

STRUCTURING SAFETY IN THERAPEUTIC WORK ALONGSIDE INDIGENOUS SURVIVORS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Structuring Safety in Therapeutic Work Alongside Indigenous Survivors of Residential Schools. This writing addresses the theory and practices of structuring safety in community work and therapy. Specifically, we track our efforts for structuring safety in work alongside Indigenous people preparing to speak publically about their experiences of violence in Canadian residential schools. This includes giving testimony in truth and reconciliation tribunals. Cathy is a Métis with Cree and Dene ancestry. Vicki is an activist and ally from white settler culture, her people are from Ireland, Newfoundland and England. This work is an enactment of our attempts to create an accountable cultural partnership in work with Indigenous people who have survived residential schools. The writing begins with an analysis of the colonial project of residential schools and putting these events in the context of political violence. Into this context we bring the theory and practices for structuring safety in therapeutic work. This includes contesting neutrality, negotiating permission, making potential risks apparent, anticipating backlash, holding space for hope, engaging in reflexive questioning, and not retraumatizing the person. The risks involved in speaking truth to power for Indigenous people required that we structure enough safety into our work with the intention of not retraumatizing people, and of creating some space for a witnessing of their stories and testimonies.

Résumé

Cet article examine, des points de vue théorique et pratique, la mise en oeuvre de sécurité dans les travaux communautaires et en thérapie. En plus clair, nous examinons nos tentatives de maintenir la sécurité auprès d'autochtones disposés à témoigner en public (y compris dans des tribunaux Vérité et Réconciliation) des violences qu'ils ont subies dans les pensionnats autochtones canadiens. Cathy est métisse, avec des ancêtres cris et déné. Vikki est militante, issue de la culture des colons blancs : ses ancêtres proviennent d'Irlande, de Terre-Neuve et de l'Angleterre. Cet article présente nos tentatives de créer un partenariat interculturel et responsable auprès d'autochtones ayant survécu aux pensionnats. On y examine d'abord le projet colonial de création de ces écoles, plaçant ce projet dans le contexte de la violence politique. Dans ce contexte nous présentons la théorie et la pratique de l'encadrement de la sécurité en thérapie. Ceci comprend la question de la neutralité, demander la permission, rendre visibles les dangers potentiels, prévoir les réactions négatives, maintenir la possibilité de l'espoir, garder l'esprit critique et ne pas rouvrir de vieilles cicatrices psychologiques. Dire la vérité comporte de tels risques pour les autochtones qu'il importait que nous créions dans notre travail une suffisante marge afin de ne pas rouvrir ces cicatrices chez les témoins, et de créer une distance afin d'observer leurs histoires et leurs témoignages.

Introduction

This writing addresses the theory and practices of Structuring Safety in community work and therapy. Specifically, we track our efforts for Structuring Safety in work alongside Indigenous people preparing to speak publically about their experiences of violence in Canadian residential schools. This includes giving accounts for the first time in a number of settings such as in therapy sessions, in community healing workshops, in conversations with lawyers or social workers and in giving testimony in truth and reconciliation tribunals. The risky nature of participation in these processes for Indigenous people required that we structure enough safety into our work with the intention of not retraumatizing people, and of creating some space for a witnessing of their stories and testimonies.

In this writing Cathy, who is a Metis with Cree and Dene ancestry, will set the context of the work by briefly describing residential schools and the devastating consequences for Indigenous communities existing within a historical context of colonial violence and land theft. Her social work across Indigenous communities has been based on an understanding of the relevance of historical and political violence for Indigenous communities today. Vikki is an activist and ally from settler

culture. She will describe her theorizing and practices for Structuring Safety in therapeutic work: contesting neutrality, negotiating permission, making potential risks apparent, anticipating backlash, holding space for hope, engaging in reflexive questioning, and not retraumatizing the person. Vikki will offer questions specifically oriented to residential school survivors to show the theory in practice. Cathy will then reflect from within the specific context of her work alongside survivors of residential schools. This writing is framed as a collaboration, and we will indicate who is speaking throughout the writing in order to locate ourselves culturally and to resist conflating our important differences.

Residential schools, Truth and Reconciliation and Settlement tribunals

Cathy: Residential school is a term used to refer to institutions of internment and resocialization for First Nations, Inuit and, in some cases my people, the Métis in Canada (Logan, 2001). Residential or mission schools were instituted under Canada's Indian Act (Department of Justice Canada, 2011), a piece of racialized legislation designed to assimilate Aboriginal people in Canada (Leslie, 2002). This act was a form of federal domination ensuring that virtually every aspect of daily life for First Nations people was regulated and controlled (Government of Canada, 1996, p. 255). Aboriginal people were stripped of their rights, both natural and legal, and their lands were taken illegally (Harris, 2002, 2004). Various religious organizations such as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican and Baptist churches were given contracts to run the facilities that would house over 150,000 children who were separated from their families and communities. One hundred thirty-two schools were located across the country in every province and territory except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and P.E.I. The goal of the program was to remove the Indian from the child (Campbell Scott, 1920, cited in Regan, 2010). Residential schools opened in Canada before confederation and the last one was closed in 1996 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010). However, lawyer and researcher Bruce Feldthusen (2007) documents that these institutions for Indigenous children have existed on this land since the 1600s.

A critique of residential schools

The term "residential school" is a colonial euphemism for what might more accurately be described as a prison camp or internment centre. In fact attendance was mandatory and the method of transporting children constituted kidnapping in many cases. Parents who refused to comply faced prison and the government withholding resources from

families. Children were forced to engage in studies of Christianity as well as provide their labour for the functioning of the school (Miller, 1996). For those not familiar with the details of residential school violence, recent stories are documenting physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, cultural and sexualized violence against children. This ranged from public humiliation, child rape, deprivation, to sticking pins through children's tongues when they spoke their Indigenous language. The violence was systemic, across schools to varying degrees and perpetrators were granted a form of impunity and were seldom removed or punished for their heinous acts. Sources have shown that Indigenous children were deliberately exposed to tuberculosis and many died from the disease, sometimes two thirds of a school population.

In addition to the focus on creating a class of future menial labourers, the violence perpetuated against the children was rampant and largely ignored by those who knew about it. According to Feldthusen (2007) from the University of Ottawa, between 48% and 70% of the children were sexually abused. In some schools this figure was as high as 100%. He notes that the non-sexual physical abuse was often barbaric and indicates that the violence was systemic and deliberate, that those in charge were aware and that this was no well-intentioned mistake (2007). While colonial or standard accounts (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997) are used to conceal violence, many scholars have concluded that "residential schools have been the single most devastating event to affect First Nations peoples since contact" and many former internees continue to live out the horrors of this past internment (Thomas, 2005, p. 239).

Recently, as part of a national Truth and Reconciliation process, former internees were invited to come forward and publically describe accounts of the violence perpetuated against them by priests, nuns, staff and other students in these religious institutions. These statements or testimonials are being recorded for the declared purpose of educating Canada about these historic and recent atrocities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2011). The terms "truth" and "reconciliation" are problematic in that they imply that we are reconstituting a relationship that was once whole whereas European and Anglo-colonialism in Canada has inherently involved violence against Indigenous people in an attempt to remove their land, wealth, resources and children and place them into a class of servitude. Words such as "torture," "genocide," "racism," and "white supremacy" are omitted from the discourse used to describe this deliberate violence against Indigenous peoples in Canada. What follows is a summation of Vikki's stance for Structuring Safety in therapeutic and community work, with connections and invitations to make the ideas applicable to work with residential school survivors.

A Stance for Structuring Safety

Vikki: Structuring Safety describes the practices of negotiating or co-constructing conditions, structures and agreements that will make space for *safe-enough* work alongside survivors of residential schools. Therapeutic relationships that are experienced as safe are not capricious, natural, or random. They require intentional practices that create consistency, predictability, and set the space for *safe-enough* conversations (Reynolds 2010a, 2010b). Structuring Safety is not something therapists do to get ready for the real work, it is the real work. Developing a capacity for Structuring Safety is a core competency for therapists working alongside residential school survivors, requiring skill, complex analysis of power, moral courage, compassion and critical supervision. Most of what I have learned about safety comes from my work with refugees who are survivors of torture and political violence, where the risks of transgressing safety are huge (Reynolds, 2010b).

There is no perfectly safe therapeutic relationship, as there are always risks of transgressing safety. We contest the binary of “safe or unsafe” when we co-create relationships of *enough-safety* with our clients (Bird, 2000, 2004). I work to create *some-safety*, *enough-safety*, or a *safe-r* conversation and relationship. All conversations across difference are risky because power is always at play. Doing harm by replicating oppression is always a potential risk. This is true despite our commitments to social justice and our collective ethics (Reynolds, 2009). As part of Structuring Safety I believe we are required to contest objectivity and neutrality and take on overt position for justice-doing. I take an overt stand of naming the political violence of residential schools. This is required in my work, especially as a response to and resistance against silencing popular discourses, such as the government’s recent non-apology for residential schools. (Coates & Wade, 2009)

Therapeutic and community work is not objective, neutral or innocent. I employ the metaphor of a bathtub to describe our work because once you get into that bathtub, like this work; there is no way to keep any part of the water pure or squeaky clean. We can’t pretend that our positions in this work are innocent or neutral, or that there isn’t a risk of us hurting a person. In work with survivors of political violence, and here I include survivors of residential schools, it is imperative to hold understandings of the complexities of power and of the political world. Safety is not assured by being well intentioned but can be fostered by holding a critical analysis and an anti-oppression framework (Reynolds, 2010a). Many Indigenous clients are required to educate their therapists about colonization, the atrocities of residential schools and the structural oppressions faced by their communities.

Ideally residential school survivors will see therapists who share their culture and histories. Until that can be a reality allies will need

to do this work (Reynolds, 2010c). Therapists who are not Indigenous must understand the history and impact of colonization and genocide as their responsibility in order to be qualified to work alongside Indigenous clients. Allies work to change the social contexts in which these atrocities occurred (and still occur), as our collective accountability as settler people for the violence of colonization.

Collaboration contributes to Structuring Safety by honouring the autonomy of the survivor of residential school in deciding what will be talked about and what will be of use. Survivor-centered work requires that I am de-centered as the therapist (Reynolds, 2010b, White, 2007), and resist taking a position of expertise on the life of the survivor. Collaboration invites the sharing of power and responsibility. As therapists, we do not save people and we are not responsible for people dying (Reynolds, 2010a). A collaborative stance requires the letting go of some power on the part of the therapist (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). This can be experienced as profoundly discomforting for us as helpers when the survivors we work with are in extreme situations and death is ever-near.

Structuring Safety requires that we trust people with their own lives. It is patronizing for me to decide a survivor is not up to giving testimony or participating in a tribunal. I can collaborate with folks and ask questions to help them make informed choices, but I want to side with the ethical principal of autonomy and not replicate oppression by siding with paternalism. As a person from the dominant culture, that is settler culture, this is profoundly important in conversations with Indigenous people negotiating their engagement with the Canadian government given our past and present violence which is often backed up by paternalism.

Practices of Structuring Safety

There are many paths to Structuring Safety in terms of preparing the space to foster safety. What I think is most important is that the setting serves as a response to the question:

- How does this space (office, counselling room) foster safety?
- How does my performance of myself, (my clothing, posture, tone of voice, attitude) foster safety?
- How do I locate my privilege and acknowledge my cultural locations in an attempt to foster safety?

I make my privilege and cultural connections known as part of Structuring Safety. I am Irish Catholic with ties to Newfoundland and Eng-

land. It is important that I name my cultural locations because I am from settler cultures. Not locating myself is a threat to safety, as Indigenous survivors will probably assume I think that I'm just "normal" while they have a culture and need to be explained, or that I'm uninformed enough to think my locations of privilege do not matter.

Negotiating participation in the tribunals structures safety by slowing the retellings down so that survivors have agency about what is spoken or not spoken (Bird, 2006). This practice positions the conversation as something different than interrogation. These questions help the person consider their decision to participate in a residential school tribunal:

- What might be useful in your participation in this tribunal across time to you?
- What might be useful to your family, to your community?
- What might be the potential costs of participating in this tribunal?
- How might your participation in this tribunal get in the way of your participation with your family, with your community?

Continually negotiating permission can engender safety. This practice addresses the relational nature of permission, which is different than assuming permission is *something* that can be obtained through signing forms. It is important that people know that they can withdraw their participation in the tribunal process at any time, and that the therapist act in ways that would lend survivors confidence that there would be no consequences if they decide to withdraw. Foregrounded against a backdrop of political violence and state oppression, this permissioning of the survivor can be transformative.

Structuring Safety in the context of residential school tribunals or any public retellings of the survivor's experiences requires planning useful responses to potential backlash. These questions help prepare responses to backlash:

- What are the possible risks of backlash for your speaking out?
- Given all of these risks, why might you still be willing to do this?
- What will it be like for you to have decided to do this pain-

ful thing if nothing happens from this but backlash? How are you going to respond to that?

- How might considering the risk of backlash now, before you agree to speak, invite you to think differently about participating in the tribunal?
- If you choose to speak, how can we strategize to respond to the backlash?

Safety is structured in conversations when therapists amplify their hearing of “no”, and make space for the survivor to speak their “no”:

- What ways of knowing yourself have you trusting that you will be able to say “no” to me if I ask something that is not okay?
- What will it take for you to be able to say “no” to me if I ask you a question that’s not all right? (Reynolds, 2010b)

When we do recognize, make space for, and respond to the survivor’s “no” we can inquire about what saying no says about the person’s qualities and ways of being:

- What does your “no” say about our work together, and about your ability to decide what’s going to happen and not happen in our work together?
- Is there anything I’m doing, or anything I’ve done that’s got you saying “no”? Or is this you deciding you’ll decide where this work is going and how fast?

Negotiating telling and not-telling is collaboration in practice, and requires the therapist have a genuine desire to be informed and even directed in their work by the survivor. This practice and the following questions are informed by the supervisory work of narrative therapists Johnella Bird (2006) of New Zealand/Aotearoa and Michael White (2000) of Australia:

- As we’re sitting here now and you are considering what you’re going to tell me, I would like you to travel ahead in time until after this meeting, and think about how you will be with the telling. How might you feel about the telling tomorrow? Might the telling of this get in the way of our counseling relationship? Might the not telling of this get in the way

of our counselling relationship?

- As you're sitting here now, and considering what you're going to tell me, I'd like you to consider knowings you hold about yourself, that let you trust that you can be the person to decide if there will be speaking or holding of your own counsel. What do you know about our relationship together that might help you trust your right to tell or not tell? (Reynolds, 2010b)

As a practice of Structuring Safety I try to ensure that the therapeutic relationship can hold the person, offer some containment for experiences of suffering, and not be experienced as retraumatizing for the survivor. This requires that we create relationships of dignity (Richardson & Wade, 2010) and respect, and that we can respond to suffering immediately and in useful ways.

Retelling details of torture, with no transformation or libratory negotiations of new meaning can be retraumatizing for the survivor. For example, refugees who are torture survivors have to tell their whole torture story at hearings to gain refugee status in Canada. This allows torture's story of the person to be the only story required and witnessed. This is dangerous, not useful for the person to reexperience, but required for legal purposes. We need to resist these totalizing victim stories, and ask for and participate in bringing forward and witnessing the person's resistance stories (Reynolds, 2010b; Wade, 1996). Whenever people are oppressed they resist, and giving voice, dignity, and respect to these stories of resistance are useful to the survivor in multiple ways. They offer an account of the person as intelligent, creative, and resourceful, and they contest seeing the person as an object of violence without autonomy or dignity (Richardson & Wade, 2008; Wade, 1997).

The government has an ethical obligation to provide on-going care for the people who come forward to participate in the tribunals. Therapists will need to know what other resources will be made available to participating survivors including counselling and benefits, and have extensive knowledge of community oriented and culturally relevant resources.

As therapists, even after negotiating consent and after the person has agreed to the telling, we have an ethical obligation to plan for the actual and potential harms of these conversations, and have responses available:

- How can your body be useful to you in this telling? What do you feel, sense, that indicates that it is time to slow down, maybe stop, or take a break?

- What body experiences let you know you are okay-enough in the telling? That you can do this in a good-enough way?
- Would it be okay if I check in whenever my body's telling me to slow us down, maybe get out of our chairs and take a breath together?

Survivors require a safe-enough plan for every part of the process, in the conversation, the rest of the day, that night, tomorrow. These questions invite containment throughout the work:

- It is likely that these are going to be heartbreaking stories for you to tell. This will be difficult. We'll need a safe-enough plan for you, to hold you in the thinking and telling, and afterwards. I believe this, because other people who have participated in truth and reconciliation tribunals have taught me this.
- How will you care for yourself today, and throughout our work together preparing for the tribunal?
- How can you invite collective care for you today, in the future and throughout the tribunal process?
- How are you going to be there for yourself in the days of the tribunal? I always anticipate the backlash, and it's not unlikely that, after speaking, there is going to be some thinking based on real actions of oppression you have suffered, that you are going to be punished for this. So how are we going to leave in an okay way and plan to be okay-enough for the rest of the day, after the tribunal?

Solidarity structures safety by contesting individualism, isolation and fear (Reynolds, 2010d). I invite survivors to think of who shoulders them up, who is alongside them in a good way in the work they're doing, who are their witnesses. I then invite survivors to people-the-room with these folks (Reynolds, 2011), and find creative and actual ways to invite people to be in solidarity with them as a practice of Structuring Safety.

The practice of people-ing-the-room invites therapists and survivors to bring forward a spirit of solidarity by bringing these actual and imagined others to stand alongside us, for example in the tribunal proceedings. This practice aims to allow the person to be embraced with revolutionary love, reminded of their relationships of solidarity and dignity, and more able to be safe-enough in the retelling. These ques-

tions help residential school survivors people-the-room:

- Who do you want to be here alongside you physically throughout this work that you and I engage in? Who do you want at the tribunal? Why these people? How are these relationships useful to you in this difficult work?
- How are we going to people-the-room with your ancestors and your family, real people you would bring in, imagined others, to be your witnesses and shoulder you up?
- How can these allies serve to hold you up, remind you of who you are, and help keep you safe-enough in your telling?
- How are you going to hold on to those folks after the talk? How will their actual and imagined presence be useful to you?
- How might you negotiate their participation alongside you? How will you let them know what is expected, and catch them up on their service to you?

Structuring Safety requires that therapists resist getting caught up in compelling stories of pain and suffering. Questions informed by a naïve and intrusive curiosity pose great threats to safety. We can easily be seduced by the privileging idea that as therapists we have a right, and perhaps even a duty, to ask anything that captures our interest.

I aim to resist being seduced by oppression's story of the person, and instead engage with a helpful curiosity about the survivor's acts of resistance against the suffering and oppression. While I do not need all of the details of pain and abuse, I do need to know enough details so that the person's acts of resistance become apparent (Reynolds, 2010a; Wade, 1997). As Canadian response-based therapist Allan Wade (2008) says, much of the person's acts of resistance against oppression can be hidden by the ways in which therapists and other professionals talk. We ask questions that elicit accounts of the person's spontaneous, intelligent and prudent responses to the oppressions they are suffering.

I tell survivors that I need to know what they think I need to know, so that I can be of use. Sometimes the survivor wants a witnessing of all of their experiences, especially by a member of the dominant culture. I am willing to do this if it is useful to the person, but I also explore their sites of resistance. As therapists holding an ethic of justice-doing I believe we are required to enter any governmental process with a healthy suspicion alongside a believable hope. Some survivors may find the process meaningful and possibly healing; Again it is patronizing, espe-

cially for settler therapists, to predict the outcomes of the tribunal, or its usefulness to survivors. These questions engender and amplify the survivor's relationship with hope:

- What is a possible believed-in-hope for what might come forward out of your participation in the tribunal?
- Who are the important witnesses you want your testimony to be heard by?
- Do you see any of this testimony work as acts of resistance against the political violence you experienced?

Survivors may choose to participate in the tribunal process for their own purposes, and may see this work as an act of resistance in itself. It is possible for survivors to experience respect, dignity, and being witnessed whether they participate in the tribunal, decline participation, or withdraw their testimony (Akinyela, 2004). If survivors decide to step out of the process they could say, "I was in it, and then I decided to have it stop". What does it mean for a survivor of political violence to be able to say, "I was in something not okay; I said 'no', and it stopped?" This gives a new map of the world that can be profoundly useful: Survivors of torture have taught me this.

Structuring Safety can guard against violations of peoples' dignity. Dignifying the people I serve is at the heart of my work. I might use these questions early on to structure safety and to build dignifying relationships:

- What do I need to understand in order to respect you, make space for you, and not transgress against you in our relationship?
- What do you hold sacred, close to your heart, that it would be useful and important for me to know?

Dignity can be afforded to people when they are given the power to define themselves (Bracho, 2000). As a practice of resisting replicating oppression in many forms, such as colonization, I ask people to self-identify how they wish to be located culturally. I ask everyone, including people I might read as from the dominant culture/white what culture they belong to as a universal practice to resist the racism inherent in only asking non-white people about culture.

Structuring Safety requires critical supervision which is ethically necessary in all therapeutic work and especially in the context of political violence. Therapists can also make use of reflexive questioning

throughout their work, which can invite them to enact their ethics in therapeutic conversations. For example:

- How am I attending to power and accountability in this conversation with this person in this moment? How am I attending to the cultural differences between us in this work, and in this moment?
- How am I Structuring Safety and attending to negotiating permission in this moment-to-moment encounter?

In this work alongside residential school survivors it is imperative that therapists have cultural consultants who hold them to account (Waldegrave, 1990; Waldegrave & Tamasese, 1993) especially if the therapist is from settler culture, but also if the therapist is from a different Indigenous cultural group than the survivor. Practices of cultural accountability are required to address transgressions that replicate the oppressions of residential schools.

Therapists from the dominant settler culture must enter this work skeptically, critically, with great humility held alongside therapeutic competency, and with some welcome from Indigenous communities. They must hold solid competencies in Structuring Safety, and have access to excellent therapeutic supervision and structures in relation to cultural accountability. This cannot be overstated.

Reflections

Cathy: Through making space for naming violence and honouring the dignity of survivors in this consultation, I felt safety's presence. In our community work together, I have been moved by the tangibility of the safety you work to create. One example of this is when you create space for Indigenous people to talk, particularly when with non-Indigenous people are taking time to tell others what life is like for Indigenous people or what we need. Vikki, what's the history of your engagement with Structuring Safety, and who are your teachers? Who influenced you to become mindful of being with respect and awareness as an ally?

Vikki: Survivors of torture and political violence are my real teachers, and I have learned about Structuring Safety off of their backs. Teachings from my work in activist communities and new social movements over decades of fellowship are threaded throughout my work. I've also been informed by my extended family, my queer/refugee family-of-choice, Irish Catholic/English/Newfoundland culture, and most particularly my father's teachings on dignity.

These practices of Structuring Safety are centered within the context of work with survivors of the political violence of residential school. However, risk is inherent in all of our therapy and community work across differences of power. My hope is that these particular learnings can be transferred into other contexts with an aim to promote Structuring Safety.

A Story of 'people-ing-the-room'

Cathy: *I was invited to serve as a support person for a woman (a community leader) who agreed to participate in a residential school tribunal. It was to be held at a hotel in a B.C. city, far away from her home community. I felt honoured by the invitation and was mindful of the complexity of this event.*

In beginning to choreograph some safety and ground of familiarity in this legalistic set up, I asked her the following question:

- *If you could make the space one where you felt comfortable, safe, supported and held by the ancestors, what would you do to the room?*
- *Who or what would you invite in?*

She identified the people, both embodied and in spirit, that she would like to be there with her, sending her courage and love. We talked about the roles of her helpers and what each person would do. We talked about imagining the room the way she wanted it. This involved envisioning the particular kind of feeling, energy, colours and presence that would invite her to more safety. The day before, we both had lunch with her lawyer to get a picture of what the day would involve, to prepare ourselves and strategize for her optimum well-being.

On the day, we went to look at the room in advance. She brought a number of sacred objects, to hold and to have in front of her during the strenuous interview process. She decided where she would sit and placed the little altar in front of her. We talked about the people who would be supporting her, before, during and after, and the particular roles they would have. This included laying the intention that particular people would be there in spirit to offer love and strength.

The hearing was difficult. Many of the questions were invasive and evoked hard memories, the kind of events people try to forget. She got a terrible headache. There was also a blanket in the room which at one point she used to cloak herself, for both protection and warmth. Uncomfortable feelings arose in response to the process. I wrapped the blanket around her shoulders. The inquiry lasted the whole day, with lawyers using their skill and diplomacy to elicit the kinds of answers that related in some way to the determination of compensation. Afterwards, we took a walk by the water, enjoyed the sunlight, the breeze and the trees in order to get some air and nurturance after sitting indoors all

day in a sterile kind of surrounding. My companera saw an eagle fly overhead, which she received as a reminder from Creator that we are witnessed.

The following days were not easy as persistent and painful memories had been provoked in this hearing. She relied on the strength of prayer, family support and the knowledge of "what is right and good" to help her recover from the tribunal. The conviction that children should be treated with kindness can provoke many adults to such acts of bravery and courage.

Dedication

The survivors of torture and political violence we have worked alongside in various global communities and residential school survivors from the Indigenous territories of Canada are the heart of this work. This writing took place on Indigenous land which was never surrendered.

Acknowledgments

We raise our hands to Ann Maje-Raider, former chief of the Liard First Nation and Executive Director of the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, and to the people who have "shouldered you up" over the years in the difficult work you have tackled so mightily. Spirited thanks to our heart colleagues Allan Wade and Linda Coates and to Johnella Bird for her moral courage and ever-unfolding teachings.

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