

# **WHITE BENEVOLENCE**

RACISM AND COLONIAL VIOLENCE  
IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

EDITED BY AMANDA GEBHARD,  
SHEELAH MCLEAN AND VERNA ST. DENIS

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EXCERPT

## INTRODUCTION

*Amanda Gebhard, Sheelah McLean and Verna St. Denis*

The vision for this edited collection arises from our shared commitment to elevate critical standpoints on racial inequality in Canada. Drawing on the frameworks of critical race theory, antiracism, anticolonial theory and whiteness studies, this compilation brings together research and writing that examines the work of whiteness and systemic racism as they are practised in Canadian institutions. Captured in the title, *White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in the Helping Professions*, the aim of this collection is to interrogate the everyday work of white settler professionals who often profess to support Indigenous Peoples yet reproduce colonial narratives that uphold white supremacy. By examining the practices of whiteness within education, public health, social work and criminal justice, the chapters in this collection demonstrate how colonialism is ever-present and often plays out through white benevolence.

White benevolence is a form of paternalistic racism that reinforces, instead of challenges, racial hierarchies, and its presence is found across Canadian institutions. The authors in this collection challenge the master narrative of Canadian benevolence, in which the state is imagined to uphold ideals of democracy, multiculturalism, peacekeeping and tolerance. These colonial scripts are deeply embedded beliefs both at home and abroad (Mackey 2002; Schick and St. Denis 2005; Thobani 2007). This imagined community represents a symbolic space that is upheld as an ideal version of who and what the nation imagines itself to be (Anderson 1991; Baldwin 2010; McLean 2013). The myth of Canadian state innocence is embodied by white settler subjects and embedded in institutional policies and practices.

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Selective historical amnesia is a mechanism that allows white Canadians to distance and absolve themselves from the violence of settler colonialism (Coleman 2006). White settler colonialism is a form of colonialism motivated by access and control over territory, accomplished through the process of constructing white supremacy in relation to Indigenous inferiority (Said 2003; Wolfe 2006). “Whereas other forms of colonialism can be understood through the exploitation of labour and capital, settler colonialism is a territorial project that is centred on the accumulation and control of dispossessed land” (Nunn 2018: 8).

All racialized communities in Canada have suffered systemic violence in a multitude of forms under white supremacy; however, Indigenous communities and communities of colour have distinct histories and experiences of oppression. Following Latty, Scribe, Peters and Morgan (2016: 135–136), “we resist theorization that treats Black and Indigenous peoples’ experiences with anti-Black racism and settler colonialism as interchangeable phenomena.” While this collection includes chapters that attend to points of connection and tensions between multiple forms of racism, the exposure and examination of anti-Indigenous racism is at the fore of this collection.

This collection demonstrates that the past is present and exposes how the whiteness of Canadian institutions is upheld through everyday practices within institutions. Spanning a range of disciplines, authors examine how whiteness is created and maintained, and how it reproduces inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across settler society. Each chapter examines performances of whiteness within particular institutional settings, and together they demonstrate how widespread these practices are — and, therefore, systemic — and also how professionals are invited and seduced into these practices. The analysis offered in this collection counters the assumptions of superiority and innocence that implicitly informs the practice of white professionals.

The whiteness of settler colonialism has been undertheorized in Canada and within the helping professions. The discussion of racism and whiteness has largely been situated in the context of the United States, where whiteness studies and critical race scholarship have predominantly focused on anti-Black racism, and where there is less investment in national narratives of innocence. The absence of research on whiteness in Indigenous studies is noted by Chris Andersen (2009: 94) who contends, “Teaching about whiteness, how whiteness frames

Indigeneity and how Indigenous people know whiteness should stand as a central component of the discipline of Indigenous studies.” Attending to this gap, the authors in this collection challenge readers to grapple with the ways in which white dominance and racism are normalized in Canada and to question the narratives of white benevolence that maintain colonial dynamics of inequality.

The contributions of whiteness scholarship in the helping professions are especially pertinent on the Prairies, the geographical context for much of the writing in this collection. While settler colonialism reproduces foundational logics that span across geographical spaces, such as the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from the land, these logics are forged within distinct historical moments and unique contexts (Starblanket and Hunt 2020). The landscape of the Prairies inhabits a space with a history of particular patterns of whiteness that include violent state repression during the Riel Resistance, the highest number of residential schools in Canada, and apartheid policies such as the pass system and enforced starvation (Dorries et al. 2019; Williams 2015; Daschuk 2013). Contemporary white supremacy in the Prairies is visible in the far-right populism of the oil and gas extraction industry, the high push-out rate of Indigenous students in public education, recently bolstered trespassing laws that stoke racialized fear, and ongoing deaths of Indigenous people in police custody.

This book captures many of the distinct mechanisms of whiteness that are reproduced across the Prairies, a landscape where white supremacy is masked by “mythical tropes about the virtuousness of its people and the righteousness of its political and cultural formations” (Starblanket and Hunt 2020: 22). These tropes cast Indigenous Peoples as a threat to settler-colonial values in ways that function to normalize Indigenous exclusion and death. While the impacts of colonial atrocities have been enormous, Indigenous Peoples continue to survive and thrive by drawing on the strength and self-determination of their communities and Nations. Indigenous acts of refusal and resistance to the workings of whiteness and racism are found throughout this collection.

## **COLONIALISM, RACE AND NATION BUILDING**

The contemporary forms of colonial practices that reproduce racial hierarchies traced across this collection have their foundations in the history of nation building in Canada. Nation building in Canada re-

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lies on white settler colonialism to secure the land and resources that Indigenous Peoples thrived on for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. The foundation for settler narratives of white superiority and Indigenous inferiority can be traced back to colonial devices such as the fifteenth-century Doctrine of Discovery, a Papal Bull issued to European explorers that constructed Indigenous lands as “*terra nullius*” or devoid of human life (Manuel 2015; Reid 2010; Thobani 2007). The doctrine stated that Indigenous Peoples had no sovereign rights to their own lands, and this legal fiction became the foundation for Canadian law in relation to the ongoing theft of Indigenous lands and resources (Manuel 2015). As Reid suggests, “The Doctrine of Discovery is not simply a relic of colonial history; it is the legal force that defines the limits of all land claims issues to this day, and it was integrated into North American law from an early period” (2010: 342).

In the seventeenth century, scientific racism played an integral role in the justification of colonial policies by inventing racial categories. European scientists utilized tests such as craniometry, the measurement of skulls, in a quest to prove that people descended from Western European countries were innately, or biologically, superior. Testing aimed to link human attributes such as intelligence, ethics and morals to skin colour, justifying systems of white dominance (Gould 1981; TallBear 2013). European scientists used these tests to create false racial hierarchies, situating white people at the top of the racial hierarchy and Indigenous Peoples and Black people at the bottom. Over the last three decades, geneticists have determined that race is a socially constructed category that has no basis in biology; as TallBear (2013: 37) contends, “Pegging discrete racial categories proved impossible.” While classifying human diversity is what professor of biological anthropology Alan Goodman (2007: 7) calls “bad science,” it has nevertheless been used to support beliefs about European superiority. The myth of race as biological circulates across settler society today and is found in the racist assumptions that Indigenous Peoples are less intelligent, more susceptible to substance misuse and more prone to violence. The ongoing consequences of the myth of race as biological are real, detrimental and often deadly.

As this collection demonstrates, racial stereotypes have dire consequences when they are used as the rationale for the colonial violences of schooling exclusions, imprisonment, the denial of lifesaving care and child apprehension. More broadly, tenets from the discovery doctrine



and debunked theories from pseudo race science have been used to justify government policy. For example, across the Prairies, the success of Indigenous farmers was resented by settler farmers, resulting in government policies that purposely sabotaged Indigenous Peoples' efforts to join the agricultural economy (see Carter 1993; 2006). Policies reinforced the colonial narrative that Indigenous Peoples were *idle by nature* and, therefore, would not make use of such a valuable resource as land (Carter 2006). These examples of white settler logics continue to underpin the colonial scripts that dehumanize Indigenous Peoples.

Building a colonial nation, therefore, required more than the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their lands; it required ongoing work to eject them from the category of human (Thobani 2007). Created and maintained as part of white settler governance systems, institutions such as justice, education, health care and social work, have been instrumental in asserting systems of white dominance over Indigenous territories and people. Paraphrasing Wynter (2003), Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013: 74) write, "Settler colonialism requires the construction of non-white peoples as less than or not quite civilized, an earlier expression of human civilization, and makes whiteness and white subjectivity both superior and normal." As Jean-Paul Sartre states in the preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, "The only way the European could make himself man was by fabricating slaves and monsters" (Sartre in Fanon 1963: viii).

The policies, laws and institutions created by nineteenth-century settlers were white supremacist, patriarchal and middle class (Comeau 2005; Thobani 2007). The outsider status of Indigenous Peoples, Black people and People of Colour was secured through racist state policies and social practices (Bannerji 1997; Thobani 2007). Razack, Smith and Thobani (2010: 1) remind us that Indigenous women, namely Maria Campbell, Janice Acoose, Emma Larocque and Lee Maracle, were among some of the first to publish written critiques of Canada as a white settler society and analyze its ongoing colonial practices, particularly through colonial institutions.

Indigenous resistance to colonialism and systems of white domination began with the arrival of Europeans on this continent and has never stopped. Indigenous refusal takes shape in many forms, including within treaty relationships, which Indigenous Peoples have negotiated to protect their communities, territories and ways of life (Krasowski 2019). These negotiations are ongoing and stem from the colonial govern-

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ment's consistent abrogation of the spirit and intent of the original treaties. While the Prairie landscape is engulfed by the Numbered Treaties, settlers have "little historical or contemporary understanding of treaties" (Tupper and Cappello 2008: 566). The erasure of treaties upholds the settler myth of empty landscapes that justify white entitlement to Indigenous land. When treaties are included in the public sphere, they are most often depoliticized (Tupper and Cappello 2008) or used to secure the false narrative that Indigenous Peoples surrendered their lands and governance systems to the Canadian state (Krasowski 2019).

### WHAT IS WHITENESS?

Colonialism, racism and whiteness are interlocking systems that inform each other and are not necessarily distinctive. "Racism is the legitimating ideology of colonialism" (Green 2011: 239) and a system that "encompasses all of the various relations of power that [arise] from the domination of one racial group over another" (Ware 2015 [1992]: xviii). Critical scholars have recognized that the study of racism must include the study of whiteness. Whiteness is not only embodied and maintained by white people; however, they benefit exponentially from systems of white dominance (Matias and Mackey 2016; Warren 2001).

In the early twentieth century, W.E.B. Du Bois developed the field of whiteness. Du Bois' original theorizing about the operation of whiteness is evident in the work of the contemporary whiteness scholars drawn upon in this collection. This includes Du Bois' elucidation of the following: the value of whiteness depends on the devaluation of Blackness; whiteness provides compensation in material and psychological forms; whiteness manifests in vehement beliefs about entitlement and superiority; and whiteness is expressed through brutal violence as well as acts of charity (Du Bois 1903: 1935). In the mid-twentieth century, Franz Fanon wrote about the challenge of decolonization (1963), which sought to disrupt the colonial investment in the idea that the white man is the "predestined master of the world" (1952: 97). In his foundational auto-ethnographic work, *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon (1952) provides a powerful analysis of how his identity was fixed through the gaze of white colonizers. Similar to Foucault's theory of the function of panoptic surveillance, which refers to a state of continuous monitoring, the white gaze keeps "the black person under constant inspection" (Nielsen 2011: 365).

Many scholars of whiteness studies followed. David Roediger, in *The*

*Wages of Whiteness* (1991), studied the mechanisms of racism and the making of white identity among Irish American working-class white people. Ruth Frankenberg's influential text *White Women, Race Matters* (1993) provided an in-depth examination of white women's role in upholding racial hierarchies. Renowned feminist scholar bell hooks (1997) wrote about whiteness studies as the return of the ethnographic gaze onto white people by Black people. The work of Peggy McIntosh popularized the concept and study of white privilege in the late 1980s, and scholars have since produced an expansive analysis of the many manifestations of whiteness across the helping professions.

Whiteness is a "social identity that is positioned as superior to other 'races' within a system of racial hierarchy" (Cancelmo and Mueller 2019: 1). Frankenberg (1993) explained whiteness has a set of three interrelated dimensions. First, it is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Wide ranging in their scope, privileges cannot be understood in isolation from each other; privileges are cumulative. Privilege includes a range of unearned advantages bestowed upon white people, such as higher wages, access to quality health care, access to education and protection in the justice and legal system. Second, Frankenberg asserts that whiteness is a "standpoint" or place from which to look at oneself, others and society. Later, scholars employed the term "internalized dominance" to name the ways in which white people believe themselves to be superior (Tappan 2006). Third, whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices, to a set of ways of being in the world, often not named as "white" by white people but considered instead as "Canadian" or "normal." Whiteness is normalized as the centre and is all too often uninterrogated in our efforts to address inequality (Kumashiro 2009). While displays of whiteness are found in the passionate beliefs of white settlers that they are unquestionably entitled to the resources of the nation, these settler assumptions are also found in the conviction that society needs everything whiteness has to offer (Schick and St. Denis 2005: 308).

## **COLONIAL SCRIPTS**

In our work with social work students, pre-service teachers, justice workers and health care professionals, we note the troubling repetition of explanations "that let those accountable for on-going domination, off the hook for pervasive inequality" (St. Denis 2007: 1085). Settlers often hold Indigenous Peoples responsible for the devastating consequences

of inequitable conditions maintained by whiteness within our institutions. The most popular explanations for inequality today are rooted in deficit discourses widely circulated through what we are calling *colonial scripts*. Colonial scripts are the stories, narratives and statements that frame Indigeneity as inferior while simultaneously constructing white settler identity as superior, effectively naturalizing settler-colonial power. So ubiquitous and entrenched, negative and racist narratives about Indigenous Peoples are stated by white settlers as if they were reasoned facts (Schick 2002). Colonial scripts reproduce the national narrative that Canada is a peaceful, non-discriminatory nation that has been built on individual work ethic alone (McLean 2018; Thobani 2007).

Colonial scripts are upheld by several ideologies and myths. Meritocracy is the belief that individual character and hard work are solely responsible for a person's life trajectory and conditions. Memmi (1967: 79) wrote about meritocracy as occupying an important part of the mythical portrait of the colonized constructed by the colonizer, underlining it is economically fruitful; the imagined industriousness and "virtuous taste for action" supposedly belonging to the colonizer justifies their privileged position. In "'We Built a Life from Nothing': White Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Meritocracy," McLean (2018) describes how stories she heard growing up positioned her white settler family as having earned their middle-class status through hard work and intelligence alone. Naming these stories as national texts, McLean shows how such narratives erase the colonial policies that ensured white settlers would flourish while Indigenous Peoples faced oppressive practices, including differential access to land ownership and resources. Such stories are prevalent and function to make contemporary economic inequality seem like the outcome of personal merit and actions of individuals.

Colour-evasiveness is the belief that skin colour holds no social and political meaning and that people do not see race. In the Canadian context, professing to be colour-blind has come to be equated with being non-racist; however, claiming not to "see race" is a convenient way of denying structural racism and, therefore, alleviates responsibility to account for profound racial disparities. Further, enactments of colour-blindness erase how the racial and cultural identities of individuals and groups shape their lived experiences and are also sources of pride, strength and empowerment. Bonilla-Silva (2017: 53–57) argues that colour-evasiveness is a powerful ideology that "defends the contem-

porary racial order.” It operates through four central frames: *abstract liberalism*, which draws on political liberalism and employs ideologies such as free choice, individualism, equal opportunity and meritocracy (e.g., “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps”); *naturalization*, which suggests that racial disparities are biologically driven (e.g., “Addiction is in their genes”); *cultural racism*, which connects imagined shortcomings of racialized people to culture; (e.g., “It’s not in their culture to value education”); and *minimization of racism*, which constructs racism as a thing of the past and positions contemporary claims of racism as outrageous (e.g., “The residential schools are a thing of the past/they need to stop playing the race card”).

Colonial scripts allow social workers, health care professionals and teachers to assume the familiar role of innocent do-gooders who simply wish to help and to see themselves as providers of what they imagine Indigenous Peoples are lacking — be it intelligence, work ethic or parenting skills. As mechanisms of white settler colonialism, the dehumanizing narratives that mark Indigenous Peoples as biologically different and inferior continue to impact Indigenous Peoples’ lives and deaths in Canadian systems today. In assuming positions of superiority and of knowing best, non-Indigenous people continue a pattern that began at first contact: “Ever since the two races first met, non-Indians have been trying to teach, convert, ‘improve’ or otherwise change Indian peoples” (Doxtator 2011: 33). In her article “Against Improvement,” Van Styvendale (2020: 79) problematizes the pervasive discourse of improvement through which “many prison education and arts initiatives articulate their value.” Referring to prisons but also applicable to programs across institutions, Van Styvendale argues that the discourse of improvement that undergirds them “locates the ‘need’ in the carceral subject, rather than pointing to the inherent violence of the penal industrial complex (PIC) that produces this need in order to justify the system’s existence” (79).

## STATE BENEVOLENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

The state institutions referred to in this text are also known as the helping professions, which have been integral to forging the national identity of benevolence as a white settler society. The origins of the term “helping professions” is unclear, and today its usage to describe work in the human services is contested. We employ it here to identify the histori-

cal foundations of sectors mandated to save Indigenous Peoples from themselves: social work, education, health care and justice, whose violent histories have been whitewashed. For example, contemporary social work education frequently leaves out social work's history of leadership in eugenics, racial segregation, assimilation and genocide and favours standard accounts that position early and contemporary social work as "firmly on the side of social justice" (Chapman and Withers 2019: 75). Similar patterns of erasure of past and ongoing investments in racial violence exist in nursing, teaching and policing (Cappello 2012; Scribe 2020; Stake-Doucet 2020).

Comeau (2005: 10) argues that education, penal, health and mental health, immigration systems and the Christian church were erected for the purpose of building a white nation where its citizens would be protected from non-white immigrants and Indigenous Peoples. These institutions, premised on the idea that white Europeans were divinely ordained, asserted white moral authority through the dismantling of Indigenous and non-white family structures and knowledge systems.

Originally conceived as missionary work within the Christian church, helping professionals remained bound to the ideals of the church that continued to regulate social norms as they expanded into public institutions outside of the church and as their helping activities became formalized (Roger 2000). Instead of "helping the less fortunate" through the "enlightenment of Christianity, the professional nurse, social worker, shelter worker or teacher could improve upon ... the health, well-being or family relationships [of the 'less fortunate']" (Roger 2000: 127). This quest for improvement was based upon total disregard for the complex knowledge systems already in place in Indigenous communities, which have existed since time immemorial. White settlers entering the helping professions today continue to be motivated by the patronizing imperative to save Indigenous Peoples.

The state-sanctioned and institutionalized management of Indigenous and immigrant populations was necessary to create a white benevolent national identity that could terrorize Indigenous families and communities with impunity. The conviction of the supremacy of white, heteronormative and masculine ideals and lifestyles during Canada's nation-building period of the late 1800s and early 1900s gave rise to the belief that those who embodied these ideals were morally responsible for modelling how to live for all others (Comeau 2005). Intimately con-

nected to the overlapping projects of nation building and racialization, “the welfare state constituted itself as ‘compassionate’ and ‘caring’; it exalted national subjects as possessive of the same qualities” (Thobani 2007: 107).

The helping professions, therefore, both depended on and reproduced the inferiority and *other* status of Indigenous Peoples, Black people, and People of Colour. As the work of helping professionals constituted the *other* in unfavourable terms — and as everything the white settler was not — their practices secured their own senses of self as kind, helpful, and benevolent (Chapman and Withers 2019; Comeau 2005; Roger 2000) and, in the words of Thobani (2007), as exalted subjects. White women specifically were considered “the ideal bodies to reproduce patriarchal values and colonial epistemologies, but not to challenge these frameworks” (Meiners 2007: 46). While their work as professionals allowed them access to dominance, it also “ensconced them within a system that was designed to pathologize all those, including themselves, who deviated from it” (Roger 2000: 128). Foucault’s (1973) concept of the medical gaze is useful for understanding how pathologies are operationalized in institutions. The medical gaze refers to the power bestowed upon professionals to observe, classify and categorize patients in ways that are dehumanizing. Due to the status attributed to professionals, the patient becomes marked by predetermined diagnoses, while the professional remains disconnected from and irrelevant to the patients’ behaviour and symptoms. Backed by institutional power, the medical gaze at once attempts to determine individual identity and normalizes Western European ideologies about family, child-rearing, health, illness, birth and death.

## **REDIRECTING THE GAZE**

This book redirects the gaze toward white people in the helping professions — education, social work, health care and criminal justice — to show how they wield institutional power to enact white settler colonialism. Authors unapologetically expose the violence enacted toward Indigenous Peoples within colonial institutions. The work of whiteness goes undetected because of its taken-for-granted superiority and its “repetition of mundane and extraordinary acts that continually make and remake whiteness, all while eluding scrutiny and detection” (Warren 2001: 92). Authors unmask whiteness and how it so often escapes exami-

nation by presenting as unquestionably kind, helpful and benevolent. “If the mask of whiteness, the pretense, represents it as always benign, benevolent, then what this representation obscures is the representation of danger, the sense of threat” (hooks 1997: 345).

Broad in scope and cross-disciplinary in orientation, the chapters offer a multiplicity of voices that disrupt, refuse and resist settler-colonial myths of white benevolence. Authors explore how histories of racism continue through enduring national scripts of innocence. The topics covered in this book are wide-ranging, together providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of how the colonial past remains present. Readers are challenged to grapple with deeply embedded assumptions regarding where and with whom the responsibility for change is located.

The arc of the table of contents is deliberate and reflects our foundational thesis that whiteness does not work in isolation within institutions. Drawing points of connection between attitudes, policies and practices that work in concert across professions illustrates the need for shared accountability in disrupting white supremacy. It is our hope that readers will recognize the workings of whiteness in each institution regardless of their own specific affiliations, and that this collection serves to expand on what counts as important knowledge for professionals. We invite readers to reflect upon how the organization of the book highlights the interlocking and overlapping mechanisms of whiteness between institutions that work together to uphold systemic racism and oppression.

The book opens with an examination of whiteness in the child welfare system in Verna St. Denis’ part-autobiographical, part-historical social analysis entitled “Living My Family Through Colonialism.” St. Denis began writing this story over four decades ago in her undergraduate studies. Generous with her experiences, St. Denis recounts growing up surrounded by the threat of apprehension by social services and criminalization by law enforcement. St. Denis counters the social imaginary of Indigenous parents as unfit and white social workers as knowing better and knowing best, which continues to undergird contemporary child welfare. St. Denis demonstrates how despite the pervasive threat of violence, Indigenous families challenge colonial systems that construct them as deviating from white notions of “the good family.” St. Denis’ chapter foregrounds the history of whiteness in child welfare, inviting readers to examine the history of foundational policies and practices that uphold white supremacy within their respective disciplines.



Moving from the home into the school, the second chapter, by Sheelah McLean, “Toxic Encounters: What’s Whiteness Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?” is a provocative piece that extends the literature on racism in education by examining whiteness in the context of public schools. McLean’s research on racism in high schools illustrates how white teachers actively perpetuate racism and protect white supremacy. McLean demonstrates that racism is neither random nor rare, evidenced by patterns of whiteness that create a toxic climate of racial hostility for Indigenous students. McLean examines how white dominance is maintained through everyday performances of whiteness in school systems and makes explicit the role white teachers play in patterns of racial violence. The forms of whiteness examined in this chapter are not unique to public education, and McLean encourages readers to recognize similar practices of whiteness across institutional and social spaces.

The next chapter examines the denial of health care as a tool for settler-colonial violence. Exposing racism in health care as rampant and widespread, Lavallee and Harding’s “How Indigenous-Specific Racism Is Coached into Health Systems” illustrates the influences of commonplace racist behaviour in health care, which range from microaggressions that attack Indigenous identity to the denial of lifesaving care, unmasking the relationship between disparities in health outcomes and racism. This chapter shows how stereotypes and prejudices about Indigenous Peoples are not benign, but can have life-altering, life-threatening and even lethal impacts. Lavallee and Harding argue that anti-Indigenous racism coaching is embedded in medicine, nursing, allied health care professionals, unions, licensing colleges and governments. Lavallee and Harding’s analysis provides readers with an examination of how individuals across the helping professions are actively coached into authorizing a set of beliefs, thoughts and actions that are harmful to Indigenous Peoples.

The fourth chapter is an examination of the criminal justice system, completing an introduction to the four central institutions. Within an anticolonial abolitionist framework, in “Within This Architecture of Oppression, We Are a Vibrant Community”: Indigenous Prairie Prisoner Organizing during COVID-19,” Nancy Van Styvendale discusses the Indigenous prisoner-led “anti-oppression movement” that took place in Saskatchewan during COVID-19, drawing on the influential organizing and writing of the late Cree prisoner justice advocate Cory Cardinal.

The chapter focuses on three hunger strikes that Cardinal mobilized in service of his people's health and well-being, analyzing prisoner hunger striking as a "technique of struggle" (Bargu) against the penal system, a settler-colonial structure designed to remove Indigenous Peoples from their lands, communities, cultures and kin. Using two analytics — refusal and relational accountability — the chapter elucidates how Indigenous Prairie prisoner organizing functions both to refuse the lethal violence of the penal system and to enact local Indigenous laws of relational accountability, thus articulating an anticolonial abolitionist vision of a world beyond prisons grounded in Indigenous sovereignty. Van Styvendale's chapter encourages readers to imagine the possibilities for cross-racial solidarity organizing.

The next chapter transports readers into the intimate space of family/home, another institution where white settlers learn superiority in relation to Indigenous Peoples. Willow Samara Allen's "Tracing the Harmful Patterns of White Settler Womanhood" takes a deep dive into the role of white women in building and maintaining settler-colonial violence. Allen shows how the performance of benevolent white femininity preserves white women's innocence in racism under the guise of protecting, helping and saving. Allen poignantly weaves together personal experience and empirical data to evoke self-reflexivity on the part of white settler women. While acknowledging the social penalties of disrupting racism, Allen calls on white women to insert themselves within larger projects of settler colonialism and hold themselves, and each other, accountable for breaking harmful patterns of white womanhood.

The analysis provided by Allen on white women's complicity in settler-colonial violence sets the stage for the next chapter. Amanda Gebhard, in "Policing Indigenous Students: The School/Prison Nexus in the Canadian Prairies," traces how white teachers' beliefs shape school practices in ways that criminalize Indigenous youth and construct a future of incarceration as inevitable. Gebhard disrupts whitewashed narratives that produce Indigenous youth as "disengaged and troubled" to expose the operations of racism, colonialism and whiteness in schools, and the real and material consequences these have on Indigenous students' educational trajectories. The chapter emphasizes the importance of disrupting white professionals' innocent subject positions as an integral first step to building schools that resist the settler-colonial project of criminalizing Indigenous Peoples. It is a powerful reminder that the

policing of Indigenous Peoples starts early and is not confined to the justice system alone.

Megan Scribe's chapter expands on the analysis of law enforcement's myth of impartiality. "The Stories We Tell: Indigenous Women and Girls' Narratives on Police Violence" exposes the widespread refusal to hold police officers and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members accountable for the violence they inflict on Indigenous women and girls. This refusal gives rise to official narratives depicting police officers as benevolent figures charged with the difficult task of managing so-called troubled and vulnerable Indigenous girls. Scribe foregrounds counter-narratives circulated by Indigenous girls and their communities to demonstrate the erasure of state complicity in violence. Knowledge about police violence perpetrated against Indigenous girls and women is familiar to Indigenous Peoples and to the general public, yet state narratives on police violence in the lives of Indigenous girls remain scant. Scribe reminds us that "while it is true that Canada has largely relied on bureaucratic approaches over direct military missions, policing Indigenous peoples has always been an integral part of its repertoire."

Timothy Stanley's "Colten Boushie and the Deadly Articulations of Settler Colonialism: The Origins and Consequences of a Racist Discourse" speaks to the deadly consequences of white settlers' entitlement to the land. Tim Stanley analyzes the public discourses surrounding the 2016 murder of Colten Boushie, a member of the Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, and the subsequent acquittal of Gerald Stanley, the white settler who ended Boushie's life. Stanley illustrates how Donald Dickie's *All about Canada for Little Folk* (1924), the first primary school social studies textbook published in Canada, was a foundational text that mirrored public and media discourses that exonerated Gerald Stanley. The author shows how long-standing discourses within social studies curriculum normalizes racist property relations and settler disregard for Indigenous lives. The critical analysis in this chapter allows readers to think about how discourses embedded in historical texts continue to circulate within institutions and shape settler identity.

The next chapter takes readers into post-secondary education. Written as a conversation, Shaista Patel and Nisha Nath, in "What Can 'Settler of Colour' Teach Us? A Conversation on the Complexities of Decolonization in White Universities," expand on the markedly different experiences of Indigenous, Black and Peoples of Colour within

settler-colonial systems and the salience of examining the term “settler.” Starting from the central question of “what does critically thinking about people of colour as not just immigrants but rather as settlers on Indigenous Peoples’ lands shift how we think about the work of race in ongoing colonial dispossession, especially in academic institutions?” Patel and Nath draw readers into a nuanced and rich dialogue that extends the scholarship on settler identity. As the chapter unfolds, Patel and Nath examine a range of issues, including the university as a structure of power, how white coloniality manifests across spatial contexts and the mechanics of engaging in ethical decolonial work vis-à-vis disciplines, pedagogies and research. As Patel and Nath underline, conversations about the relationality of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people in white supremacist settler-colonial contexts of North America began several decades ago but continue to be urgently needed.

The next chapter debunks the myth of meritocracy, a deeply entrenched ideology that is frequently served up as justification for white dominance. Providing a detailed analysis of how land acquisition and material wealth are linked to whiteness and racial exploitation rather than hard work and strife, S.J. Adrienna Joyce, in “Am I a Settler? Considering Dominance Through Racial Constructs and Land Relationships,” examines her personal relationships to structures of settler colonialism and whiteness. Building on the discussion in Patel and Nath’s previous chapter, Joyce addresses the complexity of “settler” as a category in relation to Black people and People of Colour. Using her own family history as an example, Joyce deftly unpacks how her white identity is produced by and through her relationship to racialized spaces. A critical interrogation of settler identity, Joyce invites settlers to consider what is masked by their own most cherished narratives about settlement.

Chapter 11 expands the discussion of racism in health care detailed in Chapter 3 by Lavalley and Harding. In “Unmasking the Whiteness of Nursing,” Sharissa Hantke explores how deficit thinking steeped in whiteness pervades nursing practice today to build an argument for the inclusion of antiracism into nursing education. Hantke demonstrates how racist narratives and assumptions in nursing limit the access Indigenous Peoples have to a high quality of care, often taken for granted by white settlers. Written with a tone of urgency and using personal examples, Hantke argues that antiracist education is required for contem-

porary nursing practice to break the historical patterns of whiteness and the harms it inflicts onto Indigenous Peoples.

In “Whiteness of Medicine,” Jaris Swidrovich, a First Nations pharmacist in urban Saskatchewan, shifts from daily interactions in health care to the larger systems of funding, insurance and service delivery, and their colonial underpinnings in medicine. Swidrovich reveals how the systems have grave and detrimental impacts on access to care by Indigenous Peoples and, as an example, provides an in-depth analysis of the racist underpinnings of the Government of Canada’s Non-Insured Health Benefits program. Keeping with the theme of counter-narratives as valuable data, Swidrovich discusses how the personal stories entrusted to him by countless patients disclose disturbing examples and experiences of racism and whiteness and demonstrates how this limits Indigenous Peoples’ access to both Western and traditional Indigenous medicines, and ultimately health and wellness. Swidrovich’s chapter challenges the dominant narrative of Canada as a place that upholds “universal health care,” showing how it masks the inequitable policies that are detrimental to the health and lives of Indigenous Peoples.

Jas M. Morgan’s powerful autobiographical narrative takes readers back to the high school context in “A Circle of Rocks: Cannibal Culture, Kinship and Indigenous Youth in the Saskatchewan Public School System.” Morgan weaves together creative nonfiction and cultural criticism as a metaphorical backdrop to narrate her experiences attending high school and post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. Morgan powerfully illustrates that despite a hostile context of racialization, Indigenous young people on the Prairies persist in creating futurities and hope using spaces such as social media, where creative forms of resistance are enacted through self-representation and body sovereignty. This chapter is a significant reminder to readers that Indigenous Peoples are always and already engaged in refusal and resistance in the spaces this book examines.

The next chapter offers an example of caucusing as an antiracist pedagogy that shields Indigenous, Black and Peoples of Colour (IBPOC) from the inevitable harms caused by white settlers in cross-racial learning spaces. Drawing on data collected from an antiracism and anticolonialism learning series in the context of social work, Jeff Halvorsen, Régine King, Liza Lorenzetti, Adrian Wolfleg and Lemlem Haile, in “White Entitlement in Antiracism and Anticolonialism,” demonstrate

how participants displayed entitlement to the stories of Indigenous and racialized participants and anger toward their exclusion from the People of Colour caucus. The authors illustrate the keen engagement of white people to participate in educational activities about racism, so long as these activities keep white settler innocence intact. The authors found caucusing a useful way of reducing the emotional burden so often taken up by Indigenous and racialized activists who become tasked with supporting white aspiring allies.

Offering readers yet another compelling autobiography, Heather Carter's "Permission to Escape" lucidly recounts her experiences growing up in Northern Saskatchewan as a white-skinned, red-haired Métis woman. Similar to St. Denis and Morgan, Carter connects her personal experiences to the broader structures of settler colonialism's attempts to destroy Indigenous identity. Carter describes how presenting as white shaped her interactions within education, health care and the justice system, and allowed her to access legitimacy in spaces where her darker-skinned family members could not. Carter narrates a present shaped by a past whereby opportunities were granted and racialization was escaped "because she looked white." Importantly, this chapter adds to the larger conversation about the operation of gender and race in a settler-colonial context, demonstrating how Carter's access to support and open doors necessitated a performance of femininity in keeping with colonial tropes of white womanhood.

The final word in this collection goes to Dr. Alex Wilson, a Cree Two-Spirit scholar from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, interviewed by Sheelah McLean in "Queering the Mainstream." Alex shares how living a Two-Spirit identity and nationhood is not defined by settler-colonial systems of violence. In this chapter, Wilson connects memories and current stories of living on ancestral lands to Cree laws, cosmologies and ontologies. Wilson reveals how her transformative research, scholarship and ongoing work in queering land-based education was not only in response to the oppression Two-Spirit people face, but rather developed as its own validation of Indigenous knowledge. Wilson's chapter evokes the question of how an ethics of queer Indigenous relations shatters the foundations colonialism depends upon, the social hierarchies that are enacted upon humans and other-than-humans that continue to denigrate Indigenous lives and the systems on which Indigenous Peoples depend.

The authors in this collection take readers into classrooms, hospitals, prisons and homes, and many of them centre stories as starting points for analysis, calling to mind Brayboy's (2005: 430) suggestion that "stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being." As a significant form of resistance, the counter-narratives told across chapters disrupt dominant narratives and expose the practices of whiteness within a settler-colonial society (Brayboy 2005). Authors reveal the racial productivity of colonial scripts and tell far more complex stories about inequality that redirect the responsibility for change onto the shoulders of non-Indigenous people.

It is significant to spotlight white helping professionals not because their racism is exceptional, but because of how their work has come to signify an antithetical relationship to violence. In our current context of growing settler consciousness about white supremacy and colonialism, it is imperative to understand how racism operates under the guise of doing good. Myths of benevolence legitimize practices of anti-Indigenous racism, and this collection brings specific attention to these dynamics in a largely understudied region, a place where settler-colonial violence is rampant and Indigenous resistance is ongoing and multilayered. We are hopeful that this collection will be used in a range of educational contexts and that professionals will be convinced of the usefulness of interdisciplinary knowledge for making antiracist interventions in specific fields.

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