Conversations About Indigenizing, Decolonizing and Transformative Pedagogical Practices

Lynne Davis
Trent University

Jan Hare
University of British Columbia

Chris Hiller
Renison University College, University of Waterloo

Lindsay Morcom
Queen's University

Lisa K. Taylor
Bishop's University

In this post-TRC environment, this paper explores how educators are engaging in Indigenizing, decolonizing, or reconciling pedagogical practices in post-secondary institutions that encourage or inhibit transformation. The discussion is based on a research study using talking circles to create a conversation among 34 Indigenous and settler ally educators at the Congress for Humanities and Social Sciences in 2017. We discuss the stories shared by participants within the three themes of responsibility, relationship, and reconstruction. Indigenous and settler ally instructors identify and use opportunities for change in classrooms, despite resistance from some students and administrators. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for transformation at student, faculty, and institutional levels.

Keywords: Indigenous pedagogies; Indigenizing; decolonization; settler education; reconciliation

Introduction

In the wake of the 2015 *Final Report* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, there has been a significant mobilization by post-secondary institutions to respond to the *Calls to Action* specifically related to education. On National Aboriginal Day (June 21) of 2017, Universities Canada announced the results of a survey of universities showing that:

close to 80 per cent are conducting activities to promote intercultural engagement through cultural activities, events and forums, talking circles, competency or reconciliation training and more; just under 70 per cent have or are developing strategic plans for advancing reconciliation; two-thirds are working to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, methods and protocols into research practices and projects and the same number are striving to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms on campus. (Universities Canada, 2017, p. 4)

Since the TRC *Final Report*, this movement toward reconciliation has been palpable in universities and colleges across Canada, and can be seen in advertisements to hire Indigenous faculty, appointments of Indigenous scholars to senior administrative positions, and new requirements for all students to take Indigenous content courses. This acceleration of Indigenous-focused activity builds upon a hard-won experiential base that has been slowly growing over several decades, including the Association of Canadian Deans of Education's 2010 Accord which requires Indigenous Studies education for all teacher candidates in Canadian universities.

In its 1996 report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples observed the growing number of programs in Indigenous Studies, Indigenous teacher's education, social work, law, and other areas that had developed to meet the needs of Indigenous students and Indigenous communities (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, p. 514). Two decades later, the TRC's *Calls to Action* urged post-secondary institutions to step up their game by creating good spaces and productive learning opportunities for Indigenous students, while also undertaking public education that would fill the huge gap in understanding for settler Canadians regarding Indigenous cultures, shared histories, treaties, and rights such as those defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These processes of educational change had already begun in many post-secondary institutions, but have since been expanded with the energy of the moment.

It is in this broader context of reconciliation that our research team has turned its attention to pedagogies for decolonizing, Indigenizing, and transforming in the post-secondary classroom. There are numerous critiques in the education and Indigenous studies literatures (e.g., Battiste, 2000, 2013; Cannon, 2012; Cote-Meek, 2014) that point to the typical university classroom as a colonized space in which Indigenous students experience racism and exclusion in subject content, pedagogical processes, and classroom interactions. Battiste (2000) speaks about the classroom as a site of cognitive imperialism. Dion (2009) has uncovered how educators can repeat colonial narratives despite having good intentions. The classroom experience can reflect a settler colonial consciousness that goes unchallenged unless mindfully addressed (Kuokkanen, 2008). Non-Indige-

nous faculty and students, many of whom may have little or no understanding of Indigenous/settler relations, residential schools, and historical and ongoing colonialism, reproduce majority settler ontological and epistemological understandings and settler privilege, creating a toxic environment for the learning of Indigenous students. In this way, the classroom can be a vehicle for reproducing the same intergenerational racist and colonial ideas unless intentionally disrupted.

How can we decolonize, Indigenize, and transform post-secondary classrooms to create spaces where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can flourish? Indigenous scholars and their supporters have been engaged in this work for several decades, as have anti-racist, anti-oppression, feminist, and critical pedagogy scholars who also pay close attention to the dynamics of classrooms (e.g., Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Baskin, 2006, 2016; Battiste, 2013; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2007). Indigenous and decolonizing approaches focus on not only the intellectual dimensions of learning but also on the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of individual learners. Examples of the ways in which these pedagogical practices are intentionally engaged are growing across Canadian classrooms. For example, circle pedagogies drawn from the traditions of some Indigenous Nations represent a disruption of the hierarchical relationships that are typical in the university classroom (e.g., Graveline, 1998). As a community of learners, circle participants engage as co-learners in a respectful collective process by which each participant can contribute. Experiential approaches mirror traditional ways of learning in Indigenous contexts and may be brought into the classroom for diverse learning experiences. Visits to Indigenous communities and events, engaging in traditional harvesting practices, performing arts, and on-the-land learning are all examples of experiential pedagogies that engage students' learning in a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual way. Educators across disciplines also draw upon common resources such as 'The Blanket Exercise', a popular education exercise developed by KAIROS in collaboration with Indigenous partners over the last two decades, which invites participants to learn intellectually and affectively about colonization by simulating the impact of colonial land grabs, residential schools, depopulation of communities, and other forms of colonial violence.

Both Victoria Freeman (2018) and Celia Haig-Brown (2012) have emphasized the importance of the "colonial biography" as an effective storytelling tool in helping settler Canadians to understand their own connection to the colonization of Indigenous lands by their ancestors, and the ways in which they themselves benefit. Critical race theories and settler colonial theories have helped to describe settler resistance to challenging

White privilege through concepts such as settler consciousness (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Mackey, 2016), "white fragility" (DiAngelo, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012), and settler moves to innocence (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Razack, 1998; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

These examples from the practice of experienced educators point to a growing body of knowledge about complex dynamics of the classroom, related to decolonizing, Indigenizing, and transforming Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations. Our research team has been concerned with alliance-building strategies in the classroom, as opportunities to engage with Indigenous ways of knowing and learning while also deconstructing settler colonial narrative structures and practices. As we reflect on this growing emphasis among educators who in the post-TRC environment are teaching Indigenous topics and materials with greater frequency, we feel it is timely to assess how scholars and practitioners, both experienced and new to this practice, are engaging the complexities of this kind of education across diverse disciplines. Moreover, we are interested to learn how their practices are being shaped, helped, and hindered by the larger institutional structures in which they are embedded.

This paper is part of the journey of our conversations and research. We begin by sharing the theoretical ideas informing our work, then discuss how the research has unfolded. We share what we have learned, using Battiste's framework of responsibility, relationship, and reconstruction, to map out the terrain of complexities, opportunities, and challenges for teaching and learning that are invoked by pedagogies of reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization. In our final section, we discuss the implications of our findings for working with students in classrooms, with faculty, and within institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Over the past two years, we have reflected together on the new proliferation of pedagogies of reconciliation and decolonization, and our own wary hopefulness regarding the emergence post-TRC of institutional responses and cultures of redress. Through this reflection, we have become more and more convinced of the importance of seeing this new emergence as a critical opportunity to bring together post-secondary educators who have long engaged in this work for a focused conversation on pedagogies of possibility. As educators and scholars, we seek to disrupt universities as important microcosms of broader Indigenous-settler relations. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, we share a common conviction that significant insight can be generated—and *has* been generated—by reflecting on the de/colonizing problematics, relations, and possibilities that

surface within our classrooms, as well as within pedagogical and curricular efforts to address these dynamics. We also believe that knowledge gained in such explorations has important implications for the broader societal project of reconciliation and decolonization.

From the beginning of this particular project in 2016, we envisioned an interdisciplinary gathering that would draw panelists and participants from across an array of disciplines engaged in this work including education, history, Indigenous studies, sociology, social work, environmental studies, cultural studies, women's studies, the humanities, business, and sciences. Our conviction was, and is, that each discipline offers unique and valuable insights regarding the work of decolonization and reconciliation as a whole. In our preliminary design, we drew from a framework of critical questions [for a more detailed description, see the issue's Editorial introduction] that helped guide our thinking about pedagogies in the present historical moment, choosing to focus the scope of this paper on how we decolonize, Indigenize, and transform post-secondary classrooms to create spaces where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can flourish.

It should be noted that the teaching of Indigenous perspectives, content, and pedagogies has had a long history in post-secondary education, with programs and initiatives largely aimed at increasing access to postsecondary for Indigenous learners. Over the last four decades, Indigenous teacher and social work education, Indigenous studies, and Indigenous language programs have established a foundation for advancing the distinct pedagogies associated with the transmission of Indigenous knowledge traditions (Absolon, 2010; Baskin, 2006, 2016; Battiste, 2013; Bruyere, Hart, & Sinclair, 2009; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Hampton, 1995; Hill & Wilkinson, 2014; Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett, & Gilles, 2015; Kovach, 2010; Sinclair, 2004). It is only more recently that post-secondary institutions are making focused efforts beyond Indigenous-specific program developments to be inclusive of Indigenous perspectives, approaches, and engagement in their institutional policies and practices, with implications for all classrooms and learners (MacDonald, 2016; Pete, 2016; Universities Canada, 2017).

There is a growing body of research examining the teaching and learning of Indigenous content and ways of knowing in post-secondary classrooms that highlights the tensions and possibilities that pedagogies of reconciliation and decolonization create in learning spaces. On occasion, the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are transmitted—using land/place-based, intergenerational, narrative, or experiential learning processes within the contained spaces of the academy—meet with student

and instructor resistance or are not clearly understood or appreciated, especially where more conventional Western pedagogies are the norm. For example, Dei (2011) suggests that while key elements of Indigenous spirituality can provide a powerful base of knowledge, in his experience their inclusion in the classroom continues to be met with opposition by both students and instructors. Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett, and Gilles (2015) caution that Elder and Indigenous community participation can be hit-and-miss because students may not understand the significance of their presence or the knowledge they share. In addition, post-secondary institutions often fail to recognize the significance of Indigenous community participation.

The literature also tells us that the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous instructors teaching Indigenous content, perspectives, and pedagogies in higher education are different in several salient ways. Non-Indigenous faculty may feel unprepared or lack confidence to engage in conversations on Indigenous issues in the classroom (Belczewski, 2009; Merculieff & Roderick, 2013). Kovach and colleagues (2015) examine the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous instructors teaching in the disciplines of social work and education, including graduate and undergraduate education. They describe an outside-in dynamic experienced by non-Indigenous instructors who feel they never quite know enough about Indigenous knowledge systems and feel vulnerable in taking them up in their teaching. Still, some of these instructors may not see the possibilities for making connections to Indigenous perspectives in their courses (Merculieff & Roderick, 2013). Non-Indigenous instructors taking on the role of allies also face the same kind of resentment or resistance from students and colleagues that their Indigenous academic counterparts experience when they emphasize Indigenous content and perspectives in their course curriculum (Christie & Asmar, 2012).

Indigenous instructors face a different set of experiences, describing the inherent difficulties of interacting with non-Indigenous students resistant to Indigenous perspectives, while negotiating their own identity and culture within colonial spaces (Hare, 2016; Cote-Meek, 2014). Indigenous academics describe race-outsourcing and race voyeurism as particular challenges of teaching in Western universities (Walter & Butler, 2013), in which Indigenous academics are called on to give lectures or asked to share their personal stories with students on being Indigenous. Indigenous faculty who draw on accumulated personal knowledge and experience to teach from an Indigenous perspective also may find they do not have access to, or know how best to incorporate, knowledges that are specific to a territory or place (Cannon, 2012).

Students also bring with them different investments in learning from Indigenous pedagogical approaches, which create classroom dynamics that can both help and hinder learning in the mixed classroom where there are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. Extensive literature has documented the experiences of Indigenous students in post-secondary classrooms with racism, both overt and covert, being most widely reported (e.g., Kovach et al., 2015; St. Denis, 2007). Cote-Meek's (2014) analysis of individual and institutional racism experienced by Indigenous students suggests that much of the literature has focused on the link between racism and Indigenous students' lack of success, generating a need to better understand the nature and extent of racism experienced in classroom encounters, as well as how such encounters undergird and reify settler privilege.

Despite resistance by non-Indigenous students to Indigenous pedagogical frameworks in classroom learning as observed by instructors, there remain points of inspiration across disciplines in post-secondary education. For example, pre-service teachers engaging with Indigenous theories and practices and learning from Indigenous educators, Knowledge Keepers, and communities have experienced deep transformations in social understanding, as well as moving towards articulating and implementing Indigenous pedagogy in coursework and practicum (Kitchen & Raynor, 2013; Phillips, 2011; Williams & Tanaka, 2007). Similar processes of learning have been explored among students of social work (Baskin, 2016; Max, 2005). As Indigenization and decolonizing practices spread through the academy, we can expect to learn more about how discipline-specific contexts bring forth different kinds of challenges and opportunities.

Sharing Circles

In our original research design, we envisioned interdisciplinary conversations through sharing circles or talking circles, terms we use interchangeably. The sharing circles were to have a dual purpose: first, to explore and theorize together the challenges, persistent dilemmas, and possibilities that surface in relation to these pedagogies within post-secondary classrooms; and second, to foster a collaborative sharing of classroom experiences, promising teaching strategies, effective learning activities, and creative resources and curriculum. This vision led to organizing a day-long event held at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences on May 29, 2017[1] in Toronto, Ontario. The event comprised two panels, two talking circles, and a pedagogy showcase. What follows is a description of the sharing circles that form the basis of our research.

The two talking circles, with 34 participants in total, gave each person an opportunity to share their thoughts on their practice and the institu-

tional environment in which they work. The practitioners, educators, scholars, and graduate students taking part in sharing circles responded to the central guiding question: what are the opportunities, dilemmas, and challenges of negotiating the terrain of decolonizing and/or Indigenizing post-secondary classrooms? While sharing circles serve as a pedagogical practice, they are also a method for gathering knowledge based on cultural traditions, whereby participants come together to share collectively and each person has an opportunity to be heard through taking turns. Sharing is the emphasis in this research approach, with participants talking and listening to one another as the desired interaction (Basylak, 2002; Hart, 2002). Rather than responding to research questions, participants share stories with one another in relation to the central question asked of the group (Kovach, 2009). This "storying" effect establishes trust and relationship among those in the sharing circle (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2010).

We realized that anonymity was critical to many participants and so we indicated in our signed consent form that stories from the sharing circle would be used without quotations that might identify individual contributors. Each of the sharing circles was recorded and transcribed. Our research team independently analyzed and coded the stories to identify themes and sub-themes. The team came together to discuss themes, establishing a more detailed and nuanced account of storylines. This allowed for triangulation, weighing our interpretations of participants' contributions, and ensuring we had identified consistent patterns across individual interpretations. The discussion of patterns across the data and discrepancies in our interpretations lead to an emerging picture that contextualizes what and how pedagogical practices are implemented within classroom and institutional spaces. We discuss the three themes within the theoretical framework of responsibility, relationship, and reconstruction.

What We Have Learned

Responsibility
The stories from the two sharing circles draw from both participants' past and present experiences to shape their knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities they hold in decolonizing, Indigenizing, and transforming university classrooms. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) help us to conceptualize the notion of responsibility that emerged in the sharing circles. Their work has particular relevance as it focuses on how Indigenous perspectives can impact on the everyday functioning of the university institution. Since universities are not neutral enterprises, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) tell us that responsibility to transform policy and prac-

tices plays out through forms of active participation that challenge institutional power and authority. This includes examining personal assumptions and understanding the consequences of our intentions and motives, processes which tend to invoke moral and ethical sensibilities. Further, underlying responsibilities are explicit commitments to culturally relevant and appropriate, accessible, and quality education that centre Indigenous perspectives and priorities at the heart of learning.

The nature of the talking circle invites participants to identify and speak from their own social location and experience. Most begin their narratives by situating themselves in relation to the specific Indigenous territories on which they live and work, and by locating themselves and their stories within broader histories of colonization and decolonization. Many participants also describe their identities in complex and multifaceted ways that complicate essentialized categories and disrupt straightforward Indigenous/settler binaries with nuances of experience, geography, histories of colonization and diaspora, and processes of gendering. Through this subject positioning, they contemplate their practice, revealing the responsibilities they hold for addressing settler colonialism and advancing Indigenous content, perspectives, and pedagogies in their work.

Indigenous participants speak of their responsibility to be agents for change and reconciliation within their communities and their institutions, which entails Indigenizing curriculum, ensuring that institutional moves toward reconciliation went beyond surface to deep change, and encouraging their colleagues to engage in decolonization efforts. They note that while they feel personal responsibility for these efforts, the structure and expectations of the institution mean that sometimes their work is not fully recognized to the degree that other types of service, research, or teaching might be. The work they are required to do toward Indigenization carries a significant burden in terms of both time and emotional toll, and can be quite overwhelming, particularly in cases where there are only one or two Indigenous faculty members present in a department or faculty. For the few Métis participants, their responsibility is further complicated as their identity positions them both as colonizer and colonized, placing them in a unique position to engage in reconciliation as bridge-builders.

Non-Indigenous individuals, who make up the majority of the participants in the circles, discuss similar themes, albeit from a different perspective. Many see their responsibility beginning with an acknowledgement that reconciliation requires both Indigenous and settler peoples' participation; several participants cited the Two Row Wampum, which depicts Indigenous and settler peoples each following their own path but

working alongside one another in peace, respect, and friendship as a model for their own allyhood. There is insistence by some participants that reconciliation move forward in a meaningful way, rather than being viewed as a transient fad.

To act on this responsibility, non-Indigenous participants describe a need to engage extensively with Indigenous community members, students, and colleagues to determine what appropriate Indigenization or decolonizing should look like at their institutions, and push for that change. This entails engaging in dialogue about how to create learning experiences for all students, as well as fostering an institutional responsibility to ensure that students of all heritages leave their institutions with an awareness of the ongoing history and impact of colonialism and at least some Indigenous knowledge or awareness. Recognizing the inherent challenges of institutions that plan for reconciliation and incorporation of Indigenous content, these participants concede that academic freedom within post-secondary institutions may require encouragement and coaching among colleagues. At the same time, many highlight the importance of following the lead of Indigenous colleagues, at times needing to push back against institutional pressures to take on leadership positions in this work. Several also express their own struggles to include Indigenous content and pedagogies in their classroom, and particularly their concerns about appropriating Indigenous knowledge. They understand that if they fail to include these elements it is unlikely that students will experience them. This is particularly the case in institutions where Indigenous faculty are significantly underrepresented. For many settler allies in the sharing circles, working with pedagogical practices that engage with Indigeneity requires constant self-questioning, including openly admitting their own lack of knowledge, biases, racisms, and complicity in colonial ideologies and practices. Some non-Indigenous instructors also describe taking on role modelling to encourage colleagues to question the received narratives, pedagogies, and ideas presented in their courses.

Relationship
There is an overarching emphasis on relationships in the stories that participants tell about their work to transform teaching and learning in the post-secondary institution. Indigenous ways of knowing place emphasis on relationship. From an Indigenous perspective, relationships between and among human, material, natural, and ancestral worlds shape how the world is understood. The nature of these relationships stresses respect, balance, and interconnectedness, rather than power and authority which tends to characterize relationships within academic institutions. These relation-

ships are honoured through Indigenous languages, cultural practices, protocols, ceremony, respectful interactions, and other forms of representation.

Participants in the sharing circles identify a variety of relationships that they foster, acknowledging their relationships to Indigenous knowledges and students, relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and connections between institutions and Indigenous communities. The nature of these relationships is explored through participants' stories, giving us a sense of what is valued and what is challenging, how these relationships are negotiated, and what outcomes are produced through these engagements. Similar to questions of responsibility, this theme is discussed in relation to identity positionalities of participants.

Indigenous participants are less conflicted about Indigenous knowledge in the classroom; they frequently see their teaching space as a place of reclamation, and their teaching as an opportunity to honour their relationships with their ancestors, languages, and cultures.

Participants of settler heritage are understandably introspective about their roles and boundaries. They seek to create Indigenized or decolonizing learning environments while constantly self-checking to determine what content and pedagogies they should approach, and what should be left to colleagues or Indigenous guests. However, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants identify numerous similarities in their classroom experiences as well. In both cases, they see the need to move forward from an era in which Indigenous knowledge has been viewed as inferior to one where it is considered equal to Western knowledge.

According to participants, elevating the status of Indigenous knowledges among learners requires that they make significant changes in the classroom atmosphere; they strive to create classrooms that are places of truth-telling and compassion, places of empowerment for Indigenous students, and places where students of settler heritage are able to engage in opportunities to be unsettled in their thinking and behaviours. Participants note as well that creating these places requires that they develop deep relationships with students that are built over time. They describe unsettling settler students and addressing racism as an emotionally fraught endeavour that may result in conflict between students, and between students and the instructor. Participants also note the extreme challenge of navigating that conflict without creating space for "white fragility" (DiAngelo, 2011) or settler denial, but without alienating any students. Such a pedagogy demands navigation of complex historical and current issues, including relationships to land and place, returning of lands stolen from traditional inhabitants, and the loss of privileged access to land and resources for settlers; this is a recurring concern for settler students that reflects deeper

issues of identities, 'settled expectations' of privilege (Mackey, 2016), connection to place, and development of nationhood. It also requires students and teachers to shift how they think about learning, one another, the environment, and justice.

Collectively, participants note that to engage effectively in this work, non-Indigenous educators must make it a priority to unsettle themselves and challenge their own assumptions, while those of Indigenous heritage are often called upon to take on the emotional labour of helping settlers understand the mutually detrimental impacts of colonization. In both cases, participants emphasize the importance of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, both within and external to the institution. They discuss the need to create supportive networks of likeminded colleagues with whom they can discuss dilemmas, classroom content and pedagogy, and negative student responses. They also recognize a need to have not only Indigenous academics in a Western sense but also traditional Elders and Knowledge Keepers within the institution, to bring in diverse perspectives and allow students and educators alike to ask questions as they develop their understanding of Indigenous knowledges and decolonial analyses.

Participants further note the need for modelling their differentiated roles in relation to decolonization and Indigenization at lateral and higher levels of the institution. For example, settler scholars talk about their role in discussing the inclusion of Indigenous content in their courses and appropriate methods for its inclusion with other settler scholars who might be hesitant or resistant to doing so. They also describe challenging university administrators to engage in appropriate community consultation to create meaningful opportunities for institutional reconciliation. These conversations can be very difficult because they involve calling on their colleagues to challenge their beliefs and open their minds, which is not always met with positive responses. However, these participants note that as fellow settlers, they were able to leverage their privilege to demonstrate to settler colleagues that reconciliation is not just the responsibility of Indigenous peoples. They note instead the need to engage in meaningful conversation with faculty and community members of all heritages to break down "echo chambers" and ensure all voices **are** heard and honoured.

The decolonizing of institutions and the integrated inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing requires not only personal relationships, but also relationships between institutions and Indigenous communities, both urban and on reserve. Many participants note the need to engage Indigenous community members in formal and informal learning experiences to the benefit of both the community and the institution. At the same time,

participants highlight that it is vital that these relationships not become exploitative; rather, relationships need to be reciprocal, meaningful, and mutually beneficial. Some of the participants note that reciprocity demands the proper recognition and remuneration of guest speakers including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Indigenous community members, and others who contribute content and knowledge, as well as a recognition of the mutual responsibilities and benefits of reconciliation.

To achieve reciprocity, those working in institutions must develop trusting relationships with community members over time, which a few participants note can be difficult in the high pressure 'publish or perish' atmosphere of Western universities. Sometimes, participants note, time spent engaging in conventional forms of knowledge mobilization is valued far more than time spent developing reconciliatory relationships with Indigenous communities, even if reconciliation through Indigenous community engagement is a stated goal of the institution. Furthermore, institutions are bureaucracies, and strategic visioning surrounding reconciliation generally results in predetermined goals. That impacts the development of relationships because it interferes with the ability of those relationships to develop organically and produce meaningful outcomes that may differ from what is expected. In spite of these challenges, many of the participants note that developing relationships with communities, then working with communities to develop tools, resources, and goals, results in the best outcomes for Indigenizing and reconciling in the classroom. In addition to grassroots community relationships, participants also emphasize external relationships to other entities such as school boards and government departments that help participants develop resources and mutually beneficial goals.

Reconstruction

Thinking through personal, professional, and institutional practices, participants engaged in processes of what Marie Battiste (2004, 2012) refers to as deconstruction and reconstruction, which are considered essential elements of decolonization. Deconstruction allows for a critique of colonial strategies that continue to operate within educational institutions. It is often necessary for participants to problematize teaching and learning in order to move towards reconstruction, whereby Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and pedagogies exist alongside other intellectual traditions in the classroom as legitimate and sustainable sources of knowledge. Our analysis then gives prominence to reconstruction so that we can reveal new frames of thinking and pedagogical approaches that contribute to transformation in the classroom.

The initial site of deconstruction and reconstruction for most participants is the classroom. They note the importance of moving from the creation of Indigenized spaces within otherwise settler-oriented classrooms to the creation of authentically Indigenous and decolonizing educational experiences. This transition can involve changing the narrative and approach in an existing course or creating new courses steeped in Indigenous knowledges and ways of teaching and learning. In both cases, these changes require instructors to move beyond sporadic inclusion of Indigenous content and guest visits from Indigenous academics or Knowledge Keepers. Rather, these transformations tend to consistently privilege Indigenous perspectives, content, and pedagogies, and engage in Indigenous assessment methods. Meaningful institutional Indigenization means such efforts need to occur beyond the social sciences, arts, and humanities, and have impact in less obvious subjects such as the pure, applied, and health sciences and business administration. Across fields and disciplines, participants note that deconstruction and reconstruction require careful consideration of complex issues. For example, a few participants indicate that instructors must balance local and pan-Indigenous perspectives in a way that is relevant to students and the knowledges they bring to coursework. They emphasize, unapologetically and consistently, use of engaging Indigenous content and Indigenous methodologies, and importance of making efforts to role model this for students and colleagues. Such a process places even more demands on the already heavy workloads of Indigenous and settler ally faculty members. It can be particularly demanding in cases where such members with knowledge, expertise, and even motivation are significantly underrepresented, or where there is a lack of support from colleagues or meaningful professional development to help colleagues develop into stronger allies.

Deconstruction and reconstruction processes aspire to go beyond the classroom to impact the structures and physical spaces of the university. Participants in some institutions, such as those that occupy former residential schools or other deeply colonized spaces, are at times powerfully aware of the physical and spatial realities of processes of deconstruction and reconstruction. However, this is a consideration that could be observed in all institutions. It can take the form of visual identity in objects, art, and books, or the renovation of spaces to enable openness for practices such as smudging or drumming. More deeply, however, deconstruction and reconstruction require institutions to create learning spaces where the layouts are flexible and where Western setups are not the automatic default. For example, several participants describe needing to move furniture each class to engage in circle teaching, and then risking conflict with colleagues and administrators

if the chairs are not returned to straight rows when they are finished. Others note classrooms where the chairs and tables are bolted to the floor, preventing them from engaging in circle teaching at all, or contexts where class sizes have become too large to facilitate Indigenous relational pedagogies. Still, others note a need for outdoor teaching spaces where modern technology can still be employed. Participants at many institutions note that as technology becomes more ubiquitous, synchronous and asynchronous online courses are attracting Indigenous learners in communities, particularly in remote locations; while seeing obvious benefits to these courses, participants are challenged in engaging Indigenous pedagogies in an online atmosphere. Outside the classroom, participants note, the Western, hierarchical natures of institutions are visible in the floor plans, whereby offices of more important faculty members are in preferred locations,and often welcoming spaces for Indigenous students are limited or altogether lacking. Deconstruction and reconstruction require institutions to consider these physical realities in equal measure to content and pedagogy.

Discussions of deconstruction and reconstruction often include the identification of institutional implications and challenges. Participants frequently note that financial implications prominently impact on reconstruction efforts. In cases where budgets place limitations on decolonizing efforts, it is necessary to have engaged, visionary leadership to ensure work continues, and courses and spaces are appropriately resourced. In addition to financial concerns, participants also note a lack of support for systemic change from some students and colleagues. Universities, they say, are inherently colonial institutions that are not developed with Indigenization in mind. Reconstruction requires a tremendous change in institutional ethos to nurture widespread support and the development of new frameworks and structures. If done poorly, these efforts risk tokenizing Indigenous faculty and Indigenous knowledges, or expecting them to change to match the existing structures and concepts present in the institution. Reconstruction also means ensuring that performance evaluations reflect equal appreciation of different kinds of knowledge, knowledge creativity and mobilization, and service. More widely, it requires institutions to balance Indigenization with multiple and somewhat conflicting priorities, such as internationalization, income generation, and commercial innovation. While participants note the slowness of change can sometimes result in frustration and hopelessness, they are also aware of significant shifts in awareness and positive changes in institutions that have committed themselves to change over the past few years.

To support reconstruction at the institutional level, participants note that it is important to have supportive administration and a specific, stated

intent. For example, many institutions have developed individual defini-
tions of what decolonization means and formal responses to the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* (2015). Such documents create
an appetite for change and a collective vision with which to move forward.
A few participants note having some trepidation that the creation of doc-
uments outlining formal responses is seen by some as the end of racism
and discrimination and the achievement of reconciliation, rather than a
first step in that direction. Some also doubt whether real decolonization is
even possible within the context of colonial institutions. In general, how-
ever, participants are hopeful that, with support, forms of reconstruction
are achievable.

Participant Reflections on Practice

Throughout the talking circles, participants describe how their experience
and analysis of institutional barriers, their understanding of their specific
roles and responsibilities in Indigenizing or decolonizing the classroom,
the opportunities and challenges they face in working with Indigenous
and non-Indigenous students, and the particular unfurling of their own
learning journeys are all shaped by their identities and how they are
located in the nexus of intersecting relations of power that constitute
post-secondary institutions. Questions of identity, power, and difference
tend to coalesce around particular aspects of practice, including: working
through settler emotions of fear, discomfort, or anger; addressing historic
and current experiences of trauma tied to colonialism for both Indige-
nous students and professors; experiencing pushback or resistance from
colleagues or broader institutions; developing frameworks for multi-epis-
temological dialogue; discerning roles and responsibilities related to
relationship- and alliance-building; negotiating the line between honour-
ing and appropriating Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies; and
addressing or carrying the weight of racism, backlash, and colonial
assumptions, especially in mixed classrooms.

In outlining their perspectives and experiences, participants also note
a number of effective strategies for moving forward processes of decolo-
nization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. They suggest a number of
approaches that have been successful at different levels of the institution,
including with students in the classroom, with faculty in course design and
research, and with institutional leadership.

Students: Creating Spaces for Respectful Engagement

Participants identify strategies that they have found effective with non-
Indigenous learners, with Indigenous learners, and in mixed classrooms.

Numerous participants discuss their approaches to working with non-Indigenous learners who are open to Indigenous content but who have had little opportunity to learn about it. Participants find that with these learners, a potential strategy involves exploring reflexively the systemic silences regarding Indigenous content in their own educational histories. Participants also find that it is effective to have open, frank discussions of difficult topics. This includes frank conversations of fears about Indigenous content and appearing racist or appropriative, what it means to be respectful, why different learners need to engage in questioning and discomfort as a process of growth and reconciliation, and what their responsibilities are as allies. Many participants also talk about working with non-Indigenous students who are not open to Indigenous content, including those who are actively resistant to or even aggressive about the topic. In engaging with these students, some participants find that working for decolonization in a caring and compassionate way is effective, although they have to make sure they are not capitulating to White fragility. Others find that more aggressive, confrontational approaches are more effective in reaching these students and guiding them to question their stances and assumptions. The approaches vary due to a number of factors, including the instructors' personalities, their identities and positionalities, local attitudes, and institutional cultures.

With respect to working with Indigenous students, the participants identify the need to adapt their classrooms to meet learners' needs, specifically in terms of understanding appropriate educational and assessment strategies. They understand that Indigenous students face racism and aggression in post-secondary institutions, and that it is vital to create safe spaces for Indigenous students to talk about their experiences, to interact with other Indigenous people, and to seek culturally appropriate counselling where needed. Given that most classrooms contain a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, participants identify unifying strategies of engaging in interactive Indigenous pedagogies such as circle work that enable students to form relationships with one another. They also suggest having open discussions about the similarities and differences between Indigenous and Western pedagogies. Finally, an effective strategy taken up by numerous participants is engaging land-based learning, which allows students to connect to and learn from the land on which they all live.

Educators: Building Relationships For Support and Towards Decolonial Learning
With respect to faculty and curriculum development, participants note various strategies for supporting Indigenization, with a paramount strategy of engaging more Indigenous people. Strategies include hiring more Indige-

nous faculty members, and treating Elders and Knowledge Keepers as equivalent to faculty with Western credentials. They also include building relationships between Indigenous communities and individuals and faculty so that guest speakers are respected and remunerated appropriately, as well as creating meaningful and sustainable relationships. Non-Indigenous participants describe their own need for self-education or re-education, including critically assessing their own knowledge, attitudes, and ideas. They also cite the need to create professional development sessions to enable other faculty members to do the same, and to identify where it is and is not appropriate to teach Indigenous content. Finally, participants describe strategies for creating mutual support for Indigenous and ally faculty members to share ideas and seek ways to overcome challenges.

Related to the fostering of mutual support, several participants discuss the need to work collectively to support their Indigenous colleagues and students; such work includes challenging systems and structures that result in Indigenous educators being overworked or designated as solely responsible for Indigenization efforts. Non-Indigenous participants also speak of their particular responsibility to take on more of the emotional labour of dealing with feedback from students and faculty members who may react negatively to the inclusion of Indigenous content or pedagogies. They discuss co-teaching or other strategies that might serve to buffer Indigenous educators from backlash, including negative teaching evaluations, which are common for Indigenous instructors teaching courses on challenging subjects such as decolonization.

Institutions: Re-orienting Policies, Systems, Relationships, and Spaces
Lastly, participants identify strategies that apply at the level of institutional leadership. They cite the need to work directly with administration to create change in areas such as policies on guest remuneration and ceremonial practices such as smudging, community partnerships, the creation of culture-based programs, appropriate funding for Indigenous and decolonizing work and courses, and the prioritization of Indigenous knowledges and related curriculum development. Participants also find it effective when institutions create partnerships with communities to ensure Indigenous students' needs were met and to appropriately integrate Indigenous knowledges across various fields. While participants note that the development of such relationships takes time, they see this relationship-building as vital for authentic Indigenization and reconciliation. Several also argue for strategies of advocating within institutions, for policies recognizing the input of labour involved in building these relationships, recognition with implications for performance evaluations,

and considerations for renewal, tenure, and promotion. Several partici-
pants also see it as vital to engage other organizations such as school
boards and government institutions to create cohesive strategies within
local areas and beyond. They also discuss the importance of impressing
upon leadership the need to create welcoming spaces for Indigenous stu-
dents and faculty, to hire more Indigenous faculty, to ensure the workload
associated with Indigenization and reconciliation efforts is not overwhelm-
ing for existing Indigenous faculty, and to create professional development
and curriculum to help non-Indigenous faculty Indigenize or decolonize
their courses and identify strong resources. Furthermore, participants dis-
cuss strategies pertaining to architectural design, classroom layout, and
visual identity; several argue for the need for recognition amongst institu-
tional leadership for the value of visible Indigenization and support for
classroom transformation with an eye to enhancing Indigenous pedago-
gies. Many participants note that all of these strategies are facilitated when
an institution has an overarching strategic plan for Truth and Reconcilia-
tion that outlines institutional goals but that also leaves space for the
organic evolution of relationships and approaches to Indigenization and
decolonization.

Conclusion

In this study, we have explored a particular historic moment that has been
defined by widespread response by institutions and educators to the
TRC's *Calls to Action* (2015). It can be seen in our analysis that initiatives
to introduce and/or expand the presence of Indigenous faculty, Indige-
nous knowledges, and Indigenous pedagogical processes in the academy
are encountering both facilitative and resistant forces. This is both a diffi-
cult and productive moment in transforming Indigenous-settler relations.
Our research has demonstrated that there is a deep desire by self-identi-
fied Indigenous and settler ally educators to do the necessary work to
effect positive change for all learners. Despite uncertainties and resistance,
individuals are moving forward within their spheres of influence to trans-
form classrooms, relationships, and institutions. These are sites of difficult
learning (Britzman, 2013) as curriculum and pedagogies engage not only
intellectual, but physical, emotional, and spiritual learning as well. These
are the spaces to which educators, students, and even administrators
bring their individually embodied experiences and identities, structured
within differently racialized collective histories of colonization and dias-
pora, and so there is much at stake in processes of transformation.
Decolonizing and reconstructing takes courage and tenacity. It's also
important to contextualize these conversations within pedagogical dis-

cussions of the risks of re-centering settler consciousness and leaving moves to innocence unexamined.

Post-secondary institutions, as creators and disseminators of Western knowledge systems, operate with powerful assimilative mechanisms and tendencies. Individual participants are differentially positioned to intervene in change processes in their institutions and in the classroom, whether as administrators or as faculty, and as Indigenous educators or as settler allies. In the stories that participants tell in our research, we see the messiness and unevenness of the processes of Indigenizing and decolonizing institutions. Indigenous participants describe their experiences of working in an entrenched system where they have to balance asserting their identities and enacting their truths with negotiating demands to fit into a highly regulated set of norms, expectations, and rewards. Institutional policies can enable or disempower classroom pedagogies, having direct implications for the practices of instructors and the resulting classroom experience for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. How individuals take up their responsibilities, build relationships, and decolonize/reconstruct their own consciousness and classroom practices has significant implications for the deep processes of Indigenous-settler reconciliation that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission envisioned for Canada's future.

Notes

[1] The afternoon panel and pedagogy showcase was co-organized with the Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences.

References

Absolon, K. (2010). Indigenous wholistic theory: A knowledge set for practice. *First Peoples Child & Family Review, 5*(2), 74-87.

Archibald, J.-A. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Baskin, C. (2006). Aboriginal worldviews as challenges and possibilities in social work education. *Critical Social Work, 7*(2). Retrieved from http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/aboriginal-world-views-as-challenges-and-possibilities-in-social-work-education

Baskin, C. (2016). Strong helpers' teachings: The value of Indigenous knowledges in the helping professions. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Basylak, D. (2002). Journeys to success: Perceptions of five female aboriginal high school graduates. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 26*(2), 134-151.

Battiste, M. (2000). Maintaining Aboriginal identity, language, and culture in modern society. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 192-208). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Battiste, M. (2004). *Animating sites of postcolonial education: Indigenous knowledge and the humanities.* Plenary address to Canadian Society for Studies in Education. Saskatoon, SK. Retrieved from http://www.usask.ca/education/people/battistem/csse_battiste.html

Battiste, M. (2012). *Bringing Aboriginal education into conventional education: Nourishing the learning spirit.* Paper presentation at 2012 Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Annual Meeting, Waterloo, ON.

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit.* Saskatoon, SK: Purich Press.

Battell Lowman, E., & Barker, A. J. (2015). *Settler: Identity and colonialism in 21st century Canada.* Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Belczewski, A. (2009). Decolonizing science education and the science teacher: A White teacher's perspective. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, 9*(3), 191-202.

Britzman, D. P. (2013). Between psychoanalysis and pedagogy: Scenes of rapprochement and alienation. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*(1), 95-117.

Bruyere, G. (Amawaajibitang), Hart, M. A. (Kaskitémahikan), & Sinclair, R. (Ótiskewápíwskew). (Eds.). (2009). *Wícihitowin: Aboriginal social work in Canada.* Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Cannon, M. J. (2012). Changing the subject in teacher education: Centering Indigenous, diasporic, and settler colonial relations. *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry, 4*(2), 21-37.

Christie, M., & Asmar, C. (2012). Indigenous knowers and knowledge in university teaching. In L. Hunt & D. Chalmers (Eds.), *University teaching in focus: A learning-centred approach* (pp. 214-232). Camberwell, AU: Australian Council for Educational Research Press.

Cote-Meek, S. (2014). *Colonized classrooms: Racism, trauma and resistance in post-secondary education.* Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Dei, G. J. S. (2011). Revisiting the question of the "Indigenous". In G. J. S. Dei (Ed.), *Indigenous philosophies and critical education: A reader* (pp. 21-33). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, 3*(3), 54-70.

Dion, S. D. (2009). *Braiding histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' experiences and perspectives.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Dumbrill, G. C., & Green, J. (2008). Indigenous knowledge in the social work academy. *Social Work Education, 27*(5), 489-503.

Freeman, V. (in press). Becoming real on Turtle Island: A pedagogy of relationship. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 40*(1).

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness.* Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Haig-Brown, C. (2012). Decolonizing diaspora: Whose traditional land are we on? In A. A. Abdi, (Ed.), *Decolonizing philosophies of education* (pp. 73-90). Rotterdam, NL: Sense Publishers.

Hampton, E. (1995). Towards a redefinition of Indian education. In M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* (pp. 5-46). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Hare, J. (2016). *"All of our responsibility"*: Instructor experiences in the teaching of required Indigenous education coursework. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 38*(1), 101-120.

Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal approach to helping.* Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Hesch, R. (1996). Antiracist educators Sui Generis? The dialectics of Aboriginal teacher education. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 33*(3), 269-289.

Hill, G., & Wilkinson, A. (2014). Indigegogy: A transformative Indigenous educational process. *Canadian Social Work Review, 31*(2), 175-193.

Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). First Nations and higher education: The four R's: Respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education, 30*(3), 1-15.

Kitchen, J., & Raynor, M. (2013). Indigenizing teacher education: An action research project. *Canadian Journal of Action Research, 14*(3), 40-58.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Kovach, M. (2010). *Toward an IK-friendly pedagogy in mainstream classrooms: A single site pilot study of non Indigenous faculty perspectives on integrating Indigenous Knowledges into their course instruction.* Unpublished report. Saskatoon, SK: College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

Kovach, M., Carriere, J., Montgomery, H., Barrett, M. J., & Gilles, C. (2015). *Indigenous presence. Experiencing and envisioning Indigenous knowledges within selected post-secondary sites of education and social work.* Saskatoon, SK: University of Saskatchewan, College of Education. Retrieved from http://www.usask.ca/education/profiles/kovach/Indigenous-Presence-2014-Kovach-M-et-al.pdf

Kuokkanen, R. (2008). *Reshaping the university: Responsibility, Indigenous epistemes, and the logic of the gift.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

MacDonald, M. (2016, April 6). Indigenizing the academy: What some universities are doing to weave Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledge into the fabric of their campuses. *University Affairs.* Ottawa, ON: University Affairs. Retrieved from http://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/indigenizing-the-academy/

Mackey, E. (2016). *Unsettled expectations: Uncertainty, land and settler decolonization.* Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Max, K. (2005). Anti-colonial research: Working as an ally with Aboriginal peoples. In G. J. S. Dei & G. S. Johal (Eds.), *Critical issues in anti-racist research methodologies* (pp. 79-94). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Merculieff, L., & Roderick, L. (2013). *Stop talking: Indigenous ways of teaching and learning and difficult dialogues in higher education.* Anchorage, AK: University of Alaska Anchorage.

Pete, S. (2016). 100 ways Indigenizing and decolonizing academic programs. *Aboriginal Policy Studies, 6*(1), 81-89. https://doi.org/10.5663/aps.v6i1.27455

Phillips, J. (2011). *Resisting contradictions: Non-Indigenous pre-service teacher responses to critical Indigenous studies.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

Razack, S. H. (1998). *Looking White people in the eye: Gender, race, and culture in courtrooms and classrooms.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *People to people, nation to nation: Highlights from the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.* Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply and Services.

Schick , C., & St. Denis, V. (2005). Troubling national discourses in anti-racist curricular planning. *Canadian Journal of Education, 28*(3), 295-317.

St. Denis, V. (2007). Aboriginal education and anti-racist education: building alliances across cultural and racial identity. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30* (4), 1068-1092.

Sinclair, R. (2004). Aboriginal social work education in Canada: Decolonizing pedagogy for the seventh generation. *First Peoples Child and Family Review, 1*(1), 49-61.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.* Winnipeg, MB: Author. Retrieved from htttp://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1*(1), 1-40.

Universities Canada. (2017, June 21). Survey shows Canada's universities advancing reconciliation. *Universities Canada.* Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/survey-shows-canadas-universities-advancing-reconciliation/

Walter, M., & Butler, K. (2013). Teaching race to teach Indigeneity. *Journal of Sociology, 49*(4), 397-410.

Williams, L., & Tanaka, M. (2007). *Schalay'nung Sxwey'ga*: Emerging cross cultural pedagogy in the academy. *Educational Insights, 8*(3). Retrieved from http://www.ccfi.educ. ubc.ca/publication/insights/v11n03/articles/williams.html