

Being Taught by Raven: A Story of Knowledges in Teacher Education

Jeannie Kerr

University of British Columbia

Amy Parent

Simon Fraser University

In this article, we consider our collaborative efforts supporting teacher candidates in a mainstream Bachelor of Education program at a research-intensive Canadian university, to engage with Indigenous knowledges, pedagogies, and perspectives in their emerging classroom practice through a mandated course. In our course planning, we relied on the theoretical ideas of Indigenous scholars Dwayne Donald and George J. Sefa Dei to frame the complications of engaging Indigenous knowledges in Western academic and societal contexts that are immersed in ongoing colonial relations and knowledge practices. In this article, we rely on Jo-ann Archibald's Indigenous story-work methodology to further develop theoretical understandings of the questions that emerged in the experience of engaging these ideas with our students. We see this methodology as thoroughly intertwined with our theoretical commitments in this piece. From our emerging understandings and questions, we look to the writings of Nuuchah-nulth hereditary chief and scholar Richard Atleo to help us understand our experience of resistance with Raven and her friends in the classroom. Considering the experience of resistance as being out of balance and harmony, we recognize the restorative potential of Atleo's principles of consent, recognition, and continuity as part of a responsive pedagogy. We also are guided by Atleo's specific ways to understand both the students and our own resistance as needing to transition through phases. In this article and our work in the course, we centre Indigenous theories and theorists from our part of the world as a decolonial practice related to geo-political concerns in knowledge-making practices.

Introduction

We begin by raising our hands high to show our deep appreciation to the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations for providing us with a place to live, study, and teach, and acknowledge that we are guests on their traditional, ancestral, unceded, and overlapping territories. In this article, we consider our collaborative work to assist teacher candidates in a mainstream Bachelor of Education program at a research-intensive Canadian university to start on a pathway of engaging with Indigenous knowledges, pedagogies, and perspectives¹ in their emerging classroom practice through a mandated course. We appreciate that even having such a course and educational focus in our context emerges from incredible

efforts over a long period of time by Indigenous scholars, such as Verna Kirkness, Jo-ann Archibald, and Lorna Williams, along with many people working in various capacities inside and outside of the academy. We also acknowledge the work of Jan Hare in the original course design. We thank these scholars and community members for their hard work.

To understand the complications of our work, we note the significance of ongoing colonial relations in Canadian educational contexts and society. In planning our course, we relied on the theoretical ideas of Dwayne Donald and George J. Sefa Dei to frame the complications of engaging Indigenous knowledges (IKs) in Western academic contexts. In our work with our students and ourselves, we forefronted an important discursive turn in that we positioned the pedagogical possibilities in terms of *being taught by*, rather than *learning about*, Indigeneity to move away from an objectification of Indigeneity. We framed the possibilities in this way to also emphasize the radically different phenomenological experience of receiving the gift of being taught what is new and often difficult—learning something that is beyond the capacities of ourselves (Biesta, 2013; Kuokkanen, 2003). We also sought to consider with our students the colonial context in which knowledge and power circulate in classrooms, and our ongoing relations to people, knowledges, and places.

In this article, we rely on Jo-ann Archibald's (2008) *Indigenous Storywork* to breathe life into our story of working together in teaching this course, and to help us be taught by Raven. We see our methodology as thoroughly intertwined with our theoretical commitments in this piece (Smith, 1999). From the questions that emerge from our experience with Raven, we engage with the ideas of Richard Atleo (2004, 2011) to help us make meaning of the resistances we experienced and encountered. We understand our choice to draw explicitly on Indigenous theories and theorists in our part of the world as being a decolonial practice. Following coloniality scholar Catherine Walsh, we acknowledge the geo-political aspects of knowledge production, and the need to name and consider epistemic spaces and places, and the ancestors they invoke, as a form of intervention and critique (Walsh, 2012). We also appreciate the ideas of Martin Nakata as he highlights the significance of multiplicity within both Indigenous and Western traditions of thought and practice, and the positioning of IKs and Western knowledges (WKs) as not being antithetical to one another (Nakata, 2007; Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012). In this article, we do not seek to provide the answers to the challenges and possibilities of engaging Indigeneity in Western educational settings, nor do we seek to disparage or simplify any form of knowledge-making practice; rather, we

hope to take you (the reader) on our personal journeys to explore the complexity of teaching and learning in the multiple epistemic interfaces of IKs and WKs.

Amy Parent

N'it (Hello). My mother's side of the family is Nisga'a from the House of Ni'isjoohl and we belong to the Ganada (frog) Clan. On my father's side, I am French and German. My Nisga'a name is Nox Ayaa Wilt and I am a mother, researcher, and educator. I have concentrated my teaching and scholarship efforts in Indigenous higher education to contribute to increasing the numbers of Indigenous youth with university degrees, and to ensure that university programs are epistemologically relevant, reciprocal, respectful, and responsive (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) to Aboriginal community needs.

As an educator, I understand that I hold many responsibilities to prepare to teach in a 'good way' (Newhouse, 2008). This includes showing my reverence for the wisdom received from my grandmothers, ancestors, and the Creator (Simoget Laxghi) who precede me in this realm. I also draw upon the wholistic understanding of IK that is detailed by Stó:lō educator Jo-ann Archibald. She demonstrates the importance of a utilizing a wholistic framework when working with students. Wholism addresses the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual forms of learning and ensures that interconnections between a student, their family, communities, and place are woven into this framework (Archibald, 2008; Archibald, Pidgeon, & Hawkey, 2010). I also weave together critical concepts of cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2008) and the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007) so that transformation of colonial consciousness is possible and attainable in educational contexts. To this end, I feel it is extremely valuable to model collaboration to students, to promote a positive understanding of Settler/Indigenous relations (Donald, 2009). I am grateful to have had the opportunity to collaborate and teach alongside Jeannie Kerr.

Haida Elder Woody Morrison recently told me "that one of the most difficult things you can get a person to do is to have them change their mind and see things from another perspective."² As I endeavoured to teach this course, I approached a number of faculty members who had previously taught various Indigenous-focused courses so that I could learn from their experiences. They informed me that changing Settler students' perceptions of Indigenous peoples was an arduous task that was not to be taken lightly. I therefore felt it was important to revisit a number of stories, principles, and experiences while seeking new understandings about Settler pedagogy (Regan, 2010; Kerr, 2014). I was excited and daunted to work

with the minds and hearts of the students I was going to form relations with in this important course.

Jeannie Kerr

My name is Jeannie Kerr and I am a Settler³-scholar-teacher grateful to be thinking, writing, and teaching on the ancestral, traditional, unceded, and overlapping territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Nations. I greatly appreciate the welcoming I have received in this place. My parents immigrated to what is now known as Canada with my older sister, and I am of the Kerr Clan from the Scottish borderlands, and more recently Glasgow on my father's side, and the Couch family of Cork County, Ireland on my mother's side. I am the first of my family to be born in Canada. I attended elementary and secondary schools in a suburban area of Toronto, developed for the increasing number of new immigrants in the early Trudeau era, but have spent most of my adult life in Vancouver.

Since becoming an elementary school teacher in the late 1990s, I taught almost exclusively in schools located in vibrant communities that sought to resist significant efforts of economic and political marginalization. I have been teaching and thinking about education, schooling, and the relationships between poverty, schooling, racism, and social inequity for a long time, and have sought to bring a critical and self-reflexive perspective to these reflections. My experiences have led me to question the beliefs I acquired growing up concerning what it means to know, live, learn, and teach in a Settler nation-state with a popular narrative of itself as multicultural, tolerant, and beneficent. I am fortunate to be taught by Indigenous scholars and community members about ways I can engage with Indigeneity as a Settler, and the complications related to my identity, as I work to create transformative opportunities in educational contexts. I am grateful to Amy Parent for the collaborations in thinking, learning, writing, and teaching that help me to engage with these important concerns.

*Theoretical Understandings: Amy and Jeannie are
Taught by Indigenous Scholars and Raven*

In our collaboration we chose to work together, but felt the universe and Creator were helping us along to make it possible. We enjoy and are enriched by working together, and also felt our cultural genealogies would demonstrate for teacher candidates the ways that Indigenous and Settler peoples could work together in a complicated space in respectful and thoughtful ways. We felt embodying these kinds of respectful relations was key to the subject matter of our course. In planning our course, we were

significantly influenced by Indigenous scholars Dwayne Donald, George J. Sefa Dei, and Jo-ann Archibald. We frame ourselves as *being taught by* these scholars and mentors instead of *learning from* them, to emphasize our recognition of the gift of their teachings (Biesta, 2013; Kuokkanen, 2003). We were also aware of the complicated identities, narratives, and discourses emerging through colonial encounters as highlighted by Donald (2009, 2012), as well as the politics of knowledge production as highlighted by Dei (2011a, 2011b). As we approached this course, we sought to provide opportunities for students to engage more meaningfully and ethically with IKs as *knowledge*, and thus discourage a colonial gaze that reads IK simply as interesting cultural belief. We were hoping to shift the gaze inward and consider ourselves (students and instructors) in relation, so as to begin to be collectively taught by Indigeneity.

Jeannie: Some of our Key Theoretical Influences

As Donald argues, there are deeply learned habits arising from the colonial experience in Canada that reinforce a notion “that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians inhabit separate realities” (2012, p. 91). Donald analyzes the fort as a mythic symbol that is part of the Canadian frontier imaginary that signifies the teleological dream of *civilization*, and that positions Indigenous peoples and knowledges as “outside accepted versions of nation and nationality” (2012, p. 100). These narratives and discourses about Canadian nation building and civilization devalue Indigenous peoples and knowledges, and erroneously teach that Indigenous and Settler peoples occupy separate realities. We felt that it was critical that the teacher candidates engage with Donald’s work to help them draw out and question dominant and often unchallenged problematic assumptions, and provide an opportunity for teacher candidates to critically relate the narratives of separate realities to their own memories and relationships. As a Settler who was raised unquestioningly on these problematic narratives, and my experience of needing to unlearn these certainties, I felt it necessary to engage these ideas with our students. We also felt that this would help to motivate students, through emphasizing the ethical demands of engaging with Indigeneity.

Dei (2011a, 2011b) draws explicit attention to the ways that Western epistemic practices have historically positioned WKs as neutral and universally applicable and understood, and IKs as cultural belief. His concerns take place within a geo-political conversation that attempts to silence IK while “colonial hegemonic ideologies and Eurocentric discourses” dominate through “masquerading as universal knowledge” (2011a, p. 22). In our understanding, we note a distinction between the more positivist forms of

Western knowledge emerging from modernity and established through the Enlightenment, to which Dei refers, and postmodern perspectives. Although, following Walsh (2012, pp. 12-13), we note the lack of attention to the geo-political location of postmodern critical theory which dominates through Western traditions, and the need for ontological plurality in critical discourse through attending to critical Indigenous perspectives (Kerr, 2014, pp. 90-91). In the course, we wanted our students to appreciate the significance of place and tradition to all knowing and knowledge-making practices, and the need to position IKs as knowledge, as they consider ways to engage Indigeneity in their work in classrooms.

Thinking in the vein of Dei and Donald, we sought to disrupt the dynamics of WKs occupying the centre and to allow our students to see themselves in relation to IKs and peoples within a complicated interface to inform their own work. This is not to critique WKs with our students and present it as singular and antithetical to IK, but to consciously centre IK within a Western educational context. We drew on our own diverse experiences of being taught by Indigenous scholars, to position the teacher candidates in this similar orientation with their own learning in the course. A key piece of our course was thus an assignment, where the teacher candidates would take a previously-designed unit of instruction for an elementary classroom and reconsider the sources of knowledge that informed the unit, to include or reform them entirely from IK sources. The students were asked to discern the key questions at the centre of the unit, and then consider IKs and perspectives that could inform these questions. For example, a small unit on Remembrance Day was taken back to the question: *How can we live peacefully together?* The teacher candidates revised their unit to centre the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace. In this part of our work with our classes, we experienced an encounter that caused us to think much more deeply concerning this approach and allowed us to develop our understanding of the epistemic interfaces in this context. We share this event as a story of our experience with Raven through *Indigenous Storywork* (Archibald, 2008).

*Amy: Ways our Theoretical Influences are
Intertwined with Storywork Methodology*

We had many unexpected moments throughout the process of teaching this course when Raven swooped down in front of us to caw her cacophonous song. Sometimes Raven's songs were loud and easy to understand, while others times they were cryptic, and required more patience and deeper listening, for the songs to be audible and for us to hear her message. Despite the dissonance of Raven's songs, none of her messages have left

us unchanged. As storywork holds both methodological and theoretical meanings, educators are required to expend a considerable amount of energy to engage stories within a Western educational context in a way that retains their integrity. The meanings we uncovered (from our story with Raven) significantly shaped our process and related to themes in the theories noted above.⁴

Stories are the most ancient Indigenous method for transmitting knowledge. Archibald's (2008) foundational book *Indigenous Storywork* conceptualizes and discusses the importance and ways of working with stories in Indigenous education and research. She centres seven principles related to working with stories and storytelling: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. Each of these principles can be applied as a theoretical/methodological framework to make meaning from stories. Archibald's work is of particular salience for us because it embraces stories and storytelling as a research methodology and provides a wholistic perspective in furthering understandings of IKs. We appreciate the way that Archibald has gathered, applied, evaluated, and passed on her wholistic knowledge by showing how Indigenous storywork methods can be woven into educational and research contexts.

Our way of engaging Indigenous storywork was to investigate how our encounters in the classroom help us to live *with* stories and, moreover, how we can live *well* with stories as part of our methodological inquiry and practice. In doing so, we aim to follow the way that Archibald had carefully taught us to think and feel *with* stories—in contrast to thinking *about* stories—so they can become the teacher. As she aptly suggests regarding storywork, "Showing respect through cultural protocol, appreciating the significance of and reverence for spirituality, honouring teacher and learner responsibilities, and practising a cyclical type of reciprocity are important lessons documented here for those interested in First Nations/Indigenous methodology" (Archibald, 2008, p. x). To do this, we identified a personal experience story that spoke to our intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical challenges of engaging our students with IKs in the university classroom. We felt that this story could be our teacher. Through our theoretical lenses we grew to understand our framing of the story and the questions that emerged, and identified the complexity we needed to understand as coming through one particular character. We called this character Raven in recognition of the role of Raven in Indigenous stories in our part of the world and particularly in my culture. We then turned to the work of Richard Atleo (2004, 2011), where we each spent significant (and we really mean significant) amounts of time reading, reflecting, discussing, and then returning to his work for well over a year,

in an iterative and cyclical process to unfold the multiple layers of knowledge and vast emotional wisdom embedded in his theories, stories, and storywork. We also listened carefully to our intuition, dreams, and knowledge learned from our interactions with the land, to carefully guide our questions and discussions. In doing so, we learned that there was direct continuity with our experiential story in the classroom and with the traditional stories and characters (such as Raven) that have been passed down for millennia in my community and other Indigenous communities that we are being taught by.

Our learning came through Raven—a now familiar friend who has a knack for bringing new light and understanding—and was guided by the wisdom of Atleo and Archibald. The trickster character in First Nations stories has multiple meanings and multiple forms—such as Raven, Naapi, Coyote, and more. Trickster has the ability to shape shift (metamorphose) and transform into other beings. According to Archibald (2008, p. 5), “The English word ‘trickster’ is a poor one because it cannot portray the diverse range of ideas that First Nations associate with the Trickster, who sometimes . . . is a shape shifter, and who often takes on human characteristics.” In my culture, Raven is called *Txeemsim* (Clemsum), which means trickster or miracle worker. According to Nisga’a Elder Bert McKay, “Txeemsim displays the best of what humankind should strive for. But he is an approachable demi-god, full of human failings, even as he demonstrates how these failings can be conquered” (p. 15 as cited in Rose, 1993). In many of the stories, the Trickster also teaches us how to create balance and harmony in our lives; in this way, Txeemsim demonstrates how we have attempted to create wholistic teaching practices. First Nations stories often have implicit meanings and Archibald (2008, p. 32) reminds us that it is up to the learner to find the theories embedded in stories. Thus, we understand Txeemsim to play with different levels of metaphors, reflexivity, and analysis. We leave it to you to find and create your own meaning from the tales of Txeemsim that have shaped our story. It was through our discussion of the story we are about to share that we began to create a theory together in a collaborative storywork process.

Encountering Raven in the Classroom

Amy:

I’m walking around the class as the 34 students in this cohort work in their small groups on our assignment. I brainstorm questions with each table, as most of the groups are a bit puzzled with the demands of engaging Indigenous knowledges as knowledge sources. ‘How do we get to the core question of our unit?’ one group asks. ‘How will Indigenous knowledge answer this question?’ another group asks. As I work with each group they are starting to understand

this shift, yet I still can feel their mild discomfort. 'Should we suggest getting an Elder for this part?' they ask uneasily. I am surprised that most of the students are preoccupied with not offending anyone with their unit plan.

Although there is some confusion, the students are working together to consider the challenges. There is one group that stands out from this generalization. I begin to see visible tensions in Raven's group. In particular, her friend Mouse appears nervous and keeps looking at me to get my attention.

When I get to the group, Raven shares: "We already know how to Indigenize the curriculum". I share my surprise because the previous week Raven had told me that she had not yet learned how to make a lesson plan. Raven explains: 'I have been Indigenizing the curriculum in my weekly practicum days'. She then shares, matter-of-factly, that she finds this assignment 'too gratuitous', and that the sample lessons I shared were not 'anything that she would teach, or want to teach'. Raven then rolls her eyes and crosses her arms.

I ask her group members if they have any suggestions or interests in mind. Moose, who is sitting beside Raven, is visibly angry. She sits with folded arms glaring at me. She clearly supports Raven's statements but chooses to remain silent. Deer avoids my gaze, while Mouse nervously interjects: 'I'm afraid to teach the content incorrectly and so I don't know what to do'. Mouse then nervously turns her head from me to Raven and looks at the floor.

I let the group know that developing confidence and understanding are some of the key requirements of the assignment, and that the only way that we are going to learn how to Indigenize the curriculum is if we try, like Michael Yahgulanaas' 'Little Hummingbird' in the video we had watched earlier. I also let them know that I was not expecting perfection so much as effort, collaboration, and meaningful thinking. I then invite them to brainstorm possible ideas and I share some of the other group's lessons plans in hopes of inspiring them to move out of their stuck position.

Raven is now getting even more impatient with me. She suggests: 'We could do a lesson about the BC gold rush's impact on Aboriginal people'. I explain to her that we are trying to move from an add-on approach and meaningfully engage Indigenous knowledges in a lesson plan. I also gently let her know that I do not want to overburden them with creating a new lesson plan, but they could look for a lesson plan that has been already created and is suitable to their interests, and then work with that lesson.

As I calmly share these ideas, I am feeling anything but calm as I anxiously fret over the resistance that is manifesting in the group. I further explain that our assignment is not to talk 'about' Aboriginal peoples' experiences, but to centre Indigenous knowledge. Raven and Moose roll their eyes, let out large sighs of frustration, grow silent, and refuse to participate in the discussion, thus ending Mouse and Deer's attempts to engage. I let them know that I am going to leave them for a bit, but will check in on them to see how their ideas are developing before class ends.

I rush down the hall to Jeannie's class to give her a heads-up about what has just happened in my class and to ask for some suggestions on how to get this group unstuck so they can start to get into this assignment. On my way to her class I am having a severe "Help me Creator!" moment because I am feeling anxious and worried, as this was my first time trying to

teach this assignment.

Jeannie:

My class is using in-class time to work with their group members on the assignment. They are struggling with the demands and I'm realizing we are asking the students to think in ways that are new and unfamiliar to them. They are unsure about rationales and big questions, and also looking at IK as an add-on activity. With good conversations, they seem to be slowly getting the ideas. Amy comes in to see if I can talk with a group in her class that are becoming entrenched in resisting the assignment. While my students are puzzled, no one has yet firmly resisted it, and so I'm curious and want to see what's going on. I am able to get to Amy's class about 5 minutes later and I sit down at the table with Raven, Moose, Mouse, and Deer, who I have met a couple of times. They have been waiting and I feel their frustration and apprehension as I sit down. I take a good breath and centre myself, and invite them to share their thoughts.

Raven looks at me and immediately lets me know the assignment is problematic. 'By saying we need to bring in Indigenous knowledge we are making a division between Aboriginal and Western people. Knowledge is just knowledge, and pedagogy is just pedagogy—anyone can use things without having to label them as Aboriginal or Western' Raven says. 'We would like to develop a unit plan that shows how Aboriginal people were oppressed during the gold rush. That is more realistic' shares Raven with great confidence. I explain the goals of the assignment again and acknowledge the shift in thinking in this way—how challenging it is to think of ourselves as always privileging Western ways of thinking, but never calling out the Western cultural lens in play—just leaving it as neutral and therefore invisible. 'When we start thinking about the ways of thinking that inform curriculum, we realize that Western ways of thinking are often taking all the space—this is limiting and alienating' I share. I let them know the assignment is deliberately putting Indigenous knowledge at the core of the unit to address these problematics. It is not that Western knowledges are specifically problematic but, for our purposes, we are challenging the space they are occupying.

I go through the assignment again with small steps and examples. Moose is nodding her head in agreement and shares that this makes good sense, as Mouse and Deer look very relieved. Raven remains determined. 'No!' she says pushing her body towards the table with her eyes blazing—'I won't do it like this!' Moose advises Raven that it does make sense and she will help her, but Raven folds her arms and sits back. I let Raven know that this experience of resistance is common and I have felt it too, but this is an opportunity to try this out and see how it goes and what can be learned. Raven softens a bit in her body, and her gaze rests on the table. I let her know that she only needs to remain open to the possibilities, and to learn with her group through giving it a try. 'Okay, I'll give it a try' Raven says, in a way that suggests that for her this will be pointless.

Amy and Jeannie Think about Raven's Tricks

We realized when talking with each other over time that we had been taught by Raven. We appreciated that our work was to understand more deeply the type of tricks that Raven had used with us, so that we could understand the layers of complexity in engaging Indigeneity meaningfully in the university classroom. We revealed four of Raven's tricks within our conversations through our storywork process.

Uncomplicated Certainty

Raven's first trick was to reinterpret the assignment to claim that the assignment put WKs and IKs into a binary, and then critique it as inappropriate and come up with her uncomplicated solution. Despite the common concerns and diverse perspectives that have been raised by countless scholars and community members about the complexity of engaging Indigeneity meaningfully and respectfully in the classroom (notably by Battiste (1998), Marker (2004), and Nakata (2007)), Raven suggests this is very easily done and ignores the complexity and uncertainty that has been raised in the classroom conversations. Through her chosen focus, Raven was also able to maintain problematic contemporary and historic relations by reinforcing in her plan the problematic narrative of Indigenous peoples as easily understood, victims, and without knowledge (Kuokkanen, 2003). Raven was able to perform this trick by agreeing that IKs and WKs are not binary to one another, but asserted this is due to the fact that knowledge is universally understood! Raven ignores that the lack of a binary relates to the complicated intersection of culture, history, perspective, and power in knowledge-making practices (Little Bear, 2000; Marker, 2004, 2011a, 2011b; Nakata, 2007), thus oversimplifying a complex context.

WKs as Neutral, Universal, and Invisible

Raven's trick with uncomplicated certainty is directly related to her next trick, which seeks to promote WKs as neutral, universal, and invisible. Raven argues that knowledge is just knowledge, and chooses to ignore that all peoples participate in traditions of thought and practice which influences how they make meaning and know. Walter Mignolo (2011, p. 118) argues that Western epistemic perspectives attempt to occupy a zero point, wherein the zero point is the epistemological location that places a privileged knowing body as occupying a detached and neutral point of observation, and from this neutral place "maps the world and its problems, classifies people, and projects what is good for them". Similar to Dei, Ramón Grosfoguel (2007) adds to these thoughts by noting that the particular Western modernist view of knowledge is able to dominate through masquerading as universal knowledge and presents itself as the god-like view of truth: "It's a point of view that conceals itself as being beyond a point of view" (2007, p. 214). Walsh (2012, p. 13) extends these ideas to reflect on the lack of geo-political awareness in critical thought, which continues to dominate from Western perspectives. In our view, critical theory similarly invisibilizes Western ontological commitments in knowledge-making practices and thus continues to occupy the problematic zero point. Raven's trick was to continue to occupy the zero point, even through cri-

tiquing colonial relations, and have her Western-influenced views on knowledge continue to masquerade as universal knowledge.

Denying Relationality and Contemporary Indigeneity

Raven's next trick was to choose to engage with Indigeneity by putting it in the tight historical event of the BC gold rush and deny any contemporary relation to issues of power—thus, avoiding an engagement with IKs. Here, Raven positions “Aboriginal culture” as a relic of the past, therefore freezing Indigenous peoples into a colonial time machine to be engaged with as objects of study, and denying the ongoing relationship between Indigenous peoples and Settler peoples (Nakata, 2007; Donald, 2012). This move does not provide room to appreciate IKs as alive, fluid, complex, and applicable in a contemporary context. Indigenous peoples are then not portrayed in human complexity and in relation to issues of power and ongoing colonial dynamics. This trick conceals the diversity among Indigenous peoples that stems from differing histories, cultures, and traditions through homogenizing this diversity into a single Aboriginal cultural experience.

Guarding Western Territory

Institutions and classroom environments offer myriad opportunities for students to protect themselves from seeing their relationship with Indigenous peoples. Raven's trick in guarding territory was to strategically invite a metaphorical fort that protected WKs through denial and disillusion of Indigenous peoples' knowledges and embodied presence in our shared space. The guarding of Western territory was also perpetuated in Raven and Moose's body language during the encounter.

Raven, Moose, Deer, and Mouse were comfortable with the “Aboriginals in Canada” approach that portrays Indigenous peoples as objects of study, bringing to life the familiar script that we all have been exposed to during our years of tutelage in the Canadian education system. Responding to the familiarity of this formation, teacher candidates often want the simple facts so they can learn how to teach and not be required to engage with Indigenous knowledges and peoples in their lives. This formation is appealing in its familiarity, and allows the *colonial frontier logics* that naturalize separation to continue undisturbed (Donald, 2012). Of course, the intent of the course, and the ideas that shaped our practice, were guided in a way that would encourage the students to emerge from encounters with Indigeneity with a larger sense of self, an acknowledgement of the complexity of holding a space where multiple epistemologies and narratives could exist, and our relations to these ideas in a specific place. Our

hope was to work in the interfaces and acknowledge relationships, and not centre forts to be defended.

*The Heart of Resistance: Being Out of Balance and Harmony —
Amy and Jeannie are Taught by Richard Atleo*

From our time with Raven and her friends, we felt that we had undergone an experience of resistance with a desire for erasure. We felt that we needed to not only understand the tricks that worked to support this problematic dynamic, but to understand the heart of resistance as well. We use the term *heart* purposefully to signal the emotional landscape that underlies the complications. As we talked with others and searched for a theoretical explanation to understand resistance to Indigeneity in the classroom, we quickly realized that no single explanation would suffice. As time went on, and we decided to pursue these questions and learning through our scholarship together, we realized Raven was picking us up from where she had left us, almost one and a half years ago.

Our experience taught us that students that are asked to engage differently with Indigeneity might experience a continuum of difficult emotions that comes from engaging with difficult knowledge. Drawing on Britzman's conceptualization, knowledge becomes difficult when it references incommensurability, trauma and social breakdowns (Britzman, 1998; Pitt & Britzman, 2003). It was within this course that we saw many of our students confront the realities of colonization and begin to grieve about this process for the first time. This is also likely the first time that they had been asked to examine themselves in relation to problematic narratives and discourses in Canadian Settler society. In our course, this likely produced a number of fears, which we saw manifest as uncertainty and fear with many students, and a desire for erasure in our encounter with Raven, Moose, Mouse, and Deer. As we sought to learn from Raven, we began thinking about how we could be taught by IKs to address our work with teacher candidates in this challenging dynamic. We felt that the inter-related emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual aspects of this dynamic required the wholistic wisdom embedded in Indigenous knowledges. We chose to look to the work of Richard Atleo, an Elder scholar in our region of the world, to help us with our emerging questions about the heart of resistance.

Being Out of Balance

In the Nuu-chah-nulth perspective, as Richard Atleo shares it, reality is understood as *heshook-ish tsawalk*—everything is one (2004, 2011). Atleo clarifies that this idea of reality includes both the physical and metaphys-

ical (2004, xiii). Atleo stresses that, from this orientation, the idea of maintaining *tsawalk* is framed on the notion of “How should one live and negotiate this creation? How does one balance and harmonize the disparate and contradictory elements of reality?” (2011, p. 35). We have come to understand that the forms of resistance we encountered in our experiences with teacher candidates could be theorized as a state of being out of balance through encountering difficult knowledge, and that our efforts should be directed at harmony and balance. The imbalance occurred through the relationships in the classroom: the relations between IK and the students, between Raven and her friends, and between the instructors (us) and the students. We now appreciate that our work is to create classroom contexts that support relationships and balance.

Atleo (2004) provides an example of finding the clues to our challenges of achieving balance from the Nuu-chah-nulth creation stories and embodied protocols. Atleo (2004) shares the creation story of *How Son of Raven Captured the Day* and shares how Son of Raven receives the advice from the wise Wren that access to the spiritual world would require becoming a tiny insignificant leaf. Atleo advises that the story teaches that “access to the storehouse of the non-physical realm can be achieved not via the egotistical approach but via the insignificant-leaf, or humble approach” (2004, p. 36). He finds that *insignificance* here is both a moral way of being and a “natural description of human identity” that can maintain balance in an infinite universe (2004, p. 36). The story captures the basic human drive for knowledge, but the inflated ego gets in the way. Insignificance is then practiced through protocols for being humble in community. In this way, it is possible to avoid being out of balance and harmony—through practices and dispositions of humility (2004, p. 34).

We have learned that ways to find balance are found through trying to remain humble and open to learning and relationships—for both ourselves and our students. The experience of *being taught by* relates to this orientation. We both have had memories return to us from our own experiences of being students in Western educational institutions. These memories remind us that students can be fearful of external measures of coercion and disciplinary institutional action. Perhaps most relevant to our course, students may be afraid of having their lack of knowledge exposed or their prejudices challenged publicly—particularly at a time when they are attempting to establish a professional identity. Individualist notions of competition are ingrained in Western institutions and have often taught students that only one viewpoint can win in the classroom—leaving the *defeated person* feeling ashamed and perhaps officially labelled as a failure. As the students in our class engage with knowledges and perspectives that

destabilize some deeply held assumptions and commitments, we need to consider how to create the type of classroom that will allow students to explore these ideas and not feel they need to resist or, worse, erase IKs for self-protection. As instructors, we also needed to come to terms with our own fears that students will reject or refuse to meaningfully engage with us and the course assignments. We, too, need to maintain a humble orientation to the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual complexity of this work as we engage in a shared physical space with teacher candidates, as both teachers and learners.

In Atleo's (2004, 2011) work, he suggests three basic principles for restoring balance and we are attempting to be taught by these principles in our work. The *principle of recognition* requires a relation that manifests mutual respect and a desire for understanding (Atleo, 2011, p. 80). We see this as a way to understand how to manifest a generosity of spirit and intention to our students, and to encourage our students in this same way with us, each other, and the IKs with which they come into relation. The *principle of consent* requires that everyone should have opportunity for free expression of ideas, thoughts, and perspectives, but a natural limit to that expression cannot be inconsistent with the *principle of recognition* of the human and more than human (Atleo, 2011, p. 95). Therefore, the free expression of ideas is limited in that we continue to consider how we are being respectful through desiring to understand instead of judging and erasing (as Raven attempted to do through her tricks). In this way, students and instructors can share ideas in the class, but not in a way that serves to ignore the *principle of recognition*. Finally, Atleo discusses the *principle of continuity* as honouring the "sacred right of life forms to continue to live in their own integrity of being" (2011, pp. 121-122). This view seeks multiplicity of perspectives and ways of life, while appreciating that these moments may be difficult and require agreements and protocols to be managed well (Atleo, 2011, p. 122). We see this principle as being enacted in the classroom by discussing with our students the ethical commitment to consent and recognition, as we share our different views and stories at the interface of what becomes difficult knowledge.

Atleo (2004) also speaks about the fear that is felt when one encounters something new because it challenges a person to expand their thinking, identity, life, and paradigm. In this way, resistance is natural to being in the world and change cannot happen without resistance. We have considered that it is important to understand the ways of working with resistance to restore harmony. Atleo has developed the term *phase⁵ resistance* to describe an unwillingness to accept or engage change, and *phase transition* to describe the process of starting change (2004, pp. 64-65). He suggests

that a *phase connector* is needed to encourage change. In our encounter with Raven and her friends, we encountered Raven's *phase resistance*, yet her friends seemed to reach a *phase transition* through patience, humility, a collaborative disposition, and openness to IKs (Atleo, 2004, pp. 68-69). We see our work in the *phase connector* area—being the instructor's creation of a supportive environment. We also needed a *phase connector* in our own resistance as instructors, and we see our engagement with storywork and being taught by our friend Raven in this light.

Conclusion

This article has been an exploration of the complexities of engaging Indigeneity with teacher candidates to inform their emerging classroom practices in a mandated course. We hold our hands high in appreciation to the scholars we engaged—along with Raven and her friends—who have taught us a great deal about teaching and learning in the vibrant and challenging epistemic interfaces of IKs and WKs. We have learned that there is a meaningful interrelationship that is present, a unity between all variables of existence (plant, animal, spiritual, and human realms) that is dependent upon the principles of recognition, consent, and continuity (Atleo, 2004), and that these principles need to be enacted in our classroom pedagogies. Enacting these principles not only connects the resistances that arise when instructors and students encounter IKs in Western academic spaces, but also changes our classroom practices in ways that may also serve as powerful forms of reconciliation in many unforeseen places.

Our time with Raven, and her tricks at avoiding meaningful engagement with IKs, has allowed us to come full circle with our storywork methodology to illustrate what Atleo (2004, p. 5) refers to as "story-as-theory and a method of knowledge acquisition". We also recognize this circle as a *spiral* (Stewart-Harawira, 2005), as we come back to our teaching practice together next month in a shared classroom space with a deeper understanding, but ready to be taught more. In doing so, we have extended our theorizing to encapsulate wholistic dimensions of IKs, thanks to our friend Raven. To this end, we have learned that engaging students in ways they might be taught by Indigeneity requires effort, careful planning, cooperation, initiative, vision, hard work, patience, endurance, persistence, faith, and, above all else, hope for multiple transformations. We have also learned that transformation of students' engagement with Indigeneity over the span of one course is not likely. Instead, we see our work as similar to that of planting seeds. We hope that the seeds will grow when the conditions are right. In the meantime, we have chosen to write this article so that we may contribute to the advancement of transforma-

tional pedagogies that are both practical and useful for other sojourners in similar landscapes.

You are probably wondering: What happened after our encounter with Raven? How did her group do on their final presentation of the assignment? Let's just say that Raven did as only Raven can do given her unique personality traits. As our reality is interrelated, dynamic, and ever changing, she may just make an appearance in our next classroom . . . Or yours . . .

Notes

¹ For ease of reading, we will use the term *Indigeneity* when we are referring to Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, and pedagogies collectively, and *IKs* when referring to Indigenous knowledges.

² Permission has been given by Woody Morrison to share this personal communication within this article.

³ Claiming an identity as a Settler warrants a discussion that exceeds this format. I would only briefly acknowledge I claim this identity not as staking a claim to land, but to acknowledge my participation, and my ancestors' participation, in problematic and ongoing colonial relations, as discussed by Paulette Regan (2010). I capitalize the 'S' to denote a group of people sharing an identity.

⁴ It is important to note the tensions that emerge when educators attempt to engage Indigenous methodologies in a Western context (Smith, 1999). We have touched upon these tensions in our story of Raven, as well as in our attempt to signify the importance of blending our methodology and theory sections of this article.

⁵ Atleo (2004, defines a phase as "being one complete stage of existence that is connected, and related, to an indefinite number of other complete stages of existence" (p. 64).

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