

**Decolonizing Japanese Canadian Intergenerational Trauma Healing:**

**A Land-based Model for Counsellors**

by

Naomi A. Aris Horii

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APPROVED BY

Dawn Percher, M.A., R.C.C., Capstone Supervisor, Master of Counselling Faculty

Sam Kaplan, R.C.C., Faculty Reader, Master of Counselling Faculty

School of Health and Social Sciences

**Abstract**

The aftermath of the incarceration of and colonial and racial harm to Japanese Canadians in 1942 is wounding, generations later. This paper will offer ways to address intergenerational trauma in the Japanese Canadian community from a counselling field perspective using a liberation psychotherapy approach, community conversations, and autoethnobiographical story. A main assumption of this paper is that the ongoing harms of colonialism and colonial approaches to therapy is doing a disservice to the practice of therapy with racialized populations (immigrant, diasporic, mixed-race) and its practitioners. Furthermore, decolonizing a practitioner's approach to therapy is imperative to work alongside those who experience colonial and racial trauma. This paper also emphasizes how Land-based healing is central to countering the impacts of racial and colonial trauma, spotlighting the work alongside the pre-WWII immigrant-settler identities of Japanese Canadians.

*Keywords:* Japanese Canadian, Land-based healing, intergenerational trauma, decolonial counselling

**In Dedication, With Love**

To my father, Bob Yoshiharu Horii (1942 – 2021), and his brothers, Aki, Louie, Charlie (1933 – 1978), Isao (1939 – 1943), Billy, and Johnny – from which all connections to our ancestors thrive: past, present, future.

To my mother, Louisa Anne Fearon, (1954 – 2015), my grandmother, Thelma Fearon (1920 – 2002), her grandmothers, and all grandmothers.

To my husband, Ryan, and to my spirited son, Phoenix – may you always be free to  
*kokoro kara hanasu*

To Land and Waters, all my relations, respectfully, I bow.

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## Chapter One

This capstone project seeks to spark conversation in the therapeutic community about the ways we are addressing intergenerational trauma in populations that have experienced racialized, colonial trauma. By focusing on the experiences of the Japanese Canadians whose families immigrated to Canada before WWII and experienced the mass incarceration during the war years, this paper will ask: what are the lasting impacts on the community generations later, and how can we address them with a decolonial lens? In doing so, this paper sheds light on an underdiscussed area of how Japanese Canadian intergenerational trauma can be viewed with an understanding of settler colonialism in the field of counselling. Decolonial practices are proposed from which to work alongside Japanese Canadian intergenerational trauma and calls for therapists to critique current colonial practices of psychotherapy. As a third-generation Japanese Canadian, this author's intersection within the work is deeply personal, with added relation to community members cited in this paper.

### Land and Location of the Self to Community

Integral to this capstone is the acknowledgment that the Land has been the one constant factor in all endeavors of life, death, survival and growth. The Land has been here for millennia and has been able to, and will into the future, generously hold our pain, strength, healing, and hope. From this stance, on the unceded Coast Salish lands of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw from which I write, I bow deeply to the Land and its constant, life-giving presence to the work of healing. Without the Land and all that it provides, I would not have had this privilege to offer this work to the field of counselling.

I have spent my life on the Pacific Northwest coast of the Coast Salish lands and territories primarily of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees) W̱SÁNEĆ (Saanich), Wyomilth (Esquimalt) and Quw'utsun (Cowichan) people. Both my parents were born on Turtle Island, where so-called Canada is located. My mother came from mixed

settler lineages by way of Scottish and English lines, and Indigenous lineages of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops) and Xaxli'p peoples of the St'át'imc nation generations ago. My late father was *Nisei*, (second generation) from Japanese fishing lineages via Wakayama, Japan. I am *sansei* (third generation) Japanese Canadian with mixed settler and Indigenous ancestry. I have many memories of how these Coast Salish lands supported me in the ways I am disconnected to my own ancestral Indigenous practices, as well provided a tender line of connection to my various cultures via plants, the ocean, the mountains, and a myriad of other sensory pieces I am still coming to understand.

Because of the historical and ongoing colonial violence, policies, and impacts of WWII, it is a common experience of many *sansei* and beyond to be cut-off from Japanese language and culture under the pressure for Japanese Canadians families to assimilate in the aftermath. Yet with much searching, I gratefully connect to the Land and my cultures through place, people, memory, imagination, art, teachings, and stories. This connection is medicine. Much of my family's history was not spoken about on both sides of my family. I learned of the unique resilience that I have inherited that exists alongside unspeakable hardships of the decades-long silences, the loss of words, the smoldering anger, and deep, bottled-up grief. This, I have learned, is a common experience of being Japanese Canadian today: to inherit a heavy, unknowable grief, and be disconnected from language and culture that precariously balances on the protective factors of resilience.

In my efforts to create connection and stability, I remember how my father would build a garden wherever he lived, and he would say that it had to be "Japanese" in some way. He would often build a pond with a bamboo wood water feature with pond plants and of course, koi fish. I helped him search for the best boulders on the side of the Fraser River and hauled them back in the truck for the gardens. It would take a few weeks of him staring at them to make sure they were placed just right. Even when he lived in places where there was no yard, he built koi pond gardens in pots on the deck. I

also remember *mattake*, or *matsutake* (pine mushroom) hunting with him. The joy of just walking on the soft, mossy ground was enough even if we got 'skunked' and did not find any. His quiet connection to the Land was gifted to me, and I am still learning about the ways the Land is medicine to me as it was for him. I often wonder if he built Japanese ponds, vegetable and rock gardens as way to soothe the loss of his sense of home and place he tried so hard to rebuild after the war years. I also think about the ways my mother found solace in connecting with Land, how her eyes would soften at the sight of open skies and sage brush mountains. I bow deeply to the lands that have nurtured them, my ancestors, myself, and the future generations.

### **Background of Japanese Canadian Racial Trauma**

My father and his brothers have deep relationships to the Land and water. They are from fishing lineages and livelihoods and know how to live on the land. When WWII commenced in 1942, out of fear that Japanese Canadians were enemies of the state the Canadian government ordered all Japanese Canadians to be 'relocated' away from the West Coast to the Interior of BC to be incarcerated in primitive, hastily built camps. My father was a baby at the time, and his parents, like so many others, were terrified at the prospect of caring for their family (seven boys) and their elderly parents in incarceration camps. All Japanese Canadians were deemed 'enemy aliens' and were stripped of all property and most belongings, forcing them to leave their livelihoods, their boats, farms, businesses and homes to live in controlled poverty, without access to schools, hospitals, and in many cases, running water, electricity, or ways to continue community life. This horrendous act of racism left our community of well over 25,000 people, according to Kobayashi & Miki (2020; p. 449) prisoners of the state from 1942-1949. After being held in animal stalls at Hastings Park, families were taken to incarceration camps. Some were sent to labour camps or farms, many were sent to Japan after the war, breaking family and community ties, dispersing them across the country, if not exiling them to Japan. Families

were inevitably torn apart coming home to nothing. For a brief history and recommended reading list, please see the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre (NNMCC, n.d.).

My father's family was sent to East Lillooet incarceration camp. In the aftermath of the war years, families continued to struggle with grief, and many families were fractured under what Hardy (2023) names as racial trauma and the colonial pressures of white-dominant societal expectations. My father and my uncles tended to resilience and grief in different ways, and I continue to understand the ways they enacted, big or small, forms of resistance and healing. This is my medicine. My uncles Billy and Johnny connect to their fishing lineage and remain active in the fishing community, even as the fishing industry became an unsustainable livelihood. Recently, my uncles Aki and Louie spearheaded a community initiative to memorialize East Lillooet internees in the place of the internment camp, with provincial and federal signage and a Japanese garden as a place important to Japanese Canadians to grieve. Louie describes the garden as a non-traditional Japanese rock garden that is "adapted to local nature and the local materials of Lillooet" (Saimoto, 2022). I reveled in that, much like my dad, my uncle had the same pride showing me the rocks and Japanese design features. He too processed place and memory with building something beautiful with rocks and Land. I learned from my father and uncles that creating community ties to land, 'local nature,' culture, and memory is important medicine for grief – grief from intergenerational impacts of racial and colonial trauma and loss. At the garden unveiling, many people wept as the St'át'imc drummers and Japanese Canadian *taiko* drummers played in solidarity at the garden gates backdropped by steep, sage-brush hills. My eyes, too, softened. I knew then at that time that there is still much healing work needed in our community.

### **Relationship: A Therapeutic Approach**

Japanese Canadian connections to people, places, and practices exist in a vast and growing system of knowledge, wisdom, and healing that I have yet to fully grasp. The more I learn about my own

identity and location, the more I understand the Indigenous perspectives that all people and Land (all creatures, plants, mountains, waterways, air, etc.) are in relationship. I am learning that relationship (see key terms) is not just a noun, but it is rather a way of living, with tenets of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (Joseph, 2023; Ivan Leonce, personal communication, May 14, 2024; Squamish Nation, 2023). This understanding has *almost* been completely undone with the impacts of war and colonialism. Yet, I look to the ways Indigenous communities have survived colonialism and continue to nurture their relations for inspiration. I look to the ways Japanese Canadian communities, such as my family's fishing communities, worked together with Indigenous communities to maintain connection to and build wisdom of the Land and waters. I look to my family's efforts to build connections to Land using 'local nature.' To re-kindle relationship and connection is a difficult and radical act of love in the face of the continuing harms of colonialism. In the effort toward collective healing, this must be continually recognized and validated in the Japanese Canadian community's journey toward healing.

Skwxwú7mesh ethnobotanist, Leigh Joseph (2023), emphasizes that within this relationship and connection comes responsibilities, and urges us to reflect on ways to enact traditional practices of reciprocity and respect in relation to the earth. This perspective of responsibility has been severed by colonial movements, wars, resource extraction and systems of power. In pre-colonial times, all people had traditional practices of being in reciprocal relationship with Land and communities as the main principle of health and wellness (Doc Luke, 2005; Joseph, 2023; Mullan, 2023). It is a mechanism of our fundamentally relational nature to all things of this Earth (Fenghali, 2024). A decolonial approach to mental health and healing requires an acknowledgement that all people have an ancestral, Indigenous identity, and that all people can cultivate this relationship (Mullan, 2023). The need to create access to traditional, land-based knowledge in the work of healing and mental wellness is vital to shift colonial practices of disconnection in psychotherapy (Mullan, 2023).

The connection between Land and mental wellness is the cornerstone of this paper. Within the colonial medical industrial complex and the institution of psychotherapy, it is paramount to continue to cultivate connection to Land and culture for health and healing from the therapist's standpoint. I am learning to prioritize relational connection in different ways which will in turn influence my approach to my vocation as therapist. It is an on-going practice of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (see key terms) via re-remembering my location in proximity to people, places (Land), and culture (Joseph, 2023; Mullan, 2023). I honour all ways of relating the self and the world in all beings, and this is a constant point of reverence and respect in my approach as a counsellor.

### **The Practice of Doing Decolonial and Liberation Psychology**

The impacts of colonialism (racism, heterosexism, patriarchy, ableism, ageism, etc.) persists intergenerationally as long as they are present. Having a nuanced understanding of the impacts colonial trauma has on Japanese Canadians and their families can provide a foundation for collaborative conversations about what is needed toward healing in the community. This is decolonial work. This endeavour serves to enrich the dominant models of trauma *treatment* with a decolonial understanding and practice of *healing*. This is not to be mistaken as what psychotherapy would name a 'cultural consideration' to culturally-informed trauma treatment. Linda Thai (Therapist Uncensored, 2023) iterates that while culturally-informed psychology may fixate on the question "what happened to your people," there is a need to practice a more liberatory approach, or "liberation psychology" which holds the question in therapy: "what continues to happen to your people" (Therapist Uncensored, 2023, 2:34). Liberation psychology plays an active part in ending a cycle of intergenerational grief and trauma because it involves recognizing the contexts and conditions in which trauma lives, with the participation of the therapist's role in these systems.

It requires the therapist to challenge their own colonial conditioning to be in right relationship with the client (see key terms). Addressing and undoing intergenerational colonial harm entails embodying community, joy, and ancestral identity on both sides of the therapeutic relationship (Mullan, 2023). Tuck and Yang (2012) reject the idea that thinking and understanding what decolonial means is not enough to make something decolonial. The authors caution that those in academia adopting the word 'decolonial' as a metaphor produce more colonial harm (2012). Mullan (2023) asserts that healing emotionally, spiritually, or psychologically from colonial harm is by nature, decolonial. If we, as therapists, can support this work by practicing and embodying decolonial therapy, it is politically unmetaphorical.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

#### **Circle Process**

An Indigenous practice of listening and sharing where people sit in a circle and have open exchanges of story sharing on topics that may be painful or difficult. Circle process brings people together in an atmosphere of respect and concern for everyone. Key principles for the Circle Process are to honour the value of lived experience and dignity of each person, give equal voice to all, confidentiality to ensure emotional safety, and consent (Healing Justice, 2023).

#### **Decolonial/Decolonize**

Decolonial is the intentional oppositional stance to the colonial worldview of power, scarcity, and imperial control. Decolonial approaches seek to not only oppose the colonial worldview, but also return to "wise practice" (Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010) that operationalizes traditional, ancestral wisdom and knowledge as a legitimate framework for understanding the self and the world.

#### **Gosei**

Fifth generation Japanese Immigrants, the children of *yonsei* parents.

**Indigenous**

Indigenous is a way to describe identities of people with bloodlines that originate in a particular place, or a culture or people that maintains a level of generational/ancestral relationship and stewardship to that place, or to describe a worldview that relates to pre-colonial culture, language, land-based practices grounded in decolonial or pre-colonial understandings of earth, lifeways, kinship and relationships (Feghali, 2024). The term 'Indigenous' is used in this paper as a conceptual, broad term that is related to pan-Indigenous with acknowledgement that there are diverse, place- and culture-specific Indigenous concepts and teachings that will otherwise be noted.

**Intergenerational trauma**

Intergenerational trauma is unresolved/unaddressed historical, individual and/or collective trauma that shows up in health and relationships. In psychological epistemology, it was originally described as behavioural or clinical problems in offspring of Holocaust survivors (Mullan, 2023). Intergenerational trauma can also be known as family trauma or multigenerational trauma. It can also be seen as the psychological effects of collective trauma (episodic, systemic, prolonged, for example) on a cultural group of peoples that has been passed down from one generation to the next. In the study of genetics, trauma can alter the function of genes (epigenetic), and then be coded for the subsequent generation and onwards (Valeii, 2024).

**Issei**

First generation Japanese Immigrants

**Land-based healing**

Land-based healing refers to healing methods that support emotional, spiritual, physical, mental health by connecting to the Land and greater, natural world. It is a way to inspire and remember relationship and connection to all things of this world, foremostly, love (Joseph, 2023; Norm Leech, T'it'q'et

community of the St'at'imc nation, personal communication, April 11, 2024). Land-based healing is fundamental to an Indigenous worldview of relationship, health, and spirituality.

### **Kokoro**

The word for heart-mind or Spirit in Japanese language.

### **Land and Earth**

Land and Earth are sometimes used interchangeably. They are conceptualized as a living, changing, ever-present, grand organism that encompasses all aspects of the natural world. Humans are a part of it, as well as rocks, mountains, rivers, oceans, deserts, creatures, flora, fauna, mycelium – all elements of place. In Indigenous worldviews, the Land is the whole ecology of relationships on this earth, as well as within the cosmos (Feghali, 2024). These relationships share spiritual energy and kinship, and story; as well as the assumption that all that is on the Land and Earth are related in origin. “Land” may be used in contexts of place and connection, “Earth” may be used more expansively.

### **Nisei**

Second generation Japanese Immigrants, the children of *issei* parents.

### **Nikkei**

Any person that is of Japanese ancestry.

### **Relationship**

The concept of relationship is used with an understanding of kinship: a felt-sense of accountability to whom one belongs (Clark, 2016) with responsibilities to be in right relations to be in a sustainable, mutually beneficial state of connection.

### **Right Relations**

Right Relations is an Indigenous concept that is to cultivate relationship with three main tenets: responsibility, respect, and reciprocity (Ivan Leonce, personal communication, May 14, 2024). Right

relations occur in all aspects of the Land's ecologies, and a human's effort is to choose it to enact just relationships and stewardship of the Land.

**Sansei**

Third generation Japanese Immigrants, the children of *nisei* parents.

**Turtle Island**

Indigenous peoples across North America have variations of a story about how North America was created during a time when Earth was covered in water, on the back of a turtle. I use the term interchangeably with North America.

**Yonsei**

Fourth generation Japanese Immigrants, the children of *sansei* parents.

**Outline of the Capstone Project Chapters**

The aftermath of the incarceration of and colonial harm to Japanese Canadians in 1942 is wounding, generations later. This paper will propose ways to address intergenerational trauma in Japanese Canadian community from a counselling field perspective using a liberatory psychotherapy approach, community conversations, research of relevant literature, and infusions of autoethnobiographical story. In chapter one, I locate Land and self in relation to this endeavor, noting my ethical and learner stance and introduce the paper's main concepts and key terms. In chapter two I will: a) outline some of the intergenerational challenges that the Japanese Canadian community faces today b) review the contemporary literature on what is needed to help heal intergenerational trauma and grief with a decolonial lens, and c) highlight the gaps that colonial, academic perspectives create in this arena and offer how a Land-based approach is needed for intergenerational trauma healing. This will include reference to Indigenous models of Land-based healing. I argue that a liberatory, decolonial therapeutic approach to these issues is needed as an ethical responsibility in order to avoid causing further colonial harm with dominant, so-called culturally-informed psychotherapeutic approaches. The final chapter of this paper proposes a grief sharing circle for intergenerational members of the Japanese Canadian community. As this project does not exist in a cultural vacuum, it will be important to name some of the healing initiatives that are currently happening in the community and situate this capstone offering alongside the ongoing work of others. For the discussion portion of the final chapter, I will suggest how this research and work can speak to the broader issues of colonial harm on families of immigrant communities and invite dialogue about the threads of connection.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

This section of the capstone explores the concepts of Japanese Canadian intergenerational trauma and grief, and what is needed, from a therapeutic practitioner's perspective, to support clients experiencing these things. First, I will provide a decolonial understanding of Japanese Canadian collective identity, and some mental health challenges Japanese Canadians face today. This will provide the foundation for a discussion of what is lacking in the dominant literature and colonial epistemologies of intergenerational trauma and grief, allowing space for decolonial work to emerge, with some considerations to decolonize the therapeutic practice. Lastly, I will outline how Land-based connections to traditional wisdom and culture is needed, which will provide the ground work to the following offering in chapter three.

### Colonial Shadows of Japanese Canadian Collective Identity

*“Despite that dazzling accomplishment by our community the past shimmers with the unknown.  
Our history still remains baffling as we continue to construct stories that evade completion.”*

*--Roy Miki, 1998.*

Community Elder Roy Miki (1988) who recently passed into Spirit this year (Oct 5, 2024) prophesied in 1988 how far Japanese Canadians have come fighting for justice, yet have so much more to understand about the past. Much of the historical literature on Japanese Canadians start with the first Japanese immigrant to Canada, Manzo Nagano, in 1877 (NNMCC, n.d.). From early regional histories to the emergence of Japanese Canadian social justice movements, the contributions of Japanese Canadian historians, scholars, artists, writers, and journalists have provided a multidimensional understanding of the story of Japanese Canadians by starting the history with the 'first' immigrants. For many sansei and later generations, the time of arrival to Turtle Island is where their family history starts, as access to stories and histories from ancestors prior to immigrating is difficult. Multiple factors such as

distance from traditional Land, loss of language and culture, and lack of record-keeping/lost records due to dispossession and internment pose barriers to a collective connection to Japan as the origin of culture, place, and memory for newer generations (Growe, 1985; Stanger-Ross et al., 2020). This, with the added immigrant desire to create a better life in Canada and start anew, often included leaving the burdens of the Meiji restoration and oppressive caste system in Japan (Ayukawa, 2007; Geiger, 2011; Kobayashi, 2020; Stanger-Ross et al., 2020). Family histories were truncated to mostly 'begin' in the later-half of the nineteenth century in so-called Canada: a settler-colonial-defined era of imported labour and resource extraction (Komori, 2023b) or what Adele Perry (Harp, 2024) describes as the time of the formation of Canada as an "emergent settler nation". However, through a decolonial lens, the Japanese Canadian diaspora story does not start on Turtle Island. For further research on Japanese cultural and socio-political migration histories, and how they relate to settler colonialism please see Geiger (2011), Lu (2019), and Takai, (2015). It will not be the scope of this paper to explore transpacific migration politics of Japanese early immigrants. However, it will be important to note that while there is much academic research in this field, it is uncommon for subsequent generations to have access to family written and oral histories (cultural practices, wisdom and knowledge) that are pre-emigration to Canada. This will be a place of further inquiry in the therapeutic domain in addressing Japanese Canadian racial and intergenerational trauma in the discussion to come.

The colonial collective memory of Canada involves the disremembering of histories prior to the emergence of our settler nation, deleting thousands of years of history – native and diasporic. The systematic erasure of traditional ways of knowing the Land – histories, healing, medicines, wisdom, and stories, is part of the settler-colonial agenda (Kauanui, 2018b; Mullan, 2023). Embedded within the colonial worldview is the idea that settlers arrive on uninhabited lands, or *terra nullius*, empty and up for the taking (Squamish Nation, 2023) or 'nobody's land'. This 'blank slate' is where colonial history begins,

displacing peoples and dispossessing them of centuries of culture and histories, while replacing them, through genocide or systemic acts of violence, with settler narratives and ways of knowing (Mullan, 2023). Patrick Wolfe (2006) argues that the growth of settler-colonial society relies on the elimination of the native – that elimination is not episodic, it is structural. The idea of history being written to omit anything that came before the ‘first arrivals’ lays the foundation upon which to build what Ojibwe scholar Jean O’Brien calls the “myth of the vanishing Indian” (Kauanui, 2018a) or what Wolfe describes as the “logic of elimination” (Wolfe, 2006). Drawing from Wolfe’s work, O’Brien explains that by fraudulently writing Indigenous history as something in the past renders it a mere preface to an inauthentic beginning, asserting a modernity that excludes traditional Indigenous knowledge and people (Kauanui, 2018a). Both O’Brien’s and Wolfe’s work brings me to question: what can settler colonialism tell us about the vanishing cultural identities of diasporic immigrant settlers? What are the ways in which the Japanese Canadian identity is erased and/or vanishing? How can counsellors work alongside grief that considers the structural violence of settler colonialism? Of course, Indigenous people are not vanishing, despite settler colonial narratives; therefore, I wonder: what are the ways Japanese Canadians can counter the dominant narrative that their traditional ways of knowing are being eliminated? Writer and poet Roy Miki, (1998), in a moment surrounded by boxes of archival material writes, “the past shimmers with the unknown,” searching to complete the story of Japanese Canadians. Yet, perhaps what remains “baffling” to Miki (1998) is that which could not be documented and archived, and only accessed through practice, being, or connection to a time accessed through imagination, stories, the senses, or the Spirit. This is a counter-colonial approach and worth exploring in the discussion of identity and mental health.

The perspective of ‘inauthentic beginnings’ is important in understanding ways in which the Japanese Canadian diasporic national identity is created, maintained, and/or perceived. As a *sansei*, I

suggest here that even by identifying as *issei* (first generation immigrant), *nisei*, or *sansei* (or beyond), is a way of relating to not just an episodic moment in history, but also to a structural worldview. To be ‘first generation’ or *issei*, by default disaffirms whatever came before, echoing what O’Brien names as “firsting” or defining a false beginning of history in place and memory (2018, p. 246). In a conversation with Patti Ayukawa, *nikkei* therapeutic arts practitioner, she stressed the need for Japanese Canadian individuals to investigate their own histories so to decolonize their view of themselves in colonial history (personal conversation, May 7, 2024). Patti Ayukawa invites us to hold complexity around the Japanese Canadian identity and monikers of generation (*issei*, *nisei*, and so forth): that immigrant histories seen from a decolonial perspective honors what came before settler colonial ‘beginnings.’ Across therapeutic modalities and theories, holding complexity is an important piece of support in the therapeutic relationship for a client’s capacity to restructure, process, reframe, or make meaning of the past as trauma responses are limited in capacity to do so (Dulwich Centre, n.d.; Gutiérrez, 2022; Hendel, 2018; Mullan, 2023). From a therapeutic stance, highlighting settler colonial aspects of diasporic experience can provide folks from diasporic histories enriching ways to resource strengths outside of the limitations of colonial thinking/knowing. In doing so, it can help support a more enriched, “thicker narrative” (Dulwich Centre, n.d.) of the Japanese Canadian collective and/or individual history, identity, and memory. I will explore this further in my discussion on decolonial approaches to grief and loss. While I spotlight Japanese Canadians in this paper, this approach may be relevant for many other clients with immigrant histories. Furthermore, Mullan (2023) argues that this approach is relevant for all humans wounded by colonial harm: indigenous, settlers, immigrant, refugees, and all intersections of socio-cultural location.

### **Specific Challenges to Wellness**

The purpose of this paper is to address the specific mental wellness challenges that Japanese Canadians experience today. Like many oppressed, racialized, minority groups, the co-opting of a dominant national colonial narrative is often necessary for the survival for immediate futures, but detrimental to the thriving of generational futures (Harp, 2024). The decolonial work of Japanese Canadians is as necessary now as the systemic structures that support them: the Medical Industrial Complex and dominant discourse in Psychology and mental health, for example. It is important to discuss here the ways in which Japanese Canadian trauma histories come into awareness, and how the weight of them get passed down generationally in the form of grief and loss.

### **Trauma Reckoning: Emergent Truth**

For Japanese Canadian people whose families emigrated before the war, the racial trauma, war trauma, and intergenerational trauma they experienced is well documented (please see works by Ken Adachi, 1976; Ann Gomer Sunahara, 1981; and Oikawa, M., 2017). In a conversation with community leader, activist and educator, Connie Kadota, she related that it was not until the early seventies when Asian Canadian and Japanese Canadian *sansei* communities began to normalize speaking out in resistance to anti-Asian policies, harms, and government wrongdoings past and present (personal conversation, May 3, 2024). In an in-depth analysis of the 1970's grass-roots publication, *The Asianadian*, Angie Wong (2023) outlined the magazine's aim to provide an unapologetic rejection of Canada's dominant colonial narrative of multicultural benevolence through essays, poetry, satires, and art. *The Asianadian* was one venue of many and Connie Kadota, Wong (2023) as well as Li (2008) link the emergence of this publication and Asian grass roots organizing to the time of the Black Power, civil rights and Indigenous sovereignty social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It was during this time that Japanese Canadian photographers, artists, writers, activists, and community organizations worked hard

to develop “new cultural politics” (Li, 2008; p. 11) to redefine Canada’s cultural identity. After much organizing on part of the Japanese Canadian community negotiating with the federal government, Canada announced a redress settlement for all Japanese Canadians who survived the war, acknowledging the trauma Japanese Canadians faced during and after the war years (Kobayashi & Miki, 2020). Art Miki and Audrey Kobayashi describe the movement behind the Japanese Canadian Redress of 1988 as a painful yet pivotal step toward healing some of the trauma through governmental admission of wrongdoing (Kobayashi & Miki, 2020). Bringing awareness to and educating so-called Canada on the truth of what happened and the extent of the dispossession, fragmentation and dispersal of Japanese Canadian communities (material, cultural and place-based), is something that Mr. Miki describes as the most important goal of Redress (Kobayashi & Miki, 2020). And yet, decades later, many people, including Japanese Canadians, do not know the extent or the lasting effects of the trauma that happened. Truth about the family trauma and losses are still coming to light to this day. There are many ways trauma histories are becoming known and remembered – through art, poetry, essays, research, community gatherings and the like. In my conversation with Connie Kadota, she explained the multi-year project, *Tsunagu* (2024), in collaboration with community leader, activist, and film director Lucy Komori, is working to connect intergenerational family histories with Japanese Canadian collective history, revealing the emerging truths of the past. This tender and painful story-sharing process aims to address intergenerational trauma that continues to show up in families and is deeply needed for community and intergenerational healing (personal conversation, May 3, 2024). This project collects 29 family stories and shares them on a website that uses key words so that the user can search specific themes or topics of Japanese Canadian identity, such as: assimilation, racial discrimination, loss of language, cultural identity, internment camps, life before the war, etc. (Tsunagu, 2024). *Tsunagu* is one of many community initiatives that are emerging in response to the clear and present need to address

intergenerational and community silence about systemic harm, past and present. The project continues to evolve, as the need to dive deeper into the complexities of Japanese Canadian lived experiences arises.

### **Complex Racial and Colonial Trauma**

Many writers and scholars contextualize Japanese Canadian trauma within historic systems of racial oppression and colonialism (Komori, 2023a; McAllister, 2010; McAllister, 2012). In his article, Adams (2020) outlines that the racial injustices and trauma Japanese Canadians faced is not neatly defined by the war years. The author analyzes Canadian labour, immigration and citizenship law, and its intersecting oppressive force on Chinese, Japanese, and Indigenous people in pre-war Canada (Adams, 2020). He presents that *issei* hopes for a better life and equality clashed with the law's ability to inflict violence and harm based on race (p. 90). Racialized newcomers to so-called Canada in its formation of becoming a settler nation were excluded from constitutional rights: their mobility, economic opportunities, and political participation were all restricted (Adams, 2020; McAllister, 2010). Yet *issei*, and other immigrants, found themselves to be in a complex social location: they were colonial subjects, and at the same time had immigrated and thus were contributing to the displacement and loss of Land and resources of Indigenous people (Stanger-Ross et al., 2020). In a conversation with J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, (Kauanui, 2018b) Patrick Wolfe argues that settlers are those are benefitting from the invasion, dispossession, and/or genocides of Indigenous peoples, which also includes those who immigrated under coerced or exploitative conditions as colonial subjects for racialized migrants. In this vein, Jane Komori (2023a, 2023b) offers perspectives on viewing the social location of Japanese Canadians in what the author names as the nation's early 'settler ecology' by connecting settler colonial studies to the emergence of racialized capitalism in the formation of so-called Canada. While highlighting the ways in which Japanese Canadians experienced loss, Komori (2023a; 2023b) holds central to the discussion the

complexity of racialized, settler experience. Thus, Japanese Canadians colonially 'begin' their family history as disenfranchised settlers who experienced significant racial trauma, building livelihoods as racialized, exploited labourers while trying to fit into the national colonial narrative. The loss of dignity and place as migrant, racialized labourer, and then internment with the loss of all possessions, property, livelihoods and hopes for the future are still damaging generations that followed. The race-based trauma is intergenerational. To provide a foundation for the discussion to follow, I have underscored here that for Japanese Canadians, the wounds of colonial trauma are deeply connected to racial trauma. The futile endeavor of racialized minorities to colonially 'fit in' to so-called Canada's dominant national identity is a complex site of trauma that counsellors cannot ignore or bypass in fear in the therapy room, especially as it happens in real time within the therapeutic relationship.

In his insightful work, Kenneth Hardy (2023) presents language and practice for therapists working alongside clients who experience the invisible wounds of racial trauma. The main injuries of racial trauma, Hardy (2023) outlines as 1) internalized devaluation, 2) an assaulted sense of self, 3) learned voicelessness, 4) psychological homelessness, 5) rage, 6) intangible loss and invisible collective grief, 7) orientation toward survival. These clear categories provide client and therapist various windows through which to look at, explore, and address the emotional and psychological effects of the constant exposure to race-related trauma responses that often go unseen, unaddressed, are unnamed, invisible, and yet are interwoven into the identities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC). Focusing on the systemic impacts, Hardy (2023) stresses that racial trauma is a "fundamental, predictable, and inevitable life circumstance" for BIPOC folks, (p. 50) that it and would be unethical to evade in the therapy room. Hardy & Qureshi (2012) argue that a racially-sensitive approach that focusses on the main injuries of racial trauma is imperative to supporting BIPOC. Furthermore, the authors show that by limiting interventions to treating behavioral problems, individual psychological

issues, substance misuse (focusing solely on sobriety), or family problems will never be broad enough in scope to address the damaging and invisible impacts of racial and colonial trauma (Hardy & Qureshi, 2012).

There has been much literature on ways Japanese Canadians had to show their loyalty to the government, but also to society at large after the war years, (Oikawa, 2017; Stanger-Ross et al., 2020). Untangling the ways colonial and racial trauma assaults the sense of self and affects the Japanese Canadian collective process of internalized devaluation, learned voicelessness, and loss of home is paramount for healing. Hardy (2023) explains that the need to assimilate for survival or safety reasons, involves a disavowal of the literal or symbolic self. I see this as a controversial and tender topic which Japanese Canadians today are hesitant to talk about, because of shame or guilt. These damaging emotions persist down the generations, and it is within Hardy's (2023) racially-sensitive therapeutic framework where therapist and client can collaborate and address racial and colonial trauma.

### **Grief: Legacies of Loss**

Not only does the trauma of the war years continue to impact WWII survivors and their descendants, but grief and loss have become central to the current day challenges that intergenerational Japanese Canadians face. Therapist and social justice advocate, Linda Thai (Therapist Uncensored, 2023) notes that where there is trauma, there is grief. Japanese Canadians are processing the traumas of the *issei* and their descendants, which include comprehending the different types of invisible losses, such as: stigmatized, ambiguous, anticipatory, or disenfranchised grief (Speaking Grief, 2024). To understand collective and individual grief of Japanese Canadians, we must strive to understand the loss and the impact of the grief. Stanger-Ross et al., (2020) held an in-depth discussion on the impacts and politics of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians, with the aim to understand the "enduring legacies of loss" (p.35). In the book, *Landscapes of Injustice*, editor Jordan Stanger-Ross

(2020), presents writings from the research collective of scholars contributing to a seven-year research and education project dedicated to the history of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians (*Landscapes of Injustice*, 2017). The 'enduring legacies of loss' is meticulously researched and analyzed to understand dispossession not just in terms of property, land, or boats; but also as livelihoods, hopes, family histories, status, belonging, language, and cultural identity. Stanger-Ross et al., (2020), after examining archival written and oral histories, government documents and scholarly work of historians, finds that the dispossession of Japanese Canadians is permanent: it caused "permanent changes to the social geography of Japanese Canadian life" and can be felt and seen generationally (pp. 34-35). Years after the war ended, Japanese Canadians could not return to their homes on the Pacific Coast and were forced to 'relocate' as migrant labour, east of the Rocky Mountains or be 're-patriated back to Japan' for their own 'safety' (Kage, 2008). The calculated and forced dispersal and displacement of West Coast Japanese Canadian families and communities across the country and Japan inflicted permanent damage, with the impacts of loss that cannot be undone (Kage, 2008). Japanese Canadians grieve the tangible losses that can be documented, but they also grieve the invisible losses of disconnection and 'what could have been' for their community and culture. Carrying the grief of visible, as well as the invisible losses, is part of the biopsychosocial and spiritual legacy of the *issei* and their descendants.

From a therapeutic stance, it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge the grief and loss of war trauma, racial trauma, and colonial trauma, as well as that which Japanese Canadians experience today from ongoing systemic colonial oppression. Embedded in the grief and loss, is the loss of integral aspects of identity: community, culture, language, place, and memory – especially as elders pass on. Yet, all is not lost, with a decolonial understanding of these things. I will counter the dominant colonial psychotherapeutic approaches to address intergenerational trauma, grief, and loss with the most critical concept: connection. In my conversation with community leader Cyril Morris, of Lək'wəŋən territories

(Songhees and Esquimalt nations), he told me how his people were almost eradicated after the European colonizers came, and stressed that the only way through the most tragic loss, the deepest grief, the most heinous of traumas, is through building connection to Land and culture (personal conversation, March 15, 2024). Cyril has inspired me to honor the ways his people, and many others, have sought connection as medicine.

### **Building Connections**

Alongside the discussion of Japanese Canadian mental health and the collective narrative of trauma, loss and grief, it is important to relate to the ways Indigenous communities experience dispossession, loss and grief. There is a breadth of literature on Indigenous health and the experiences of colonial trauma, but it is not the scope of this paper to provide a review of this literature. For this paper, I would like to draw attention to an Indigenous worldview that since time immemorial, humans and nature were never, nor ever will be, separate. This will be a central part of following discussions about how to address colonial trauma, grief, and loss for non-Indigenous folks.

#### **Indigenous Worldview: The Inseparable Tie Between Human and Land**

*“When I think about the times in my life where I have felt the most at ease, the surest about myself, the most connected, they were the times that I have spent on the land...”*

*--Leigh Joseph, 2023.*

Scholar Jane Komori (2024a) invites the reader to consider the colonial academic dialogue that started over twenty years ago of environmental thought and politics with Bruce Braun (2002). He wrote that at the center of capitalist modernity is nature externalized. His work encourages settler colonial perspectives to grasp how the need to separate ‘society’ from ‘nature’ functions to commodify it. He too-gently questions the binary of human versus nature, drawing from Indigenous conceptual understandings of nature. I extend this to say the interruption to the intricate ways humans are in

ecology with nature (or Land) is a result of colonial harm. Drawing from the work of O'Brien (2018) and Wolfe (2018) and their perceptions of the settler colonial aim of vanishing Indigenous futures as structural framework, the settler colonial idea of 'nature' that Braun (2002) speaks of can also be seen as vanishing. Nature is seen as 'wild' or 'untouched' until it is over-resourced or over-developed, inevitably 'unusable' and a part of the past (Braun, 2002). What is important here is that while Indigenous peoples are losing their Land or 'nature' (via natural resource extraction and environmental destruction, for example) their existential futures are at stake, as their health and wellness is directly tied to the relationship to land. At the heart of addressing loss and grief is the Indigenous Land-Back movement, where Land-Back is the foundation of health for Indigenous people (David Suzuki Foundation, 2024). Without a sovereign relationship to Land via cultural practices and Land stewardship, the disconnection/dispossession is deeply felt in the body and gravely affects indigenous futures (DavidSuzukiFDN, 2021b). Anishinaabe Land defender, Candace Neveau understatedly and gravely relates that the body is uncomfortable without a connection to Land (DavidSuzukiFDN, 2021, 4:55). This way of seeing Land and its intrinsic relation to health is tied to viewing humans as a part of the Land, in direct relationship to all things on the Earth, or as Anishinaabe Land defender Shiri Pasternak describes as part of the natural ecology of the Land (DavidSuzukiFDN, 2021a,7:48).

What is critical about these Indigenous Land defenders' voices is that the loss of Land creates a tragic cascade of losses: a colonial worldview of loss may use the word invisible, but within the Indigenous worldview, these losses are very much tangible, visible, felt, and seen. Much of the Land-Back movement is centered around biopsychosocial and spiritual health of the individual in the ecology of community and nature (DavidSuzukiFDN, 2021a, 2021b). Connecting to Land and culture is the main medicine for the deeply wounding harms of settler colonialism (Cyril Morris, personal conversation, March 15, 2024).

The Land-Back or other Indigenous sovereignty movements do not fit neatly into the discussion to address the mental health and wellness of immigrant settler communities today and into the future. Although, central to the Land-Back movement is that with Indigenous stewardship over the Land there would be proper environmental decisions that nurture all human futures. There is much to learn from the Indigenous resistance movements against colonial harm. The ways in which Indigenous voices locate and relate to traditional practices, wisdom, and knowledge de-centers injurious, colonial frameworks of being and becoming. In the therapeutic relationship, decentering colonial ways of viewing trauma, grief and loss will be a way forward to work toward not just Japanese Canadian wellness futures, but also liberatory practices of psychology. This will involve a deep honoring of Indigenous connection to Land and Land-based healing. By doing so, Japanese Canadians can locate themselves in relation to Land and Indigenous Land stewardship rather than colonial timelines and frameworks. There is much to learn outside these frameworks, and here opens the opportunity to inquire what traditional wisdom and knowledge can offer for decolonial approaches to healing.

### **Wellness and Connection to Land**

Norm Leech, from the T'it'q'et of St'at'imc nation and Japanese Canadian Mariko Kage, are two people among a handful of others developing a program to teach decolonized tools for trauma healing for Japanese Canadians and broader healing communities. They explain that connection with the Land is central to wellness and healing (Personal conversation, April 11, 2024). In this conversation, Norm talked about how connection to Land means to feel totally and completely unconditionally loved, as if held in the arms by grandparents and to feel this love for the Land is like feeling a connection to family. Norm explains that deeply knowing this connection is not only healing for the self but also provides agency to give it to others—creatures, humans, the Earth—to sustain and nurture all relationships (personal conversation, April 11, 2024). Both Mariko and Norm iterate that love is connection, and without

connection, there is no love or wellness. Leigh Joseph (2023) explained in her book that wellness is not only mental, emotional, spiritual health, but also with “the interrelationships we experience with the natural world and with community” (p. 11). Furthermore, she extends the concept of community to non-human kin – plants, waters, creatures, mountains, etc., (2023). Echoing Norm Leech’s point of recognizing and receiving unconditional love from the Land as crucial to our ability to truly know love, Joseph (2023) writes that because of this constant support the Land gives to all life, part of wellness is upholding our side of the relationship to Land and contributing love back to all things on Land (p. 12). Norm Leech iterates that colonialism imports separation, such as individualism, ‘us against them’ mentality, and division (seen as borders, cultures, religions); whereas pre-colonial, traditional knowledge centers connection, relationship, and responsibility (personal conversation, April 11, 2024).

### **Relations and Attachment**

Norm Leech, Mariko Kage, and Joseph (2023) are part of an ocean of Indigenous voices that stress the importance of connection as central to an Indigenous worldview. Within this worldview, all human and non-human parts of the world are in relation or are thus *related*. I will discuss the concept of ‘felt-sense’ of being in relations with the world and how dominant, colonial theories of attachment in psychotherapy fail to comprehend a decolonial ideas of the self and wellness. This will create an anticolonial space in which to understand the impacts of intergenerational trauma of Japanese Canadians as settler immigrants, considering the unique challenges to wellness they face today. It will also create space to envision what is needed, from a therapeutic standpoint, to support wellness and healing.

### **The Felt-Sense**

Métis knowledge keeper and therapist, Shirley Turcotte, leads many discussions in the field of psychotherapeutic modality, Indigenous Focus-Oriented Therapy (IFOT) (Maximé, 2021). Turcotte

developed this modality from Gene Gendlin's work of Focusing-Oriented Therapy (FOT) where much of the therapeutic engagement between client and therapist is with the client's 'felt-sense' of emotional experience (Focusing International, n.d.; The International Focusing Institute, 2024). IFOT differs from FOT in that while both center the client's experience of embodiment or 'felt-sense', Turcotte extends the 'felt-sense' experience to be contextualized within an 'all my relations approach' (Maximé, 2021), incorporating the Indigenous conceptual framework of all parts of the world – human and non-human – as in relation. This approach decolonizes Gendlin's framework, and enriches it into a modality that nurtures deep connection as the fundamental piece for client healing. Turcotte's 'all my relations' approach seeks to locate sites of trauma and invite the client to connect them to community, ancestors, culture, and Land, thereby undoing aloneness (Maximé, 2021). As Norm Leech explains how colonial ideologies of individualism are harmful, Turcotte also explains that the concept of aloneness is colonial (Maximé, 2021). This way of viewing suffering is de-pathologizing for individuals, and all their relations. Furthermore, Turcotte helps clients to know that suffering is not solely theirs to hold, it is also held by others (ancestors, community, humanity, non-human kin), as well as the Land. IFOT modality centers the 'felt-sense' as the main site to process trauma in relation to ancestors, Land, and all human/non-human kin. It is an enriching perspective to understand intergenerational racial and colonial trauma transmission, grief and loss, as well as wisdom, knowledge, and resilience transmission. As Turcotte explains, the 'felt-sense' goes beyond processing a limited narrative about feelings, it accesses a deeper pathway to track physical sensation as memory, and ask-into what is needed to help unburden this feeling, or set it back down to the Land (Maximé, 2021).

In colonial terms, 'felt-sense' cannot be fully explained, but can be surmised as noticing the physical sensations of the body and connecting them to a feeling or memory, acknowledging the presence of emotions in the body. There are many modalities in the field of psychotherapy that use

body-based techniques, or somatic therapy, and there is a breadth of literature of their efficacy in processing trauma through understanding and managing the mechanics of the nervous system. Leading the movement to understand the relationship between trauma and the body, Bessel van der Kolk's (2014) research has shown that the 'felt-sense' can be explained in the study of the vagus nerve which is the body's central highway of information connecting all organs of the body to the lower brain stem (van der Kolk, 2014). Ninety percent of the neuronal information sent through this nerve flow from body to brain, while only ten percent flow from brain to body, highlighting the fact that the body's information (pain, joy, everything in between) and processing power is profound, and thus describes why physical sensations that are present are often indescribable or even unconscious (McBride, 2021, van der Kolk, 2014). Hillary McBride (2021) centers her research and practice working with the felt-sense, and what the body is processing (rather than the mind/brain). With the goal to connect the self to the body and undo the ways dominant culture has scripted disconnection as a narrative of exploitative, capitalist harm, she names the importance of feeling connected spiritually as part of a holistic feeling of connection. While Bessel van der Kolk (2014) focuses on the brain-body relationship, McBride (2021) extends the science into an intimate conversation about the relationship to the body. Resmaa Menakem (2017) takes a more decolonial approach and examines how trauma and the felt-sense can live very differently in racialized, colonized, and white bodies, and acknowledges the impacts of ancestral and collective trauma. Menakem (2017) explains that the largest part of the vagus nerve goes through the gut, consisting of about 100 million neurons, often called our 'second brain'. Bodily senses flow through the vagus nerve, or what he calls the "soul nerve" to this second brain, and for this reason, it is why the body can have a felt-sense of our deepest emotions: love, fear, anger, dread, grief, sorrow, disgust, and hope (Menakem, 2017). I flag this here to say that these deep emotions cannot be defined without culture and worldview, and I suspect that is the reason he names the vagus nerve a marker of the soul.

Alongside somatic practice offerings he presents, through meticulous research within socio-cultural frameworks, that the structures of colonial violence can produce a profound difference in collective experiences of safety.

Much academic research has been dedicated to the felt-sense of safety. Janina Fisher (PESI, 2016) explains that the recent research of trauma and the brain has allowed an understanding of affect tolerance and seeing Pat Ogden's 'optimal arousal zone' or Dan Siegel's 'window of tolerance' as the place where safety can be felt, and processing of the body's experiences can happen (as cited by Fisher, PESI, 2016, 52:37). Fisher (PESI, 2016) explains that in the wake of trauma, without the feeling of being safe, there lives a specific constellation of trauma responses: fight, flight, freeze, fawn, instigated by the amygdala, shutting down the pre-frontal cortex. These often painful responses manifest in ongoing psychophysiological reactions as if stuck in stubborn patterns of behaviour response (PESI, 2016; Fisher & Ogden, 2011) or stuck in a self-reinforcing positive feedback loop (Payne et al., 2015). These patterns of behaviours such as dissociation, anger, or emotionally withdrawn, becomes harmful to the body, the person – in that the way a person learns to know themselves is through the body's emergency stress paradigm (PESI, 2016; Fisher & Ogden, 2011; McBride, 2019). This 'paradigm' Kenneth Hardy (2023) speaks to as being a survival orientation of BIPOC that is both a worldview and a reflex to ongoing toxic stress. He also notes that this orientation to survival is deeply linked to psychological homelessness, since there are very few places that BIPOC feel safe (Hardy, 2023). This can be an extremely distressing emotional, cognitive, spiritual, felt-sense of dissonance, as a person may not identify with how they know themselves or their place in the world.

Turcotte's 'all my relations' approach of accessing the felt-sense with the aim to address this dissonance or disconnection places neuroscience within a worldview. By doing so, she, and so many other care supporters using traditional knowledge of safety, highlight the colonial worldview wherein

neuroscience often resides in practice. For example, how we define the deepest core emotions will be up to the culture in relation to Land and Spirit, or worldview, in which a person or people create(s) meaning. I am reminded of Norm Leech's description of the feeling of unconditional love as being held in the arms of a grandparent, and that it is the Land that provides this love-connection and important bond.

### **Attachment: Expanding the Meaning of Belonging**

Much of dominant, colonial psychology is built upon the Eurocentric ideas of the self and how that self builds attachment bonds to develop identity. I am interested in exploring decolonial frameworks of attachment theory, and how important the attachment relationship to Land is in the development and understanding of the self. In her foundational work, *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman (1992) produced a body of work to understand the experience of trauma survivors in relation to social context. Herman (1992) writes:

“Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience.” (p. 51).

Her focus highlights the centrality of relationships to understanding the wounds of trauma. These relationships are to primary caregivers, social supports, and community (Herman, 1992). Safety and trust in those relationships are robbed in the events of trauma; and guilt, shame, feeling abandoned, and loss of dignity are some of the deeply wounding effects (Herman, 1992). With broken attachment bonds, Herman's (1992) work aims to repair and recover safety and trust in those basic attachment relationships – referring to the co-founders of attachment theory, John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992). Yet, Herman's influential work balances on the precarious assumption of the

universality of the experiences of colonial, middle class, white conception of attachment. Heidi Keller (2021) responds to the problem of basing all of what the psychological field of study knows on Bowlby's and Ainsworth's thin theory of attachment. Deeply researched, her work calls into question the uncritical acceptance of attachment theory and how it has been unethically applied to people with diverse, cultural realities (2021). Keller (2021) calls out recent qualitative and quantitative attempts at considering the role of culture in their research, noting that although there may be some universal human traits, the spectrum of attachment relationships belongs in cultural context. The author highlights that the quality, visibility, perceptual style, and nature of relationships are culturally defined (Keller, 2021). To add to Keller's (2021) critique, I would note that the idea of the 'self' is innately colonial, therefore at the root of Bowlby's and Ainsworth attachment theories is the colonial idea of self as individual, rather than self as part of a living ecology of Land and Earth. For example, colonial Eurocentric ideas of the self are based on early psychologist Sigmund Freud's concept of personality and what drives behaviour: unconscious and conscious existence of ego, id, and superego (McLeod, 2024). An anticolonial conception of self is related to all things on Land and Earth, and defined by cultural understandings of Spirit, emotion or heart, mental/intellect, and body. Alongside many other Elders, healers, healthcare practitioners, Linklater (2014) centers the pan-Indigenous concept of the Medicine Wheel to a decolonial approach to trauma healing, as the Medicine Wheel is integral to understanding self within systems of balance and harmony of the Land and Earth. Bringing a decolonial understanding of attachment theory and trauma to the discussion of connection to Land and culture, Linklater's (2014) and Keller's (2021) work create space in which to explore diverse models of attachment and identity development. While Keller (2021) critiques the developmental significance of the attachment bond between primary caregiver and child, she presents literature that finds many cultures have unique expressions of self and attachment, counter to Bowlby's and Ainsworth's theories.

In her research and writing on revolutionary politics, poet and writer Kai Cheng Thom (2023) presents one of many anticolonial models of attachment. In this ecological model, the significant developmental attachments are “deeply rooted kinship networks” (2023; para. 1) that is a complex, overlapping web of interconnected processes. Opposing colonial frameworks of prioritizing the mother as primary attachment figure, Cheng Thom organizes her view of significant bonds to be (in no hierarchal order): attachments to self, Spirit, identity groups, society, community and culture, beloved others, environment, and non-human world (2023). While acknowledging a widely dimensional model, she notes that this can therefore provide “greater possibilities for healing, transformation and social change” (2021; para. 2). Moving beyond the individualistic views of the colonial field of study, ecological attachment models can expand the meaning of belonging to be embedded in cultural knowledge and wisdom. Of course, Indigenous cultures embody this since time immemorial. I wanted to ask Norm Leech if he considered Land as a significant developmental attachment bond, yet hearing the description of being loved by the Land is much like the feeling of being held in the arms of a grandparent, I suspect that feeling loved by the Land is one of many integral attachment bonds for the formation of the self and Spirit.

### **Trauma Healing**

Renee Linklater (2014) presents a comprehensive response to the colonial school of attachment and trauma theory. Her work unpacks the ways colonial understandings of wellness and mental health are fundamentally damaging the health and spirits of Indigenous people (2014). The author compares colonial psychology’s focus on mind and behaviour, treating mind and body ‘illnesses’ as separate entities to Indigenous models of wellness that focus rather on restoring balance to the self through relationships and connection (Linklater, 2014). Mariko Kage (personal conversation, April 11, 2024) also highlights the importance of decolonizing our view of the person as only mind and body by reminding

me of Japanese word *kokoro*, which translates to “heart/mind,” encompassing an element of Spirit as inseparable to the self and is often used when asking about how a person is doing. A plain way of asking about a person while interweaving the inseparability of Spirit and person speaks to the pre-colonial understanding of the self.

Wellness is thus felt and known through the spirit of a person. What I find to be illuminating is Linklater’s (2014) discussion on Indigenous worldview and knowledge: because of colonial harm, Indigenous worldviews have expanded to include the more recent experiences that arose from the colonial experience, and as such it may be necessary to decolonize those worldviews to “understand the fragmentation that has occurred” (p. 28). Those seeking to understand this fragmentation and ground their worldview, Linklater (2014) asserts that becoming immersed with cultural resources and traditional ways of learning, knowing, and living is essential. The author cites Joseph Couture on how traditional knowledge brings one “to think intuitively, to think with the heart, to think Circles [author’s capitalization of the word, denoting a way of being/living], to understand and utilize dream, metaphor, and symbol” (Couture, 2005; as cited by Linklater, 2014). In my conversation with Norm Leech and Mariko Kage, (personal conversation, April 11, 2024), they talked about how colonial systems work to erase or devalue what Joseph Couture explains here: using intuition or felt-sense, shapes, dreams, sounds, or imagination are seen as invalid ways to seek knowledge. Linklater (2014) along with Mullan (2023) iterate that knowledge is at the core of Indigenous existence, yet it is under constant pressure to be known if colonial institutions maintain control over it. Kenneth Hardy’s (2023) work unpacks the way racial trauma has shaped not only a racialized person’s way of being or surviving, but also how it shapes the therapeutic relationship in the therapy room. He stresses the use of non-traditional therapeutic aids to seek knowledge and urges therapists to question ‘standard principles of clinical practice’ as these standards of practice were not created with People of Colour in mind (p. 118), instead were created

directly from a colonial process and framework of assimilation (Mullan, 2024). Since the way of knowing self, community, and world is disrupted via colonial harm, Linklater (2014) refers to “ethnostress” in her explanation of Indigenous trauma theory (p. 32). This concept has been expanded by writers such as Natalie Gutiérrez (2022) and Jennifer Mullan (2024), relating that colonial, racial harm seeks to eradicate the ethnicity from Black and Indigenous, racialized bodies of colour. Creating space to accept knowledge and knowledge-seeking practices from outside the colonial worldview (utilizing ‘felt-sense,’ for example) as valid and necessary for wellness is a critical stance from which to support the healing of trauma and its generational impacts.

Japanese Canadian experiences of trauma and grief are fragmented, and thus not fully understood by the community as a whole. Japanese Canadians are still seeking to understand the burdens on the *kokoro*, or what Gutiérrez (2022) names as “legacy burdens.” The author describes ‘legacy burdens’ as sets of messages or beliefs absorbed from systemic oppression, as well narratives of shame and/or guilt reinforced and handed down within the family, leaving individuals with internalized messages of inferiority (2022, p. 27). Kenneth Hardy’s (2023) work on racial trauma is fundamental to understanding the ways Black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC) navigate a white supremacist, colonial world. Gutiérrez (2022) named legacy burdens as sites of complex post-traumatic stress (CPTSD), whereas Hardy (2023) outlines something similar: racial trauma is a hybrid of chronic or prolonged and toxic stress. Since the long-term exposure to racial oppression is ongoing, the wounds of racial trauma are often invisible, unacknowledged, and lacking language to even name it (Hardy, 2023; p. 72). ‘Ethnostress’, racial trauma, chronic or prolonged toxic stress or CPTSD: these authors strive to legitimate the damaging impacts of these in the work of trauma healing. There is much to learn from Indigenous, and other decolonized models of healing. What is clear is that space for cultural or traditional knowledge-seeking practices needs to be normalized as legitimate, integral sources of

attachment repair and healing from racial, colonial trauma. This will require therapists and healthcare practitioners to investigate what that means for them, personally, as they collaborate with their clients authentically.

Norm Leech and Mariko Kage are currently leading the discussion toward individual and collective healing in the Japanese Canadian community, basing offerings on healing trauma and grief by connecting with culture and land. As so many thinkers, writers, scholars, artists, healers, and Elders are doing, they hold steady that coming back to what all people would have once known as their own connections to the seasons, to Land, beauty, love, and relationships as the source of healing and wellness. This work is Land-based healing.

### **Land-Based Healing**

*“Our landscapes have informed every aspect of our social structures, inspired our ancestral cosmologies, narrated our stories, animated our foods and agricultural practices, intoned our languages and the rhythms of our songs, revealed our gods, and inspired every aspect of our relationships, rituals, beliefs, and identities” (Layla Feghali, 2024; p. 21)*

Land-based healing has been in Indigenous practice since time immemorial. Like many others, Feghali(2024) looks to ancestral ways of knowing Land as a guide to know one’s place in this world. Echoing Kai Cheng Thom (2023) holding significance in the complex web of kinship, ethnobotanist Feghali(2024) centers the re-mapping of kinship in the modern world through the relationship with plants, or what she calls ‘plantcestors’ of her people’s Land of origin. Her discussion around diaspora is most relevant here, as Japanese Canadians are of a diaspora that have a severed relationship to Land of origin, Japan. Feghali (2024) names that being of diaspora has its losses and gains of which can be felt to different degrees, yet as a site of trauma, diaspora is severance from the Land and a trauma that should not be discounted even if it was a “chosen” fate. As outlined earlier in this chapter as some of the

challenges Japanese Canadians face today, loss of kinship to the Land of origin, the Land that informed their very creation (language, culture, community, *kokoro*, sense of beauty and knowing the world) it can be argued, can be the site of remembrance and healing.

Being 'uprooted' is a way Japanese Canadians describe themselves during the internment and after the war (Adachi, 1976; Gomer Sunahara, 1981; Kage, 2008; Oikawa, 2017). Yet Feghali(2024) reminds us that the original uprooting was when the *issei* left Japan, literally, if roots is identifying with the Land as an ancient ancestor complete with all human and non-human inhabitants as ancestral relatives. In a sense, Japanese Canadians intimately know what it is to be 'uprooted.' This is a decolonial way to view the person in relationship to place and has a central place in therapeutic discussions of racial and colonial trauma.

To seek knowledge (ancestral ways of knowing, guidance, wisdom, indigeneity) and to be in relationship (reciprocal, healing) with the land, Sandra Styres (2018) describes this as a remembering that forms deeply intimate and spiritual connections. In the same vein, Shirley Turcotte (Indigenous Focusing Oriented Therapy, 2018) explains that this can emerge from the felt-sense of remembering wisdom that has existed over thousands of generations as experiential knowledge. Using decolonial knowledge-seeking ways described earlier in this chapter to access the felt-sense connections in the primordial (Fenghali, 2023) attachment bonds of Land, Land-based healing can address the pain of disconnection, aloneness, lack of feeling safe, and other feelings/emotions caused by colonial harm. Redvers (2020) writes that Land-based healing, though practiced and taught by Indigenous knowledge keepers for millennia, goes largely undefined and under-studied in the field of counselling and mental health. After presenting a qualitative study on the experiences of eleven Land-based healing practitioners, the author finds that practitioners were able to support communities to cultivate stronger connection with individual and collective strength and resilience, Spirit and Land, relationship to culture

and language, as well as intergenerational community (Redvers, 2020). Redvers, (2020) makes a distinction between ‘nature-based’ and ‘Land-based’ healing, in that the latter is an intentional cultivation of the relationship between person and Land through Land-based practices, whereas the former insinuates that nature is separate to humans, which is a colonial worldview. Lastly, in the Land-based healing programs in Redvers’ (2020) study, participants noted that it is important to have a skillful, connected practitioner grounded in their own cultural knowledge and rooted in a cultivated relationship to Land. While the therapist or healthcare practitioner does not need to be an Elder or spiritual leader in offering Land-based tools for healing, Redvers (2020) reminds us that it is not enough to simply claim ‘cultural competence’ as practitioners. In the pursuit of decolonizing ideas of Land and Land-based healing, Mullan (2023) stresses the importance of emotional self-inquiry on part of those seeking to hold space for others, to appreciate the values of transparency, accountability, and vulnerability when appropriate. The author urges practitioners to investigate how their own colonial disconnections from Land impacts the work with clients (2023).

Relevant to the learning of the field of counselling psychology, research showed the importance of Elder engagement of Land-based healing programs because they are knowledge-keepers, and knowledge is inherently tied to the Land (Walsh et al., 2020). In the interviews conducted, the Elders also spoke of the ways language is tied to the changing seasons, which was also noted as important pieces of the knowledge transmission (Walsh et al., 2020). In the Japanese Canadian community, there are such knowledge-keepers – those who are grounded in cultural knowledge and rooted in their relationship to land. Community leaders and Elders, activists and healers: many come to mind in my community. In relation to the discussion on ancestral knowledge, connection to “plantcestors” (Fenghali, 2024) and land-based knowledge, the books *From the Sea and Shore* (SJCCC & VCVA, 2021) and *Our Edible Roots* (JCVA, 2018) are notable examples of community members’ stories of place,

recipes, traditional practices of seed cultivation and growing of traditional vegetables, as well as cultural practices. To support the connection of individuals to their community knowledge-keepers is central to addressing cultural grief and loss and other symptoms of racial and colonial trauma.

### **Considerations For a Decolonial Therapeutic Practice**

In colonial terms, counsellors treat mental health problems. In decolonial terms, wellness is cultivated in grounded, Land-based relationships with people, places, practices, and Spirit. It will be imperative for the field of psychotherapy to envision and practice a way to honour a decolonial approach to healing colonial trauma and grief. Furthermore, this will require the therapist to come back to the liberatory psychology question: “what continues to happen to your people” (Therapist Uncensored, 2023, 2:34). This will not be the counsellor becoming ‘culturally competent’ as noted in chapter one, it will need to be in the self of therapist to work on decolonizing imperial, colonial perceptions of people, ‘nature’, relations, and the world as we know it. Mullan (2023) seeks to unpack what ‘decolonize’ means for therapists. In her work are countless reflection questions for therapists to continually check-in with how colonization is being challenged in practice, yet one of the central pieces to decolonizing therapeutic practice is to “politicize your practice” (p. 322) by understanding the systems, structures, and people that benefit from colonial harm, and aligning therapeutic values toward healing from colonial harm (2023). This calls for contextualizing colonial systems and structures in current-day practice. Liberation psychology is to locate, relate to, and critique the ways ‘therapy’ is being practiced in the larger umbrella of the medical industrial complex, with bravery and resolve. In a talk by Jennifer Lee Koble (Reflecting on Justice, 2024) she reminds therapists that we, as humans, have the capacity to hold hard things, and the idea that holding the realities, complexities and violence of colonialism is too overwhelming is a concept of white fragility. Koble (Reflecting on Justice, 2024) calls on all practitioners to do their own decolonial work to undo their own colonial fragility by refusing to

look away from the injustices of colonial harm. Furthermore, Mullan (2023) urges therapists to investigate their own ancestral roots of trauma, kinship networks, practices of healing and relationship to Land. Personal inquiry of ancestors, Land, and family takes time, guidance, and community, and examines history outside of colonial individualism, colonial way of knowing and thinking, and colonial way of remembering (Mullan, 2023).

Hardy (2023) offers detailed strategies to work within a racially-sensitive, decolonial framework of therapy: a framework which acknowledges the current systems of harm in which the work of therapy resides. Following his structure of what I previously outlined as the categories of invisible, racial trauma, the work of the practitioner with the client will be to: counteract devaluation and support self-love, repair the assaulted sense of self and support relational connectedness, counter psychological homelessness, transform voicelessness to voice activation as well as habits of survival to strategies survival, normalize rage, and acknowledge what is needed for grief and loss. This can be through racial storytelling, racial genogram, psychoeducation/normalizing trauma responses, and using an approach which the author developed that employs a structured sequence of client validation, challenging or naming what is not working, and utilizing client strengths and wisdom to provide a path toward healing (Hardy, 2023).

### **Summary**

Within my own family, some in the Spirit world, others not, each embody unique and specialized knowledge of the Land, be it histories, geographies, fishing practices, foraging, cultivation of food or flowers, cooking, painting, and likely more that will emerge as my relationships with them continue to grow. I am grateful for the ways I can connect to them, access ancestral knowledge, know my self through them, and the larger interconnectedness of all non/human things. What I notice to be a profound expression of healing is the myriad ways the Japanese Canadian community finds ways to

nurture intergenerational connections and knowledge of Land. This is through community gatherings, healing circles, festivals, talks, artist collaborations with Elders, as well community-created cookbooks telling stories to pass on wisdom of place, livelihoods, and culture. With this glimmer, I still see the gap in support for Japanese Canadians, and furthermore, for immigrant communities. Additionally, there is yet a larger gap in inviting settler identities into the discussion of decolonizing, within Japanese Canadian, immigrant, diasporic, White, racially mixed communities, and the medical industrial complex of psychology. It is with this work that I hope to provide a point from which to discuss liberation psychology amidst and against colonial realities. The intersection of settler identity and immigrant/diasporic identity is complex – or is it? Norm Leech says to simply look to the Land and ask: what do the senses tell us? (personal conversation, April 11, 2024). It will involve a deep honoring to the stewards of the local and/or ancestral Land, curiosity and a learner stance from which to seek knowledge and deep remembrance of one's own relationships to ancestors, and the ancient ancestors of Land.

### Chapter Three: Land-Based Circle Sharing for Japanese Canadians Experiencing Grief

Many Japanese Canadians from families who endured the racial and colonial trauma of the war years and post-war systemic violence inherited an orientation toward survival that was passed down generationally not just from the uprooting of Japanese Canadian incarceration in Canada, but also from the challenges of immigration. Within the context of pervasive, external pressures of colonialism, the impacts of internalized devaluation and an assaulted sense of self further compounds learned voicelessness, psychological homelessness, and above all, grief and loss (Hardy, 2023). This lived-experience taught generations that it is not safe to feel, share, or show a full range of emotion, nor tend to past traumas that have been buried by *gaman*, or in Japanese, enduring the unbearable with patience and dignity. Much of the *issei* and *nisei* survival orientation embodied the Japanese saying *shikata ga nai*, meaning, 'it cannot be helped' or 'nothing to be done.' This chapter presents an offering to Japanese Canadians to confront the legacies of loss as a group, in effort to be witnessed in community in connection with individual and collective grief. This will be a group sharing circle that centers Japanese Canadian intergenerational and collective grief to address *shikata ga nai*. I will outline the background context within which this circle will take place and discuss how this circle can support participants using the research underpinnings of chapter two, noting some limitations to caution. This will be followed by a discussion on the responsibilities of a practitioner to relate to this work in a good way, the format of the circle, and finally, conclusions to this paper.

#### Background – Sharing Circle Within Context

Ongoing is the work to meet the needs of the Japanese Canadian community as it changes and grows in relation to past traumas and grief. Alongside *nikkei* writers, poets, artists, thinkers, performers addressing the nuances of the settler-immigrant experiences of war, racial and colonial trauma, are yet many other *nikkei* wellness supporters, healers, Elders, and knowledge-keepers part of networks of

solidarity against racial discrimination and acts of violence on Turtle Island and beyond. As previously mentioned, the *Tsunagu* project (see Chapter 2) is one such example of ways the community is acknowledging the need for collective healing. Yet another is Tsuru For Solidarity, a Japanese American grassroots transformative justice organization that is dedicated to direct action to end detention sites, inhumane immigration policies, and deportation, as well as coordinate opportunities for intergenerational trauma healing in the community and across communities of colour (Tsuru For Solidarity, n.d.). The organization offers a ‘healing circles for change’, a specific model developed by Satsuki Ina, which employs a structured format for listening with presence and story sharing (Tsuru For Solidarity, n.d.). Amidst Ina’s format being offered throughout Japanese Canadian and BIPOC communities across Turtle Island, there is a burgeoning openness to the work of healing intergenerational trauma and grief. Universities and Japanese Canadian organizations have researched and recognized the need to support the wellness of internment survivors and their descendants. In 2022, with the support of Japanese Canadian community organizations, the British Columbia (BC) government launched the Japanese Canadian Legacies, an initiative that supports healing for the Japanese Canadian community in BC (Japanese Canadian Legacies, 2024). This initiative funds community-level work to address intergeneration impact that government actions had on the Japanese Canadian community (Japanese Canadian Legacies, 2024). The work of healing past colonial and racial harms on Japanese Canadians is ongoing, and this sharing circle proposed in this chapter is *part* of a rich web of work happening in the community, as it responds to the growing and changing needs for wellness. Rather than be a ‘one-off’ or singular event, the hope is to invite participants to take the practice of accessing the felt-sense and apply it when needed, share it with others, and talk about the experience of it with family and community.

Where there is trauma, there is grief. The sharing circle proposed here is a response to attend to intergenerational grief. There are many types of grief, and as Turcotte (Maximé, 2021) explains, grief of a community, of a people, of ancestors, can be handed down generationally if it is not attended to in a good way. Much of the teachings of Norm Leech and Mariko Kage from the *Japanese Canadian Healing Tools* program is about accessing the felt-sense to tend to the grief of past traumas, and by doing so, healing the traumas that are stored in the body and *kokoro*. Accessing the felt-sense in the all-my-relations framework of Turcotte will provide a decolonial pathway toward collective witnessing. It is the intention for this circle to provide participants the opportunity to access the felt-sense in Turcotte's framework, and invite a sharing of this sense with others of Japanese diasporic lineages, undoing aloneness, voicelessness, internalized devaluation, psychological homelessness, and tending to the loss and grief of culture, language, and connection to Land.

There are some areas of caution facilitators may consider. This circle is for Japanese Canadians experiencing grief from racial and colonial trauma. This circle is not for those outside of this diasporic lineage, yet facilitators may use this framework to work with other diasporic communities, inviting those of same lineage. The requirement to close the group to same immigrant lineage is to support collective witnessing and healing of intergenerational and collective trauma. This group format is not supportive to individuals who experience severe/debilitating spiritual or emotional/mental pain, as this would require closer guidance and help from care supporters.

### **Responsibilities**

Before the session, I invite any facilitators (practitioners, therapists, care supporters, clinicians) of this circle to look at what being in relation to participants means in the Indigenous framework of relationship (see key terms): respect, reciprocity, responsibility. It is imperative that facilitators embody person-centred approach of respect by withholding judgement, centering a person's experience, and

trusting that the person is the expert in their own lives. In practicing reciprocity, a facilitator will need to offer authenticity, presence, and generosity in their own sharing in the circle. Facilitators are expected to receive and share stories and experiences as equally important parts of the circle process to decolonize the view that facilitators are 'above' the participants in knowing and being. In good practice of responsibility, facilitators are not only upholding the ethical guidelines of clinical practice (BCACC, 2014) but also approaching ethical dilemmas with reference to a decolonial framework that honors all parts of a person: body, mind, Spirit, culture, and community and the various forms of wisdom and knowledge. Furthermore, the facilitator is holding responsibilities within a nuanced awareness of ongoing structural oppression functioning inside and outside the circle.

Some helpful questions to align the facilitators to the circle process are outlined in Appendix A. These questions are for facilitators to reflect on before facilitating. As the process of decolonizing therapeutic practice takes time, is life-long, and is not linear, these questions are provided to invite the facilitator to come back to the questions over and again as they see needed to engage in self-reflection and politicize their practice, as politicizing therapeutic practice contextualizes it within the ongoing harms of colonialism.

Not only do the facilitators have responsibilities, but all participants have responsibilities to each other. In decolonial group process, guidelines of safety are co-created, thus the facilitators must provide the opportunity before any deeper sharings happen to allow for the group to co-create guidelines for safe engagement. This can be verbal, this can be outlined on paper, and open for revision as the session unfolds. With guidelines of engagement in place, as the group moves into deeper sharings, it is the facilitator's responsibility to attune to what is being said and unsaid, as well as tend to their own feelings and experience and what is coming up for them. This may look like taking a pause or asking for help

when needed from co-facilitators to follow a protocol of support and care outlined in the guidelines of engagement.

Lastly, it is the responsibility of the facilitators to provide an offering of support should any lasting impacts weigh on the participants after the session. This could look like a toolkit of helpful resources or practices, or a group online 'check-in' so that all participants may share their supports with each other and connect virtually.

### **Format**

The main format of the session will be a *circle process* (see key terms). This allows for a decolonized approach to sharing, and to be in *right relations* with one another. There will be two facilitators, and maximum 12 participants. The session will run for 3 hours, with the opportunity to follow up with an online check-in after the session.

### **Before the Session**

Each participant will be informed of the process, the discussion topics, the accessibility of the space and format, and what their involvement may look like in accordance to informed consent before their participation, as well as the expectation of confidentiality. Each participant will have the opportunity to inform facilitators what they might need for accessibility needs before the session. Facilitators are to ensure a trauma sensitive space for all participants, free from main allergens, and with safe access to bathrooms, water, and exits. Chairs will be arranged in a circle, with cushions available for those who would like to sit on the floor with options for folks that need to get up, stand, shift, or change seating for comfort needs. Each participant is invited to bring a land-based item of beauty to set in the centre of the circle to share as a talking piece or item to hold while talking/listening. Each participant is invited to do what they need to be comfortable, ask for help or support from the circle if needed, and to feel free to bring up concerns or questions as they arise.

### **Circle Sharing Session**

An important part of the day will be the acknowledgement of the Land, as it will be central focus for the session. Any person from the circle is invited to do a Land and relations acknowledgment. Upon commencement of the session, participants are invited to introduce themselves, check-in with feeling words, and share how they are showing up that day. Hearing everyone's voice is important for developing safety in the circle. Participants are then invited to co-create guidelines of engagement: what safe engagement looks and feels like for the session moving forward. It is sometimes helpful to have this written on an easel or the like for those who need a visual, however it is not a requirement, as decolonial agreements are verbal and do not need to be written. Everyone present is to keep each other accountable to the agreement.

It will be important for the facilitators to provide a grounding to resource safety before entering heavier discussions. Thus, a facilitator may offer a Land-based meditation or visualization, or breathing exercise. This will allow for folks to access an important element for the felt-sense: Land as a resource of strength, knowledge, and medicine. Next, Facilitators may need to explain the felt-sense from an all-my-relations lens depending on participant familiarity of the tool before practicing this type of knowledge-seeking as a group.

Accessing the felt-sense is intentional, and as this group is Japanese Canadian, invitations to access the felt-sense will be within a Japanese Canadian understanding of historical and collective grief from colonial and racial trauma. For solidarity, a round of sharing around family history would be helpful to locate and hold the differences and sameness of the stories. This is also to highlight what might be on the other side of accessing the felt-sense: a Japanese Canadian intergenerational resilience and strength. Since this session focuses on grief, facilitators will ask the group to take time to absorb, sit with, and reflect on the following questions:

- What do you notice weighing on you?
- What do you know weighs on your family? Your ancestors? Your lineage?
- What do you see as some of the community losses?
- How do you see the community grieving?

To build on this, facilitators invite participants to differentiate between feelings and the felt-sense. The facilitator will use prompts and guiding questions to invite this to be practiced as a group, such as:

- Notice what sensations are showing up in the body. What are the qualities of these sensations?
- What are the feelings emerging? Can you name them?
- Sitting with this feeling if it is safe, can you remember this feeling and sensation from another time? Who else in your family carries this?
- How big is it? How wide?
- What other qualities do you notice? Does it have a shape, a texture, etc.?
- Do you know this feeling and sensation to be shared with others?
- Ask into it: what does this felt-sense want to do? Where does it want go?
- What does it love, what does it need to heal?
- What elements of Land can help this? What medicines are present?

Facilitators use a slow pace to allow the process to integrate into the body/Spirit/mind, and when participants are ready, facilitators shift into a sharing process. This will be a round of sharing, inviting participants to share their experience of the felt-sense. To guide this portion, facilitators may ask:

- What came up for you in this experience?

- What medicines or knowledge feel important to share?

As each person shares, participants listen with presence, validate what resonated before sharing their own. In this practice of story weaving, each person feels heard after sharing and weaves their own story with the previous person's. Please see Tsuru For Solidarity (n.d.) *Healing Circles for Change* for this practice, developed by Satsuki Ina.

This main portion of the session will take the most time. It will be important for facilitators to integrate movement/bio/food/drink breaks at the appropriate moments throughout the session. After the main sharing, facilitators invite a Land-based grounding exercise, before a closing round. For the closing round, facilitators circle back to the words grief and use the prompt: What can your grief teach you? This last question of the session invites the sharing of collective wisdom.

#### **After the Session**

Because the sensitive nature of the discussions, participants may experience lasting impacts of the session. Facilitators will send out a list of resources that may be of help (books, websites, writers, artists, community members/events, etc.) In the effort to grow the collective web of support, facilitators can arrange for a virtual check-in, to help process any lasting difficult or challenging thoughts or feelings that arose after the session in relation to grief. This opportunity is intended to be casual and unite each other to make connections for the future.

### Discussion

The context of this paper is within an emerging web of community healing opportunities. I believe that the Japanese Canadian community at large is coming into an awareness that collective healing is needed and possible. As community needs change shape, so do the responses to those needs. This paper is one of many offerings to discuss and explore Japanese Canadian trauma healing, and it is the hope that it will spark discussions in other, uprooted immigrant communities. I began writing this paper with this grounding, yet through the research and writing of this paper, I found future areas of focus that could be helpful to expand the discussion around Land-based healing. Because the scholarship of settler-colonialism has expanded greatly in recent years, there is a need to anchor the discussion more in this field of academia. This could involve looking deeply at the structural violence of settler-colonial psyche beyond the work cited here. My desire is to learn more about the racialized colonial subject, and the harmful mechanisms of assimilation. Assimilation is a place of profound shame in the Japanese Canadian community. For many *issei* and *nisei*, proving loyalty to empire was a site of great trauma alone. Had this paper had the breadth of purpose, I would have liked to research more in assimilation and attachment theory: attachment to nation, empire, national identities, dysfunctional attachment bonding or trauma bonding, and the overriding of kinship bonds. This overriding was where I believe shame lives, and where we can shed light on the darker, more painful parts of our history is where the growth, ceremony, healing, and reconnection can happen. Additionally, with the deeper discourse on settler-colonialism, this can open the discussion to focus on the role of therapy and the role of therapist. Though decolonizing our practice as care supporters is imperative, examining the settler-colonial identity as therapist will be paramount to unlearning the ways the field of psychology has claimed knowledge of the human as colonial subject. With this, it would be in analysis of colonial fragility present in the therapy room.

In chapter three, the circle sharing session is for tending to grief, yet this can be modified to tend to shame as well, with the exploration of assimilation and broken bonds of attachment and kinship. To further modify, there are many ways to offer Land-based tools, and this is integrated into the practices of the circle, therefore offerings that reflects the local Land, being outdoors, or inviting those who offer plant medicines to take part are a few suggestions. Furthermore, creating a collective of peers and mentors in the field of Land-based healing is important to support the remembering of community roots through consultation, sharing, advising, discussion, ceremony or other.

### **Conclusions**

In many ways this paper has allowed me the opportunity to grow my understanding of Land-based work and how it is relevant, reflective, and restorative to my own community and self. At the outset, it was a place of curiosity and learning, but as I conclude this work, I understand that Land-based healing is simply a part of knowing oneself as a part of the whole grandmother Earth. This knowledge is not exclusive, does not cost anything, is not sacred, is not special. It is part of life, and sometimes whole communities forget this privilege of being on this Earth because of shame and structural violence. I believe there are knowledge-keepers who can help communities and individuals connect to place and memory, and this work is needed in the Japanese Canadian community, and humanity at large. To connect with practices, culture, our sense of beauty, place, and memory is the ultimate medicine to intergenerational racial and colonial trauma. And with the settler-colonial lens, if all of humanity can wake from the colonial dream of imperialism, then there is hope that our role to give back to the Land with our love and protection is remembered.

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**Appendix A**

## Reflection Questions For Circle Facilitators

What are the roles of your life that anchor and inform your responsibilities – what guides you to be here?

Credentialing is white-bodied supremacy – How am I decolonizing the hierarchy-building of knowledge?

Humble yourself – How am I accountable to the people in front of me and to my responsibilities to them, rather than letters of credentials?

How am I here in a good way?

How am I disrupting the colonial mindset?

How am I understanding the historical and current day colonial trauma as it relates to me?

How am I understanding the historical and current day colonial trauma as it relates to the people in front of me?

Inviting and calling in your ancestors: How can I invite their support? How can I speak in a good way as they are represented in my words and actions?

What practice/ritual/ceremony is helpful to me to practice non-judgement?

What practice/ritual/ceremony is helpful to me to care for my Self (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, cultural) before, during, and after the session?