Conflicts and Lessons in First Nations Secondary Education: An Analysis of BC First Nations Studies

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In the Canadian and United States public education systems, knowledge about the history and culture of Indigenous peoples has historically been excluded from or misrepresented in social studies curricula. This exclusion and misrepresentation reinforces the oppression of Indigenous peoples in society at large. This study examines efforts to develop and teach a course that counters this history of misrepresentation. Through an investigation of British Columbia's secondary-level social studies course entitled BC First Nations Studies, this article explores the tensions that arise in teaching about the history and culture of Indigenous peoples in the public education system. An analysis of these tensions examines how they are related to deeper issues of epistemology, pedagogical values, and legitimation and thus provides useful lessons for educators teaching Indigenous studies and for educators in general who struggle to implement education as the practice of liberation in the mainstream education system.

> The task at hand is to decolonize our disciplinary and pedagogical practices. The crucial question is how we teach about the West and its Others so that education becomes the practice of liberation. This question becomes all the more important in the context of the significance of education as a means of liberation and advancement for Third World and postcolonial people and their/our historical belief in education as a crucial form of resistance to the colonization of hearts and minds. (Mohanty, 1994, pp. 151-152)

> It is obvious that the whole of creation cannot be brought into the school. This means that some selection must be made of teachers, curricula, architecture, methods of teaching. And in the making of the selection the dice must always be weighted in favor of this or that. (Counts, 1932, pp. 16-17)

In the history of the Canadian public education system, the dice have long been weighted against the West's Others. In the creation and teaching of curricula, the experiences, ways of knowing, and pedagogies of Indigenous peoples, people of color, women, the working class and poor, and other marginalized groups have all too often been neglected or, more frequently, exploited and distorted to serve specific purposes of oppression. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the field of social studies education. Social studies education in Canada has historically been composed of the political history of White, economically privileged males. Even when included, the perspectives of other groups have often been deemphasized (Zinn, 1980). Such deemphasis of the history of non-dominant groups in society serves two purposes. First, it normalizes their oppression and makes that oppression seem natural, insignificant, or even

nonexistent. Second, it denies people who identify with these groups a role in history: it silences the histories and experiences of them and their communities. In both ways this type of history education serves to uphold structures of racism, oppression, and colonization.

As a social studies educator who strongly believes in education as a force for social change against structures of oppression and toward justice and liberation, I wished to examine how history education could meaningfully incorporate the histories of those whose stories were so often left untold. I believe that education can and should play a liberatory role in society and that challenging the marginalization of oppressed peoples in history education is necessary to make this role a reality. As McLaren (1998) maintains, liberatory education involves "excavating" and making public "dangerous memories," meaning "the stories and struggles of the oppressed [that] are often lodged ... in the social system's repressed unconscious" (p. 234). But what does it mean to excavate dangerous memories in a public school classroom, which is fundamentally an instrument of the state? And what are the challenges and benefits of doing so?

In order to answer these questions, and to develop a better understanding of how courses that include such dangerous memories can contribute to education as the *practice of freedom* (Freire, 1970) by challenging structures of racism and oppression, I began to conduct qualitative research on a secondary-level social studies course in British Columbia that teaches about the history and culture of Indigenous peoples. The course, entitled BC First Nations Studies, is an elective course targeted toward both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in grades 11 and 12. Although BC First Nations Studies had been developed locally in various parts of BC since the 1980s, the course did not become an official part of the provincial curriculum until 1995 and was then revised and updated by the BC Ministry of Education in 2000. Thus the course provided an opportunity to understand better a specific example of an attempt to teach about a group whose history and culture had until recently been all but excluded from the mainstream education system, as well as to examine how such a curriculum was developed, how it was affected by state involvement, and its implementation in the mainstream school system.

Through an examination of BC First Nations Studies, I hoped to discover lessons that would be useful not only for those interested in Indigenous education, but for all educators interested in how education can play a liberatory role in society by including the histories and/or perspectives of people who have been marginalized by the hegemonic power structures of mainstream education. Thus the central question guiding my research was: What can educators learn from an analysis of BC First Nations Studies that will help them to create and teach social studies curricula in the mainstream education system in a liberatory way?

Research and Analysis Methodology

The heart of my research, which was conducted from September 2005 to June 2006, was a series of qualitative interviews. I interviewed 21 teachers and other education professionals (textbook and curriculum writers, university professors, and BC Ministry of Education staff involved in the development of the course) all over the province. For the interview guides, see Appendix A. All educator interviewees are identified with pseudonyms unless otherwise requested by the participant. Educators who participated in the study were recruited either through a general e-mail to the BC Aboriginal Education listserv, through referral from another participant, or through contacting the school district's Aboriginal education department. In addition to the interviews with the educators, I spent about 10 hours in each of three classrooms observing the course being taught. While in these classes, I gave the students surveys at the beginning and at the end of the course and also conducted short interviews with students. For student interview and survey instruments, see Appendixes B and C. All student surveys and interviews were anonymous. Both survey and interview participation was optional for students although most chose to participate. In total I surveyed 48 students and interviewed 34.

Finally, I also had the opportunity to teach the course myself for three months, and during this time I kept notes on my experiences as a teacher, events that occurred in the classroom, how students reacted to the course, and the pedagogical choices I faced. I have used the results of my surveys, the data from my interviews, the literature I reviewed, and my own personal experience as an educator to understand and analyze BC First Nations Studies, and I draw on all these sources in my understanding of the course and its implications for educators. Throughout the discussion of my research results, the interviewees' voices are presented in the context of the theoretical framework informed both by literature and personal experience, which I have used to interpret, understand, and make use of my research results. As Haig-Brown (1995) writes,

> Conducting research and writing ethnography are, necessarily, a process of selection. The writer, ever conscious of the other study participants, chooses what to look at, what to record, how to look, how to record, what to analyze, how to analyze, how to order, what to write, and how to write.... She selects, from seemingly endless options, a single way to present the work. (p. xv)

Because of this process of selection, a qualitative study is necessarily a "cautious truth" (p. xv), that is, a truth that is influenced by the author's perspective.

Another reason for which I claim to offer a cautious truth is because of my identity as a White researcher studying Indigenous education. Throughout the process of conducting my study, I was aware that research about Indigenous people has often served an exploitive role: more often than not the knowledge produced from that research has served the forces

of oppression and colonization, either through appropriating Indigenous knowledge, objectifying Indigenous people, or justifying colonial policies and attitudes. As Ron Shortt, a former administrator of the Native Education Centre in Vancouver, writes,

> Aboriginal people of this country, and, indeed, worldwide have good reason to be mistrustful of outside research into, and consequent interpretations of, our experiences and our hopes for the future.... However sensitive they might be, academics must always remain observers, not participants, in our history and in our efforts to define our future. (Haig-Brown, 1995, p. vii)

I recognize my role as an observer rather than a participant, and I know it is not my place to dictate the direction of Indigenous education. In this article I attempt to speak with an awareness of and respect for the boundaries and limitations I face as a non-Indigenous person writing about Indigenous issues. As such, I recognize that although my analysis is informed by Indigenous thought and I present Indigenous perspectives through the voices of my participants, I do not offer a personal Indigenous perspective. In fact one of the reasons I chose a qualitative research method was because I believe that the knowledge about BC First Nations Studies and Indigenous education lies with the people directly involved in the course. I see the data I collected as a series of voices and perspectives of these people, and I wished to let these voices speak as much as possible.

In my attempts to understand and learn from the many voices and perspectives of the educators and students whom I interviewed, I struggled with the fact that no consensus was obvious among the interviewees: in fact more than anything I observed a cacophony of opposing and multifaceted perspectives. Not only did people differ from each other, but many also had internal contradictions in their own understanding of certain issues. As I spoke to more people, I came to see that the opposing viewpoints I was hearing stemmed from underlying tensions in the course and that these tensions could be understood in relation to the challenges involved in teaching an Indigenous studies course in the mainstream education system. I realized that an exploration of the tensions in the course would illuminate information that could be useful to educators attempting to respond to such challenges in other settings. Therefore, I chose to organize the analysis of my research around understanding the core tensions that arose in structuring, teaching, and learning from the course.

In order to gain a better understanding of these tensions, I made use of three major theoretical frameworks. The first is critical theory, which acknowledges the relationship between what goes on in schools and structures of power in society and is useful for examining how knowledge and power create and influence each other in education and how education can be a transformative force in society. The second is postcolonial studies, which situates Indigenous education in the context of colonialism

and explores the links between colonialism and modern society's perceptions of Indigenous knowledge and is useful for examining how education can be a decolonizing force. The third framework is Indigenous educational theory,[1] which explores epistemologies and pedagogies of Indigenous cultures and is useful for understanding why tensions arise when teaching about Indigenous cultures in the mainstream education system.

Haig-Brown (1995), whose work is similarly based on an analysis of the tensions involved in teaching First Nations history and culture in mainstream society, maintains, "by naming the tensions experienced, people can begin to address them" (p. 253). This article is an attempt to both name those tensions and to point out some issues to consider in addressing them. It is my hope that an analysis of the tensions uncovered in BC First Nations Studies will provide educators with a better understanding of the underlying issues involved in teaching curricula that focus on society's dangerous memories and thus will empower them to create and teach liberatory social studies courses.

BC First Nations Studies: The Journey of the Course's Development

In order to understand better the lessons learned from my study, it is important to introduce some background information about BC First Nations Studies that will situate the course in the context of its development. The following description of the background and history of the course was compiled based on interviews with individuals involved in its development. The course is unique in that it was first developed at the grassroots level by educators who identified the severe lack and poor quality of First Nations content in the social studies curriculum. Starting in the 1980s, some teachers began to respond to this lack by integrating First Nations content into mainstream social studies courses, whereas others designed specific courses on Native Studies for their schools or school districts. Because of their locally developed nature, First Nations studies courses typically focused on the specific First Nation(s) living in the community where the course was being taught. Often field trips, guest speakers, arts and crafts, and other hands-on experiential learning techniques were used to help students understand the culture and traditions of the local First Nations people.

Beginning in the 1990s, educators around the province who believed in the importance of such a course began to lobby for it to become part of the official provincial curriculum. In the early 1990s, the BC Ministry of Education decided to support the development of an official BC First Nations Studies course by hiring a team of teachers from around the province to put together the curriculum. Many of these teachers had been teaching the course locally for years. Once the learning outcomes from the curriculum were developed, they were sent to other educators and First Nations communities for approval. In the mid-1990s, BC First Nations Studies

became a provincially organized course. Soon afterward it became an option to meet the grade 12 humanities elective requirement for graduation.

However, enrollment in the course remained low, in part due to lack of resources and lack of expertise among social studies educators in the area of First Nations studies. In addition, the course was perceived by many to be a watered-down course that was less academically rigorous than other courses and had a reputation, in the words of the educators I interviewed, as being a "craft" course meant for "dummies." BC First Nations Studies was often seen as an inferior course intended only for First Nations students, who were considered not smart enough to take other social studies courses. As Indigenous educator Marianne explained,

> The attitude was that knowledge about our history, knowledge about who we are is only good enough for Aboriginal people. It's not of worth to any other Canadian. That was the attitude. Or that if it's knowledge that has Aboriginal content, then it's fluff. It's not academically rigorous, and so it can't be for students who are going to go on to university. They don't need to know about Aboriginal people. That was the attitude.

The poor reputation of the course was due in part to the fact that it existed for so long without a formal structure or adequate teaching resources. Furthermore, its status as an elective course without university entrance credit contributed to the perception that it was nonacademic. Finally, the course was dismissed because of its focus on Indigenous content. Because colonialism in BC classified Indigenous knowledge and culture as inferior, the perception that Indigenous cultures are less civilized or developed still exists today as evidenced by both personal and structural racism in the province. Thus BC First Nations Studies was viewed as an inferior course because Indigenous knowledge in Canada was—and in many cases still is—subjugated by the domination of the colonial regime of truth.

In order to address low enrollment and the perception of academic inferiority, educators, First Nations communities, and First Nations political organizations joined together to lobby for reorganization of the course, university entrance credit, and the creation of a textbook. In 1999 the Ministry responded to this lobby when it negotiated with universities to give BC First Nations Studies the same status as Socials 11 (the required grade 11 grade Canadian history course) for university entrance requirements. At the same time, the Ministry made BC First Nations Studies one of two alternatives to Socials 11 to meet graduation requirements (along with Civic Studies 11). Hence BC First Nations Studies became a core social studies course. The Ministry decided that because of this change, they should revise BC First Nations Studies so that its structure matched that of Socials 11 and Civic Studies 11. So in cooperation with a team of teachers, the learning outcomes for the course were again revised in 2000.

At the same time the Ministry contracted a team of writers to develop a textbook for the course. During the process of writing the text, drafts were

sent for review to stakeholders in the Indigenous community, and First Nations Elders, who are traditionally considered to be the holders of wisdom in Indigenous cultures, were also consulted. In 2003 the textbook was published and released across the province (Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock, 2003). As a Ministry staff person stated, the text was "intended to provide a positive, optimistic message and to be empowering to students in terms of the present and future" while at the same time avoiding whitewashing the history of BC's relationship with First Nations people. The next step in the course's development was for it to become an examinable course. In 2004 the Ministry of Education instituted a new graduation program in BC that added a new provincial standardized exam to Socials 11. Because it is an alternative choice for Socials 11, BC First Nations Studies was also given an exam that counts for 20% of a student's final mark.

The changes in BC First Nations Studies since the introduction of the textbook and final exam have altered the course in several significant ways. Originally, when the course was developed locally, it focused primarily on the history and culture of the local First Nations in each area. However, with its standardization, the focus has become more generalized, addressing the history and culture of all First Nations in BC rather than one specific Nation.

Second, before provincial standardization the course allowed educators a great deal of flexibility. However, the revised curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2000) discarded the former model that allowed teachers to choose from several units and instead formally laid out all the prescribed learning outcomes (PLOs) that the teacher is now required to teach, thereby leaving less room for choice. The addition of the standardized exam also restricted the flexibility of the curriculum because it measures the students' knowledge of the PLOs and therefore means that teachers are held responsible for teaching every PLO.

A third reason why changes to BC First Nations Studies were significant is that whereas previously the course incorporated a great deal of art and cultural expression, it now has a much stronger emphasis on the political history of First Nations. This focus on politics and government puts the course more in line with Socials 11, which focuses primarily on the contemporary political history and governmental structure of Canada. The introduction of the exam enforced this focus even further, as it includes little content based on cultural knowledge and nothing based on local knowledge, but instead emphasizes the general political history of First Nations peoples in BC.

Officially, the province still encourages teachers to include local and cultural components in the course. For example, the course Integrated Resource Package states,

> In order to reflect BC First Nations' cultural diversity and make First Nations Studies meaningful for students, teachers are advised, wherever possible, to have students achieve the course outcomes through a focus on local content-a focus on the First Nation whose traditional territories are in that part of the province. The most effective way to do this is by inviting guest speakers into the classroom (e.g., 35% of the course). (BC Ministry of Education, 2000)

However, in reality the structure of the exam deemphasizes local and cultural components, as some of this content is considered to be unexaminable by the Ministry. As Sonya, a Ministry of Education staff person who was involved in the development of the exam, explained, local content cannot be included because it may "advantage some students over others," particularly those students living in the area from which the content originates. In addition, the Ministry decided not to include questions "around the spiritual and other dimensions" because, as Sonya stated, "we felt that it was a little bit disrespectful to try and put that on an exam."

Thus due to time constraints, many teachers feel pressured to focus primarily on the examinable aspects of the course and feel that they cannot dedicate 35% of the course time to having guest speakers. As Sonya acknowledged, the decision not to examine local and some cultural aspects of the course,

> takes away all of the hands-on type of learning in the classroom and while the shading [of those topics which are not on the exam] doesn't suggest that they shouldn't teach it, what happens in many other examinable courses is if this is shaded it's not taught. People start to let the exam define how the course will be taught. And that's what will happen with this one. Which means a lot of the local stuff may get taken out.

The standardization and generalization changed the structure of BC First Nations Studies from being a locally focused, flexible course the primary content of which was art and culture to a provincially focused, more rigidly prescribed course the primary content of which is political history. The textbook and the exam even more rigorously enforced these changes. Many educators who lobbied for the creation of a provincial curriculum and textbook see these changes as a step forward both in Indigenous education and in mainstream society's recognition of Indigenous rights, history, and culture. These changes were intended to promote the course by increasing its recognition as a legitimate course. Efforts to make the course more academic convey to the general public that Indigenous culture and history are by no means less important than Anglo/Franco culture and history in Canada. In addition, the efforts made to work with Indigenous communities in the development of the learning outcomes and textbook add further authority to the course. Most important, as enrollment in the course has steadily increased since these changes were made, a larger number of people have been given the opportunity to learn about Indigenous history and culture.[2]

However, these changes also gave rise to much controversy. The restructuring of the course left many educators feeling that they had no choice but to cut out local and cultural learning because these aspects were not emphasized by the textbook or exam. Some educators argued that the design of the textbook, the rigidity of the curriculum, and especially the addition of a standardized exam not only limited the course, but demonstrated disrespect for Indigenous culture and tradition because they have adapted the course to fit within a Eurocentric way of understanding and evaluating knowledge. Corrina, one of the Ministry of Education personnel involved in the development of the provincial curriculum, acknowledged,

> Obviously we're creating a course that fits into our present education system, which is basically a Western system. This is perhaps contrary to the way education would happen within a First Nations community, which would be through storytelling, and through Elders, example, and teachings.

Although standardization of the course has brought some important gains because it attempts to fit the course into a Western system, standardization may also have unintentionally marginalized Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies by deemphasizing local and cultural learning and privileging Western ways of knowing, teaching, and evaluating learning. In the following section, I explore the epistemological and pedagogical tensions that teachers faced following the changes in the course and what these tensions reveal about the challenges of teaching Indigenous studies in the mainstream educational system.

Naming the Tensions: Conflicts Related to Epistemology and Pedagogy

Throughout my interviews, educators reflected on how the changes in the course had brought out tensions between the more Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies that they employed before the course was restructured and the more Western epistemologies and pedagogies imposed since then. One significant way the educators interviewed felt that Western epistemologies were being privileged was through emphasis on impersonal, measurable knowledge. Whereas in Western knowledge systems objectivity and impersonality are typically given high status in the regime of truth, in Indigenous knowledge systems personal growth and knowledge gained from one's own experience are privileged (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Cajete suggests, "Tribal/Indigenous Education is really endogenous education, in that it educates the inner self through enlivenment and illumination from one's own being and the learning of key relationships" (p. 34). However, personal knowledge and inner growth do not fit neatly into the mainstream education system because, as Cajete explains, "these dimensions and their inherent meanings are not readily quantifiable, observable, or easily verbalized, and as a result, have been given little credence in mainstream approaches to education" (p. 20). For example, Paul, who used to run a performance drum group as part of

his First Nations Studies curriculum, described how participating in the group had a powerful personal and emotional effect on many of the students. One student in particular, who before participating had felt ashamed to be Aboriginal, began to accept his culture and himself through his experience as a member of the drum group. Paul said that in an Aboriginal-centered evaluation, this student "would have got an extremely high score for coming to terms with himself." However, in the public education system he would get little credit for his personal development because it could not be measured on any kind of standardized exam.

Another reason why personal knowledge does not fit neatly into a Western education system is that whereas Western history is typically taught through an objective or impersonal voice, Indigenous history and culture are lived experience for Indigenous students. As Indigenous educator Carrie described:

> One of the difficulties I'm really conscious of in teaching a course ... on First Nations issues is there's no allowance for the fact that when our cultures are being taught that that is personal. And it's not like it's out here or separate from who we are. And so somebody comes in and tries to objectively teach us about our history in an academic framework. [But] it touches us emotionally regardless.... That stuff is our lived experience, it's our lived history, it's our parents' lived history and our grandparents' lived history. I think that's part of the problem with the course in general. I think it's really necessary. I'm really excited that it exists. I really believe that a provincial exam validates it in a way that no provincial exam might make it just fluff. But I think that's just a thing [that] ... needs to get acknowledged more.

Despite the personal nature of the course content, currently no structure exists in prescribed learning outcomes (PLOs), textbooks, or exams to incorporate the personal aspect of the course as a lived experience for students. Thus although teachers may bring this aspect into the classroom, they do so in spite of the curriculum rather than because of it.

The tension between personal and impersonal epistemologies also presented teachers with challenges when they tried to employ student-centered rather than content-centered pedagogies. The personal nature of Indigenous epistemologies privileges student-centered learning, whereas the impersonal nature of Western epistemology generally privileges content-centered learning as demonstrated by the learning outcomes, textbook, and exam. Ministry staff person Sonya explained that in the design of an exam, "You really are not supposed to take students into account.... We should be basing our exams on our learning outcomes" rather than students' abilities. In contrast, Indigenous educator Daniel commented that as a First Nations person teaching the course, "I might not personally put a lot of emphasis on the academic content because I know the nature of the kids I have in there. And you start where the students are." Although the unstructured nature of the course had previously given educators the freedom to emphasize student-centered pedagogies, the structure

introduced to the course has led many teachers to feel that they need to adopt content-centered pedagogies.

A second tension that the educators interviewed discussed frequently was that of experiential versus text-based pedagogies. Because Indigenous epistemologies are based on personal knowledge and experience, learning from experience is privileged whereas Western epistemology is often impersonal and thus privileges text-based learning through reading and writing (Cajete, 1994; Goulet, 1998). Some educators described rich and personal experiential learning activities that they had previously used in teaching BC First Nations Studies and lamented that they did not have the time to include experiential learning with so many learning outcomes to meet for the exam. Paul, who used to take his First Nations Studies course outside the classroom onto the land or into the community, commented,

> When you look at things from a Native perspective it's a lot of experiential types of stuff. Whereas, the course when you put it into a classroom, that experiential component quite often gets really watered down, and it rotates over to an informational type of experience to a huge degree.

Some of the educators whom I interviewed suggested that an informational type of pedagogy, which focuses on absorbing facts rather than experiencing culture, would not give students a genuine understanding of Indigenous cultures. First Nations educator Matthew explained,

> First Nations Studies is about going out there and experiencing.... What's it like to put up a teepee? Have you ever put up a teepee? There's all sorts of lessons around that. Have you ever gone to a sweat? There's a whole bunch of experiences around it. How do you learn that [from a textbook]? This is an eagle feather. The whole teachings around an eagle feather. Does it talk about that in the textbook? In each region, the value of an Elder.... The way to experience a valuable, wise Elder is actually to be able to go visit one. Experience what it's like to have the presence of an Elder, and the teaching and the knowledge that goes with it. It's priceless, that kind of stuff. You can't put it in a textbook. And the only way you can experience it is actually living it.

According to Matthew, experiential learning is essential for a genuine understanding of Indigenous cultures. As one Indigenous student stated, "I think I learned the basic history of First Nations people in school, but then again I really won't know everything until I go and experience it for myself."

Teachers faced a third tension related to conflicts between oral and written pedagogies. Many felt that Indigenous knowledge could not be adequately understood through book-based learning because Indigenous culture is an oral culture. Many tensions arose during the development of the textbook about whether the book truly represented an Indigenous voice or if Indigenous voices and history could even be represented through text. As Indigenous educator Daniel explained, the history presented in BC First Nations Studies, "isn't our history in a sense. It's a written history and our history is oral. And it feels very different.... Because it's a really different way of knowing and presenting." The National

Indian Brotherhood (1972) acknowledged this difference in their landmark paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*, saying, "The values which we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, in our legends and in the culture" (p. 2).

Whereas before publication of the textbook teachers felt they could choose to use oral or written pedagogies, some said that the introduction of the textbook limited their abilities to use oral and/or experiential pedagogies. This is not to say that educators did not like the textbook, for many did. However, teachers struggled with how far they felt the textbook and the exam controlled the course and enforced a text-based pedagogy that left little space for traditional oral or experiential pedagogical methods. As Daniel said, "I think the content is very good and the textbook is very good," but "there's not a lot of latitude for other things."

A fourth tension faced by the educators was the contrast between place-based Indigenous knowledge and a generalized, nonsituated view of knowledge that is valued in Western epistemology. As several Indigenous education scholars have maintained, in Indigenous pedagogies the pursuit of knowledge is inextricable from one's relationship to the land (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Cajete, 2004). Thus "knowledge of places is ... closely linked to knowledge of self, to grasping one's position in the larger scheme of things, including one's own community" (Basso, in Marker, 2004, p. 106). The former locally focused structure of the course reflected place-based Indigenous pedagogies because the content of the course was tied to the environment and people living in the communities where the course was being taught.

Because the restructuring gave the course a provincial focus rather than a focus on the local First Nation(s), the content became more impersonal and abstract rather than being linked to students through their location. In addition, reduced time to work with community members because of the increased course content and pressures of preparing students for the exam left fewer opportunities for students to hear the voices of local First Nations people directly. Some educators felt that the course's general rather than local perspective silenced Indigenous voices and so told Indigenous history through a Western voice and perspective. Non-Indigenous educator Jeanette said that she found the revised course disrespectful because

> The whole intent of BC First Nations Studies 12 was to be for the territory wherever it was being taught that those people's voices would be represented-their stories, their culture, their experience. And now that seems to be again watered down with the textbook.

Finally, educators also struggled with the tension between holistic and categorized approaches to knowledge. Indigenous epistemologies are typically holistic, meaning that they do not divide and categorize knowledge, but rather try to understand phenomena in their entirety. As Indigenous philosopher Deloria (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001) explains,

> The best description of Indian metaphysics was the realization that the world, and all its possible experiences, constituted a social reality, a fabric of life in which everything had the possibility of intimate knowing relationship because, ultimately, everything was related. (p. 2).

Some educators saw the new BC First Nations Studies curriculum as an attempt to force Indigenous content into "predetermined categories" (Deloria & Wildcat) that would distort and misrepresent such knowledge. Non-Indigenous teacher Jack, for example, asked, "Do we even have the right to take First Nations culture and put it in this neat little box of European standards?" Sonya, a member of the Ministry staff who participated in the design of the exam, explained,

> Exams by their very nature dissect a course and kind of strip it down to bits and pieces. So you're not looking at it in a holistic way anymore, you're just looking at, you know, "What is repatriation?" Well, repatriation is a definition, but what is the concept, right?

Sonya acknowledged that adding a provincial exam to the course had put pressure on teachers to teach the course in a less holistic way.

Indigenous teacher Paul described the difficulty of representing a holistic way of knowing within the school system:

> It's really difficult, because Native people believe we're all connected. But because we live in this world where things are chopped into little pieces, we don't feel that connection any more, or very seldom. And so, when you start talking about trying to put Nativeness into a course, these are fundamental things that you have to talk about. Saying OK, how do those become a reality?

Paul's question, how can one "put Nativeness into a course," underlies the varying tensions that educators faced when trying to represent Indigenous ways of knowing and learning within the structure of the mainstream school system.

Everyone whom I interviewed who was involved in restructuring BC First Nations Studies communicated that they by no means intended to give preference to Western ways of knowing and teaching. However, by trying to bring the course into line with other mainstream social studies courses, Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies were marginalized to some extent. Marginalizing Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching can be seen as disrespectful of Indigenous cultures or even oppressive because of the extent to which Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching are subjugated. In addition, if Indigenous pedagogies and values are not employed, the course may lose some of its ability to help students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to gain a genuine understanding of Indigenous cultures. In fact one educator even expressed concern that the course might distance Indigenous students from their own culture rather than connecting them to it. Daniel explained,

> Education is also a danger-you lose your culture, you start taking on the values of this system. And that's a real hard balance. I'm not sure where we are with that one. And that would be one of my concerns.

This potential loss leads to the fallacy into which Freire (1970) claims education often falls: "In the name of the 'preservation of culture and knowledge' we have a system which achieves neither true knowledge, nor true culture. (p. 61)

Understanding the Tensions: Two Views of Legitimation

If so many educators acknowledged that the provincial standardization of BC First Nations Studies and the addition of the textbook and the final exam limited their abilities to employ Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies in the course, then why did many educators—including many Indigenous educators—support these changes? The reason is that these changes were introduced as part of a sincere attempt to legitimize the course in the eyes of students, educators, universities, and the general public.

Educators around the province recognized that the low status of the course could contribute to rather than alleviate racism and oppression. Although adding BC First Nations Studies to the official BC curriculum was a first step in legitimizing the course, when Indigenous history and culture are included in the curriculum but are seen as less important, the inclusion of Indigenous content serves instead to devalue Indigenous culture and history, reinforce negative stereotypes, and further marginalize Indigenous students. This was the case with BC First Nations Studies before its revision in 2000.

The restructuring of the course and the addition of the textbook and exam were part of an effort by the Ministry of Education to add legitimacy to BC First Nations Studies. As Ministry staff person Abby told me,

> We felt that this course needed some credibility because we know that sometimes students are told to go into this course because it's an easier course than Social Studies 11, and we don't want that to happen. So we felt that it was really important that there be a text with the course.

Similarly, Ministry staff person Sonya explained that the exam was added because, "We want to stop this business of making it a dumping ground for students, and we want students to take this course seriously. We want to legitimize the course."

The Ministry's attempts to legitimize the course were essentially based on the notion that in order for the course to be seen as reputable, it needed to have a similar structure and evaluation system as in the other grade 11 social studies options. However, some educators felt that such an approach to restructuring the course was simply part of an attempt to bring the course more in line with colonial or Eurocentric thinking. The tensions around efforts to legitimize BC First Nations Studies flared as educators began to realize the significant effect the restructuring had on how the course could be organized and taught.

In my discussions with educators, I realized that the tension over whether attempts to legitimize BC First Nations Studies were positive or

negative could be related to the deeper issue of what is meant by legitimation. I began to notice that educators were using the concept of legitimation in varied ways, and I came to the conclusion that legitimation could be understood in at least two major ways. These emerged from my interpretation of the research. The first type of legitimation I call *reform legitimation*, because it works to remold the course so that it will fit into the primarily Western ways of knowing and teaching of the mainstream public education system. The effect of this type of legitimation would be to tell the story of First Nations people using the voice of Western academia: meaning a so-called objective voice not tied to a specific person or place. This type of legitimation would attempt to make the course appeal to a wider audience through giving it the same structure and status as other social studies courses with the goal of educating more people in BC about the history of First Nations.

The second type I call *revolutionary legitimation* because it would aim to change how students, teachers, academics, and education professionals view knowledge and the evaluation of knowledge and to challenge the regime of truth that subjugates Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching in the mainstream education system. This type of legitimation would attempt to teach the history of Indigenous people in BC using an Indigenous voice and pedagogy and would aim to have that voice and pedagogy acknowledged by the general public as being just as legitimate as that of Western academia. Revolutionary legitimation would not only alter the course, but would necessitate radically disrupting the structures and norms of the educational system as a whole in order to bring Indigenous knowledges from the margins to the center, on equal ground with Western ways of knowing, learning, and teaching.

Although revolutionary legitimation may at first appear to be the only option for educators who are concerned, as I am, with education as the practice of liberation, I became convinced through my research that there were valid arguments for both types of legitimation. Many educators whom I interviewed argued that reform legitimation was necessary and valuable, and some even implied that it was an important first step to make revolutionary legitimation a possibility. Marianne, who is a well-established and respected Indigenous educator, supports this view in the following discussion.

Marianne: So the challenge is that Canadians generally have been kept ignorant about Aboriginal people and our history, and they've been kept ignorant about our place on this land, told from our perspective. They've been kept, in a sense, afraid because of the conflict. And there's nothing that helps them to overcome their lack of knowledge and their fear of Aboriginal people and our history.

Mason: What do you think about the exam that they're introducing? Do you think that's a positive move for the course?

Marianne: In this country, knowledge about and study of our world has been excluded from learning resources. And as many ways as we can institutionalize our world into the

normal course of the life of a school, the better. There are challenges-there are challenges with the text, there are challenges with the development of resources when there's such diversity amongst First Nations in the province. But at the same time, I think that we should be able to strive towards meeting the challenge rather than ignoring it. So I think it needs to be part of what the districts are doing. Are tests, any tests, good or bad, is another question.

Marianne's comment implies that regardless of whether exams and standardization are useful, she believes that instituting these measures for BC First Nations Studies will help Indigenous people because they lend a legitimacy to the course that will increase its status and appeal and therefore make more Canadians aware of the importance of the history and culture of Indigenous peoples. Thus Marianne advocates for an institutionalization of Indigenous knowledge into the "normal course of the life of a school."

In contrast, Jack, a non-Indigenous teacher, holds another view. He feels strongly that reform legitimation would only serve to reinforce structures of colonialism and oppression. He explained:

I really think that by going to this exam they're going down the wrong path. They're trying to, in my opinion, put something in a box that doesn't want to be there. And to me it reeks of colonialism. You've got a government system, again, deciding, "Here's what you need to know in order to know what First Nations culture is all about." To put that in a standardized test form, with multiple-choice questions, rips out the whole reason for this course in my opinion. And I know I've got colleagues who will counter that argument and say, "Well, you have to have a test or it's not seen as legitimate." But to me, I don't buy that argument. The legitimacy of the course does not have to be through the end of a test.

From Jack's perspective, reform efforts to legitimize the course are part of the colonial system's attempt to control Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous educator Battiste (1998) supports this sentiment when she argues,

Many of us have come to realize that we do not have to be put under a Western lens to be legitimized. Yet we are aware that what is defined as knowledge in schools and curricula is not congruent with our conceptualization, and so we must find ways to schools and texts. We must be actively part of the transformation of knowledge. (p. 24)

Jack, Battiste, and other educators whom I interviewed argue for a revolutionary type of legitimation that would challenge how dominant society defines and measures knowledge.

It is important to note that the two types of legitimation are not an either-or choice: many educators supported both types simultaneously and thus saw both positives and negatives in the attempts to legitimize the course. One teacher, for example, called the addition of the exam a "double-edged sword" because on the one hand "there's a sense among staff and among students now that the course has more academic value," and thus more students have enrolled in the course; but on the other hand, the exam "takes away a lot of the local uniqueness that the course could have, and makes it a lot more generic." In addition, educators who sup-

ported reform legitimation efforts were not against revolutionary legitimation. For example, Marianne, who is strong supporter of Indigenous pedagogy, is currently working to integrate Indigenous ways of teaching and learning into the school system. At the same time as she is attempting to institutionalize Indigenous world views in the mainstream education system and validate Indigenous content through the current power structure of that system, she is also challenging the boundaries of what is valued in mainstream education. Of further significance is the fact that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators employed both views of legitimation: a preference for one type of legitimation was not associated with whether the educator identified as Indigenous. Thus the contrast between the two types of legitimation presented an ongoing tension—both in individual educators and between educators—that shaped their ideas and feelings about the course.

The difference between the two types of legitimation complicates the notion of *liberatory education*. If liberatory education is to be understood as education that challenges structures of racism and oppression and empowers marginalized peoples, then BC First Nations Studies was experienced as liberatory by some students. Many non-Indigenous students whom I interviewed told me that the course had changed how they understood the world and had helped them to overcome stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. For example, one student said, "Before this course ... I never knew absolutely anything [about First Nations], and everything I heard from my peers would be horrible things. Now that I see that I'm really ashamed of how I used to think about it." Another student said that before this course, "I was just ignorant—I had no idea what was going on. But this course is good. I've changed my outlook, my opinions of First Nations people, by a long shot." In addition, Indigenous students commented that the course had helped them to feel proud of their background and connected to their culture, as evidenced by comments such as, "I used to be a self-doubting Native but now, after this [class], I have more pride for who I am" and "[Because of this course] I will become more involved with my culture because I think it's important for me."

Thus although the course employed a reform legitimation strategy by adapting to a Western epistemological and pedagogical structure, the overall effect was still to challenge racism and oppression. It is interesting to imagine what the course would have looked like had a more revolutionary legitimation strategy had been employed. Perhaps there would be no exam, perhaps experiential learning would dominate over written assignments, or perhaps the course would focus on personal rather than academic development. However, in order for the course to retain its legitimacy, it would not be enough to change only the course, but rather the whole school system would have to be altered so that Indigenous ways of knowing and learning were valued. Such a change would necessitate a

shift in values throughout society. Perhaps reform legitimation can be a step toward that shift because it may offer more people the opportunity to learn about Indigenous cultures and overcome the barriers of racism and oppression, thus making a revolutionary shift in values increasingly a possibility. In this view the two types of legitimation are not always in opposition to each other, but can act as two interconnected ways of working toward the same end.

Addressing the Tensions: Implications for Educators

In this final section I return to my research question and explore what educators can learn from an analysis of the tensions involved in BC First Nations Studies that will help them to create and teach social studies curricula in a liberatory way. Rather than attempting to resolve the conflicts in BC First Nations Studies—a task that I believe belongs to the educators involved in teaching and structuring the course—my recommendations are in the from of general issues for educators to consider when designing curricula and teaching in their own settings. As Purpel (1989) says of his work, this conclusion is an attempt to "clarify the questions that are of most worth. These questions can help educators develop appropriate responses" (p. 23). Thus I encourage educators, community members, and students to develop appropriate responses as they relate to their own specific situations and to use their consideration of the following issues to promote education as the practice of freedom.

Decolonial Teaching

One of the themes that emerged strongly from my research was the notion that the public school system is organized such that it often limits or discourages Indigenous epistemologies or pedagogies. Although many schools appear to welcome multicultural curriculum when such curriculum does not challenge Eurocentric epistemology and pedagogy, a true understanding of and respect for non-Western cultures is not possible. True decolonial teaching is not only a matter of adding content about the histories of Indigenous peoples, but also necessitates using Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies in the program, and in so doing dismantling the privilege ascribed to Eurocentric ways of thinking and being. As Audre Lourde has written, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (in Ellsworth, 1989, p. 305). This implies that decolonization cannot occur through Western thought or pedagogy, but rather emerges from the adoption of an Indigenous world view that can challenge the hegemonic nature of colonialism's epistemic domination. Mignolo (2006) refers to this change in world view as "a decolonial epistemic shift" (p. 327) because it necessitates a wholly different way of understanding knowledge: what it means to know, what counts as legitimate knowledge, how one can assess a person's knowledge, and what the purpose of knowledge is.

In order to engage in decolonial teaching, educators must undergo a *decolonial epistemic shift* in their own classrooms by challenging Eurocentric conceptions of knowledge and learning. As Mohanty (1994) writes, "Uncovering and reclaiming subjugated knowledges is one way to lay claim to alternate histories. But these knowledges need to by understood and defined pedagogically, as questions of strategy and practice as well as of scholarship" (p. 148). In practice, decolonial teaching of Indigenous studies would incorporate Indigenous pedagogical methods such as experiential, student-centered, and place-based learning. Teaching about First Nations culture entirely through books and standardized tests is not respectful of Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching and does not challenge the colonizers' control of what counts as knowledge. Decolonial teaching, on the other hand, involves expanding the narrow Eurocentric definitions of what it means to know and how knowledge can be assessed, thus making genuine space for non-Western ways of knowing and being.[3]

Legitimation

The need for decolonial teaching must be partnered with an awareness of issues of legitimation. Programs that teach Indigenous studies in the mainstream education system must negotiate the need for reform legitimation with the need for revolutionary legitimation. Although reform legitimation is useful because it can lend credibility to a course and challenge its marginalized status, revolutionary legitimation is necessary to challenge the Eurocentric norms about curriculum design, teaching, and assessment that are valued in the mainstream education system. Thus reform legitimation should be employed only as a step toward a revolutionary change in values, not as an end in itself.

In order to promote liberatory education, educators teaching Indigenous studies should think carefully about the measures they take to legitimize their programs. They should ask: Are measures to legitimize the course in fact changing the course so that it fits into a Western epistemology and pedagogy and disregards the Indigenous group's values? Are such changes necessary due to the gains that can be made in legitimizing the course and increasing enrollment so that more students can be exposed to Indigenous culture and history? Or is there another way to do it—an alternative, for example, to the standardized exam or other Western methods of legitimation? In other words, educators need to take into account how to balance the need for legitimation and acceptance by mainstream society with the need to challenge and transgress mainstream values.

Standardization

The standardization of BC First Nations Studies, although intended to increase esteem for the course, also had the effect of leaving teachers with less time to incorporate local and cultural knowledge, include the voices of Aboriginal people, and encourage experiential learning and personal

growth. Many educators struggled with the pressure they felt to adopt non-Indigenous pedagogies in their efforts to meet the content demands of the course.

As this study has demonstrated, much is at stake when a course is standardized and content-based learning outcomes are mandated. The difficulty of incorporating student-centered and experiential learning is a familiar conundrum to many educators—not only those who teach Indigenous studies courses—as they are faced with a large amount of content that students are required to know and high-stakes testing to ensure that students have acquired such content. Although intended to improve academic outcomes, standardization also places limitations on teachers' choices, thus reducing their abilities to employ the learning techniques that they believe are most effective, and as discussed in this study, has a dangerous potential to marginalize non-Western epistemologies and pedagogies. These negative outcomes need to be mitigated by a concern for and actions to promote decolonial and liberatory teaching.

Structural Change

Finally, the above-mentioned actions must be viewed as part of an ongoing struggle for structural change in school systems. As long as decolonial teaching and revolutionary legitimation are practiced on the margins, in opposition to rather than in alignment with the mainstream educational system, the liberatory power of education will not be fully realized. In order to achieve structural change, the incorporation of Indigenous studies courses must be viewed as more than an add-on to preexisting curricula. As Indigenous educators Wilson and Wilson (2002) write, they are often asked to assist in "infusing" Indigenous content into the school curriculum, and although this request is made with good intentions,

> It is like someone claiming that she or he is going to make a buffalo and rabbit stew with one buffalo and one rabbit: it would be difficult to find the rabbit in that pot of stew. The point is that the power differential remains as it has since formal education began. (p. 67)

The power differential that Wilson and Wilson describe is such that the dominant Western system of knowledge is so ingrained in the public school system that it is difficult to challenge. Castellano, Davis, and Lahache (2000) state,

> Despite the rhetoric of respect for diversity in multicultural, racially diverse school systems, the dominant position of provincially accredited curriculum and practices ensures that school environments continue to emphasize ideas that reflect Western knowledge and belief systems. (p. 99)

In order to challenge the power differential created by the structure and values of the school system, the system as a whole must place a greater value on ways of knowing, teaching, and evaluating learning that stem from non-Western cultures. Such a revolution in values would be a form of decolonial education because it would challenge the Western-

dominated values of the colonial system. Such a change would also be a type of revolutionary legitimation because it would legitimize courses that focus on non-Western history and/or culture in the eyes of the mainstream education system without sacrificing the abilities of these courses to employ non-Western epistemologies and pedagogies.

Such structural change will not occur unless the mainstream education system, which in the case of BC First Nations Studies is attempting to include Indigenous knowledge in an institution organized around non-Indigenous values, undergoes transformative change. This transformation would include not only changes in the methodology or structure of a specific course, but changes in values throughout the school system. As Indigenous teacher Daniel stated,

> We still have a lot of work to do, and I guess what I don't want is to see we've put these [First Nations courses] there thinking we've helped First Nations people because we still have some big questions.... I think school still has a long way to go in terms of understanding values. Not just telling the stories, not just putting it in a book and teaching the course. It's actually, you begin to live those values. It's systemic. Now that changes the values.

Educators who believe in education as the practice of freedom are responsible for working toward such systemic changes in values. This responsibility demands of educators that they do more than simply deliver prepackaged curricula and act as forces for personal and social change, and in so doing shape the field of education toward a liberatory ethic. As hooks (1994) writes, educators must "open our minds and our hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions" (p. 12). However, in order to traverse effectively the boundaries of what is considered acceptable in the mainstream education system, educators can and should take into account the influence of current values and beliefs in their educational settings and harness the power of both reform and revolutionary legitimation in their efforts to promote education as the practice of freedom. Freire (1998) writes, "The teaching task ... requires the capacity to fight for freedom, without which the teaching task becomes meaningless" (p. 4). This fight for freedom requires continually struggling with difficult and complex questions such as those outlined in this article and never letting go of one's commitment to a vision of liberatory education for all.

Notes

[1]It is important to note that Indigenous education scholars (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Hampton, 1993; Henderson, 2002; Marker, 2004) often refer to Indigenous thought as a general concept. However, they do not claim that such references to Indigenous thought, epistemology, or pedagogy imply the uniformity of all Indigenous cultures. Similarly, in my analysis, Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies are not meant to be understood monolithically, but as patterns of thought that are in many cases held in common by diverse cultures. In addition, an understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems is not

meant to imply that all Indigenous teachers teach in certain ways or that all Indigenous students know and learn in certain ways. Rather, Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies are philosophies, values, and practices that although they stem from Indigenous traditions, can be applied by people of various cultural backgrounds.

[2]In 1994-1995 (the first year the course was offered provincially) 84 students enrolled, of whom 63 were Aboriginal and 21 non-Aboriginal. In 2005-2006 (the most recent year in which data were available) 2,659 students were enrolled in the course, of whom 1,046 were Aboriginal and 1,613 non-Aboriginal. In general, enrollment in the course has increased steadily each year. No research has been conducted on the cause of this increase, and thus it may or may not relate to the changes in the curriculum. Conclusive data on enrollment in the course since the introduction of the exam in 2005-2006 are not yet available.

[3]Since I conducted my research, the BC Ministry of Education has developed a new course called English 12 First Peoples (to be released in September 2008), which is a grade 12 elective English course focused on literature written by and about Indigenous peoples. It is significant to note that in the development of this course, an explicit attempt was made to incorporate Indigenous pedagogies and principles of learning (BC Ministry of Education, 2007). At the same time, this new course was designed to be "equivalent" to the standard English 12 course and thus also has a provincial exam. It will be interesting to see the effects of the inclusion of Indigenous pedagogies in the design of this new course and how this compares with BC First Nations Studies, in which Indigenous pedagogy is not directly addressed through the course outline. In addition, the inclusion of Indigenous pedagogy in this new course is a testament to ongoing efforts by educators to practice both revolutionary and reform legitimation, and in so doing to challenge the boundaries of mainstream education.

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Appendix A. Educator Interview Guide

Questions for Education Professionals

1. Tell me about your involvement with the BC First Nations Studies course.
2. What do you know about the history of the course?
3. What do you think are the strengths of the course?
4. What do you think are the weaknesses of the course?
5. What do you know about the goals of this program?
6. Do you think this program is achieving its goals?
7. What do you know about what people think of the course? What has the reaction to it been?
8. Is there a relationship between the course content and a particular teaching style?
9. How do you think the course influences students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)?
10. What do you know/think about the new provincial exam for this course?
11. What do you think about the course being a substitute for Socials 11?
12. Do you think courses like this will address the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people?
13. Do you think courses like this will make people (Aboriginal or not) more willing to stand up for the rights of Aboriginal people?
14. What do you think are the important issues I should look into surrounding this course?
15. What other research is there on this course?
16. Who else should I speak to about "BC First Nations Studies?"

Appendix B. Student Interview Guide

1. Are you Aboriginal?
2. Why did you decide to take this course?

3. Have you learned anything from this course so far that surprised you? How did you feel when you learned this?
4. Is there anything you think about differently as a result of this course?
5. Is there anything you will do differently as a result of this course?
6. Is this course different than other socials courses you've taken? If so, why?
7. How would you describe the history of First Nations in BC?
8. How would you describe the current situation of First Nations in BC?
9. Do you think you learned enough about First Nations in school? Was what you learned a fair picture of First Nations people and history?
10. Do you think it's important for students in BC to learn First Nations history? Why or why not?
11. Do you think anything about this course should be done differently next time? If so, what?
12. Would you recommend this course? Why or why not?
13. How would you suggest this course be improved?
14. What would you think if this course was taken out of the curriculum?

Appendix C. Initial Student Survey

Questions for Students: Initial Questionnaire

1. Are you Aboriginal?
2. Why did you decide to take this course?
3. Have you learned anything from this course so far that surprised you? How did you feel when you learned this?
4. Is there anything you think about differently as a result of this course?
5. Is there anything you will do differently as a result of this course?
6. Is this course different than other socials courses you've taken? If so, why?
7. Do you think you learned enough about First Nations in school? Was what you learned a fair picture of First Nations people and history?
8. Do you think it's important for students in BC to learn First Nations history? Why or why not?
9. Do you think anything about this course should be done differently next time? If so, what?

Questions for Students: Final Questionnaire

1. What was the most significant thing you learned in this course? Why was it significant?
2. Has taking this course changed you in any way or made you think differently? If so, how?
3. What do you think the next 100 years will be like for Aboriginal people in BC? What are your predictions and why?
4. What can you, personally, do to improve the quality of life for First Nations people in BC?