

Pedagogies for Decolonizing

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This article provides examples of introductory activities that engage students in initial steps in understanding the systemic structure of colonization. Examples of student group responses to the activities are provided. The understandings explored by students through these activities are then taken up through Indigenous literatures in university contexts in order to contribute to the ongoing decolonization of knowledge in the university and to explore indigenous understandings of pedagogies. The author explores various themes important to the decolonizing of educational practices through discussions of (a) colonizing and decolonizing agendas, (b) disrupting government ideology, (c) decolonizing government and reclaiming Indigenous governance, (e) decolonizing spirituality and ceremony, (f) disrupting colonizing ideologies and decolonizing minds, (g) reconnecting to land, (h) decolonizing history, and (i) community-based education and decolonizing education. Conclusions drawn include the importance of engaging students in Indigenous pedagogies so that they can find support for transforming understandings through Indigenous literatures and understand strategies and opportunities to decolonize education.

Introduction

Indigenous education is self-determined; engages distinctive Indigenous methods, structures, and content; and encourages respect for Indigenous knowledges and self-reliance and self-respect of Indigenous peoples (Hampton 1995). It addresses the social, cultural, pedagogic, and epistemological needs of Indigenous communities and explores Indigenous collective heritage and contributions to global education (Cajete, 1994). It enables an understanding of Indigenous ancestors' mimetic consciousness as well as examination and critique of colonization (Graveline, 1998). Our pedagogies, like our epistemologies, are in relation to the worlds we know and experience.

In this article I describe a teaching scenario that creates opportunities for students to express experiences, processes, and effects of colonization and its historical and current realities and provides a set of shared stories that students can then draw on throughout the course to express the new understandings of colonization that emerge. It also serves as the basis of understanding from which to draw out understandings of decolonization.

Decolonizing, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power. (Smith, 1999, p. 98)

A step in the process of defeating colonial power is to recognize this power, how it is structured into an integrated system, and to begin to

disrupt it through knowledge of how the system works. With this knowledge the system can be challenged and dismantled.

Indigenous scholars provide strategies that can be used in the process of decolonizing by recognizing the structures of colonization, meanwhile strategizing and engaging in practices and processes that disrupt colonial power. In this article I draw conclusions from the literature about the sources, structures, and maintenance of colonization and how these can be decolonized by drawing on Indigenous scholarly articulations of decolonization.

One strategy for decolonizing is to create a sense of the complexity of colonial oppression and how it is systematically exercised. This complex interconnected system is continually evolving and transforming itself. The system of colonial oppression did not end with the creation of Canada. Understanding this colonial system is of central importance if students are to begin to consider how it has historically oppressed and how it continues to oppress and then to understand how this can be disrupted. The teaching scenario outlined here is useful in this decolonizing process.

Structure

This article comprises a series of sections. It begins with a note on language used followed by introduction of the teaching context and my own background as an Indigenous scholar. Next the teaching scenario and two activities are introduced. A typical response to Activity 1 is provided in Table 1. Activity 2 is described followed by three figures that highlight how these activities engage students. In a section called "Understanding the Activities," I explore the process of discussing small-group responses in a larger-group setting. Students' responses to the activities and my pedagogic orientations are included in sections that take up issues central to students' discussions including "Colonizing and Decolonizing Agendas," "Disrupting Government Ideology," "Decolonizing Government and Reclaiming Indigenous Governance," "Decolonizing Spirituality and Ceremony," "Disrupting Colonizing Ideologies and Decolonizing Minds," "Reconnecting to Land," "Decolonizing History," and "Community-Based Education and Decolonizing Education." Conclusions follow.

A Note on Language

One source of colonial power is through naming and control of language (Smith, 1999; Iseke-Barnes, 2004). It is important to examine the language we use if we are to understand colonial oppression and the process of decolonizing. I have never taught a class with an Indigenous focus clarifying language use. I provide this section as an example of the information I might provide students who ask about this.

The words *Indigenous*, *Native*, *Indian*, *Aboriginal*, and *First Nations* are all used by authors in the field and in materials presented here. Each term is a colonial creation that collectivizes distinct groups of peoples and there-

fore can be challenged as colonial tools. But each term also facilitates dialogue on particular political histories and is used in particular contexts. Each term also allows Indigenous peoples with distinct heritages to work collectively. Authors in the literature cited in this article make distinctions between these terms and their use depending on the author's context. Therefore, it is a challenge to make use of the terms. But it appears that one term with the broadest potential application and inclusiveness is *Indigenous*. Peoples from around the globe use this term so I make use of this term here.

The Teaching Context

Before discussing the activities, I begin by explaining my own context of teaching in this way. I am a Metis woman from northern Alberta, having grown up in a community where oppressions of education, government, and racism were everyday realities. I am a mother of three children whose lives continue to be affected by these realities. These early and continuing experiences motivate activities for change (Iseke-Barnes, 2003, 2005).

Working at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education as an assistant and then associate professor and now at Lakehead University as a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Education, my mandate for many years has been to introduce Indigenous education ideas into the curriculum in teacher education and graduate programs where I taught or teach. In thinking about this, it was important that I find a way to introduce Indigenous thought into these courses and to introduce both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to concepts of colonization and decolonization. Anyone who has taught courses that focus on issues of oppression has encountered student resistance to this learning, students' taken-for-granted ideas that often interfere with instruction, and students' stereotypical ideas about Indigenous peoples. It is important to develop strategies and activities to overcome these challenges.

Introducing the Activities

Graveline (1998) created an activity called the Cage of Oppression to overcome similar challenges and to create opportunities for students to understand oppression and colonial practices historically and today. In her activity she engages students in understanding the complex systems that intersect including heterosexism, racism, classism, ableism, racism, ageism, sexism, and Eurocentrism. She encourages students to think about actions taken that support oppressive agendas including to blame, deny, ignore, bash, stereotype, appropriate, minimize, silence, project, and avoid. In her activities students engage in psychodrama and talking circles to understand that the lives of oppressed peoples are "shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional ... but are systematically related to each other" (p. 91). These forces form what she terms *a cage of oppression*.

The activities I outline here were influenced by Graveline (1998) and emphasize students in relation to their worlds. They draw on students' histories and knowledges to understand how oppression and the dynamics of power work in societies and aid students to bring these understandings to the further study of Indigenous literatures examined through the course. Graveline explains that group processes (like the Cage of Oppression) encourage group members to learn from the expressions of other members, aid students in valuing themselves and being responsible for their own learning, encourage empathy with others and a sense of community, and may provide opportunities for people from oppressed groups to reclaim histories.

I have used these two teaching activities in two classes per year for the past six years in teacher education, master's, and doctoral programs in Aboriginal or Indigenous studies courses in institutes or faculties of education. Students worked in groups of three, four, or five and shared their findings after each activity; and as a class we compared and then synthesized students' responses. I begin by outlining Activity 1 and the results from this activity in a table. I then outline Activity 2 and discuss three examples of group responses to the second activity to enable the reader to understand students' broad understandings of colonization articulated during these activities.

The basis for these activities was outlined by Bishop (2002), but I have modified them in my use based on students' feedback (which is discussed in the descriptions of activities). When the activities are engaged in an Indigenous-focused context, students begin to understand the workings of oppression and dynamics of power and also explore Indigenous experiences in relations of oppression in Canada. Activity 1 provides a brief space to explore two imaginary societies.

Activity 1

In order for students to participate in this activity, some initial working understandings are necessary. To begin, I ask students to consider two imaginary societies so that we can consider a broad spectrum of social ideas without being constrained by details of a particular context. The purpose of the activity is to help students to begin to examine their own understandings and life experiences of the interrelations of forms of oppression. Students recognize that a scenario with two imaginary societies would not occur in a pure form as we are imagining, and so later in the activity they often spontaneously move toward discussion of their understandings of specific realities of Indigenous peoples in Canada and internationally.

Activity 1 Guidelines

The first imaginary society is based on the assumptions of separation, hierarchy, and competition. These concepts are defined for students.

Society 1

- Separation:** All peoples are divided into groups and groups are separated from each other by social institutions like education, social status, neighborhoods, religious affiliation, etc.
- Hierarchy:** All peoples are divided into groups with some having higher status than others in society. This produces a hierarchy of power where those with more status get more and have access to more while those with less status get less and have access to less.
- Competition:** Goods are available to members of the society on a competitive basis. Unequal distribution of goods and resources are based on hierarchy of status.

Society 2

The second imaginary society is based on principles of connection, equal value, and cooperation.

- Connection:** All members of society are connected to all others through relationships.
- Equal Value:** All members of society have equal value to one another and have equal access to resources.
- Cooperation:** All members of society share their goods with each other. Distribution of goods is based on supply and need rather than on a competitive system.

In this scenario, students are asked to imagine that Society 1 overtakes or conquers Society 2. Working in groups of three, four, or five, students are given flip-chart paper and markers. On the first sheet they list in two columns (labeled Society 1 and Society 2) characteristics that they might find in each society.

Over the years I have modified the activity descriptions so that it is clear that we are working on a fictional model of societies rather than real ones and now suggest, "Society 1 overtakes or conquers Society 2" so that incomplete conquest is possible to imagine as Indigenous students have at times responded that "Indigenous peoples in Canada may have been colonized but we were never conquered."

Note that in this table students worked through assumptions of Society 1 as a competitive society, adding violence and a divide-and-control orientation. They distinguished the characteristics of the second society both before and after conquest. The students made this important distinction because they were aware that societies changed by conquest might behave differently in the post-conquest period. This distinction is frequently generated by students, and often I am asked to clarify whether I want them to consider pre-conquest or post-conquest society.

Each group of students is asked to report briefly their findings to the larger group. The first group usually provides a complete overview, and

Table 1
Sample Response to Activity 1

<i>Society 1</i>	<i>Society 2</i>
Inequality/Hierarchy	(before conquest)
Competition (of resources)	Equality
Individualism	Cooperation
Violence	Community-based
Divide/Control power	Shared Resources
	Peaceful
	(after conquest)
	Marginalized
	Low self-esteem

subsequent groups usually discuss only ideas that were unique from previous groups. This activity is a precursor to Activity 2 and provides opportunities to examine societies and to distinguish between them. Because the societies are idealized, students are free to see various criteria on which to base their understandings. They draw on these understandings of differences in societies to engage Activity 2.

Activity 2

Following the whole-group discussion of Activity 1, groups turn their seats back to their shared tables on which another sheet of flip-chart paper is provided for the second activity. At about the center of this paper they are asked to agree on one tactic that they might use if they were to be colonizers and members of Society 1 in conquest of Society 2. They circle this tactic. Students then connect other ideas to the first by completing the statement *In order to do this, first we must do this*. Students are also asked to continue by completing the statement *If we do this, then this will happen*. Students connect any and all steps that are related.

Students sometimes find that the idea of working backward and forward through these questions implies a linear process. At times the recorder wishes to adhere strictly to the linearity. When this occurs it generally constrains students' discussions. In these instances I suggest that they add to the diagram the ideas emerging in their discussions and connect them later. With this added freedom to record however they choose, they engage in more lively discussions. And they usually note many interconnections between the ideas they have written. Soon their papers become a web of interconnected ideas. Particularly after we take up the work of the small groups in a large-group setting, students note that it really does not matter where they begin. They say that this is really a web of interconnected ideas and come to understand that oppression is a system. I have selected several group responses that contain numerous

ideas but that are visually understandable. These appear in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

In Figure 1 students began with contact and sketched numerous ideas related to assimilation in the post-contact period. Students discussed the numerous facets of the system of oppression as they developed this representation of their ideas. Note that dogma, ideology, religion, military, and dispossession of land are all important factors in colonization, as are relocation; disconnection from spirit; poverty; loss of roles; and loss of holistic health, resources, and belonging to communities. A central feature for this group was discussion of loss of relations and relationships as well as loss of interrelationships with all our relations. When we take this example together, I say that I would prefer a less benign expression than *loss* as many colonized people and colonized relationships were extinguished deliberately through the forces of colonization.

Group two began their discussions with "To Assimilate we need CONTROL" and described numerous practices and approaches to colonization including physical force and violence, dividing people against themselves, control of land and relocation away from it, education and seizing of

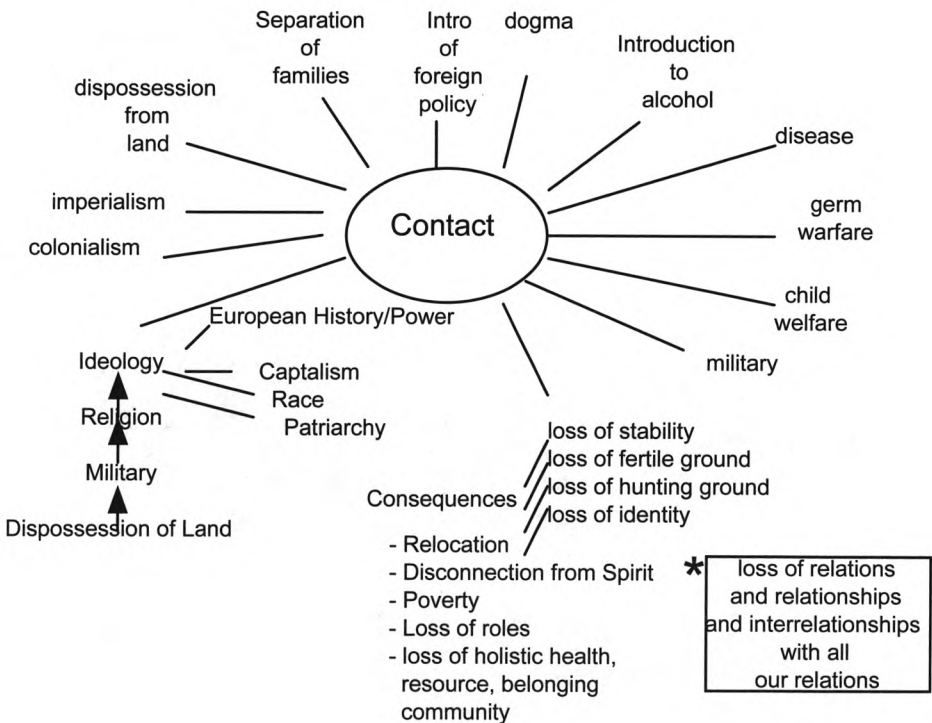


Figure 1. Group response beginning with contact and naming many ways colonization has proceeded following contact.

children, and replacement of Indigenous governance with colonial governance, as well as legislation to control people. Notice that their initial themes all radiate from the center and that there is an initial connection of control-children-education. This group identifies central themes and societal structures that are part of maintaining colonial structures.

In Figure 3 the group began with psychological strategies of creating fear, dividing and breaking relations, and creating a false sense of hope. From this central set of ideas came discussions of law, education, hierarchy, undermining spiritual beliefs, and imposing dominant beliefs. All these colonial strategies aided in maintaining colonial structures and patterns and facilitated the ongoing colonial oppression of the colonized group.

Understanding the Activities

After this activity students are asked to share their findings with the class. Each group in turn shows its paper to the class as a whole, and its members talk about their discussions. Students explore the interconnected system of oppression that emerges through colonial conquest of one society by another. In whole-class discussions students note that no matter where they choose to start their discussions, they connect to many of the same ideas as their classmates. They note that their charts intersect with those of other groups, creating a larger mapping of colonial oppressions. Across all the various classes in which I have used these teaching activities, students

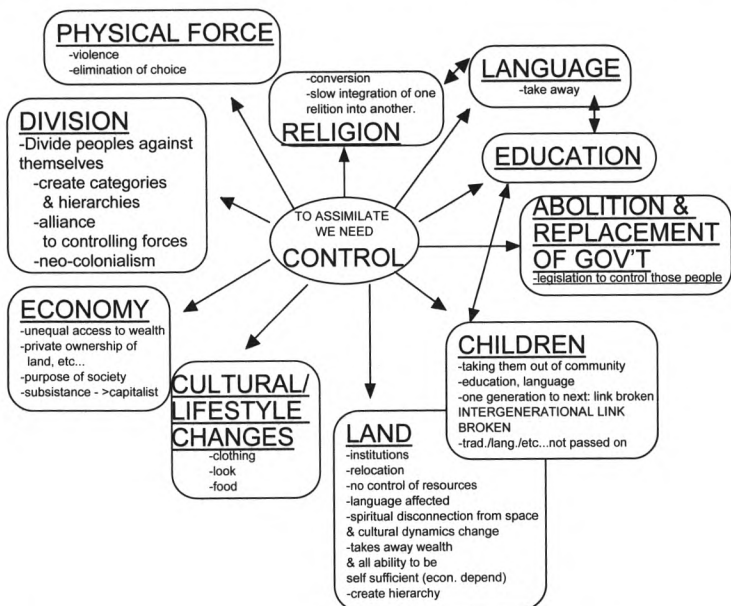


Figure 2. Group response beginning with the idea that to assimilate we need control.

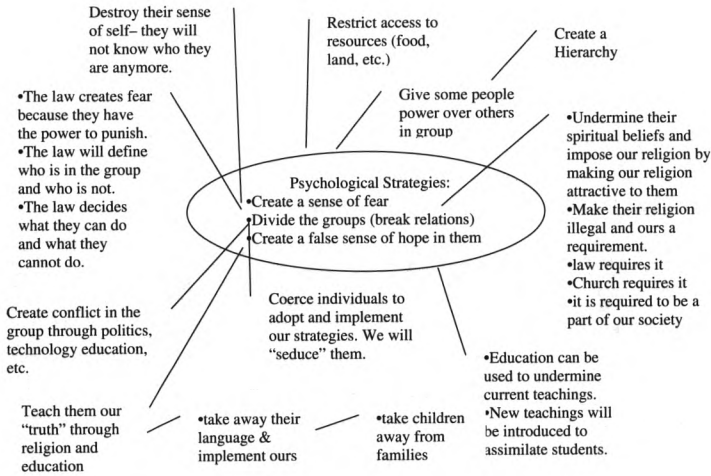


Figure 3. Group response beginning with psychological strategies.

use this activity to understand aspects of the interconnected nature of the system of oppression and colonization.

Following these discussions I ask students how they know so much about how to be a colonizer. It is a question that usually stimulates deep thinking and questioning. I ask them if in their coursework in public schools or in university they have learned about these issues. Many of my students are educators, but others come to the class from numerous other disciplines across the university. They say that they have not taken history courses or courses on social relations that examine the colonizing activities of nations on the lands we now call North America or in other Indigenous nations throughout the world. Some express outrage that they have not previously been directly taught about these things in their education. Despite this lack of direct instruction, it is clear that all groups of students know a great deal about colonization and how they could implement it if they were in the position to do so. I ask them to interrogate the sources of their understandings, and this becomes the basis for many ongoing discussions throughout the course.

Through discussions and analysis, students generally come to the conclusion that they know so much about colonization because they live in Canada, a state that continues to colonize Indigenous peoples, and that their understandings are formed by their understandings of how the British government and later the Canadian government dealt with and continues to deal with Indigenous peoples. They also explore their understandings of oppression in current events in Canada and internationally—like the failure of Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia to sign the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples in fall 2007.

In subsequent classes, students begin to explore the structure, sources, and maintenance of colonization in Canada and internationally. In our discussions we also are attentive to taken-for-granted assumptions that students bring to this class, their unlearning of dominant understandings of relations that sustain colonization, and then uncover and discuss opportunities to disrupt colonization and to engage in decolonizing. Students are aided in these activities through literature from Indigenous scholars.

Colonizing and Decolonizing Agendas

While we explore colonization, our intention is always to consider and to begin the process of decolonizing the mind (Calliou, 2001; Thiong'o, 1997). In many years of teaching using these activities, I have noted that students almost always discuss colonial ideologies in one or more of their numerous forms. Students' examples in Figures 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate this point. In their working groups and the whole-class setting, students discuss how these ideologies are imposed and contribute to colonial agendas.

Figure 2 focuses on ideologies of control as a starting place. In Figure 1 note the imposition of dogma as well as ideology including European history and power, capitalism, race, and patriarchy. Figure 3 notes psychological strategies, imposition of religion, outlawing religions of those being colonized, and the purpose of law to define group membership and exclusion.

Legislated identities which regulated who was an Indian and who was not, who was a metis, who had lost all status as an indigenous person, who had the correct fraction of blood quantum, who lived in the regulated spaces of reserves and communities, were all worked out arbitrarily (but systematically), to serve the interests of the colonizing society. (Smith, 1999, p. 22)

Students relate to discussion of legislating of identities through their lived experiences as Indigenous peoples or members of other marginalized groups. In my classes I work in a teaching circle format. I begin classes by identifying who I am, where I come from, and identify some of the community-based understandings that inform my teaching. We work in circle, and I ask students to identify who they are, where they come from, and some of the location-based understandings that they bring to the class. This provides us with opportunities to know who is in the class and to begin to forge bonds between class members who are diversely located. I also ask students to identify why they might be interested in taking the course. They have many reasons for taking an Indigenous-focused course, including interest in being better prepared to teach Indigenous students, wanting to learn about something they have not learned much about before, continuing the learning they have undertaken in other courses, exploring Indigenous literatures, and exploring ideas to enhance their personal experiences.

At the onset of this first class I always begin by discussing the challenges of learning about decolonizing. Students may experience difficulty when we discuss the many ways that colonization has occurred and how it has been reformulated in the current context. They will be challenged in recognizing colonizing ideologies that once were practiced and that continue to be practiced. They may experience personal struggle and challenge in dealing with the many facets of colonization that perhaps their ancestors created on Indigenous lands with Indigenous peoples. A common emotion in this difficult learning is guilt, but many other mixed emotions and processes arise, and I encourage students to read Tatum (1992) as an aid to understanding some of the challenges they may face in the process of decolonizing. I also encourage them to ensure that they have social supports for undertaking this particularly emotionally challenging coursework. At times students do experience considerable stress and emotional upset in learning about topics including genocide, slavery, racism, sexism, violence, and oppression. It is important that students ensure that they have people to talk to in the event that they become upset by readings. Students also suggest that speaking to family and friends about their learning can be challenging, as family and friends may not be open to the ideas they are expressing, and this can be painful.

The topics of discussion in this course can be considerably challenging both intellectually and emotionally, so I begin classes with smudge: a practice of purification or cleansing involving the burning of plant materials that supports students to let go of the pain of these readings and supports their opening up and becoming receptive so that they can begin to engage in discussions of decolonizing processes and strategies (Graveline, 1998).

It is important to find a balance between discussing colonization and its many forms that exist today, and decolonizing and processes and strategies helpful to achieve it. In the course, students come to understand some of the structure, sources, and maintenance of colonization, along with how to challenge colonial oppressions. As a part of this process, students examine educational practices and the colonizing effects of the education system for children as well as the education system in which they are students. They note that their identities are regulated as graduate students, and the opportunities to strategize and take action on decolonizing in the academic setting can be another location for colonization.

Although students critique colonizing strategies in a discussion of colonial processes, it is also important for them to become aware of decolonizing strategies and how modern Indigenous peoples are active in recognizing colonization, which may well be the first step in decolonizing. The students can turn to many sources of support to understand strategies for decolonizing.

Today contemporary artists and activists challenge these ideologies of control and critique the political realities of dominant discourses through their art. Students engage in discussions of Indigenous art and Indigenous uses of the Internet that challenge colonization and provide strategies for decolonizing. Cheryl L'Hirondelle's "Treaty Cards" allow users of an Internet site to create or modify their treaty cards, thus shifting the representation of their identities (Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2007). In a recent CD-ROM release *An Indian Act: Shooting the Indian Act*, artist Archer Pechaw documents Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's performance in going to England and actually shooting holes in the Indian Act document. These disruptive strategies of artists and activists affirm that true identities are under the control of Indigenous peoples, and they disrupt the taken-for-granted control that exists in the Indian Act. These are decolonizing practices that support the self-conscious knowledge of Indigenous peoples aware of history but moving beyond it—at least in a virtual world of Internet and digital imaginings that allow Indigenous peoples to see a future free of colonial controls.

Students are encouraged to look to Indigenous artists, activists, and scholars for sources of inspiration to aid them in considering how to disrupt colonial agendas. Indigenous scholars globally have begun to engage in discussions that enable not only understanding of the structures, sources, and maintenance of colonization, but also how communities, both local and global, might engage in decolonizing and disrupting ongoing oppressions. Drawing on Indigenous literatures (Graveline, 1998; Gunn Allen, 1992; Hampton, 1995) and the work of Indigenous artists and activists, students consider how focusing on personal healing, self-determination, self-esteem, and Elders' knowledge—to name just a few strategies—will bring about another kind of community in which they might wish to live. The emphasis is on taking personal responsibility for one's own actions and engaging opportunities for change in educational settings and society in general, and how oppressions can be disrupted.

Once students understand some ideas about oppression, they begin to see it around them. For some this is the first time that they have really noticed oppression. Through the course it begins to become integrated into their everyday activities, their writing, and their questioning. In numerous classes students spontaneously bring up examples of misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples—offensive packaging or labeling in the grocery store or misinformation and misrepresentation in advertising in newspapers, magazines, or on the Internet—and sometimes they wish to produce a wall of offensive materials. We engage in discussions about what such a wall would represent to us, the participants in this class who are hoping to foster a dialogue about change, and we discuss what it might represent to others entering the University halls who are not informed about the intentions of our project. Would a wall of offensive materials be

understood as an affront to the misrepresentations we are trying to challenge? Students usually decide to share their new-found understandings with each other and continue to notice and reject such offensive materials, but decide to take action other than in a large public collection of offensive materials.

It is important when discussing colonization that we not focus solely on the critique of colonization. Restricting our discussions to critiques of colonization still enables those participating in this activity to envisage Indigenous peoples as victims of the system. Moving beyond the victim role requires understanding resistance and acts of sustenance and finding strength in which Indigenous peoples are engaged. Disrupting the colonizing agendas and strategies of government is a significant understanding that students engage in considering decolonizing pedagogies.

Disrupting Government Ideology

A major source of colonization is government ideologies and structures. Figure 1 notes the introduction of foreign policy, military, and relocation. Figure 2 notes abolition and replacement of government as well as legislation to control these people, and Figure 3 identifies assimilation through education and teaching those being colonized the colonizers' "truth" through religion and education as well as the development of laws that allow the colonizers control. Paula Gunn Allen (1992), in *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, tells us,

Consciously or unconsciously, deliberately, as a matter of national policy, or accidentally as a matter of "fate," every single government, right, left, or centrist in the western hemisphere is consciously or subconsciously dedicated to the extinction of those tribal people who live within its borders. (p. 190)

Whether one acknowledges all past and present governments as engaged in the extinction of Indigenous peoples or merely the extinction of the fiduciary responsibility to Indigenous peoples, government structures still enforce an Indian Act in Canada that does not recognize status Indians as human beings and continues systematically and tightly to control who can and cannot be called an Indian (Voyageur, 2000; Lawrence, 2004). Students are often surprised to learn that one can be an Indian or a human being in the Indian Act legislation in Canada, but that they cannot be both.

In a subsequent discussion of Howard Adams (1999), students learn more about the colonization processes that aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples to the ways of the colonizers. Adams characterizes colonizers as "grand organizers" who did not recognize how Indigenous societies were already organized and were already civilized by respectful relations with others. They also frequently recognize that the colonizers (e.g., governments or global companies) still continue to use divide-and-rule strategies as in Figures 1 and 3, which identify loss of relations.

Decolonizing Government and Reclaiming Indigenous Governance

Students are always interested in strategies to disrupt colonial processes and dismantle colonial structures. They wish to understand, besides armed conflict or continual demonstrations, what might be involved in challenging colonial oppressions and beginning to live a decolonized governance structure. They engage with Maggie Hodgson (2002), who explains, "the government replaces the system of traditional chiefs with elected chiefs" (p. 93). She describes the disruption of an Indigenous structure of governance that had at its core "consensus building, role modeling, and management based on the value of relationships" (p. 93). She describes a colonial governance system based on a competitive hierarchical system that often has the effect of dividing communities and causing difficulties in managing resources. She suggests that "a community that values sharing pays more attention to the needs of people than to the budget" (p. 94). This is the basis on which the second society in Activity 1 is based. Students see the value of cooperation, community-based sharing, and shared resources as leading to a potentially peaceful existence. But the idealized nature of their activity does not fully reflect current realities and creates the need for more in-depth discussion of strategies.

The strategy of returning to an Indigenous or Native vision of governance based on historic governance involves reconceptualizing governance in our modern times by rejecting the colonial pressures and moving toward decolonization. It involves the self-conscious and self-reliant process of "reclaiming the inherent strength and power of indigenous governance systems, and freeing our collective souls from a divisive and destructive colonized politics" (Alfred, 1999, p. 80). This process is both personal and public and involves rejecting colonial ideologies "in favour of self-conscious traditionalism" (p. 80).

Returning to traditional governance structures, family-led systems and self-conscious traditionalism are ways of decolonizing governance structures and recreating forms of governance that are responsible to Indigenous communities (Bird, Land, & Macadam, 2002; Monture-Angus, 1998). This involves challenging systems where chiefs are responsible to government departments rather than to their own people for fiscal decision-making (Fox & Long, 2000) and recognizing and disrupting a system that created unlivable circumstances for many people in Indigenous communities, including women (Lawrence, 2004; Mihesuah, 2003; Silman, 1987; Voyageur, 2000) and entire communities (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 1997).

For many students who engage with this literature, it begs the question of the potential to decolonize in the university, which is a hierarchical structure where competition, individualism, and divide-and-control power are often exercised. It is a challenge to consider decolonizing when one is in "the belly of the beast," some students assert. But given the

alternative, they are determined to decolonize by working in their immediate location. Students focus in their classes on working together, sharing resources, and encouraging and supporting everyone to recognize how they have come to accept oppressive ideologies and disrupt these no matter what each student's starting place. Students recognize the ongoing reality of colonialism that continues ideologies of control. They recognize that decolonizing can be a strategy of disrupting oppressive ideologies and can occur in local acts and small gestures and changes: like taking up smudge in the university setting, which is a commonly suppressed activity in an academic or educational context.

Decolonizing Spirituality and Ceremony

Ideologies of control, and particularly controlling spirituality and ceremony (Iseke-Barnes, 2003), are central characteristics of colonial control. Students ask: Are universities that deny smudge or traditional use of tobacco gifts to Elders, for example, engaged in colonial control? In Activity 2 students noted imposition of other religions, conversion, slow integration of one religion into another, undermining of spiritual beliefs, the practice of making Indigenous spiritual practices illegal, and imposition of laws that require acceptance of imposed church-based religions in education and institutionalized structures (e.g., statutory holidays include Christmas) as colonial strategies that oppress Indigenous peoples and spiritual practices.

Students discussed government actions of outlawing all Native ceremonies including the potlatch and sundance, thus disrupting important ceremonies that helped Indigenous people and communities know who they were, aided in healing, and reaffirmed cultural and spiritual knowledge (Hodgson, 2002). It was part of the Canadian government's genocidal policies. Students are sometimes shocked to learn of the violence and suppression of Indigenous spiritual practices.

Students are interested in practices, strategies, and procedures to decolonize spirituality and ceremony. They want to know about Indigenous languages and cultures and how these "contain the accumulated knowledge of our ancestors" (Ermine, 1995, p. 104). One strategy for decolonizing is to connect to Indigenous languages and tap into our inner creative life force and inner space that allows us to practice inwardness and to understand our lives through dreams, visions, and prayer.

In Aboriginal philosophy, existence consists of energy. All things are animate, imbued with spirit, and in constant motion. In this realm of energy and spirit, interrelationships between all entities are of paramount importance, and space is a more important referent than time. (Little Bear, 2000, p. 77)

Given students' stated strong concern over the disconnection from "all our relations" including spirit (Figure 1), they are engaged in Little Bear's explanation that it is on the Earth where the repetitive and continuous process of creation, with its cycles, phases, and patterns occurs and can be

observed. Indigenous peoples engage in “renewal ceremonies, the telling and retelling of creation stories, the singing and resinging of the songs, [which] are all humans’ part in the maintenance of creation” (p. 78). These practices of repetition and renewal sustain communities and cultures.

Indigenous cosmology and epistemology, which are explored with students in the course, counter the sometimes held intellectual assumption that Indigenous peoples must produce themselves as disembodied minds or that they must not present cultural essences or discourses of the past (Iseke-Barnes, 2004; Lattas, 1993). Bannerjee (2000) contends that the recovery of past cultural images, creation of historicized connections in the present, and incorporation of these into Indigenous identity discourses is appropriate because they “can play an empowering role in identity politics and in articulating forms of resistance” (p. 10). Knowledge of these strategies can empower students as they embark on education in the colonial confines of the university and as they attempt to dismantle their colonized understandings and decolonize their minds.

Disrupting Colonizing Ideologies and Decolonizing Minds

Students often note that ideologies of control include colonizing minds and ways of thinking beyond those related to spiritual practices. In Figure 3 note that colonizers act to destroy a sense of self in those they are colonizing so that they will no longer know who they are. Paula Gunn Allen (1992) comments on the effects of “the colonizers’ revisions of our lives, values, and histories [which has] ... devastated us at the most critical level of all—that of our own minds, our own sense of who we are” (p. 193). Emma LaRocque (1997) explains colonial processes in society that function to control our minds including “stereotyping, labeling, blaming, denying, censoring, or psychologizing” (p. 373).

Students comment that it can be frustrating, challenging, disheartening, and lonely to struggle against these forces, but also note in a class like this that they feel collective support for one another and feel strengthened to continue in the struggle. In the first class in which I used these activities, I had 11 students, nine of whom were Indigenous master’s or doctoral students who had rarely had another Indigenous student in a university class, let alone an instructor and eight Indigenous fellow students. It was a luxury they had not experienced, and they savored the opportunity. Some days they wanted class to continue beyond our three-hour meeting so that they could stay together. The next semester most of the students continued in another course of mine just so that they could continue to be together. The two non-Indigenous students learned a great deal from their peers and were welcomed and supported in their efforts in learning. Taking these experiences with them, many of these students have now moved to positions as professors or researchers in universities across Canada.

Disrupting colonial ideologies and powerful processes of indoctrination and beliefs in the inferiority of Indigenous people (Adams, 1999) is a

powerful part of what education can achieve. Elders are important in the process of recovery and resistance to this indoctrination and dehumanizing realities. Their role is central in reinserting the importance of remembering our past and remaking our futures. We are challenged as university educators to consider Elders' knowledge in the university classroom. Ermine (1995) explains the role of "the Old Ones, the guides of our communities" (p. 107) in a process of engaging memory. He contends that they have encouraged the younger generations to seek understandings in an "inner cosmology ... Those Old Ones who made countless journeys into the inner space have embedded these principles in Aboriginal education systems so that future generations can continue the research" (p. 107). So what pedagogies do we require in the university to engage in this inner cosmology and to engage in research that will strengthen Indigenous educational systems? Perhaps recreating relations and interrelations is a valuable response to the disruptions of the colonial process. Perhaps it is through the ongoing interconnections of Indigenous peoples in the academy and connections between the academy and Indigenous communities that will support ongoing efforts to decolonize university settings.

In the university setting, Indigenous peoples also find support and sustenance in the works of writers and storytellers from Indigenous nations who are engaged in struggles to overcome the internalized forces of colonialism and who face the politics of decolonizing (Ruffo, 2001). Lattas (1993) explains that incorporating stories and images from the past and valuing memory are important because "memory is an imaginary horizon and thus creative force in human affairs" (p. 251). Through story, "we transform the various discrete aspects of our lives into synthetic meaningful totalities which have the effect of depth because they connect the present with something beyond it" (p. 251). It is, therefore, fundamental for Indigenous peoples to engage memory as it is "part of those imaginary structures and synthesizing techniques through which we produce the real" (p. 251).

Stories recount the historical events of Indigenous peoples in Canada and are shared by Elders, who are the historians of communities through Indigenous pedagogies. "All these stories [are] ... entrusted through the years by one generation to the next" (Ahenakew, 1973, p. 25). These stories recount great deeds of Indigenous peoples, providing children access to stories of their families and communities encouraging them to look to the past with pride and confidence so that they may "face the future with courage making new stories for the next generation" (Lanigan, 1998, p. 111). Telling stories is a practice in Indigenous cultures that has long sustained Indigenous knowledges and peoples (Castellano, 2000). In telling stories, Elders honor the experiences and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples and the multiple, collective, and collaborative readings of our

world. The challenge is to consider how to encourage students to engage deeply with Elders in developing their understandings. At Lakehead University an Elders' council works in various parts of the university to bring their knowledge into classes and programs. Traditional teachers in various programs support the work of students. A sweat lodge and ceremonies on campus support students in their ongoing education. Perhaps this is an important model of support for students, faculty, and staff in the ongoing decolonizing of the university.

Reconnecting to Land

Standing at the sacred stone lodge (sweat lodge), we are reminded that our ancestors lived in relation to this land and that our generations are blessed to have the opportunity to reconnect to land, an aspect of Indigenous life that encourages us to know who we are and to maintain a sense of self in relation. This connection has historically been disrupted by colonization. Students in these activities always note that land and control of it has been and continues to be a colonizing practice. Dispossession of land (Figures 1, 3), controlling access to land and food (Figure 3), private ownership of land and controlling the economy (Figure 2) are ongoing colonial strategies. "Europeans, according to their philosophy, had the right to plunder Indigenous lands and seize them as sovereign territory" (Adams, 1999, p. 3). Land is more than merely a resource in Indigenous communities. What has been disrupted by colonization is relationship to land.

The important relationship between Indigenous land and Indigenous life recognizes the importance of this relationship to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and the interrelationships of land, water, plants, and animals as all our relations (Laduke, 1999), and students recognize the disruption of interrelationships as an important part of the colonial structure. The Tewa expression "look to the mountain" refers to a sacred peak that gives the Tewa strength (Cajete, 1994). Indigenous ways of being and Indigenous education are located in thousands of years of existence on Indigenous lands and the value of Indigenous observations, seasonal learning, and accumulated knowledge (Armstrong, 1987; Cajete, 1994). Students ask, How is it we can ever fully understand land when we are within the four walls of the university? Models of taking students outside of university classrooms exist for some types of classes. In the university setting, as an initial step, we can also acknowledge the land on which we stand and the peoples of that land.

"Both Marxists and capitalists view land and natural resources as commodities to be exploited ... by capitalists for personal gain, and ... by Marxists for the good of all" (Grande, 2004, p. 27). Grande contends that critical and radical theories focus on human liberation with the presumption of human superiority. Indigenous scholars, in contrast, view the interrelationship of human beings with land, plants, animals, and all of creation—often expressed in the statement *all my relations*—as central to

Indigenous communities and Indigenous education (Laduke, 1999; Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998). The challenge is in our classrooms and in the university situation to act as if we have relations.

Decolonizing History

Part of acting in the knowledge that we have relations is to acknowledge our past and our ancestors. This can be a challenge because colonial control is exercised through the imposition of European history/power (Figure 1). Dominant histories subjugate Indigenous knowledges (Iseke-Barnes, 2005). Students are taught that "History is ... about justice, that understanding history will enlighten our decisions about the future" (Smith, 1999, p. 34), but dominant history is not truth, but an interpretation of events told from a particular point of view (Mackey, 2002). "History is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others" (Smith, p. 34). This is a contentious idea for some students who have a real commitment to dominant portrayals of history. Given the work that students have already completed in the course, they realize that there are glaring omissions in their education and that information about the colonial past and present has been hidden from them. As a result, they are more willing to consider history as contested. They have already learned so much about what they do not know about Indigenous peoples and histories that it is already clear to them that their education has been biased (Battiste, 2000).

Students come to understand that Indigenous peoples have been denied an active role in the production of dominant accounts and images in representations of history (Lanigan, 1998). Through socioeconomic control, the reserve system, missionaries, and residential schools, assimilation was accelerated. These historical practices of assimilation and control continue today through schools that teach only knowledge from mainstream society and not that from Indigenous world views (Battiste, 2000).

Knowing history is a "part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization" (Smith, 1999, p. 34). It is vital in transforming understandings into justice. Honoring and knowing alternative histories is a way to access Indigenous Knowledges. It allows us to understand and transform colonial understandings. Smith contends that we need "a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history" (p. 34). Some of these actions on history include telling and retelling stories (Brant, 1994; Harjo & Bird, 1997; Huggins, 1997), reclaiming the past (Adams, 1999), and providing testimony to the past (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 1997; Byrne & Fouillard, 2000) are all ways in which indigenous peoples are engaging the process of recovering from a colonial past. These activities are celebrated in aboriginal literature (Eigenbrod & Episkenew, 2002; Gunn Allen, 1992; Monture-Angus, 1995, 1998; Ruffo, 2001), in

resistance writing (Blaeser, 1996; hooks, 1988; Maracle, 1996; Smith, 1999; Vizenor, 1978), in writing expressing dissatisfaction with the appropriation of indigenous histories and cultures (Adams, 1999; Churchill, 1998, 1999; Doxtator, 1988; Smith, C., 1994; Smith, L.T., 1999; Valaskakis, 1993), in writing directly on issues of healing and recovery from colonial experiences (Deiter & Otway, 2001; Graveline, 1998, 2004; Hart, 2002), and in writing about aboriginal education (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Cajete, 1994; Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000). (Iseke-Barnes, 2005, pp. 150-151)

Engaging in education to challenge practices of cultural exclusion is complicated. It is important to challenge dominant history and its assumptions of truth (Iseke-Barnes, 2005). If students have had the opportunity to become aware of the complexities of systems of colonization, they can challenge images and mainstream portrayals in popular media, exhibits in museums that portray Indigenous peoples in stereotypical ways, and literatures that subjugate and misrepresent. They can also look for alternatives where Indigenous histories are presented as in the recent film *Elijah* (2007, Director Paul Unwin, Anagram Pictures), and *Onkwa'nistenhsera* (*Mothers of Our Nations*, 2006. Director Dawn Martin-Hill). They can look to recent exhibits like *Shapeshifters*, *Time Travellers* and *Storytellers* (co-curated by Candice Hopkins and Kerry Swanson at the Royal Ontario Museum, October 6-February 28, 2008). Students can begin to examine literatures that reflect Indigenous histories and realities from the viewpoint of Indigenous peoples (Bastien, 2004; Byrne & Fouillard, 2000; Churchill, 1998; Stanley Venne, 2003). They can also be encouraged to consider pedagogic and educational practices that promote respect for Indigenous communities (Knockwood, 2003; Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2000).

Community-Based Education and Decolonizing Education

Students in these activities are enrolled in a course in an institute or faculty of education. Not surprisingly, discussion of the role of education in colonization is common among students. All three groups mentioned education as a component in colonization. They understand that the effect of the education system on Indigenous peoples cannot be denied. Public schooling has been an instrument to impart damaging myths about Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2000), cultures (Iseke-Barnes & Sakai, 2003), languages (Calliou, 2001; Iseke-Barnes, 2004) and world views (Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2006). Education has also been important in producing a discourse in which Western science has come to dominate thought patterns (Iseke-Barnes, 2005). Battiste contends that a serious problem with education is the inability to free the human spirit to achieve its full potential because of limiting ideologies produced through cognitive imperialism and the singular focus on narrow scientific views of the world. Calliou documents the practice of using biased language to sanitize dis-

cussions of residential schools in order to present the effects as being about ineffective and underfunded education rather than an intentional genocide of Indigenous peoples. The particular focus of her critique about language is directed at the sanitizing in the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). She challenges scholars and communities to retain a critique of residential schools and their clearly genocidal intentions and to challenge language games that strip away the practice of linguistic, cultural, and numeric genocide that was enacted in residential schools.

Grande (2000) provides a decolonizing strategy for education by mapping the terrain of struggle from genocide, colonization, and resistance to Red power and pedagogy. She provides a new educational theory or Red pedagogy for Indigenous intellectualism that includes sovereignty and self-determination. She grounds theory in subjectivity, which is understood in terms of relationships. Her definition of Red pedagogy includes a quest for sovereignty and dismantling of globalization, epistemological knowledge, understanding the earth as a spiritual center, and tribal and traditional ways of life as sociocultural frame of reference.

Grande's (2004) ideas of a Red pedagogy engage a revolutionary critical pedagogy for inquiry as a place to begin to rethink Indigenous praxis. Red pedagogy focuses on hope as a central tenet. Not hope in the Western future-oriented focus, but rather "hope that lives in contingency with the past—one that trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors as well as the power of traditional knowledge" (p. 28). It is about believing "in the strength and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and communities, recognizing that their struggles are not about inclusion and enfranchisement to the 'new world order' but, rather, are part of the indigenous project of sovereignty and indigenization" (p. 29).

Calliou (2001) discusses the importance of examining Indigenous scholarship and honoring cultural teachings. She draws a parallel between development of curriculum and the creation of graffiti that "assaults, delights, excites, insults, or teaches" through text and images "inserted with or without permission into public and private spaces" (p. 195). She compares curriculum to graffiti, using similar language and assigns "curriculum as markings made (un)wanted in public/private mindspaces" (p. 195). We are challenged in this account to reconsider curriculum and to consider how to think about educating for self-determination.

Nadeau and Young (2006) propose an Indigenous pedagogy in which we understand the role of the physical body in dealing with emotional and mental stress and engage the spiritual to draw on intuition and internal knowledge, recover a sense of the sacred, and maintain peace between peoples by walking in a sacred manner. To aid in this balancing they use a technique called "embodiment practice" (borrowed from Apoyshan 1999, 2004), to pay attention to the flow of energy through the body and en-

vironment. This helps us to be more physically present in our bodies, increases awareness of relationships to others, and enables deeper engagement with spiritual selves and practices involving song, dance, and use of healing medicines.

Nadeau and Young (2006), in a three-phase process, encourage people to reaffirm the basic goodness of each person and a connection to inner gifts, "collective prayer and ceremony that work(s) with anger, grief and loss" (pp. 93-94), and "affirmations of individual and collective strengths or gifts and a movement toward performance and ritual collective action" (p. 94). In this process Nadeau and Young encourage recovery of historic and collective memory, reframing these memories to transform the individual so that he or she can experience sacred memories and movement from responding individually to a process of public witnessing of one's pride in one's identity and relationships in community.

Colonization challenged the integrity of teachings of oral traditions. Practices such as Nadeau and Young's (2006) provide an example of how to begin the process of honoring Indigenous knowledges as legitimate, whole, collective, and responsible. We need to value and engage our Indigenous knowledges if we are to decolonize. Willie Ermine (1995) explains, "those people who seek knowledge on the physical plane objectively find their answers through exploration of the outer space, solely on the corporeal level" (p. 103). This is a typical focus in mainstream educational practices. Ermine explains that "those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed Aboriginal epistemology" (p. 103).

We are challenged as educators to transform our educational practices and to consider Indigenous curricula and ways of educating that account for our histories, both before and after contact, and to recognize ongoing survival, healing practices, wholeness, and ways back to Indigenous knowledges that can transform our lives as Indigenous scholars, educators, and students.

Conclusion

A significant Indigenous pedagogic practice incorporated in the activities articulated in this article and through its discussions includes understanding that transformation can take the form of disrupting dominant discourses. Indigenous literatures in Canada and beyond bear witness to Indigenous practices of decolonization, contribute to the ongoing critique of colonization in its many forms, and contribute to understanding how to undertake transformation of universities (Iseke-Barnes, 2007; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004). When students engage with this literature and are informed by it, they can begin to transform their thinking. It is important that educators be involved in the creation of opportunities to immerse students in this literature and experiences by which they can transform their under-

standings of Indigenous peoples and knowledges through Indigenous pedagogies and facilitating opportunities for them to witness and participate in decolonizing strategies and practices.

I give students opportunities for transformation in my practices by beginning my classes with smudge, prayer, and song; sitting in teaching/learning circles with students; passing a stone to encourage us to know who is speaking and whose responsibility it is to listen; and encouraging students to acknowledge from what personal location they speak in the sharing circle. These practices facilitate students to bring themselves to the process of hearing the voices of Indigenous scholars and opening themselves to understanding the processes of colonization and the challenges and strategies of decolonizing. They contribute to students' understanding of themselves as culturally located and affected by cultural influences that have taught them to accept biased accounts of history, misinformation, and miseducation. It is a complex and dynamic way to teach, and students appreciate the opportunity to engage with these issues.

These activities and practices help students gain insight into their own locations and beliefs—often steeped in colonized ideas that need to be challenged. I too am challenged in these contexts to expand my own understandings and to continue to challenge my beliefs. I continue to learn a great deal from students each time I teach a class. These courses are challenging for students and me as these ideas may be new and unfamiliar, and many issues arise from this teaching as we unpack our taken-for-granted assumptions and begin a process of change.

I started this discussion to give you a sense of teaching activities and processes included in my teaching. This is only a brief snapshot of selected materials and themes in my courses. I hope it encourages discussion of some ways that universities are changing; provides possibilities for Indigenous knowledge in the university classroom; suggests how Indigenous knowledge is shaping my teaching; and provides examples of how intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions of education are being nurtured. This is not meant to be prescriptive. I outline some of the larger forces that have created the educational contexts in which I teach and strategies and practices that I have used to continue to honor Indigenous knowledges. I thank all the scholars and teachers who have aided in my learning. I thank all the Elders and ancestors who have guided and supported me in this venture. All my relations.

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