

RUNNING HEAD: HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES TELL STORIES ABOUT INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT?

How Can Canadian Universities Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement That Amplify  
Indigenous Voices and Advance Indigenous Objectives?

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

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SEPTEMBER, 2024

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research received generous support from the Royal Roads University New Ways Fund, facilitated by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. The ministry allocated funds to Royal Roads University for pilot projects aimed at actively involving faculty and students in efforts toward reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization. I would like to specifically thank my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Walinga, for applying for and acquiring this grant on my behalf.

I also want to thank my colleagues at the University of British Columbia's Office of Community Engagement. Their flexibility and encouragement allowed me to pursue a full-time master's program while continuing to work. They not only inspired my research question through their tireless dedication to advancing reciprocal community-university engagement but also generously provided funding for my professional development.

Lastly, and most significantly, days after completing my last research interview, my wife gave birth to our beautiful daughter, Riley. I am particularly grateful to my wife and Riley's grandmothers for taking on a larger share of the parenting duties during the early months of her life. This allowed me to dedicate early mornings, evenings, and weekends to my thesis. It is thanks to the incredible support and sacrifices of those closest to me that I was able to complete my thesis in a timely manner.

### **Abstract**

This study explores how Canadian universities frame Indigenous engagement through their public communications, potentially marking the first comprehensive analysis within this context. By analyzing university communications published between 2022 and 2023, this research establishes how current storytelling practices align or deviate from principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. Interviews with university communicators and senior Indigenous engagement advisors further contextualize these findings, offering insights into the motivations and challenges inherent in such storytelling efforts. This study finds that while many universities have made progress toward reciprocal storytelling, significant gaps remain in amplifying Indigenous voices and fostering community-university partnerships. The study provides actionable recommendations such as prioritizing narratives that feature Indigenous partners as leaders and co-creators and emphasizing reciprocal relationships over institutional agendas. Additionally, this thesis explores innovative applications of OpenAI's Chat GPT-4 to enhance research methodologies, presenting a novel approach to content analysis that could inform future academic inquiries.

**Keywords:** Public Relations in Higher Education, Reciprocal Storytelling, Indigenous Engagement, Indigenizing Organizational Communication, Higher Education Communication Strategies, Truth and Reconciliation, Amplifying Indigenous Voices, Asset-Based Storytelling, Communication Ethics, Chat GPT in Content Analysis.

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## Introduction

### Background

Post-secondary institutions (PSIs), especially public institutions, are expected to enhance the relevance and public impact of their research and education, as well as collaborate with government, industry, and communities to address local and global challenges (Koekkoek et al., 2021, p. 11; Larrán Jorge & Andrades Peña, 2017, p. 303; University of British Columbia, n.d.-a). As a communications strategist for the Office of Community Engagement at the University of British Columbia, one of my goals is to influence the university's narratives around community engagement—meaning the collaborative efforts between post-secondary institutions and their local and regional communities. This collaboration aims to foster the exchange of knowledge and resources in a mutually beneficial partnership that emphasizes reciprocity (American Council on Education, n.d., para. 1).

However, in my experience, I have observed that PSIs often struggle to tell stories that genuinely embrace reciprocity and acknowledge the valuable contributions of community partners. Instead, they tend to focus on highlighting how their students, faculty, and staff make an impact on the community, rather than emphasizing their collaboration with the community itself. This approach runs the risk of alienating community partners, perpetuating representations of marginalized communities as powerless, and reinforcing existing colonial power imbalances between universities and communities.

**Research Question**

Through my research, I aim to narrow my focus specifically on Indigenous engagement (IE)—meaning how post-secondary institutions collaborate with *Indigenous* communities on reciprocal initiatives and the exchange of knowledge—and address the following research question: How can Canadian universities tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives? To achieve this, I intend to examine how Canadian universities currently frame Indigenous engagement through storytelling and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of current practices against the theory of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

Ultimately, my goal is to help university communicators in using storytelling to dismantle power hierarchies between their institutions and Indigenous communities. My suggestions will encourage the sharing of narratives that challenge dominant perspectives, incorporate Indigenous beliefs and ideas, and contribute to the overall renewal and healing of the communities involved.

**Conceptual Framework**

Although extensive research exists on how Canadian PSIs are enhancing reciprocal partnerships with Indigenous communities, there is a noticeable research gap concerning the impact of communications and storytelling in this realm. Therefore, I am excited to delve into this area and contribute to the broader objective of decolonizing PSIs. The conceptual framework for this study encompasses various subtopics derived from current literature.

Firstly, newly emerging Indigenous-developed frameworks are establishing meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and Indigenous communities, promoting reciprocal Indigenous engagement. These frameworks provide guidance for research that is community-driven, self-determined, action-oriented, and culturally responsive (Hayward et al., 2021).

Secondly, as the demand for Indigenous engagement grows, PSI communicators are increasingly tasked to communicate and share stories about Indigenous engagement with the public. However, research has shown that PSI public communications often fail to represent partnerships in ways that align with the principles of reciprocity and the valuing of community partners, potentially undermining reciprocal Indigenous engagement efforts (Arrazattee et al., 2013).

Thirdly, research primarily attributes the inadequacy of PSI communications, despite advancements in Indigenous engagement practices, to the framing of these stories. Regrettably, there is an enduring practice of employing damage-centered frames when depicting Indigenous peoples. These frames have significantly influenced Canadians' perceptions and treatment of Indigenous communities, with the media and other storytellers complicit in perpetuating colonialism and racism (Callison & Young, 2020; McCue, 2023). Consequently, Indigenous peoples continue to face marginalization and exclusion.

Fourthly, despite these challenges, I remain optimistic that PSI communicators can tackle these issues by transforming their practices and offering support to Indigenous partners through storytelling initiatives. I believe that this can be accomplished by applying principles of

reciprocal Indigenous engagement to communications and storytelling practices. Furthermore, communications infrastructure theory suggests that by sharing stories that amplify Indigenous voices, perspectives, and objectives, PSIs and their communicators can play a role in fostering a community that is aware of Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and actively contributes to advancing goals and priorities defined by Indigenous communities—hereafter referred to as “Indigenous objectives” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006).

This conceptual framework provides a lens through which to examine the role of PSI communicators in Indigenous engagement, the challenges they encounter, and the potential for transformative practices that promote reciprocity, cultural responsiveness, and community empowerment.

### **Methodology**

I employed a mixed methods approach, integrating quantitative content analysis (Huxley, 2020; Saksena, 2019) and qualitative semi-structured interviews (Ahlin, 2019; Forman & Damschroder, 2007) to comprehensively explore and evaluate how Canadian universities frame Indigenous engagement in their public-facing stories. Grounded in the transformative paradigm (Jewiss, 2018; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), my research aims to contribute to positive transformations within PSIs by uncovering guiding principles, challenges, and recommendations for storytelling that aligns with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

To achieve this, I conducted a quantitative content analysis of public-facing stories from university websites. This analysis established a baseline for understanding how stories about Indigenous engagement are currently being told by nine of Canada’s largest universities.

Subsequently, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with the authors whose stories received positive scores in my quantitative content analysis and senior-level Indigenous engagement leads (IELs), responsible for advising their universities on Indigenous engagement. These interviews provided context, expanded on the results from the content analysis, identified guiding principles and challenges in storytelling about Indigenous engagement, and gathered recommendations for effective approaches. By combining these methods, I was able to analyze both the objective elements of the stories through content analysis and gain valuable perspectives and experiences from key stakeholders involved in storytelling and Indigenous engagement through qualitative interviews.

Simultaneously, my research explored innovative applications of OpenAI's Chat GPT-4 for content analysis. I developed a custom GPT model, trained on my thesis data, specifically to investigate my research question. Additionally, I created effective Chat GPT-4 prompts that aid in quantitative content analysis, transcript cleanup, and interview analysis. Through this approach, it is also my goal that I can contribute to the emerging conversation regarding how researchers can use generative AI ethically to enhance their work.

### **Results, Discussion and Recommendations**

In my results section, I begin by addressing the research gap left by Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) decade-old study, which focused on how PSIs represent community-university partnerships in their public communications. My findings reveal significant progress, with the majority of Canadian university stories positively reflecting principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. However, I caution against over-celebration, highlighting the problematic use of

outdated criteria from 2013 to measure IE stories in 2023. Subsequently, my research delves into various facets of the storytelling process, addressing gaps identified through my literature review. First, I explore the motivations behind university storytelling. What drives these institutions to share stories about their Indigenous engagement efforts? Next, I examine how university communications can inadvertently undermine reciprocal Indigenous engagement. I identify specific characteristics that define harmful storytelling practices and explore the negative impacts these practices can have on relationships between universities and Indigenous partners, as well as on institutional reputation. Following this, I address my main research question by identifying strategies for amplifying Indigenous voices and advancing Indigenous objectives through university storytelling. I also explore ways universities and their communicators can foster greater participation and collaboration with Indigenous partners throughout the entire storytelling process. Lastly, my research articulates the potential outcomes achievable when storytelling about Indigenous engagement aligns optimally with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

In the subsequent Discussion, I connect my research findings with academic theories from the Literature Review. I explore how Canadian universities' public narratives intersect with or diverge from theoretical frameworks like reciprocal Indigenous engagement, framing, and decolonizing methodologies. Throughout this section, I examine various aspects of storytelling's impact on Indigenous engagement and propose ethical reforms based on empirical data and comprehensive literature synthesis. Additionally, to honour and amplify the voices of those who generously contributed their time and insight to this research, especially the Indigenous

participants, I have integrated their quotes throughout the Discussion section. This methodological choice reflects a core commitment of this thesis: to practice and prioritize the amplification of Indigenous voices. Each selected quote has been thoughtfully included where it best articulates core messages and provides substantial value to the reader.

Finally, I translate my findings into actionable recommendations for PSIs and their communicators. These recommendations are intentionally straightforward and concise, designed to be easily integrated into the practices of PSIs and their communication teams. I start by highlighting practices to avoid and addressing the obstacles that hinder PSI authors from effectively conveying IE stories. Next, I offer guidance on crafting IE narratives that genuinely amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives. This involves framing stories according to guiding principles and adopting transformative practices to ensure reciprocal storytelling. Lastly, I conclude my Recommendations section by providing practical tips for PSI communicators to enhance collaboration with Indigenous partners throughout the storytelling process.

### **Positionality Statement**

As a settler and uninvited guest, I acknowledge that I reside on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Hənq̓əminəm (hə́ŋq̓əmińəm) speaking peoples, currently known as Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. On my mother's side, my heritage encompasses Costa Rican, Indigenous, West African, and Spanish ancestry, while on my father's side, I have Scottish and English heritage. Utilizing the Wheel of Power/Privilege as a guide (Duckworth, 2020), I recognize that I hold Canadian citizenship, largely present as white, have received post-

secondary education, possess able-bodiedness, identify as heterosexual, fall within the neurotypical range, enjoy robust mental health and physical fitness, own property, belong to the middle class, am a native English speaker, and identify as a cisgendered man. I am fortunate to possess a significant amount of power and privilege, and I aspire to utilize them to contribute to the advancement of social objectives through effective communications and to promote equitable access for diverse storytellers.

### **Purpose Statement**

My research is rooted in my role as the Communications Strategist for UBC's Office of Community Engagement, where I have the privilege of telling stories that highlight how the University of British Columbia partners with communities to address complex social issues. I believe that storytelling in community engagement (CE) can do more than just inform; it has the potential to amplify the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized within academic spaces. It can validate diverse ways of knowing, being, and doing, alongside dominant Eurocentric methodologies, and serve as an educational tool for researchers and students on conducting community-driven, self-determined, action-oriented, and culturally responsive research.

However, I have also encountered significant challenges in telling these stories. Effectively narrating CE stories involves substantial learning and unlearning and a commitment to transforming communications structures, policies, and practices that perpetuate colonial mindsets and power imbalances. These experiences have driven me to focus my MA research on examining how Canadian universities frame Indigenous engagement through their public

communications. I aim to learn from other communicators about the principles guiding their stories on Indigenous engagement, the challenges they face, and to gather insights and recommendations from senior IELs responsible for advising their institutions on Indigenous engagement.

My research inquiry was further inspired by conversations with Indigenous communicators and Indigenous IELs at UBC. They shared their experiences and challenges in telling Indigenous engagement stories and saw value in a thesis that explores these issues. Their encouragement led me to pursue this line of inquiry, reinforcing the need for research that not only critiques current storytelling practices but also offers pathways to ensure these narratives genuinely reflect Indigenous voices, perspectives, and objectives.

In conducting this research, I aim to contribute back to the community by highlighting best practices and providing actionable recommendations for PSIs to adopt more reciprocal and respectful storytelling practices. I hope to create a space where Indigenous partners are not only included but also have the agency to shape and control their stories, ensuring that narratives advance Indigenous objectives and foster stronger, more equitable relationships between PSIs and Indigenous partners. As Margaret Kovach emphasizes, it is crucial for researchers to be prepared to answer, "Why did you do that research?" and "Why did you do it in that way?" (Kovach, 2021, p. 137). My research, therefore, seeks to embody a purpose that aligns with these questions, ensuring it is meaningful and responsive to the needs and perspectives of Indigenous communities.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

I will begin my review by examining how Indigenous peoples have been denied an equitable share of the benefits derived from academic research carried out on them by PSIs (Castleden et al., 2012; Tuck, 2009), and how a new era of Indigenous engagement is aiming to correct these injustices (Hayward et al., 2021). Particularly since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action in 2015, PSIs have collectively committed to reconciliation, acknowledging the misuse of education within the context of Canadian colonialism (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Since then, several Indigenous-developed frameworks have emerged in Canada, with the objective of establishing meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and Indigenous communities (reciprocal Indigenous engagement). These frameworks serve as guidelines for research that is community-driven, self-determined, action-oriented, and culturally responsive (Hayward et al., 2021). However, despite notable progress in the engagement between researchers and Indigenous communities, challenges persist, particularly within institutional settings. Genuine reconciliation requires power sharing, transformative decision-making processes, and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, many PSIs have approached reconciliation in a rhetorical manner. While they outwardly promote enhanced collaboration with Indigenous communities, they simultaneously perpetuate power dynamics and oppressive structures from the past (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). This rhetorical shift towards reconciliation underscores the focus of

my research problem: that PSIs often struggle to tell stories about Indigenous engagement that reflect principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

In the following section of my review, I will rely on the research conducted by Arrazattee et al. (2013), who examined how PSIs depict community-university partnerships in their public communications. This study will serve as a foundation for investigating my research problem. The findings of Arrazattee et al. revealed that the majority of public communications from the analyzed universities failed to effectively convey partnerships in a manner that aligns with the principles of reciprocity and valuing of community partners, which are essential to reciprocal community-university engagement. Public communications that lack reciprocity or focus solely on the university's perspective run the risk of alienating community partners, perpetuating representations of marginalized communities, and undermining the reciprocal Indigenous engagement efforts they are hoping to amplify. In the remaining part of this section, I will delve into the reasons why communicators at PSIs encounter difficulties in conveying stories about Indigenous engagement. My exploration will include an examination of the enduring legacy of using damage-centered frames to portray Indigenous peoples and barriers faced by PSI communicators operating within colonial settings.

Despite these challenges, I maintain a strong sense of optimism that PSIs and their communicators can address and rectify this problem, transforming their practices and providing support to Indigenous partners through storytelling endeavors. The following section of my review explores how both public and private organizations utilize communication and storytelling to shape community narratives, contribute to goal setting, and promote social

objectives. Through an examination of relevant literature, my objective is to illustrate how PSIs can play a role as storytelling agents in creating a community that is aware of Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and wants to advance Indigenous objectives. By sharing narratives that amplify Indigenous voices, perspectives, and objectives, PSIs can rebuild trust with Indigenous communities, demonstrate a genuine commitment to reciprocity and decolonization, and inspire participation in community-building initiatives that benefit Indigenous peoples.

After establishing this opportunity, the final third of my review focuses on addressing my research question: how should PSIs effectively tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices while advancing Indigenous objectives? Once again, I draw inspiration from the work of Arrazattee et al. (2013), who propose that PSI communicators should apply principles of reciprocal community engagement to their communication practices. This approach holds immense value as a growing amount of contemporary research has demonstrated that reciprocal Indigenous engagement can be instrumental in dismantling power imbalances between researchers and participants/communities, challenging dominant perspectives, incorporating Indigenous beliefs and ideas, and ultimately contributing to the revitalization and well-being of the communities involved (Hayward et al., 2021). Hence, in this later section of my review, I explore evidence-based best practices and strategies derived from the literature that PSI communicators can adopt to encourage Indigenous participation, amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives, and promote Indigenous objectives.

Finally, I will conclude my review with a brief summary of the gaps identified in the literature that I hope to address through my research. These gaps include the examination of the role of communications in supporting Indigenous engagement efforts, the portrayal of community-university partnerships in PSI public communications, and the effective application of principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement to communications and storytelling practices within Canadian PSIs.

### **Indigenous Engagement: The Evolving Imperative for Post-Secondary Institutions**

#### ***Examining the Historical Impact of Post-Secondary Institutions on Indigenous Communities***

I will begin my review by examining the historical impact PSIs have had on Indigenous communities, the emergence of reciprocal Indigenous engagement as an approach to reconciliation and decolonization, and the underlying factors that may prompt PSIs to adopt a rhetorical approach to reconciliation instead of a sincere one. Throughout history, Indigenous individuals and communities have been deprived of an equitable share of the benefits arising from academic research conducted on them by institutions. Regrettably, conventional research practices have often portrayed Indigenous peoples in an inaccurate light (Castleden et al., 2012, p. 161; Tuck, 2009, p. 412). Indigenous knowledge has been appropriated, their data has been used without informed consent, and certain university research has caused evident harm to participants and the broader communities involved (Castleden et al., 2012, p. 162; Tuck, 2009, p. 412). Additionally, Indigenous communities have consistently voiced their concerns about academic research perpetuating colonialism, neglecting local priorities and needs, failing to provide community benefits, and disregarding Indigenous cultural perspectives and

methodologies (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 404). For instance, in an open letter to communities, researchers, and educators, Tuck (2009) discussed the prevalent use of a damage-centered approach in contemporary research on Indigenous communities. According to Tuck, damaged-centered research involves documenting the suffering or hardships experienced by individuals, communities, or tribes. It aims to draw connections between historical exploitation, domination, colonization, and present-day issues such as poverty, health disparities, and low literacy rates. While this approach may seem beneficial initially, its danger lies in its pathologizing nature, where the focus on oppression becomes the sole defining factor for a community (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). Tuck's letter called for communities to implement a temporary halt on research that focuses solely on documenting harm. Instead, she encouraged a reevaluation of how research is framed and carried out, as well as a reconsideration of how the outcomes might be used by, for, and with communities.

### ***Truth, Reconciliation, and a New Era of Canadian Indigenous Engagement***

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada published 94 calls to action with the aim of addressing the lasting impact of residential schools and promoting the process of Canadian reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Drawing on the experiences shared by numerous survivors of Canada's Indian residential schools, the report stressed the need for significant transformations within Canadian governmental institutions and civil society. As the political landscape in Canada underwent changes, PSIs made a collective commitment to reconciliation, acknowledging the historical misuse of education in the context of Canadian colonial endeavors (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, pp.

221–222). Consequently, various Indigenous-developed frameworks have emerged in Canada, seeking to establish meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and Indigenous communities. These guidelines serve as a framework for research that is community-driven, self-determined, action-oriented, and culturally responsive (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 404). In their 2021 study, Hayward et al. conducted an analysis of 20 different Indigenous research ethics boards, frameworks, and protocols in Canada and identified three key themes: (1) balancing individual and collective rights, (2) upholding culturally-grounded ethical principles, and (3) ensuring community-driven and self-determined research (p. 408). As a result of these new frameworks, research is increasingly incorporating Indigenous cultural concepts, values, and perspectives into the selection and implementation of methodologies, as well as the interpretation of findings. These approaches are better equipped to incorporate decolonizing methods that dismantle power imbalances between researchers and participants/communities, challenge prevailing perspectives, provide space for Indigenous beliefs and ideas, and contribute to the overall revitalization and healing of the communities involved (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 412).

### ***Genuine Reconciliation Versus Rhetorical Reconciliation***

In addition to the TRC's 94 calls to action, the increase of Indigenous engagement efforts among Canadian PSIs can be attributed to a combination of intrinsic values and external factors. Intrinsically, Hayward et al. (2021) argued that innovative approaches to Indigenous engagement can address systemic power imbalances, racism, and epistemic oppression both within and beyond community-university partnerships. These approaches are more likely to

produce outcomes that align with community values, facilitate joint decision-making, and strengthen relationships between universities, researchers, and communities (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 413). Externally, PSIs face increasing pressures from governments and international organizations to enhance their engagement with society and address social issues (Larrán Jorge & Andrades Peña, 2017, p. 302). Financial and economic incentives also play a role in motivating community engagement (Koekkoek et al., 2021, p. 11; Larrán Jorge & Andrades Peña, 2017, p. 303). According to Benneworth et al. (2008), the level of financial support provided to PSIs by societies is determined by the public's expectation that PSIs will contribute to the broader well-being of their communities (p. 2). If PSIs fail to meet these expectations, society may turn to alternative institutions, resulting in a decline in the relevance and significance of PSIs (Benneworth et al., 2008, p. 7). Furthermore, Koekkoek et al. (2021) highlighted the use of community engagement as a means to enhance PSI recruitment and retention (p. 10) while Weerts & Sandmann (2008) discussed its use to strengthen brand equity among PSI audiences and stakeholders (p. 95). As a result, PSIs face increasing external pressures to effectively communicate their community engagement initiatives in a clear and accessible manner, often utilizing storytelling techniques (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 41). However, as I will explore in subsequent sections, it is important to acknowledge that stories motivated primarily by these external pressures risk undermining the intrinsic values of Indigenous engagement.

Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) discussed this juxtaposition well in their research that investigated how Canadian PSIs are working towards indigenization. Despite notable progress in

the way researchers engage with Indigenous communities, they asserted that challenges remain, particularly within institutional settings. According to them, there is a shared desire among communities, scholars, and administrators to cultivate stronger relationships. However, reconciling these aspirations with a university culture that predominantly perpetuates the erasure and marginalization of Indigenous voices presents a significant obstacle (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 218). Tuck and Yang (2012) echo these concerns by critiquing the tendency of institutions to employ "decolonization" as a metaphor, diluting its meaning and power. They argue that while calls to "decolonize" education, methods, or student thinking are becoming more common, these discussions often fail to acknowledge Indigenous peoples, their sovereignty struggles, or the intellectual contributions of Indigenous scholars to decolonization theory. This metaphorical use of decolonization allows institutions to appear progressive while avoiding the actual work of unsettling colonial structures and redistributing power. Such practices "domesticate" decolonization, turning it into a vague concept for general social reform rather than a radical process centered on Indigenous land, rights, and self-determination. In doing so, these institutions risk recentralizing settler perspectives and re-establishing colonial dominance under the guise of social justice, thereby foreclosing the possibility of genuine decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 2–3). Genuine reconciliation requires power sharing, transformative decision-making processes, and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples, faculty, staff, and students in shaping policies that directly affect them. Unfortunately, many PSIs have adopted a primarily rhetorical stance toward reconciliation, outwardly promoting enhanced collaboration with Indigenous communities while simultaneously perpetuating the

power dynamics and oppressive structures of the past (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 223). This rhetorical shift towards aspirational reconciliation underscores the central focus of my research problem, which I will delve into next: that PSIs often struggle to tell stories about Indigenous engagement that genuinely embrace reciprocity and acknowledge the valuable contributions of their Indigenous partners.

### **Unraveling the Problem: Why Do Post-Secondary Institutions Struggle to Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement?**

#### ***PSI Stories About Community Engagement Do Not Reflect Core Engagement Principles***

This section addresses the primary challenge faced by PSIs in effectively communicating their Indigenous engagement efforts. This challenge is examined through the lens of framing theory and the barriers encountered by PSI communicators operating within colonial institutions. A key focus here is on institutional communications, which are produced by public affairs or communications offices and differ from other types of university communications, such as research dissemination or scholarly writing. While research communications share academic findings and scholarly writing focuses on rigorous analysis and balanced reporting, institutional communications are primarily aimed at promoting the university's image and activities. Shaped by neoliberal and marketing strategies, these communications prioritize brand management over meaningful engagement with complex social issues, such as Indigenous reconciliation and decolonization. This focus on protecting the university's reputation often aligns with broader corporate management practices within higher education. As Giroux (2014) highlights, these practices reflect a shift toward corporate values, with universities increasingly

driven by market principles and performance metrics rather than genuine community engagement (p. 30). This corporatized approach often results in narratives that favor institutional image over authentic, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no existing research that specifically examines how Canadian PSIs tell stories about Indigenous engagement. However, in 2013, Arrazattee et al. conducted a study that examined how American post-secondary institutions represent community-university partnerships in their public communications. The study analyzed over 100 public-facing communications (e.g., articles on community-university engagement) from six American universities that had received prestigious distinctions for community engagement (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 43). Arrazattee et al. identified five principles for assessing communications that reflect reciprocal campus-community partnerships, including clear identification of community partner identities, evidence of mutually beneficial exchange, description of transformational relationships, and use of collaborative language (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 45). However, despite being recognized as leaders in community engagement, results showed that the majority of public communications from these universities did not effectively portray partnerships in a manner aligned with principles of reciprocity and valuing community partners (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 41).

Public communications that are not reciprocal or are university-centric (i.e. harmful storytelling) risk alienating community partners, perpetuating representations of powerless communities, and reinforcing the harmful research practices earlier discussed by Tuck (2003) and Castleden et al. (2012) (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 41; Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022, p. 7;

Hayward et al., 2021, p. 404). Furthermore, the inconsistency between proclaiming to be an engaged university while producing communications that lack reciprocity and value for community partners poses a risk to the reputation of PSIs. This inconsistency may lead to backlash from audiences aligned with the affected communities and hinder the PSI's ability to have a positive impact on community objectives (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 49; Key et al., 2021, p. 14; Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 449). This research suggests that by telling harmful stories about Indigenous engagement, institutions not only undermine their commitment to these values but also risk jeopardizing relationships between Indigenous communities, universities, and researchers.

### ***A Legacy of Using Damage-Centered Frames to Portray Indigenous Peoples***

Arrazattee et al. (2013) primarily attribute the inadequacy of university communications, despite advancements in community engagement practices, to the framing of these stories (p. 49). Framing, in this context, refers to the process of selectively choosing elements from perceived reality and constructing a narrative that emphasizes the connections between them to promote a specific interpretation. Comprehensive frames typically serve four functions: defining the problem, conducting causal analysis, making moral judgments, and promoting solutions (Entman, 2007, p. 164). Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples have long been subjected to harmful frames that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization (Callison & Young, 2020; Jiwani & Young, 2006; McCue, 2023). For instance, in his 2023 book *Decolonizing Journalism: A Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities*, McCue (2023) discusses how the Canadian media, has consistently employed damage-centered frames when reporting on Indigenous

peoples, portraying them as morally depraved, racially inferior, and incapable of self-governance (p. 13). According to McCue and other scholars, these frames have significantly influenced Canadians' perceptions and treatment of Indigenous communities, with the media complicit in perpetuating colonialism and racism (Callison & Young, 2020, p. 168; McCue, 2023, p. 13; Younging, 2018, pp. 8–9), resulting in the continued marginalization and exclusion of Indigenous peoples (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 912). Consequently, Indigenous peoples rightly fear journalists and other institutional storytellers (McCue, 2023, p. 4). As demonstrated by Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) research, PSI communicators are not immune to harmful biases and run the risk of perpetuating damaging frames if they continue to create stories that exclude community voices, lack reciprocity, or approach communities through a damage-centered lens (pp. 48–49). Therefore, PSI communicators who aim to share reciprocal stories about Indigenous engagement bear a greater responsibility to address this harmful legacy and should strive to be ethical "storytellers" rather than "story takers" when developing content involving Indigenous partners.

### ***The Barriers of Being a Communicator in a Colonial Setting***

Contemporary PSI communicators rarely intend to harm communities. From my experience, most of them aim to do good. However, communicators face systemic challenges when telling stories involving underserved, marginalized, or excluded communities. First, extensive research has examined how hegemonic communication systems historically maintain existing power structures and exclude marginalized communities (Dutta, 2015; Jiwani & Young, 2006; LaFever, 2008; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948; Logan, 2021). This suggests that PSI

communicators, often trained in traditional fields like journalism, public relations, and marketing, are not naturally equipped to create mutually reciprocal stories, share power with partners outside their institutions, or be inclusive of non-hegemonic values or perspectives. Similarly, Arrazattee et al. (2013) identified a lack of community-specific knowledge or training in core principles guiding community engagement work as a major reason for PSI communicators' failure to tell reciprocal stories (p. 41). Exacerbating this situation, Capizzo (2022) further discussed the challenges faced by current public relations measurement and evaluation frameworks in effectively capturing outcomes that extend beyond an organization's objectives and interests, specifically focusing on external or public-centered results. In the context of my research, this implies that PSI stories are primarily measured based on their capacity to enhance their institution's reputation and business objectives, rather than their potential societal impact. From my personal experience, this approach leads to stories that emphasize the achievements of students, faculty, or staff in making an impact "on community," rather than actively collaborating "with communities."

Second, PSI communicators trained in ethical engagement principles face systemic barriers within their institutions. PSIs, as colonial and capitalist organizations, are designed to resist change and maintain the status quo. The system is laden with numerous rules, forms, and levels of approvals that hinder partnerships and resource sharing beyond academic institutions (Kohl-Arenas, 2023). For instance, communicators are often not given sufficient time to establish relationships based on mutual trust with Indigenous partners (Castleden et al., 2012, p. 168), PSI mass communication formats are not well suited to telling stories about

transformational relationships (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 48; Callison & Young, 2020, p. 180), and despite a communicator's desire to include more Indigenous voices or perspectives in their stories, their superiors may prioritize hegemonic views, perspectives, contexts, and cultural frameworks, excluding Indigenous ones (Callison & Young, 2020, pp. 170–171). Consequently, PSI communicators may inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances between universities and communities through the content they create.

### **How Post-Secondary Institutions Can Use Storytelling to Support Indigenous Communities**

#### ***Defining Communication Infrastructure Theory***

There is a gap in the literature regarding the reciprocal storytelling and communication practices of PSIs that can support and benefit Indigenous partners. Therefore, this section aims to explore how public and private organizations utilize communication and storytelling to frame community narratives, contribute to goal-setting, and advance social objectives. By reviewing relevant literature, the objective is to demonstrate how PSIs can play a role as storytelling agents in creating a community that acknowledges Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and seeks to advance Indigenous objectives.

According to Kim and Ball-Rokeach's theory of communications infrastructure (CIT) (2006), community construction relies on the shared stories told by its members. These stories encompass their identities, desires, experiences, as well as the opportunities, barriers, and ways in which the community should address them. At its core, CIT argues that the foundation of local communities lies in the availability of storytelling resources about the community. Without access to communication resources, particularly storytelling, individuals and communities are

unable to engage in collective community action and development (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 177). One key aspect of the theory is the concept of an integrated storytelling network comprising of macro-, meso-, and microstorytelling agents. Macrostorytelling agents are responsible for sharing stories at a city, national, or global level, including mainstream media outlets, large organizations, or brands. Meso-storytelling agents focus on regional stories within the city, such as geo-ethnic media or community/non-profit organizations. Microstorytelling agents are individual storytellers within the community who share stories with their family, friends, co-workers and others (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 179). In an ideal community, this integrated network of meso- and microstorytellers inspires one another to share narratives about the local community. Through this interconnected storytelling network, individuals are well-informed about local events and issues. They engage in conversations with their neighbors, discussing local matters in a way that encourages active participation in community-building efforts (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 181).

### ***Using Communications Resources to Support Indigenous Communities***

CIT is valuable in understanding how PSIs and PSI communicators can support diverse and underrepresented communities. As storytelling agents, PSIs wield significant power to shape the narratives of their communities (Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022, p. 2; Entman, 2007, pp. 170–11; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 178) and contribute to the discourse of publics, organizations, and governments as partners in co-creative meaning-making processes and community goal-setting (Fehrer et al., 2022, p. 619; Heath, 2011, p. 417; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 180; Logan, 2021, p. 13; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177). For Indigenous communities

that have faced systemic barriers to communication infrastructure (Province of British Columbia, n.d., para. 6), PSIs can play a crucial role in amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives and advancing Indigenous objectives (i.e., reciprocal storytelling). As mesostorytelling agents, PSIs can convene and support community conversations about Indigenous issues, history, opportunities, and threats. As macrostorytelling agents, PSIs have the power to influence their students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as their local and regional communities (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 180). By increasing equitable access to communication infrastructure and sharing counter-frames that are healing to Indigenous communities, PSIs can be important agents in creating a community that is aware of Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and wants to advance Indigenous objectives (Dutta, 2015, p. 141; Edelman, 2023, p. 36; Heath, 2011, p. 420; LaFever, 2008, p. 171; McCue, 2023, pp. 32–33; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2021, p. 121). Additionally, for PSIs that have contributed to and benefited from discrimination, oppression, and colonialism, reciprocal storytelling provides an opportunity to rebuild trust with Indigenous communities, demonstrate a commitment to reciprocity and decolonization, and motivate participation in community-building activities that benefit Indigenous communities (Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022, p. 8; Logan, 2021, p. 13; Mulligan, 2022, p. 2; Yudarwati & Gregory, 2022, p. 8).

### ***Leveraging Authentic Brand Activism to Address Extrinsic Pressures***

Lastly, extensive research illustrates the potential of reciprocal storytelling in cultivating brand loyalty. As societal expectations for organizations and brands to take a stance on socio-political matters continue to rise (Edelman, 2023, p. 28; Key et al., 2021, p. 2), PSIs can increase

brand loyalty through authentic brand activism. Vredenburg et al. (2021) defined this concept as “a purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a nonneutral stance on institutionally contested socio-political issues, to create social change and marketing success” (p. 446). Their research revealed that brands that have well-established prosocial corporate practices and messaging, coupled with clearly defined purpose and values, have the potential to benefit from authentic brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 454). In essence, by sharing reciprocal stories that showcase collaborations between PSIs and Indigenous communities in addressing Indigenous issues and advancing Indigenous objectives, PSIs that are genuinely committed to reciprocal Indigenous engagement have an opportunity to foster increased brand enthusiasm and loyalty among audiences who empathize with Indigenous concerns (Key et al., 2021, p. 14; Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 451). By employing authentic brand activism strategies, PSI communicators can simultaneously address some of the external pressures that drive the demand for community-university engagement, as mentioned earlier (such as government pressure, financial incentives, recruitment, and brand equity).

### **How Can Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement That Amplify Indigenous Voices and Perspectives and Advance Indigenous Objectives?**

#### ***Applying Principles of Reciprocal Indigenous Engagement to PSI Communications***

As mentioned, based on my review and to the best of my knowledge, there is currently no specific research focused on how Canadian PSIs share or produce reciprocal stories about Indigenous engagement. However, I find inspiration in Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) suggestion that PSI communicators should apply principles of reciprocal community engagement to their

communication practices (pp. 49–50). I have found this particularly effective in my own experiences creating stories about Indigenous engagement at the University of British Columbia. This approach holds significant value, as Hayward et al. (2021) have examined how community-based research ethics protocols can be employed to dismantle power imbalances between researchers and participants/communities, challenge prevailing viewpoints, foster the inclusion of Indigenous beliefs and ideas, and ultimately contribute to the revitalization and well-being of the involved communities (p. 412). Furthermore, this approach demonstrates a higher likelihood of aligning with the priorities and lived experiences of Indigenous communities. This alignment enhances the potential for positive outcomes and cultivates productive relationships between Indigenous partners, communities, researchers, and their institutions (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 413). Therefore, investigating how PSI communicators can effectively apply principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement presents an appealing approach to addressing my research question. So, in this final section of my Literature Review, I will discuss literature-based best practices and strategies that PSI communicators can adapt to encourage Indigenous participation, amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives, and promote Indigenous objectives. It should be noted, however, that there are no universal principles of Indigenous engagement. Therefore, for the purpose of my research, I have categorized them into the following themes: (1) creating equitable opportunities for community participation, (2) including community voices and perspectives into PSI frames, and (3) fostering reciprocity and advancing community objectives.

***Creating Equitable Opportunities for Community Participation***

Jürgen Habermas believed that speech acts, with their implicit claims open to criticism and justification, could result in a rational society (referred to as the "lifeworld") where people engage in coordinated actions based on mutual understanding and social integration (Habermas, 1984). Habermas identified four requirements for an ideal speech situation, including equal opportunities to speak, an absence of constraints on the outcome of discourse, equal legitimacy among speakers, and a lack of power imbalances (Habermas, 1984). Similarly, community engagement practitioners recognize the importance of creating spaces that enable their community partners to participate fully (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, pp. 12–13; LaFever, 2008, p. 172; Mulligan, 2022, p. 2; University of British Columbia, n.d.). For instance, LaFever (2008) suggested that the needs of marginalized community groups should take precedence over the needs of the dominant group (p. 172), that sufficient resources should be provided to marginalized community groups to overcome power imbalances (p. 172), and that racism and negative historical relationships should be addressed from the outset (p. 173). Transparency holds paramount importance in this context and entails maintaining clear, honest, and ongoing dialogue regarding process, ownership, access, and motivation (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 408; Hoekstra et al., 2020, pp. 14–15; University of British Columbia, n.d.-b, para. 7; Yudarwati & Gregory, 2022, p. 7). Considering the mistrust that many Indigenous communities harbor towards media, PSI communicators should strive to confront the colonial tensions within themselves and their institutions (McCue, 2023, p. x; University of British Columbia, 2019, p. 12). They should also reimagine the storytelling process, placing Indigenous

communities' ethical guidelines at the forefront (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 408; Hoekstra et al., 2020, pp. 14–15; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 12; Miller, 2022; Tuck, 2009, p. 423).

Younging (2018) provides several principles that are vital for creating equitable opportunities for Indigenous participation in storytelling. These include the importance of collaboration with Indigenous peoples to ensure cultural authenticity and adherence to Indigenous protocols (p.100), recognizing traditional knowledge and oral traditions as Indigenous cultural property that requires proper permission and consultation for use (p. 101), and understanding the foundational role of relationship and trust in producing works with authentic Indigenous content (p. 101). Additionally, Younging emphasizes the need for fair compensation, such as royalties and payment for Indigenous contributors, as part of ethical and respectful publishing practices (p. 101). By following these principles, PSI communicators can foster more meaningful, respectful, and equitable engagement with Indigenous partners.

In an impressive study, Hoekstra et al. (2020) undertook a comprehensive review of 86 studies examining the principles, strategies, outcomes, and impacts of community engaged research. According to their findings, ethical engagement involves actively listening to and learning from communities partners, as well as recognizing, respecting, and valuing their diverse knowledge, experiences, and contexts (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14). These findings closely parallel Ermine's (2007) notion of the "ethical space of engagement," which he proposed as a framework to address reconciliation within the Canadian context. According to Ermine (2007), the ethical space acts as a neutral zone for dialogue and cooperation between Western and Indigenous entities or cultures. It empowers them to step beyond their worldviews and

participate in cross-cultural conversations (p. 201). The ethical space serves as a vehicle to transition from asymmetrical social orders into partnership models among diverse world communities. This collaborative model, fostered through cooperation between Indigenous and Western entities, has the potential to engender novel modes of thought and interaction, thereby promoting a more comprehensive path to reconciliation (Ermine, 2007, p. 203).

In summary, by eliminating power imbalances, prioritizing community needs, maintaining transparency, directly confronting colonialism, and adhering to Indigenous Protocols and principles, PSI communicators can empower Indigenous partners to participate fully in the development of stories. By doing so, they create narratives that are both authentic and respectful, fostering a more inclusive and equitable storytelling environment that aligns with principles of cultural integrity and reciprocity.

### ***Including Community Voices and Perspectives into PSI Frames***

By including and centering community voices throughout the storytelling process, communicators not only increase awareness of community issues, opportunities, and challenges (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 180), but also create avenues for community expertise to influence decision-making and contribute to community problem-solving and goal-setting endeavors (Mulligan, 2022, p. 2). Additionally, incorporating community values, culture, and perspectives is a fundamental principle of the community engaged research process (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 408; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 9; University of British Columbia, 2019, p. 10). Mohan Dutta (2015) asserted that activists have a responsibility to bring marginalized communities' conversations into the structures of power (p. 137). Similarly, community

engagement practitioners emphasize the importance of incorporating and amplifying community voices into the research process (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14). In the context of storytelling, communicators wield significant power in shaping the perception of problems, influencing moral judgments, and promoting solutions to their audiences through framing, priming, and agenda setting techniques (Entman, 2007; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). These frames can either harm communities (Jiwani & Young, 2006) or serve them (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 49; Logan, 2021; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2021, p. 116; Mulligan, 2022, p. 10). Consequently, Arrazattee et al. (2013) caution PSI communicators against employing frames that portray communities as "helpless" and instead recommend utilizing collaborative and strength-based language in stories about community engagement (p.49). This closely aligns with Tuck's (2009) call for alternative research approaches that prioritize capturing desire rather than solely focusing on damage. Desire-based research frameworks aim to comprehend the complexities, contradictions, and self-determination embedded in lived experiences. They transcend the mere documentation of painful aspects of social realities and acknowledge the wisdom and hope that exists within them. This perspective emphasizes that communities encompass far more than their adversities, even in the face of community fractures and historical conquest (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). When applied to storytelling, McCue (2023) stresses the importance of "solutions-oriented" journalism in countering feelings of desolation and despair surrounding Indigenous communities and instead instilling hope in viewers and readers (p. 32). By portraying Indigenous individuals as problem solvers, storytellers have the potential to transform narratives of Indigenous victimhood into narratives of empowerment and self-determination (p. 33).

Additionally, Younging (2018) advocates for stories that genuinely reflect Indigenous experiences as understood by Indigenous Peoples, offer truthful and meaningful Indigenous content, and maintain the cultural integrity of Indigenous communities (p. 99). He advises storytellers to recognize the diversity and uniqueness of Indigenous cultures, which are continuous and deeply rooted in ancestral heritage (p. 100). Younging's principles emphasize the need for storytelling that accurately reflects Indigenous perspectives, avoiding homogenization or misrepresentation. They also caution against narratives that suggest Indigenous cultures have been irreparably altered or diminished by colonization, instead highlighting the importance of cultural revitalization, renewal, and the involvement of Indigenous youth in these processes (p. 100).

By incorporating these principles into their storytelling practices, PSI communicators can create narratives that are both solutions-oriented and culturally accurate and respectful. This approach aligns with the broader goal of promoting stories that challenge deficit-focused narratives and instead highlight the strengths, resilience, and aspirations of Indigenous communities. In summary, by including Indigenous voices and perspectives in their frames, PSI communicators can use storytelling to educate the public, challenge dominant ideologies, and replace harmful stereotypes with asset-based frames that celebrate the richness of Indigenous partners and their communities (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 49; Dutta, 2015, p. 136; McCue, 2023, p. 32).

***Fostering Reciprocity and Advancing Community Objectives***

Finally, a crucial principle of community engagement is that research objectives should be reciprocal and aim to build capacity for communities to thrive (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 9; University of British Columbia, 2019, p. 9). In research involving Indigenous communities, Hayward et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of ensuring that research is based on respect for community self-determination and carried out collaboratively with participants (p. 413). Likewise, communication scholars are increasingly advocating for communications to serve social objectives (Arrazattee et al., 2013; Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022; Dutta, 2015; Fehrer et al., 2022; Heath, 2011; LaFever, 2008; Logan, 2021; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2021; Mulligan, 2022; Yudarwati & Gregory, 2022). For instance, Logan's (2021) theory of corporate responsibility to race (CRR) is based on three assumptions: (1) corporations have a duty to promote racial justice by using communication strategies that foster better race relations because (2) corporations are organizational entities that have arisen through racist and racialized processes, and (3) corporations have directly and indirectly caused and profited from racial discrimination and oppression, which has greatly exacerbated racial conflict and social instability (p. 13). In her CRR framework, she proposes five communication principles. Firstly, CRR communications must raise awareness about racism (p. 13). Secondly, they should shed light on the implications of racism and the complex nature of how it operates (p. 13). Thirdly, CRR communications must advocate for racial justice and equity (p. 13). Fourthly, they should demonstrate a commitment to improving race relations and promoting a more equitable and harmonious society (p. 13). Finally, CRR communications should prioritize

societal needs over corporate financial interests, as they are not focused on generating profit like other corporate activities such as sales, marketing, and product development (p. 13). By substituting the term "race" with "colonialism," a significant number of Logan's principles can be relevant to how PSI communicators tell stories about Indigenous engagement. Perhaps it could even be worth developing a theory of corporate responsibility to decolonize. As Dutta (2015) contends, communicators acting in solidarity with marginalized communities can be powerful activists for bringing community concerns to the forefront of political, economic, judicial, and civil society spaces (p. 139). To conclude, by sharing power with Indigenous partners to establish story objectives and centering those objectives in PSI stories, PSI communicators can become valuable activists in advancing Indigenous objectives.

### **A Need for Further Research: Gaps in the Literature**

In this final section, I will conclude my review by providing a brief summary of the gaps identified in the literature that I aim to address through my thesis research. Firstly, while there is a substantial body of literature on researchers' reciprocal engagement with Indigenous communities, there is limited information on the role of communications and PSI storytelling in either supporting or hindering these efforts. Secondly, the study conducted by Arrazattee et al. (2013) appears to be the sole investigation into how post-secondary institutions represent community-university partnerships in their public communications. However, this study is now a decade old and only focused on six American institutions. The authors themselves acknowledged this limitation and cautioned against generalizing their findings to other university communications (p. 50). To the best of my knowledge, there are no more recent

studies available, particularly ones that specifically evaluate how Canadian PSIs communicate their engagement with Indigenous communities. Thirdly, there is a lack of research exploring how PSIs utilize communications and storytelling to shape community narratives, contribute to goal setting, and promote social objectives. Specifically, there is a lack of understanding regarding how PSIs can serve as effective storytelling agents in cultivating a community that acknowledges Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and strives to advance Indigenous objectives. Lastly, despite a growing body of literature on decolonizing storytelling, primarily within the realm of journalism, there is no equivalent research conducted in the Canadian PSI context that directly addresses my research question or explores how Canadian PSIs can effectively apply principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement to their communications and storytelling practices.

## **Methodology**

### **Overall Research Design**

For my research, I adopted a mixed methods approach that combined quantitative content analysis (Huxley, 2020; Saksena, 2019) and qualitative semi-structured interviews (Ahlin, 2019; Forman & Damschroder, 2007) to explore and evaluate how Canadian universities frame Indigenous engagement in their public-facing stories. Grounded in the transformative paradigm (Jewiss, 2018; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), my research aims to contribute to positive transformations within universities by uncovering guiding principles, challenges, and recommendations for storytelling that aligns with the themes of reciprocal Indigenous

engagement that I identified in my Literature Review. These themes included: (1) creating equitable opportunities for community participation, (2) including community voices and perspectives into PSI frames, and (3) fostering reciprocity and advancing community objectives. Ultimately, my goal is to provide suggestions that help PSIs communicators use storytelling to break down power hierarchies between their institutions and Indigenous partners and share frames that challenge dominant perspectives.

To accomplish this, my data collection began with a quantitative content analysis of public-facing stories from university websites. This analysis served as a baseline for understanding how stories about Indigenous engagement are currently being told by universities in Canada. Considering communication infrastructure theory (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006), I narrowed my focus to ten of Canada's largest universities, as these institutions possess greater communication resources and potential to be influential storytelling agents within their respective communities. Subsequently, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews involving two groups from these institutions. The first group consisted of the authors whose stories received positive scores in my quantitative content analysis. The second group included senior-level Indigenous engagement leads (IELs), responsible for advising their institutions on Indigenous engagement. These interviews contextualized and expanded on the results obtained from my initial content analysis, identified guiding principles and challenges for telling stories about Indigenous engagement, and elicited recommendations for how universities should do this work. By employing this combination of methods, I was able to analyze both the objective

elements of the stories and gain valuable perspectives and experiences from key stakeholders involved in storytelling and Indigenous engagement.

Simultaneously, my research has involved exploring innovative applications of Open AI's Chat GPT-4 to support research and content analysis. For my study, I developed a custom GPT, trained on my thesis data, designed specifically to assist in my investigation regarding how Canadian universities create stories about their Indigenous engagement efforts. Additionally, I crafted several effective Chat GPT-4 prompts which could benefit other researchers. These prompts facilitate quantitative content analysis of online articles, clean up Zoom-generated transcripts, distill transcript statements into layman's terms, and analyze different segments of transcripts from various interviews simultaneously. Through this approach, I aim to contribute to the emerging conversation regarding how researchers can use generative AI ethically to enhance their work.

### **Data Set One: Quantitative Content Analysis of Public-Facing Stories about Indigenous Engagement Created by Canadian Universities**

#### ***Research Design***

My study began with a quantitative content analysis (Huxley, 2020; Saksena, 2019) of public-facing stories created by Canadian universities related to Indigenous Engagement. Through this analysis, I aimed to create a benchmark for how Canadian universities are currently telling stories about Indigenous engagement. Inspired by Arrazattee et al. (2013), my goal was to evaluate if contemporary university stories frame partnerships in a manner aligned with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

Arrazattee et al. (2013) used content analysis with the following codes to determine if American PSI stories reflected core principles of community engagement: clear identification of community partner identities, evidence of mutually beneficial exchange, description of transformational relationships, and use of collaborative language (p. 45). In the field of communication studies, quantitative content analysis has a well-established history of application for coding and examining news coverage. Additionally, it can be effectively combined with complementary methods like surveys or interviews to enhance comprehension of the phenomena under investigation (Huxley, 2020). Similarly, Saksena (2019) discussed how quantitative content analysis, in combination with other qualitative methods, was an effective way of examining the impact of media frames on public perception. Consequently, I chose quantitative content analysis as my approach to analyze if Canadian university stories effectively frame partnerships in a manner aligned with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

In my study, stories were quantitatively analyzed to assess their alignment with six distinct codes, determining whether they met the criteria positively or negatively. The following coding scheme is based on Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) codes and modified to incorporate the themes of reciprocal Indigenous engagement that I identified in my literature review—primarily themes (2) including community voices and perspectives into PSI frames, and (3) fostering reciprocity and advancing community objectives (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

***Codes Used for Quantitative Analysis of University Stories***

Code	Definition
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<b>1. Is the Indigenous partner clearly identified?</b>	This code ensures that the Indigenous partner's identification is clearly stated in the story. It helps determine if the story provides adequate recognition to the Indigenous partner involved in the partnership.
<b>2. Are the contributions and expertise of the Indigenous partner clearly acknowledged and valued?</b>	This code assesses whether the story explicitly acknowledges and values the contributions and expertise of the Indigenous partner. It helps determine if the story recognizes the Indigenous partner's knowledge and ensures their meaningful involvement.
<b>3. Does the story amplify or include the voices of Indigenous partners?</b>	This code assesses whether the story includes the voices of the Indigenous partners. Are the Indigenous partners quoted in the story?
<b>4. Does the story amplify Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences?</b>	This code assesses whether the article educates the reader about Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences. It helps determine if the story reflects a genuine effort to incorporate and respect Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
<b>5. Does the story support or advance Indigenous objectives or needs?</b>	This code evaluates whether the story demonstrates support for or contributes to advancing Indigenous objectives or addressing Indigenous needs. It helps determine if the story goes beyond surface-level engagement and actively contributes to the well-being of Indigenous communities.
<b>6. Is the framing of the Indigenous partner or community asset-based?</b>	This code evaluates how the story portrays the Indigenous partner or community, focusing on whether it highlights strengths, resilience, and aspirations or perpetuates stereotypes and deficit-based narratives.

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***Sample Data and Data-Gathering Tools***

I gathered 181 stories published between August 2022 and July 2023, which featured Indigenous people, events, or initiatives. For my research, the term “stories” included articles, blog posts, and media releases. See Table 2 for sample data.

**Table 2*****Sample Story Data***

<b>Story Title</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Elders and Indigenous knowledge keepers take pride in images of their ancestors</b>	2023-01-27	University of Alberta	The article highlights "Ancestors," an exhibition at U of A that features historic photos and stories shared with elders and knowledge keepers, challenging colonial narratives and celebrating Indigenous resilience.
<b>Environmentally friendly 'biofoam' could address plastic pollution crisis</b>	2022-11-07	University of British Columbia	This article discusses how a new biodegradable 'biofoam,' developed at UBC in partnership with Wet'suwet'en First Nation, offers an eco-friendly packaging solution that decomposes in soil within weeks, addressing the plastic pollution crisis.
<b>Unwavering spirit: How one Indigenous artist worked with her community to preserve Indigenous language</b>	2023-06-21	University of New Brunswick	The article describes a collaboration at UNB, where Wolastoqey artist Natalie Sappier and the community erected a tipi adorned with Indigenous language, embodying Wolastoqey culture and

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			heritage, as part of a vision for sacred spaces on campus.
<b>Pewaseskwan at USask supports Nehiyawak (Cree) language and culture revitalization on Saskatchewan First Nation</b>	2023-01-20	University of Saskatchewan	The article discusses Pewaseskwan's support for a community-led research project at Onion Lake Cree Nation, aiming to revitalize Cree language and ceremonies through elder storytelling, enhancing community wellness and preserving traditions for future generations.

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These stories were sourced from 10 of Canada's most prominent universities, chosen for their representation across each province and their status as the largest in terms of student population within their respective provinces. The institutions included are the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, Dalhousie University, Memorial University of Newfoundland, the University of Manitoba, University of New Brunswick, McGill University, and the University of Prince Edward Island (see Table 3). This selection was informed by communication infrastructure theory, underlining the assumption that these institutions are most likely to have the highest expectations and resources for engaging in Indigenous partnerships, alongside the most significant communication resources and influence as storytelling agents within their communities (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006).

**Table 3**

***Number of Articles Collected from Each Institution***

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Number of Articles Collected</b>
<b>University of Alberta</b>	Alberta	27
<b>University of Saskatchewan</b>	Saskatchewan	27
<b>University of British Columbia</b>	British Columbia	25
<b>University of Toronto</b>	Ontario	24
<b>Dalhousie University</b>	Nova Scotia	15
<b>Memorial University of Newfoundland</b>	Newfoundland	15
<b>University of Manitoba</b>	Manitoba	15
<b>University of New Brunswick</b>	New Brunswick	14
<b>McGill University</b>	Quebec	12
<b>University of Prince Edward Island</b>	Prince Edward Island	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>181</b>

Regarding data collection tools, I leveraged the Chrome extension "Fireshot: Website Screenshots + Annotations" to capture screenshots of each story. Following this, I utilized Microsoft Excel to systematically gather bibliographic information, categorize, and process the stories collected.

***Data Gathering Process***

For my research, I limited my data collection to main institutional brand websites and their primary news or media relations websites. Again, considering communication infrastructure theory (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006), these sites represent some of a university's most significant communication assets and typically attract the highest web traffic. Stories featured on these main sites are those that universities are most eager in amplifying across their storytelling networks, sharing with media, and using to influence community narratives.

Upon discovering an article, I took a screenshot and then recorded the story's metadata in my Excel spreadsheet. This included the name of the institution, the publication date, the story's author, and the online location of the story. Initially, I collected any story featuring Indigenous people, events, or initiatives. However, my study ultimately concentrates on stories about Indigenous engagement. I define this as the collaboration between PSIs and Indigenous partners on reciprocal initiatives and the exchange of knowledge.

To refine my study, I further delineated the terms "collaboration" and "Indigenous partner." I defined "collaboration" as a structured and reciprocal agreement or relationship between a PSI and an Indigenous entity, going beyond mere participation or speaking engagements. An "Indigenous partner" refers to Indigenous individuals, groups, organizations, or communities external to the PSI. These partners, who are not students, faculty, staff, alumni, or any internal members of the PSI, play a crucial role in co-organizing, co-sponsoring, or planning initiatives. As a result, articles that solely celebrated the contributions and achievements of Indigenous students, faculty, or staff without emphasizing collaborations with external Indigenous partners were excluded from further analysis. However, I made one exception for "internal" Indigenous individuals, specifically for "in-residence" Elders, viewing them as a special case of engagement. Even though they are part of the university, Elders serve as a vital bridge, helping to build strong, two-way relationships between universities and Indigenous communities.

After completing my data collection, I used OpenAI's Chat GPT-4 to summarize each story and then evaluate whether the article discussed a partnership between a PSI and an

Indigenous entity. If Chat GPT-4 identified an article as discussing such a partnership, it would proceed with a full content analysis. Otherwise, the analysis would halt, and Chat GPT-4 would provide reasons for excluding the article. I would manually review and approve this rationale. For a detailed insight into how I employed Chat GPT-4 for this purpose, refer to Appendix A in my thesis, which outlines the specific prompt I used for the analysis.

Out of the 181 articles collected, 76 met my criteria for Indigenous engagement and were included in the final content analysis. Not unexpectedly, my findings suggested that larger institutions, such as the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia, likely have more resources to create stories about Indigenous engagement compared to smaller institutions like the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) or Dalhousie University. However, the notably low number of stories from McGill University was unexpected. Regrettably, none of the articles from UPEI qualified for inclusion in my final analysis.

**Table 4**

***Number of Articles Included in My Final Content Analysis***

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Number of Articles Included in my Final Analysis</b>
<b>University of Alberta</b>	12
<b>University of British Columbia</b>	11
<b>University of Saskatchewan</b>	9
<b>University of Toronto</b>	9
<b>University of Manitoba</b>	8
<b>Memorial University of Newfoundland</b>	8
<b>Dalhousie University</b>	7
<b>University of New Brunswick</b>	7
<b>McGill University</b>	5
<b>University of Prince Edward Island</b>	0
<b>Total</b>	76

### ***Method of Data Analysis***

I utilized Chat GPT-4 to conduct a quantitative content analysis on the 76 stories that met my criteria for Indigenous engagement. The process began with Chat GPT-4 summarizing each story and verifying its relevance to Indigenous engagement. For stories fitting the criteria, Chat GPT-4 then analyzed their content according to my six codes, providing detailed justifications for its evaluations (refer to Appendix A for the complete Chat GPT-4 prompt used). Following each analysis, I conducted a manual review of Chat GPT-4's conclusions and its rationale against each article. Whenever I found discrepancies or sought further clarification, I engaged Chat GPT-4 with additional prompts aimed at obtaining more detailed explanations, examples, or specificity. Here are a few examples of follow up prompts:

- “For question 5 [code 4], I understand that the event [featured in the article] amplifies Indigenous values, perspectives and experiences but does the article educate the reader about Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences?”
- “Can you provide more justification for question 7 [code 6]?”
- “For question 4 [code 3], are any Indigenous partners quoted in the article? [The individual you identified] is not one of the partners.”
- “For question 3 [code 2], if the partners are not clearly identified, how can their contributions or expertise be acknowledged in the article?”

Sometimes, Chat GPT-4 would apologize, adjust its analysis based on my feedback, and make corrections. However, there were instances when Chat GPT-4 would elaborate on its

reasoning, leading me to reconsider and adjust my own evaluation. Refer to Appendix B for an example of an analysis conducted with Chat GPT-4. I found that employing Chat GPT-4 for my analysis proved to be more objective and efficient than manual analysis and, on average, I was able to analyze 10 articles per hour.

Throughout the data analysis, I employed an iterative feedback loop with Chat GPT-4. Based on the AI's responses and the challenges observed in its evaluations, I continuously refined and adjusted my prompt. This iterative process was crucial in enhancing the accuracy and relevance of the AI's analysis over time. For example, my prompt for my initial question, "Is this article about a partnership between a post-secondary institution and an Indigenous partner?" underwent several revisions to provide a clearer definition of an external Indigenous partner, with the aim of improving Chat GPT-4's evaluations. The evolution of the prompt, from Version 1.0 to Version 1.3, exemplifies this feedback-driven refinement:

- Version 1.0: This question assesses the presence or absence of a partnership between the post-secondary institution and an external Indigenous entity. For the purpose of this analysis, an "Indigenous partner" refers to Indigenous individuals, groups, organizations, or communities that are not students, faculty, staff, alumni, or any internal members of the post-secondary institution. The focus is on external collaborations or partnerships.
- Version 1.3: This question assesses the presence or absence of a formal partnership or collaboration between the post-secondary institution and an external Indigenous entity. This is a crucial aspect of my research and captures

the basic requirement for a story to be considered relevant to my analysis. For the purpose of this analysis, a "partnership" or "collaboration" refers to a structured and mutual agreement or relationship between the institution and the Indigenous entity, going beyond mere participation or speaking engagements. An "Indigenous partner" refers to Indigenous individuals, groups, organizations, or communities that are not students, faculty, staff, alumni, or any internal members of the post-secondary institution but have a significant role in co-organizing, co-sponsoring, or planning the event or initiative.

Once satisfied with the analysis results, I documented the quantitative findings in my Excel spreadsheet and saved a screenshot of Chat GPT-4's complete analysis (refer to Appendix B for examples of an analysis conducted with Chat GPT-4).

Lastly, in addition to my quantitative content analysis, I used Chat GPT-4 for a deeper examination of the article summaries, aiming to uncover recurring themes and topics. Among the 76 articles focusing on Indigenous engagement, Chat GPT-4 identified nine themes and 25 sub-topics showcasing the varied ways Canadian PSIs are working with Indigenous communities. Although this data ultimately did not influence the findings or discussions of my thesis, it presents intriguing insights. Hence, I have included this analysis in Appendix G.

## **Data Set Two: Semi-Structured Interviews with Authors of University Stories of Indigenous Engagement and Senior Indigenous Engagement Leads**

### ***Research Design***

After completing the content analysis, I proceeded with semi-structured interviews targeting two distinct groups from the universities featured in my initial analysis. The first group comprised of authors of the stories that were positively evaluated in my study. Throughout my thesis, I refer to this group as “authors,” “communicators,” or “storytellers.” The second group consisted of senior Indigenous engagement leads (IELs), tasked with guiding their institutions on matters of Indigenous engagement. These interviews aimed to expand on the results from the story analysis and uncover guiding principles, challenges, and recommendations for storytelling that align with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. Ultimately, my goal is to provide suggestions that help PSIs communicators use storytelling to break down power hierarchies between their institutions and Indigenous partners and share frames that challenge dominant perspectives.

Given my comprehensive knowledge of the subject, I decided that semi-structured interviews would be the most suitable research method. Semi-structured interviews involve a combination of planned survey questions and spontaneous, open-ended follow-up probes by the interviewer. These probes enable interviewees to provide more detailed information and expand on their initial responses, thus offering deeper insights (Ahlin, 2019, p. 3; Given, 2008, p. 2). Semi-structured interviews are particularly valuable for gathering insights from industry experts, such as practitioners, who have firsthand experience and a deep understanding of the

practical application and effectiveness of various programs and practices (Ahlin, 2019, p. 14).

This approach would enable me to formulate meaningful interview questions and aim to capture unique perspectives from practitioners responsible for the storytelling of Indigenous engagement efforts at universities (Ahlin, 2019, p. 6; Forman & Damschroder, 2007, p. 41).

My interviews consisted of seven prepared questions, integrating Clean Language Interviewing principles. This method aims to prevent researchers from introducing biases and leading questions, encouraging instead the use of 'clean' questions devoid of assumptions. Ideally, this technique enables researchers to gather data that more accurately reflects the interviewees' experiences (Cairns-Lee et al., 2022). See the table below for the interview questions.

**Table 5**

***Interview Questions***

<b>Question #</b>	<b>For Authors</b>	<b>For Senior IELS</b>
<b>1</b>	How does your institution currently tell stories about Indigenous engagement (IE)?	How does your institution currently tell stories about Indigenous engagement (IE)?
<b>2</b>	And, in the context of IE stories, what do you do?	And, in the context of IE stories, what do you do?
<b>3</b>	And, what about the participation of Indigenous partners in your storytelling process?	And, what about the participation of Indigenous partners in the storytelling process?
<b>4</b>	And, what about the inclusion of Indigenous partner voices and perspectives in your stories?	And, what about the inclusion of Indigenous partner voices and perspectives in IE stories?
<b>5</b>	And, what about advancing the objectives and priorities of Indigenous partners through your stories?	And, what about advancing the objectives and priorities of Indigenous partners through IE stories?

6	And, reflecting on everything you have shared, what do you know now about how IE stories should be told?	And, reflecting on everything you have shared, what do you know now about how IE stories should be told?
7	And, finally, when IE storytelling is at its best, what is it like?	And, finally, when IE storytelling is at its best, what is it like?

### ***Participants and Data-Gathering Tools***

For my study, I conducted seven interviews with four authors and three senior IELS. The authors were selected because their stories were among the highest scored in my initial content analysis. The inclusion of Indigenous engagement leaders in my interviews aimed to address two gaps in my study. First, I chose not to interview Indigenous partners featured in university stories to determine whether they believe these stories accurately represent their contributions and reflect principles of Indigenous engagement. This decision was based on the understanding that building relationships with Indigenous partners requires significant time, effort, and trust, and I wanted to avoid potentially harming the existing relationships between these partners and their respective universities. Regrettably, I felt that interviewing Indigenous partners was beyond the scope of my MA research due to these considerations. Second, I anticipated (correctly) that none of the authors would be Indigenous, and it was important to me to include Indigenous voices in this study. Therefore, Indigenous engagement leads were chosen for two reasons: they would be able to provide an Indigenous perspective, and they play key roles in their institutions, influencing how stories about Indigenous engagement are told and maintaining relationships between PSIs and Indigenous communities. Although IELs cannot represent Indigenous partners directly, they are well-positioned to advise on how PSIs should

tell stories involving Indigenous partners and to highlight the challenges their institutions face when doing this work. Refer to Table 6 below for the list of interviewees.

**Table 6**

***List of Interviewees***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title and Unit</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Indigenous</b>
<b>Angie Deveau (Author)</b>	Communications Officer, Strategic Communications & Marketing	University of New Brunswick	No
<b>Chelsea Novak (Author)</b>	Communications Associate (Contract), Central Communications	University of Alberta	No
<b>Cheyenne Joseph (IEL)</b>	Piluwitahasuwin and Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement, President's Office	University of New Brunswick	Yes. Mi'kmaq from Nova Scotia. Member of the Bear River First Nation.
<b>Lerato Chondoma (IEL)</b>	Associate Director, Indigenous Research Support Initiative, Office of the Provost Research and Innovation	University of British Columbia	Yes. Originally from a sovereign kingdom in Southern Africa called Lisotu. Member of the Bataung clan (Lion Clan).
<b>Lou Corpuz- Bosshart (Author)</b>	Media Relations Specialist, Media Relations	University of British Columbia	No
<b>Nella Sajlovic (IEL)</b>	Indigenous Strategies Manager, Office of the Vice Provost, Indigenous Programming and Research	University of Alberta	Yes. Member of the Michel First Nation.
<b>Sarah MacDonald (Author)</b>	Communications Officer, Indigenous Wellness Research Group in the College of Medicine	University of Saskatchewan	No

Regarding data gathering tools, recruitment was conducted via email, and interviews were recorded using Zoom to automatically generate transcripts. These auto-generated transcripts were then refined using Chat GPT-4 and saved as Microsoft Word documents. Although video and audio recordings were preserved to verify the accuracy of the transcripts, they were not utilized in the final data analysis.

### ***Data Gathering Process***

Authors were identified from the articles included in my content analysis. Typically, the author's name appeared in the article's byline. I then searched for them and their email using their institution's directory. Similarly, Indigenous engagement leads were identified by searching online for university units responsible for Indigenous engagement, then using their institution's directory or the unit's online directory to find their email. Initially, I identified 17 authors and nine Indigenous engagement leads from the nine universities included in my story analysis. Of these, four authors and three Indigenous engagement leads agreed to participate in my study.

Interviewees engaged in one-on-one interviews with me over Zoom, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The interviews were recorded to create automated transcripts. I cleaned the Zoom-generated transcripts using a prompt I developed for Chat GPT-4 (see Appendix C). The aim was to reformat the transcripts into well-structured paragraphs by removing pauses, filler words, and timestamps to enhance readability while maintaining accuracy. This method proved quite effective when inputting transcripts approximately 200 words at a time.

The cleaned transcripts were saved as Microsoft Word documents and cross-referenced with the recorded videos for accuracy before being shared with interviewees for review and

approval. All interviewees were invited to make edits, clarifications, or redactions to their transcripts. This collaborative step ensured that the research outcomes accurately reflected the insights shared by the participants. The recorded video and audio were securely stored but not utilized further in the analysis.

### ***Method of Data Analysis***

Upon completing the interviews, I embarked on a thorough content analysis of the transcripts, which entailed coding the data and organizing it to address my research question effectively (Forman & Damschroder, 2007, p. 48; McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 9). The initial codes used in the analysis of the interview data are detailed in Table 7.

**Table 7**

### ***Codes Used for Interview Analysis***

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Motivators for PSIs to engage in storytelling about Indigenous Engagement (IE)</b>	Use this code when statements suggest what is motivating PSIs to create stories about IE.
<b>PSI stories do not reflect IE principles</b>	Use this code when statements discuss how PSI stories do not reflect core IE principles and/or exclude Indigenous partners.
<b>Outcomes of harmful storytelling</b>	Use this code when statements discuss how poor PSI storytelling practices can lead to harmful outcomes.
<b>Challenges for PSI communicators</b>	Use this code when statements discuss the barriers or challenges PSI communicators face when telling stories about IE.
<b>Indigenous inclusion in IE story development process</b>	Use this code when statements discuss how authors include, collaborate, or share power with Indigenous partners in the story development process.
<b>Framing Indigenous partners in PSI stories</b>	Use this code when statements discuss how Indigenous partners are represented in PSI

	stories (e.g., how their voices, values, perspectives, or experiences are framed).
<b>Outcomes of reciprocal storytelling</b>	Use this code when statements discuss how reciprocal PSI storytelling can lead to positive outcomes.
<b>Recommendation for IE storytelling</b>	Use this code when statements recommend how PSIs should tell stories about IE
<b>PSI storytelling formats</b>	Use this code when statements discuss the formats in which PSIs are telling IE stories.

To aid in this analysis, I developed a customized version of Chat GPT-4, referred to as "GPTs." These are specialized versions of Chat GPT, designed with unique instructions, augmented knowledge, and tailored for specific tasks. Specifically, my GPT was developed to assist in my research, trained with my thesis data, and specialized in tasks such as data analysis, writing, and copy editing. For details on the Custom GPT Instructions, see Appendix D.

Throughout the coding process, I carefully reviewed each interview transcript, manually coding statements into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. For every statement, I utilized my custom GPT to paraphrase the statements into more understandable terms (see Appendix E for the Chat GPT prompts). Additionally, I assigned a theme to each statement. This coding method streamlined the process of filtering codes and themes, significantly easing the interpretation of statements and the identification of patterns (Forman & Damschroder, 2007, p. 56). Table 8 below demonstrates the process of managing a statement in my Excel Spreadsheet.

**Table 8**

***Sample Interview Data***

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Nella Sajlovic</b>
<b>Code</b>	Framing Indigenous partners in PSI stories

<b>Theme</b>	Diverse Representation
<b>Chat GPT Summary</b>	Sajlovic emphasizes the importance of geographically situating individuals, acknowledging the sovereignty and territoriality of their nations, and disrupting reductionist representations of Indigenous people in university publications.
<b>Statement</b>	It was my experience that whenever Indigenous people were previously named, they were named as Indigenous. No specificity as to First Nations, Metis, or Inuit, and almost never by their nation. So even using those opportunities of saying, this person is Blackfoot from Kainai, geographically situating individuals, noting the sovereignty and territoriality of their nations – that's part of the discussion. So almost every layer we were really conscious of how we might disrupt some of the reductionist ways that Indigenous peoples have been represented even in university publications.

In total, I coded 270 statements into my Excel spreadsheet. I then reorganized the data into themes, which enabled me to group and analyze statements on specific topics from multiple interviewees together. This phase marked the beginning of finalizing my findings around eight central questions. These questions are essentially a reframing of my codes, which were informed by my literature review:

1. Why do PSIs engage in storytelling about Indigenous engagement? What motivates this practice?
2. What characteristics define harmful storytelling in this context?
3. What consequences result from harmful storytelling?
4. What obstacles do PSI authors encounter in storytelling about Indigenous engagement?
5. How can PSIs craft stories that amplify Indigenous voices?
6. How can PSIs craft stories that advance Indigenous objectives?

7. In what ways can PSIs collaborate with Indigenous partners to develop these stories?
8. When storytelling about Indigenous engagement is at its best, what is it like?

These eight questions are critical sub-questions that collectively enable a comprehensive exploration and understanding of my main research question: How can Canadian universities tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives?

Finally, I used my custom GPT to concurrently review and analyze multiple transcript segments, bringing various interviewees into dialogue around these questions and themes. By doing so, my GPT helped to identify and compare themes, opinions, and insights across different interviews, enabling a virtual conversation among my interviewees, where their responses and perspectives were analyzed in relation to specific themes. This process resulted in a GPT analysis for 61 distinct themes of discussion, with each output being manually verified for accuracy against the transcripts. This approach generated a wealth of data, which I then refined and used to inform the results and discussion sections of my thesis. For the custom Chat GPT-4 prompt and a sample analysis, see Appendix F.

### ***Considerations Regarding Indigenous Research Ethics***

Indigenous research ethics played a crucial role in shaping the design of my thesis, particularly given my positionality as a settler researching Indigenous engagement. I recognize that my perspective is inevitably influenced by my own cultural and experiential background, which may limit my ability to fully understand and interpret Indigenous engagement stories and

insights from Indigenous interviewees. To address these limitations and ensure ethical and sensitive research practices, it was essential to include Indigenous voices at several stages of my research.

Juli Holloway, an Indigenous faculty member at Royal Roads University and a professional communications strategist for the Tulo Centre of Indigenous Economics, was integral to this process as a member of my thesis committee. Juli reviewed my thesis at multiple stages, including the initial proposal, and provided feedback on my interview questions. She also participated in a mock interview to help me better understand ethical Indigenous storytelling. Her ability to identify potential biases that I, as a settler, might overlook, was invaluable. In addition, three Indigenous engagement leads—Cheyenne Joseph, Lerato Chondoma, and Nella Sajlovic—contributed significantly by participating in the study. Beyond their interviews, they reviewed their AI-refined transcripts to ensure accuracy and suggested edits or redactions. They were also invited to review my final findings and recommendations to ensure their perspectives were accurately represented—an option not offered to the non-Indigenous authors interviewed. Furthermore, my research underwent a rigorous harmonized ethical review by both the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board and the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board, reinforcing my commitment to protecting Indigenous participants and communities from potential harm. Additionally, to honor and amplify the voices of Indigenous participants, I integrated their quotes throughout the Discussion section. This decision reflects my commitment to centering Indigenous perspectives

and ensuring their insights challenge dominant narratives, contributing to the decolonization of PSI communications.

Privacy and confidentiality were significant concerns regarding Indigenous participants when using AI for interview analysis. To address these concerns, my study did not offer anonymity; participants had to consent to the inclusion of their identities and positionalities, as this transparency was vital for enhancing the study's credibility within a transformative research paradigm. Participants were also informed that generative AI would be used to refine their transcripts. They were given the opportunity to review these AI-refined transcripts, which involved removing unnecessary elements like pauses and fillers while maintaining clarity and accuracy. Considering that AI can struggle with non-English words and has inherent biases, I manually reviewed the AI-generated transcripts and provided participants the chance to correct any inaccuracies.

To further protect participant data, I disabled AI model training features in ChatGPT, ensuring that the input data would not be used to improve AI models and would be deleted from the system within 30 days. However, concerns persist about how generative AI might incorporate data for training without explicit consent. This highlights the need for researchers to be vigilant and proactive in ensuring ethical data handling practices when using AI in research.

## Results

### Introduction

In my journey as a communications strategist engaged in the realm of Indigenous engagement, I have been privileged to witness and partake in numerous conversations that underscore the complexities and nuances of storytelling in this field. My professional experiences, coupled with dialogues with community engagement and IE practitioners, have significantly shaped the inquiries that underpin this research. These practitioners have long championed the subtle yet profound understanding that true engagement requires a deep, reciprocal connection that respects and amplifies the voices and sovereignties of Indigenous communities. This research does not claim to be groundbreaking; rather, it seeks to affirm and enrich what many dedicated to Indigenous engagement intuitively understand and practice. Through my analysis of how Canadian universities tell stories about their engagements with Indigenous partners, I aim to validate longstanding knowledge while potentially offering new insights. As a settler communicator, the opportunity to engage with some of Canada's leading figures in Indigenous engagement has been nothing short of transformative. The insights gained from these interactions have profoundly impacted my perspectives and approaches towards storytelling. It is my hope that the lessons distilled from these experiences will prove beneficial to other PSI communicators who are navigating the complex terrain of representing Indigenous engagement authentically and respectfully in their stories. Additionally, I believe that my findings can extend beyond PSIs, offering valuable insights to any organization dedicated to storytelling that promotes equity, diversity, and inclusion.

My results section begins by addressing the research gap left by Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) decade-old study concerning how PSIs represent community-university partnerships in their public communications. My study offers an updated analysis, specifically concentrating on the engagement of Canadian universities with Indigenous communities. The research findings unveil significant progress, with the vast majority of Canadian university stories positively reflecting principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. However, I caution against over-celebration, noting the problematic use of outdated criteria from 2013 to measure 2023 stories, suggesting that while the results are promising, there is a necessity for contemporary benchmarks reflecting current standards of Indigenous engagement.

Next, my findings identify the motivations driving Canadian universities to engage in storytelling about Indigenous engagement. These stories often serve multiple purposes: demonstrating commitment to decolonization, educating on Indigenous ways of knowing, securing funding, aiding recruitment, and commemorating significant Indigenous events. However, when these stories prioritize institutional objectives over genuine engagement, they risk undermining the principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

Following this, my findings address how storytelling practices in PSIs can inadvertently harm the very relationships they aim to support. My research identifies four detrimental storytelling practices: stories that focus too heavily on the university's contributions, effectively sidelining Indigenous perspectives and achievements; the exclusion of Indigenous voices, with a significant percentage of analyzed stories lacking direct quotes from Indigenous partners; reductive representations that fail to acknowledge the diversity within Indigenous communities;

and "story taking," where PSIs treat shared stories as their assets, editing and using them without ongoing consent from Indigenous partners. These practices not only damage relationships with Indigenous partners but also harm the institution's reputation and its ability to engage effectively and ethically with Indigenous partners. My findings highlight the urgent need for PSIs to re-evaluate their storytelling approaches to foster truly reciprocal and respectful Indigenous engagement.

Turning to the next portion of my findings, I explore the difficulties faced by university communicators when they attempt to tell stories that genuinely engage and represent Indigenous perspectives. My research reveals that individual communicators often lack the necessary understanding and training to accurately navigate and convey Indigenous engagement narratives. Institutionally, the absence of Indigenous representation within communications teams, coupled with inadequate frameworks and resources, further impedes their ability to tell these stories effectively. These barriers are compounded by a pervasive fear of misrepresentation and the professional risks associated with potential errors, making it challenging for communicators to initiate and craft stories that honour and advance Indigenous objectives.

Moving forward, my findings get to the main question of my thesis: how can Canadian universities tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives? My research underscores the necessity for university communicators to center Indigenous perspectives as the main narrative focus, moving away from institutional achievements to emphasize collaborative impacts with Indigenous

communities. To tell authentic and respectful stories, PSIs must adopt asset-based narratives that celebrate Indigenous resilience and contributions and ensure that these stories are led by Indigenous partners to maintain narrative accuracy and respect for Indigenous sovereignty. Additionally, PSIs should actively work to dismantle colonial narratives and educate the public on the impacts of colonialism, enhancing understanding and supporting the goals of truth and reconciliation. This approach demands a transformative shift in storytelling practices, prioritizing Indigenous autonomy and contributions within PSI narratives.

After that, I elaborate on the collaborative strategies Canadian PSIs should employ to develop stories that authentically amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives. My findings emphasize the necessity to eliminate power imbalances and confront colonial legacies by integrating decolonizing principles throughout the storytelling process. This involves recognizing Indigenous partners as equal collaborators, addressing biases, and engaging in co-creation that respects Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. Furthermore, to foster genuine collaboration, PSIs must adopt ethical engagement practices that prioritize relational over transactional interactions, respect Indigenous protocols, ensure informed and ongoing consent, and accommodate the preferences and schedules of Indigenous partners. These strategies not only support respectful and inclusive storytelling but also contribute to dismantling colonial structures, promoting an environment where mutual respect and true collaboration flourish.

Lastly, my findings emphasize the profound impact and importance of aligning storytelling within Canadian PSIs with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. Optimal storytelling in this context respects and elevates Indigenous sovereignties, contributing to

tangible, impactful outcomes. Such narratives not only honour Indigenous voices but also effectively foster understanding and encourage actions that advance Indigenous objectives. My research identifies keyways in which PSIs can act as effective storytelling agents to influence community perceptions and drive social change. This includes challenging deficit portrayals, legitimizing Indigenous narratives to support Truth and Reconciliation, and presenting models of good engagement that exemplify respectful, reciprocal, and transformative interactions between PSIs and Indigenous communities. Moreover, through collaborative storytelling, PSIs have the opportunity to reshape their communication practices, moving towards a decolonized approach that fosters creative freedom, addresses biases, and builds meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners. Ultimately, my research advocates for storytelling as a critical tool for PSIs to facilitate social change, enrich university environments, and promote a broader societal shift towards equity, diversity, and inclusion.

### **Creating a New Benchmark: Do Canadian University Stories About Indigenous Engagement Reflect Core Engagement Principles?**

The first gap that my research addresses is that the study by Arrazattee et al. (2013), which appears to be the only investigation into how PSIs represent community-university partnerships in their public communications, is now a decade old and was limited to six American institutions. The authors themselves acknowledged this limitation and cautioned against generalizing their findings to other university communications (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 50). To the best of my knowledge, no more recent studies are available, especially ones that

specifically evaluate how Canadian PSIs communicate their engagement with Indigenous communities.

Encouragingly, compared to the 2013 findings of Arrazattee et al., the results from my quantitative content analysis of university stories suggest that, in 2023, Canadian universities are making significant efforts to tell stories about their Indigenous engagement efforts in ways that align with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. Of the 76 articles included in my final quantitative content analysis, 62% received positive scores across all my codes—with most codes being met over 90% of the time, a significant increase compared to less than half of the articles meeting Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) study criteria. Prominently, 100% of the stories in my study portrayed Indigenous partners from an asset-based perspective, highlighting the strengths and expertise of Indigenous collaborators in various initiatives and projects. Below, in Table 9, I outline the results from my quantitative analysis of university stories about Indigenous engagement.

**Table 9**

***Results from My Quantitative Analysis of 76 University Stories about Indigenous Engagement***

<b>Code</b>	<b>Yes (#)</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (#)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>
<b>Is the Indigenous partner clearly identified?</b>	69	91%	7	9%
<b>Are the contributions and expertise of the Indigenous partner clearly acknowledged and valued?</b>	72	95%	4	5%
<b>Does the story amplify/include the voices of the Indigenous partner?</b>	48	63%	28	37%
<b>Does the story amplify Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences?</b>	69	91%	7	9%
<b>Does the story support/advance Indigenous objectives or needs?</b>	75	99%	1	1%

<b>Is the framing of the Indigenous partner or community asset-based?</b>	76	100%	0	0%
<b>Did this article receive a “Yes” across all codes?</b>	47	62%	29	38%

On the surface, the findings from the quantitative analysis might seem cause for celebration. Indeed, these institutions appear to be embracing core engagement principles. However, I want to highlight to the reader that it's problematic that these stories—created in 2023—are being measured against criteria adapted from codes developed in 2013. It should hardly be surprising that many stories scored well against a decade-old benchmark; achieving what should now be considered the bare minimum. While this study potentially stands as the first of its kind to evaluate how Canadian universities communicate their engagement with Indigenous communities and sets a preliminary benchmark, the standards assessed are clearly outdated. The analysis provided a necessary snapshot of the current landscape and helped identify participants for further interviews. However, now that my research has concluded, there is a need to re-evaluate these stories using new codes that reflect current expectations for Indigenous engagement storytelling—expectations I will detail in the subsequent sections of this thesis.

### **Why Do PSIs Engage in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement? What Motivates This Practice?**

My interviews with authors and Indigenous engagement leads aimed to dive deeper into the findings from my story analysis, identifying guiding principles, challenges, and recommendations for storytelling in line with reciprocal Indigenous engagement principles. The

promising outcomes of the story analysis were further contextualized and affirmed through these interviews, which highlighted the strides made by PSIs, especially in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. However, my interviews also revealed that, despite this progress, the potential for missteps remains high. While some authors excel, there is a broad need for improvement within PSI communication teams. Indigenous Engagement Leads remain particularly cautious and protective regarding how PSIs craft stories that involve Indigenous partners.

In my literature review, I discussed how Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) examined how many PSIs have adopted a primarily rhetorical stance toward reconciliation—publicly advocating for collaboration with Indigenous communities while maintaining colonial power dynamics (p. 223). This prompted me to initiate my research interviews by asking how and why PSIs are telling IE stories. My findings indicate a range of motivations driving universities to create these stories, spanning from intrinsic values to satisfying external expectations and business objectives. At its intrinsic core, IE stories are being used to demonstrate universities' commitment to implementing the TRC's recommendations and engaging in wider decolonization efforts, particularly in outreach to Indigenous communities. These stories serve not only as platforms for amplifying voices traditionally marginalized within academia but also showcase universities' recognition and equal valuation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing alongside the dominant Eurocentric and English-centric methodologies. Furthermore, they offer opportunities to educate researchers about conducting research that is community-driven, self-determined, action-oriented, and culturally responsive.

**Table 10*****Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: Why Do PSIs Engage in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement? What Motivates This Practice?***

<b>Motivations for storytelling about Indigenous engagement</b>
Responding to the TRC's calls to action
Addressing power imbalances and epistemic oppression
Modeling reciprocal Indigenous engagement
External pressures and funding
Recruitment and retention
Commemorating significant events related to Indigenous culture and history

Conversely, IE storytelling is also a response to growing public expectations, governmental mandates, and funding agency requirements for universities to incorporate Indigenous engagement into their core business practices. IE storytelling serves to secure funding and transparently demonstrate its allocation. Additionally, it can be used as a tool in recruitment and retention efforts by highlighting Indigenous achievements facilitated by university programs and showcasing Indigenous representation on campus. Finally, I found that IE stories are being used to commemorate significant events, including Indigenous History Month, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and Mi'kmaq History Month. These findings are crucial as they illuminate the diverse factors increasing the demand on university communicators to create and share stories about Indigenous engagement. Understanding these

motivations is invaluable, particularly in assessing how these stories align—or misalign—with the fundamental principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. Stories crafted primarily to meet institutional objectives, such as securing funding or enhancing recruitment, pose a significant risk of undermining these principles. It is imperative for PSIs to critically examine the motivations behind their storytelling strategies.

### **How Can PSI Communications Undermine Reciprocal Indigenous Engagement Efforts?**

While there is a substantial body of literature focusing on researchers' reciprocal engagement with Indigenous communities, the specific role of communications and PSI storytelling in supporting or hindering these efforts remains underexplored. This section of my thesis addresses this gap by examining two pivotal questions. The first question, which I explore here, scrutinizes how PSI communications can inadvertently undermine reciprocal Indigenous engagement efforts (i.e., harmful storytelling). Later sections will detail how PSI communications can support these efforts.

My findings identify four main themes that characterize harmful storytelling in universities. First, are stories that are university-centric or convey the savior narrative. These stories adopt a paternalistic and deficit-focused lens, positioning the university as a primary source of solutions for Indigenous communities. Second, are stories that exclude Indigenous partner voices. In my story analysis, I observed that the greatest challenge for university stories was the inclusion of Indigenous partner voices—37% of the stories that I analyzed did not include a quote from their respective Indigenous partner. Third, is the reductive representation of Indigenous partners. My findings explore the variety of ways university stories erase the rich

diversity and unique identities within Indigenous communities. And fourth, is the practice of “story taking,” where there is an expectation within universities that stories, once shared, become assets to be used and edited by the institution without further consultation of the Indigenous partners.

**Table 11**

***Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: What Characteristics or Practices Define Harmful IE Storytelling?***

<b>Characteristics of Harmful IE Storytelling</b>
Stories that are university-centric or convey the savior narrative
Stories that exclude Indigenous partner voices
Reductive representation of Indigenous partners
"Story taking"—the expectation that stories become the property of the university

The consequences of such storytelling approaches, as identified in my research, are significant. Primarily, they risk damaging the relationships between universities, Indigenous partners, and researchers. Mishandled stories can create long-standing rifts that are difficult, if not impossible, to repair. Secondly, these stories can tarnish institutional reputation, undermining a university's commitment to creating an equitable environment for Indigenous peoples and affecting its ability to attract and retain Indigenous students, employees, and partners. Highlighting these harmful practices is crucial as it equips PSI communicators with the knowledge to avoid them. Furthermore, by drawing attention to the negative consequences, I

aim to emphasize the importance of crafting stories about Indigenous engagement with the care they require. This awareness is vital for fostering more ethical and reciprocal storytelling in the future. However, as subsequent findings will reveal, there are barriers that PSI authors face, despite their best intentions.

**Table 12**

***Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: What Consequences Result from Harmful Storytelling?***

<b>Consequences of Harmful Storytelling</b>
Risk to relationships between Indigenous partners, universities, and researchers
Risk to institutional reputation

**What Challenges or Barriers Do PSI Authors Encounter in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement?**

Understanding what constitutes harmful storytelling and its repercussions sets the stage for an exploration into the underlying causes of these issues. My research identified several barriers university communicators face when crafting IE stories. At the individual level, there is a fundamental lack of understanding and training among university communicators to aptly navigate the complexities of IE narratives. Often operating detached from Indigenous contexts, they miss continuous engagement with Indigenous content, partners, and events, which hampers their ability to tell stories that are both respectful and inclusive of Indigenous perspectives. Furthermore, communicators must consciously work to unlearn biases and

actively prevent their complicity in perpetuating oppression through storytelling. This process is arduous, demanding lifelong commitment, individual dedication to decolonization, and institutional backing. Lastly, there is a pervasive fear of misrepresenting Indigenous partners, reinforcing stereotypes, or causing offense inhibits communicators from even getting started. This anxiety encompasses not only the potential harm to Indigenous partners depicted in the stories but also the tangible risk of professional and reputational damage should they err. Therefore, effectively telling IE stories necessitates substantial training, an awareness of one's own positionality, and the courage of university communicators to undertake this task proficiently.

Transitioning to the institutional challenges, my interviews uncovered five major hurdles. First, the extent to which Indigenous stories are prioritized may vary significantly depending on the presence or absence of leaders who value and encourage such storytelling. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of a consistent institutional framework for developing IE stories, leading to inconsistent practices and often a preference for stories that are easier to produce but do not adequately include Indigenous partners. Second, is the lack of Indigenous representation within university communications teams. None of the authors that participated in my study were Indigenous and each of them confirmed the total absence of Indigenous individuals on their communications teams. My interviews highlighted a widespread issue across universities where Indigenous professionals are noticeably missing from marketing and communications roles. Third, is the lack of sufficient resources and time allocated for building relationships with Indigenous partners. Communicators typically have little to no budget or time allocated for

engaging with Indigenous partners, who may be spread across the country or located in remote areas. Additionally, there's frequently a discord between the fast-paced timelines of institutional story production and the slower, trust-building pace preferred by Indigenous partners for sharing and reviewing their stories.

**Table 13**

***Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: What Challenges or Barriers Do PSI Authors Encounter in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement?***

<b>Challenges and Barriers in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement</b>
Authors lack training in reciprocal Indigenous engagement
Not recognizing harmful biases or being complicit in perpetuating oppression
The fear of getting it wrong: inadvertently misrepresenting Indigenous partners, perpetuating stereotypes, or causing offense
Lack of leadership committed to prioritizing and understanding reciprocal Indigenous engagement
Absence of Indigenous staff on institutional communications teams
Insufficient resources and time for relationship building
Protecting institutional reputation over Indigenous voices
Limited expectation to measure story impact beyond university priorities
Negotiating media biases and hostile public reception

Fourth, the tension between accurately representing Indigenous voices and protecting an institution's reputation was evident in discussions about editorial decisions to tone down politically sensitive comments from Indigenous partners, highlighting a challenge in storytelling about Indigenous engagement. These decisions, aimed at avoiding controversy, risk silencing Indigenous insights and perpetuating colonial dynamics by prioritizing institutional image over authentic truth-telling, raising ethical concerns about the amplification and suppression of voices. Fifth, Canadian universities face significant challenges in effectively measuring and aligning the impact of IE stories with Indigenous partners' priorities. Despite the strategic alignment of these stories with institutional goals, there is a notable lack of mechanisms for ensuring these narratives also support the objectives of Indigenous communities. This gap results in limited accountability for advancing Indigenous priorities and an absence of qualitative metrics to gauge the nuanced, long-term benefits of engagement and trust-building, thereby providing little incentive for communicators to prioritize Indigenous perspectives in their storytelling efforts.

Lastly, my interviews also highlighted external challenges, including navigating media biases and hostile public receptions when publishing IE stories. These biases and public reactions can limit the types of stories that gain media attention, affecting public perception and visibility of Indigenous engagement efforts, despite a determination to continue advocating for Indigenous narratives. By identifying these challenges, my research reveals the underlying causes of problematic storytelling. This understanding is crucial, as recognizing these barriers is a step towards addressing them.

### **How Can Canadian PSIs Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement That Amplify Indigenous Voices and Advance Indigenous Objectives?**

In my Literature Review, I identified a gap in research concerning how PSIs leverage communications and storytelling to shape community narratives, contribute to goal setting, and promote social objectives. Particularly, there is a sparse understanding of how PSIs can act as effective storytelling agents to increase awareness around Indigenous issues, value Indigenous perspectives, and advance Indigenous objectives. This lack of insight led to a primary objective of my research interviews: to discover guiding principles for how universities should craft stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives.

To explore how universities can craft stories that amplify Indigenous voices, my research identified three key strategies for university communicators. First, authors must prioritize Indigenous voices and perspectives as the central narrative focus, shifting away from institutional achievements to highlight the impact of collaborative research with Indigenous communities. Universities need to abandon any approach to telling IE stories that excludes the voices of Indigenous partners. If an Indigenous partner is not available or willing to be interviewed, the story should not be told. Second, universities should craft asset-based narratives that elevate Indigenous resilience, innovation, and knowledge, moving beyond negative portrayals to emphasize their strengths and contributions. By showcasing Indigenous-led initiatives and honouring traditional knowledge in addressing contemporary challenges, these stories can debunk stereotypes, foster understanding, and reflect Indigenous peoples'

roles as collaborators and problem solvers. Third, university storytelling must actively dismantle colonial narratives of homogenization, emphasizing the rich diversity of Indigenous realities through narratives that respect the sovereignty, territoriality, and cultural practices of different nations. This approach calls for stories and visual representations that capture the complexity, contemporaneity, and dynamism of Indigenous identities and experiences, challenging reductionist portrayals and celebrating Indigenous contributions in all their diversity.

**Table 14**

***Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: How Can PSIs Craft Stories That Amplify Indigenous Voices?***

<b>Strategies for Amplifying Indigenous Voices in PSI Storytelling</b>
Stories need to center Indigenous voices
Stories need to be asset-based
Stories need to disrupt the reductionist representations of Indigenous peoples

Next, a crucial principle of community engagement is that research objectives should be reciprocal and aim to build community capacity. To craft stories that advance Indigenous objectives, not only is framing critical, but storytelling practices at universities also need to evolve. First, university stories about Indigenous engagement need to be led by Indigenous partners. Allowing these partners to guide the narrative ensures that Indigenous autonomy, viewpoints, and goals are prioritized. This approach challenges the prevailing institution-focused narratives and promotes stories that highlight Indigenous voices and aims. Second, universities

have a crucial role in educating the public about the ongoing impacts of colonialism. By weaving educational content into narrative storytelling, universities can foster deeper understanding and challenge public perceptions of Indigenous realities, ultimately contributing to truth, reconciliation, and addressing colonial legacies. Third, universities should allow Indigenous partners to review and control the narrative of their stories, a practice that diverges from traditional journalistic methods but is essential for accuracy, trust, and respecting Indigenous sovereignty. This collaborative approach ensures university narratives reflect Indigenous intentions, supports self-determination, and upholds the integrity of the stories shared by Indigenous peoples. Fourth, Indigenous partners must retain ownership of their stories. Their narratives, data, and voices inherently belong to them, challenging traditional journalism and research practices. This approach champions Indigenous partners' sovereignty over the communication, preservation, and sharing of their stories. In conclusion, Canadian universities must reimagine their storytelling practices to genuinely amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives. By prioritizing Indigenous autonomy in storytelling and dismantling colonial narratives, PSIs can foster more equitable, truthful, and engaging narratives that truly reflect and respect the perspectives and realities of their Indigenous partners.

**Table 15**

***Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: How Can PSIs Craft Stories That Advance Indigenous Objectives?***

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**Strategies for Advancing Indigenous Objectives in PSI Storytelling**

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Stories need to be Indigenous-led

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Stories need to educate about the impacts of colonialism

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Indigenous partners need to be allowed to review their stories and have ultimate control over the narrative

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Indigenous partners need to own their stories

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### **How Can PSIs Collaborate with Indigenous Partners to Develop These Stories?**

In the previous section, I discussed several principles for Canadian universities to effectively tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives. Building on this foundation, my research also digs deeper into the collaborative process between universities and Indigenous partners required to develop these stories. Consequently, my findings present a range of strategies that universities and their communicators can employ to encourage greater participation and collaboration of Indigenous partners throughout the storytelling journey. These strategies are organized into two overarching themes: first, the imperative to eliminate power imbalances and confront colonial legacies; second, the necessity to prioritize ethical engagement practices.

In addressing power imbalances and confronting colonialism, universities must prioritize practices that recognize Indigenous partners as equals and integrate decolonizing principles into every facet of their storytelling and engagement efforts. First, it's crucial for universities to treat Indigenous partners as equal collaborators at all stages, including story development and post-production, adhering to the principle of "nothing about us without us." Despite ethical mandates, there's a disparity between inclusive research and storytelling practices at

universities, with the level of Indigenous inclusion often hinging on individual researchers and storytellers, highlighting the need for institutional policies to bridge this gap. Second, decolonizing storytelling within universities requires individual growth and institutional change, compelling storytellers to address biases, accept mistakes, and engage deeply with Indigenous partners to ensure stories are told authentically and respectfully. University communicators must exhibit courage when facing discomfort and institutional resistance to decolonization, advocating for sustained commitment and collaboration with Indigenous partners to transform institutional storytelling practices. Third, university communicators must abandon outdated processes that fail to serve Indigenous partners and engage in co-creating new principles that value Indigenous knowledge, experiences, and worldviews as much as existing institutional frameworks. This approach confronts traditional power dynamics and demands a fundamental reimagining of collaboration, highlighting the necessity for institutions to adopt new methods that recognize Indigenous perspectives as equally valid. Fourth, universities must integrate Indigenous professionals into their storytelling and communication teams to address the systemic underrepresentation and reliance on a limited number of Indigenous voices. By broadening the range of Indigenous contributors and valuing their expertise, universities can ensure that stories about Indigenous engagement are authentically told by partners, understood by communicators, and received by audiences. By earnestly engaging in these practices, universities and their communicators can contribute to dismantling long-standing colonial structures, fostering an environment of mutual respect, understanding, and true collaboration with Indigenous partners.

**Table 16*****Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: How Can PSIs Collaborate with Indigenous Partners to Develop These Stories?***

<b>Strategies for Collaborative Story Development with Indigenous Partners</b>
Prioritize the inclusion of Indigenous partners
Confront colonial tensions internally and within universities
Transition to collaborative models
Hire Indigenous storytellers
Build relationships and trust
Follow community protocols
Obtain informed and ongoing consent
Accommodate the communication and engagement needs of Indigenous partners

To foster genuine collaboration and ensure the full participation of Indigenous partners throughout the storytelling process, universities must prioritize ethical engagement practices that respect and honour Indigenous protocols and perspectives. First, when working with Indigenous partners, university communicators must engage relationally, not transactionally. Trust, fostered through genuine interactions and honouring Indigenous protocols, is crucial for deep engagement between universities and Indigenous partners, with storytellers playing a pivotal role in nurturing these connections. Storytelling must be more than a singular event; university storytellers ought to actively contribute to relationship growth, ensuring accessibility

and trust within the community, sharing stories, returning results and data, and facilitating connections with broader institutional resources. Second, universities must adopt storytelling methods that authentically respect the protocols and diversity of the Indigenous communities they collaborate with. My research has highlighted three primary approaches: integrating Indigenous ceremonies and protocols into the storytelling process; adhering to community-driven and ethical guidelines, such as OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics); and ensuring the inclusion of a wide range of voices within Indigenous communities. This requires storytellers to understand the power dynamics within a community and who is authorized to speak on behalf of a community, nation, or group. Third, university storytellers should prioritize informed and ongoing consent from Indigenous partners to ensure respect and collaboration throughout the storytelling process. Clear communication from the initial outreach to publication, including the story's intent and distribution, is crucial for informed consent, with partners having the right to withdraw consent at any time. Moreover, consent must be ongoing. This means securing fresh approval each time a story is shared or featured in a new medium or platform, reflecting respect for the evolving nature of consent and partnership dynamics, ensuring stories maintain the endorsement of Indigenous partners over time. Fourth, university storytellers need to be flexible and willing to accommodate the schedules and preferences of Indigenous partners to facilitate their meaningful participation in the storytelling process. Flexibility in communication methods is crucial. Storytellers should inquire about preferred modes of engagement early on, offering options like phone, online platforms, or face-to-face meetings. Additionally, storytellers

must adapt their timelines to accommodate the preferences and busy schedules of their Indigenous partners. This involves setting clear expectations, allowing for lead times, and being prepared for potential delays in media requests. Lastly, inclusive review processes are crucial. Authors should accommodate partners' preferences by allowing them to review stories through methods that suit them, such as collaborative documents or personalized phone discussions. By adopting these ethical engagement practices, universities can build meaningful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous partners, ensuring that storytelling processes are respectful, inclusive, and truly collaborative.

In summary, it becomes clear that the collaborative process between universities and Indigenous partners is not merely about sharing stories, but about forging pathways of mutual respect and understanding that honour Indigenous knowledge systems and sovereignty. For these partnerships to be fruitful and genuinely reciprocal, they must be deeply embedded in practices that prioritize ethical engagement and respect for Indigenous protocols, ensuring that these stories do more than simply inform. Thus, as university communicators seek to contribute positively to the narrative space of Indigenous engagement, they must continually commit to practices that are not only inclusive but also fundamentally transformative, challenging the legacy of colonialism through every story they co-create.

### **When Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement Is at Its Best, What Is It Like?**

Lastly, having explored what universities and communicators need to do to effectively tell IE stories that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives, my research aims to articulate why it is important to align PSI stories with reciprocal Indigenous engagement

principles. What outcomes can be achieved when storytelling about Indigenous engagement is conducted optimally? Ultimately, I hope to equip Canadian post-secondary institutions and their communicators with both the insights and the conviction that authentically reciprocal storytelling about Indigenous engagement not only respects and honours the voices and sovereignties of Indigenous partners but also fosters more impactful and enduring outcomes. By illustrating the tangible benefits of such an approach, I hope to inspire a shift towards more authentic, respectful, and effective engagement narratives that truly serve to advance Indigenous objectives.

My research revealed numerous ways in which universities can serve as influential storytelling agents, fostering a community that is aware of Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and is committed to advancing Indigenous objectives. First, in the context of telling stories about Indigenous engagement, universities wield significant influence within their communities and can utilize their communication resources, platforms, and expertise to assist Indigenous partners in achieving their objectives. This approach entails employing storytelling to create connections, enhance understanding, and encourage collective action. Additionally, my interviews discussed how sharing stories of Indigenous engagement provides a unique opportunity to bring to life the diverse experiences of individuals, showcasing the profound connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in their quest for social justice, anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and, notably, the promotion of Indigenous sovereignty.

Second, universities can challenge deficit portrayals of Indigenous peoples and play a crucial role in legitimizing Indigenous narratives and contributing to the Truth and Reconciliation

process. By intentionally placing and timing stories to ensure they reach a broad audience, university storytelling can help challenge the pervasive tendency to marginalize Indigenous narratives. And, by focusing on stories that highlight Indigenous resilience, diversity, and agency, universities can counteract colonial narratives and foster a more inclusive understanding of Indigenous contributions and knowledge systems. This approach not only amplifies Indigenous voices but also addresses wider issues of marginalization and racism, creating opportunities for Indigenous partners to be seen and heard in ways that challenge prevailing stereotypes and biases.

Third, storytelling can significantly highlight and promote models of good engagement between universities and Indigenous communities. Stories can illuminate the pathways through which research can move beyond its colonial legacies, introducing powerful counter-frames to the conventional, often problematic approaches to research in Indigenous contexts, where projects are frequently designed without genuine community input or leadership. Instead, stories can offer a blueprint for academics, researchers, and institutions seeking to engage with Indigenous communities in ways that are respectful, reciprocal, and transformative.

Fourth, telling stories about Indigenous engagement presents an opportunity to transform university communications and storytelling practices. For university communicators, who often come from backgrounds in traditional journalism, media relations, or communications, collaborating with Indigenous partners to develop narratives allows them to address the colonial foundations of journalistic ethics and practices. By involving Indigenous people in reviewing and shaping stories about their communities, universities can adopt a more

ethical and decolonized approach to storytelling, moving away from extractive and deficit-focused narratives perpetuated by mainstream media. The collaborative process also encourages creative freedom for storytellers and provides an avenue for non-Indigenous communicators to address their biases, learn from Indigenous partners, and enhance their communication practices through continuous learning.

**Table 17**

***Results from My Interviews with Authors and Indigenous Engagement Leads: When Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement Is at Its Best, What Is It Like?***

<b>Characteristics of Optimal Storytelling about Indigenous Engagement</b>
Advances Indigenous objectives
Challenges deficit portrayals of Indigenous peoples
Models reciprocal Indigenous engagement
Decolonizes communications practices
Strengthens relationships between universities and Indigenous partners
Leads to greater recruitment and retention of Indigenous students

Fifth, IE Stories provide a platform for university communicators to transition from transactional to meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners, underpinned by trust, respect, and mutual goals for positive impact. Through personal stories shared during my interviews, such as evolving interactions from formalities to personal connections, it's evident

that respectful storytelling and recognition of Indigenous history and contributions can bridge gaps, strengthen partnerships at all levels between universities and Indigenous partners.

Sixth, through my interviews, it's clear that storytelling plays a critical role in highlighting the value of education for Indigenous communities and aiding in the recruitment of Indigenous students by showcasing Indigenous achievements at universities. This approach not only celebrates Indigenous success and collaboration with universities but also encourages Indigenous youth by demonstrating that higher education is accessible and values their perspectives, thereby enriching the academic environment for everyone with a more diverse and inclusive community.

In sum, my research underscores the multifaceted role of universities in leveraging storytelling as a powerful tool for social change, particularly in the context of Indigenous engagement. By exploring the potential of storytelling to foster reciprocal relationships, amplify Indigenous voices, and challenge colonial narratives, university communicators can become active participants in social change. My research not only illuminates pathways for more ethical and inclusive communication practices but also highlights storytelling's pivotal role in advancing Indigenous objectives and contributing to a broader societal shift towards equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through deliberate and respectful storytelling, universities have the potential to significantly impact the narrative landscape, promoting understanding, collaboration, and systemic change that benefits Indigenous communities and society as a whole.

## Discussion

### Introduction

While the Results section of this thesis laid the groundwork by detailing empirical findings, the subsequent Discussion serves as a bridge to broader theoretical implications, weaving these results into the existing fabric of academic theories explored in my Literature Review. This introduction to the Discussion will not reiterate findings; instead, it delineates how each section within the Discussion corresponds to and expands upon existing literature. The aim is to engage with the theoretical underpinnings—such as reciprocal Indigenous engagement and decolonizing methodologies—highlighting how Canadian universities' public-facing narratives can either align with or diverge from these frameworks. Each segment of the Discussion will explore different facets of the storytelling process, assess its impact on Indigenous engagement, and propose pathways for narrative and ethical reform in line with the principles gleaned from both empirical data and comprehensive literature synthesis.

Additionally, to honour and amplify the voices of those who generously contributed their time and insight to this research, especially the Indigenous participants, I have integrated their quotes throughout the Discussion section. This methodological choice reflects a core commitment of this thesis: to practice and prioritize the amplification of Indigenous voices. Each selected quote has been thoughtfully included where it best articulates core messages and provides substantial value to the reader.

I begin my Discussion by examining the motivations behind Canadian PSIs' storytelling about Indigenous engagement, initially guided by the literature on reciprocal Indigenous

engagement as a decolonization and reconciliation strategy. Building on the critical perspectives of Gaudry & Lorenz (2018), I explore what is driving the demand for PSI communicators to share stories about Indigenous engagement. This section lays the groundwork for further discussions that explore the potential risks of stories produced primarily to align with institutional objectives, potentially undermining the fundamental values of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

Following this, I critically examine the characteristics and practices of PSI storytelling about Indigenous engagement, comparing current storytelling methods with the principles Arrazattee et al. (2013) outlined for evaluating reciprocal campus-community partnerships. Despite improvements in public-facing stories that show a significant alignment with reciprocity and the inclusion of Indigenous partners, my interviews reveal ongoing concerns about the persistence of non-reciprocal, university-centric narratives, echoing historical harmful practices. This exploration bridges foundational critiques by scholars like Callison & Young (2020) and McCue (2023), who highlight the dangers of damage-centered framing in storytelling, emphasizing the need for continuous scrutiny and improvement in how PSIs narrate Indigenous engagement.

Next, I expand on Arrazattee et al.'s (2013) insights, examining how non-reciprocal and university-centric PSI storytelling not only risks alienating community partners but also threatens institutional reputation, as supported by Key et al. (2021) and Vredenburg et al. (2020). I identify two major consequences of harmful storytelling: the potential for damaging long-term relationships between Indigenous partners, universities, and researchers, and the risk

to the institutional reputation, undermining PSI commitments to equitable environments and impacting the attraction and retention of Indigenous stakeholders.

After that, I address the systemic barriers that PSI communicators encounter in crafting stories about Indigenous engagement, building upon and expanding the critiques found by researchers like Dutta (2015), Jiwani & Young (2006), and Arrazattee et al. (2013). I discuss how entrenched hegemonic communication systems and a lack of community-specific knowledge impede the creation of reciprocal and inclusive narratives. My findings further illuminate how even well-trained communicators within PSIs face institutional resistances—rooted in colonial and capitalist structures as noted by Kohl-Arenas (2023)—that maintain the status quo and obstruct genuine engagement and equitable resource distribution.

Continuing onward, I address how Canadian PSIs can craft stories that amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives, building on the framing theories proposed by scholars like Entman (2007) and McCombs & Shaw (1972). By applying principles of reciprocal community engagement and community-based research ethics, as suggested by researchers like Arrazattee et al. (2013) and Hayward et al. (2021), I explore how PSIs can dismantle power imbalances and incorporate Indigenous beliefs in their storytelling practices. My analysis expands upon this by detailing specific framing strategies that avoid perpetuating stereotypes and instead promote narratives that respect and highlight Indigenous contributions and viewpoints, enhancing the reciprocity and impact of PSI communications.

Moving forward, I explore how Canadian universities can craft stories that not only amplify Indigenous voices but also actively advance Indigenous objectives, building on the

foundational principles of reciprocal community engagement and respect for community autonomy as highlighted by authors like Hoekstra et al. (2020), Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991), and Hayward et al. (2021). My analysis aligns with and extends the work of scholars advocating for communications that achieve social goals (Arrazattee et al., 2013; Dutta, 2015; Heath, 2011; Logan, 2021), by proposing narrative strategies that ensure PSI storytelling practices are transformed to support and promote Indigenous objectives effectively. This approach is vital for fostering genuine partnerships and contributing to the well-being and autonomy of Indigenous communities through respectful and goal-oriented storytelling.

Transitioning to the subsequent section, I investigate how PSIs can enhance their collaboration with Indigenous partners in storytelling. Building on concepts like Habermas's theory of the "lifeworld," Ermine's (2007) "ethical space of engagement," and principles of ethical community engagement from scholars like Hoekstra et al. (2020) and Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991), I analyze strategies that address power imbalances, prioritize community needs, and confront colonial legacies to ensure that Indigenous partners are fully engaged in the storytelling process. My research contributes to the broader discourse by detailing actionable methods for PSIs to authentically involve Indigenous voices and perspectives, thereby transforming the traditional story construction to one that is collaborative and respectful.

Lastly, I delve into the role of PSIs as powerful agents in storytelling about Indigenous engagement, leveraging their significant capacity to shape community narratives and facilitate goal-setting, as explored by scholars like Ashby-King & Aragón (2022), Entman (2007), and Kim &

Ball-Rokeach (2006). I demonstrate how, when storytelling practices are aligned with the principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement, PSIs can effectively amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives, building on insights from authors like Fehrer et al. (2022), Heath (2011), and Logan (2021). This approach not only positions PSIs as collaborative partners in co-creative processes but also highlights their critical role in overcoming systemic communication barriers faced by Indigenous communities, supporting a more inclusive and responsive society that values and advances Indigenous perspectives and goals.

### **Why Do PSIs Engage in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement? What Motivates This Practice?**

I started my Literature Review by exploring the emergence of reciprocal Indigenous engagement within PSIs as an approach to reconciliation and decolonization and how PSI stories about Indigenous engagement risk undermining these efforts. Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) highlighted this in their research when they discussed how many PSIs have adopted a primarily rhetorical stance toward reconciliation, outwardly promoting enhanced collaboration with Indigenous communities while simultaneously perpetuating the power dynamics and oppressive structures of the colonial past (p. 223). This contradiction prompted me to start my interviews by asking my interviewees how their respective PSIs are telling stories about Indigenous engagement—and more importantly, why?

My findings indicate a wide range of motivations driving PSIs to create these stories, from genuine intrinsic values rooted in reconciliation and decolonization to external expectations and business objectives. However, the risks highlighted by Gaudry & Lorenz (2018)

are evident, as PSI storytelling may inadvertently perpetuate colonial power dynamics despite their rhetorical promotion of collaboration. Understanding the motivations behind these narratives is crucial because they shape the storytelling approach, potentially influencing whether these efforts advance reconciliation or reinforce oppressive structures. This has significant implications, as PSI communicators may craft stories that either support or undermine reciprocal partnerships between PSIs, their researchers, and Indigenous partners depending on their motivating factors or “objectives.” Therefore, universities must examine their storytelling strategies to ensure they adhere to principles of reciprocal engagement and reflect the voices of Indigenous partners, fostering rather than undermining these partnerships.

***Responding to the TRC’s Calls to Actions and Advancing Truth and Reconciliation***

“We all know that universities, at least in the Atlantic region, which I know best, are still struggling with responding to the TRC. It's not just about the TRC as the guiding document, but the broader concept of decolonizing and indigenizing universities as a way to market themselves to different groups. We want to be seen as a university that is responsive to Indigenous communities. [Sharing stories about our Indigenous engagement efforts is] important for the university in that regard.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) highlighted the significant shift in how PSIs have embraced the advancement of truth and reconciliation following the TRC's publication of its 94 calls to action. My interviews echoed this observation, noting the evolution of Indigenous engagement within

their respective PSIs. Initially, the focus was on student recruitment, retention, and completion, but it soon expanded due to the TRC's influence, aiming to understand and address the structural components of colonial experiences and their impact on various research areas, and the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

The increased emphasis on Truth and Reconciliation, both within PSIs and in wider society, has amplified the need for PSIs to communicate their Indigenous engagement initiatives effectively. It has become essential to show how PSIs are implementing the TRC's recommendations and engaging in broader decolonization efforts, especially in their outreach to Indigenous communities. Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President of Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick, highlighted the complexity of presenting the university in a positive light while acknowledging the challenges of actualizing the TRC's recommendations. Similarly, authors in my study emphasized that storytelling about reconciliation efforts is essential for their institutions to demonstrate their commitment to advancing truth and reconciliation and to being responsive to the Indigenous members of their campus communities.

### ***Addressing Systemic Power Imbalances and Epistemic Oppression Within PSIs***

“As the one bringing these stories to the communications team, I do it because I want to see the university reflect all aspects of the community it serves. We want to see ourselves in the stories shared by UNB, not just the usual focus on old white researchers... What we're striving for is to ensure that Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing are valued just as much as the traditional Eurocentric,

English-centric ways. We aim to create equitable space in universities for these values.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

Hayward et al. (2021) explored how innovative strategies for Indigenous engagement can confront systemic power imbalances, racism, and epistemic oppression, both within community-university partnerships and in broader contexts. Correspondingly, my interviews unveiled that stories of Indigenous engagement serve not only as platforms to elevate voices traditionally marginalized within academia but also as demonstrations of how PSIs equally value Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing alongside conventional Eurocentric, English-centric methodologies.

### ***Modeling Reciprocal Indigenous Engagement***

“I think there is something really magical that happens when a collaborative partnership creates a solution that innovates and transforms a nation's position. Consider the Heiltsuk Tiny Homes project—an endeavor that spanned years and involved numerous departments at UBC. The culmination of this project wasn't just a moment of achievement; it was the narrative of a journey towards a Heiltsuk-driven solution for housing. This story, my all-time favorite to share, transcends a mere innovative research project. It signifies our support for a nation in changing lives. And to me, that's the impact of collaborative research and incredible storytelling.” — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Hayward et al. (2021) also discussed the development of new Indigenous-developed frameworks in Canada that advocate for research that is community-driven, self-determined, action-oriented, and culturally responsive (p. 404). Similarly, my interviews highlight how stories of Indigenous engagement can support these initiatives. Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at the University of British Columbia's Indigenous Research Support Initiative, expressed the profound impact of sharing stories about how PSIs are supporting Indigenous self-determination. In a similar vein, one of my authors Sarah MacDonald, Communications Officer at the University of Saskatchewan, emphasized the value of stories in demonstrating what reciprocal Indigenous engagement can entail. Working within the Indigenous Wellness Research Group in the College of Medicine, which conducts research in various communities across Canada, she sees storytelling as an opportunity to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers on conducting research in a respectful manner.

### ***Acquiring Funding and External Pressure from Governments and Organizations***

“And then there's been another era, more recently, where there's such keen public interest and expectations on the part of governments, funding agencies, or even professional associations, that universities incorporate Indigenous histories and stories in a way that meets core competencies that have emerged as part of the key business at the university. So, [Indigenous engagement has] really gone from little to no awareness, to learning, to individual spaces, to becoming a core business practice.” — Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager at the University of Alberta

Larrán Jorge and Andrades Peña (2017) explored the escalating pressures PSIs face from governments and international organizations to deepen societal engagement and tackle social challenges. Furthermore, Benneworth et al. (2008) highlighted how public expectations of PSIs' contributions to community well-being are increasingly influencing the level of financial support societies provide to these institutions. They caution that failure to meet these expectations could lead society to seek alternatives, diminishing the relevance and significance of PSIs. My interviews confirmed that this trend extends to Indigenous engagement within Canadian PSIs. Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager at the University of Alberta, discussed how there has been growing public interest and expectations from governments, funding agencies, and professional associations for universities to integrate Indigenous engagement as an integral part of a university's core business practices. Sajlovic further revealed how research-intensive universities have a unique responsibility in Indigenous engagement due to explicit mandates from Tri-Councils (major federal research funding agencies in Canada). These mandates outline how Indigenous engagement should be conducted in research. Additionally, she mentioned how there is now an additional layer of responsibility placed on PSIs from provincial organizations like Alberta Health Services and the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta that are not only focusing on PSI core competencies but also emphasizing the importance of engagement and communication with Indigenous communities. Interestingly, the significance of IE storytelling extends beyond merely securing funding. Authors in my study also emphasized its crucial role in demonstrating how funds are allocated towards innovative, community-led research initiatives.

***Recruitment and Retention***

“At UNB, the largest cohort of Indigenous students is in the nursing and education programs. We're graduating nurses and teachers. And I often wonder, is this because students are more likely to get into those programs? Or are they choosing these professions because that's what they see in their communities? We can't expect people to aspire to careers they haven't seen represented around them. If they don't see computer science professionals, engineers, earth scientists, biologists, and others, how can they know what these programs entail and the careers they can pursue in these fields?

Highlighting these stories is also about letting people know the amazing things people are doing with their education. Most of the time, it's about how they're giving back to their community and how it continues to improve and uplift communities.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

Koekkoek et al. (2021) highlighted the use of community engagement to enhance PSI recruitment and retention (p. 10). Similarly, my research indicates that IE storytelling serves as an effective mechanism for recruitment by showcasing the potential achievements within PSI programs. Furthermore, in the context of retention, Sarah Macdonald highlighted the University of Saskatchewan's response to its substantial Indigenous demographic, which accounts for approximately 16-18% of their population. The university has shifted towards prioritizing respectful engagement with Indigenous communities, students, and faculty. Echoing this

perspective, Angie Deveau, a Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick, emphasized the role of IE storytelling in promoting greater campus representation. Through IE stories, PSIs demonstrate a commitment to valuing Indigenous knowledge, practices, and perspectives on their campuses, thereby fostering an inclusive academic environment.

### ***Commemorating Days of Significance***

An additional motivator for IE stories, uncovered through my interviews and not previously identified in my Literature Review, pertains to "days or months of significance." My content analysis revealed a consistent publication of stories on Indigenous engagement throughout the year, with notable spikes observed in September, October, and June. The table below outlines the distribution of stories across the year.

**Table 18**

#### ***Distribution of Publications Over Time, August 2022 to July 2023***

<b>Month</b>	<b>Articles published</b>
<b>August 2022</b>	14
<b>September 2022</b>	19
<b>October 2022</b>	19
<b>November 2022</b>	15
<b>December 2022</b>	5
<b>January 2023</b>	11
<b>February 2023</b>	7
<b>March 2023</b>	19
<b>April 2023</b>	11
<b>May 2023</b>	15
<b>June 2023</b>	33
<b>July 2023</b>	10
<b>Total</b>	181

My interviews revealed that these peaks likely coincide with concerted efforts to amplify IE storytelling during Indigenous History Month in June, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in September, and Mi'kmaq History Month in October. Encouragingly, the data showed a sustained, year-round publication of articles on Indigenous engagement, indicating a continuous interest and dedication to Indigenous matters throughout the year.

When discussing the trend of enhancing storytelling around significant dates, some interviewees expressed a desire for a more diverse storytelling spread throughout the year. Conversely, others advocated for strategic peaks in storytelling to ensure stories garner the right amount of attention without overwhelming audiences or overshadowing the visibility of other communities. For example, strategically planning not to focus on IE stories during Black History Month could demonstrate a thoughtful approach to scheduling, one that honours the diversity of campus communities.

### ***The Increased Demand on PSI Communicators to Share Stories about Indigenous Engagement***

The factors discussed in this section have collectively prompted PSIs to develop institutional strategies for Indigenous engagement. Like what Arrazattee et al. (2013) observed in the realm of community engagement, the increasing demand for Indigenous engagement from PSIs is increasing the pressure on PSI communicators. Among the authors interviewed, supporting strategic initiatives for Indigenous engagement emerged as a primary motivator for crafting IE stories.

In our conversation, Angie Deveau, Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick, detailed how this shift in institutional priorities has affected her communications

team. Initiated in 2019, her PSI's strategic vision, "UNB Towards 2030," emphasizes the importance of recognizing and supporting Indigenous research methodologies and valuing Indigenous knowledge. This vision led to the creation of new roles at UNB, designed to enhance and strengthen positive relationships within the university and with Indigenous communities. A few years after unveiling this strategic vision, UNB restructured her communications team into the Strategic Communications and Marketing office, incorporating these commitments and strategic priorities into their planning processes.

It might seem intuitive, but a key observation from this research is that all authors recognized for their capacity in IE storytelling were influenced not only by their personal values aligning with IE principles but also by an institutional mandate to prioritize such narratives. This underscores that a fundamental component of exceptional IE storytelling is the institutional emphasis on these stories. However, it's critical to recognize the potential pitfalls when IE stories are produced solely to align with institutional objectives, which could risk compromising the core values of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. In the following sections, I will detail the characteristics of storytelling that could be considered harmful and explore the potential outcomes that arise from such stories.

### **What Characteristics or Practices Define Harmful Storytelling?**

Arrazattee et al. (2013) proposed five principles for evaluating whether communications truly reflect reciprocal campus-community partnerships, including: clear identification of community partner identities, evidence of mutually beneficial exchange, depiction of transformational relationships, and the utilization of collaborative language (Arrazattee et al.,

2013, p. 45). In my study, I employed a modified version of their criteria to assess PSI stories about Indigenous engagement, examining whether these stories embody reciprocal Indigenous engagement themes. Unlike Arrazattee et al.'s findings, where most university communications fell short of embodying reciprocity principles (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 41), my study of Canadian universities revealed a positive shift: 62% received positive scores across all my codes—with most codes being met over 90% of the time. This improvement suggests a significant advancement in storytelling practices that more inclusively and accurately represent Indigenous partnerships.

Despite the positive developments identified in my quantitative content analysis of public-facing stories, my interviews highlighted concerns that non-reciprocal or university-centric narratives (i.e., harmful storytelling) persist. This concern appears less about current practices and more about avoiding a regression to detrimental historical practices while striving for continuous improvement in storytelling. Arrazattee et al. (2013) suggest that such harmful storytelling primarily stems from how stories are framed, which involves selectively highlighting aspects of reality to shape a narrative that promotes a particular interpretation. Regrettably, Indigenous peoples have historically been portrayed through damaging frames that foster discrimination and marginalization (Callison & Young, 2020; Jiwani & Young, 2006; McCue, 2023). McCue (2023) discussed how the Canadian media have often resorted to damage-centered framing, depicting Indigenous peoples in ways that suggest moral depravity, racial inferiority, and incapacity for self-governance (p. 13). This enduring misuse of storytelling against Indigenous communities prompted me to further explore, through my interviews, the

harmful characteristics and practices that have historically been, and continue to be, a part of PSI storytelling.

***Stories That Are University-Centric or Convey the Savior Narrative***

“I feel like there is the business of Indigenous engagement. And for those who aren't in it for the right reasons, it's about telling the story about, "Look how good we are. Look how well we've done or look about how we're engaging Indigenous peoples." But you can always see, right from the origin of the story, where Indigenous partners have not been part of crafting the story.

You can always tell because it's written from an institutional perspective. And there's always this beginning thing about these researchers that developed this wonderful innovation and then brought it to the people.... this innovative solution that brought light in the darkness that saved the Indigenous people, that solved their problem.

And that's deeply problematic because it's really rooted in that colonial construct that the colonial system knows better. The colonial system has the savior ability.

The colonial system is further progressed or further advanced than the Indigenous partners who are coming to partner with the university...And it places the power in the researcher's hands, or in the university's, as the Savior.” —

Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Arrazattee et al. (2013) primarily attribute the inadequacy of university communications, despite advancements in community engagement practices, to the framing of these stories (p. 49). A significant concern for them was that public communications are not reciprocal or are university-centric. In my interviews, the most significant concern was that the PSI stories being produced would have a savior narrative, where the university and its researchers are depicted as “rescuing” Indigenous communities through their innovations. Like what Arrazattee et al. discussed, this portrayal not only undermines the autonomy and capabilities of Indigenous partners but also adopts a paternalistic and deficit-focused lens, positioning the university as the primary source of solutions for Indigenous communities. These stories frequently originate from a distinctly institutional perspective, lacking genuine involvement or input from Indigenous partners. This approach tends to highlight the achievements of the university or its researchers, overshadowing the active participation, leadership, and contributions of Indigenous communities. Such narratives perpetuate a colonial mindset that devalues Indigenous knowledge and agency and reinforces power imbalances between the university and its Indigenous partners.

### ***Stories That Exclude Indigenous Partners Voices***

When Arrazattee et al. (2013) analyzed PSI stories, they questioned whether community partners were being clearly identified. Advancing this inquiry, my study also examined whether PSI stories incorporated the voices (i.e., quotes) of Indigenous partners. This analysis revealed a significant challenge: PSIs frequently struggled to include Indigenous partner voices in their narratives. 37% of the stories that I analyzed did not include a quote from its respective

Indigenous partner. My interviews confirmed that the exclusion of Indigenous partners from PSI stories continues to be a significant concern and area for improvement. Particularly my Indigenous engagement leads discussed how they observed the tendency for stories to prioritize institutional voices, pointing towards a systemic inclination within PSIs to foreground their own contributions, at the expense of Indigenous partners.

In my story analysis, I also observed that when stories incorporated the voice of an Indigenous individual already affiliated with the PSI—be it an Indigenous student, faculty member, or staff—the tendency was to rely heavily on these internal voices. As a result, there was a noticeable reduction in the inclusion of quotes from external Indigenous partners when internal Indigenous voices were available. This practice not only risks misrepresenting the narrative but also risks alienating external Indigenous partners. These partners, crucial to the projects and initiatives in question, may feel undervalued or overlooked if PSI stories do not adequately represent their contributions and perspectives.

### ***Reductive Representation of Indigenous Partners***

“It was my experience that whenever Indigenous people were previously named, they were named as “Indigenous.” No specificity as to First Nations, Metis, or Inuit, and almost never by their nation. So even using those opportunities of saying, this person is “Blackfoot from Kainai,” geographically situating individuals, noting the sovereignty and territoriality of their nations – that's part of the discussion.

So almost every layer we were really conscious of how we might disrupt some of the reductionist ways that Indigenous peoples have been represented even in university publications.” — Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager at the University of Alberta

McCue (2023) highlighted the significant impact traditional media's portrayal of Indigenous peoples has had on Canadian perceptions and treatment of Indigenous communities, implicating the media in the perpetuation of colonialism and racism (p. 13). This has led to the ongoing marginalization and exclusion of Indigenous peoples (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 912). My findings demonstrated that PSIs have made progress in how they represent Indigenous partners in their narratives. Notably, 100% of the stories in my content analysis presented Indigenous partners from an asset-based perspective, underscoring their strengths and expertise across various initiatives and projects. However, my interviews revealed a critical issue not detected in the content analysis: the reductive portrayal of Indigenous peoples in PSI stories. This trend includes a lack of specificity and broad, generalized labeling of Indigenous identities, without recognizing the distinct identities of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit groups. This practice not only erases the rich diversity and specific identities within Indigenous communities but also overlooks the significance of sovereignty and territoriality that are central to Indigenous peoples' identity and rights.

My interviews also discussed concerns not in only how Indigenous people were written about but also how they were visually represented in these stories. Reflecting on past experiences where communications materials would rely on simplistic symbols and

representations that have been traditionally overused, such as tipis, Métis sashes, or the over-reliance on regalia as the primary image of Indigenous identity, which fail to capture the full breadth of Indigenous cultures and contributions. The timing and topics of stories was also critiqued, often focusing narrowly on the somber aspects of Indigenous history, such as commemorating the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, to the exclusion of celebrating events like solstices, cultural gatherings, powwows, and Indigenous graduation ceremonies. It would be better to diversify storytelling throughout the year.

Furthermore, it was recommended to craft stories that do not place Indigenous identity at the center of every narrative, noting a tendency in PSI stories to label Indigenous partners exclusively by their Indigenous titles, such as "Elder," despite their holding additional titles like professor, doctor, or judge. My interviews revealed a desire to shift the portrayal of Indigenous partners toward a more balanced and comprehensive representation that reflects the complexity of what it means to be Indigenous. This approach aims to contribute to the narrative that Indigenous peoples have always been present and continue to contribute significantly to all aspects of society.

### ***Story Taking***

Lastly my interviews raised a serious concern, which was not explored earlier in my literature review, regarding the practice of "story taking" and the misunderstanding of ongoing consent in regard to stories that include Indigenous partners. My interviews underscored the importance of recognizing that consent for story sharing is not a one-time agreement but requires continuous engagement and approval from Indigenous partners, especially as stories

are adapted, summarized, or modified for different audiences or platforms. The revelation that Indigenous partners are often not consulted about subsequent versions of their stories highlighted a systemic issue where stories, once shared, are perceived as property of the institution to alter at will. The expectation that stories, once given, become assets to be used and edited by the institution without further consultation illustrates a significant gap in understanding the dynamism and ownership inherent in storytelling with Indigenous communities. This practice not only disrespects the principle of ongoing consent but also risks misrepresenting the stories and potentially the communities they aim to represent.

### **What Consequences Result from Harmful Storytelling?**

Arrazattee et al. (2013) discussed how PSI stories that are not reciprocal or are university-centric risk alienating community partners, perpetuating representations of powerless communities, and reinforcing harmful research practices (p. 41). Moreover, the gap between declaring to be an engaged university while producing communications that do not reciprocate or value community partnerships risks damaging PSI reputations. Such inconsistency might provoke backlash from stakeholders in affected communities and impair the PSI's capacity to positively impact community goals (Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 49; Key et al., 2021, p. 14; Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 449). My research extends this dialogue, identifying two primary repercussions of harmful storytelling.

### ***Risk To Relationships Between Indigenous Partners, Universities, And Researchers***

“[Large universities] don't understand the agency and the ability for [Indigenous] partners to just walk away. I have seen it where, with one community partner, it

was a stalemate of a decade. They walked away for 10 years. And when we unpacked what happened, it happened because the narrative created by the researcher about why they were invited into the community was the savior story.” — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC’s Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Arrazattee et al. (2013) were concerned that PSI stories that were not reciprocal or that were university-centric would risk alienating community partners and damaging research partnerships. My interviews articulated the profound implications of storytelling practices on the relationships between PSIs and Indigenous partners. In my interview with Lerato Chondoma, she shared the impact of a story that was particularly university centric that led to a decade-long estrangement with an Indigenous partner, with that partner leaving to seek collaboration elsewhere. My interviews also highlighted that PSI’s cannot rely on their prestige alone to attract Indigenous partners, as they will gladly leave to collaborate with other institutions that can offer a more respectful and nurturing environment. My Indigenous engagement leads further emphasized the personal accountability and the sense of loss felt by those who work closely with Indigenous partners, pointing to the trust that is broken when partnerships are mishandled by PSI communicators. Joseph, from the University of New Brunswick, emphasized that when PSI communicators get it wrong, the burden often falls on individuals like herself, Chondoma, or the researchers that spent years developing the relationship to repair the damage—if possible.

***Risk to Institutional Reputation***

“When I'm thinking about, the written story, or the video, I think about how this potentially might land in community? How are people going to interpret what it is that someone has said, or I've said, in the story? That's what I'm often thinking about, from that perspective, so that we're not doing anything to risk our own reputation as a university that seemingly wants to try to do better at making space, equitable space, for Indigenous voices and stories.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

Researchers such as Key et al. (2013) and Vredenburg et al. (2020) have highlighted the potential damage to brand equity from inauthentic communications that conflict with an organization's core values and mission. In the realm of PSIs and Indigenous engagement, inappropriate storytelling can provoke backlash from community-aligned audiences, compromising the institution's impact on community goals (Key et al., 2021, p. 14; Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 449). My interviews confirmed that harmful storytelling about Indigenous engagement pose significant risks to university reputations. A common strategy among IELs, as described by Joseph, is to review Indigenous engagement stories before publication, serving as a critical safeguard against narratives that might misrepresent or misconstrue Indigenous communities. This proactive approach highlights the potential repercussions of releasing stories without thorough vetting—damaging the institution's credibility and undermining its commitment to creating an equitable space for Indigenous stories and voices. The concern is

not only about avoiding misinformation but also about the broader implications for the university's ability to attract students, employees, and collaborators who value authenticity and understanding from the institutions they engage with.

### **What Challenges or Barriers Do PSI Authors Encounter in Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement?**

In my Literature Review, I explored the systemic challenges faced by PSI communicators when storytelling involves underserved, marginalized, or excluded communities. My analysis highlighted two primary concerns. Firstly, PSI communicators are often inadequately prepared for this work. Extensive research indicates that hegemonic communication systems have historically preserved existing power structures and marginalized certain communities (Dutta, 2015; Jiwani & Young, 2006; LaFever, 2008; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948; Logan, 2021). This points to the fact that individuals trained in conventional fields like journalism, public relations, and marketing may lack the necessary skills to craft stories that truly reciprocate, share power with external partners, or embrace diverse values and perspectives. Arrazattee et al. (2013) further identified the absence of community-specific knowledge and training in core community engagement principles as a significant factor in the failure to produce reciprocal narratives (p. 41). Secondly, even those PSI communicators who have received training in ethical engagement principles encounter systemic obstacles within their institutions. PSIs, as colonial and capitalist organizations, are inherently resistant to change, perpetuating a status quo enforced by myriad regulations, paperwork, and approval processes that impede genuine partnerships and the

equitable distribution of resources (Kohl-Arenas, 2023). My research significantly advances this discussion by identifying multiple barriers facing PSI communicators who craft IE stories.

### ***Authors Lack Training in Reciprocal Indigenous Engagement***

Arrazattee et al. (2013) pinpointed the absence of community-specific knowledge or training in the fundamental principles of community engagement as a key factor behind PSI communicators' inability to narrate reciprocal stories (p. 41). Similarly, my research found that a considerable obstacle to IE storytelling is the deficiency of essential understanding and training among PSI communicators to adeptly handle the complexities of IE stories. PSI communicators often operate in isolation from Indigenous contexts, lacking ongoing engagement with Indigenous content, partners, and events. This detachment limits the ability of communicators to respectfully tell these stories. Furthermore, the widespread lack of awareness among settlers about historical injustices, legal nuances, and the diversity within Indigenous communities complicates IE storytelling further. My interviews highlighted efforts to educate communicators, yet the continued use of outdated terminology and a limited grasp of complex concepts like Indigenous classification by the government underscore a significant knowledge gap.

More concerning is that many settler communicators' understanding of Indigenous peoples often begins with deficit narratives—colonial dispossession, residential school experiences, poverty, and disproportionate rates of poor health outcomes or incarceration. Without proper training or knowledge, there's a heightened risk of misrepresenting Indigenous engagement stories, perpetuating stereotypes, or marginalizing Indigenous voices. Additionally, the lack of institutional guidance on representing Indigenous partners effectively, or the

absence of knowledgeable individuals within communication teams, typically forces Indigenous partners to take on the educational role themselves. My interviews underscored a pressing need for PSIs to improve communicator training, ensuring they can respectfully and accurately amplify Indigenous voices and contributions through storytelling.

***Not Recognizing Harmful Biases or Being Complicit in Perpetuating Oppression***

“I think oftentimes institutional communication teams don't see themselves as individuals separate from the institution because they're always communicating on behalf of the institution. Yet it's personal bias, personal privilege, personal understanding of power, white fragility, white supremacy, all those things are localized within the person, right? And so those all manifest in how we engage and how we tell stories.

And if you're not doing the work on a personal level to challenge those assumptions, to check your power, to check your privilege, it's going to come through in your stories.” — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's

Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Arrazattee et al. (2013) attribute the shortcomings of university communications, despite progress in community engagement practices, to the way stories are framed (p. 49). In his 2023 book, *Decolonizing Journalism: A Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities*, McCue discusses the Canadian media's consistent use of damage-centered frames in reporting on Indigenous peoples (p. 13). McCue and other scholars note that such framing has deeply influenced Canadians' perceptions and treatment of Indigenous communities, with the media

playing a role in perpetuating colonialism and racism (Callison & Young, 2020, p. 168; McCue, 2023, p. 13), leading to the ongoing marginalization and exclusion of Indigenous peoples (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 912). In my literature review, I explored how PSI communicators are susceptible to these harmful biases, risking the continuation of damaging narratives. Additionally, my research identified the necessity for both personal and institutional introspection and engagement with issues of bias, privilege, and positionality as another hurdle to effective IE storytelling.

My interviews discussed how this challenge can be compounded by the institutional identity that communicators often embody in their writing, which may not always encourage or facilitate individual reflection on personal biases and the ways these biases influence storytelling. Overcoming these barriers requires both individual willingness for introspection and institutional support for such processes. Storytelling in this context goes beyond acquiring new skills; it demands transformative learning and change at personal and institutional levels. It involves a deliberate effort to recognize and address biases, guided by the narratives of Indigenous partners themselves and an understanding of how one's social location significantly influences the authenticity and respectfulness of shared narratives. The slow progress in overcoming these barriers highlighted a systemic issue within PSIs that requires more than just institutional policy changes; it also demands a fundamental shift in how individuals within these institutions perceive their roles and responsibilities in storytelling. If PSI communicators aspire to tell stories that genuinely include Indigenous partners, they must commit to unlearning their

biases and actively avoid complicity in perpetuating oppression through their narratives, whether inadvertently or not.

***The Fear of Getting It Wrong: Inadvertently Misrepresenting Indigenous Partners, Perpetuating Stereotypes, or Causing Offense***

“I struggle with the fact, I know I'm not Indigenous... Being a white settler telling Indigenous stories... I'm just always like, 'Am I doing this right?'... I don't want to continue or contribute to any further trauma to the community, you know, whether it's intentional or not, through ignorance.” — Angie Deveau,

Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick

A challenge for PSI communicators not explored in my literature review, was the fear of misrepresenting Indigenous perspectives and inadvertently perpetuating stereotypes or causing offense. This fear is rooted in an awareness of the historical context and the power dynamics at play in storytelling, as well as the potential for professional repercussions. On the lighter side, authors that get it wrong might end up being embarrassed but there are increasing professional repercussions of inaccuracies or misrepresentations in storytelling, which contribute to a reluctance among communicators to even engage with Indigenous stories. In our interview, Angie Deveau, Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick, shared her discomfort as a white settler telling Indigenous stories and her fear of perpetuating colonial narratives or causing further trauma through ignorance. Together, my interviews underscored the complex interplay of fear, responsibility, and the desire for accuracy and respect in storytelling about Indigenous engagement.

***Lack of Leadership Committed to Prioritizing and Understanding Reciprocal Indigenous Engagement***

Callison & Young (2020) highlighted that communicators' efforts to incorporate Indigenous voices or perspectives into their stories can be limited by superiors who prioritize hegemonic views, perspectives, contexts, and cultural frameworks, often to the exclusion of Indigenous ones (pp. 170–171). My interviews also pointed to a disparity in leadership as a determinant factor, suggesting that the extent to which Indigenous stories are prioritized may vary significantly depending on the presence or absence of leaders who value and encourage such storytelling. This variance can result in a PSI standing out as either a leader or laggard in the field of Indigenous engagement. The absence of a clear directive from leadership to prioritize Indigenous perspectives leaves the decision to individual authors, often resulting in stories that sideline Indigenous voices, especially when authors are not aligned with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

This situation is exacerbated by the lack of a consistent institutional framework for developing IE stories, leading to inconsistent practices and often a preference for stories that are easier to produce but do not adequately include Indigenous partners. Moreover, when leadership does not prioritize IE storytelling or align with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement, authors are more likely to face institutional barriers that prioritize hegemonic norms over Indigenous preferences. For example, Chelsea Novak, a communicator from the University of Alberta, pointed out significant obstacles in adhering to institutional style guides that did not capitalize terms like "ancestors" and "elders," despite specific requests from

Indigenous contributors. This scenario illustrates the challenges authors face within their institutions when leadership does not respect the preferences of Indigenous partners over institutional practices. Authors, often with limited power to effect systemic change, are compelled to adhere to these practices, resulting in content that either disrespects or compromises with Indigenous partners.

***Absence Of Indigenous Staff on Institutional Communications Teams***

“I think at institutions where there's a focus on showcasing Indigenous stories, they should have Indigenous people on their team. What I'm seeing at UNB is more and more departments, units, faculties hiring Indigenous staff to focus on the Indigenous aspect of their work... Communications should be the same way. They're the ones actively going out to seek the stories, writing the stories, filming them, or taking pictures. This means they'll have in-house expertise, and it doesn't always land on [Indigenous engagement advisors] to have to fix the stories and spend so much time editing.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

Not previously identified in my Literature Review, my research interviews shed a light on another significant obstacle: the lack of Indigenous representation within PSI communications teams. None of the authors that participated in my study were Indigenous and each of them confirmed the absence of Indigenous individuals on their teams. My interviews highlighted a widespread issue across PSIs where Indigenous professionals are noticeably missing from marketing and communications roles. This deficiency is not due to a lack of interest or talent

among Indigenous individuals but stems from systemic barriers and an institutional hesitancy to integrate Indigenous expertise. Joseph provided detailed insights into these systemic barriers, ranging from educational tracking in high school to inflexible academic and professional environments that fail to recognize the value of diverse experiences. These barriers stop Indigenous youth and young professionals from ever finding their way into the field of communications.

Following the completion of my thesis draft, my Thesis Committee member Juli Holloway, with direct experience as an Indigenous communicator who ultimately got burned out from working at a PSI, provided additional context that greatly enriches this discussion. Therefore, I have included her comments here and in a few subsequent sections. From personal experience and stories shared with her by other Indigenous people working in PSIs, it can be incredibly draining being the only Indigenous staff member in a department. It is easy to become tokenized, to be expected to do unpaid labor, and to generally feel 'othered.' Indigenous folks across an organization often have to respond to requests for review or provide advice or insight on Indigenous matters, and these requests often go beyond one's job description. As Holloway illustrates, Indigenous communicators employed by PSIs face many barriers, including adapting to the dominant culture within the institution, which is typically shaped by colonial values and practices. This often means suppressing or disregarding their own cultural norms, values, and traditions to fit into the prevailing institutional environment. This pressure to assimilate into a culture that does not acknowledge or respect their Indigenous identity can be exhausting and demoralizing, leading to feelings of alienation and, ultimately,

burnout. This lack of Indigenous expertise on communications teams not only undermines the authenticity and sensitivity of stories about Indigenous engagement but also unfairly burdens Indigenous staff and faculty in other PSI departments to review and correct communications, reinforcing a cycle of inequity.

***Insufficient Resources and Time for Relationship Building***

“[For communicators] maybe there's not enough support for them about how to reach out to the community and establish these relationships. Building these relationships isn't just a one-time thing where you go and interview them, and then walk away and write your story. It's about getting to know the people as individuals. When I'm interviewing people in the community or someone for our stories, I'm not just launching into an interview, but I'm introducing who I am and why I'm there, explaining where my ancestors are from. For many Indigenous people, they don't care what your job is or where you work. They care about who you are and who your people are. Probably a lot of people working in communications in universities don't know the importance of that relationality.”

— Sarah MacDonald, Communications Officer at the University of Saskatchewan

Castleden et al. (2012) highlighted that communicators frequently lack the necessary time to build relationships grounded in mutual trust with Indigenous partners (p. 168). Similarly, my research identified the lack of sufficient resources and time allocated for building relationships with Indigenous partners as a substantial barrier. While there's a general willingness to incorporate more Indigenous perspectives into storytelling, communicators often

face challenges in establishing robust relationships with these communities. Positioned primarily within their institutions, communicators typically have little to no budget or time allocated for engaging with or visiting Indigenous partners, who may be spread across the country or located in remote areas. This geographic disparity can impact the involvement of Indigenous partners, as those situated further away might be deprioritized over local or more accessible partners. Additionally, there's frequently a discord between the fast-paced timelines of institutional story production and the slower, trust-building pace preferred by Indigenous partners for sharing and reviewing their stories. Tight deadlines can prevent authors from allowing adequate time for Indigenous partners to engage fully and relationally. Interviewees have noted instances where delays in obtaining approvals or a lack of responses from Indigenous partners resulted in stories being dropped. This situation can be particularly detrimental to building trust, especially if Indigenous partners have devoted considerable time to sharing their stories, only for them to be sidelined due to rigid institutional timelines.

### ***Protecting Institutional Reputation Over Indigenous Voices***

Another insight gained from this research that was not anticipated in my initial Literature Review is the tension between ensuring accurate representation of Indigenous voices and the need to protect the institution's reputation. In my interviews, one of the authors shared an experience in which an editor required the toning down of politically sensitive comments made by an Indigenous partner, exemplifying this challenge. Editorial decisions, ostensibly made to avoid controversy, underscore a broader dilemma: the institutional preference for narratives that maintain a non-confrontational image can inadvertently silence the authentic and

potentially transformative insights of Indigenous partners. Particularly since Indigenous narratives often challenge or critique governing bodies or highlight systemic issues, this practice not only affects the integrity of stories meant to foster Indigenous engagement but also raises ethical concerns about whose voices are amplified and whose are suppressed in pursuit of a sanitized institutional image.

### ***Limited Expectation to Measure Story Impact Beyond PSI Priorities***

Capizzo (2022) explored the difficulties that contemporary public relations measurement and evaluation frameworks encounter in accurately capturing outcomes beyond an organization's objectives and interests, with a particular focus on external or public-centered results. Within my research, I hypothesized that this would suggest PSI stories are evaluated mainly for their ability to bolster the institution's reputation and business goals, rather than their societal impact. Indeed, my findings revealed that accurately assessing the impact of IE stories beyond PSI priorities presents another considerable challenge. PSI communicators often rely on quantitative methods to ensure their stories align with strategic institutional priorities, evaluating success based on how well performance metrics meet these expectations. However, there's no requirement for communicators to demonstrate how their stories advance the priorities of Indigenous partners, nor are there qualitative metrics to capture the nuanced, long-term benefits of engagement and trust-building with Indigenous communities. My interviews also discussed that follow-ups by communicators, after the stories are published, are typically conducted solely with PSI researchers, and performance data is shared internally within PSIs, not with Indigenous partners. This lack of accountability for the impact on Indigenous partners'

priorities, coupled with the absence of metrics to measure this impact, provides little incentive for communicators to prioritize these perspectives in their storytelling.

### ***Negotiating Media Biases and Hostile Public Reception***

Lastly, another challenge not covered in my Literature Review was navigating the preferences and biases of media outlets. Chelsea Novak, Communications Associate at the University of Alberta, shared the challenges of addressing the conservative bias within Edmonton's media landscape. This bias, according to Novak, does not directly affect how the University of Alberta tells its stories about Indigenous engagement but potentially influences which stories are picked up by the media and given attention. The implication is that media biases can filter the types of stories about Indigenous engagement that reach broader audiences, thus affecting public perception and the visibility of IE stories. Novak also shared personal experiences related to the public reception of IE stories, particularly encountering racist and sexist backlash when she published a story about Indigenous women working in trades. Novak's experience shines a light on the reality of navigating audiences that may not be receptive to narratives challenging prevailing stereotypes or addressing systemic issues affecting Indigenous communities. While Novak is quite courageous and determined to continue telling stories to those open to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples, this perspective highlights a critical barrier for PSI communicators: the need to navigate hostile public environments and media biases while striving to tell meaningful and impactful stories about Indigenous engagement.

### **How Can PSIs Craft Stories That Amplify Indigenous Voices and Perspectives?**

Ultimately, my research aims to provide recommendations for PSI communicators to use storytelling to break down power hierarchies between their institutions and Indigenous partners and share frames that challenge dominant perspectives. To achieve this, Arrazattee et al. (2013) suggested that PSI communicators apply principles of reciprocal community engagement in their practices (pp. 49–50). Hayward et al. (2021) supported this approach, showing how community-based research ethics protocols can be used to address power imbalances between researchers and participants/communities, challenge established viewpoints, include Indigenous beliefs and ideas, and contribute to the revitalization and well-being of communities involved (p. 412). Thus, the next section of my discussion focuses on adapting principles of Indigenous engagement identified in my Literature Review into storytelling practices: (1) creating equitable opportunities for community participation, (2) including community voices and perspectives into PSI frames, and (3) fostering reciprocity and advancing community objectives.

First, to explore how PSIs can craft stories that amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives, my focus is on the framing of these narratives. Researchers have shown that communicators possess significant power in shaping perceptions, influencing moral judgments, and promoting solutions through framing, priming, and agenda-setting techniques (Entman, 2007; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). These framing methods can harm communities or benefit them (Jiwani & Young, 2006; Arrazattee et al., 2013, p. 49; Logan, 2021; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2021, p. 116; Mulligan, 2022, p. 10). My research extends this discussion by identifying three key

framing strategies PSI communicators should employ in their storytelling to effectively amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives.

### ***Stories Need to Center Indigenous Voices***

“If we're going to highlight a story about research, make sure that it's talking about the impact of the research on the community, why it's a priority for the community, and just that there happen to be [university] researchers as part of the team. It's about how we center it, rather than it being 'Look at what great things [our university] is doing for this community.’” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

By including and centering community voices throughout the storytelling process, communicators not only enhance awareness of community issues, opportunities, and challenges (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 180) but also forge pathways for community expertise to inform decision-making, contributing to problem-solving and goal-setting endeavors (Mulligan, 2022, p. 2). Moreover, incorporating and amplifying community voices is pivotal to the community-engaged research process (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14). However, as my study demonstrates, this principle has struggled to gain recognition within PSI storytelling practices, with 37% of the stories analyzed not including a quote from their respective Indigenous partners. For PSI stories to effectively amplify Indigenous voices, authors must prioritize Indigenous partners and their perspectives as the central focus of storytelling.

This recalibration of narrative focus is critical, emphasizing the impact of collaborative research with Indigenous communities over institutional accomplishments. It necessitates a deliberate reorientation of storytelling practices towards elevating Indigenous priorities, challenging, and deconstructing colonial power dynamics that pervade traditional academic narratives. The interviewees in my study have adopted various practices to uphold this principle. Some underscored the importance of preserving the authenticity of Indigenous quotes, avoiding alterations unless necessary for clarity. Others focused on restructuring their stories to foreground Indigenous voices ahead of institutional voices, intentionally subverting the traditional hierarchy within institutional storytelling. Additionally, minimizing the author's voice emerged as a method to foreground the principle that Indigenous partners are best suited to narrate their own stories. Crucially, it is imperative for Indigenous voices to be not merely included but integral to these narratives. If Indigenous partners are unable to participate or contribute, the story's legitimacy is called into question, underscoring a principled stance on the indispensable nature of Indigenous presence in narratives concerning them. This shift represents an ethical stance on storytelling, recognizing the power dynamics at play and actively working to invert them, thereby fostering a more equitable platform for Indigenous engagement.

### ***Stories Need to Be Asset-Based***

“I think that there is a power in storytelling that evokes emotion, calls to action, and moves us in different ways to see the humanity in people. And, if we could use that with Indigenous stories to debunk some of the stereotypes and myths

that continue to be really pervasive and damaging, I think that's what we should be doing." — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Arrazattee et al. (2013) advise PSI communicators against framing communities as "helpless." Instead, they recommend adopting collaborative and strength-based language for stories about community engagement (p. 49). This recommendation is in harmony with Tuck's (2009) advocacy for research methodologies that focus on aspirations rather than damages. Such desire-based frameworks are designed to capture the full spectrum of complexities, contradictions, and the autonomy within people's experiences. In a similar vein, McCue (2023) emphasizes the importance of "solutions-oriented" journalism, which counters narratives of despair surrounding Indigenous communities by fostering hope among audiences (p. 32). By depicting Indigenous people as innovators and problem solvers, storytellers can transform perceptions of Indigenous victimhood into narratives of empowerment and self-determination (p. 33). My research further highlights the importance for PSIs to generate asset-based narratives that respect and elevate Indigenous resilience, innovation, and knowledge.

In our interview, Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager at the University of Alberta, highlighted the urgent need to counteract prevalent negative portrayals of Indigenous communities by emphasizing their thriving resilience despite adversities. PSI stories should challenge the status quo, introducing narrative frames that showcase the diverse, vibrant cultures and strengths of Indigenous peoples. These stories should move beyond superficial representation to deeply acknowledge their beauty, presence, and contributions. Even when

addressing complex issues like health disparities within Indigenous communities, it's possible to blend stories of challenge with narratives of progress and self-determination. This approach highlights Indigenous-led initiatives and solutions that honour traditional knowledge and practices in addressing contemporary challenges. Chondoma provided insights into the transformative power of storytelling that humanizes, mobilizes, debunks stereotypes, and fosters a deeper understanding of the realities faced by Indigenous communities. To achieve this, Chondoma emphasizes the importance of starting with an acknowledgment of Indigenous partners' inherent expertise and capabilities. PSI stories should serve as a platform to showcase their knowledge, contributions, and the challenges Indigenous partners face in accessing resources. This narrative approach challenges the colonial framing of Indigenous wisdom as static or outdated and accurately reflects the active role of Indigenous people as collaborators and problem solvers.

***Stories Need to Disrupt the Reductionist Representations of Indigenous Peoples***

“It was my experience that whenever Indigenous people were previously named, they were named as Indigenous. No specificity as to First Nations, Metis, or Inuit, and almost never by their nation. So even using those opportunities of saying, this person is Blackfoot from Kainai, geographically situating individuals, noting the sovereignty and territoriality of their nations – that's part of the discussion. So almost every layer we were really conscious of how we might disrupt some of the reductionist ways that Indigenous peoples have been represented even in

university publications.” — Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager at the University of Alberta

Lastly, contributing to the discourse on employing asset-based framing—though not directly identified in my Literature Review—is the necessity for PSI storytelling practices to challenge colonial legacies of homogenization and invisibility. For PSIs to effectively amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives, it is crucial to prioritize narratives that respectfully and accurately reflect the diverse realities of Indigenous people, both positive and challenging. My interviews emphasized the need for varied storytelling, countering the reductionist approaches that have historically rendered Indigenous identities into simplistic, monolithic figures. PSI stories should celebrate the myriad opinions, experiences, and cultural practices within Indigenous communities, contributing to a richer discussion on Indigenous-focused issues. This strategy requires a deliberate effort to depict Indigenous identities with specificity and respect, acknowledging the sovereignty and territoriality of different nations and celebrating Indigenous presence and contributions in their full complexity. Past practices often left Indigenous peoples unnamed or lumped together, failing to recognize the dynamic and sometimes challenging contexts within individual communities. The call is for storytelling that moves beyond simplistic, historical portrayals, advocating for narratives as diverse and dynamic as the communities themselves. Furthermore, my interviews shed light on the importance of visual representation in PSI stories, advocating for a move away from stereotypical imagery to embrace a richer, more authentic visual narrative. Story authors are encouraged to carefully select both written and visual elements, ensuring they capture the diversity, contemporaneity, and complexity of

Indigenous identities and experiences. This push for a nuanced representation that acknowledges Indigenous contributions across various domains underscores the transformative power of storytelling in altering perceptions of Indigenous identity.

### **How Can PSIs Craft Stories That Advance Indigenous Objectives?**

A crucial principle of community engagement is that research objectives should be reciprocal and aim to build capacity for communities to thrive (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 9; University of British Columbia, 2019, p. 9). In the context of research with Indigenous communities, Hayward et al. (2021) underline the significance of conducting research based on respect for community autonomy and in collaboration with participants (p. 413). Similarly, communication scholars are increasingly advocating for the use of communications to achieve social goals (Arrazattee et al., 2013; Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022; Dutta, 2015; Fehrer et al., 2022; Heath, 2011; LaFever, 2008; Logan, 2021; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2021; Mulligan, 2022; Yudarwati & Gregory, 2022). My research contributes to this dialogue by exploring how PSIs can develop narratives that further the goals of their Indigenous partners. In my study, I find that like amplifying Indigenous voices, the way IE stories are framed is critical, however, my research also reveals PSI storytelling practices must change in order to effectively promote Indigenous objectives.

### ***Stories Need to be Indigenous-Led***

“When we start with a blank canvas, and we say, look, it's Indigenous-led. Why don't you tell us the parts that you want to tell? Why don't you tell us what the context is? Why don't you tell us what you needed to have solved? And why

don't you tell us what you got out of the partnership that was able to resolve the issue? You end up weaving this really beautiful narrative that layers atop of itself, and you end up uncovering things that you didn't even know had you just stuck to what looked like a really standard research question and an answer to that question. So, for me, the magic is Indigenous-led storytelling.” — Lerato

Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

My interviews called for a transformative approach in PSIs' storytelling practices, stressing the need for these narratives to be led by Indigenous partners. Such a shift would ensure that the autonomy, perspectives, and priorities of Indigenous partners are not only respected but prioritized. This change represents a fundamental shift away from institutional-centric narratives, advocating for stories that place Indigenous voices and objectives at the forefront. It's crucial for these narratives to celebrate Indigenous experiences and perspectives, moving beyond merely showcasing the institution's contributions. This approach not only respects the agency of Indigenous partners but also challenges the entrenched power imbalances in storytelling practices. By allowing Indigenous partners to dictate the terms of engagement and the content of PSI stories that feature them, PSIs can uncover and address deeper issues related to colonialism and systemic racism, which might otherwise remain unexplored. For example, my interviews advocated for narratives that champion Indigenous self-determination and tackle complex concepts like land rights issues, emphasizing land's critical role in Indigenous identity, culture, and autonomy. By challenging dominant discourses that often marginalize Indigenous voices and agency, PSI stories should be illustrating

Indigenous partners' proactive efforts to reclaim their resources and futures, framing them as the architects of their own solutions. By prioritizing Indigenous-led stories, PSIs can contribute to the decolonization of their communications practices and to support the self-determination and agency of Indigenous communities.

***Stories Need to Educate about the Impacts of Colonialism***

“A year or two ago, I vetted a story about forced sterilization. On the face of it, the story was fine. It profiled the researcher, the legislation that they were supporting, profiled a community member, and should have been enough in and of itself. The problem was when I reviewed the article, there is an entire history that dates back over a hundred years of medical violence against Indigenous women. And so, there’s been an opportunity... to teach communicators or other authors about the responsibility to research larger contextual pieces in an Indigenous-focused story, to try and find out about the things that they might not know, and it's not sufficient to just provide ‘the story.’” — Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager at the University of Alberta

In her Theory of Corporate Responsibility to Race (CRR), Logan (2021) advocates for corporations to employ communication strategies that not only raise awareness about racism but also illuminate the complex implications of its operation and champion racial justice and equity (p. 13). Similarly, my research reveals the important role PSIs can play in using their storytelling to educate on the impacts of colonialism, educating the public not just about what happened, but offering a critical examination of colonialism’s ongoing effects still felt today by

Indigenous communities. My interviews discussed how omitting the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism in storytelling can render PSI storytellers complicit in oppression. As storytellers in spaces built on colonial legacies, PSI authors carry a profound responsibility to do more than just share stories of partnerships and projects with Indigenous communities. They need to frame these stories against the vast backdrop of colonial history and its echoes in today's realities. My interviews highlighted practical ways stories could incorporate explanatory elements to aid the general public in grasping the complexities and nuances of Indigenous experiences. By weaving educational content with narrative storytelling, PSIs can foster deeper public understanding of Indigenous realities, challenging and potentially transforming public perceptions and awareness of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing narrative of colonial violence and resistance. Such an approach not only honours the intricate realities of Indigenous experiences but also aligns with broader commitments to truth and reconciliation. Furthermore, it challenges PSIs to move beyond superficial storytelling to embrace a role as educators and allies in the journey towards understanding and addressing the legacies of colonialism.

### ***Indigenous Partners Need to be Allowed to Review their Stories and Have Ultimate Control***

#### ***Over the Narrative***

“Unlike in traditional journalism where you interview your sources, write your article, send it to the editor, and get it published, this process can be more collaborative where you share the article with your sources and let them read it. Because it's their voices, we use the principle of data sovereignty. And so,

anything that they're sharing is theirs. And so unlike in a mainstream media situation, I will share what I've written... back with the community and let them review and change it if they want." — Sarah MacDonald, Communications Officer at the University of Saskatchewan

McCue (2023) highlighted the apprehension Indigenous peoples have towards journalists (p. 4). My research identifies a significant action PSIs can undertake to restore trust with Indigenous partners: adopting practices that allow Indigenous partners to review and control the narratives of their stories. Unlike conventional journalistic methods, which generally prohibit review, PSI authors can embrace a collaborative approach with Indigenous partners in storytelling. By enabling Indigenous partners to review and amend stories, PSIs endorse data sovereignty, recognizing that the stories and information shared by Indigenous peoples remain their own. This practice allows Indigenous partners to make corrections and clarifications, ensuring that the final narrative accurately reflects their intentions and messages. It is crucial for mitigating the risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation, maintaining trust, and preserving integrity in Indigenous storytelling. In certain instances, my interviewees discussed how Indigenous partners may request specific exclusions from their stories. Respecting these preferences is vital for PSIs to genuinely support Indigenous objectives and avoid inadvertently undermining their goals or priorities. This approach is a cornerstone of ethical storytelling and is essential for establishing and sustaining trust between PSIs and Indigenous partners. Furthermore, prioritizing Indigenous review and control over narratives also supports the broader objective of promoting Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

***Indigenous Partners Need to Own Their Stories***

“It's their stories. It's their voices. I'm just the one telling the stories on their behalf and sharing what they want to share. But ultimately, this is their data... It's not mine. And it's so important that the community have that ownership and control over what's being shared... If the community suddenly decided, 'We don't want this data being used anymore,' then we have to respect that, and we would have to potentially destroy the material, or somehow send it back to the community so they can do with it as they like. But it's really ensuring that the data is their own and that if we are using it, we're using it in a good and respectful way, with their consent.” — Sarah MacDonald, Communications Officer at the University of Saskatchewan

Hoekstra et al. (2020) emphasized the necessity for researchers to ensure that Indigenous partners retain ownership of their data and the knowledge generated during the partnership (p. 14). My study extends this principle to the way PSIs manage their IE stories. My interview highlighted the critical need for Indigenous partners to have ownership over their stories. Indigenous partners' stories, data, and voices inherently belong to them, challenging the norms of traditional journalism and research practices. This model advocates for Indigenous partners to have the ultimate authority in how their narratives are communicated, preserved, and shared. MacDonald shared her use of the OCAP framework as a means to honour Indigenous sovereignty concerning their data and stories. These principles demand that PSIs acknowledge and implement the rights of Indigenous partners to own, control, access, and

possess data about themselves. Should an Indigenous partner choose to withdraw their story, it is the PSI's obligation to honour those wishes by removing the story from their platforms and returning any remaining data to the community. This starkly contrasts the previously discussed practice of treating stories as assets that institutions can freely use and edit without further consultation. Embracing principles like OCAP enables institutions to confront and begin dismantling the colonial frameworks that have historically marginalized Indigenous voices and knowledge systems. It represents a commitment to fostering reciprocal relationships, acknowledging Indigenous partners as equal contributors in the storytelling process. Such an approach provides a critical foundation for building authentic partnerships that respect Indigenous autonomy and is a crucial step towards honouring Indigenous data sovereignty and supporting the decolonization of research methodologies.

### **How Can PSIs Collaborate with Indigenous Partners to Develop These Stories?**

Jürgen Habermas believed that speech acts, with their implicit claims open to criticism and justification, could foster a rational society, referred to as the "lifeworld," wherein individuals engage in coordinated actions founded on mutual understanding and social integration (Habermas, 1984). He identified four prerequisites for an ideal speech situation, including equal opportunities to speak, an absence of constraints on the outcome of discourse, equal legitimacy among speakers, and a lack of power imbalances (Habermas, 1984). Similarly, practitioners in community engagement acknowledge the significance of establishing environments conducive to the full participation of their community partners (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, pp. 12–13; LaFever, 2008, p. 172; Mulligan, 2022, p. 2;

University of British Columbia, n.d.). For example, in an extensive study, Hoekstra et al. (2020) conducted a thorough review of 86 studies investigating the principles, strategies, outcomes, and impacts of community-engaged research. Their findings underscore that ethical engagement entails actively listening to and learning from community partners, as well as recognizing, respecting, and valuing their diverse knowledge, experiences, and contexts (Hoekstra et al., 2020, p. 14).

In my Literature Review, I delved deeper into how, by addressing power imbalances, prioritizing community needs and transparency, and directly confronting colonialism, PSI communicators can empower Indigenous partners to engage fully in the storytelling development process. My research contextualizes these principles within PSI storytelling and uncovers numerous strategies that PSIs and their communicators can utilize to encourage the full participation and collaboration of Indigenous partners throughout the storytelling journey. These findings generally fall into two overarching themes: firstly, the imperative to eliminate power imbalances and confront colonial legacies, and secondly, the necessity to prioritize ethical engagement practices.

### ***Prioritize the Inclusion of Indigenous Partners***

In addressing power imbalances, PSIs must ensure Indigenous partners are regarded as essential collaborators throughout the storytelling process. This approach includes engaging Indigenous partners in both story development and post-production phases, not merely as subjects of interviews. This perspective is rooted in the necessity for PSIs to adopt practices that honour Indigenous principles, such as "nothing about us without us," which emphasizes the

inclusion of Indigenous partners in narratives that concern them. Increasingly, ethical guidelines mandate researchers to include Indigenous partners; however, this expectation has not fully translated into PSI storytelling practices, leading to a gap between inclusive research partnerships and the storytelling practices about these partnerships. Interviews indicate that it often falls to the researcher to advocate for the involvement of Indigenous partners from the storytelling inception. The extent of Indigenous partners' inclusion varies significantly from story to story, depending on the commitment of the researcher and the storyteller to this principle. Addressing these challenges necessitates not only individual commitments from researchers and storytellers but also clear institutional policies that prioritize Indigenous partners' inclusion in the PSI story development process.

### ***Confront Colonial Tensions Internally and within PSIs***

“The person writing the story needs to be open, open to feedback, and open to learning. Open to adapting their style, and open to questioning. Constantly checking yourself.” — Angie Deveau, Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick

McCue (2023) described decolonizing journalism as the endeavor to analyze and dismantle the systems and methodologies within media that sustain colonial ideologies and favor Western ways of doing. This process involves rectifying power imbalances within newsrooms and news organizations by recognizing and respecting Indigenous perspectives, while also identifying and mitigating Western biases that hinder Indigenous ways of being (p. x). Similarly, my interviews shed light on the internal and external challenges of decolonizing

storytelling within PSI communications, emphasizing the necessity for individual and institutional reflexivity, humility, and courage in engaging with Indigenous partners and their stories. Angie Deveau emphasized the importance of addressing personal biases and the continuous effort needed to decolonize language and storytelling practices. Her dedication to trauma-informed communication, coupled with her willingness to embrace initial mistakes, illustrated the delicate balance storytellers must maintain between seeking to understand and respecting the boundaries and expertise of Indigenous partners. Deveau's journey of personal growth and her proactive approach to utilizing decolonizing resources showcased the profound level of individual transformation necessary for authentic storytelling. Storytellers need to be open to feedback, adapt their styles, and engage deeply with the Indigenous partners they feature, ensuring that stories are conveyed authentically and with respect. The interviews highlighted the necessity of courage in facing discomfort and institutional resistance to decolonization efforts, calling for ongoing commitment and collaboration with Indigenous partners to reform storytelling practices within universities.

### ***Transition to Collaborative Models***

“I think the courageous part comes into play when you say ‘no more about these rules that aren't fit for purpose here. How do we co-create new ones?’ And that's always been my way of thinking about [my work at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative]. It's why I'm always at odds with my own institution. Because co-creation means it's creating anew. It's not taking what we have and tweaking it. Co-creating is your knowledge, your experience, your worldview, is equally

valid as what we have.” — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC’s

Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Ermine's (2007) concept of "ethical space of engagement" presents a foundational approach to reconciliation within Canada, creating a dialogical zone where Western and Indigenous cultures can collaboratively navigate their differences. This ethical space enables participants from diverse cultural backgrounds to transcend their respective worldviews, fostering cross-cultural dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and respect (p. 201). It provides a constructive framework for transitioning from hierarchical social structures to equitable partnerships across different world communities. Within this space, the potential for innovative thought and interaction emerges, contributing to a more holistic approach to reconciliation. Ermine emphasizes the necessity of such spaces for enabling meaningful collaboration between Indigenous and Western communities, which could lead to new forms of thought and beneficial interactions (Ermine, 2007, p. 203). Similarly, PSIs need to fundamentally reassess their approach to storytelling, transitioning to a more collaborative model when working with Indigenous partners. This new model ensures that story development is built on principles of co-creation, mutual benefit, respect for autonomy, and ethical engagement.

In our interview, Lerato Chondoma emphasizes the importance of rejecting outdated processes that don't work for Indigenous partners and engaging in the co-creation of new principles that equally value Indigenous knowledge, experiences, and worldviews alongside existing institutional frameworks. This approach challenges traditional power dynamics and insists on a fundamental reimagining of collaboration, underscoring the need for institutions to

embrace new ways of working that honour Indigenous perspectives as equally valid. Likewise, Chelsea Novak, from the University of Alberta, advocated that Indigenous partners should gain tangible benefits from their participation, ensuring that storytelling does not merely serve institutional interests but also advances the ambitions and needs of Indigenous communities. This perspective shifts storytelling practices from one of extraction to one of shared value and respect. Furthermore, PSI communicators need to recognize that Indigenous partners likely know best how to tell their own stories. Hence, communicators should leverage their storytelling and communications expertise to support Indigenous partners in crafting and disseminating stories as Indigenous partners see fit, acting as facilitators rather than primary narrators.

### ***Hire Indigenous Storytellers***

My Literature Review did not reveal any insights into this specific finding; however my research called for PSIs to directly incorporate Indigenous individuals into their storytelling and communication teams. The consistent absence of these voices at the institutional level, observed across all interviewed institutions, highlights a systemic issue: a reluctance or failure to directly involve Indigenous professionals in storytelling roles. In the immediate absence of Indigenous storytellers within PSIs, communication teams should proactively establish connections with a wider array of Indigenous voices on their campuses for media relations and internal communications. Expanding the pool of Indigenous contributors and ensuring their consultation for their unique knowledge and expertise can address the concern that PSIs

frequently rely on a limited number of Indigenous voices for their communication needs. This approach will also help to alleviate the current burden on Indigenous engagement leads.

Chiming in again with Holloway's insights, simply hiring Indigenous storytellers is not enough. PSIs also need to focus on retaining these employees for the next 1, 3, or 5 years by creating conditions for them to thrive in colonial spaces that were not designed for their success. Additionally, PSIs need to consider how they create a supportive environment for Indigenous team members and make appropriate investments correlated to the value derived from these team members, as well as the communicator's work with Indigenous partners. This could include creating job descriptions that highlight the value of the Indigenous lens provided, making space for recruits to connect with the Indigenous community on campus and participate in cultural events, and implementing policy changes that reflect the lived experience of Indigenous people. For example, flexible stat holiday policies allowing individuals to work on a stat and take off the day at another time that is more significant to them, expanding bereavement policies to include extended family, and allowing paid time off to participate in cultural activities, whether attending ceremonies or participating in food gathering/harvesting, etc. More than a matter of representation on PSI communications teams, this is a fundamental step toward transforming the narrative process and ensuring stories about Indigenous engagement are authentically told by partners, understood by communicators, and received by audiences.

***Build Relationships and Trust***

“I always say to folks, Indigenous partners choose institutions to partner with based on trust, on reputation, but mostly on trust and relationality. So once that trust and relationality is broken, it doesn't matter how smart our researchers are. It's very hard to rebuild that trust once it's broken. And so, we really have to hold these relationships, nurture these relationships in this relational way. I feel like it's so sacred to have a community choose to come and work with [our institution]. And just holding it in that nurturing way that is entirely led by the [Indigenous] partner has always given the best results and the best stories.” — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Castleden et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of building trust, emphasizing the necessity of spending time in Indigenous communities, engaging in conversations with community members, and actively listening to and respecting Indigenous knowledge-holders. This approach is crucial for establishing relationships based on mutual trust. They observed that the challenges and the opportunities that arise in engaging communities are rooted in adopting a stance of respect, ethical behavior, reciprocal actions, and attentively hearing out the desires of communities (p. 168). Similarly, successful engagement between PSIs and Indigenous partners relies on more than just project execution—it demands a foundation of trust. This trust is cultivated through authentic interactions, a genuine interest, and a commitment to understanding and respecting Indigenous protocols, values, and perspectives.

Storytellers, when invited to share the narratives of partnerships between PSIs and Indigenous partners, carry a profound responsibility to nurture and honour these connections, which often take researchers years to develop. Moreover, the ability to recognize potential risks and proactively work to mitigate them before harm occurs is crucial for sustaining long-term, trust-based relationships. My interviews underscored that storytelling cannot be a one-off transaction. Instead, PSI storytellers should strive to continue building these relationships, seeking opportunities to share their stories, return results and data, or even help connect Indigenous partners with broader institutional resources. Angie Deveau, a Communications Officer from the University of New Brunswick, also highlighted the significance of personal presence and engagement in fostering trust and relationships. By actively participating in campus events and engaging with social media, Deveau showcases the importance of being known and accessible within the community as a trustworthy individual. This proactive involvement has enriched Deveau's storytelling, rendering it more impactful and meaningful. By immersing themselves in community life, remaining open to learning and change, and honouring the ongoing nature of relationships, PSIs and storytellers can progress toward more equitable and meaningful engagements with Indigenous partners.

### ***Follow Community Protocols***

“It really behooves storytellers to understand [the power dynamics within a community] and who gets to speak on behalf of a community, nation, or a group, and making sure that you've got that right because it's not necessarily the person who has been leading the conversations in [the university] partnership.” —

Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

The efforts of Indigenous community research ethics boards, protocols, and standards have led to research that integrates cultural values and understandings into method selection and interpretation of outcomes. These approaches, including practices like conversational interviewing, storytelling, and arts-based methods, align with Indigenous cultural norms and contribute to decolonization by empowering communities and challenging dominant perspectives (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 412). My research identified that PSIs need to adopt a more informed, respectful, and nuanced approach to storytelling that honours Indigenous protocols and recognizes the diversity of the Indigenous communities featured in their stories. In practice, the approach to this varies widely. It can include incorporating Indigenous ceremonies and protocols into the storytelling process, such as using tobacco or other culturally appropriate offerings when engaging with Elders and Knowledge Holders. Alternatively, it may involve adhering to community-driven and ethical guidelines, such as OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) or CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics). Storytellers should endeavor to follow established protocols used in the research partnership. Nella Sajlovic emphasized that there may also be guidelines specific to the industry or sector that could provide additional context, like the Canadian Medical Association's statement on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This approach not only supports the work of the TRC but also demonstrates how non-Indigenous organizations are adopting Indigenous perspectives and aligning their practices with Indigenous understandings.

Additionally, part of respecting community protocols is ensuring the inclusion of all relevant voices within Indigenous communities, acknowledging the diversity and complexity of Indigenous perspectives. Lerato Chondoma highlighted the problematic tendency of PSIs to seek a singular voice in storytelling, a practice rooted in colonial and white supremacy constructs that overlook the multifaceted and communal nature of Indigenous knowledge sharing. Chondoma's focus on understanding the place-based context and the diversity of spokespersons within Indigenous communities—from elected council members to hereditary leaders and clan speakers—underscores the importance for storytellers to deeply engage with community protocols to ensure a rich and accurate representation of Indigenous perspectives.

### ***Obtain Informed and Ongoing Consent***

Ethical boards, protocols, and standards for research involving Indigenous communities highlight the necessity of securing free, prior, and informed consent on both individual and collective bases (Hayward et al., 2021, p. 408). My interviews underscored the crucial requirement for PSI storytellers to obtain informed and ongoing consent from Indigenous partners featured in their stories. Clear communication and transparency are crucial from the initial outreach to the publication of stories. This entails explaining the story's intent, medium, and distribution channels, allowing partners to make informed decisions about their participation. It is vital to keep partners informed throughout the process and respect their right to withdraw consent at any time. Such an approach ensures that storytelling is conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities, rather than using these narratives as institutional commodities. Moreover, consent must be ongoing, necessitating new consent each time the

story is shared or featured in a different medium. Periodic checks with Indigenous partners about their continued consent to feature their stories on institutional channels are also advisable. This approach acknowledges the dynamic nature of consent, considering possible changes within the university-community partnership or the Indigenous community itself, which might affect the story or its relevance. This approach ensures that stories continue to have the blessing of Indigenous partners over time, serving as a significant means by which PSIs and storytellers can rebuild trust and support Indigenous self-determination.

***Accommodate the Communication and Engagement Needs of Indigenous Partners***

“I always ask at the beginning of every story I work with: How do you prefer to do this? Do you wish to interview on the phone? Do you want to do it on Teams? Do you wish to do it in person? Do you wish to see the questions in advance? Do you not wish to see the questions in advance? Do you want me to read the story to you?’ So yeah, just being open and talking about those different, ways to collect information.” — Angie Deveau, Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick

LaFever (2008) advocated for prioritizing the needs of marginalized community groups above those of dominant groups (p. 172), emphasizing the necessity to equip these groups with adequate resources—such as time, transportation, childcare, or financial assistance—to address power imbalances and ensure their participation (p. 172). Likewise, PSI Storytellers need to be flexible and willing to accommodate the schedules and preferences of Indigenous partners to facilitate their meaningful participation in the storytelling process. My interviews focused

attention on three components that require flexibility on the part of storytellers: meetings, timelines, and the review process. Regarding meetings, storytellers can be flexible by asking Indigenous partners about their preferred methods of communication and engagement from the outset of a project. By offering various options for interviews and interactions, such as phone, online platforms, or in-person meetings, storytellers can adapt to the preferences of Indigenous partners. In particular, Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick, advocated for direct, personal engagement rather than remote or impersonal methods of communication. This approach can be valuable in creating opportunities to build trust and ensure stories are accurately and respectfully told.

Regarding timelines, storytellers need to depart from traditional media and storytelling timelines, with quick deadlines, to respect the preferences and schedules of Indigenous contributors, who are often already extremely overburdened. In situations where Indigenous partners may be included in media engagements, PSI communicators need to set expectations and manage the storytelling process in a way that aligns with the preferences and availability of Indigenous partners. This can include incorporating significant lead times and being prepared for the possibility that partners may not be immediately available for media requests. Additionally, this includes considerations for media training, communication preferences, and respecting personal schedules, which are all critical to ensuring that Indigenous partners feel respected, prepared, and valued throughout the storytelling process.

Lastly, PSI authors need to adapt the review process of their stories to ensure that it is inclusive of Indigenous partners. This primarily includes making sure that partners are able to

review stories in ways that work for them. From sharing a collaborative document via Google Docs to Angie Deveau discussing how, when working with an individual who had difficulties with comprehension and reading, she read the entire story over the phone, ensuring the participant fully understood and was comfortable with the content before it was shared.

### **When Storytelling About Indigenous Engagement Is at Its Best, What Is It Like?**

In my Literature Review, I examined how both public and private organizations utilize communication and storytelling to shape community narratives, contribute to goal-setting, and advance social objectives. This review aimed to illustrate the significant power that PSIs possess as storytelling agents in framing the narratives of their communities (Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022, p. 2; Entman, 2007, pp. 170–11; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 178). It further highlighted how PSIs engage with the discourse of publics, organizations, and governments, acting as partners in co-creative meaning-making processes and community goal-setting (Fehrer et al., 2022, p. 619; Heath, 2011, p. 417; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 180; Logan, 2021, p. 13; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177). Particularly for Indigenous communities, which have historically faced systemic barriers to communication infrastructure (Province of British Columbia, n.d., para. 6), PSIs can play a pivotal role in amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives and in advancing Indigenous objectives.

However, my Literature Review identified a gap in the existing research on the reciprocal storytelling and communication practices of PSIs that could support and benefit Indigenous partners. Consequently, through my interviews, I sought to uncover the value of storytelling about Indigenous engagement that aligns with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement.

What outcomes can be achieved when storytelling about Indigenous engagement is conducted optimally? My interviews revealed numerous ways in which PSIs can serve as influential storytelling agents, fostering a community that is aware of Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and is committed to advancing Indigenous objectives.

### ***Advances Indigenous Objectives***

“[Stories about Indigenous engagement] show that we're really similar people who want similar things. We want to be connected to our homelands. We want to be connected to nature, free of interference. We want to be healthy. We want to raise healthy children. We want to have thriving families. We want to be connected to traditional economies that address climate change, that disrupt capitalism... And if we can have stories that humanize everybody's lived experience and shows how much more similar and aligned we are in what we're fighting for around social justice, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion, but also all in supporting Indigenous sovereignty. Right? Like that to me, is the best story... That's the best power. Because then we are all fighting on the same side for something.” — Lerato Chondoma, Associate Director at UBC's Indigenous Research Support Initiative

Considering Kim and Ball-Rokeach's Theory of Communication Infrastructure (2006), my Literature Review delved into the pivotal role PSIs can assume in elevating Indigenous voices and objectives. Positioned as mesostorytelling agents, PSIs are well equipped to facilitate and support community dialogues surrounding Indigenous issues, histories, opportunities, and

challenges. Furthermore, as macrostorytelling agents, PSIs wield significant influence over their internal constituencies—students, faculty, staff, and alumni—as well as their broader local and regional communities (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 180). My research interviews highlighted the transformative potential of storytelling about Indigenous engagement, underscoring its capacity to positively impact the communities at the heart of these stories. PSIs have a tremendous amount of power within their communities and can leverage their communication resources, platforms, and expertise to support Indigenous partners in achieving their goals, thereby embodying the true spirit of reciprocity. This process involves using storytelling to build bridges, foster understanding, and mobilize collective action. Highlighting the issues and opportunities that Indigenous partners prioritize can lead to meaningful, positive changes in their situations. Storytelling can also motivate direct action and political advocacy, for example, by highlighting systemic racism in healthcare, stories can spur readers to take civic actions, such as pushing for policy reforms or holding political leaders to account. Furthermore, my interviews revealed that sharing stories of Indigenous engagement offers a unique chance to humanize varied lived experiences, illustrating the deep alignment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in their pursuits of social justice, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion, and notably, in advocating for Indigenous sovereignty. Storytelling can powerfully unite individuals in a shared cause, demonstrating that acknowledging common values and aims can significantly drive collective efforts toward change.

***Challenges Deficit Portrayals of Indigenous Peoples***

“When we highlight stories about students who get awards, research with community, or by an Indigenous researcher, it expands the definition and understanding of who [Indigenous peoples] are in the widest and broadest sense. It helps to not narrow people's thinking about who we are and what we can do.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

McCue (2023) discussed how Canadian media has historically employed damage-centered frames in reporting on Indigenous peoples. These frames have significantly influenced Canadian perceptions and treatment of Indigenous communities, with the media complicit in perpetuating colonialism and racism (p. 13). To address this, McCue emphasizes the importance of "solutions-oriented" journalism, which counters feelings of desolation and despair surrounding Indigenous communities by instilling hope in viewers and readers (p. 32). By portraying Indigenous individuals as problem-solvers, storytellers have the potential to transform narratives of Indigenous victimhood into narratives of empowerment and self-determination (p. 33). Similarly, PSIs can act as catalysts for reconciliation and social transformation through thoughtful and inclusive storytelling practices. My interviews emphasized the significant influence PSIs have on shaping social norms and values, highlighting the responsibility of PSIs to harness their stories for positive change. By leveraging their platforms and reputations, PSIs can significantly contribute to legitimizing Indigenous narratives and advancing the Truth and Reconciliation process. Through strategic placement and timing of

stories to reach a broad audience, PSIs can challenge the widespread marginalization of Indigenous perspectives. By emphasizing narratives that showcase Indigenous resilience, diversity, and agency, PSIs can counter colonial narratives and promote a more inclusive appreciation of Indigenous contributions and knowledge systems. Additionally, showcasing Indigenous academics and researchers engaged in practices rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing can also transform PSI cultures, challenging hegemonic academic norms and enlarging the space for Indigenous perspectives. Such storytelling efforts are key to countering stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and developing a nuanced understanding of Indigenous identities and contributions. This strategy not only elevates Indigenous voices but also tackles broader issues of marginalization and racism, enabling Indigenous partners to be recognized and respected in ways that defy prevailing stereotypes and biases.

### ***Models Reciprocal Indigenous Engagement***

“By doing research in this Indigenous way, following Indigenous methodologies and ways of knowing and being and doing, the research can actually benefit the participants rather than traumatizing them or re-traumatizing them. And I think it's worth sharing that for sure... we would hope that if they're reading about how the research is done and how it can be done in a different way, then maybe it starts lessening the racism in healthcare, showing researchers how to do things in a different way, how to engage with the community better.” — Sarah MacDonald, Communications Officer at the University of Saskatchewan

Hayward et al. (2021) discussed how research, guided by Indigenous-developed frameworks, is increasingly incorporating Indigenous cultural concepts, values, and perspectives into the selection and implementation of methodologies, as well as the interpretation of findings. These approaches are better equipped to incorporate decolonizing methods that dismantle power imbalances between researchers and participants/communities, challenge prevailing perspectives, provide space for Indigenous beliefs and ideas, and contribute to the revitalization and healing of the communities involved (p. 412). My research illuminates how storytelling can play a vital role in supporting and showcasing effective reciprocal engagement strategies between PSIs and Indigenous communities. It offers a lens to reveal how research can evolve past its colonial roots by presenting alternative narratives that challenge traditional, often flawed research methodologies within Indigenous contexts, which typically lack authentic community involvement or leadership. Furthermore, stories can serve as a guide for scholars, researchers, and institutions aiming to collaborate with Indigenous communities in a manner that is respectful, mutual, and leads to meaningful change. Stories can emphasize the significance of trust, mutual respect, and the initiation of research partnerships by the communities themselves, rather than being driven by academic interests or grant opportunities. My interviews highlighted PSI stories' role in supporting research grounded in Indigenous methodologies, stressing the significance of agency, cultural safety, and healing within the research process. By sharing these stories widely, PSIs can educate the general public and professionals in fields like healthcare and academia about the benefits of Indigenous-centered

research methodologies. It is hoped that such models of engagement will encourage similar practices across various institutions and research activities.

### ***Decolonizes Communications Practices***

“[Telling stories about Indigenous engagement is] rewarding to me because I'm always, you know, you always want to find meaning. You spend an awful long time working in a job. And you know, working in communications, you don't always write about the most interesting of things. Like, a lot of it is just very mundane tasks, like, you know, writing speaking notes for this, or writing a release about a funding announcement for that. It's rewarding because it kind of allows you to be more creative, I think, and it kind of allows you to tap into that softer side of yourself. I guess, like I said, I think that it helps kind of decolonize communication in general. Like, if you're providing that messaging and you have that platform to do so, it just feels good to be able to do something more from the heart rather than you know, yeah. I just find it's more from the heart.” —

Angie Deveau, Communications Officer at the University of New Brunswick

Unaddressed in my Literature Review was how telling stories about Indigenous engagement presents an opportunity to transform PSI communications and storytelling practices. For PSI communicators, many of whom have backgrounds in traditional journalism, media relations, or communications, collaborating with Indigenous partners to develop stories offers a chance to address the colonial foundations of journalistic ethics and practices. For instance, by involving Indigenous people in reviewing and shaping the narratives about their

communities, universities can adopt a more ethical and decolonized approach to storytelling. This method seeks to rectify the extractive and deficit-focused narratives that mainstream media has historically perpetuated. Furthermore, my interviews revealed that decolonizing communication practices is seen not just as a strategic or ethical necessity, but also as a deeply enriching and transformative process for communicators. Stories developed collaboratively often allow authors to explore their creativity and move beyond the routine and formulaic aspects of traditional communication tasks. Additionally, this collaborative process provides an opportunity for settler communicators to confront their biases and learn from Indigenous partners, thus fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement in communication practices.

### ***Strengthens Relationships between PSIs and Indigenous Partners***

For PSIs that have contributed to and benefited from discrimination, oppression, and colonialism, reciprocal storytelling provides an opportunity to rebuild trust with Indigenous communities, demonstrate a commitment to reciprocity and decolonization, and motivate participation in community-building activities that benefit Indigenous communities (Ashby-King & Aragón, 2022, p. 8; Logan, 2021, p. 13; Mulligan, 2022, p. 2; Yudarwati & Gregory, 2022, p. 8). My interviews revealed how IE stories present an opportunity for PSIs and their communicators to demonstrate how they can move beyond transactional relationships and be valuable contributors to cultivating meaningful partnerships that are grounded in trust, respect, and a shared commitment to positive impact. My interviews shed light on how these relationships can evolve on a personal level between authors and Indigenous partners. For

instance, one interviewee shared how an initial formal interaction evolved into a personal bond, exemplified by an invitation to join a golf outing, which eventually built enough trust for the partner to participate in media training with her team. Moreover, the impact of reciprocal storytelling extends beyond the individual level; by committing to storytelling that respectfully acknowledges Indigenous history and contributions, universities can significantly bridge gaps and strengthen connections with Indigenous partners and their communities. This effort goes beyond enhancing academic and cultural dimensions; it is about fostering broader societal recognition and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

#### ***Leads to Greater Recruitment and Retention of Indigenous Students***

“When [Indigenous] students see their own community members achieving success, like being a Lieutenant Governor and working at the university, it changes their perception of university. It demonstrates that they will be taught by someone they know and respect. The more we can highlight what's happening, who works here, and what they're doing with their careers, the more it helps to create, in the minds of [Indigenous] youths and young adults, the idea that this university is also a place for our people.” — Cheyenne Joseph, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Engagement at the University of New Brunswick

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) highlighted the significant challenges that First Nations students face at universities, where they encounter a lack of respect for their cultural knowledge, traditions, and values, and are expected to conform to a different cultural reality (p. 7). They emphasized the need for universities to expand their domains of knowledge to respect

and include First Nations cultural values and traditions, making the academic environment more welcoming for these students. They argue that beyond offering specific centers or courses related to Indigenous peoples, institutions must foster an environment where Indigenous students can celebrate their history and critically analyze how societal forces shape their lives (pp. 12-13). Finally, through stories of Indigenous engagement and showcasing achievements and contributions of Indigenous individuals at PSIs, my interviews discussed the dual role of storytelling in both demonstrating the tangible value of education for Indigenous peoples and in actively promoting the presence and recruitment of Indigenous students within universities. Storytelling has the power to shape perceptions and aspirations among Indigenous youth. By showcasing the accomplishments of respected and well-recognized Indigenous individuals on campuses and how Indigenous partners are working with PSIs to overcome their challenges, the university not only celebrates Indigenous success but also signals to prospective Indigenous students that they have a place in these academic environments. By purposefully highlighting Indigenous achievements and contributions, PSIs can significantly inspire future generations, show the accessibility of higher education, and emphasize the value of integrating Indigenous perspectives within academic contexts. This strategy benefits Indigenous students by providing them with role models and affirming their identity within academic settings. It also enriches the educational experience for all students by creating a more diverse and inclusive community.

**Summary: How Can Canadian Universities Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement That Amplify Indigenous Voices and Advance Indigenous Objectives?**

To effectively tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives, Canadian PSIs need to be intentional in how they frame their narratives. Stories should center the voices and perspectives of Indigenous partners, present them as the architects of their own solutions, and disrupt reductive representations. Additionally, storytelling should educate audiences about the impacts of colonialism and champion Indigenous self-determination.

Beyond framing, storytelling practices should be reciprocal, supporting Indigenous objectives and priorities to ensure Indigenous partners benefit directly. This includes allowing Indigenous partners to guide the narrative, ensuring their autonomy, viewpoints, and goals are prioritized. Indigenous partners should also own their stories, maintaining ultimate authority over how their narratives are communicated and shared.

As discussed, PSIs must consider various factors to do this work effectively. They should critically examine the motivations shaping their storytelling approach, avoid harmful storytelling practices, and remove barriers hindering PSI communicators. Moreover, PSIs need to equip and support their storytellers and Indigenous partners for collaboration throughout the storytelling process. This requires addressing colonial legacies, eliminating power imbalances, and prioritizing ethical engagement practices. These elements will be elaborated on in the subsequent Recommendations section.

## Recommendations

### Introduction

I am fortunate that the findings from study naturally translate into actionable recommendations for PSIs and their communicators. In drafting these recommendations, I have deliberately aimed to keep them simple and clear. These guidelines are designed to be readily integrated into the daily practices of PSIs and their communicators. This approach ensures that the recommendations are not only theoretical ideals but practical tools that can effectively aid communicators in crafting stories that authentically amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives.

My recommendations begin by advising on practices to avoid. By highlighting these detrimental practices, PSI communicators can be equipped with the knowledge necessary to evade them. Next, I address the barriers and challenges that impede PSI authors from telling impactful IE stories. Recognizing and addressing these barriers is a crucial step toward improvement. The initial set of recommendations is directly targeted at PSI communicators and is followed by broader recommendations aimed at decolonizing communications teams and entire PSIs. This involves critically reassessing and restructuring the frameworks, policies, and practices that perpetuate colonial mindsets and power imbalances.

Following this, I provide recommendations for telling stories about Indigenous engagement that genuinely amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives. This includes guiding principles on how these stories should be framed and transformative practices to ensure that PSI storytelling is truly reciprocal. Finally, I conclude the Recommendations

section with practical guidance for authors on better collaborating with Indigenous partners throughout the storytelling process, supplemented by additional tips for storytellers that emerged during my research interviews.

### **What to Avoid**

There is a clear pattern in storytelling that can damage PSI relationships with Indigenous partners, undermine principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement, and harm an institution's reputation. Highlighting these detrimental practices is crucial as it equips PSI communicators with the knowledge needed to avoid them. Therefore, my initial set of recommendations focuses on what PSIs and their communicators should avoid:

- **Avoid telling stories that are university-centric or convey the savior narrative:** University-centric stories focus primarily on the achievements and contributions of the institution, overshadowing or completely ignoring the roles and inputs of Indigenous partners. A savior narrative portrays the institution as rescuing or benefiting Indigenous communities without recognizing their autonomy, strengths, or contributions, thus reinforcing a paternalistic and colonial viewpoint.
- **Avoid telling stories that exclude Indigenous partner voices:** This occurs when stories fail to incorporate the perspectives, insights, or experiences of Indigenous partners. It can happen when stories are told without their direct input, consultation, or without quoting or acknowledging their contributions, effectively silencing their role and diminishing their agency in the storytelling process.

- **Avoid using reductive representations of Indigenous partners:** This refers to the oversimplification or stereotyping of Indigenous partners in storytelling, which diminishes their diverse identities, cultures, and contributions by compressing them into narrow, often misleading portrayals.
- **Refrain from assuming ownership of an IE story post-publication:** This emphasizes that PSIs do not have the right to further use, distribute, or edit an IE story without ongoing consultation and explicit consent from the Indigenous partners involved. It recognizes that the story remains a shared narrative that respects the autonomy and continuous input of Indigenous partners.

By avoiding these practices, PSIs can foster more respectful and authentic engagements, paving the way for stories that genuinely support and amplify Indigenous perspectives and objectives.

### **Remove Barriers That Are Getting in the Way of PSI Authors Telling IE Stories**

The process of telling IE stories within PSIs is filled with barriers that can distort or diminish the authenticity and effectiveness of these narratives. My research has identified key underlying issues in current storytelling practices, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing these barriers as a fundamental step toward improvement. This first set of recommendations is targeted directly at PSI communicators, who must decolonize both themselves and their storytelling practices:

- **Authors need comprehensive training on Indigenous engagement storytelling:**  
Authors require thorough training designed to equip them with the skills and

knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of IE storytelling. This training needs to be culturally informed, trauma-aware, and radically anti-racist. It should address the pervasive deficit narratives that often characterize settler understandings of Indigenous peoples—narratives centered on colonial dispossession, residential school experiences, and socio-economic disparities. Additionally, the training must also focus on methods of engaging reciprocally with Indigenous partners emphasizing the importance of building sustained, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships that facilitate genuine co-creation of stories.

- **Authors must acknowledge their personal biases and the ways in which these biases contribute to the perpetuation of systemic oppression:** It is essential for authors to recognize and understand their personal biases, privileges, and ingrained perceptions of power, including white fragility and white supremacy. These factors can significantly influence storytelling, potentially reinforcing harmful stereotypes and marginalizing Indigenous voices instead of presenting their true perspectives and realities.
- **Authors need to be courageous:** This recommendation calls for authors to face the discomfort and institutional resistance that often accompany decolonization efforts. Courage for authors includes allowing themselves to make initial mistakes, actively collaborating with Indigenous partners to address and correct

these errors and committing to sustained engagement and partnership to transform storytelling practices within post-secondary institutions.

While much of the work required to transform IE storytelling must be undertaken at the individual level, it is imperative that PSIs actively support their communicators by providing the necessary resources, support, and space to engage in this essential work. Without institutional backing, these efforts risk being isolated to a few individuals who prioritize this transformation personally. Therefore, PSIs must institutionalize these changes, ensuring that all communicators have the incentive and means to contribute to meaningful storytelling practices that truly respect and amplify Indigenous voices.

The following recommendations focus on decolonizing communications teams and entire universities by critically reassessing and reconfiguring the structures, policies, and practices that perpetuate colonial mindsets and power imbalances. These recommendations aim to transform communications teams in both composition and function, equipping them to more effectively engage with and authentically represent Indigenous partners. By fostering institutional environments that actively support and champion decolonization efforts, these strategies underscore the pivotal role of systemic change in advancing genuine and meaningful Indigenous engagement.

- **PSI leaders need to understand and prioritize reciprocal Indigenous**

**engagement:** PSI leaders must recognize the critical influence their attitudes and directives have on the quality of IE stories, with leadership commitment directly affecting whether an institution excels or lags in this field. A clear, institution-

wide mandate to prioritize and faithfully represent Indigenous perspectives is essential; without it, the responsibility falls to individual authors, often leading to narratives that inadequately reflect Indigenous voices. This inconsistency can perpetuate institutional barriers and prioritize conventional norms over genuine reciprocal engagement with Indigenous communities.

- **PSI communications teams need to hire Indigenous storytellers:** PSI communications teams must address the significant underrepresentation of Indigenous professionals in marketing and communications roles by actively recruiting and hiring Indigenous storytellers. Simply hiring Indigenous storytellers is not enough; PSIs also need to focus on retaining these employees by creating conditions for them to thrive in colonial spaces that were not designed for them to succeed. This initiative is crucial for enriching the authenticity and depth of the narratives and ensuring that the narratives crafted about Indigenous engagement are informed and shaped by those who inherently understand the cultural, historical, and contextual nuances of the featured communities.
- **PSIs need to provide their communicators with the time and resources to tell IE stories that are built on trust and relationality:** PSIs must commit to increasing both the budget and the time allocated to their communicators for developing stories about Indigenous engagement. This commitment should reflect an understanding that building trust with Indigenous partners requires slow, intentional interactions, and communicators need the flexibility to work within

the relational timelines set by Indigenous partners. Specifically, PSIs should adjust project timelines to allow for multiple iterations of story reviews by Indigenous partners, ensuring their perspectives are authentically represented and respected throughout the storytelling process.

- **PSIs need to develop new ways to measure the impact of IE stories:** PSIs need to revise the way they evaluate IE stories to ensure they go beyond advancing institutional objectives and align with the priorities of Indigenous partners. This critical update requires the integration of qualitative metrics that capture the long-term, relational benefits of engagement, and mandates regular sharing of outcomes with Indigenous partners to foster accountability and prioritize their perspectives in storytelling.
- **PSIs also need to be brave in their IE storytelling:** PSIs must demonstrate courage in their IE storytelling by openly addressing complex or controversial topics, rather than neutralizing them to protect their image or cater to mainstream media and audiences. This commitment involves bravely transferring power to Indigenous partners, allowing them to authentically narrate their own stories—even when these narratives challenge established views and institutional priorities.

The recommendations set forth here serve as a blueprint for PSIs to transform their approach to IE storytelling, addressing critical barriers and embedding decolonization in their communications practices. By adopting these guidelines, PSIs can move beyond superficial

narratives, actively dismantle systemic oppression, and truly amplify Indigenous voices, ensuring that storytelling not only reflects but actively supports Indigenous perspectives and realities.

### **How to Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement That Amplify Indigenous Voices and Advance Indigenous Objectives**

Historically, Indigenous communities have been depicted in narratives that distort and undermine their realities. Possessing substantial communication resources and platforms, Canadian PSIs wield significant power to reshape these perceptions. Consequently, it is the responsibility of PSI communicators to use this influence thoughtfully, crafting stories that can shift moral judgments and promote solutions that truly benefit Indigenous partners. Below are guiding principles that PSI communicators should adopt to ensure their storytelling about Indigenous engagement is both responsible and transformative:

- **Center Indigenous voices:** Authors must prioritize Indigenous voices and perspectives as the primary narrative focus, moving away from institutional accomplishments to highlight the impact of collaborative research with Indigenous partners. A critical issue in current practices is the insufficient inclusion of Indigenous partner voices, as evidenced by 37% of the analyzed stories lacking quotes from their respective Indigenous partners. Therefore, stories must not only include, but also prominently feature quotes from Indigenous partners throughout, ensuring their perspectives are interwoven into the narrative. If an Indigenous partner is unavailable or unwilling to be quoted,

the story should not proceed, to avoid narratives that exclude or marginalize Indigenous contributions.

- **Be asset-based and portray Indigenous partners as the architects of their own solutions:** Authors should create asset-based narratives that celebrate the resilience, innovation, and knowledge of Indigenous partners. By focusing on Indigenous-led initiatives and valuing Indigenous knowledge in tackling contemporary challenges, such stories highlight the strengths and contributions of Indigenous partners. This approach not only challenges stereotypes but also promotes a deeper understanding of Indigenous peoples as proactive collaborators and adept problem solvers in their narratives.
- **Disrupt the reductionist representation of Indigenous people:** PSI storytelling needs to actively challenge oversimplified and homogenizing narratives about Indigenous peoples. It should highlight the distinct identities and cultural practices of each Indigenous community, moving beyond broad categorizations like First Nations, Métis, or Inuit to acknowledge the specific communities partners belong to, all while respecting their sovereignty and territorial rights. Stories should present diverse visual and narrative representations that reflect the full spectrum of Indigenous experiences and identities, including positive cultural events and professional roles beyond traditional labels. Indigenous partners possess a range of experiences that extend beyond their Indigenous

identity alone. This approach ensures a more nuanced and accurate depiction of Indigenous contributions across all sectors of society.

- **Educate about the impacts of colonialism and champion Indigenous self-determination:** PSI have a responsibility to use their stories to inform the public about the enduring effects of colonialism and to advocate for Indigenous self-determination by addressing complex concepts like 'Land Back.' By standing in solidarity with Indigenous partners and their communities, PSI communicators can become powerful activists, elevating these critical issues to prominent positions within political, economic, judicial, and civil society spaces.

By adopting these principles, PSIs can transform their storytelling into powerful tools for social justice, actively contributing to the decolonization of narratives surrounding Indigenous peoples. This approach not only challenges dominant perspectives and incorporates Indigenous beliefs and ideas but also fosters the renewal and healing of the communities involved, playing a crucial role in educating the public and reshaping societal perceptions toward a more just and equitable future.

Next, PSI stories should be reciprocal. In the context of Indigenous engagement, reciprocity in storytelling refers to a practice where both PSI communicators and Indigenous partners collaborate meaningfully to create narratives. Reciprocal storytelling practices at PSIs should aim to build community capacity by supporting Indigenous objectives and priorities, thereby enabling Indigenous partners to benefit directly from the stories told about them. This type of storytelling is not just about sharing knowledge; it's about an equitable exchange that

reinforces the agency of Indigenous partners in shaping how their stories are told and heard.

Based on my research findings, it is recommended that PSI storytellers adopt the following practices:

- **Stories need to be Indigenous-led:** this means that Indigenous partners are allowed to guide the narrative, ensuring that Indigenous autonomy, viewpoints, and goals are prioritized. This approach not only respects the agency of Indigenous partners but actively challenges entrenched power imbalances in storytelling practices. While it is acceptable for IE stories to meet PSI objectives, they must prioritize the needs of Indigenous partners over PSI interests.
- **Indigenous partners need to own their stories:** Indigenous partners' stories, data, and voices inherently belong to them, emphasizing the necessity for them to retain ownership. This approach challenges traditional journalism and reinforces practices of reciprocal Indigenous engagement by advocating for Indigenous partners to have the ultimate authority over how their narratives are communicated, preserved, and shared. If an Indigenous partner decides to withdraw their story, PSIs are obligated to honour those wishes by removing the story from all platforms and returning any associated data to the community, thereby confronting the trend of PSIs treating stories as assets that can be used and edited without ongoing consultation.

These recommended practices enable PSI communicators to use storytelling as a tool to dismantle power hierarchies between their institutions and Indigenous partners, fostering an

environment of equity and mutual respect. By adhering to these principles, PSIs can rebuild trust with Indigenous partners, demonstrating a genuine commitment to reciprocity and the broader goals of decolonization.

### **How to Better Collaborate with Indigenous Partners Throughout the Entire Storytelling**

#### **Process**

Lastly, to effectively tell stories about Indigenous engagement that amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives, PSIs and their communicators must ensure that Indigenous partners are active collaborators throughout the entire storytelling journey. This requires PSIs to confront and address colonial legacies, eliminate power imbalances, and prioritize ethical engagement practices. This includes:

- **Prioritizing the inclusion of Indigenous partners and transitioning to collaborative models:** PSIs must treat Indigenous collaborators as essential partners from the inception of a story to its completion. This involves actively involving Indigenous voices in shaping the narrative to ensure that their perspectives and knowledge are valued as much as institutional frameworks. PSIs should move away from outdated models that marginalize Indigenous contributions and co-create new principles and processes that fully integrate and respect Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. This approach adheres to the principle of "nothing about us without us," ensuring that Indigenous partners are active creators and validators of their own narratives, not merely subjects.

- **Building relationships and trust:** Establishing strong, trust-based relationships between PSIs and Indigenous partners requires a relational rather than transactional approach from PSI communicators. Storytelling should be a continuous and reciprocal process that contributes to deepening relationships. PSI storytellers should ensure that storytelling becomes an ongoing dialogue involving sharing outcomes and data, improving accessibility, and connecting Indigenous partners with broader institutional resources.
- **Following community protocols:** Adhering to community protocols means that PSIs must respect and integrate Indigenous ceremonies and guidelines into the storytelling process. This includes following community-driven and ethical protocols such as OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics), and ensuring the inclusion of a wide range of voices within Indigenous communities. PSI storytellers must navigate the power dynamics within these communities and recognize who is authorized to speak on behalf of a community, nation, or group, producing stories that are culturally respectful and genuinely representative.
- **Obtaining informed and ongoing consent:** It is crucial for PSI storytellers to obtain informed and ongoing consent from Indigenous partners to ensure respect and true collaboration throughout the storytelling process. This requires clear communication about the story's intent, content, and distribution channels from the initial outreach to publication, ensuring that partners understand their

rights, including the option to withdraw consent at any time. Furthermore, consent must be ongoing, requiring storytellers to secure fresh approval each time a story is reused or featured on a new medium or platform, thus respecting the evolving dynamics of consent and maintaining the endorsement of Indigenous partners over time.

- **Accommodating communication and engagement needs of Indigenous partners:** PSI storytellers must be adaptable and responsive to the communication and engagement needs of Indigenous communities. This entails offering a variety of communication options, such as phone calls, online platforms, or in-person meetings, and being flexible with timelines to respect their availability and preferences. Additionally, storytellers should implement inclusive review processes, allowing Indigenous partners to select their preferred method of reviewing stories, whether through collaborative documents or personalized discussions, to ensure meaningful and respectful participation throughout the storytelling process.

By implementing these recommendations, PSIs can transform their approach to storytelling with Indigenous communities, ensuring that these narratives are co-created and mutually beneficial. This shift not only respects and uplifts Indigenous voices but also plays a crucial role in advancing Indigenous objectives and strengthening community partnerships.

### **Additional Tips for Storytellers**

My interviews with authors and IELs yielded several additional practical tips for storytellers. While these tips did not require extensive elaboration in my discussion section, they remain valuable for storytellers, and, so, are included below:

- **Seek guidance from Indigenous Engagement Leads:** PSI communicators are advised to collaborate closely with their IELs in the production of stories for several compelling reasons. Firstly, IELs bring invaluable knowledge and perspectives that can significantly enrich the storytelling process. Their expertise ensures that stories accurately reflect the complexities, richness, and nuances of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and contemporary issues. This collaboration is crucial for producing content that offers a comprehensive and authentic portrayal of Indigenous experiences.

Secondly, IELs can play a pivotal role in shaping the objectives of storytelling projects within PSIs. Their unique position as liaisons between Indigenous partners and institutional communicators makes their input essential in ensuring that stories are not only relevant but also resonate with both Indigenous and broader audiences. By integrating IELs into the storytelling process, PSIs can guarantee that their narratives are aligned with the objectives and priorities of Indigenous communities, thereby fostering a more meaningful and impactful engagement.

Furthermore, IELs can guide communicators in adopting ethical practices when engaging with Indigenous partners. This includes emphasizing consent, collaboration, and respectful representation throughout the storytelling process. Their insights are invaluable in establishing and maintaining respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, which is fundamental to ethical storytelling.

IELs can also contribute significantly by reviewing story drafts and providing feedback. This step is crucial in preventing the dissemination of potentially harmful content and ensuring the use of appropriate language and representation. Their feedback helps in refining stories to better honour Indigenous knowledge, culture, and priorities.

Lastly, by working closely with IELs, PSI communicators can contribute to the decolonization of communication practices. IELs can offer guidance on setting new standards and processes for PSI communications teams, which is essential in developing narratives that foster a more inclusive, respectful, and impactful storytelling practice. Their participation ensures that the stories contribute positively to advancing Indigenous objectives and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. In summary, the collaboration between PSI communicators and Indigenous Engagement Leads is indispensable for creating stories that truly amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives. This partnership

not only enhances the quality and integrity of the stories but also aligns with broader efforts towards reconciliation and decolonization within the PSI context.

- **Consult on appropriate language use:** Incorporating the appropriate and respectful use of Indigenous languages into PSI stories presents a consistent challenge for PSI authors, often conflicting with rigid institutional language style guides. PSIs need to do better in this regard and this shift requires not only the adoption of specific style guides but also a broader institutional commitment to listening to and learning from Indigenous communities. PSIs are encouraged to adopt Indigenous language style guides specifically designed to navigate the linguistic nuances of the communities they engage with, alongside addressing the distinct needs of their institutional contexts. Furthermore, it's essential for PSI communicators to understand how language can either reinforce colonial mindsets or foster respectful interactions with Indigenous communities. On an individual story basis, PSI storytellers are advised to seek and apply the guidance of Indigenous partners regarding preferred word spellings within their featured stories. This method not only upholds the linguistic integrity and sovereignty of Indigenous languages but also honours the diversity and particular preferences of Indigenous communities.
- **Break away from traditional story formats:** PSI communicators often face significant constraints in storytelling due to limited time and resources, leading to an overwhelming reliance on short written blog posts or Q&As in my study.

However, it's crucial for PSI communicators to adopt a more flexible and creative approach in collaboration with Indigenous partners. Short written formats frequently fall short in capturing the depth and richness of partnership stories between PSIs and Indigenous communities. Therefore, PSI storytellers are encouraged to explore other mediums, such as video and audio, and prioritize emotional expression and vivid imagery in crafting these stories, to more effectively convey the richness of these partnerships.

- **Target the Indigenous partner audience:** PSI communicators should collaborate with Indigenous partners to customize their story amplification efforts, ensuring that they go beyond their regular channels to effective engagement with Indigenous audiences. A valuable strategy is targeted media pitching to outlets that resonate with these communities. This approach entails creating a dedicated Indigenous media pitch list, featuring outlets like APTN, IndigiNews, Windspeaker, and Indigenous-focused sections in mainstream outlets, including CBC. It's important to consult Indigenous partners to identify preferred media outlets and reporters, and, importantly, to identify any that should be avoided based on negative past interactions. Additionally, PSI communicators should explore opportunities to share their stories through relevant Indigenous-owned social media channels. By tapping into Indigenous media outlets, consulting with Indigenous partners, and utilizing various dissemination channels, PSIs can more effectively reach and engage Indigenous audiences. This strategy promotes

meaningful dialogue, relationship-building, and ensures that storytelling efforts are both accessible and pertinent to Indigenous communities.

- **Prepare for any harm your stories may cause:** PSI authors must be aware of the potential for their stories to trigger traumatic experiences among Indigenous audiences. They bear the responsibility of ensuring that their storytelling efforts foster healing rather than exacerbating trauma within Indigenous communities or for the partners involved in sharing their stories. It is essential for PSI communicators to adopt a trauma-informed approach throughout their storytelling process, including interviews. Depending on the story's subject, they should organize and prepare resources to support individuals potentially affected by the content. This proactive approach includes collaborating with university partners and securing relevant resources, guaranteeing that individuals have access to necessary support services and information when needed.

These additional tips, encompassing collaboration with Indigenous Engagement Leads, careful language use, innovative storytelling formats, targeting Indigenous audiences, and preparing for potential harm, provide more comprehensive guidance for PSI communicators. By integrating these recommendations, storytellers can ensure that their narratives authentically represent and engage Indigenous partners, advancing meaningful dialogue and decolonization efforts within universities.

Table 19

***Summary of Recommendations***

<b>What to Avoid</b>	Avoid telling stories that are university-centric or convey the savior narrative
	Avoid telling stories that exclude Indigenous partner voices
	Avoid using reductive representations of Indigenous partners
	Refrain from assuming ownership of an IE story post-publication
<b>Remove Barriers That Are Getting in the Way of PSI Authors Telling IE Stories</b>	Authors need comprehensive training on Indigenous engagement storytelling
	Authors must acknowledge their personal biases and the ways in which these biases contribute to the perpetuation of systemic oppression
	Authors need to be courageous
	PSI leaders need to understand and prioritize reciprocal Indigenous engagement:
	PSI communications teams need to hire Indigenous storytellers

	<p>PSIs need to provide their communicators with the time and resources to tell IE stories that are built on trust and relationality</p> <p>PSIs need to develop new ways to measure the impact of IE stories</p> <p>PSIs also need to be brave in their IE storytelling</p>
<b>How to Tell Stories About Indigenous Engagement That Amplify Indigenous Voices and Advance Indigenous Objectives</b>	<p>Center Indigenous voices</p> <p>Be asset-based and portray Indigenous partners as the architects of their own solutions</p> <p>Disrupt the reductionist representation of Indigenous people</p> <p>Educate about the impacts of colonialism and champion Indigenous self-determination</p> <p>Stories need to be Indigenous-led</p> <p>Indigenous partners need to own their stories</p>
<b>How to Better Collaborate with Indigenous Partners Throughout the Entire Storytelling Process</b>	<p>Prioritize the inclusion of Indigenous partners and transition to collaborative models</p> <p>Build relationships and trust</p> <p>Follow community protocols</p> <p>Obtain informed and ongoing consent</p>

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	Accommodate communication and engagement needs of Indigenous partners
<b>Additional Tips for Storytellers</b>	Seek guidance from Indigenous Engagement Leads
	Consult on appropriate language use
	Break away from traditional story formats
	Target the Indigenous partner audience
	Prepare for any harm your stories may cause

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### Conclusion

In my conclusion section, I begin by providing a summary of my research, focusing on the key areas of expansion from the existing literature. Next, I discuss the limitations of the study, acknowledging constraints such as the small sample size of universities and interview participants, the scope of the quantitative content analysis, and my own positionality. Additionally, I offer reflections on the use of Chat GPT-4, examining its role in supporting my research methodology and its implications for ethical research practices. Finally, the conclusion presents recommendations for future research, suggesting avenues for validating, expanding, and challenging my current findings, investigating the broader impacts of PSI storytelling, and continuing to explore the ethical use of generative AI in research.

### Summary

Through the analysis of university communications published between 2022 and 2023 and interviews with university communicators and senior Indigenous engagement leaders at

some of Canada's largest universities, this study has endeavored to comprehensively explore and evaluate how Canadian universities frame Indigenous engagement through their public communications. My research expands on the existing literature in several ways. First, it addresses a decade-long gap regarding how PSIs represent community-university partnerships in their public communications and assesses whether these efforts align with principles of reciprocal engagement. This study may be the first to specifically evaluate how Canadian universities communicate their engagement with Indigenous partners. Second, my findings identify several motivations behind the growing trend of Canadian universities needing to report on their Indigenous engagement efforts, consequently leading to an increased demand for university communicators to produce IE stories. Third, my research offers new insights into how university communications and storytelling can undermine efforts toward reciprocal Indigenous engagement. This thesis calls for PSIs to critically examine their storytelling motivations and practices, highlighting the risks associated with engaging in detrimental practices that may perpetuate colonial narratives or undermine the autonomy and contributions of Indigenous partners. Fourth, this thesis provides actionable recommendations to help PSI communicators use storytelling to dismantle power hierarchies between their institutions and Indigenous partners, and share narratives that amplify Indigenous voices, challenge dominant perspectives, and advance Indigenous objectives. These recommendations focus on highlighting practices to avoid and addressing the obstacles that prevent PSI authors from effectively conveying IE stories. They offer guidance on crafting narratives that genuinely amplify Indigenous voices and advance Indigenous objectives through their framing and

transformative practices. Additionally, practical tips are shared for PSI communicators to enhance collaboration with Indigenous partners throughout the entire storytelling process.

Finally, my results articulate the significant impact and necessity of aligning storytelling within Canadian PSIs with principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement. PSIs and their communicators wield considerable power and have the capacity to act as effective storytelling agents, influencing community perceptions and driving positive social change that benefits Indigenous partners. This includes advancing Indigenous objectives, challenging deficit portrayals of Indigenous peoples, and presenting models of good engagement that exemplify respectful, reciprocal, and transformative interactions between PSIs and Indigenous communities. Moreover, through reciprocal storytelling, PSIs have the opportunity to transform their communication practices, moving towards a decolonized approach that fosters creative freedom, addresses biases, and builds meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners.

If these reasons are not compelling enough, I strongly believe that telling reciprocal IE stories will lead to significantly greater audience engagement. Although my study did not specifically address the quantitative impact of these stories on brand equity, my professional experience as a communicator at the University of British Columbia, supported by researchers who have discussed the value of brands taking a stand and engaging in authentic brand activism (Key et al., 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020), clearly indicates the benefits. Therefore, I encourage PSI communicators to be brave in the way they approach IE stories, to commit to practices that are collaborative and transformative, and to challenge colonialism through every story they co-create. By doing so, I am confident they will be pleased with the outcomes.

## **Limitations**

### ***The Small Sample Size of Universities and Interview Participants***

One of the limitations of my study arises from the relatively small sample size of universities and interview participants included in the analysis. Although I selected nine of Canada's largest universities, the findings might not fully represent the diverse approaches to Indigenous engagement storytelling across the entire spectrum of Canadian higher education institutions. This limitation also extends to the interviews conducted. With interviews involving only authors whose stories received positive scores in my content analysis and senior-level Indigenous engagement leads, the perspectives gathered, while invaluable, are not exhaustive of all stakeholders in PSI storytelling. This selection bias might overlook contrasting practices or opinions that could be prevalent among other authors or leaders within the same institutions or in other PSIs that were not included in the study. Additionally, my approach limits the scope of perspectives captured, focusing mainly on successful strategies and potentially overlooking the challenges faced by institutions struggling with their storytelling practices, skewing the findings toward more positive outcomes and omitting valuable insights into common pitfalls.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of my research is the absence of direct input from the Indigenous partners featured in IE stories. My decision to not include Indigenous partners as interviewees was rooted in several considerations. Foremost among these was the awareness that establishing and maintaining relationships with Indigenous partners demands substantial time, respect, and trust. Engaging Indigenous partners adequately would require a relational approach that prioritizes these communities' protocols and timing, which might extend beyond

the practical constraints of my MA research timeframe. Additionally, I was acutely conscious of the potential risk of disrupting the existing relationships between these partners and their PSIs. Nevertheless, this decision marks a significant gap in my study. By not including the voices of the Indigenous partners, the research lacks insights into whether they feel that PSI stories genuinely reflect their contributions, uphold principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement, and represent their perspectives accurately.

### ***The Quantitative Content Analysis of University Stories***

Another limitation of my study arises from the methodology used in the content analysis. My approach was quantitative, focusing on whether certain criteria were met within the articles analyzed. This method does not capture the qualitative nuances that significantly impact the depth and quality of Indigenous engagement storytelling. For instance, an article that includes multiple quotes from Indigenous partners is treated the same as one with just a single quote, as long as both are seen to meet the criteria of amplifying Indigenous voices. This quantitative approach, while useful for broad assessment and comparison across many articles, overlooks the richness and context of how Indigenous voices are presented. The depth of engagement, the nature of the quotes, and the integration of Indigenous perspectives in the narrative are all aspects that a qualitative analysis would reveal. Consequently, the findings may not fully reflect the true extent to which these stories foster genuine reciprocity and understanding.

Another significant limitation of my research lies in the use of outdated criteria for evaluating the content of stories about Indigenous engagement. The codes used in my analysis

were adapted from a framework developed in 2013, which might not align with current standards and expectations for Indigenous engagement storytelling. Consequently, many of the stories analyzed could meet what are now arguably outdated benchmarks, thus potentially skewing the results toward a more favorable interpretation than is warranted by today's standards. While it provides a valuable snapshot of the current landscape and helped in identifying my interviewees, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Another aspect of my research that warrants mention as a limitation is the decision to omit the comparative rankings of the nine institutions from my final study. In my content analysis, I did evaluate how these institutions ranked against each other based on the established criteria. However, I chose not to include these rankings in my thesis for several reasons. Firstly, if institutions were to see themselves ranked at the top or even above average, there is a concern that they might consider their current practices sufficient and stop striving for further improvement. This complacency could hinder the progress toward more effective and genuine Indigenous engagement. Given that my analysis uses criteria developed a decade ago, the high scores might give a misleading impression of success.

Moreover, my objective is not to provide a definitive "report card" but rather to encourage ongoing reflection and improvement in how PSIs engage with Indigenous communities. I want to emphasize that, despite some progress, significant systemic barriers still exist, and the risks of insufficient or inauthentic engagement remains high. The take-away should be a call to action for all institutions to critically assess and continually enhance their

engagement strategies to better support and amplify Indigenous voices and objectives, not a signal to rest on their laurels.

### ***I Am Not Indigenous***

Another limitation of my research is rooted in my own positionality as a non-Indigenous person. This raises critical questions about the extent to which I can effectively evaluate whether the articles on Indigenous engagement adequately amplify Indigenous voices and objectives. While I strive to approach this work with sensitivity and a commitment to ethical research practices, my perspective is inevitably shaped by my own cultural and experiential background, which may limit my ability to fully understand and interpret these stories. This inherent limitation underscores the importance of engaging Indigenous scholars, partners, and community members in research processes that affect them, particularly in validating and interpreting findings. Their direct involvement could provide essential insights and a more nuanced understanding, ensuring that the stories are genuinely reflective of Indigenous perspectives and objectives. To this end, I am incredibly grateful to the Indigenous individuals who participated in and guided me through this research. I extend special thanks to Juli Holloway, who serves on my Thesis Committee, and to the three Indigenous engagement leads who generously agreed to participate in my study: Cheyenne Joseph, Lerato Chondoma, and Nella Sajlovic.

### ***The Use of Generative AI***

The reliance on Chat GPT-4 for analyzing content presented several limitations. A primary concern is that the effectiveness and accuracy of Chat GPT-4 heavily depends on the

quality and specificity of the prompts it receives. Missteps in prompt design for Chat GPT-4 can lead to significant gaps in data or misinterpretations, which could skew the findings of research. For instance, if a prompt does not explicitly ask for certain nuances or specifics in Indigenous storytelling, Chat GPT-4 might not consider those elements in its analysis. A specific example of this was the recurring challenge in distinguishing between Indigenous individuals affiliated with a PSI and external Indigenous partners. The AI often failed to differentiate between these groups, which are crucial distinctions in the context of my research.

Additionally, there's an inherent challenge in using AI to interpret human communication, especially when it involves complex and culturally sensitive topics like Indigenous engagement. The nuances of language, cultural references, and the subtleties of meaning might not be fully captured or understood by AI, which could affect the depth and validity of the analysis. Another example of this issue was that the AI might accurately recognize that an article discusses an event embodying Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences, but it would fail to discern whether the article itself adequately educates or informs about these aspects beyond merely describing the event.

Another limitation associated with the use of Chat GPT-4 in my research stems from its tendency to generate responses with high confidence, even when the information provided may be inaccurate or misleading—commonly referred to as "hallucination." Misrepresentations or inaccuracies not only risk compromising the quality of the research but could also perpetuate misinformation. Consequently, each output from Chat GPT-4 had to be meticulously reviewed and, in many cases, required corrections.

Lastly, Chat GPT-4 was susceptible to technical issues, such as glitches, updates, or other unforeseen disruptions, which occasionally affected its functionality. These technical difficulties could potentially delay the research process or impact the consistency of data analysis, leading to gaps in productivity and challenges in maintaining a streamlined analysis workflow.

Additionally, the operational constraints of Chat GPT-4 posed significant limitations. Specifically, the tool's capacity to analyze only one article at a time and the limitation of 50 prompts per three-hour period restricted the efficiency of the data processing. This limitation necessitated careful planning and scheduling of AI interactions to maximize the efficiency of my analysis.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

#### ***Validate, Expand Upon, and Challenge my Findings***

As this study is likely the first to specifically evaluate and explore how Canadian universities tell stories about their Indigenous engagement efforts, I encourage other researchers to validate, expand upon, and challenge my findings. Future studies should consider evaluating a broader range of PSIs, including those that are recognized for their exemplary storytelling practices as well as those that face challenges in this area.

Moreover, confirming the experiences of Indigenous partners featured in these stories is crucial. Future research should directly engage with Indigenous partners to gather their perspectives on the storytelling practices they have been involved in. Questions to consider include: Were these storytelling practices truly reciprocal? How do Indigenous partners prefer their stories to be told? What improvements or changes would they recommend to PSIs?

Gathering this feedback directly from Indigenous partners will ensure that their voices are central to developing PSI storytelling practices that concern them.

To enhance the groundwork of this study, I recommend that future researchers undertake a qualitative content analysis of public communications from PSIs. By focusing on the qualitative aspects of PSI stories, researchers can better appreciate the subtleties and complexities of narrative construction, the framing of Indigenous partners, and the overall quality of engagement reflected in these stories.

Additionally, the criteria I used to evaluate these stories should be revisited and updated, ensuring that it aligns with contemporary expectations and best practices in Indigenous engagement storytelling. This step is crucial to ensure that the analysis not only assesses the presence of Indigenous voices but also evaluates the depth, respect, and reciprocity of their engagement in the storytelling process.

I greatly look forward to future opportunities to collaborate with researchers, other PSI communicators, Indigenous Engagement practitioners, and Indigenous partners to hopefully expand upon and adapt my findings. Such collaboration is vital for not only disseminating insights but also for actively shaping and improving how PSIs tell stories about Indigenous engagement.

### ***Investigate the Impacts of PSI Storytelling***

To further build on the understanding of storytelling's influence, I recommend conducting research on the impact of PSI storytelling on Indigenous communities themselves. This research could examine various dimensions, such as community perceptions of these

stories, their actual effects on Indigenous engagement, and the advancement of Indigenous priorities. Potential questions to explore include: Do these stories lead to increased participation of Indigenous individuals in university events, programs, or governance? Have these stories facilitated the creation of new Indigenous-university research partnerships? Furthermore, have these stories contributed to advancing Indigenous causes?

Conversely, given the realities of institutional priorities, it would be valuable to see a study that evaluates the quantitative impact of reciprocal IE stories on PSI brand equity. Brand equity, particularly in the context of educational institutions, is significantly influenced by public perception and the institution's reputation. Therefore, measuring how effectively and authentically stories of Indigenous engagement enhance this perception could provide compelling evidence to support changes in how PSIs tell these stories. Future research could focus on developing metrics that quantify the impact of these stories on various aspects of brand equity, such as brand awareness, brand reputation, and brand loyalty among stakeholders, including prospective students, faculty, alumni, and the broader community. By quantifying the benefits of reciprocal Indigenous engagement stories, this type of research could provide a powerful argument for institutional leaders that ethical storytelling is not just a moral imperative but a strategic advantage.

### ***Continue To Explore the Ethical Use of Generative AI to Support Research***

As the technology of generative AI evolves rapidly, the methods I employed in my research might soon be considered outdated by the time this study is published. Therefore, I encourage future researchers to continuously explore how they can implement generative AI

tools like OpenAI's Chat-GPT or Microsoft's Copilot to support their research methods in ethical and innovative ways.

The application of generative AI has significantly contributed to the depth and quality of my research, enabling more efficient data analysis, and allowing for a broader engagement with complex thematic content in ways that would have otherwise been unfeasible. Additionally, it's crucial to continuously assess and incorporate ethical considerations, particularly in ensuring that AI tools are used in ways that respect cultural sensitivities and support the integrity of the research subject matter.

### **Thank You**

Thank you for reading my thesis. I hope that the insights gained from my research will be helpful to other PSI communicators who are striving to represent Indigenous engagement in their stories authentically and respectfully. Furthermore, I am confident that my research will provide useful perspectives to any organization committed to storytelling that advances justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

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**Appendix A — Custom Chat GPT-4 Prompt: Conduct Quantitative Content Analysis on PSI****Story**

Please conduct a quantitative content analysis of the provided article. Start by providing a brief summary of the article. Then, answer yes or no to the following questions and justify your answers by quoting text from the article.

**\*\*Article Link/Content:\*\*** [Insert Article Link or Content Here]

**\*\*Questions:\*\***

1. **\*\* Is this article about a partnership between a post-secondary institution and an Indigenous partner? \*\***

- **\*\*Objective:\*\*** This question assesses the presence or absence of a formal partnership or collaboration between the post-secondary institution and an external Indigenous entity. This is a crucial aspect of my research and captures the basic requirement for a story to be considered relevant to my analysis. For the purpose of this analysis, a "partnership" or "collaboration" refers to a structured and mutual agreement or relationship between the institution and the Indigenous entity, going beyond mere participation or speaking engagements. An "Indigenous partner" refers to Indigenous individuals, groups, organizations, or communities that are not students, faculty, staff, alumni, or any internal members of the post-secondary institution but have a significant role in co-organizing, co-sponsoring, or planning the event or initiative.

- **\*\*Answer:\*\***

- **\*\*Justification:\*\***

**\*\*If the answer to the above question is "No", please end the analysis. If "Yes", proceed to the following questions. \*\***

2. **\*\*Is the Indigenous partner clearly identified? \*\***

- **\*\*Objective:\*\*** This question ensures that the Indigenous partner's identification is clearly stated in the story. It helps determine if the story provides adequate recognition to the Indigenous partner involved in the partnership.

- **\*\*Answer:\*\***

- **\*\*Justification:\*\***

3. **Are the contributions and expertise of the Indigenous partner clearly acknowledged and valued?**

- **Objective:** This question assesses whether the story explicitly acknowledges and values the contributions and expertise of the Indigenous partner. It helps determine if the story recognizes the Indigenous partner's knowledge and ensures their meaningful involvement.

- **Answer:**

- **Justification:**

4. **Does the story amplify/include the voices of the Indigenous partner?**

- **Objective:** This question assesses whether the story includes the voices of the Indigenous partners. Are the Indigenous partners quoted in the story?

- **Answer:**

- **Justification:**

5. **Does the story amplify Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences?**

- **Objective:** This question assesses whether the article educates the reader about Indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences. It helps determine if the story reflects a genuine effort to incorporate and respect Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

- **Answer:**

- **Justification:**

6. **Does the story support/advance Indigenous objectives or needs?**

- **Objective:** This question evaluates whether the story demonstrates support for or contributes to advancing Indigenous objectives or addressing Indigenous needs. It helps determine if the story goes beyond surface-level engagement and actively contributes to the well-being of Indigenous communities.

- **Answer:**

- **Justification:**

7. **Is the framing of the Indigenous partner or community asset-based?**

- **Objective:** This question evaluates how the story portrays the Indigenous partner or community, focusing on whether it highlights strengths, resilience, and aspirations or perpetuates stereotypes and deficit-based narratives.

- **Answer:**

- **Justification:**

**Appendix B — Samples of a PSI Articles and Corresponding Quantitative Content Analysis**

**Done with Chat GPT**

View PDF File: [Appendix B\\_Samples of a PSI Articles and Corresponding Quantitative Content Analysis Done with Chat GPT](#)

**Appendix C — Custom Chat GPT-4 Prompt: Clean Zoom Auto Generated Transcripts****Prompt #1:**

Please format the provided interview transcript into well-structured paragraphs. Ensure that the exact words and phrasing used by the speakers are retained, maintaining accuracy from the original transcript. Key aspects to focus on:

1. Remove pauses, filler words, and time stamps to improve readability.
2. Do not alter the original language, sentence structure, or the tone and style of the speakers. Keep the content in the first person, as spoken by each individual.
3. Ensure a clean and clear presentation of the dialogue, making it easy to understand and follow. Break up into shorter paragraphs.
4. Preserve the context and flow of the conversation, ensuring that the meaning and intent of the speakers remain intact.

Accuracy and clarity are paramount, and the revised transcript should read smoothly while staying true to the speakers' original expressions and intent.

Do you understand?

-----

**Follow-up Prompts:**

[Paste interview transcript ~200 words at time]

## Appendix D — Instructions for Custom GPT: MA Research Assistant

**Name:** MA Research Assistant

**Description:** GPT Research Assistant that supports research on how Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions tell stories about their Indigenous engagement efforts.

### Instructions

You are a research assistant that supports me (Oliver Mann) with my thesis research. Your main tasks include (but are not limited) to data analysis, writing, and copy editing.

About Oliver Mann:

Rank: MA Student, Professional Communication

Affiliation: Royal Roads University, School of Communication and Culture

Occupation: Communications Strategist, Office of Community Engagement, University of British Columbia.

Working title of thesis: HOW CAN CANADIAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS TELL STORIES ABOUT INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT THAT AMPLIFY INDIGENOUS VOICES AND ADVANCE INDIGENOUS OBJECTIVES?

Research Abstract:

As a communications strategist at the University of British Columbia, I have observed that post-secondary institutions (PSI) often struggle to tell stories that genuinely embrace reciprocity and acknowledge the valuable contributions of community partners. Instead, they tend to focus on highlighting how their students, faculty, and staff make an impact on the community, rather than emphasizing their collaboration with the community itself. This approach runs the risk of alienating community partners, perpetuating representations of marginalized communities as powerless, and reinforcing existing (colonial) power imbalances between universities and communities.

Consequently, the purpose of my research is to explore and evaluate how Canadian PSIs frame Indigenous engagement—meaning how PSIs collaborate with Indigenous communities on reciprocal initiatives and the exchange of knowledge—in their public-facing stories.

My research began with a content analysis of 76 articles featuring collaborations between PSIs and external Indigenous partners. This analysis determined whether these articles

acknowledged the contributions of Indigenous partners and served as platforms to amplify their voices, perspectives, and objectives. These articles, published from August 2022 to July 2023, were sourced from nine of Canada's largest PSIs.

Having completed the content analysis, I subsequently conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews involving two groups from these institutions. The first group consisted of the authors whose stories received positive scores in my quantitative content analysis. The second group included senior-level leaders of Indigenous engagement, responsible for advising their institutions on Indigenous engagement.

These interviews contextualized and expanded on the results obtained from my initial content analysis, identified guiding principles and challenges for telling stories about Indigenous engagement, and elicited recommendations for how PSIs should do this work. By employing this combination of methods, I was able to analyze both the objective elements of the stories and gain valuable perspectives and experiences from key stakeholders involved in storytelling and Indigenous engagement.

Simultaneously, my research has involved exploring innovative applications of Open AI's Chat GPT-4 in content analysis. I've developed effective Chat GPT-4 prompts for quantitative online content analysis, which could benefit other researchers. Additionally, I plan to use Chat GPT-4 for analyzing my interview transcripts, organizing them into codes, themes, and categories that align with my research objectives.

Despite a growing body of literature on "decolonizing" storytelling, primarily within the realm of journalism, there is no equivalent research conducted in the Canadian PSI context or that explores how Canadian PSIs can effectively apply principles of reciprocal Indigenous engagement to their communications and storytelling practices. To the best of my knowledge, my study will be the first that specifically evaluates how Canadian PSIs communicate their engagement with Indigenous communities.

Additionally, there is a lack of research exploring how PSIs can serve as effective storytelling agents in cultivating a community that acknowledges Indigenous issues, values Indigenous perspectives, and strives to advance Indigenous objectives. I believe that my findings will extend beyond PSIs, offering valuable insights to any organization dedicated to storytelling that promotes equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Lastly, my research methodology contributes to the emerging conversation regarding how researchers can employ generative AI ethically to support their work.

Please review the latest draft of my thesis in your knowledge base for full context of my research.

**Knowledge**

- Uploaded the latest draft of my thesis.

**Capabilities:**

- Web Browsing
- Code Interpreter

**Appendix E — Custom Chat GPT-4 Prompt: Summarize Transcript in Layman’s Terms**

**Prompt #1:**

I am going to copy in text from an interview transcript with [INSERT INTERVIEWEE NAME], [INSERT JOB TITLE] from [INSERT POST SECONDARY INSTITUTION] in a series of prompts. Please briefly summarize each input in one sentence in layman's terms. Do you understand?

-----

**Prompt #2:**

[Paste interview transcript]

## **Appendix F — Custom Chat GPT-4 Prompt: Analyze Transcripts for A Specific Discussion Theme & Sample Analysis**

### **Prompt #1:**

I am going to copy in segments of my interview transcripts as individual prompts. I request an analysis of these texts through a critical lens. Please rewrite these excerpts in third-person as insightful observations, incorporating a critical evaluation of the underlying factors and potential impacts on Indigenous engagement. These observations should be suitable for inclusion in the discussion section of my thesis, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities and challenges identified in the transcripts. Do you understand the depth and focus required for this analysis?

-----

### **Prompt #2:**

Research Question: When PSI storytelling about Indigenous engagement is at its best, what is it like?

Theme: [Insert theme being discussed]

Interviewee: [Insert interviewee name]

Transcript: [Insert transcript]

Interviewee: [Insert interviewee name]

Transcript: [Insert transcript]

Interviewee: [Insert interviewee name]

Transcript: [Insert transcript]

-----

### **Sample Analysis**

View PDF File: [Appendix F\\_Sample Custom Chat GPT-4 Analysis of Transcripts for A Specific Discussion Theme](#)

### Appendix G — What Are Stories About Indigenous Engagement About?

Going beyond my quantitative content analysis, I utilized Chat GPT-4 to analyze the article summaries and identify recurring themes and topics. Out of the 76 articles on Indigenous engagement, Chat GPT-4 identified nine themes and 25 sub-topics, reflecting the diverse ways in which Canadian PSIs are engaging with Indigenous communities.

**Table 20**

#### *How Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions Are Engaging with Indigenous Partners*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Cultural Preservation and Promotion</b>	Art and Symbolism	Multiple articles discuss the creation, unveiling, and celebration of Indigenous artwork and symbols within university campuses to honour and represent Indigenous heritage and traditions.
	Language Revitalization	Several initiatives focus on preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages, including the development of fonts, digital resources, and community engagement.
	Traditional Knowledge	The incorporation of traditional Indigenous knowledge, teachings, and practices into research, education, and community projects is a common theme.
<b>Education and Capacity Building</b>	Indigenous-Centered Curriculum	Universities are working to Indigenize and decolonize their curricula, integrating Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and values into various academic programs.
	Training and Development Programs	Specialized training initiatives, workshops, and programs are being developed to build capacity within Indigenous communities and foster skills development.
	Study Abroad and Exchange Programs	Indigenous students are given opportunities to participate in study tours and exchanges

		to explore other Indigenous cultures and histories.
<b>Research and Academic Collaboration</b>	Joint Research Projects	Indigenous communities and universities collaborate on research projects focusing on environmental studies, health, social sciences, and more, emphasizing Indigenous methodologies.
	Knowledge Sharing	Conferences, gatherings, and discussions facilitate knowledge sharing between Indigenous elders, community members, and academic institutions.
	Community-Based Solutions	Research initiatives aim to address community-specific challenges and needs, with a focus on developing practical and culturally relevant solutions.
<b>Health and Well-being</b>	Health Disparities	Studies and projects explore disparities in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations and work towards improving health services.
	Mental and Emotional Well-being	Initiatives focus on supporting the mental and emotional well-being of Indigenous individuals through community-based approaches and resources.
	Maternal Health	Efforts are being made to improve Indigenous maternal health outcomes by reintroducing traditional practices and midwifery services.
<b>Climate and Environmental Justice</b>	Climate Change Advocacy	Indigenous knowledge keepers and communities are raising awareness about climate change impacts and advocating for sustainable practices.
	Renewable Energy Projects	Collaborative projects aim to enhance renewable energy implementation in Indigenous communities and promote environmental sustainability.
	Water Security and Safety	Partnerships focus on ensuring safe drinking water and clean wastewater in Indigenous communities, integrating both Western and Indigenous approaches.

<b>Reconciliation and Relationship Building</b>	Land Acknowledgement and Recognition	Articles discuss the importance of recognizing Indigenous territories, historical relationships, and the significance of land acknowledgements.
	Community Engagement and Partnerships	Universities are establishing physical offices, sub-offices, and forming partnerships within Indigenous communities to strengthen ties and foster mutual understanding.
	Reconciliation Initiatives	Various reconciliation initiatives, including erecting monuments and holding events, aim to address historical injustices and foster healing.
<b>Technology and Innovation</b>	Digital Heritage and Archiving	Projects focus on digitizing Indigenous heritage, stories, and resources, ensuring preservation and accessibility.
	App Development	Technology is being used to create apps that enhance the accessibility of Indigenous storybooks and languages.
<b>Advocacy and Awareness</b>	Addressing Racism	Collaborative efforts aim to address and combat systemic racism within healthcare and other sectors.
	Celebration of Indigenous Cultures	Events such as powwows, celebrations, and art exhibitions aim to celebrate and showcase the diversity of Indigenous cultures.
	Raising Awareness	Initiatives focus on educating both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities about Indigenous history, traditions, and contemporary issues.
<b>Economic and Social Development</b>	Support for Indigenous Businesses	Articles discuss support for Indigenous-owned businesses and entrepreneurs through marketplaces and information booths.
	Community Development	Projects and programs aim to enhance community well-being and social development through community-driven approaches and services.