

Final Research Grant Proposal

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HRSJ5030_01: Problem-Solving in the Field

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Research Question and ationale

Statement of the Problem: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) issued 94 Calls to Action in 2015 to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Call to Action number 43 urges adopting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the reconciliation framework toward decolonization (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.4). In 2019, British Columbia (BC) legislated the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), becoming the first province with an action plan to implement UNDRIP (Government of British Columbia, 2019). The TRC's Calls to Action and DRIPA prompted BC post-secondary institutions (PSIs) to initiate decolonization efforts, including developing Indigenous Strategic Plans (ISPs), however, many of these efforts seem to be performative gestures rather than substantive institutional change. While territorial acknowledgments, cultural events, and Indigenous art installations have become more common, it is questionable if these initiatives are challenging persistent colonial legacies, and promoting Indigenous rights in alignment with UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action.

Research Objective: This two-phase research will examine what BC PSIs claim versus what their public-facing reports and documents communicate regarding decolonization efforts. Phase one, for which funding is sought, will analyze institutional discourse in institutional accountability plans, reports, and documents from six major BC PSIs accessible online. A critical discourse analysis using Fairclough's three-dimensional model (Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2015) will assist in examining and identifying discursive patterns, ideologies, and narratives around decolonization. Indigenous frameworks like UBC's ISP Self-Assessment Tool and the concept developed by Fellows and Razack's (1998) "race for innocence" and "competing

marginalities”, to analyze how discourses intersect with issues of race, gender, and power relations (Fellows & Razack, 1998, p.335). Each method will guide evaluating PSIs' decolonization efforts' depth and authenticity to address ‘interlocking’ systems of oppression and avoid perpetuating settler moves toward innocence, as highlighted by Tuck and Yang (2012).

Phase one aims to assess PSIs' current decolonization state, distinguishing substantive actions from performative gestures. The aim is to identify gaps between rhetoric and practice, determining systemic changes needed to implement UNDRIP and the TRC's Calls to Action. Funding this discourse analysis will provide the groundwork for phase two to conduct further research and the development of a comprehensive decolonization framework in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, a literature review of best practices from around the world, and the inclusion of partnering PSIs. The comprehensive decolonization framework aims to offer substantive, community-driven strategies for meaningful institutional change focused on Indigenous rights.

Examining the current realities is necessary for PSIs to actualize, align and uphold UNDRIP, DRIPA and TRC commitments. Decolonization requires truth before reconciliation, and this phased approach establishes institutional efforts based on Indigenous perspectives, not just external rhetoric.

Performative Decolonization: Most BC PSIs have adopted territorial acknowledgments after the TRC Calls to Action, but a study found only 5 of 77 Canadian universities reported decolonization initiatives on their websites, showing varying degrees of commitment (Kopp & Mannitz, 2022, p. 14). While intended to recognize Indigenous peoples’ traditional territories and colonialism's impact, territorial acknowledgments can symbolize performative decolonization without meaningful actions addressing land rights, self-determination, and restoring governance

systems often highlighted. (Two Convivial Thinkers. 2024). Other performative gestures include allocating funds for cultural events (MMIWG, Orange Shirt) without prioritizing Indigenous faculty and staff recruitment and retention, redistributing institutional wealth to Indigenous communities, or integrating Indigenous artwork, language, or symbols without meaningful consultation. As scholars like Kopp et al. (2022) emphasize, individual curricular changes or symbolic acts are insufficient for substantive transformation within PSIs. Meaningful decolonization requires a collective, community-driven approach to dismantle colonial policies, practices, and unequal resource distribution marginalizing Indigenous peoples.

Government, Legislation, and Policy: BC post-secondary institutions (PSIs) are actively incorporating commitment activities into their IAPRs, Indigenous Strategic Plans (ISPs), and Aboriginal Service Plans (ASPs) in response to international and national frameworks as outlined by the UNDRIP, the TRC Calls to Action, and DRIPA. These efforts represent significant steps towards post-colonial reconciliation.

UNDRIP, adopted by the United Nations in 2007, is an international instrument aimed at honouring the rights of Indigenous peoples globally. BC PSIs are aligning policies and practices with UNDRIP to ensure the protection of Indigenous rights within their institutions.

The TRC, established in 2008, was tasked with documenting the tragic history and ongoing legacy of the residential school system. In 2015, the TRC released 94 Calls to Action as part of its final report, providing a roadmap for addressing injustices and advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. PSIs are incorporating these Calls to Action into strategic plans to address historical injustices and promote reconciliation.

In 2019, notably, BC enacted DRIPA, becoming the first province to create a legislative action plan to implement UNDRIP. This prioritizes BC's commitment to advancing Indigenous rights (British Columbia, 2019). As a result, BC PSIs are integrating DRIPA's principles into their governance, operations, and educational practices to support Indigenous self-determination and rights.

The ASP program, funded by the Ministry of Post-Secondary and Future Skills, enhances educational, cultural, and language services for Indigenous learners. However, only eleven of BC's 25 PSIs have received ASP funding. Efforts are now underway to expand ASPs' reach and strengthen commitments to all BC PSIs with accessing funds which then better support Indigenous communities they serve.

Aligning with these initiatives, the University of British Columbia (UBC) developed its Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP) in 2020. This comprehensive framework advances UBC's commitments under UNDRIP, the TRC Calls, and DRIPA by implementing meaningful actions across governance, education, research, relationships, and community engagement, further supporting reconciliation and Indigenous rights.

Research Rationale: PSIs perpetuate the settler-colonial system, historically depriving and suppressing Indigenous peoples of traditional education pathways through assimilation. Despite recent symbolic efforts, colonialism's legacy persists in operational norms, curriculum, and societal perceptions shaped by institutions. Decolonization requires deconstructing these colonial societal norms of inequities within PSIs.

This research is important as PSIs significantly influence societal perceptions by normalizing colonial beliefs imposed by European colonists. Without a critical effort to dismantle these

institutionalized colonial structures, PSIs' decolonization attempts will lack commitment and remain performative. Identifying practical strategies grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, perspectives, and lived experiences can guide PSIs toward substantive decolonization efforts centered on Indigenous rights, self-determination, and reciprocal community relationships.

Through rigorous examination of PSIs' realities and public discourse, this first phase of the research can bridge the gap between rhetoric and substantive action, providing a foundation for developing an Indigenous-led decolonization framework through the second phase. Truth precedes reconciliation; ensuring institutional efforts arise from Indigenous worldviews, not external gestures.

Research Methodology


Description of Methodology and Methods: This research utilizes critical discourse analysis (CDA) methods to examine how six PSIs in BC advance decolonization initiatives beyond performative gestures to actionable strategies in phase one. The institutional discourse analysis will cross-examine and compare three different analytical approaches (model, framework, and concept) to guide the examination of the PSIs' institutional documents and reports obtained online. The analysis will use NVivo qualitative data analysis software to organize, analyze, and identify insights based on the three discourse analysis approaches (model, framework, and concept). The software will then enable the team to cross-examine themes, underlying meanings, and patterns to understand the findings and relationships to the broader social, human rights, cultural and institutional contexts.

Scope, Objective: The first CDA will follow Fairclough's three-dimensional model to apply a systematic approach to analyze the text (description), the discursive practices supporting the text production and consumption (interpretation), and broader social practices in which the discourse

is situated (explanation) (Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2015). It also considers visual semiotic choices as "multimodal" features that can also communicate ideological meanings (Tannen et al., 2015, p.759).

The second framework will utilize the UBC ISP Self-Assessment Tool, designed to assess the progress across five key areas: Governance, Education, Research, Relationships, and Community Engagement (University of British Columbia, 2021, p.26). Specific criteria and indicators within this framework will guide the analysis of each PSI's discourse on decolonization progress.

The third framework will examine the concept of the "race for innocence" and "competing marginalities" developed by Razack and Fellows in 1998, for an analysis of how discourses intersect with issues of race, gender, and power relations (Fellows & Razack, 1998, p.335). Each aligns with the need to address 'interlocking' systems of oppression and avoid perpetuating settler moves toward innocence, as highlighted by Tuck and Yang (2012).

Cross-examining multiple methods will provide a comprehensive understanding of the discourses, identify overlaps and gaps between macro-level narratives and ideologies, and micro-level analysis of word choices, metaphors, and subject positioning.  This research directly addresses the need to critically analyze institutional discourse narratives and ideologies embedded within PSIs public-facing communications on decolonization, moving beyond superficial gestures to assess substantive, actionable strategies that cultivate reciprocal relationships and confront interlocking systems of oppression, as called for by the TRC and scholars like Tuck, Yang, and Kirkness & Barnhardt.

Sample and Access: The institutional discourse includes IAPRs, ASPs, and ISPs where available. The six BC PSIs include the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC),

Thompson Rivers University (TRU), University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), Capilano University, Vancouver Island University (VIU), and Royal Roads University.

Risk Assessment: While the research risks are minimal, the health and well-being of Indigenous Elders involved in an advisory role will be prioritized. Elders will be acknowledged as collaborators, and their contributions will guide the understanding of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and methodologies.

To address potential ethical risks in data presentation and analysis, the researcher will continuously self-reflect on positionality, social location, and inherent biases that may shape the research process. Adopting a reflexive practice grounded in Indigenous methodologies, as outlined by Kovach (2021), is essential.


The PSIs will be included as partners throughout the research design, analysis, and dissemination phases to mitigate risks of misrepresenting or perpetuating colonial narratives. Their perspectives and feedback will continuously be sought to ensure accurate contextualization of institutional discourses and co-construction of findings in a spirit of reciprocity. Establishing an Elder Advisory committee with PSI representatives in advisory roles can facilitate this collaborative and consultative approach.

Research Ethics: This project does not involve human participants and will solely analyze publicly available institutional documents for this funding application's goals. Therefore, it does not require a Research Ethics Board review.

Proposed Themes: The research aims to identify instances where PSIs acknowledge systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples and the extent to which their commitments and actions demonstrate continuity or discontinuity from colonial practices and oppressive systems.

Furthermore, to assess whether decolonization initiatives are substantive, or performative gestures based on confronting systemic discrimination and breaking away from colonial continuities.

Knowledge Mobilization

 **Dissemination Strategy:** This research will use an interdisciplinary strategy to share findings, focusing on academic and community channels and fostering reciprocal relationships with the Elders and the PSI partners included. Directly involving research assistants, Elders, and PSI partners in the dissemination process is of utmost priority.

Community-Based Dissemination: A comprehensive report and executive summary highlighting key findings, recommendations, and the proposed decolonization framework recommendations will be developed and shared directly with the six PSIs for feedback and knowledge exchange.

Outreach will be conducted to the internal and external relations departments of the six PSIs to explore opportunities for the research team to present findings to institutional stakeholders, leadership, and community members. The research team will engage with local Indigenous communities and Elders through presentations, talking circles or other culturally appropriate manners to receive input and reciprocally disseminate findings.

Conference Presentations: Abstracts will be submitted to relevant national and international conferences on Indigenous education, decolonization, and reconciliation, such as the Canadian Society for Study of Higher Education (CSSHE), World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE), and Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA).



Research assistants will be included with co-presenting findings, providing valuable experience, training opportunities, and recognition for contributions.

Online Dissemination: Open-access publishing options will be explored to ensure research outputs are accessible.

Research Team

Principal Investigator Skills: As the principal investigator, I bring strong project management and qualitative research skills, including expertise in critical discourse analysis, Indigenous methodologies, and decolonizing approaches. My experience collaborating with Elders and Indigenous communities ensures that the research will be conducted ethically, reciprocally, and respectfully. I have extensive knowledge of scholarly works on decolonization efforts, Indigenous practices, and the advancement of Indigenous rights and self-determination within post-secondary institutions.

Research Assistant Skills: The project requires two undergraduate research assistants to support data coding, analysis, literature review of best practices, note-taking, and attending meetings. Specific skills needed include proficiency in qualitative data analysis software (NVivo), attention to detail, strong organizational abilities, and a commitment to upholding Indigenous research protocols and ethical guidelines.

Indigenous Elders and PSI Research Advisory Partners

Elder Advisory: Eight Elders, including two local Elders from Tk'emlups te Secwepemc and one Elder representative from each of the six participating post-secondary institutions (PSIs), will provide invaluable guidance and knowledge throughout the research process. Their expertise in Indigenous worldviews, protocols, and the advancement of Indigenous peoples' human rights is crucial.

PSI Representatives: One representative from each of the six PSIs will participate on the advisory committee, contributing institutional perspectives and insights to ensure the research findings are relevant and actionable within their PSI contexts.

The research team will work collaboratively, with the principal investigator providing overall leadership and the research assistants supporting data collection, analysis, literature review, and administrative and logistical coordination. The Elder Advisory and PSI representatives will offer critical guidance, ensuring the research and researchers uphold Indigenous protocols, voices and knowledge systems and ongoing critical self-reflection on positionality and complicity in perpetuating colonial systemic injustices. The advisory representatives can offer advice to uncover and analyze underlying power dynamics, contrasting rhetoric with substantive actions taken by BC PSIs regarding decolonization. Their guidance will help identify potential discrepancies between the public-facing discourse of PSIs and the actual course taken to advance Indigenous rights and challenge ongoing systemic colonial legacies in alignment with UNDRIP, TRC, and DRIPA.

Budget Justification

The requested amount to support the proposed research is \$51,680. This budget supports the first phase with a timeline spanning June 2024 to June 2025, focusing on the main areas identified below.

Student Research Assistants (\$13,680): The project requires two undergraduate student research assistants. One will conduct an extensive literature review, best practices analysis, and administrative tasks. The other will facilitate qualitative data analysis using NVivo software and support administrative tasks. The hourly rate is \$30 (including 14% for tax/benefits) for a total of

200 hours per student, which also covers their participation in advisory meetings and travel to the PSIs.

Elder and PSI Advisory Roles (\$18,000):

- ***Elder Honoraria (\$10,000):*** Eight Elders (two local Tk'emlups te Secwepemc Elders, and one Elder from each of the six PSIs) will be compensated for their contributions. Each will receive an honorarium of \$250 for attending four 2.5-3-hour virtual advisory meetings (\$8,000 total). Each will receive an honorarium of \$250 for attending a final in-person gathering (\$2,000 total).
- ***Elder and PSI Representative Travel (\$8,000):*** Six PSI representatives (one from each institution) will attend the final in-person gathering. Travel costs include airfare, accommodation, ground transportation, and per diem meal allowances for 10 people.

Research Dissemination (\$15,000): The principal investigator and two research assistants will present findings at one national or international conference. Estimated costs include registration fees, travel, accommodation, and per diem meal allowances.

Unforeseen Expenses (\$1000): A contingency amount for unforeseen supplies, expenses, or travel costs, such as gift cards for the meeting space, sage/tobacco for cultural protocols, or additional travel for the principal investigator or Elders.

Each budget item is justified as it directly supports the research objectives, prioritizes compensation of Indigenous Elders and PSI partners to participate, contributes to relationship building, and allows for effective knowledge mobilization through conference presentations and gatherings with the research team and partners. A budget is provided in [Appendix A](#).

Timeline

The timeline outlines the first phase of a two-part research project that spans June 2024 to June 2025. This first phase of the research highlights critical milestones in relationship building, including incorporating Indigenous voices and worldviews, and sets the foundation for the second phase. The initial months of June - August 2024 will focus on obtaining necessary approvals, engaging with PSI partners, recruiting research assistants, and acquiring NVivo software for qualitative data analysis. This preparatory stage will set the groundwork for the subsequent phases of the research.

From September 2024 to March 2025, the research team will collect and analyze institutional documents from six PSIs, applying coding schemes and discourse analytical frameworks, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP) Self-Assessment Tool, and the concept of "race for innocence" by Fellows and Razack (1998). Four virtual advisory meetings with Indigenous Elders and PSI representatives are scheduled for consultation and engagement. The research team will visit five of the six PSIs to understand institutional contexts and discuss research and relationship-building between April and May. The timeline concludes in June 2025 with consultations for feedback and revisions, finalizing the analysis and preparing dissemination materials. An in-person gathering will facilitate knowledge exchange and reflection. The project will then plan for phase two, developing a comprehensive decolonization framework with Indigenous Elders and communities, and disseminating phase one findings at a national or international conference such as CSSHE, WIPCE, and NAISA fostering dialogue and knowledge mobilization. The Timeline is provided in [Appendix B](#).

Literature Review

An initial literature review has been conducted, and the resources have been included with this application. The grant funding for the research will permit further findings on best practices and refine the research design and methodology to advance this important work. See [Appendix C](#).

Appendix A: Grant Proposal Budget

Category	Year 1	Total
<u>Personnel:</u>		
1. Principal investigator (name)	\$0	
2. Undergraduate Research Student #1 Per hour rate \$30, total of 200 hours Fringe benefits (14%)	\$6840	
3. Undergraduate Research Student #2 Per hour rate \$30, total of 400 hours Fringe benefits (14%)	\$6840	
4. Eight Elder Advisors @ \$250 per person Total of 4 virtual meetings at 2.5 – 3 hours Gathering celebration (same rate as meetings)	\$10,000	
Total Salaries & Wages:	\$23,680	\$23,680
<u>Supplies & Expenses:</u>		
1. 20 Parking Passes at \$5 full day	\$100	
2. Technology – NVivo License	\$1300	
3. Advisory meetings snacks, beverages	\$100	
4. Gathering (food, gifts, venue)	\$2500	
5. Unforeseen expenses	\$1000	
Total Supplies & Expenses:	\$5000	\$5000
<u>Travel:</u>		
1. PSI representatives & Elders for Gathering (10 people to travel to TRU)	\$8000	
2. Dissemination (Conference PI & 2 RA's)	\$15000	
Total Travel :	\$23,000	\$23,000
Subtotal of All Categories:	\$51,680	\$51,680
Grand Total Requested from SBSJF:	\$51,680	\$51,680

Appendix B: Timeline Project

Steps	Study Milestone	Project Timeline: June 2024 to June 2025				
		June – Aug. 2024	Sept.– Dec. 2024	Jan. - March 2025	April – May 2025.	June 2025
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain institutional approvals and engage with PSI partners • Recruit and onboard two undergraduate research assistants • Purchase required software (NVivo license) 					
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and analyze institutional documents (IAPR, ASPs, ISPs) • Apply coding schemes and analytical frameworks (CDA, UBC ISP Tool, Fellows & Razack's "race for innocence" concept) • Identify patterns, themes, and underlying narratives related to decolonization efforts, cross-examine three findings • Hold first 2 virtual advisory meetings with Elders and PSI representatives 					
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue document analysis and coding • Contextualize findings within broader social, human rights, and institutional contexts • Hold 3rd and 4th virtual advisory meetings to interpret preliminary findings • Visit 5 of the 6 PSIs for relationship building and institutional context (1 PSI TRU not required) 					
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult advisory committee for feedback and revisions • Finalize analysis, findings and report • Prepare materials for dissemination (report, executive summary, etc.) 					
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold in-person gathering with Elders, PSI reps and research team to share findings • Plan for phase two framework development and further research needed • Disseminate phase one findings at 1 national or international conference (e.g. WIPCE) 					

Appendix C: References

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