservation partnerships are projects with various goals around management of protected areas, species, capacity building, education, or financial and technical support that can involve Indigenous Peoples, non-government organizations, the Canadian state, the public, and researchers. Conservation partnerships are becoming increasingly interested in respecting and affirming Indigenous Peoples' rights and activities that promote Indigenous Peoples' reconnection and relationship to their territories (Artelle et al., 2021; Beveridge et al., 2020; Dickson-Hoyle et al., 2022; Diggon et al., 2021; Hessami et al., 2021; M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021; Reid et al., 2021, 2022; Steel et al., 2021). Learning is important for partnerships as those involved are required to adapt to collaboration for effective partnerships (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Zurba et al., 2012). As Indigenous-led conservation initiatives increase and efforts toward reconciliation are made, the relationships of those involved continue to change, thus, learning around relationships must be examined. Social learning theory is a useful tool to examine learning since it focuses on what was learned and how learning happened (Jacobi & De Souza, 2021; Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Prutzer et al., 2021). This study focused on the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership as a case study to examine what kinds of shifts in relationships are taking place as this partnership embodies learning and generating knowledge to support Indigenous-led conservation. This study used social learning to explore the learning around relationships and relationship-building of those involved with the CRP.

4.1 International and Canadian Policy Context

(Hockings et al., 2004; Zurba, Beazley, et al., 2019a)In 2007, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (UN, 2007), although Canada did not formally recognize it until 2016 (Fontaine, 2016). Another major influence was the creation of the Aichi Targets in 2013, a set of 20 conservation targets for the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to achieve by 2020 (Hockings et al., 2004; Woodley et al., 2012; Zurba et al., 2019a). Canada produced a plan to implement the Aichi Targets in 2016 with the *2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada* (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016), including Target 1 to address area-based conservation goals of 17% of land and inland water and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 (ECCC, 2016). In December 2022, the CBD adopted the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, four long-term goals around conservation and biodiversity, including Target 3 to conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030 (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022). Canada has also produced a plan to implement this framework, the 2030 Nature Strategy (ECCC, 2024).

With each of these advancements, Canada has been facing a reckoning of its colonial history of conservation and PA management (ICE, 2018; Youdelis, 2016). At the same time, practitioners and scientists have been making calls for more inclusive and holistic practices within the field for the inclusion and learning from Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge (Artelle et al., 2019; Mansuy et al., 2023; M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021; Reid et al., 2024; Stein et al., 2023; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Canadian commitment to supporting Indigenous Peoples came formally in 2017 when the Federal

government invited the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) to explore the equity and reconciliation side of achieving Target 1 (Townsend & Roth, 2023; Zurba, Beazley, et al., 2019a).

The ICE was comprised of two Indigenous co-chairs and seven core members representing a range of First Nations and Metis with PA or governance expertise (2018). Nine government ICE members represented the federal, provincial, and territorial governments (FPT), as well as governmental agencies like Parks Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) (ICE, 2018). The ICE convened gatherings across Canada to help determine what equitable conservation could be in trying to achieve Canada's Target 1 and in the spirit of reconciliation (Zurba, Beazley, et al., 2019a). The ICE determined Indigenous-led PAs in Canada to be part of this solution and coined the term Indigenous Protected and Conserved areas (IPCAs) (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). IPCAs are Indigenous-led, represent a long-term commitment to conservation, and elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). The ICE completed its work in 2018 creating a set of 50 recommendations around equitable conservation amidst ongoing reconciliation and highlighted Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) as the path forward to supporting and affirming Indigenous Peoples' rights and reconnection to their territories in PA management (ICE, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Zurba et al., 2019a).

After the ICE completed its work in 2018, a core group of members wished to maintain the momentum of the work formed the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) in 2019 (CRP, 2024a). This seven-year national research partnership

was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council with the funding focused on research and knowledge mobilization. The CRP's main goal was supporting Indigenous-led conservation across Canada hosted by the IISAAK OLAM foundation, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, and the University of Guelph (UoG). The CRP was led by a leadership circle comprising five Indigenous conservation leaders and two academic leads from the UoG and has three major legacy projects: the IPCA Knowledge Basket, the IPCA Innovation Centres, and the IPCA Alliance/Network (CRP, 2024c). An Elders Lodge, comprised of four knowledge holders of diverse geographies, helped to provide cultural and spiritual information to the CRP in the first half of the partnership and co-created a governance framework based on seasons (Bishop et al., 2025a; CRP, n.d.). Engagement was largely with First Nations and some Metis and Inuit due to previous relationships formed during the ICEs work (Bishop et al., 2025a). The CRP hosted six streams of work, which were Ethical Space, Knowledge Systems, Conservation Governance, Domestic Law and Policy, Biocultural Indicators and Outcomes, and the IPCA Economics, Infrastructure and Finance stream, and other working groups generated from participant interest. In addition to these, there was an IPCA co-learning circle and other groups created around shared topics of interest, such as conservation financing and land trusts (Bishop et al., 2025a). There were also some seasonal virtual gatherings and yearly virtual partnership reviews for people to engage and gather (Bishop et al., 2025a; CRP, n.d.). There was also an informal space for student researchers to collaborate and get support from each other and the leadership circle as needed. People engaging with the CRP could join for personal interest to gain knowledge or their organization or Nation sent them. The time people spent in these spaces was also variable. The CRP also hosted

webinars and other learning opportunities, such as workshops and webinars, for its owner members and education for those outside of the CRP.

4.1.1 Important Conservation Relationship Qualities

With the rise in inclusion and acceptance of Indigenous knowledge, leadership, and initiatives within conservation, relationships among all actors involved in conservation continue to evolve. Relationships are key to conservation partnerships because they determine how well people work together, how power-sharing and conflict will be mitigated, and if members will willingly engage in collaborative learning (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Eastwood et al., 2022; Siddiki et al., 2017; Zurba et al., 2012). How a partnership begins is important so that factors such as limitations, pre-existing histories, and power imbalances can be mitigated for improved collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; ICE, 2018; Murray & Burrows, 2017; Siddiki et al., 2017; Zurba et al., 2012). This is especially important in the conservation space in recognizing Canada's dark past and ongoing treatment of Indigenous Peoples. If not discussed properly, this can undermine trust-building as the partnership continues (ICE, 2018; Rapp, 2020).

Trust and trust-building are important for relationships and relationship-building. Trust can be placed in a person, organization, object, or process where individuals, interpersonal, and institutions can influence the trust at each level and overlap continually (Hotte et al., 2019; Lumosi et al., 2020; Rapp, 2020). It is also important to consider how power impacts relationships. Individuals can exercise power (Dietsch et al., 2021; Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015), while partnerships impact what are acceptable forms of knowledge and truth (informal and formal rules, organizations, and norms)

(Shackleton et al., 2023). Political-economic systems (capitalism, colonialism, and class) constrain actors' choices and agency (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023). Finally, the discursive approach sees power as a force which enforces social norms and individuality through knowledge and narratives, and this can be seen in conservation when power emanates through institutions or groups through practicing ideologies (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023).

Beyond trust and power, there are other important relationship qualities to note in partnerships. Willingness to learn, compromise, and reciprocity can improve or undermine partnerships. Learning can be extended to the process, culture, language, and ethics of other partners (Artelle et al., 2021; Reid et al., 2022; Zurba et al., 2012). Compromise is present in all relationships and is key for complex, long-term partnerships to be adaptable (Artelle et al., 2021; Premauer & Berkes, 2015; Zurba et al., 2012). Reciprocity can help ensure there are multidirectional benefits for all involved and to hold those accountable to account for the harm Indigenous Peoples have historically faced within research and conservation broadly (Artelle et al., 2021; H. Castleden et al., 2012; Tran et al., 2020b). Lack of compromise, communication, and transparency can hinder collaboration and partnerships (Murray & Burrows, 2017; Youdelis et al., 2021b).

4.1.2 Learning

Learning is an important aspect of partnerships and collaborative conservation initiatives (Bullock et al., 2022; Eastwood et al., 2022; Lumosi et al., 2020). This research utilized Social Learning (SL) theory, which has been applied to collaborative partnerships examining learning within a social context (Buchecker et al., 2023; Bullock et al., 2022;

Cundill et al., 2019; Eastwood et al., 2022; Keen et al., 2005; Leys & Vanclay, 2011). SL is useful for examining relationships within collaborative partnerships. Partnerships require equitable decision-making through meaningful engagement of all (Eastwood et al., 2022; Eriksson et al., 2019; Lumosi et al., 2020), allowing for collective learning in which those involved find new shared values when learning to relate (Ananda et al., 2020; Eriksson et al., 2019; Folke et al., 2005; Gould et al., 2019; Schusler et al., 2003). (Baird et al., 2014; Cundill et al., 2019; Lumosi et al., 2020)(Medema et al., 2016; Schusler et al., 2003)

In this research, SL is defined as an interactive and dynamic process which occurs within a defined social context, space, or community of practice (M. S. Reed et al., 2010), and those involved can deliberate about issues, reflect, and share values that can culminate in broader social action (Andrade et al., 2023; Eastwood et al., 2022; Keen et al., 2005; Lumosi et al., 2020). SL literature has incorporated communities of practice (CoP) (Andrade et al., 2023; Folke et al., 2005; P. King et al., 2023; Lumosi et al., 2020), which examine how an individual's identity and actions are impacted through participation in an organization (King et al., 2023; Koliba & Gajda, 2009; Lumosi et al., 2020), showing how using both approaches when trying to understand the influences of learning within an organization can be effective. Knowledge Co-Production (KCP) shares similarities with SL regarding how meaningful collaboration within partnerships can be undertaken through iterative and reflective processes leading to learning and action (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020; Mach et al., 2020; Muhl et al., 2023; Wyborn et al., 2019).

I used the multi-loop model (MLM) to describe the outcomes, processes, and levels of learning (Eastwood et al., 2022; Medema et al., 2015). The MLM comprises

three loops (single-, double-, and triple-) constituting different levels of learning, which may happen simultaneously and there being no prescribed order (Medema et al., 2014). Single-loop learning looks at learning that is focused on the self, as these are changes which do not require systemic shifts but small shifts to meet current goals (Armitage et al., 2008; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). This loop is the most common level of learning since individual learning is easily adopted and encouraged (Johannessen et al., 2019). Double-loop learning looks at changing the values of the organization when challenges cannot fit within the current system, causing those involved to examine and reframe how goals can be achieved and changed (Johannessen et al., 2019; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). Double-loop can be constrained by system and structural limitations that stabilize the dominant frame (Pahl-Wostl, 2009). Triple-loop learning seeks change in the entire system, based on the single- and double-loops, revisiting and shifting the norms, values, and paradigms (Armitage et al., 2008; Johannessen et al., 2019; Medema et al., 2014; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). Triple-loop is possible but often not initiated by an organization (Armitage et al., 2008) and can result from a crisis or turning point (Lumosi et al., 2019; Medema et al., 2014).

As the CRP is an Indigenous-led partnership, it is important to examine learning outside of a Western worldview and framework (SL). Examining Indigenous ways of learning will aid in coding during analysis, while also ensuring many worldviews can be represented in the study. During the literature search, a pan-Indigenous approach was taken due to the CRP spanning all of Canada. Storytelling and ceremony are common ways to learn regardless of Nation or Tribal affiliation (ICE, 2018; Simpson, 2014). Storytelling is a common way of sharing and learning knowledge because it imparts and affirms ethics, embedding within them a First Nations worldview (Simpson, 2014).

During storytelling, the teller and listener engage in a relationship where it is up to the listener to make meaning from the story and incorporate it into their identity and life (Simpson, 2014). Indigenous ceremony is important for learning as well. Spirituality is central to Indigenous culture and one's identity and the process of learning and being open to learning itself is spiritual (Simpson, 2014). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) notes a type of knowledge specific to her culture can only be accessed if a person is aligned with forces through ceremony, ritual, and embodying the teachings one already knows, demonstrating how knowledge, learning, and spirituality are intertwined.

I used the CRP as a case study to examine learning about relationships and relationship building within nature conservation that is focused on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. My research was guided by two objectives. First, identify the SL processes and outcomes that emerged from relationships developed among those individuals involved with the CRP. Secondly, explore if and how individuals' learning outcomes from engagement with the CRP inform relationship-building practices outside the CRP.

4.2 Methods and Analysis

This research conceptualized the CRP as a unique case to study through its position as leading a large shift in the conservation field bringing together a wide variety of actors all interested in advancing Indigenous-led initiatives across Canada. Using a case study can aid the researcher in answering specific phenomena around why something happened and how it happened, which lent itself to learning and relationships particularly

well (Yin, 2009). Case studies also provide flexibility for multiple realities to exist (Yin, 2009), which is important for this research and will be elaborated on below further.

As a non-Indigenous student researcher invited to participate with the CRP, I had an ethical imperative and responsibility to engage in approaches which respect and promote Indigenous knowledge and worldviews (Key et al., 2019; Timko et al., 2015). I was invited through my supervisor's role as the CRP Conservation Governance stream Co-Lead, and my research aligns with the stream. Relational accountability, Ethical Space, and *Etuaptumumk* were utilized to ensure CRP participant worldviews are fully represented and the research can be accountable to the CRP and broader community. Relational accountability is about understanding that knowledge is created through relationships and within research, meaning the researcher has a responsibility to ensure their work is being done in good faith, spanning the entire process (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Hughes, 2019). Study approval was sought from CRP project leads when I was submitting my research ethics to Dalhousie's Research Ethics Board and during the first year (Winter of 2023). At this time, I talked about my research with the Indigenous leads within the student research space. I also followed interview protocols and was in contact with participants to understand if my interpretation of their knowledge aligned with how they think and understand. Ethical space is created when those interacting confront their bias and worldview to enter a respectful, dialogic space of relationships (Ermine, 2007; ICE, 2018; Sinclaire et al., 2021). Created by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert and his late wife Murdena Marshall, *Etuaptumumk* is about weaving Indigenous and Western knowledge together respectfully, seen as equal, and drawing on the strength of both for the current situation (Bartlett et al., 2012; ICE, 2018; Reid et al.,

2021). Ethical Space and *Etuaptumumk* were used as guiding principles during the background literature review to make sure that there was a balance of Indigenous knowledge and Western Knowledge in the sources, so I looked for Indigenous scholars/authors and/or worldviews in the materials. Ethical Space and *Etuaptumumk* influenced me while speaking to participants during the interview and analysis to ensure I was not erasing other ways of knowing and coding for Indigenous learning (storytelling, and ceremony). These also informed my own personal reflexivity throughout the research process ensuring my worldview did not overshadow my participants and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing, so I was not overstepping.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they are commonly used in SL literature (Ernst, 2019) and are a qualitative method that can allow participants to share their lived experiences, while still ensuring the researcher's research objectives can be fulfilled using an interview guide (Bernard, 2006; Cross & Galletta, 2013; Galletta, 2013). After the CRP project leads approved my study, Dalhousie (REB #2023-6675) approved this research. No specific Indigenous REB was applied for because this was not Indigenous community-based research. Instead, it was research with an Indigenous-led organization (CRP) representing nations and Indigenous interests from across Canada. Therefore in this case, the CRP was the appropriate authority for ethical approval regarding Indigenous participation. Then CRP participants were recruited with permission from CRP project leads and chosen based on their work involved broadly with PA governance and IPCAs. This scope was chosen as I initially wanted insights about governance and IPCAs but with guidance from CRP project leads the scope was widened for those who could participate. People who had engaged with the CRP for a year or more

were eligible to participate due to the objectives around learning over time. The CRP project leads gave me a list of twenty people and emails who had consented to being contacted by me. A total of fourteen CRP participants were interviewed in the Summer and Fall of 2023, while the others either were too busy or were not heard from. The list was separated into four categories: the CRP Leadership Circle, Non-Indigenous people working for IPCAs, Federal government employees, and people working for environmental NGOs. I used purposive sampling since I wanted a specific set of people with knowledge and expertise (Emmel, 2014). I recruited participants through email by sending them a lay paragraph of my research and attaching the consent form. The consent forms outlined their rights and explained the request to participate in a semi-structured interview, to be completed over Microsoft Teams and lasting 45 to 75 minutes. Participants were asked if they wanted to be identifiable in papers by name and could provide quotes with or without their names. Indigenous participants were given a $150 honorarium, provided by the CRP, in recognition of their contribution to the field and willingness to participate in this study. Since Indigenous participants would receive honoraria, there was a consent form for Indigenous participants (Appendix E) and non-Indigenous participants (Appendix D).

The interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A), which allowed me to deviate if needed and ask appropriate follow-up questions. (Emmel, 2014)At the start of the interview, participants were asked about how they were involved with the CRP and what their work entailed for context. Once participants were able to describe how they engaged with the CRP, I asked about relationship qualities that made them work well with others. I asked how they built connections and relationships. If they

could describe this without examples, it felt more organic. Participants were then asked if engaging in these spaces made them learn how to build better relationships and if they brought those practices back to their organizations or not. Interview transcripts were downloaded from Microsoft Teams with the approved consent of CRP participants. Participants were given the option of being named or anonymized in thesis results to protect their identity or if they weren't comfortable being named. Participants could still agree to be quoted to demonstrate themes even if they did not want to be named.

Transcripts were coded using NVivo 12 software using both deductive and inductive coding (Bernard, 2006). Relationship qualities and Indigenous ways of learning were used to guide coding during analysis. The first round of coding used the predetermined themes around relationships (trust, power, accountability, shared values, compromise, reciprocity) and Indigenous ways of learning (storytelling and ceremony). Inductive coding was used during the second round for any other emergent themes, such as CRP being a Bridging organization, flexibility of the CRP and engagement spaces (See bolded in Appendix F). I coded for the various spaces and ways people said they engaged with the CRP, like the Streams of Work and IPCA Knowledge Basket. I also coded participants based on the stage of their career (early career, mid-career, and late-career), if they identified as an immigrant/newcomer to Canada, and how new they were to the conservation landscape in Canada.

I analyzed how engaged participants were based on what they told me and how many spaces they were involved in, such as how many meetings or webinars they attended and level of involvement with the stream of work or co-learning circles around special topics. From this, I classified participants based on a spectrum of engagement

described as ‘highly engaged’, ‘engaged’, ‘somewhat engaged’ and ‘low engagement’ and was formulated through participant self-identification and the context provided throughout the interview. ‘Highly engaged’ means the participant was actively involved in a stream or learning circle, engaged with the leadership circle where possible, and attended webinars and other learning opportunities. ‘Engaged’ were all of the previous activities but did not do work associated with the stream or learning circle outside of meetings, whereas ‘somewhat engaged’ a participant rarely attended stream or learning circle meetings and rarely viewed webinars/other learning opportunities. ‘Little engagement’ was because the participant engaged with a stream until they learned a specific skill to bring back to their organization.

Once all codes were found, the learning was sorted as an outcome or a process and then sorted into the multi-loop model using parameters guided by the SL literature (Armitage et al., 2008; Bullock et al., 2022; Eastwood et al., 2022; Medema et al., 2014; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). I developed what each loop level was through the literature review and by comparing similar cases of conservation research examining collaborations. The three loops are as follows: acquiring new skills from the CRP about relationships and integrating them into personal everyday practices (single-loop), implementing the previous learning at their organizations to implement organizational change (double-loop), and system-wide restructuring of practices and values at their organizations (triple-loop).

The final codes and classification of learning within the multi-loop model were synthesized to accomplish the study objectives. The CRP being an example of a community of practice was used to aid in conceptualization and analysis within the multi-

loop model of social learning. Once relationship qualities were coded for, I grouped them together by whether the relationship quality was about the structure or characteristic of a space and Indigenous ways of learning. The leftover relational qualities were analyzed to have trust and build trust when combined in a collaborative environment.

4.3 Results & Discussion

The following themes emerged from this final synthesis. Firstly, reflections about relationships will be described. Attributes of a positive community of practice will be expanded on next and contain the following sub-themes: the structure of the CRP, cultivating aspects of trust, and Indigenous ways of learning. Lastly, the influences of power will be discussed.

4.3.1 Participant Demographics and Engagement

Fourteen participants engaged with the CRP were interviewed. Three were Indigenous (one works for an environmental NGO and two belong to the CRP leadership circle). Of the non-Indigenous participants, four work or have worked for Indigenous Nations or organizations, four work for the federal government, and three work for environmental NGOs. There was high variability in how engaged participants were with the CRP. The Indigenous participants were highly engaged, two who work or have worked for Indigenous Nations or organizations and one person who works for an environmental NGOs were engaged, two people who work for an Indigenous Nation and one who works for an environmental NGO were somewhat engaged, and one person who worked for an environmental NGO was engaged very little.

The two Indigenous People from the leadership circle, one person who worked for an environmental NGO who engaged very little, one person who worked for an Indigenous Nation were later in their career. Two people who worked for an Indigenous organization that was engaged, one person who worked for an Indigenous Nation, and one person who worked for an environmental NGO who was somewhat engaged were all early in their careers. The others were mid-career. The two people who work for an Indigenous organization, the person who worked for an environmental NGO who was somewhat engaged, and one person working for an Indigenous Nation said they were new to the Indigenous-led conservation landscape in Canada before being involved with the CRP. One person working for an Indigenous Nation and the person who worked for an environmental NGO who was somewhat engaged also identified their immigration/settler origins as first-generation Canadian and immigrant respectively without being prompted.

4.3.2 Reflections about Relationships

When asked about learning and relationships, participants initially tended to conceptualize and reflect on what relationships mean and look like for them. Although not all of these contributed to learning, sharing how participants talk about relationships is important for examining if or how relationships are changing. Some participants talked about relationships as "how you show up", either as being a good partner/ally or being in community. Claire Hutton, Indigenous Stewardship Director at Nature United, spoke to this and shared what this can look like:

> *...how do you show up? Showing up matters … and being clear about your intentions and aspirations, so trust, clarity, and openness, being committed for the long term. [also] Listening to where folks are at and what they're looking for…*

Others mentioned relationship qualities like clear communication, acceptance of diverse perspectives, humility, and the importance of reciprocity. While these participants could identify what entails a good relationship, in contrast, three participants felt engaging with the CRP did not allow for new learning and could only identify learning how to build relationships online due to COVID-19. This could be due to how often and why they interacted with the CRP. People may also have been less inclined to learn during their time engaging with the CRP because current relationship qualities and practices can achieve current personal and organizational goals or mandates in their everyday jobs i.e. staying within the single-loop. Only one participant experienced no learning, who is non-Indigenous and works for an NGO, due to them working with Indigenous Peoples and communities for most of their career and limited interactions with the CRP. An Indigenous woman working for an NGO, held a contrasting view about relationships by saying,

> *It's making sure you're listening with both ears. It's kind of something that I've been taught and so yeah, it may not feel relevant in the moment, but teachings are all around us and you can apply those to relationships.*

This shows how understanding and thinking about relationships can directly influence learning and reflection and may have allowed this Indigenous participant to reflect more easily.

4.3.3 Attributes of a Positive Community of Practice

The two qualities mentioned the most were that the CRP was a learning and collaborative environment, which aligns with community of practice and knowledge co-production literature being spaces of learning and collaboration to enhance learning (King et al., 2023; Lumosi et al., 2019, 2020; Mach et al., 2020; Muhl et al., 2023). Some participants spoke about learning how networking to share knowledge and experiences is important. A participant working for an Indigenous organization shared this sentiment by saying,

> *I think it was great to have the CRP, this big national network, where groups who are doing Indigenous-led conservation and developing IPCAs can kind of talk with each other because sometimes it feels like you're doing this important work but you're alone.*

Most participants felt that all the opportunities to engage and increase their network allowed them to be able to maintain these relationships throughout and beyond the CRP. The narrative that the CRP has been a platform for how an Indigenous-led collective can operate and help showcase what is possible in terms of operating and uplifting Indigenous communities was prevalent throughout interviews. A few described the CRP as a "bridging organization" and Eli Enns, co-founder and CEO of the ISSAK OLAM Foundation, described this idea as the CRP "being the scaffolding" for future Indigenous-led conservation initiatives across Canada. When I asked participants what they learned, I followed up and asked if these practices were brought back or incorporated at their organization. If they were not, it meant that people were learning at an individual level, i.e., rather than organizational. Thus, these can be characterized as single-loop learning.

The next sub-themes flow from and contribute to making the CRP a positive community of practice.

4.3.3.1 Structure of the CRP

The outcomes and processes shared by participants show the importance of how a partnership is set up and facilitated throughout, allowing for more effective relationship-building (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Hotte et al., 2019; ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2012). Most participants said the leadership of the CRP and different facilitators showed them what good relationships look like during the various opportunities to engage, especially for those newer to the field. A non-Indigenous participant working for an Indigenous organization shared this perspective saying,

> *It was getting a snapshot of how these tables are functioning and what it takes for them to function and seeing just how vital those people are to making sure that things progress and kind of growing that. OK, I'm gonna make sure that I'm one of those people so that I can help turn the wheels.*

This was also shared by Eli Enns (co-founder and CEO of the ISSAK OLAM Foundation) and Lisa Young (Executive Director of the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources) who are part of the leadership circle and felt the horizontal approach of collaboration within the streams of work and other learning circle spaces where all opinions and views were respected facilitated learning and better engagement. Some participants also identified the flexibility of being able to engage with the CRP, such as online meetings being helpful during COVID and being able to join when they could.

Several participants shared the downside of such flexibility. A few shared that the flexibility of spaces, such as membership, purpose, and what could be achieved during the partnership, was too flexible at times and better framing or communication would have helped for more effective relationship building. Most participants also felt that more frequent meetings and an opportunity for an in-person meeting now that COVID-19 has lessened would have supported better relationship-building.

4.3.3.2 Cultivating Aspects of Trust

Many learning outcomes and processes participants shared have contributed to and created an environment of trust. These were shared by all participants except those who experienced no learning about relationships and relationship-building. Some participants learned to become more confident in knowledge and relationship experiences, contributing to better relationships overall. A few of these participants said engaging with the CRP helped them affirm current practices and values they already hold or practice about relationships, such as engaging in reciprocity (i.e., rather than one-way relationship / only taking) and centring Indigenous worldviews instead of defaulting to Western ways of knowing. An Indigenous participant working for an environmental NGO shared this sentiment by saying,

> *… OK, these are all the things that I hold near and dear to my heart when I'm talking about relationships and I'm advocating for nations within my organization. And so it's just very validating and very reassuring…because I think even as like an Indigenous woman working in a white colonial organization, there's moments where I'm going to second guess myself. … and then sitting in*

those conversations with the Indigenous leadership, saying things that I'm already doing. It's like, OK, this is the right path. I do know what I'm doing. I should be trusting my gut and the ancestors…

Other relationship qualities mentioned by many were openness to ideas, ways of thinking and building relationships. A couple of participants also shared how people were willing to engage and lend a hand when needed. Mentioned less frequently by participants were outcomes such as accountability, *"being a woman of my word"*, being direct and transparent about goals and outcomes, diverse perspectives being valuable, and creating safe spaces. Increased confidence coupled with the relationship qualities increased affinitive trust through all the positive interactions (Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015). This aligns with studies that have seen mostly affinitive trust fostered through partnerships and Communities of practice (Eastwood et al., 2022; Lumosi et al., 2020). Many mentioned that knowing that those involved with the CRP want to do better amidst reconciliation (dispositional trust) along with the previous theme of the CRP being structured, showed there was high systems-based trust that helped to establish strong trust in the beginning and helped the other types of trust grow (Dietsch et al., 2021; Saif et al., 2022; Stern & Coleman, 2015). The initial trust coupled with the relationship qualities shared by participants helped create and maintain an environment to build relationships (Hotte et al., 2019; Rapp, 2020; Reo et al., 2017; Zurba et al., 2012).

4.3.3.3 Indigenous Ways of Learning

Ethical Space, *Etuaptumumk*, and storytelling were not as prevalent as I originally thought before coding considering the partnership is Indigenous-led and these are core

concepts. Nevertheless, these are still important to highlight. All three participants brought these up themselves expect for one whom I prompted it by asking if they could think about any guiding values of the CRP. These were most often mentioned by early career participants or those new to Canadian conservation and they noted the CRP was their first experience seeing these being used actively. Three participants shared that Ethical Space was a key aspect of building relationships and two people noted how this helped them navigate and interact in shared spaces with diverse views and opinions. It was brought up specifically when talking about needing to work with provincial or federal government partners. *Etuaptumumk* and ceremony, specifically practices and protocols for meetings being opened and closed with prayers by an Elder or Indigenous participant, were shared as helping to build relationships for a few participants through active involvement in an Indigenous-led partnership. Storytelling was only mentioned by one, noting how it allowed them to learn how to be in relationships with others to help them become familiar with Indigenous ways of knowing and sharing knowledge. Although Ethical Space is a core value of the CRP, the small identification may be due to how engagement is personal and must be an active endeavour.

4.3.4 Influences of Power

Three participants experienced learning characterized within the double-loop: a non-Indigenous person working for Indigenous organizations, Lisa Young, and Eli Enns. Enns was the only one to experience triple-loop learning. The low prevalence of double- and triple-loop learning was impeded by influences of power. The outcomes and processes will be stated first before the broader discussion of power.

All three shared that being part of the CRP has helped create shared terms of reference to help build relationships with government partners, which was driven by the momentum from the ICE report around the language of Indigenous-led conservation and participating with the CRP helped to navigate bringing new language to relationships. Young shared that getting the practice and language of Ethical Space into ongoing and new relationships with partners has helped to build stronger partnerships. Previous single-loop learnings, like engaging with those with diverse perspectives and backgrounds, the collaborative environment, and watching facilitation contributed to this learning outcome. Young also shared that having a chance to see how a different structure operates, UINR has been reframing and restructuring its programs for better relationship-building opportunities with other partners. Lisa and the participant working for an Indigenous organization learnings led them to create more opportunities for networking and learning opportunities within their respective organizations. This was driven by the previous processes and seeing how effective networking opportunities are for organizational goals, while also having allies to share successes and setbacks is helpful for everyone.

Only Enn's learnings reached the triple-loop through the co-creation of the IPCA planning certificate with Vancouver Island University. He observed that his strongest relationships within the CRP were established in person first and maintained virtually with the onset of the pandemic. Enns noted many of the key relationships were established during the ICE process and carried over into the CRP and described this using "pandemic terms," saying, *"I think overall there's a lot of strengthening of relationships. …So I think the essential relationships got stronger and the nonessential relationships just dissipated and stopped happening"*. Enn's learning influenced the structure of the

certificate since only the first week is in person to help foster relationships, with the hope to have a final gathering at the end to facilitate a community of practice of IPCA practitioners. This was triple-loop learning because Enns took his learning about relationships and within the CRP and brought it back to his organization creating a new protocol and practice around relationship-building.

Young and Enn's identification of this loop of learning can be attributed to their power as directors within their organizations, which may have allowed them the flexibility to enact organizational change. Young and Enn were also part of the leadership circle so they had more opportunities to engage, which may have allowed them the opportunity to be able to reflect on an ongoing basis and be able to act on these reflections more easily. The other people interviewed held relatively new positions in their organizations working on newer projects. Actor-centred and Institutional power (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023) can account for how these participants had the power to enact their learning. In contrast, several participants described how the role they played within their organizations impeded their ability to enact change, aligning with the actor-centred approach and who can make decisions determining social norms and outcomes (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023; Turner et al., 2020). Although some participants shared that their organizations were trying to change practices, such as incorporating Indigenous perspectives into conservation practices and taking stock of the harm, it takes time for shifting values to impact large organizations which is a common barrier identified in the literature (Ananda et al., 2020; Lumosi et al., 2020; Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Turner et al., 2020).

4.4 Conclusion

This paper demonstrated the learning that emerged from relationships and relationship building of people engaged with the CRP. The SL framework enabled the classification of learning within the three levels (personal, organizational, and systems change) and the types of processes which directly influenced the learning outcomes and if these learnings influenced relationship-building outside the CRP. Important reflections showing how people think and define relationships were shared, showing how this can impact how people go into relationships and if learning happens. Participants shared many relationship outcomes and processes that contributed to the CRP being a positive, collaborative experience. The structure of the CRP and the strong leadership and facilitation, coupled with shared goals and values, created strong systems-based and dispositional trust at the start. Throughout the partnership, individuals' positive experiences along with key relationship qualities fostered affinitive trust.

While many participants identified outcomes and processes within the single-loop, only a few participants experienced double- and triple-loop learning due to limited institutional power, such as the job role and who is perceived as having the power to enact and change social norms (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023). This also shows just because learning has happened, social action is not necessarily an outcome. It is important to note that this does not diminish the learning of the participants, as many shared the relationships formed during the CRP have been able to be maintained. More research that examines relationships and relationship building are changing is needed, rather than it coming up indirectly in studies. Additionally, more studies should examine power within the multi-loop model and SL more broadly.

Many participants identified the CRP as an important space of collaboration and learning, especially for participants newer to the field or unfamiliar with Indigenous conservation, showing how spaces like these are key as Indigenous-led conservation and spaces, such as IPCAs, become increasingly accepted. Many identified the CRP as a bridging organization and although the CRP partnership ended in May of 2025, the IPCA Innovation Centre and the IPCA Alliance/Network may continue to provide such a space for those in the field. Opportunities for collaborations that allow for learning that supports those new to the field should be considered in future partnerships. Finally, as more partnerships emerge, the processes that contribute to the learning outcomes about relationships and relationship building found within this study could be useful to ensure the partnership can be successful and that those involved respect Indigenous Peoples and community knowledge.

Chapter 5: Reconciliation as relationship through engagement with the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership

Author Contributions: Sophie Boardman, Dr. Melanie Zurba, and Dr. Noella Gray contributed to the design and implementation of the research. Sophie Boardman completed the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript. Dr. Melanie Zurba and Dr. Noella Gray contributed to reviewing and editing the manuscript.
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5.1 Introduction

Truth and reconciliation processes have become popularized as a means to mediate large-scale violence, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa and Australia, as well as in Canadian national efforts (Zurba & Sinclair, 2020). In Canada, the first state-led national effort was with the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and recommendations set forth in the report were largely ignored by the government (TRCC, 2015b). It was not until 2008 that reconciliation became prominent as the then-prime minister apologized to survivors of the Indian residential school system and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed to provide justice and healing to survivors and their communities (TRCC, 2015b). The Commission defined reconciliation as "… an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (p. 121) and acknowledged that reconciliation will not be successful by only understanding Canada's harmful past (TRCC, 2015b). The Commission and

subsequent government initiatives have taken the approach that this form of reconciliation is between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples of the state and society (Townsend & Roth, 2023; TRCC, 2015b). The government has upheld this previous definition with its ongoing work supporting reconciliation efforts guided by the UNDRIP Calls to Action (UNDRIP Implementation Secretariat and Department of Justice, 2023).

There exists a plethora of Indigenous and scholarly perspectives on reconciliation which contrast and argue against state-led models and definitions that would remain colonized and not inherently change the realities of society (Asch & Borrows, 2018; Bishop et al., 2025a; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Many scholarly perspectives refute reconciliation as the way forward and instead advocate for resurgence (Corntassel, 2012; McGregor, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023). Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson describes radical resurgence as a critical look at settler colonialism and an examination of the ongoing relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the state (2017). This resurgence means everyday actions, no matter how small, at all levels of society must be taken (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019). Aimée Craft and Paulette Regan (2020) also frame resurgence similarly but go further, asserting that there must be renewed commitments to justice, dialogue, and relationship building, which centre Indigenous Peoples' ways of knowing and governing and visions of the future. Although reconciliation remains contested and separate from the reconciliation literature, there is a consensus that relationships must change to make space for Indigenous ontologies and lifeways and the possible futures Indigenous Peoples seek (Asch & Borrows, 2018; Bishop et al., 2025a; Craft & Regan, 2020; Townsend & Roth, 2023).

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) published its final report in 2015, reconciliation has become increasingly popular to work towards across various sectors across Canada, including conservation (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Zurba, Beazley, et al., 2019a). Canadian conservation has roots as a colonial tool to remove IPs from their lands so settlers could enjoy these spaces for tourism and pleasure (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Johnston & Mason, 2021; Youdelis et al., 2021) and simultaneously so the state could control the natural resources (Bernauer & Roth, 2021; Goyes & South, 2019; Youdelis et al., 2021). As Indigenous Peoples were removed from their lands, this broke their relationship, access and rights to maintain responsibilities associated with their lands, and decision-making abilities (Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Shultis & Heffner, 2016). Indigenous Peoples resistance and assertion of rights and access to their lands has catalyzed a global and Canadian shift in conservation that has resulted in international frameworks recognizing the importance of Indigenous Peoples rights and decision-making in PAs (Corson et al., 2020; Norman, 2017; Reimerson, 2013).

One important global shift championed by Indigenous Peoples was the passing in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), formally recognizing Indigenous Peoples inherent rights to lands and livelihoods (UN, 2007). It requires that nations globally implement policies, programs and protocols which implement UNDRIP principles (UN, 2007). Canada initially cast a dissenting vote in 2007 and only fully endorsed it in 2016 by removing its objector status (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). UNDRIP was formalized into Canadian law in 2021 as

Bill C-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIP, 2021), further cementing Canadian commitments through law.

With these shifts in conservation, collaborations and partnerships between all conservation actors and with Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Nations are changing. These partnerships are focused on cultivating meaningful relationships which treat the Indigenous Peoples as rights holders (Mansuy et al., 2023; Reid et al., 2022; Reyes-García et al., 2022) and incorporate Indigenous knowledge in conservation practices to respect and promote different Indigenous worldviews (Artelle et al., 2021; Beveridge et al., 2020; Dickson-Hoyle et al., 2022; Diggon et al., 2021; Hessami et al., 2021; M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021; Reid et al., 2021, 2022; Steel et al., 2021). Partnerships require many relational aspects to work, such as trust, power dynamics, and how actors handle conflict (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Prutzer et al., 2021; Zurba et al., 2012). Thus, how actors engage in relationships and relationship-building is important to examine in partnerships as reconciliation advances within conservation.

Canadian commitment to addressing reconciliation in conservation became galvanized through the Aichi Targets as part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The Aichi Targets were made up of 20 conservation targets to help meet five larger strategic goals around sustainable biodiversity use and conservation that signatories of the Convention on Biological Diversity are expected to achieve (Jonas et al., 2014; Zurba et al., 2019a). Aichi Target 11 was focused on the area-based achievement of l7 percent lands and 10 percent of waters by 2020 (Jonas et al., 2014) and was Canada's Target 1 articulated in the *2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada* (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016). The Pathway to Target 1 was initiated in 2017 by

federal, provincial, and territorial governments (FPT) to oversee how the Aichi Targets would be implemented in Canada (Tamufor et al., 2024). As part of the Pathway and due to Indigenous advocacy, the Federal government agreed upon the creation of a group of Indigenous leaders who would provide recommendations, named the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a).

The ICE was comprised of two Indigenous co-chairs and seven core members representing a range of First Nations and Metis with PA or governance expertise (2018). Nine government ICE members represented the FPT governments, as well as governmental agencies like Parks Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) (ICE, 2018). The ICE convened gatherings across Canada to help determine what equitable conservation could be in trying to achieve Canada's Target 1 and in the spirit of reconciliation (Zurba et al., 2019a). The ICE determined Indigenous-led PAs in Canada to be part of this solution and coined the term Indigenous Protected and Conserved areas (IPCAs) (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 201a9). IPCAs are Indigenous-led, represent a long-term commitment to conservation, and elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities (ICE, 2018; Zurba et al., 2019a). The ICE also centred and drew on reconciliation throughout its work, determining that IPCAs can be possible spaces of reconciliation, while also facilitating reconciliation between Indigenous and settler societies and even between the broader society with lands and waters in current and future PAs across Canada (Bishop et al., 2025a; Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023). While the concept of IPCAs is not new and existed under different names within Canada (Townsend &

Roth, 2023; Zurba et al., 2019a), the broader discourse in conservation alongside the work of the ICE has brought increased acceptance of Indigenous-led PAs.

After the ICEs' work concluded, key members began a new seven-year project through a previous relationship with university scholars, along with non-governmental organizations, FTP governments, and other governmental agencies, called the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) in 2019 (CRP, n.d.). The CRP was hosted by the University of Guelph, the IISAAK Olam Foundation, and the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, led by a leadership circle comprised of two academic leads with expertise in Indigenous-led conservation from the University of Guelph and five Indigenous leaders and four of whom were former members of ICE (Bishop et al., 2025a; CRP, n.d.). The CRP engaged with non-Indigenous and Indigenous People from various Nations, and leaders, in addition to scholars, elders, youth, FTP governments, and other organizations across Canada (up to 30 organizations and 300 people (Bishop et al., 2025b). See Bishop et al., 2025a for a list of some identified organizations involved in funding and development as all those involved is not publicly available). Along with the two academic leads and the core Indigenous leaders, the CRP was also guided by an Elders Lodge, comprised of four knowledge holders of diverse geographies, to provide cultural and spiritual information to the CRP in the first half of the partnership and co-created a governance framework based on seasons (Bishop et al., 2025a; CRP, n.d.). Engagement was largely with First Nations, as well as and some Metis and Inuit due to previous relationships formed during the ICEs work (Bishop et al., 2025a). The CRP's main goal was supporting Indigenous-led conservation in Canada and had three main objectives initially (CRP, 2024a, b). Firstly, to create a network of conservation through

reconciliation and concurrently supporting IPCA establishment and PA transformations through incubation of the Canadian IPCA Alliance (CRP, 2024a, b). Second, adhering to Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession guidelines® (First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.), and other ethical protocols like Ethical Space and *Etuaptumumk* to ensure collaborative research supports the first goal (CRP, 2024a, b). Lastly, hosting dialogues, gatherings, and co-creating multi-media and other knowledge mobilization tools that will increase the capacity of Indigenous Nations and communities, the conservation sector and the public (CRP, 2024a, b).

People engaging with the CRP could join for personal interest to gain knowledge or their organization or Nation sent them. People were invited through connections with research interests and, could also ask to join a space. The time people spent in these spaces was also variable. There were many ways people could interact with the CRP, such as the dialogues and webinars mentioned previously, as well as the seven Streams of Work: Ethical Space, Knowledge Systems, Conservation Governance, Domestic Law and Policy, Biocultural Indicators and Outcomes, IPCA Economics, and the Infrastructure and Finance stream (CRP, 2024d). In addition to these, there was an IPCA co-learning circle and other groups created around shared topics of interest, such as conservation financing, land and trust (Bishop et al., 2025a). There were also some seasonal virtual gatherings and yearly virtual partnership reviews for people to engage in and gather (Bishop et al., 2025a; CRP, n.d.). There was also an informal space for student researchers to collaborate and get support which had around 30 while I was involved. At the halfway point of the partnership in 2023, an online gathering was held where it was announced how the partnership was shifting to end the Streams of Work and remaining resources to put into

the following legacy projects: the IPCA Knowledge Basket, the IPCA Innovation Centres, and the IPCA Alliance/Network (CRP, 2024c). The IPCA Knowledge basket contains and shares resources and stories to guide, information and advance Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and is an online platform currently being stewarded by the IISAAK OLAM Foundation (CRP, 2024c). The IPCA Innovation Centres support IPCA establishment, governance, and management of IPCAs located regionally to allow for learning and connection (CRP, 2024c). The IPCA Alliance/Network are Indigenous organizations and Nations formed around special topics to support legacy projects (CRP, 2024c). In May of 2025, the CRP held the final gathering online where CRP hosts, leaders, and elders reflected on the work, gratitude, and future work and partnerships that grew from the CRP.

Although the Canadian government is making efforts to work with Indigenous Nations and organizations, criticisms and caution arise against state-led solutions that some argue will maintain colonial systems and not allow for enough fundamental shifts in power to Indigenous systems of knowledge and governance (Corntassel et al., 2009; Daigle, 2019; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; McGregor, 2018; Sium et al., 2012; Whyte, 2017). Others blame settlers unwilling to become uncomfortable in their privilege to fully undertake what is needed to advance reconciliation (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Mackey; 2016; Slater, 2019), like the discourse of decolonization that Tuck & Yang (2012) argue has become a metaphor for settlers to assuage their conscience without meaningful action. There are also disagreements about who or what exactly needs to be reconciled, such as with the land and living and non-living beings, between Indigenous Nations, the original treaties signed during confederation, and between settlers and Indigenous Peoples (Asch

& Borrows, 2018; Corntassel, 2012; Corntassel et al., 2009; Coyle & Borrows, 2017; Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018; Poelzer & Coates, 2015; Sium et al., 2012; Snelgrove et al., 2014; Townsend & Roth, 2023; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

As Indigenous Peoples continue to assert their rights and more governance power in PAs and IPCAs in Canada, partnerships and relationships will continue to change. Concurrently, as the Canadian state continues to advance reconciliation in various sectors, as recommended by the TRC and its Action Plan published in 2023 (UNDRIP Implementation Secretariat and Department of Justice, 2023) and recommending IPCAs as avenues of reconciliation (ECCC, 2019), examining how people engaged in conservation partnerships think and act around reconciliation is important. As reconciliation calls for changing relationships (Bishop et al., 2025a; ICE, 2018; Townsend & Roth, 2023), it is essential to examine how these relationships are evolving and whether such changes are impacting reconciliation. The CRP offered an interesting case study to examine, as it is a decolonial partnership focused on supporting Indigenous-led conservation activities and with reconciliation guiding the work. This research explored how evolving relationships between CRP participants are impacting personal and organizational understandings and actions of reconciliation.

5.2 Methods

This research used a case study approach, which can be useful for focusing on an event or people with a shared experience and for focusing on how or why a phenomenon happened (Yin, 2009). Case studies also allow multiple realities and knowledge to exist at

the same time (Yin, 2009), aligning with other methodological needs of this research. As noted previously, the CRP was selected for what unique information and transformational change it was seeking in the field at the time and what this might show about how reconciliation moves forward within partnerships seeking similar shifts. During the initial stages of research, integration of relational accountability, Ethical Space, and *Etuaptumumk* was sought to ensure accountability of the varying worldviews of CRP participants and the broader research community. These were important to consider as a non-Indigenous student researcher coming into a decolonial partnership like the CRP. Relational accountability is about understanding that knowledge is created through relationships and within research, specifically, this means the researcher has a responsibility to ensure their work is being done in good faith, spanning the entire process (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Hughes, 2019). Study approval was sought from CRP project leads, while also following interview protocols and sharing interview transcripts and quotes with participants. Ethical space is when those interacting confront their bias and worldview to enter a respectful, dialogic space of relationships (Ermine, 2007; ICE, 2018; Sinclaire et al., 2021). Created by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall and his late wife Murdena Marshall, *Etuaptumumk* is about weaving Indigenous and Western knowledge together respectfully, seen as equal, and drawing on the strength of both for the current situation (Bartlett et al., 2012; ICE, 2018; Reid et al., 2021). Ethical space and *Etuaptumumk* were used during the interview analysis to ensure I was not erasing other ways of knowing and misinterpreting interviewees' experiences and understandings of reconciliation.

I applied for Dalhousie university ethics approval, with aid from the CRP project leads to decide the best process for recruiting CRP participants. No specific Indigenous REB was applied for because this was not Indigenous community-based research. Instead, it was research with an Indigenous-led organization (CRP) representing nations and Indigenous interests from across Canada. Therefore in this case, the CRP was the appropriate authority for ethical approval regarding Indigenous participation. Provided by the CRP, Indigenous participants were given a $150 honorarium to recognize their contributions and time to participate in this study. After Dalhousie (REB #2023-6675) approved this research, CRP participants were recruited with permission from CRP project leads and chosen based on their work involved broadly with PA governance and IPCAs. This scope was chosen as I initially wanted insights about governance and IPCAs but with guidance from CRP project leads the scope was widened for those who could participate. People who had engaged with the CRP for a year or more were eligible to participate due to the objectives around learning over time. A staff person of the CRP shared a list with me of 20 people who engaged with the CRP to contact about participation and fourteen agreed to be interviewed in the Summer and Fall of 2023. The list was separated into four categories: the CRP Leadership Circle, Non-Indigenous people working for IPCAs, Federal government employees, and people working for environmental NGOs. The six other people either declined or I never heard from them. Due to initial permissions of accessing CRP participant contacts and because they were selected based on their work and knowledge, purposive sampling was the most useful for this research (Emmel, 2014). I recruited participants through email by sending them a lay paragraph of my research and attaching the consent form. Since Indigenous participants

would receive honoraria, there was a consent form for Indigenous participants (Appendix E) and non-Indigenous participants (Appendix D). Participants were first sent a consent form for the study, their rights, and the semi-structured interviewing, which happened over Microsoft Teams and lasted 45 to 75 minutes. Before the interview started, participants chose if they wanted to be named and if quotes were allowed with their name or not.

I used semi-structured interviews because they can allow participants to share their lived experiences while still ensuring the researchers' research objectives can be fulfilled using an interview guide flexibly (Bernard, 2006; Cross & Galletta, 2013; Galletta, 2013). See Appendix A for the interview guide. The first half of the interview was spent discussing relationships and relationship building, whereas the second half of the interview discussed reconciliation. If participants did not mention reconciliation before, the first set of questions focused on discussing current and past harms of conservation initiatives and when discussions of reconciliation happened within the CRP. Participants were then asked if those types of discussions related to reconciliation contributed to or impeded relationship building. To transition to talking about reconciliation outside of the CRP, I asked participants if past harms had been discussed or acknowledged within their organization. This was more important in helping to start the conservation for participants who were non-Indigenous and worked in Federal agencies and NGOs. Then I would ask participants if learning within the CRP about relationship-building changed how they and their organization thought about reconciliation. If more prompting was needed, I would then ask about specific initiatives, such as IPCAs being

possible spaces of reconciliation or upholding commitments to recognize Indigenous rights such as UNDRIP.

Interview transcripts were downloaded from Microsoft Teams with the approved consent of CRP participants. Transcripts were coded using NVivo 12 software using both deductive and inductive coding (Bernard, 2006). The first round of coding was based on deductive themes found in the literature broadly relating to reconciliation for example, looking back on past harms, upholding UNDRIP, IPCAs being spaces and resurgence (see background). The second round of coding was focused on inductive coding of emergent themes, mainly around accountability. I also coded for how engaged participants were based on what they told me and how many spaces they were involved in, such as how many meetings or webinars they attended and level of involvement with the stream of work or co-learning circles around special topics. From this, I classified participants based on a spectrum of engagement described as 'highly engaged', 'engaged', 'somewhat engaged' and 'low engagement' and was formulated through participant self-identification and the context provided throughout the interview. 'Highly engaged' means the participant was actively involved in a stream or learning circle, engaged with the leadership circle where possible, and attended webinars and other learning opportunities. 'Engaged' were all of the previous activities but did not do work associated with the stream or learning circle outside of meetings, whereas 'somewhat engaged' a participant rarely attended stream or learning circle meetings and rarely viewed webinars/other learning opportunities. 'Little Engagement' was because the participant engaged with a stream until they learned a specific skill to bring back to their organization. I also coded participants based on the stage of their career (early career,

mid-career, and late-career), if they identified as an immigrant/newcomer to Canada, and how new they were to the conservation landscape in Canada. You can find more codes in Appendix F.

While there may be a shared discourse of reconciliation within a group such as the CRP, it ultimately means different things to people. Thus, we must establish a baseline of how participants think about reconciliation to see if learning about relationships changed perspectives or future actions around reconciliation. Participants were first asked when and how reconciliation was discussed during engagements with the CRP, which is how the first two themes, visions of the future and naming reconciliation, arose.

5.3 Results and Discussion

Before major themes are discussed, basic information about participants must be shared. Three participants were Indigenous (one works for an environmental NGO and two belong to the CRP leadership circle). Of the non-Indigenous participants, four work or have worked for Indigenous Nations or organizations, four work for the federal government, and three work for environmental NGOs. 'Highly engaged' means the participant was actively involved in a stream or learning circle, engaged with the leadership circle where possible, and attended webinars and other learning opportunities. 'Engaged' were all of the previous activities but did not do work associated with the stream or learning circle outside of meetings, whereas 'somewhat engaged' a participant rarely attended stream or learning circle meetings and rarely viewed webinars/other learning opportunities. 'Engaged very little' was because the participant engaged with a steam until they learned a specific skill to bring back to their organization. The

Indigenous participants were all considered ‘highly engaged’. Of the non-Indigenous participants: one person who worked for an environmental NGO was ‘engaged very little’, two people who work for an Indigenous Nation and one who works for an environmental NGO were ‘somewhat engaged’, and two who work or have worked for Indigenous Nations or organizations and one person who work for environmental NGOs were ‘engaged’.

5.3.1 Reflections

When participants shared an overarching definition or reflection on reconciliation, these were often big picture, encompassing societal expectations and how to move forward. These reflections were more abstract thoughts about the future of society, which I chose to separate as these were not articulated with accompanying specific actions. Participants noted how reconciliation should be a multilevel process of change, including personal, organizational, and country, all happening in parallel. Participants further shared that reconciliation happens through actions, partnerships, and relationships. It was also pointed out that what it looks like in practice is different depending on the context and relationship. When talking about relationships, it was shared that reconciliation is the framework for future relationships. This was brought up in relation to partnerships with government partners that lacked respect and acknowledgement of Indigenous rights. A participant working for an Indigenous Nation reflected about reconciliation, shared, *“Indigenous conservation is different because it's, you know, working towards reconciliation. But it's also working towards a better future and what's happening right now it's not better, it needs to improve a lot”.* This quote demonstrates how reconciliation

can be thought of as a way to get towards a better future. Overall, these reflections align with the body of literature that recognizes reconciliation as a societal shift with concrete systems change and settler disposition of power and resources concurrently (Craft & Regan, 2020; Townsend & Roth, 2023).

When participants were asked if and how reconciliation was discussed during engagements with the CRP, the conversation often started around discussing past harms. This was about if and how those within the CRP explicitly discussed or acknowledged the harm Indigenous Peoples faced and continue to face due to colonialism and PAs. Participants who said reconciliation was discussed engage in IPCA development, work for an Indigenous organization, or their work is directly tied to The Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a) or other acts the federal government is advancing towards reconciliation. This also demonstrates the spheres and places where reconciliation is actively being discussed or an accepted discourse to be leveraged properly in work.

Other participants pointed out that while reconciliation was never necessarily expressly part of discussions or work, it was in the back of their minds since the partnership name contains the word reconciliation. Only Claire Hutton, Indigenous Stewardship Director at Nature United, mentioned the early conversations about naming the partnership and using reconciliation in the title meant. Other participants explained it as a concept or framework driving the work of the CRP. One participant shared this idea saying the following.

> *I would say [it was] discussed in every meeting and if it wasn't explicitly stated then it was still the idea behind things we were discussing and frankly the whole*

idea and fact that we were meeting was because of efforts made towards reconciliation.

This shows the importance of how even if reconciliation was not named, those who engaged with the CRP could still feel and identify how their work with the CRP embodied it. Reconciliation may not have been named all the time as those who engaged with the CRP shared that people felt there was already a baseline of understanding and respect rooted in reconciliation and wanting to do better (see Chapter 4, section 4.3). This embodiment of reconciliation through collaboration and work within the CRP helped participants build better relationships. This shared understanding allowed participants to build trust and better relationships, as described in Chapter 4.

5.3.2 Accountability

Participants shared different aspects of accountability. Lisa Young, executive director of the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, mentioned that accountability of conservation organizations and governments is critical to reconciliation efforts. She specifically mentioned that steps must continue to be taken by governments and conservation organizations and NGOs to uphold UNDRIP and the advancement of the TRC. Others framed it as being accountable to future generations, ensuring that all decisions are good for several generations ahead. A participant framed this view about carbon capture and financing policies, warning that if we're not careful, a similar fate and downfall could happen like with the fur trade. Beyond these, personal and organizational attempts for accountability will be discussed.

5.3.2.1 Personal

Some participants shared reflections about their identity, personal values, and what they bring to work as individuals and these were five non-Indigenous participants, where two worked for an NGO, two work for an Indigenous Organization, and one works for an Indigenous Nation. Many shared how they have been reflecting on important knowledge or contexts they needed to overcome or learn outside of their job to be effective and engage in a good way a when working with Indigenous Peoples within the current climate of decolonizing conservation. This was more often shared by those newer to the field or immigrants who needed to learn about Canada beyond conservation. A participant working for an NGO shared,

> *I should probably add for context I'm a new Canadian, so I've been in Canada for five years. So I don't get a lot of the, you know, the historic context and a lot of the things that people in Canada grew up with. For me, I had to learn all of this quite recently. [The discussions] did spur, you know, a desire in me to improve my own knowledge because people were speaking from experience, which I liked, because I'm not from here. I was eager to learn more.*

These show how non-Indigenous participants felt they had the onus and responsibility to reflect as settlers on what reconciliation looks like for them outside of conservation. Participants also self-identified without being prompted and made sure to highlight how their identity influenced their viewpoints about reconciliation. While these personal reflections are important for catalyzing further action as described by participants, only relying on internal reflections runs the risk of dwelling on shame and personalizing and stagnating rather than being compelled into action (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This learning of

what is right can be so laborious that one might perceive change to have occurred when this is only the first important step (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Tuck and Yang (2012) describe this as one of the ways settlers enact a "move to innocence" and note this as "diversions" and "distractions," where it ultimately leaves settlers without feelings of responsibility, leading to inaction around giving land back and decreasing power and privilege.

When participants shared personal reflections, the proximity to Indigenous communities was prominent. Participants felt that if they worked directly with an Indigenous community or had the power to enact positive change at their organization, only then was their work meaningful in any way toward reconciliation. This was an interesting theme brought up, which could maybe be due to participants being able to grasp change that is more easily tangible and easier to point out rather than change that is indirect or less connectable to their work. Participants could also be referring to the harm that conservation has and continues to cause Indigenous Peoples (Artelle et al., 2021; Goyes & South, 2019; ICE, 2018), which can look like inclusivity versus being Indigenous-led and coming from the community rather than the conservation and perhaps cautioning that if an Indigenous Nation or Organization driving the work it may not be enough.

5.3.2.2 Organizational

Participants described how their organization has or is changing in response to the current paradigm shift of decolonizing conservation. Engaging in the development of IPCAs and Indigenous-led conservation was described as an avenue of active reconciliation, and establishing IPCAs can be considered reconciliation. One participant

working for an Indigenous Nation shared this sentiment by saying, "*I mean, all of the work that we're doing establishing the IPCA, it is about, you know, reconciliation*." Participants also mentioned how IPCAs are one of the ways that land is being returned, mentioning the Land Back movement. Beyond IPCAs, others mentioned more broadly that conservation projects and work must continue to be community and Indigenous-led.

Others described that meaningful work and actions towards reconciliation were through conservation work and actual conservation projects. An Indigenous woman working for an NGO shared a similar sentiment saying,

> *How do we amplify communities needs? How do we support communities needs? So I think even if the big R conversation of reconciliation isn't explicitly said, I think through our actions and our like conversations, we're constantly talking about it and people may people who are outside of the reconciliation circle, if you will, might be like, ohh well, like you're exhausting this word. Like what does it mean anymore? It's OK, through action and through partnership and through relationship is actually where like reconciliation stands, it's not just saying the word over and over again.*

This quote highlights how practitioners and those in the field can see changes and actions being made without always needing to reference the word reconciliation to get work done.

Similarly, participants described how engaging with the CRP as a decolonial partnership is a commitment to reconciliation, being part of a collaboration and project invested in reconciliation efforts and supporting IPCAs. A participant shared, *"To me, that's a powerful thing to say, conservation through reconciliation. I think that our work,*

in a way, is always working towards reconciliation". This quote demonstrates that engaging in a partnership like the CRP can, in a way, be accountability since it challenges you to be in good relations. Participants shared this idea of being in community and maintaining relationships as evidence of reconciliation advancements, which does align with the TRC and other scholarly perspectives (Corntassel, 2012; Townsend, 2022) This perspective of hope in relationships is articulated in the literature that shares societal hopes for the future that start with relationship building and societal recognition of Indigenous rights (Poelzer & Coates, 2015).

5.3.3 Beyond Reconciliation into Resurgence

This theme emerged from participants describing what reconciliation means to them and consequently described and highlighted key ideas of Indigenous Resurgence. These were separated from conservation as they go beyond conservation, though they can certainly be achieved in tandem with IPCAs (ICE, 2018; Tran et al., 2020; Youdelis et al., 2021). Three main areas were reconnection with nature or land, impacts of residential schools on Indigenous language and culture, and the need to revitalize Indigenous governance structures and traditional laws. Each will be explained more below.

Reconnection of Indigenous Peoples to land and nature was expressed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants as a key theme of reconciliation. Several saw this relationship with land as being central to resurgence activities to take place, explained within IPCAs and beyond them. A participant working for an Indigenous Nation described this by saying, "*we're working towards reconciliation with the land and protecting and stewarding the land.*" This shows that IPs are focusing on resurgence and

activities from a community perspective and the right way, rather than from the state (Corntassel, 2012; Townsend, 2022). Participants also shared that the revitalization of culture must be part of reconciliation, with many citing the harm of the residential school system. A non-Indigenous participant working for an Indigenous Nation shared this sentiment saying,

> *Reconciliation as an incentive for, you know, doing good conservation work…and it's their language and their culture [Indigenous Peoples] and they're on ceded and surrendered lands that are going to do that. So yeah, land back and revitalization of the culture and Indigenous governance is the way forward.*

This perspective shows how even though conservation work is being actioned for reconciliation, the revitalization of governance and culture are central to the futures of Indigenous Peoples and is supported by the literature (Corntassel, 2012; Craft & Regan, 2020; Townsend & Roth, 2023).

The imperative for Indigenous Peoples to have increased power, resources, and land is being echoed and actioned in the conservation space, but the dominant system remains. Some participants reflected on this, sharing that while the CRP and other similar spaces and Indigenous-led conservation initiatives they engage in are great, they felt that conservation as a Western concept was still prevailing. The participants who shared this had been working in the conservation space for a long time or work for an Indigenous Nation or organization and were mixed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. One person shared that just because you are saying it's Indigenous-led does not fundamentally mean it embodies Indigenous ideas about land, so the idea of what Indigenous-led means must continue to be discussed in partnerships and for the wider conservation movement.

5.4 Conclusion

Participants shared diverse perspectives about what reconciliation means and what is required on a personal, organizational, and societal level to achieve the changes put forth by the state and Indigenous Peoples. Many referenced relationships built through the CRP helped them realize what changes needed to happen outside of spaces that were not necessarily as open to facilitating reconciliation. Participants also shared visions of the future through the language of reconciliation. The language of reconciliation can help start conversations about what changes are needed; however, within the CRP there was much focus on what things should look like rather than statements of concrete actions could be taken (Asch & Borrows, 2018; Simpson, 2017; Slater, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Although participants expressed many ideas about reconciliation, there were still criticisms presented, such as reconciliation not fundamentally shifting colonial narratives about land and conservation. These are important to consider as the people considered by the state to enact reconciliation on the ground may not agree about the state's direction and support the shift that resurgence should be the discourse rather than reconciliation. Further research should look at how using reconciliation and resurgence in the field impacts practitioners' affinity to supporting the widespread changes that are needed.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) provided an interesting case study for examination because the partnership focused on supporting decolonial change within conservation and Indigenous-led initiatives across Canada (see Chapter 1 for more information). The CRP also engaged with a variety of people from different conservation organizations, NGOS, Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, Indigenous organizations and Nations (see Bishop et al., 2025a for a list of some identified organizations involved in funding and development as all those involved is not publicly available), providing an interesting snapshot of this moment in time when as conservation is changing and enabling examination of whether and how the decolonial change being strived for could be articulated by people involved with the CRP through relationship building. Although the CRP has ended, relationships and partnerships created through engagement with the CRP remain and will provide future scaffolding and understanding of reconciliation and futures of IPs. This chapter will outline the major findings about learning outcomes and processes of relationships and relationship building and relationships and reconciliation. There will be a discussion of study considerations and limitations, and future research.

6.2 Major Findings about Learning Outcomes and Processes of Relationships and Relationship Building

Participants shared learning outcomes and processes that contributed to their learning about relationships and relationship building within the CRP and whether these learnings have changed their relationship building outside of the CRP. The major findings and discussions fall into three major themes: How people understand and decide what relational qualities of relationships make a good relationship is important to understand learning outcomes and processes related to relationship building, the importance of bridging organizations as conservation continues to evolve, and considerations of power and organizational context that could impede learning beyond the self.

While participants could identify specific qualities and talk about what a good relationship should look like for them, not all participants identified the same qualities and had different experiences contributing to this. As discussed in Chapter four, participants shared different views about relationships and had contrasting reflections. Therefore, it is important to understand how participants think about relationships to be able to identify learning outcomes and processes. If people have a harder time identifying relationship qualities or not be able to point to spaces or processes that contribute to learning, then even if learning happens, people will be unable to understand how to articulate or share learning outcomes or processes.

Additionally, many described the CRP as an example and leader of promoting and supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and being important for the conservation space. A few described this phenomenon specifically as a “bridging

organization,". Bridging organizations are formal organizations that connect diverse actors through specific structures or engagements (Berkes, 2009; Crona & Parker, 2012). They also provide opportunities for knowledge co-production, learning, building trust, and vertical and horizontal collaboration (Berkes, 2009). This research supports the idea of the CRP being a bridging organization, as people had learning outcomes and processes about relationships and described the CRP as being learning space. This research also found trust was developed among people who engaged with the CRP, specifically affinitive trust, social characteristics and shared values formed through positive social interactions, and dispositional which are base characteristics or ideas that form trust (Stern & Baird, 2015; Stern & Coleman, 2015). More partnerships and bridging organizations like the CRP are important as conservation continues to evolve and IPCAs continue to be developed across Canada.

Indigenous ways of learning, such as Ethical Space, Two-Eyed Seeing, and storytelling, were not identified as highly as I thought going into the interviews supported by literature of partnerships with similar values and mostly by participants early in their careers. Ethical Space was identified by a few participants as helping them be in spaces with diverse views and opinions, which helped them build relationships. Two-Eyed Seeing was identified as being important to being actively involved in an Indigenous-led partnership, as well as ceremony practices like practices and protocols to opening and ending meetings or gatherings with prayer by an Elder or Indigenous participant. Storytelling was identified as helping one participant navigate Indigenous knowledge and ways of sharing knowledge they were not used to.

Power impeded learning outcomes going beyond the single-loop, meaning learning outcomes which went beyond the individual. Only three participants, a non-Indigenous person working for an Indigenous organization and the two Indigenous members of the leadership circle, Eli Enns and Lisa Young. Only Eli's learning outcomes could be categorized as triple-loop learning since his learning from the CRP culminated in the co-creation of the IPCA planning certificate with Vancouver Island University. Eli and Lisa's learning going beyond the self could be attributed to the power they hold as directors in their organizations, allowing them to make the systemic changes that other participants identified as being a roadblock to making changes within their organizations. This type of power is actor-centred and institutional power, which looks at who has the power to make decisions that determine social norms and outcomes (Saif et al., 2022; Shackleton et al., 2023; Turner et al., 2020). Some participants shared that changes were being attempted within their organization but it takes time for big shifts to happen, which is commonly identified in literature as a barrier to learning going beyond the single-loop (Ananda et al., 2020; Lumosi et al., 2020; Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Turner et al., 2020). Eli and Lisa were part of the leadership circle, so had more opportunities to reflect and learn and possibly more changes to enact changes due to more engagements. The other participant working for an Indigenous organization had a newer role in their organization, allowing them more flexibility about programs and places to implement learning outcomes and processes similar to the CRP. Therefore, job type and power play a role in impeding or helping learning to move beyond the self.

6.3 Major Findings of Relationships and Reconciliation

One major insight of this study was around accountability. While participants shared accountability ranging from personal, organizational, to societal, there was still often ambiguity and overlap between each of these levels and who would ensure these changes are being made. For example, some of those who made statements about what the future should look like did not often link those to actionable things for organizations or the state to do. It was important to see that it was not just the Indigenous Participants who saw the importance of UNDRIP being implemented and upheld, but this is still the bare minimum (Townsend & Roth, 2023). Another important ambiguity is around who and what exactly is being reconciled. While some participants shared what they thought was important in the context of their work, it's clear this difference in discourse was not directly discussed within the CRP and does present challenges for those engaging in reconciliation efforts. This begs the question still if people do not even agree on this important foundation, the changes that are expected to happen will continue to be obstructed and further disagreements about what the end means will continue to happen. Finally, similar to Bishop and other CRP colleagues (2023), these participants in the study used reconciliation and resurgence interchangeably and in tandem. For some, this was ideal for their work because it was allowing Indigenous Peoples and Nations to assert their rights and access their lands in new ways. This shows how discourse around a word looks different in practice but is still important to distinguish as conversations around reconciliation continue.

6.4 Considerations and Limitations

A big consideration of this research is the demographic representation of the 14 research participants. Since there were only three Indigenous participants, drawing larger conclusion about how all Indigenous Peoples learned and engaged with the CRP is limited. 12 of the participants were women and two were men. While there were no clear outcomes or perspectives clearly linked to gender, this should be noted for balance of representation. Five of the participants could be considered at the later stage of their careers, and nine other participants were early to mid in their careers. These perspectives are somewhat balanced, but it would have been interesting to hear from more people later in their careers and haven't worked with largely Indigenous Nations or organizations. While a few participants shared if they were newcomers or recent immigrants, this perspective was also limited. There were only two non-Indigenous participants working for an Indigenous Nation, so this perspective was limited and is a gap in this research.

There was also wide variability in how each participant engaged with and how much time was spent engaging with the CRP. Most participants were considered 'engaged' or 'somewhat engaged'. The level of engagement did not impact the learning outcome; it was the participants who identified as being later in their careers working with Indigenous Peoples the whole time who reported little to no learning. This shows that even with participants only being 'somewhat engaged', the way the CRP was set up and how ethical protocols were clear and being actioned regularly allowed someone not much time to learn about relationships. Additionally, all interviews were conducted virtually, which limited relationship-building opportunities with participants outside of the interview or other in-person opportunities that can come before or after an interview.

Due to the diversity of where participants were located, virtual interviews were the only option and no CRP in-person gathering was possible, which would have been an ideal space to talk to people casually outside of being interviewed. While our shared connection was with the CRP, it was not in the same space to be able to grow a relationship. Sadly, only after a year of engaging with the CRP, the Streams of Work got discontinued and the student group stopped meeting. I am grateful for the opportunities I was able to have and those I met until that point and until the CRP ended in 2025, I tried to attend webinars that pertained to me.

My positionality within the CRP as part of the student researchers may have given me an advantage in how participants interacted with me. It was clear that I was somewhat of an "insider," so it was easier to gain trust with participants at the beginning and have them open up and feel like they could speak freely about the CRP and their experiences. At the same time, if someone did not have a good experience with the CRP, they may be less hesitant to share since I am an insider. While I tried not to bias participants too much in their responses about engaging with the CRP, there was another factor out of my control since the CRP project leads asked participants if contact information could be given to me. If someone did not have a great experience with the CRP, it might be unlikely they would respond or read emails from the CRP. While I have not come across anyone who had this experience, this could be the case.

At the same time, I was an outsider trying to access people. Although my Honours was completed with the CRP in 2020, my research was focused on the ICE governance process so I only spoke to the members of the ICE. For this study, I was limited to the initial list provide by the CRP and then trying to ask if they could reach out to their

network for me to talk was more challenging than I anticipated. Especially as I was trying to find more Indigenous Peoples who are working on planning or managing IPCAs, none of the people had time or capacity. While this was disappointing, I recognize the increased burden Indigenous Peoples face with being asked to provide knowledge to everyone and who are already over capacity and often from communities with limited capacity. This is also why I was even more grateful that the CRP could provide an honorarium to Indigenous Participants.

The insights of the 11 non-Indigenous participants were valuable in different ways to the Indigenous participants in the study. The insights shared about relationships outcomes and processes show how non-Indigenous peoples engage and learn within a decolonial partnership. Also, the way the non-Indigenous participants talk and describe reconciliation are important since they show if and how they are supportive of the shifts and changes needed that Indigenous Peoples in the conservation field articulate about reconciliation and Indigenous resurgence. It would have been interesting to get more insights about reconciliation from more Indigenous Peoples, but may been experience research fatigue by this stage of the project (Chilisa & Tsheko 2014; Clark, 2008; Youdelis et al., 2021). According to the literature and my own personal beliefs about reconciliation, the onus is and should be on settlers to engage with reconciliation actions and discourse. This sentiment was shared by participants, which makes sense for some alignment with the CRP being so heavily focused on reconciliation.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Partnerships

This research can provide some important lessons for partnerships that wish to engage with reconciliation or decolonial conservation practices. Partnerships should consider specific structures and spaces for people in different stages of their career and how new to the conservation field. Partnerships should also make more spaces and opportunities so Indigenous Peoples can engage. Partnerships should have important conversations about shifting priorities and how to engage in decolonizing actions throughout the partnership. These will be explained more below.

Future partnerships should consider making or allowing for spaces specifically for people in different places in their careers and newer to the field. At times, the flexibility of spaces in terms of what people need from the space for research knowledge can be bridged. For example, people who are later along in the process of establishing IPCAs would not get as much out of engaging with the partnership as someone newer to the conservation field in Canada and IPCAs. If the knowledge exchange and networking are unsatisfactory, participants may not want to engage. At times, these shared spaces are important for knowledge exchange and for those who are newer to the conservation field and unfamiliar with reconciliation or decolonial conservation practices. If there are too many of those types of people engaging with the partnership, then the priority of the partnership and spaces could shift to only providing education and not to increasing capacity and knowledge to Indigenous Peoples, Nations, and organizations. Ultimately, just making more spaces exclusive (only for Indigenous Peoples, Nations or organizations) and being clear about who should be benefiting from the learning and outcomes of the partnership may be able to counter this impact.

Future partnerships should also consider having spaces for Indigenous Peoples only and earlier on. Due to limited capacity and time, Indigenous Peoples may not even have the time to fully engage with partnerships whose goal is to increase capacity. Funding to attend meetings or gatherings would also enable and more likely ensure that Indigenous participation could happen. If not already earmarked from the initial grant, there should be specific funds to allow Indigenous Peoples, Nations and organizations to engage with the partnership. This would also be helpful for communities with smaller resources and who may not be able to pay outsiders to do work the community may not have the capacity to do.

It is also important to have ongoing conversations about guiding protocols or ethics and guiding Indigenous methodologies. If the partnership is more regional or local, this may not be an issue for the partnership, but for those that may cross many boundaries and identities, this is critical in navigating throughout, not just at the beginning. The partnership also needs to have ongoing conversations about what reconciliation and a decolonizing frame mean for that partnership. As these fundamentally look different and are actioned differently depending on the context and identity (settler versus Indigenous Peoples), it is crucial to keep revisiting throughout the partnership.

6.6 Future Research

Future research could focus on the following aspects. More research that focuses on examining if partnerships are equitable and are able to achieve what they set out to do should focus on relationship building, rather than as a side outcome of collaboration. Further studies that can focus on why learning was not successful or not should be

considered in conservation, as learning will continue to be important as advances in reconciliation continue to be advocated for. Studies should also focus on why discourse and action may be mismatched when it comes to advancing reconciliation, and the practicalities of "actioning" reconciliation should be studied further. As we saw in this study, practitioners and those in the field saw reconciliation and resurgence similarly, and more studies should focus on this area.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. How did you become a member of the CRP?
2. How does your work intersect or complement the CRPs' work on advancing Indigenous-led conservation and IPCAs?
3. Do you feel your relationships with other governance actors within the CRP around IPCAs have changed since the ICE's work on IPCAs in 2018?
    a. What was different before and after?
    b. If relationships have changed, what about the ICE's work on IPCAs led to the relationship change?
4. Within the CRP, what has allowed you to work together better with the other Indigenous or non-Indigenous partners?
    a. Prompts if needed: any protocols/principles/ceremony followed?
5. What have you learned about relationships and relationship building through being a part of CRP?
6. How were these things learned? Were there particular processes that facilitated the learning?
7. Do you think there could be any improvements made to the relationship building?
8. Have there been any barriers to changing or improving relationships within the CRP?
9. Has your learning about relationships and relationship building as a member of the CRP influenced your relationships when engaging in the governance of IPCAs outside of the CRP?
10. Outside of the CRP, what do you feel is missing in your current relationships around collaboration and governance?
11. What do you think future relationships of actors within the governance of IPCAs could incorporate to improve?
12. Have the ongoing and past harms on Indigenous Peoples in conservation been discussed or acknowledged within the CRP?
    a. If yes, how did that contribute to or hinder relationship building?
13. Outside of the CRP, have past harms been discussed or acknowledged during your work post-IPCA acceptance across Canada?
14. Do you think your relationship building and work within the CRP contribute to reconciliation efforts within IPCAs?

Appendix B: REB Letter of Approval

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board
Letter of Approval

June 23, 2023
Sophie Boardman
College of Sustainability\College of Sustainability

Dear Sophie,

REB #: 2023-6675
Project Title: Exploring Learning and the Impacts of Evolving Relationships on Governance and Reconciliation within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

Effective Date: June 23, 2023
Expiry Date: June 23, 2024

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application for research involving humans and found the proposed research to be in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.* This approval will be in effect for 12 months as indicated above. This approval is subject to the conditions listed below which constitute your on-going responsibilities with respect to the ethical conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

Chair, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board
Dalhousie University

ethics@dal.ca

Post REB Approval: On-going Responsibilities of Researchers

After receiving ethical approval for the conduct of research involving humans, there are several ongoing responsibilities that researchers must meet to remain in compliance with University and Tri-Council policies.

1. Additional Research Ethics approval

Prior to conducting any research, researchers must ensure that all required research ethics approvals are secured (in addition to Dalhousie approval). This includes, but is not limited to, securing appropriate research ethics approvals from: other institutions with whom the PI is affiliated; the institutions of research team members; the institution at which participants may be recruited or from which data may be collected; organizations or groups (e.g. school boards, Indigenous communities, correctional services, long-term care facilities, service agencies and community groups) and from any other responsible review body or bodies at the research site.

2. Reporting adverse events

Any significant adverse events experienced by research participants must be reported **in writing** to Research Ethics **within 24 hours** of their occurrence. Examples of what might be considered "significant" include: a negative physical reaction by a participant (e.g. fainting, nausea, unexpected pain, allergic reaction), an emotional breakdown of a participant during an interview, report by a participant of some sort of negative repercussion from their participation (e.g. reaction of spouse or employer) or complaint by a participant with respect to their participation, report of neglect or abuse of a child or adult in need of protection, or a privacy breach. The above list is indicative but not all-inclusive. The written report must include details of the situation and actions taken (or proposed) by the researcher in response to the incident.

3. Seeking approval for changes to research

Prior to implementing any changes to your research plan, whether to the risk assessment, methods, analysis, study instruments or recruitment/consent material, researchers must submit them to the Research Ethics Board for review and approval. This is done by completing the amendment request process (described on the website) and submitting an updated ethics submission that includes and explains the proposed changes. Please note that reviews are not conducted in August.

4. Continuing ethical review - annual reports

Research involving humans is subject to continuing REB review and oversight. REB approvals are valid for up to 12 months at a time (per the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) article 6.14). Prior to the REB approval expiry date, researchers may apply to extend REB approval by completing an Annual Report (available on the website). The report should be submitted 3 weeks in advance of the REB approval expiry date to allow time for REB review and to prevent a lapse of ethics approval for the research. Researchers should note that no research involving humans may be conducted in the absence of a valid ethical approval and that allowing REB approval to lapse is a violation of the University Scholarly Misconduct Policy, inconsistent with the TCPS and may result in the suspension of research and research funding, as required by the funding

agency.

5. Final review - final reports

When the researcher is confident that all research-related interventions or interactions with participants have been completed (for prospective research) and/or that all data acquisition is complete, there will be no further access to participant records or collection of biological materials (for secondary use of information research), a Final Report (available on the website) must be submitted to Research Ethics. After review and acknowledgement of the Final Report, the Research Ethics file will be closed.

6. Retaining records in a secure manner

Researchers must ensure that records and data associated with their research are managed consistent with their approved research plans both during and after the project. Research information must be confidentially and securely retained and/or disposed of in such a manner as to comply with confidentiality provisions specified in the protocol and consent forms. This may involve destruction of the records, or continued arrangements for secure storage.

It is the researcher's responsibility to keep a copy of the REB approval letters. This can be important to demonstrate that research was undertaken with Board approval. Please note that the University will securely store your REB project file for 5 years after the REB approval end date at which point the file records may be permanently destroyed.

7. Current contact information and university affiliation

The lead researchers must inform the Research Ethics office of any changes to contact information for the PI (and supervisor, if appropriate), especially the electronic mail address, for the duration of the REB approval. The PI must inform Research Ethics if there is a termination or interruption of their affiliation with Dalhousie University.

8. Legal Counsel

The Principal Investigator agrees to comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to the project. The Principal Investigator agrees to notify the University Legal Counsel office in the event that they receive a notice of non-compliance, complaint or other proceeding relating to such requirements.

9. Supervision of students

Faculty must ensure that students conducting research under their supervision are aware of their responsibilities as described above and have adequate support to conduct their research in a safe and ethical manner.

Appendix C: REB Amendment Approval

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board
Amendment Approval

October 06, 2023

Sophie Boardman
College of Sustainability\College of Sustainability

Dear Sophie,

REB #: 2023-6675
Project Title: Exploring Learning and the Impacts of Evolving Relationships on Governance and Reconciliation within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your amendment request and has approved this amendment request effective today, October 06, 2023.

Sincerely,

Chair, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board
Dalhousie University

ethics@dal.ca

Appendix D: Non-Indigenous Interview Consent Form

Project title: Exploring Learning and the Impacts of Evolving Relationships on Governance and Reconciliation within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

Lead researcher: Sophie J. Boardman, Graduate student – School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES) at Dalhousie University, Sophie.boardman@dal.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Melanie Zurba, Assistant Professor – School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES), Melanie.Zurba@dal.ca

Introduction
You are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Sophie Boardman, who is a graduate student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether or not to take part in this research is entirely your choice. There will be no impact on you if you decide not to participate in the research. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience.

You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Sophie Boardman. Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact Sophie Boardman.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study
This research aims to build insights into the evolving relationships between Indigenous leaders and the Canadian government and other applicable jurisdictions within the governance of IPCAs. I will aim to understand how relationship building has the potential to influence governance and reconciliation by exploring the learning process and outcomes of those involved in the development of IPCAs. Knowledge from this study will aim to aid in the ongoing and future relationships of governance actors within IPCAs and future decolonial partnerships in Canada.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study
You are eligible to partake in the study if you are a member of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) and have been a member for more than a year.

What You Will Be Asked to Do
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a one-time interview lasting 60 to 75 minutes. The interview may happen over Microsoft Teams or the phone at the day and time of your choosing. You will be asked questions about your experiences and feelings about relationships as a member of the CRP, how they have and will continue to change, what future relationships should look like, and how these

relationships have the possibility of impacting governance and reconciliation within IPCAs.

The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. You can indicate your consent for this recording within this form. If you do not want your interview to be audio recorded, I will take notes during the interview that reflect your responses. You can keep your participation in the study confidential if you wish (please indicate that on this form). You can withdraw your participation at any point during the study. This applies after the interview has been conducted and recorded as well. The study will be completed by the 31st of March 2024 and you will be able to withdraw your participation by that date. After your participation, I will also contact you for member checks if you consent to be quoted.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts
While this research will not benefit you directly, it will benefit you indirectly because of the new knowledge gained about learning within a decolonial partnership and what aspects of the partnership are contributing to reconciliation and impacting governance within IPCAs. This study hopes also to benefit future research by providing insight into the learning process of an ongoing decolonial partnership, the CRP, and what lessons can be gleaned for future relationships within IPCAs.

The risks associated with this study are minimal. The interviews will be conducted through a relatively secure and reliable platform (Teams). However, Teams have data security risks associated with them. The US patriot act has provisions that allow authorities to monitor data without any notice. This risk exists with using Teams during our interview. Best data practices will be used to mitigate these risks wherever possible, but it is important that you be aware of the risks involved to your privacy and understand that it cannot be guaranteed. There are low risks for participating in this research beyond being fatigued during the interview period. You will be offered breaks to reduce this risk and you will be able to pause the interview whenever you want. There could also be risks associated with your experiences and opinions of individual CRP members which could affect your relationship within and outside of the CRP. This will be mitigated through confidentiality and anonymizing participants. The interview might generate painful memories of contentious moments or conflicts as a member of the CRP. You may terminate the interview at any time if you experience any distress.

Compensation / Reimbursement
There will be no compensation for your participation in the research.

How your information will be protected:
The participation of the CRP, as a group, in this research will be known, however, individual participation and identification will not be public unless you choose to be identified. The information that you provide to the lead researcher (Sophie Boardman) will be kept confidential. Only the lead researcher will have access to this information. As a researcher at Dalhousie University, Sophie has a responsibility to uphold your privacy and confidentiality. All electronic records, which include the recording or notes from your

interview, will be stored on a password-protected computer that will be kept with the lead researcher and will not be accessible by anyone else.

Reports
The lead researcher will describe and share findings in a masters thesis, a journal article and on the Conservation for Reconciliation Project (CRP) website. Only group results will be reported unless you consent to be personally identified beyond being a member of the CRP. This means that you will not be personally identified in any way in reports and presentations unless you explicitly give consent.

Data retention
Once the study is over your data (transcripts and their analysis etc.) will be retained for 2 years. Only the lead researcher will have access to this secure data retention. After this period, your data will be deleted completely without the possibility of retrieval. The data collected in this study will not be used beyond this study.

If You Decide to Stop Participating
You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating during the study, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. After participating in the study, you can decide by October 1st, 2023 if you want us to remove your data. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will already be published in the thesis and any papers/reports, which will be publicly available.

How to Obtain Results
A final report for the completion of a thesis and degree will be produced at the end of the study, as well as a published journal article and available on the CRP website.

Questions
I am happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact me at Sophie.boardman@dal.ca or contact my supervisor Melanie Zurba at Melanie.Zurba@dal.ca, at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-3423, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file # 2023-6675).

Signature Page

Project Title: Exploring Learning and the Impacts of Evolving Relationships on Governance and Reconciliation within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

Lead Researcher: Sophie J. Boardman, Graduate student at Dalhousie University (Sophie.boardman@dal.ca)

My supervisor is Melanie Zurba. She is an Assistant Professor at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES) and the College of Sustainability. She can be reached at melanie.zurba@dal.ca.

I (the participant) have been invited by the lead researcher to take part in this study addressing evolving relationships and learning among CRP members.

I have read the explanation of this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to take part in an interview that will occur online at a time acceptable to me. I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, until 1st October 2023.

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

You can still participate in the research if you say no to the following options.

I agree that my interview may be audio-recorded ☐Yes ☐No
I agree to be self-identified and direct quotes from my interview may be used ☐Yes ☐No
I do not agree to be self-identified, but quotes from my interview may be used ☐Yes ☐No

Would you like to be sent a summary of the study results or the final publication after completion? ☐Yes ☐No

(IF YES), what is your email address?

Email address: _____

Appendix E: Indigenous Consent Form

CONSENT FORM (Indigenous)

Project title: Exploring Learning and the Impacts of Evolving Relationships on Governance and Reconciliation within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

Lead researcher: Sophie J. Boardman, Graduate student – School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES) at Dalhousie University, Sophie.boardman@dal.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Melanie Zurba, Assistant Professor – School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES), Melanie.Zurba@dal.ca

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Sophie Boardman, who is a graduate student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether or not to take part in this research is entirely your choice. There will be no impact on you if you decide not to participate in the research. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience.

You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Sophie Boardman. Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact Sophie Boardman.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study

This research aims to build insights into the evolving relationships between Indigenous leaders and the Canadian government and other applicable jurisdictions within the governance of IPCAs. I will aim to understand how relationship building has the potential to influence governance and reconciliation by exploring the learning process and outcomes of those involved in the development of IPCAs. Knowledge from this study will aim to aid in the ongoing and future relationships of governance actors within IPCAs and future decolonial partnerships in Canada.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study

You are eligible to partake in the study if you are a member of the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership (CRP) and have been a member for more than a year.

What You Will Be Asked to Do

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a one-time interview lasting 60 to 75 minutes. The interview may happen over Microsoft Teams or the phone at the day and time of your choosing. You will be asked questions about your

experiences and feelings about relationships as a member of the CRP, how they have and will continue to change, what future relationships should look like, and how these relationships have the possibility of impacting governance and reconciliation within IPCAs.

The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. You can indicate your consent for this recording within this form. If you do not want your interview to be audio recorded, I will take notes during the interview that reflect your responses. You can keep your participation in the study confidential if you wish (please indicate that on this form). You can withdraw your participation at any point during the study. This applies after the interview has been conducted and recorded as well. The study will be completed by the 31st of March 2024 and you will be able to withdraw your participation by that date. After your participation, I will also contact you for member checks if you consent to be quoted.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts

While this research will not benefit you directly, it will benefit you indirectly because of the new knowledge gained about learning within a decolonial partnership and what aspects of the partnership are contributing to reconciliation and impacting governance within IPCAs. This study hopes also to benefit future research by providing insight into the learning process of an ongoing decolonial partnership, the CRP, and what lessons can be gleaned for future relationships within IPCAs.

The risks associated with this study are minimal. The interviews will be conducted through a relatively secure and reliable platform (Teams). However, Teams have data security risks associated with them. The US patriot act has provisions that allow authorities to monitor data without any notice. This risk exists with using Teams during our interview. Best data practices will be used to mitigate these risks wherever possible, but it is important that you be aware of the risks involved to your privacy and understand that it cannot be guaranteed. There are low risks for participating in this research beyond being fatigued during the interview period. You will be offered breaks to reduce this risk and you will be able to pause the interview whenever you want. There could also be risks associated with your experiences and opinions of individual CRP members which could affect your relationship within and outside of the CRP. This will be mitigated through confidentiality and anonymizing participants. The interview might generate painful memories of contentious moments or conflicts as a member of the CRP. You may terminate the interview at any time if you experience any distress.

Compensation / Reimbursement

To thank you for your time participating in the interview you will be compensated with an honorarium (money) totalling $150. This money comes from funding provided by the CRP, held at the University of Guelph. Once you complete the interview, you receive the $150 directly from the CRP. If you choose to withdraw from this study at a later date, you will still receive and retain the $150 honorarium.

How your information will be protected:
The participation of the CRP, as a group, in this research will be known, however, individual participation and identification will not be public unless you choose to be identified. The information that you provide to the lead researcher (Sophie Boardman) will be kept confidential. Only the lead researcher will have access to this information. As a researcher at Dalhousie University, Sophie has a responsibility to uphold your privacy and confidentiality. All electronic records, which include the recording or notes from your interview, will be stored on a password-protected computer that will be kept with the lead researcher and will not be accessible by anyone else.

Reports
The lead researcher will describe and share findings in a masters thesis, a journal article and on the Conservation for Reconciliation Project (CRP) website. Only group results will be reported unless you consent to be personally identified beyond being a member of the CRP. This means that you will not be personally identified in any way in reports and presentations unless you explicitly give consent.

Data retention
Once the study is over your data (transcripts and their analysis etc.) will be retained for 2 years. Only the lead researcher will have access to this secure data retention. After this period, your data will be deleted completely without the possibility of retrieval. The data collected in this study will not be used beyond this study.

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You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating during the study, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. After participating in the study, you can decide by December 1st, 2023 if you want us to remove your data. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will already be published in the thesis and any papers/reports, which will be publicly available.

How to Obtain Results
A final report for the completion of a thesis and degree will be produced at the end of the study, as well as a published journal article and available on the CRP website.

Questions
I am happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact me at Sophie.boardman@dal.ca or contact my supervisor Melanie Zurba at Melanie.Zurba@dal.ca, at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study.

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Project Title: Exploring Learning and the Impacts of Evolving Relationships on Governance and Reconciliation within Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)

Lead Researcher: Sophie J. Boardman, Graduate student at Dalhousie University (Sophie.boardman@dal.ca)

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I have read the explanation of this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to take part in an interview that will occur online at a time acceptable to me. I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, until 1st October 2023.

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

You can still participate in the research if you say no to the following options.

I agree that my interview may be audio-recorded ☐Yes ☐No
I agree to be self-identified and direct quotes from my interview may be used ☐Yes ☐No
I do not agree to be self-identified, but quotes from my interview may be used ☐Yes ☐No

Would you like to be sent a summary of the study results or the final publication after completion? ☐Yes ☐No.
(IF YES), what is your email address?
Email address: _____

Appendix F: Guide for Coding and Analysis

Underlined – main themes

Italicized – deductive codes

Bold – inductive codes

Chapter 4

<u>Reflections about Relationships</u>

- *Reciprocity*
- *Communication*
- *Diversity*
- **Virtual**

<u>Attributes of a Positive Community of Practice</u>

- *Collaborative environment*
- Learning environment
- **CRP being Bridging organization**
- *Opportunities to engage*
    - *Streams of work or other working groups*
    - *Webinars*
    - **Workshops**
    - Resources
        - *IPCA Knowledge Basket*
        - **Tools/things for better collaboration**

<u>Structure of the CRP</u>

- *Facilitation improved collaborative aspect*
- *Strong leadership*
- **Flexibility**
    - **Spaces too flexible (goals, membership)**
- **Supporting better relationship-building**

    - **More frequent meetings**
    - **In person meetings post-COVID**

Cultivating Aspects of Trust

- **Affirmed/Reinforced**
- **Reconciliation Aided in relationship building**
- *Trust*
- *Openness*
- **Open to building relationships**
- **Willing to help**
- *Accountability*
- *Transparency*
- *Diverse perspectives*
- **Creating safe spaces**

Indigenous Ways of Learning

- *Ethical Space*
- *Two-Eyed Seeing*
- *Storytelling*
- Ceremony

Influences of Power

- **Double-loop**
    - **Outcomes**
        - **Terms of Reference**
        - **Restructure/reframe program within own organization**
        - **Bringing multiple organizations together for networking + learning**
        - Bringing Ethical Space to new relationships
    - **Processes**
        - *Ethical space*
        - *Two-Eyed Seeing*
        - *Facilitation*

        - *Indigenous-led*
- **Triple-loop**
    - **Outcome**
        - **IPCA planning certificate co-created with Vancouver Island University and ISSAK OLAM Foundation**
    - **Process**
        - **Seeing how relationships that were well established and often in person before COVID were the strong relationships and continued to be maintained/grew over pandemic versus other relationships did not and/or got dropped and relationships created during COVID not as strong**
        - **"essential" mindset around relationships**

Chapter 5

Reflections

Visions of the Future

- *Multilevel processes*
- **Through action, partnership, and relationships**
    - **Looks different and is actioned differently depending on the relationship**
    - *Basis of all future relationships*
    - **Working towards a better future**

Describing Reconciliation

- **Looking Back**
- **Effects of Residential schools**
- Foundational concept of CRP

Accountability

- *UNDRIP*
- *TRC*

- *Accountability*

Personal

- Self-reflection
- Self-identification

Organizational

- IPCA as a place
- **Engaging in conservation partnerships as action**
- **Supporting Indigenous conservation**

Beyond Reconciliation into Resurgence

- **Restructuring resources**
- **Revitalization of culture**
    - **Language**
    - **With nature**
- **Non-Indigenous must decolonize**