

Indigenizing Counselor Education: Implementing Postsecondary Curriculum Change

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Indigenizing education is a challenging task for universities and other postsecondary institutions. The recovery and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge and ways of knowing is a critical aspect of decolonization. In this article we describe the conceptualization of graduate counselor education for Aboriginal communities and the process of implementing curriculum changes in an undergraduate prerequisite counseling skills course. Also included are an exploration of personal experiences related to teaching the course, students' responses to curricular and delivery adaptations, and themes identified from an interview conducted with two Aboriginal students in the class. We address the question of forces in the university structure that work to resist the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and share observations and recommendations.

Acknowledging the place of Indigenous knowledge in the academy is an exercise of self-determination (Doxtater, 2004; Hampton, 2000; Hill, 2000). It is both a personal and collective risk (Dei, 2002) and the beginning of an important movement to emancipate such knowledge (Doxtater). Youngblood Henderson (2000) maintains that in Canadian universities and colleges, academic curriculum supports Eurocentric contexts; when professors describe the world, they describe Eurocentric contexts and ignore Aboriginal world view, knowledge, and thought. The current reality is that most university education in Canada is education for assimilation, assuming Eurocentric content, structure, and process as constituting the only legitimate approach to education (Hampton). However, although education has been a force for destruction, it can also become a powerful force for construction (Mattson & Caffrey, 2001; Williams, 2000). The university sits in a privileged position in our society, and this position entails the responsibility of including Indigenous knowledge in "a dynamic process of knowledge generation and dialogue" (Dei, p. 4).

At the same time this is a profoundly challenging task for the university: legitimizing Indigenous Knowledges as "pedagogic, instructional, and communicative tools" (Dei, 2002, pp. 8-9), representing a shift in the process of delivering education. Duran and Duran (2000) write, "Generating healing knowledge from the life world of the colonist ... will no longer suffice" (p. 88). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) sums the dilemma up well

when she quotes the words of Audre Lorde: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 19).

An initiative has begun at the University of Victoria to deliver a graduate-level counseling program for Aboriginal communities. The program is intended for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students working in Aboriginal helping contexts; on-campus, on-site, and distance delivery models are planned. From the onset the need to have Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing shape and inform all stages of this project has been emphasized, from planning, through development, and into implementation (Marshall, Williams, & Stewart, 2007). A major task is curricular revisions to the existing undergraduate prerequisite and graduate core courses in the current program.

In this article we describe one of the first phases of the overall project, the conceptualization and implementation of curriculum changes in an undergraduate helping skills course that is a prerequisite for entry into the master's-level counseling program. We begin with a brief overview of the graduate program vision and follow with a discussion of a partnership development process. Next the first author shares her personal experiences of revising and teaching the undergraduate course and summarizes students' responses to specific curricular and delivery adaptations. We describe several themes identified from an interview conducted with two Aboriginal students in the class and link these themes to relevant literature. The experience of shifting the curriculum focus is situated in the context of the vision that has emerged for the Aboriginal Communities Counselling program. We address the question of forces in the University structure that work to resist the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge. Drawing together the threads of learning that are part of our self-reflexive process as counselor educators, we conclude with observations and recommendations.

A Graduate Program in Counseling for Aboriginal Communities

The University of Victoria's (2007) strategic plan *A Vision for the Future: Building Strength* places priority on increasing the number of Aboriginal students graduating from all faculties. This is to be accomplished by building unique commitments with Aboriginal communities while increasing support for the development of curriculum and methods that are supportive of Aboriginal community needs. The counseling program for Aboriginal Communities is intended to address these goals of curricular relevance, cultural sensitivity, and community involvement.

The vision of a community-based graduate counseling program for Aboriginal students began several years ago with a request for a University of Victoria master's in counseling program to be delivered on site in an Aboriginal community in the British Columbia interior. Limited program development funds were available for curriculum enhancement or community discussions with faculty and there were not many Aboriginal

applicants, so the program was delivered to a mixed group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with only minimal Indigenous content and limited attention to relevant protocols, practices, and ways of learning. In spite of these challenges, several Aboriginal students completed the program and are today employed in helping and educational leadership positions in their communities.

From this experience, however, the counseling faculty realized that a comprehensive revisioning was necessary in order to design an appropriate program for helpers in Aboriginal communities. A key factor was the formation of a collaborative partnership between Lorna Williams, Lil'wat from Mount Currie, BC, who is Director of the University of Victoria Faculty of Education's Office of Aboriginal Education and the second author, Anne Marshall, a counselor educator who was then Chair of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, the department that offers the graduate counseling programs, and is now Academic Coordinator for the program.

As Academic Coordinator of the Aboriginal Communities Graduate Counselling program, my role (second author) is to coordinate all aspects of its community-based delivery. I am a counseling psychologist with over 30 years of experience in direct service, teaching, and research in the field of counseling. I am a sixth-generation Canadian of Irish/Scottish/English background. Over the last eight years, I have been welcomed into a number of BC First Nations communities as a collaborator on community-based research projects. I have witnessed the effects of colonization and residential schooling, as well as the tremendous resilience and determination to revitalize traditional knowledge, language, and cultural practices. This commitment to growth and identity inspired me to support the development of curriculum content and delivery methods that are more relevant to Indigenous students and community needs and to work to create more space for Indigenous ways in postsecondary education. To accomplish this I have embarked on education and self-study about Canadian and other Indigenous history, issues, and healing. The journey has included many enriching and fulfilling experiences along with the struggles and difficulties of addressing white privilege, Western domination, and entrenched structures. Many lessons are still to be learned; however, positive support for our graduate program initiative from Aboriginal communities has been encouraging.

An important first step in the design of an appropriate program was the formation of an advisory committee of faculty and community members involved with Aboriginal education and healing, with the initial goal of envisioning a philosophical and pragmatic model for the counseling program. Twelve Aboriginal and five non-Aboriginal members are on the committee (which continues to meet, with one replacement due to an employment change). At a two-day retreat in January 2006, common

ground and goals were established along with a commitment to work together to forge a collaborative and community-focused program based on Indigenous values and principles (for more information on the project, see Marshall et al., 2007 and <http://www.educ.uvic.ca/epls/grad/documents/aboriginalcounselling.pdf>).

The next step was securing funds from the BC Ministry of Advanced Education Aboriginal Special Project Fund (www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/project_funding.htm) for curriculum redesign and development. This was accomplished with the help of administrators, faculty, and several Aboriginal service agencies, who provided supportive letters for the application. The funds covered advisory committee meetings and travel, consultation with Indigenous scholars, course-writing stipends, program assistants, administrative support, evaluation, and other resources and services. Additional in-kind support has also been received from the university and community such as faculty release, instructors' appointments, teaching assistants, community meeting space, and promotional activities.

A second retreat and development workshop was held in March 2007. The facilitator was Larry Emerson, a Diné (Navajo) scholar and counselor educator at San Diego State University. Joining the Advisory Committee members were 12 additional participants: nine Aboriginal (including one Elder) and three non-Aboriginal. Through stories, prayers, discussions, and sharing, the retreat participants generated a master list comprising key themes of native knowing, helping, and healing. These themes were then grouped into categories relating to the overarching vision for the program. A document was generated entitled *Emerging Values and Principles* (Emerson et al., 2007). The term *emerging* is to remind us that they are not static; they will be expanded and transformed as the program unfolds. Adopting this position toward the value statements and principles follows the generative model of curriculum (Ball, 2004) that describes curriculum as arriving in the community at the beginning of its generative life. Courses can be structured using an open architecture that leaves room for the voices of students, Elders, and the community to enter into active dialogue with the material.

After the Values and Principles workshop, the first author worked through the emerging categories and overarching vision documents created by participants to distill this information into a summary of main points for use as a succinct introduction:

Grounded in respect and honouring relationship, spirituality mediates wholeness and promotes healing across time and generations. Ancestors welcome and greet us as relatives in the healing process and we intentionally seek to share healing work with them. Native healing and traditional knowledge is expansive and diverse and best conveyed through the image of a circle. The circle allows us to see each other. Food, feasting, and celebrating constitute formal parts of helping, healing and counselling from an Indigenous center. The counsellor/healer is a witness who understands and appreciates the

interconnectedness and sacred dimensions of communal life. The counsellor not only witnesses other people's healing but is also a witness to healing of the self. This type of healing requires a willingness to walk in dark places. The counselling process requires listening to one's intuitive self. The model of the programme moves out from the center of an Indigenous paradigm, with praxis and critical reflection built into the guiding pedagogy. Dealing with the oppressor within to avoid re-colonization is acknowledged. The program is about teaching students the skills to rebuild family and community in line with Indigenous-style restoration. (Guenette, 2007)

The values and principles are intended to guide all aspects of the curricular redesign and program delivery process. The first phase of the redesign focused on the three undergraduate prerequisite counseling courses that are required for entry into the graduate program. In addition, a new undergraduate-level course entitled Introduction to Indigenous Helping and Healing was developed by Suzanne Stewart, a Dene graduate of the University of Victoria counseling program and a member of the Advisory Committee. This new course is recommended for applicants to the graduate counseling program, but is also open to students from other departments and faculties (Marshall et al., 2007).

Curriculum Change in an Undergraduate Counselling Skills Course

As part of the first phase of curriculum change described above, the first author was asked to work from these guiding Values and Principles to emphasize Aboriginal content and process when teaching the department's undergraduate helping skills course entitled Effective Interpersonal Communication, which is required for entry into the graduate program. This course emphasizes the teaching of basic interpersonal skills for active listening and the understanding and communication of empathic responses. The skills taught in this course are transferable to a variety of professional settings such as counseling, education, human development, management, health care, psychology, and recreation. These are also life skills that allow students to navigate interpersonal relationships with greater effectiveness.

Instructor Self-Location.

I (first author) started the process of curriculum change with self-location. I am French Canadian with roots in Canada that go back to the 1600s. My siblings and I have often spoken of our Métis connection on my paternal mother's side. My father's emphasis on our French heritage serves to keep any other connection in the dark, a subject to be whispered about but never brought into the open. At times I see my own heritage as the grounds of colonization. My self-location included addressing the questions Findlay (2000) raises in the Foreword to the book *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* edited by Marie Battiste: what is in this process for me, and what is in me for this process?

I am Auntie to four beautiful First Nations nieces. I have lived and worked on the northern end of Vancouver Island for years: an area rich in

First Nations culture, tradition, and peoples. From an academic and personal standpoint, I have made it my responsibility to understand and become knowledgeable about First Nations culture and history. As I watch my nieces struggle to live in two worlds, the white world of their fathers and the First Nations world of their mothers, the issues surrounding the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into the university become very real for me. It is important that they be free to acknowledge all parts of their heritage and to see their own reflection in a postsecondary setting.

Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Ways of Knowing

From the perspective of my own personal philosophy of teaching, I began to make connections with the literature on Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing. Suzanne Stewart (2007), a Dene member of the program Advisory Committee, had written a working document on making curriculum change through the lens of Indigenous pedagogy. She states that curriculum can be created and delivered from within an Indigenous pedagogy, placing education in the context of culture, values, relationship, and historical realities. As an Aboriginal collaborator, I wished to explore how this might be done. I began to grapple with the question: What is Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy?

Aboriginal pedagogy is not just styles, methods, and strategies: it is an epistemological and philosophical framework from which one proceeds (Hodgson-Smith, 2000). Aboriginal epistemology is rooted in language and culture, a language that is rich in metaphor (Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000). Aboriginal epistemology, according to Ermine (1995), seeks to understand the reality of existence by looking within, to commune with soul and spirit. Rituals and ceremonies are the means by which one explores the inner world. Attention is also paid to dreams, as they flash symbolic messages from the inner realm. Ermine also explains the role of community in that culture is accumulated knowledge and the community becomes the repository and incubator of the totality of a group's knowledge. Aboriginal philosophy emphasizes process over product, and it is holistic and cyclical while being firmly grounded in a particular place (Little Bear, 2000).

The vibrancy of Aboriginal education is found in a community context, both in theory and practice (Castellano et al., 2000). For First Nations people, education is a lifelong continuum of experience that has been picked up through interactions with others and with nature (both seen and unseen) as well as with the cosmos (Little Bear, 2000). Cajete (2000) describes Aboriginal education as helping others to find their *face*: who they are, what their unique character is meant to express, to what vocation they are called. This involves learning about relationships, which begin with family and reach out to clan, community, tribe, and the world. The goal or purpose is to become complete: to find one's face and heart. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) affirm that all products of the human mind

and the heart are interrelated in Indigenous knowledge and that all knowledge flows from the same source, which is rooted in the kinship Aboriginal people have with all living creatures that share the land and the spirit realm. It was encouraging to find the literature supportive of the *Values and Principles* document.

Course Plan

With an evolving awareness of my own self-location, motivations, and philosophy of teaching, as well as some of what has been written about Aboriginal epistemology, knowledge, and pedagogy, I set out to plan curricular changes. My first challenge was that this particular summer class would consist of predominantly non-Aboriginal students and content appropriate for many settings. I needed to strike a balance among differing priorities and student experiences. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) write, "The relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Eurocentric knowledge in the educational system must be sensitive to both ways of knowing" (p. 92). Building a bridge between the two perspectives would be a challenge. Guided by several of the writers cited above and drawing from the *Values and Principles* document, I structured the course to follow a more Indigenous approach. Every class was conducted with students in a large circle where stories could be shared and we could all see one another. I resolved early in the course to ensure adequate time to start every class with personal sharing and reflection. I wanted students to get to know one another and to learn to interact in a climate of trust and acceptance. Respectful listening was highlighted and modeled throughout the course. As they reflected in the circle on take-home exercises related to communication skills, they told their own stories and heard and respected those of others. In most university classrooms personal stories are rarely considered legitimate sources of knowledge (Chambers, 1989) although orality is the primary mode of communication in Indigenous communities and the telling of personal and traditional stories is central (Dei, 2002). In this helping course, the telling of personal stories allowed the learning to be self-reflective and grounded in each person's particular cultural context.

In addition to taped demonstrations of communication skills, course assignments included two journal submissions for which students were encouraged to be creative by using art, story, and collage as examples of non-textual representations of learning. The journals were presented as a means to foster an approach to learning that would require self-reflection and the exploration of the inner self in the process.

During the course, each student created a personal culture collage and shared this with classmates as a means of building respect for and an understanding of cultural diversity. One entire class (of a total of 12) was devoted to Aboriginal cultural identity with time for an Aboriginal guest speaker. One of the two First Nations students in the class agreed to speak

on this day. Having a fellow classmate share his story, which was both emotional and illuminating, was another powerful cohesion-builder for the class as a whole.

Outcomes and Reflections

In the written evaluation comments I received at the conclusion of the class, as well as in comments written in their reflective journals, students stated that they had appreciated the adapted structure of the course and the Aboriginal content, particularly the guest speaker's story and the cultural collage activity. Many collages were included in their journals with lengthy reflections describing what making the collage and being able to share it with classmates had meant to students. In their journals I read over and over that hearing a classmate they had come to know and respect as a fellow learner share his story of residential school experiences and community healing was emotionally moving and a powerful educational moment. Formal evaluation comments included: "The class was largely exploratory and reflective in nature and this had a huge impact on me"; "I loved that we could practice as we learned"; "I found the instructor's strongest asset to be that she could really listen to me and show me she cared about my learning in this class"; "I loved the class we did on Aboriginal content and process—I have never had a more positive course experience." These comments from predominantly non-Aboriginal students emphasized my belief that the type of educational strategies that would benefit and fit with an Aboriginal pedagogy could and would benefit all students.

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) describe an enhanced curriculum for Aboriginal learners that includes: a belief that knowing requires a personal relationship between the knower and the knowledge; an integral and interactive relationship based on trust between the teacher and student, a relationship that allows students to enter into a realm where they are vulnerable; time spent on questions such as Who are you? Where do you come from? How are you enriched by this learning? I believe I achieved a high level of trust with students and that they were able to begin to answer these questions for themselves.

Two Aboriginal Students Speak

After the course was completed, I invited the two First Nations students in the class to share their experiences and thoughts about Aboriginal education. Both students are represented here by pseudonyms: Frank, a middle-aged man taking the course as his last elective in a graduate leadership program, was experienced in educational as well as helping roles. Betty is a young First Nations woman completing her undergraduate degree with a strong expressed desire to work with her people and make a difference. Taking a semistructured narrative approach, three guiding questions were asked of the two students, who were interviewed together: (a) What did

you experience in this course that you think worked in terms of an Indigenous approach to education? (b) Were there specific things you experienced in this course that you think should be altered, changed, or left out? and (c) What else would you like to see included in a course that is a prerequisite for an off-campus master's counseling program for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who plan to work in an Aboriginal context? The interview took place at the University and was audiotaped.

Responding to what had worked in the course, Frank replied, "I liked the dyads, the triads, and the practice. It is my experience that First Nations learners are very practical hands-on learners and they learn far more from doing rather than just hearing about something." Frank also acknowledged how useful the practical taped assignments and journals were, "the journal was really something everyone could do, benefit from, and succeed at." Similarly, Ball (2004) states, "engagement in learning requires a curriculum that is relevant and personally meaningful and that affirms the student's own identity and experiences" (p. 472).

Betty reflected on the power of having a First Nations speaker who spoke not only of the pain and hardship in the community, but was also able to emphasize the hope.

I liked that he spoke of what the community was doing to heal itself. Too often we hear what is wrong with our people and not what is happening to make things better. That really got me thinking about my community, my family, and the work that needs to be done to continue to help people on their healing journeys.

Larry Emerson (2007), a Dine counselor-educator, speaks of the healing work individuals go through that centers them in community, making them not only from a community but for a community.

Many of the two students' responses addressed the question of what they thought needed to be changed. Frank spoke of authenticity of voice and the presence and involvement of Aboriginal people in course delivery. "I can't underscore enough that there needs to be an Aboriginal person involved—either taking the lead or assisting as a TA, but definitely a presence and preferably an Elder." Indigenous knowledge consists of cultural values, belief systems, and world views that are imparted by community Elders (Dei, 2002). The transfer of traditional knowledge from Elders to students is an important component of Native culture: the Elders are the core of the culture (Emerson, 2006). Elders become co-constructors who can share cultural traditions and history; these become intrinsic building blocks of a program (Ball, 2004).

Betty spoke about some of the helping skills that were presented. "Questioning and challenging—those types of skills—it would take a long time working with an Aboriginal client before you would even think of doing that." This comment illustrates a difference between Western and Aboriginal approaches. Frank observed, "My experience on a daily basis

with my people—it's all about listening—a lot of the time people just want to be heard, have a chance to tell their story." This comment is consistent with humanistic and narrative approaches to counseling practice, an example of an important meeting point between Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing.

Both students commented that rituals and ceremonies were also subjects that needed to be addressed. Prayer and rituals that fitted with traditional Native groups, making use of a feather or a talking stick while in the sharing circle, and smudging were all mentioned. Baskin (2002) writes that Aboriginal epistemology is spiritual, and in order to incorporate Aboriginal ways of knowing into the academy, we must be willing to embrace spirituality, which is often resisted in Western educational settings. The strength of Indigenous power is sustained through ritual and ceremony (Hill, 2000).

In the class devoted to Aboriginal content and issues, a breakfast of muffins, fruit, and juice was provided. Both Frank and Betty spoke of appreciation for this, but at the same time observed that it was only for that day rather than a taken-for-granted part of how things should be done. Frank said, "Being in the community, what can I say? Food is important. For every gathering we have at home there is always food—even if it is for 50 or 60 people." Betty nodded emphatically in agreement and added, "Yes, everything is food." This underscores the importance of sharing food in the context of learning.

Frank would have liked more than one class devoted to Aboriginal themes, which highlights the dilemma of how to balance Western and non-Western content and process. "You only exposed the tip of the iceberg. Only one class devoted specifically to Aboriginal points of view." I was reminded of Dei's (2002) contention that, "Colonial is conceptualized, not simply as foreign or alien, but rather as imposed and dominating" (p. 7). Doxtater (2004) describes a colonial-power-knowledge that communicates the cultural presupposition that Western knowledge is real knowledge, while ignoring other knowledge. Too often we in the academy fail to question or problematize the imposition of so much that represents Western knowledge in educational settings (May & Aikman, 2003).

When asked to envision what else was needed, a theme related to the place of theory and whose theory would be taught was brought up. Frank spoke of Indigenous theory, "We have a lot of good theory—[such as] the power of cleansing in healing and how sacred that is." Frank shared examples of individual family rituals for cleansing and community-based examples such as plunging into a running river each morning before attending a conference. Theory was seen as something that needed to be lived and made real. Dei (2002) contends that the academy devalues and makes inferior Indigenous history, experience, and knowledge and undermines confidence in local knowledge. Citing Stuart Hall, Dei reminds us

that theory is not truth, but a set of contested, localized knowledges. When we let go of our attachment to Western “theory” and lead with local knowledge first, local students and community members become the first contributors; we ask and learn from what they know first and place this in the forefront of class discussions, only going to the texts as secondary sources (Ball, 2004). Hill (2000) writes that the site of Indigenous theory and ideology is in the ceremonial context; Elders often refer to ceremonies as a source of knowledge as Western scholars might refer to theory or literature.

When a program is to be situated off campus and in the traditional territory of a specific group of Aboriginal people, the necessity of community consultation was emphasized.

Consulting with the community so you can honour the traditional territory and be aware of the rituals and ceremonies that fit with the traditional culture and protocols of the area. You need to have elders on your committees at every stage.

This was imperative in Frank’s mind. Ball (2004) stresses community consultation and involvement when delivering programming in the community. The training is brought into the community, and the community is brought into the training. When education takes place in this type of community context, it is not only the learners who benefit: the whole community benefits in ways that are hard to predict in advance.

Betty emphasized the need to be able to connect skills learned to actual practice.

I was thinking that I needed to be able to see how I would apply this stuff in my community ... in each thing we did that was my focus—how can I apply this to work with Aboriginal clients that I might work with.

Harrison (2005) speaks to this point, writing that Aboriginal students want to be able to talk about how they can apply knowledge acquired to their particular social and historical context.

Two final points were especially salient in the discussions that weave throughout this article. Betty spoke poignantly of how the experience of postsecondary education can make an Aboriginal person feel as if a gulf is opening in front of them, and they become separated from their community and traditions.

For me, I moved here with the intention of going back and now I just don’t know. Many people come here and get lost ... I think now it is really hard to go back to your community when you are educated and trained ... It is so hard—there is this world here and another world there—I didn’t want it to be this way for me.

This reminded me strongly of Emerson’s (2007) analogy of education being like a runaway train taking you away from yourself and your people. Frank responded to Betty with a story.

One of my friends is a counselor—she received her master's degree and she told me, "Frank, you know I don't put that degree on the wall. What I have on the wall framed is my feather - that is my certificate."

Many times Indigenous people who take part in higher education find that they must subtly screen out their Native identity and world view (Emerson, 2006). In postsecondary institutions it is critical that we address this transition process and assist Aboriginal students to find ways to bridge the cultural differences when they return to their communities.

The final theme of which Frank spoke was the absolute necessity of emphasizing the historical context of Aboriginal people's reality, with specific references to colonialism, the Indian Act, the legacy of residential schools, the ongoing poverty, health risks, and multiple losses Aboriginal people deal with daily.

Residential schools keeps coming up for me—some people think we are beating on a dead horse with this but it's still there—the negative effects are still there ... there needs to be more of an emphasis on the whole history of oppression.

Frank's comments are raised repeatedly in respect to the literature about Indigenous Knowledge and the academy. Dei (2002) argues that examining the colonial histories of marginalized communities is a necessary component of the process of decolonization. Baskin (2002) asserts that we must speak to the "horrific outcomes of the colonial encounter" (p. 4). Successful helping is not possible unless the provider is aware of the sociohistorical factors that have had such devastating effects on Aboriginal people (Duran & Duran, 2000). This becomes especially important in a program that trains Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal counselors to work in Aboriginal communities. The ongoing reluctance of many institutions to acknowledge that educational issues for Aboriginal people cannot be addressed or separated from the historical background of colonization is a large problem (May & Aikman, 2003).

Unless academics, researchers, institutions, and Indigenous nations are prepared to name the forces that have threatened Indigenous knowledge and threatened Indigenous knowledge holders and challenge colonizing forces currently within the academy, our attempts to use Indigenous knowledge as a tool for decolonizing will certainly fail. (Simpson, 2004, p. 378)

Where Do We Go From Here?

The interviews with Frank and Betty were both informative about what worked, and more important, insightful about where we need to focus further attention. In reflecting on the course, I had to accept the limitations of what could be accomplished. This was an initial attempt to shift a curriculum focus in a certain direction: more work and integration is in progress. I did not deceive myself that I could achieve an ideal Indigenous learning environment.

Next steps involved consultation with members of the Advisory Committee about how this course could be taught again in view of Betty's and

Frank's comments and the experience of the class as a whole. One issue raised was about language. In many Aboriginal cultures there is no disease-based language: healing involves moving out and away from the dis-ease and looking back through language lenses that emphasize restoration and wholeness (L. Emerson, personal communication, March 19, 2008). In terms of teaching a course on helping skills, this means more focus on hearing the story and less on defining the "problem."

At the University of Victoria, the newly developed Introduction to Indigenous Helping and Healing course can be offered only once a year given current resource limitations and student interest. Thus our major challenge is to establish a plan for undergraduate prerequisite courses that will meet the needs of several groups of students at the same time. We must also attempt to find a way to emphasize Aboriginal epistemology in a structure that is typically not friendly to such inclusion. Celia Haig-Brown (1995) writes that contradictions are part of the process of becoming, all is in flux and even as a thing exists it is changing and the change is essential to ongoing existence. We need to develop ability to discuss and work in situations while acknowledging that things are in an ever-changing context. Leroy Little Bear (2000) connects the idea of flux to an Aboriginal philosophy where things are acknowledged to be in constant motion. We need to be open and clear about proceeding from an Indigenous frame or lens and making this process transparent, as well as emphasizing how looking through this lens can be useful for all students.

Further curricular changes to the Effective Interpersonal Relationships course would stress the importance of personal story and the circle model. The circle is held together in a group context, both literally and figuratively, through telling and hearing stories: this is how one gains admittance to the circle and how the circle is maintained (L. Emerson, personal communication, March 19, 2008). Telling one's own story is a valuable tool in training across many disciplines. When students or trainees write narratives, tell stories, and share these stories with others, they become better caregivers (Charon, 2007). The emphasis on storytelling means more attention to the basics of respectful listening. Being able to listen fully to another's story without feeling the need to solve or challenge is important. Emphasis on building trust among students and more time spent on personal reflection to emphasize a process of self-discovery would be included. The inclusion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal helping professionals to share practical aspects of their work with Aboriginal clients would become an important addition. There would also be a stronger emphasis on understanding what it means to help in the face of traumatic historical realities. We must critique and acknowledge the trauma that has resulted for multiple generations of Aboriginal people as a result of colonization (Battiste, 2000).

Conclusions

When envisaging educational experiences that are meant to increase access to postsecondary opportunities for Indigenous students, we in the academy must address an important question. What are the forces that work to resist the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in the university? These forces are real and more prevalent than perhaps we in the academy wish to believe. As Dei (2002) writes, to speak in the academy about decolonization is a personal and collective risk. How do we find the courage to speak this truth to power? We who benefit from the university's structure and hegemonic discourse must face how the academy has devalued Indigenous history, experience, and knowledge. Simpson (2004) writes that since the time of colonial contact, Indigenous knowledge has been attacked and suppressed as a means of annihilation, and when and where this failed, assimilating Indigenous people. Every aspect of Indigenous knowledge was attacked: spirituality, ceremonial life, the destruction of languages, the taking of children, residential schools, the outlawing of traditional governance, the theft of traditional lands. Simpson is clear and direct when she states that to be true allies to Indigenous peoples, we must be willing to step outside our privileged positions and challenge practices that still conform too closely to colonial power structures. It is imperative that we find ways to root our work in the politics of decolonization.

As the graduate program moves from this preparatory phase to delivery in the community, Frank's and Betty's voices and experiences in this course will be of great benefit. We believe it is clear from their comments and the literature that curriculum change must be made in a spirit of collaboration and respect, with careful attention to Indigenous community protocols and traditions. Changes will involve content areas, especially in terms of providing a forum for teaching Indigenized theories of helping, as well as changes to how content is presented and taught. The topics of historical oppression and colonization of Indigenous people must not be avoided. These experiences and stories need to be heard in order to inform the educational practice of those who counsel in an Indigenous context. We need to emphasize and work to create postsecondary educational experiences that will serve to connect Indigenous students to their own realities and communities and not further their isolation in a predominantly Western structure.

To us as counselor-educators this experience of Indigenizing curriculum has been an important step in an ongoing experience of self-reflexivity that is so important to the practice of counseling and to the overall training of counselors. We reflect on this experience, the literature, and the voices of all the students involved as we continue to move forward in the process, keeping our guiding values and principles clearly in view.

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