

Editorial: Challenges, Possibilities and Responsibilities: Sharing Stories and Critical Questions for Changing Classrooms and Academic Institutions

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Teaching for anticolonial resistance, Indigenization, and reconciliation in a Western post-secondary institution presents integral philosophical, curricular, pedagogical, professional, and personal challenges. With respect to educational philosophy, Indigenous and Western approaches are diametrically opposed, in that Western education compartmentalizes knowledge by subject, while Indigenous philosophies make the fundamental assertion that knowledge is, by nature, holistic and inter-related (Battiste, 2013; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Cherubini, 2009; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Haig-Brown, 2008; Morcom, 2017). Compartmentalization is evident in the very structure of the Western post-secondary institution, since universities and colleges are divided into departments and faculties that reflect a fragmented conceptualization and dissemination of knowledge. Often, different faculties are even housed in separate buildings, which further emphasizes this compartmentalization. That structure not only ensures the continued practice of compartmentalizing knowledge, but also makes a general statement about the institution's philosophy of the nature of knowledge (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Morcom, 2017).

In contrast, Indigenous holistic educational philosophy focuses on interrelations between topics rather than separation into subjects, as well as connections between knowledge and the individual, community, Nation, earth, and divine. This focus on interrelations is vital to meaning making (Couture, 1991; Haig-Brown, 2008, Kanu, 2011, Morcom, 2017). Ermine (1995) describes how the fragmentation of knowledge is not only incompatible with Indigenous knowledges but is, in fact, harmful to them. In forcing Indigenous knowledge forms into a fragmentary system, we indelibly harm those knowledges by turning them into something they are not (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Ermine, 1995). By constraining Indigenous knowledges into a Western classroom and monolithic curriculum structure, we risk losing the emphasis on connections that are vital to understanding the nature of knowledge itself (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Ermine, 1995; Morcom, 2017).

Furthermore, Western institutions are separated into hierarchies in a way that is not contiguous with most Indigenous societies; departments are sub-grouped to form faculties and disciplines are meticulously grouped into taxonomic hierarchies such as arts, humanities, and sciences. For example, one way to see Indigenous studies is as a subgroup of cultural studies, which is, in turn, a subgroup of the arts and/or humanities; an Indigenous studies program may be therefore housed in a cultural studies department, in a Faculty of Arts. As a result, Indigenous knowledge may be limited to the Indigenous studies department, with the assumption that content in all other departments and faculties will be Eurocentric and Western. Similarly, faculty members are divided by hierarchy, with a hierarchical distinction between adjunct, assistant, and associate professors, as well as between administrators including department heads, deans, and upper administration. While recent years have seen efforts in many institutions to engage diverse ways of knowing and being within an academic context, metrics for navigating this hierarchy and succeeding within it, such as metrics for tenure and promotion or achievement of higher administrative positions, have traditionally been based in Western academic moorings that require individualistic activity and self-promotion. We know that this environment is not conducive to Indigenous education and can be marginalizing for Indigenous learners. Similarly, it is not conducive to the engagement or teaching of Indigenous knowledges and learning approaches, or the conduct of academic inquiry in an authentically Indigenous way for faculty members.

Educators who teach anticolonial resistance, Indigenization, and reconciliation within Western institutions are also faced with questions related to Indigenous content, perspectives, and pedagogical approaches. Since

certain aspects of Indigenous knowledges are imbued with a sense of sacredness, educators must constantly ask themselves what is appropriate to teach in a classroom context and whether they have the legitimacy to do the teaching. Indigenous knowledge traditions are informed by protocols, which are necessary for guiding use and access in contexts. The dynamic nature of such systematic rules that are mediated within cultural contexts reveal the complexity of Indigenous knowledge traditions; this poses challenges for multi-epistemic approaches to teaching and learning. For example, Elders often decide whether someone is ready for a specific cultural teaching before sharing it with them; in a classroom, however, everyone expects to receive the same knowledge. Furthermore, certain knowledge is limited to specific ceremonial purposes or times of the year, and this may not align with course calendars.

Educators also face pedagogical challenges in this work. Finding appropriate spaces for teaching Indigenous and reconciliatory knowledges in a culturally appropriate way can be difficult. Indigenous approaches to education are different from Western approaches, and therefore classroom expectations and interactions may be difficult, at first, for students to understand. For example, Indigenous education that traditionally focuses on peer-to-peer learning; relationships between student, teacher, and community; and connection to land may be very difficult to achieve in an indoor setting or a space where furniture cannot be moved. Land, Knowledge Keepers, and artifacts of the culture are sources of knowledge and authority, which are neither fully understood nor accepted as legitimate in relation to dominant classroom practices (Hare, 2016a).

Finally, on a professional and personal level, there is increasing emphasis by institutions to re-conceptualize curriculum within undergraduate and graduate programming, including professional programs in faculties of social work, law, education, and health-related disciplines. The *Calls to Action* in the 2015 Final Report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) have placed significant responsibility for change on many professions (TRC, 2015). For example, the Canadian Association of Social Workers has pledged "The profession of social work recognizes the very specific role and responsibility it has in supporting the implementation of the TRC recommendations with emphasis on those specific to Child Welfare" (CASW, 2015). A number of national and provincial organizations have called for compulsory instruction in Indigenous education for their pre-service teachers (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010; British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2015; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). A number of teacher education programs across Canada are also now committed to mandatory coursework

in their teacher education curriculum, which places new demands on teacher educators.

There is certainly an emotional toll on those teaching for resistance, Indigenization, and reconciliation in environments that may be explicitly or implicitly hostile to these approaches. Education has played an extensive role in the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, who may not want to see their knowledge systems misappropriated or misrepresented in Western educational institutions or, worse, not represented at all. There is also a continuing attitude amongst many people that Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing are inferior to those of Western cultures, as well a general ignorance toward Indigenous peoples that is still pervasive and problematic (Godlewska, Schaepli, Massey, Freake, & Rose, 2017). Fear, frustration, compassion fatigue, and burnout are very real experiences for those who engage in Indigenized and reconciliatory education.

In spite of these challenges, many educators—both Indigenous and settler—across multiple fields and disciplines, feel a deep-seated responsibility to educate towards decolonization and reconciliation in ways that honour Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies. Recognizing the inherent challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities associated with teaching and learning Indigenous content, perspectives, and pedagogies, we as the five co-editors of this special edition began reflection on pedagogical questions, theoretical underpinnings, and conditions of praxis that might frame conversations to advance Indigenization, reconciliation, self-determination, and decolonization. As Indigenous and settler educators, we have grappled with these frameworks in our teaching and practice, noting that the actualization of these contested terms varies based on interpretation within professional philosophies, existing curriculum, and teaching approaches across institutional disciplines. We bring forward a set of questions that these frameworks incite for us, offering them for readers to consider as they contemplate the contributions to this themed journal and deliberate on their own practices. Some of these questions include:

- How are pedagogies shaped by or responsive to the different epistemic frameworks, assumptions, methods, norms, historical debates, disciplinary commitments and concerns, and social contexts of praxis generic to particular disciplines?
- What kinds of support—intellectual, experiential, material, social, even spiritual—do educators need in carrying out these forms of pedagogy, within different social contexts and in light of varying institutional constraints?
- What are the pedagogical implications that differently positioned faculty bring into the classroom that include personal and

academic histories, structural relationships and distances, situated knowledges and ignorances, embodiment, and the ways different bodies are read in the classroom?

- What promising pedagogical responses honour Indigenous knowledges, cultures, aspirations, and visions while also critically addressing settler colonial power, privilege, and constructions of difference?
- How do we create a culturally respectful and safe learning environment for Indigenous students, especially in what are often settler-majority classrooms?

We understand that positionality confers commitments and responsibilities to these theoretical frameworks in relation to the teaching and learning of Indigenous content, perspectives, and pedagogies (Hare, 2016b). Thus, we take a moment to situate ourselves within this work, which is in line with Indigenous protocols of introduction and allows the communities that we engage with to locate us in relationship to those perspectives and how they are shaped. Jan Hare is an Anishinaabe scholar-educator from the M'Chigeeng First Nation, with family roots also within the Teme-Augama Anishnabai First Nation, but living in Musqueam territory. Her teaching and research is concerned with improving educational outcomes for Indigenous learners through centering of Indigenous knowledge systems in early childhood education, K to 12 schooling, and post-secondary settings. As associate dean for Indigenous education, she continues to lead the development and teaching of coursework in Indigenous education for teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. Lynne Davis is a settler scholar living in Michi Saagig Anishinaabe territory, where she teaches in the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies, Trent University, in the areas of Indigenous/settler relationships and transforming settler consciousness. She is committed to bringing decolonizing and unsettling practices and pedagogies into the classrooms while creating transformative spaces of learning for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Chris Hiller is a settler Canadian living in Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Attawandaron traditional territories in southern Ontario. Chris' work as a researcher and educator in the fields of social work and community-based social change centres on pedagogical strategies for transforming settler consciousness, recognizing Indigenous lands and sovereignties, and working concretely towards decolonized futures. Lindsay Morcom is of Algonquin Métis and German heritage, and a member of the Bear Clan. She is an interdisciplinary researcher with experience in Indigenous and decolonizing education, Aboriginal languages, language revitalization, and

linguistics. She works as an assistant professor and coordinator of the Aboriginal Teacher Education program at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Lisa Taylor is a settler Canadian teaching in Abenaki traditional territory in southeastern Quebec. Her teaching and research ask what it means to remember the past and honour the lives of others, especially from the tangled histories and psychic difficulty of complicity. Committed to decolonizing teacher education, she explores this through pedagogies of witnessing and remembrance in dialogue with Indigenous educational frameworks of story and relationality.

As a collective of diverse scholar-educators, in 2016 we discerned the need and opportunity to create an event that would bring post-secondary educators together to engage in conversation, where they could share practices, raise questions, reflect on difficult moments, and respond to each other's experiences among a supportive community of like-minded educators. This inspired a full-day event in May 2017, hosted by the Canadian Critical Pedagogy Association in partnership with the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, held at Ryerson University in Toronto as part of the Canadian Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences annual conference. The event was organized into four parts. The first part of the day featured a panel presentation with Indigenous education scholars Dr. Susan Dion and Dr. Jan Hare, who discussed the ways Indigenous knowledges have been represented in the academy and offered windows into challenges from various school-based research settings. This was followed by a set of two talking circles, whereby event participants shared generative and wide-ranging exchanges, analyzed in the article by co-editors included in this special issue. This led to a high profile pedagogy-focused panel in the afternoon, featuring Métis education scholar Dr. Kevin Lamoureux, settler historian Dr. Victoria Freeman, and Haudenosaunee social work scholar Dr. Bonnie Freeman. Concluding the day was a pedagogical showcase that gathered almost two dozen educators to share concrete classroom examples, teaching strategies, student responses in coursework, and curriculum innovations.

While the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge traditions in Western educational classrooms may present challenges, the contributions to this *Canadian Journal of Native Education* special edition suggest that there is far more to be gained through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, content, and pedagogies, that enrich the learning experiences for all students. The authors of the following articles help us to deepen our understanding of how settler colonialism operates, as well as how it can be confronted in curriculum and practice. Their writing considers how teaching and learning are mediated by the different positions they occupy

as settler, ally, and Indigenous educators. Moreover, their work brings attention to the ways Indigenous epistemologies, cultures, and languages can change the way we approach teaching and learning in classroom and online spaces in meaningful and respectful ways.

The first three articles theorize the efforts of instructors to engage holistically with Indigenous knowledges and to challenge settler colonial relations in the present through critical reflection processes. In the first article of this issue, "Conversations About Indigenizing, Decolonizing, and Transformative Pedagogical Practices," Davis, Hare, Hiller, Morcom, and Taylor report on the talking circles held as part of the day-long *Pedagogies of Decolonization and Reconciliation in the Postsecondary Classroom* conference held at the 2017 Congress for Social Sciences and Humanities. Drawing on what post-secondary educators from across Canada shared about their institutions and classroom practices, the authors report on their findings using a framework of responsibility, relationship, and deconstructing/reconstructing. Participants discussed steps forward in creating new spaces of innovation, including classrooms where they have put into practice Indigenous knowledges and cultural practices such as circle pedagogies, Indigenous relationality, and holistic understandings. In describing experiences of encountering transformative learning in the classroom or facing resistance from students, their conversation reveals the terrain of contradictions that is being negotiated at this historic moment by those who are trying to work with Indigenous knowledges, change classroom learning, and challenge institutional cultures and practices.

For authors Kerr and Parent, relationality figures prominently in their experiences of teaching in a Faculty of Education. These educators consider how to engage teacher candidates in conversations about the complexities of applying British Columbia's First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) in the classroom and school environments. They use Archibald's relational story-telling approach to assess the difficulties of translating the deep knowledge traditions and values embedded in the FPPL into action, when filtered through the consciousness of settler teachers and educators. What their storytelling methodology reveals is that at the cultural interface, the potentialities of the FPPL may be thwarted by a settler consciousness that does not recognize ethical relationality opportunities. Their article "The First Peoples' Principles of Learning in Teacher Education: Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*" explores these complex spaces which need to inform teacher education.

Relationality continues in the writing of Cooper, Major, and Grafton in "Beyond Tokenism: Relational Learning and Reconciliation Within Post-Secondary Classrooms and Institutions". These authors consider what will

move classroom practices beyond tokenism. They pay attention to the micro-dynamics of teaching, including creating safe spaces for relational learning, honouring the knowledge of Indigenous experts, creating enriching content, encouraging self-reflection through innovative assignments, and measuring the quality of student work outside the strict confines of the Western academy. Working across post-secondary classrooms in the health sciences, humanities, and social sciences, the authors suggest that these dimensions are essential to a decolonizing practice that responds to the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

Attention to the tensions and complex dynamics of individual and collective learning in different contexts is the focus of the next set of three articles. The challenges of building forms of relationality across differences in positionality, prior knowledge, epistemology, and investment are explored in concrete pedagogical practices showcased and analyzed by these three papers. In "The Build a Community Exercise and Indigenous Content in Teacher Education", Nardozi, Arndt, and Steele introduce a dramatic exercise that walks participants through the interlocking, multiple onslaughts of colonization on the fabric of Indigenous communities. While this embodied learning activity engages teacher candidates emotionally and centres experiences of Indigenous communities, they note that skilled facilitation is essential to structure and encourage critical practices of self-implication. This combination of empathetic and critical engagement is key to building forms of relationality that engage differently positioned and invested learners from their particular starting points of learning through what the authors consider "a gateway to host a dialogue on healing and reconciliation."

In "Reconciliation in Social Work: Creating Ethical Space Through a Relational Approach to Circle Pedagogy", Laurila explores the pedagogy of a talking circle as an ethical space in a discipline profoundly implicated in the persistent structures of settler colonialism that reach into Indigenous childhoods, families, and communities and that are reinforced through social work classrooms. Framing and activating relationality through the model of the circle, she elaborates on a nuanced model that integrates the four directions of learning within an holistic pedagogy, focused on building physical and inner ethical spaces for critical reflexivity, self-location, and responsibility amongst differently positioned future social workers.

Building on her own solidarity work and experiences of teaching with Indigenous educators, Freeman maps out the frameworks through which colonial thinking permeates settler consciousness in her article "Becoming Real on Turtle Island: A Pedagogy of Relationship". She draws from a personal history of self-examination, activism, and co-teaching with

Indigenous educators to identify key pedagogical challenges and strategies, and outlines an interdisciplinary approach to contextualizing student understanding. Understanding colonialism as not only a political, social, legal, and economic set of relationships of power but a psycho-social structure of feeling, Freeman describes one exercise in personal and family historical excavation that opens up these layers of inherited “settler consciousness” to critical examination and political re-orientation.

The last set of three articles consider the work of decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogies through a lens of curriculum visioning and planning. In “The Five R’s for Indigenizing Online Learning: A Case Study of the First Nations Schools’ Principals Course”, Tessaro, Restoule, Gaviria, Flessa, Lindeman, and Scully-Stewart explore the complexities, challenges, and opportunities of incorporating Indigenous knowledges, values, and learning practices into online educational spaces. Reflecting upon their experience of building and evaluating an inaugural online course for administrators of First Nations schools, the authors ask: How might educators “ensure meaningful spaces of cultural and contextual relevance, community development, and decolonization” within online learning environments and, more fundamentally, how might online learning be re-imagined as an effective “vehicle for Indigenous knowledge”? Drawing upon an expanded version of Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (2001) 4 R’s of Indigenous education, the authors trace how guiding principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships are each envisioned within and manifested through the course design, content, and pedagogy.

Walsh, Van Patten, St-Denis, and Jerome broaden this curricular lens to consider how the twin imperatives of decolonization and Indigenization play out in a specific discipline. In “Towards Decolonization and Indigenization of Social Work Research: Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Calls to Action*”, the authors describe a 2016 World Café-style dialogue organized at the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Social Work. Using the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) *Calls to Action* as an orienting framework, Indigenous and settler faculty, students, and community members met to discuss what Indigenization, decolonization, truth, and reconciliation mean for social work education, practice, research, and community relations. World Café participants spoke powerfully to the specific context of social work, citing the need to address the discipline’s implication in colonialism. The authors organized process outcomes thematically, syphoning them down to nine concrete recommendations.

In the final article, Martin Cannon further extends the curricular lens by considering the broader social, political, and historical context in which all efforts to decolonize and Indigenize education unfold: that of settler

colonialism and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples and lands. In "Teaching and Learning Reparative Education in Settler Colonial and Post-TRC Canada", Cannon asks: "How might schools be invigorated so that all people teaching and learning within them are better able to consider, know about, name, and challenge an investment in colonial dominance and complicity?" Here, Cannon recalibrates TRC-inspired discussions within teacher education by casting a critical light on assumptions of history, law, and citizenship that remain unchallenged even within current discussions of reconciliation, as well as critiquing *culturalist* approaches to education that advocate *cultural competence* without addressing the foundational realities of Indigenous lands, sovereignties, and self-determination. Cannon moves beyond critique to share his own course and curriculum development and the pedagogical principles and commitments that inform them, drawing upon his experience as a Haudenosaunee teacher and learner.

Concluding Comments

Taken together as a collection, the articles in this special issue reflect the real opportunities and challenges that have presented themselves in educational institutions in a post-TRC landscape. But as we learn from the authors, there is much work to be done if we are to accomplish the societal changes imagined by the TRC, Indigenous peoples, and settler allies. Today's initiatives to create change rest on decades of groundwork laid by Indigenous educators and their allies across the fields of education, law, social work, humanities, and Indigenous studies. Through ongoing engagements in difficult learning, much has been understood about the colonizing and assimilative practices of the academy as well as their resistance. In this collection, we see that the deep structures of the academy are being challenged in multiple initiatives through the day-to-day practices and organization of the classroom, and that this momentum for change is travelling in waves across post-secondary institutions. Recognizing our different positionings as educator and scholars and particular approaches to Indigenousizing, decolonizing, or transforming classrooms, we are on a collective journey where good companions and critical questions make all the difference. As a community of Indigenous and settler educators intent on transformation, we are strengthened through the process of sharing stories and critical questions, as we have in this volume.

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