

Decolonization and the Non-Indigenous Educator

by

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Abstract

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Indigenous knowledge and perspectives have become an important piece of British Columbia's new curriculum. This is reflected by their presence across the curriculum throughout the grades. Many non-Indigenous educators feel ill-equipped to teach Indigenous education. This project aims to assist teachers in knowing where to start in teaching Indigenous education and how to access relevant and appropriate local resources. The first chapter addresses the need for educators to ground themselves in this work first. The second chapter discusses the topic of decolonization and why Indigenous ways of knowing have become such an integral part of our curriculum in an act of reconciliation. The final chapter offers a resource to support educators towards a culturally appropriate education system.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"You're here for a purpose. Let's help you find that purpose.

Let's help you to build upon that purpose and find ways to nourish it."

(Coleman, Battiste, Henderson, Findlay, & Findlay, 2012, p. 147)

Who am I?

I am a non-Indigenous educator living, learning, and teaching on the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ people. I am a descendent of Scottish and German settlers. I am an ally and I am a witness.

Why am I Here?

The first time I learned about residential schools was as a first year university student. I felt disappointed that I learned about this dark past of Canada later in my education career. I want to do my part to make sure that others don't feel the same way. As a young adult I began to form connections and relationships with the WSÁNEĆ community through working with First Nations children at a day camp on the Saanich Peninsula. Over the past four years I have been on a journey in learning with the local WSÁNEĆ peoples while working as a classroom teacher at local elementary schools in the Saanich School District.

I have learned about Indigenous education in the context of our schools and classrooms while exploring the new British Columbia curriculum. Through a collaborative planning experience, I learned about and worked on weaving Indigenous content into the curriculum in a respectful way. I have spent time working with others in my school district to enhance learning opportunities and successes for all Indigenous learners. Through my experiences working with local Indigenous families I have seen the hurt and damage left from the legacy of residential

schools. I see the importance of a strong community that recognizes and celebrates differences; a community where we support one another. When I think about reconciliation, I recognize that relationship and connection are key for a healthy community. I am here to learn, listen, and participate in reconciliation; to recognize that wrong has occurred in this place, to acknowledge that a group of people in our country are hurting, and to work with others to repair and maintain respectful relationships for all.

Who Can Help Me?

I have nervous feelings doing this work. I feel worried about making mistakes and causing more harm. While serving as a Key Person at my school (Key People are District staff such as Principals, Vice-Principals, Indigenous Education staff and a designated non-First Nations staff member who attend local Enhancement Agreement meetings) and sharing my learning with staff, I notice that our district resources are underutilized. We have many great resources but teachers don't know where to start nor how to start. Many non-Indigenous educators have the same uneasiness as I do. I have learned to surround myself with others and to rely on my personal and professional learning community for encouragement and gentle direction. I have learned the importance of talking with First Peoples in our district, connecting with Indigenous Support Teachers and local organizations that focus on advancing quality education for all Indigenous learners. For me it is about non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples walking side by side towards a better future for our country.

Where am I Going?

Throughout my graduate studies in the area of curriculum leadership I have been challenged by articles on Indigenizing and decolonizing education. Some key questions that guide my journey are: How can I approach educating for reconciliation in a way that does not

recolonize? In what ways do my Eurocentric views get in the way? My aim is to find ways to support non-Indigenous educators in doing this work in a respectful way. We have been invited to participate in reconciliation; it is not an independent endeavor. We need to take one step at a time, walking through it together, today.

Last year I had the privilege of attending the Climbing the Mountain workshop with Dr. Niigaanwewidam Sinclair at Indspire's National Gathering for Indigenous Education in Montreal (personal communication, November 29, 2017). We spent a full day with Dr. Sinclair looking at the provided resource on educating reconciliation for Canadian and Indigenous educators. I found it interesting that we did not begin looking at the resource until we had explored, answered, and reflected on the four key questions with which I began my introduction. He explained that before educators begin to do the work of reconciliation and Indigenous education, we need to know who we are, where we are coming from, where we are headed, and who can help us. When the new curriculum in British Columbia was introduced with Indigenous perspectives and knowledge across the content and levels many teachers, like myself, voiced concerns about how to approach this material (BC's New Curriculum, 2018). Many non-Indigenous teachers did not have post-secondary training in Indigenous studies and are looking for guidance and direction in how to appropriately address traditional Indigenous knowledge. As I share my experiences with non-Indigenous educators I often find that many are looking for an easily accessible guidebook to be able to check off the boxes for Indigenous curriculum. This thinking is taking a colonial approach towards a colonial system. Our education system is structured in a way that privileges Eurocentric thinking. The curriculum is centred around Western knowledge and is taught predominantly by non-Indigenous educators. Our teaching methods and texts are from non-Indigenous perspectives, as is our post-secondary education

training. We have built up a system that efficiently and effectively holds up European structures and values. How can non-Indigenous educators recognize the need to take a step back from our conditioned colonial ways and see the value in doing the challenging work of knowing, seeing, and recognizing themselves in relation to others? Through my research I will discuss how to address culturally inclusive teacher practices that support a culturally responsive education by starting with the concept of decolonization. I hope to highlight the importance of teaching Indigenous concepts in education and offer a way to build a partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school leaders such as teachers, support teachers, educational assistants, and administration.

In Chapter Two I include a literature review on Indigenous education. Indigenous education is vast and vital to curriculum today. The main topic I have reviewed is the idea of decolonization in respect to our society, curriculum, schools, and classrooms. In order to decolonize, educators need to interrupt and disrupt settler-colonial societies. As a starting point non-Indigenous educators need to recognize our privilege, power, and positionality in the current education system. We need to address our assumptions and understandings of Indigenous peoples and perspectives. Decolonizing should unsettle our pedagogy. Critical reflection of Western-style leadership and rethinking the purpose of education is necessary (Cajete, 2016; Regan, 2010). A step in this critical reflection is recognizing that there are many systems of knowledge in our world and a culturally appropriate education system needs to address this. A new system is needed that looks at ways to bring systems of knowledge together through reflecting on the value of language and place, and forming mutually reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In Chapter Three I will create a framework for supporting non-Indigenous educators in their journey of integrating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the classroom in a respectful and meaningful way.

Throughout this paper I will be using several terms that need to have a common understanding. Aboriginal, Indigenous, and First Peoples are interchangeable terms that are used to include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. In the context of my local community it is appropriate to use the term Indigenous as I will throughout this project. The term Indian is no longer utilized but will be used in this paper when it is suitable to the specific historical context. Colonization is the act or process of settling in a place and politically controlling its people, which creates an unequal relationship between the colonizers and Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2017, p. 17). Decolonization is the undoing of colonization. It involves restoring Indigenous ways of knowing, culture, traditions and languages, and balancing Western and Indigenous knowledge. Decolonization involves indigenization, or making something indigenous. This involves qualifying Indigenous perspectives and knowledge, and the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing into our educational systems. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (2015) defines reconciliation as a “process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms” (p. 3). It is the restoration of relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to Indigenous Education

In the fall of 2015 the British Columbia Ministry of Education introduced a newly redesigned curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 9. Through exploring the curriculum, some key changes stood out for me such as the introduction of core competencies, a concept-based and competency-driven framework for learning and assessment, and the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives throughout the content areas. This change brought about mixed feelings for many. Some welcome the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, while others feel reluctant and underqualified to do this work. Many school districts do have a focus on improving school success for Indigenous learners, but this change is clear that including Indigenous knowledge and perspectives is for all learners. The website for BC's new curriculum states in their overview that this focus is to "ensure that all learners have opportunities to understand and respect their own cultural heritage as well as that of others" (BC's New Curriculum, 2018).

The inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives throughout the curriculum also supports the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was launched in 2008 to address the legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada. Indian Residential Schools operated in Canada for over one hundred years with the intent to assimilate Indigenous children into the dominant Canadian culture. The TRC's findings and recommendations are a way for our country to move forward together in the spirit of reconciliation and healing, and to provide a framework of steps to take

together. The final report published in December 2015 includes 94 recommendations or calls to action for our country.

In their calls to action are sections devoted to education and education for reconciliation. The TRC makes eleven recommendations including working towards eliminating the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, developing culturally appropriate curricula, and protecting the right to Indigenous languages. There is also a section on professional development and training for public servants. Here we see a need for the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education on the histories of Indigenous peoples (including residential schools) as well as treaty and Indigenous rights for public servants. The call to action states that “this will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

In my research I chose to focus on addressing the new curriculum and the TRCs recommendations to teach Indigenous education in a culturally appropriate way from the perspective of a non-Indigenous educator. In this literature review I will focus on the theme of colonization in the education system and will discuss decolonization strategies.

Colonization and Its Impact

When I reflect on Social Studies lessons from my own educational experiences in the 1990s in Canada, I notice that they often painted a picture of our country’s beginnings with brave and heroic settlers exploring a wild, vast, and empty land. This land was not in fact empty but was filled with an abundance of culturally diverse groups of Indigenous peoples. For hundreds of years European settlers have been colonizing this land, bringing with them their systems of

education, ways of living, and new languages to a group of people who had their own thriving systems for thousands of years before first contact.

Through the process of colonization, colonial settlers imposed the dominating European culture on Indigenous peoples. One of the most devastating impacts of colonization on Indigenous communities was through education. Residential schools were enacted to enforce European education models on Indigenous children. For many, attendance was mandatory in a foreign system whose aim was to “eliminate Aboriginal people as distinct peoples and to assimilate them into the Canadian mainstream against their will” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 6).

These schools had devastating and lasting effects on Indigenous children, families, and communities. Children were taught in a foreign language, through foreign methods, and introduced to a foreign culture and religion. Residential schools were different than Indian day schools in that the children stayed at the schools for months at a time which left many Indigenous communities void of children for most of the year. Residential schools impaired the ability for families and communities to pass down important traditions, celebrations, ceremonies, and languages. To further the impact of colonization on Indigenous culture, legislation was introduced through the Indian Act starting in 1876 and continuing through to 1951 when the Indian Act underwent major changes. The legislation saw Indigenous groups losing the right to traditional systems of governance, to conduct business, to practice certain ceremonies, and to educate children in their own culture (Smith, 2017).

One of the most destructive impacts of colonization was on language. There are hundreds of distinct Indigenous communities across Canada, many with unique languages and dialects in danger of extinction. Residential schools severed the relationship between Indigenous children

and their communities, and the right and opportunity to a shared language. According to Davis (2017) British Columbia is home to sixty percent of the Indigenous languages in Canada (p. 65). Many of these are in danger of being lost. Extinction of Indigenous languages means a loss to their cultural heritage and identity. Davis' (2017) research notes that language has a positive connection to health and wellness on Indigenous communities. Language revitalization is making a positive difference in supporting and rebuilding Indigenous identity.

In recent years the impact of colonization is becoming more well known across the country. It is not difficult to find research on the impact of colonization in Canada. According to the literature (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Regan, 2010) Indigenous peoples have been silenced, marginalized, and failed by a Eurocentric society for too long. They are calling upon non-Indigenous Canadians to take responsibility for residential schools, for the ongoing racism, to bear witness to the stories, and to pay attention to our personal response to it. Steps, such as the TRC and BC's redesigned curriculum, support the research and are beginning to address the concerns brought up in the literature. Bissell and Korteweg (2016) state that the aims of the TRC are to promote empathy, intercultural understanding, and mutual respect. As previously discussed, BC's new curriculum is infused with Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Teachers across the province are looking for ways to indigenize our schools and classrooms, and are beginning to seek balance in our current system. While indigenizing the curriculum is important, we have a responsibility to look at ways of decolonizing the system that has been in place for over one hundred years (Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). Upon learning of the impacts of colonization Pratt and Danyluk challenge educators to question our role in teaching Indigenous education as non-Indigenous educators. A starting point is to question why learning this culture is important to you. Indigenous peoples are open to sharing certain traditional knowledge if the

intent of use is for the right purposes. In this next section I will focus on decolonization in the educational system and highlight strategies suggested in the literature for non-Indigenous educators.

Decolonization

Justice Senator Murray Sinclair, chairman of the TRC from 2009 to 2015, places educators in the role of decolonization suggesting, “Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out” (as cited in Anderson, 2016: Murray Sinclair: Education is key to reconciliation, para. 10). In 1951 the Indian Act was amended to integrate Indigenous learners into mainstream public schools. The problem is though, that these schools still remain as places of assimilation and oppression due to their Eurocentric curriculum and leadership, and lack of Indigenous teachers (Milne, 2017). European ideology may no longer be imposed by force or intimidation, but is now imposed by conditioning. While some may look at the failures of Indigenous learners, we need to recognize that the learning environment has failed these learners.

Unlearning settler-colonial societies. Before educators examine their own privileges, power, and positionality in schools, they need to notice, name, and understand settler-colonial societies. Dei (2000) states that colonial systems are imposed and dominating. Our way of life, language, parenting, and education are seen as superior and often the authority on such topics.

Donald (as cited in McGregor, Madden, Higgins, & Ostertag, 2018) identifies that:

We must first reread and reframe colonial constructs in order to see more clearly the language and logics that have clouded our thinking...Only then will the stories linking Aboriginal peoples and Canadians revitalize relationships with a common sense of place.” (p. 2)

After learning about the impact of colonization and the uncomfortable truths surrounding residential schools many respond with empathy but Regan (2010) argues that empathy is not enough. Decolonization is social action where, as European settlers we need to challenge our assumptions, thinking, attitudes, and worldviews. In order to work towards reconciliation, Battiste (2002) calls upon the decolonization of our minds and our hearts. It is taking personal and collective risks to see where Indigenous people have been defined by the dominant European culture. It is critically reflecting on our society where norms are challenged, thinking is disrupted, and our position as the dominant group should be threatened.

Understanding privilege, power, and positionality. An important theme to understanding and unlearning settler-colonial societies is understanding Eurocentrism. We need to understand Eurocentrism in order to unpack our privilege, power, and positionality. Eurocentricity is seeing European settlers as superior. This superiority positions us in a place of power where we receive the benefits of wealth from Indigenous land and resources (Regan, 2010). Burleigh and Baum (2017) urge non-Indigenous educators to reflect on this sense of entitlement. Berger (2009) claims that:

We have all been marinated in Eurocentric thought, so it is not surprising that our own Eurocentrism may seem somewhat like the air we breathe and be just as invisible. This will make identifying and combating it an extra challenge." (p. 65)

We need to build awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the structures in place that oppress, discriminate, and marginalize the other. Higgins, Madden, and Korteweg (2015) warn that if this privilege is left unexamined and unchallenged, Eurocentrism is an invisible force that contributes to ongoing colonization. To combat this requires courage, creativity, and risk-taking.

After reflecting on how our society is built upon and validates settler-colonial values, the next step to decolonization is to be highly attentive and aware of the individual privilege, power, and positionality we hold as European settlers on traditional territories. A theme in the literature on decolonization is for non-Indigenous educators to study ourselves as settlers and cultural beings, and to seek to understand how we came to live on this traditional territory (Burm & Burleigh, 2017; Cannon, 2013; Regan 2010). Continually acknowledging our status on this land and the privilege that comes with it is a start to rebuilding authentic relationships with Indigenous peoples (Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). For non-Indigenous educators this could be an uncomfortable and frustrating place to be but if we are to “properly enjoy the benefits of this society....[we] have to take responsibility for the fact that what [we] have now, what [we] are gaining now, is something....that was taken away improperly" (Cannon, 2013, p. 29). Placing ourselves on the land as cultural beings is an important part of Indigenous culture and a good space to be in order to understand ourselves as visitors to this land. Higgins, Madden, and Korteweg (2015) speak to the necessary:

Processes of coming-to-know themselves as cultural beings who have a longstanding shared history with Indigenous peoples and unravel their deeply held stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples, so that they are better positioned to attend to the relationship building and honouring of Indigenous knowledges and peoples which is at the heart of Indigenous education. (pp. 270-271)

Focusing on our position as descendents of colonizers, helps to bring to light the privilege and power that comes with the benefits of being a colonizer on this land. It is important to "identify as non-Indigenous as 'a place of negotiation where for the most part, unlearning can

occur, and new knowledges are given primacy'...'consider what we don't or more importantly perhaps, cannot understand'" (Mcgregor, Madden, Higgins, & Ostertag, 2018, p. 4).

A key theme in the literature is how Indigenous voices have been silenced in settler-colonial societies. The literature around decolonization agrees that non-Indigenous voices are heard disproportionately to Indigenous voices. To decolonize is to raise the collective voices of Indigenous peoples. As we listen to their stories, we have the opportunity to deconstruct the past and expose the injustices through colonization. A critical look at the history of Canada will expose the social, political, economic, and emotional reasons that Indigenous voices have been de-privileged (Battiste, 2002).

One final theme that emerged in the literature in addressing power, privilege, and positionality is seeking to understand how we fit into Indigenous history, not just where Indigenous stories fit into the history of Canada (Cannon, 2013). It is evident that non-Indigenous educators have limited knowledge of how we continue to benefit from past Indigenous-settler relations. A thorough understanding of the importance of issues such as treaty rights, land-based and resource extraction, and knowledge of Indigenous communities are important to see our deficits when it comes to Indigenous history (Berger, 2009; Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Cannon, 2013).

Unsettling pedagogy. Once we have placed ourselves in this land, aware of our position, power, and privilege in this space, and have reflected on our ongoing settler-colonial systems in place, then we must look at our practice in the same way. Bissell and Korteweg (2016) suggest that for too long Indigenous peoples have been silenced and marginalized by a lack of culturally relevant texts and teaching methods. They go on to say that Indigenous students gather strength from their communities, families, cultural traditions, and Indigenous knowledge in order to self-

identify. Our curriculum does not reflect this. Non-Indigenous educators deliver a curriculum that has been shaped by Eurocentrism. Thus, it is not surprising that there is a large educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. The current curriculum we deliver is relevant to settler identities, languages, and our versions of history (Higgins, Madden, & Korteweg, 2015). Berger (2009) calls for a culturally responsive curricula that involves relevant content, themes, and teaching methods for all learners. Some key topics non-Indigenous educators should consider when approaching content is to think about knowledge production. Questioning how we know what we know challenges colonial ideologies and the silent Eurocentric curriculum (Battiste, 2002; Dei, 2000). We need to look at the structure of our schools and how they validate Western knowledge and de-legitimize Indigenous knowledge (Adjei, 2007). The literature speaks to this concept and addresses some key areas. We need to critically examine our curriculum, resources, and methods used. To see the gap lessen between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners, Preston (2016) calls for “cultural consistency between home and school experiences...[and the] importance of nurturing the student’s culture and customs while simultaneously promoting high-quality education” (p. 113). Our teaching methods and materials need to reflect all learners, and we need to challenge, inspire, and support Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike.

Western-style leadership. Educators possess a great deal of power and opportunity in teaching Indigenous education. Teachers have the power to decide what to teach, how to teach it, and when to teach it. We also have the power and the opportunity to make transformational change in our schools in the way we approach Indigenous education. Traditionally European educators have been the source of meaning, knowledge, and action (Schick, 2000). Decolonization should not only be about teaching, but also about learning (Regan, 2010).

Educators have the opportunity to shift leadership and become the learners themselves. We have the opportunity to open doors and give a voice for more experts, perspectives, and ways of knowing in our schools. Across the literature is a call for Indigenous voices to be added to the conversation in schools and to create space for Indigenous educators to take the lead (Berger, 2009).

This shift does not come easily. Critical reflection on the educators' own beliefs around Indigenous peoples is necessary in order to disrupt the potential of passing stereotyped beliefs onto our students. Pratt and Danyluk (2017) refer to this as critical service-learning where educators carefully and critically question previously held assumptions and perspectives; they need to question the concept of power and develop real relationships with the community. Often this is calling educators to step out of their comfort zone. Educators can feel hesitant, worried, disoriented, uncomfortable, even resistant to teaching Indigenous education. This unstable space is not something to fear. For a disruption that sees lasting change, educators need "an unsettling pedagogy...based on the premise that settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: we must experience it, beginning with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society" (Regan, 2010, p. 29). When educators place themselves in the role of learner and open themselves up to shifting understandings, where they do not hold all the answers, they are opening themselves up to a space of hope and change. We need to welcome this space, explore this space, and see it for its possibility for transformational learning in our schools for ourselves and for our learners. It is an opportunity to escape from oppression for the non-dominant culture (Schick, 2000).

Pratt and Danyluk (2017) point us towards questioning our role in Indigenous education. We have an opportunity to uncover the values of the dominant culture. Burm and Burleigh

(2017) situate us in this work affirming that we have a responsibility to teach this not only because it is provincially required, but also because we “have a responsibility as a settler Canadian. [We] have a stake in treaties as do all of our students. It's not about having Indigenous students or not” (p. 41). In my context our school district has a few schools where Indigenous learners are more visible, and there are schools where staff may not be aware of any Indigenous learners. Many educators in those contexts do not yet understand the importance of incorporating Indigenous education into their daily practice. I once heard it said that it is in those contexts, where you may not have Indigenous learners, that it is vital to include Indigenous perspectives, histories, and ways of knowing.

Burm and Burleigh (2017) point out that educators need to question themselves on what they know about teaching Indigenous students. Educators need to question themselves on their assumptions or understandings about Indigenous communities. What do we know about teaching Indigenous Education? What do we know about Indigenous communities? Donald (2012) refers to this as “ethical relationality.” It is exploring the relationship non-Indigenous peoples have with Indigenous peoples. It’s listening without judgement and responding to the unheard voices that have been on this land for time immemorial.

Purpose of education. The potential for leading the change in our schools and classrooms in decolonization lies with the larger system of education itself. Rethinking education is reflecting on the purpose of education. Research supports the view that our schools are Eurocentric and the purpose of education is for the acquisition of knowledge. As we teach we are socializing young people into the current European knowledge system (Tupper, 2013). At present our education system is manageable, predictable, and controllable (Ahenakew, 2017) which helps educators address the massive role in educating our young people. Regan (2010)

argues that “education is not simply about the transfer of knowledge but [should be] a transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make change in the world” (p. 29). Eurocentrism blocks educational change when we value knowledge as an object and view education through the lens of economics.

Berger (2009) expresses the need for educators to acknowledge and challenge the current educational system. As a starting point, we should be asking tough questions such as: Why do we do it this way? Does it have to be this way? What other ways can it be done? This will open up the conversation to new possibilities towards a better education system, society, world, and humans. This requires time and patience, and for educators to be open to being challenged on our ideas and willing to disrupt the status quo. Pratt and Danyluk (2017) boldly call out that “it is not First Nations who are failing and in need of changing, it is the learning environment itself” (p. 21). Changing the current system so it is relevant for all learners is paramount.

As most educators are non-Indigenous European settlers, who have been schooled in a Eurocentric curriculum as learners and as pre-service teachers themselves, a broader definition of education to include the “varied options, strategies, and ways through which people come to learn, know, and understand the world and act within it” (Dei, 2000, p. 112) is needed. Preston (2016) argues that education should be grounded in pedagogy that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically” (p. 113). I would add that it needs to empower all students and honour them as cultural beings.

Our current system is focused on product, performance, and competition (Cajete, 2016). It is a static knowledge system that promotes ownership of knowledge. To Europeans it is seen as a more productive knowledge system in the modern world. (Battiste, 2002) that claims it is the only way of progress (Battiste & Henderson, 2009). Curriculum theorists have written about the

purpose of education over the past century and have explored different perspectives on education. Many of the theories and ideas from these diverse thinkers support the concept of decolonization in our education system.

Dewey (2004) articulated that enthusiasm needs to be injected into our schools. Education should be a process of living well within the community. Education should move learners beyond habit and encourage thinking creatively. He stressed that infusing enthusiasm into education is done through understanding a child's capacities, interests, and habits. He called for a system that is dynamic and flexible offering different forms of education for learners with different interests.

Freire (2004) addressed the need to challenge the unjust structures of a post-colonial state. He argued for the lines between teacher and student to be blurred where lateral exchange of ideas is expected. He called for a more human, collaborative, and dialectical education system where learners co-investigate their world alongside educators. Freire also led the call for a focus on critical thinking in our schools.

Noddings (2004) echoed Dewey's call for an enthusiastic education and focused her research on happiness as an aim of education. Like Freire she expressed a need for the blending of teacher-student roles where students can participate in the construction of curricula. She calls for a movement away from the economic purposes of education towards education as a way for the improvement of the soul.

More recently Aoki (2005) challenged educators towards an "inspired education" where he addressed the need for more acceptance of worldviews beyond Western thought. He suggested a blend between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-live(d). Coe (2016) furthers this idea of a rebalanced education system that blends multiple methods. She calls for education

to be flexible, emergent, responsive, creative, and holistic. The purpose of education should be relational, going beyond the academics, to develop the health, happiness, and well-being of the whole child. Through reflective discussions, curriculum should be used as a verb where ongoing adjustments are made to the system to support the curiosity and wonder of our learners. Collectively these beliefs on the purpose of education align with Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing and living.

Indigenous knowledge. Higgins, Madden, and Korteweg (2015) describe Indigenous knowledge as plural, dynamic, adaptable, and evolving. Battiste (2002) discusses this further, pointing out that Indigenous knowledge is not frozen in time. She continues to describe it as a living process that is to be absorbed and understood. It is important to note that it is not something to be possessed which some have and others do not. To Battiste (2002; 2009) Indigenous knowledge is oral, symbolic, and sacred. Furthermore learning is purposeful, relational, and a lifelong responsibility. Dei (2000) notes that cultural traditions, values, belief systems, and worldviews are passed on to younger generations through elders. It is highly experiential and holistic; it is learning that focuses on skills, abilities, and problem-solving techniques.

Indigenous knowledge holders are potential leaders in a sustainable, community-based education. Contributions from Indigenous knowledge will lend a voice to conservation, sustainability of biological diversity, and innovative approaches to environmental education (Battiste, 2002). Battiste and Henderson (2009) describe it as an “ecologically centered way of life or expresses a sustainable humanity” (p. 5). They continue to point out that its primary aim is to maintain the integrity of people and place. It does not want to return to the past, rather its aim

is to sustain knowledges, and renew our understanding and relationship with the natural world (Battiste & Henderson, 2009).

Dei (2000) noted three strands to Indigenous knowledge. Traditional knowledge is passed through the generations, usually through elders. Empirical knowledge is the act of observing the world, its nature, culture, and society. Revealed knowledge brings to light the importance of the spiritual world to Indigenous knowledge. Revealed knowledge is through dreams, visions, and intuition. Dei described Indigenous knowledge as being spiritual, metaphorical, interconnected, expressive, and narrative. It is grounded in people, place, and history.

Importance of language and place in Indigenous knowledge. Berger (2009) notes that language is always mentioned in the first steps of decolonization. Battiste (2002) furthers the importance of language noting that it is significant to the survival of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous language production is always connected to place. Language and place are key to Indigenous education. Dei (2000) notes that Indigenous knowledge includes relationship and experience with the environment leading towards an in-depth understanding of place. Thus when approaching Indigenous education educators need to ground themselves in teaching and learning from the local land and the local language.

Acknowledging systems of knowledges. The path to decolonizing our settler-colonial society needs to include an acceptance of differing worldviews and perspectives. An acknowledgement of different systems of knowledge is required to move forward in a new and healthy way for our country.

Dei (2000) calls educators to look at Indigenous education and decolonization as an invitation and a provocation for dialogue around knowledge production and education. As discussed, we are often unaware of our Eurocentric oppression and need to not only examine

ways knowledge is produced but also examine our privileges associated with certain knowledge systems. Eurocentrism includes the viewpoint that our worldviews, perspectives, and knowledges are superior; others are seen as insufficient, inferior, and negative. Cajete (2016) calls for a need to find balance between knowledge systems and to focus on the potential of interrelationship between world systems.

Blending the two systems. UNESCO in 1966 declared that each culture has the value and dignity to be respected, preserved, and to develop their own culture (Battiste & Henderson, 2009). Indigenous knowledge recognizes this fact. It honours the existence of different knowledge systems. It recognizes when different ways of knowing complement each other and does not shy away from conflict in different knowledge systems (Dei, 2000). Indigenous knowledge reaffirms that knowledge is a collaborative process which has the power to transform our learning spaces (Ahenakew, 2017), reshape our institutions and processes (Battiste & Henderson, 2009), and to show that there are other ways to live with the biological world (Dei, 2000). It has the potential to fill ethical and knowledge gaps left through European knowledge and searches for a path to change in this postcolonial space. “Indigenous knowledge creates potential for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in trans-systemic ways that European knowledge alone cannot do” (p. 13). When we acknowledge Indigenous knowledge systems it creates space for a fresh, balanced perspective and lens in which to analyze our Eurocentric education systems and its pedagogies (Battiste, 2002) and has the potential to renew, revitalize, and restore connections to people and place (Battiste & Henderson, 2004).

Across the literature is a warning when acknowledging the two systems of knowledge (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Dei, 2000; Preston, 2016). Indigenous knowledge cannot be seen as a binary opposite to European knowledge, and one system cannot be given

higher privilege over the other. Battiste (2002) describes a blending of the two systems in our educational context where both knowledge systems are respected. Ahenakew (2017) calls for dialogue between the two different systems, seeing more respect given to Indigenous knowledge than it has had in the past. Preston (2016), Higgins, Madden, and Korteweg (2013) build on that dialogue calling for a bridge to shorten the gap between the two systems. A place to start is to look for similarities between the two systems (Battiste, 2002) and to critically reflect on Eurocentric prejudices against Indigenous knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2009). Likewise the literature warns against appropriation. Dei (2000) defines appropriation as acquiring and using knowledge without acknowledging the collectivity and ongoing collaboration through dialectic exchange. Regan (2010) notes that sharing what you learn is an important Indigenous tradition. Non-Indigenous educators need to consistently question why they want to know certain knowledge and treat it carefully as sacred knowledge that has been generously shared with them.

Relationship with Indigenous peoples. Moving forward in Indigenous education through decolonizing our pedagogy, curriculum, school systems, and ways of knowing only happens through a respectful and mutually reciprocal relationship with Indigenous peoples. It will take time and patience to repair the damage and to rebuild trust. It will be through “Indigenous first-person narratives and representations as normalized (usual) teaching, rather than relying on third-party (abstracted), or textbook (settler-biased) non-Indigenous representations of FNMI peoples as curriculum” (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016, p. 5). To develop and strengthen relationships with the local community, educators should gain exposure to the local culture and traditions. Educators need real world experience showing a deep care for the local culture and to learn about the diversity of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and global Indigenous peoples. Cajete (2016) notes that “civilizations and the institutions they create are not the

enduring human systems---communities are” (p. 366). Many articles recognize that this is hard work and that it cannot and should not be done alone. It is to be a collaborative and dialectical effort. Cannon (2013) calls for non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples to start by finding common ground and build settler-Indigenous alliances through productive dialogue. The most important piece noted across the field is for non-Indigenous teachers to be aware of the local customary protocols for learning and teaching Indigenous education. The focus must be moving forward in respectful relations with Indigenous communities.

Following the call to action from the TRC, education programs are including Indigenous education courses for preservice teachers. This is the beginning of an opportunity to disrupt the current educational status quo. "Sustained attentiveness to Aboriginal-Canadian relations and willingness to hold differing philosophies and worldviews in tension creates the possibility for more meaningful talk on shared educational interests and initiatives" (Donald, 2012, p. 107). Donald explains that teaching Indigenous education should be seen as a responsibility and an act of kindness. Approaching education in this way connects us and helps us relate to one another. Many authors noted that mistakes will be made, but that is to be expected. Battiste (2002) encourages us to move forward together with decolonized hearts and minds and offers this thought from President Hampton of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College: “How does the acorn unfold into an oak? Deep inside itself it knows---and we are not different. We know deep inside ourselves the pattern of life” (p. 29).

Gaps in Research

As I mentioned in the introduction my first exposure to residential schools wasn't until post-secondary education. In my journey speaking with friends, family, and colleagues I have heard similar stories. In the last five years the individual schools in our district have started to

acknowledge the traditional territories on which we live, learn, and play. In the last ten years our school district has implemented an Enhancement Agreement with goals whose purpose is to enhance the learning opportunities and successes for all Indigenous learners. We have Indigenous support teachers whose role is to not only support students but also teachers in this journey. These are examples of how steps are being made to reconcile a wrongdoing that has occurred in our country and to reconcile ongoing wrongdoings. These are relatively new steps. Likewise the research around decolonization is new as well. Indigenous peoples were not necessarily ready to share their stories. Through the work of the TRC more awareness and active reconciliation is seen in schools across the country. The literature I reviewed is mostly from the last ten years demonstrating the amount of work that is currently being done around the topic of decolonization. At present, the focus is on understanding colonization, its impact, and steps we can do to move forward together in the spirit of reconciliation. As I read across the literature I wondered about inservice for practicing educators who have been brought up in a colonized system, trained at a colonized institution, and now teach in a system that is shifting and moving. What does it look like to reconcile Indigenous Knowledge with European Knowledge in contemporary Canadian education systems? Many practicing teachers are feeling untrained, unqualified, and unsure about the appropriate steps. As our classrooms are slowly shifting, our pedagogy is changing, and our curriculum is evolving, I can see a need for future research in the field around the effect of culturally appropriate education systems on Canadian society.

Cajete (2016) expresses that a non-Indigenous educator teaching Indigenous education needs to be selfless, moral, honest, compassionate, humble, responsible, experienced, and spiritual. I was interested in exploring the concept of recolonization but found this term is not often found in the literature. Dei (2000) defined recolonization as non-Indigenous educators

holding onto power, privilege, and positionality in the classroom through deciding what and how Indigenous cultures, traditions, and histories are taught. As non-Indigenous educators consider decolonizing their pedagogy and classrooms, I foresee future research on the dangers of recolonization. This is a topic that should be considered as teachers engage in teaching Indigenous education.

Chapter 3: Project

“...this journey is lifelong. That where I am today is different from where I was yesterday and where I will be tomorrow” (Burm & Burleigh, 2017, p. 43)

Justification for Project

I teach in the Saanich School District (No.63) which is located on the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ people who have lived and worked on this land since time immemorial. Saanich Schools are located in close proximity to four of the Saanich First Nations: Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tseycum and Tsawout. We are very fortunate to have district leadership who value the importance of a good relationship within communities. Our district has a local Education Enhancement Agreement with a goal to support Indigenous learners in our district as well as to emphasize the importance of celebrating our local communities and cultures for all learners.

My work with the local Enhancement Agreement has meant tremendous personal growth and learning on my role in teaching Indigenous education. I am an ally and a witness for the local Indigenous communities and would like to share my learning journey with colleagues in hopes that they also will be inspired to challenge their assumptions, thinking, attitudes, and worldviews around Indigenous education. Recently at a district-wide workshop on January 28, 2019, Kaleb Child (Director of Indigenous Education for British Columbia) stated that regardless if you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, we are all teachers of Indigenous education.

Overview

To support elementary teachers in my school district I have created a website (<https://sites.google.com/sd63.bc.ca/indigenoused>). The website consists of four pages. The first page includes a welcome to the website written in SENĆOTEN, the traditional language of the

WSÁNEĆ people on whose territory our school district sits. Through my research a common theme was on the importance of language revitalization as integral to reconciliation. Therefore it was important to me that a SENĆOŦEN welcome, both written and spoken, served as an entry into the resource.

The second page, Teacher as Learner, follows in importance. When the new curriculum was introduced, it was quickly noted that Indigenous education was throughout the content areas, not distinct to Social Studies as it had been in the past. Many educators called for resources to support them in integrating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in their classroom and lessons. Relationship and interconnectedness are key concepts to Indigenous cultures and traditions. It is not appropriate to simply pick up a resource and start teaching without first doing some important work. This essential work includes the teacher being a part of a learning journey themselves. This page aims to support teachers in grounding themselves in this work. They need to first understand the complex histories and ongoing issues important to Indigenous peoples in Canada. Teachers need to educate themselves specifically in learning about, from, and with the local Indigenous peoples of the local territories.

The third page is a link to the resource pages to support Indigenous education across British Columbia's elementary curriculum. It features a google slide that includes where Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are mentioned in our curriculum throughout the content areas in the elementary context. The intent of this page is that a teacher can find relevant and appropriate resources that can be easily accessible to support the content areas. The table includes a short description of the content for that specific area which is hyperlinked to a google document that lists the resources we have at our district office that can be borrowed as well as online resources to meet the curriculum needs.

This resource is a living document as I intend to update it as new resources become available. Currently this project is focused specifically on the elementary curriculum but if this model proves successful and helpful to our district then a future consideration would be to extend the project to include middle and secondary curriculum. For the past several years our district has taken many steps to support a dynamic shift in balancing European and Indigenous ways of knowing in our current education system. From partnering with our local communities, to access to resources, and opportunities for new learning, the potential is there to see the full integration of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in our schools. My hope is that this resource is another provision to support staff, students, and communities in coming together and moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation.

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