The "Build a Community" Exercise and Indigenous Content in Teacher Education

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As part of the Deepening Knowledge Project's efforts to create meaningful opportunities for teacher candidates to learn about Indigenous histories, current communities, and pedagogies, our team facilitates a "Build a Community" exercise with students who are enrolled in teacher education programs at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. As an embodied learning activity (Ng, 2012), "Build a Community" is one strategy we use to engage teacher candidates emotionally to learn about topics they are often resistant to, such as settler colonialism. It is also a gateway to host a dialogue on healing and reconciliation. This paper situates "Build a Community" in the literature to bring Indigenous content into teacher education and details our team's experience in developing an effective experience for both Indigenous and settler facilitators and audience members.

Keywords: Indigenous perspectives, teacher education, embodied learning

Introduction

On Tuesday, June 2, 2015, Canada's historic Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its recommendations after six years of gathering survivor testimony and documents on the Indian Residential School system. On that day, TRC commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson asked, "How honest are our textbooks about the traditional keepers of their land and their part in Canada's story? How frank and truthful are we with Canadian students about the history of residential schools and the role our governments and religious institutions played in its systematic attempt to erase the cultures of aboriginal people?"[1] During the closing ceremonies that week, the education system and, by extension, educators were implicated in the creation of stereotypes and misunderstandings about Indigenous peoples and communities within the general Canadian population. Prominent figures, including Justice Murray Sinclair, chief commissioner of the

TRC, and the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, asserted that better education was crucial to reconciliation going forward.[2]

The authors of this chapter are connected as part of the Deepening Knowledge Project (DKP) team at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Since 2008, this group has played a role in bringing Indigenous history, realities, and perspectives to teacher candidates and Master of Teaching students (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013; Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014). We have thought deeply about what material future teachers should include in their classrooms, drawing on the work of Indigenous scholars, educators, and community members. The team has also studied the pedagogies used in delivering this content to teacher candidates, to probe if they impact teacher candidate willingness and readiness to include Indigenous content in their teaching practice (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014).

One of our findings from a previous study was that teacher candidates often felt that teaching these perspectives is mostly for the benefit of Indigenous students (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014):

> Teacher candidates who had a deeper understanding coming into the program, or who developed such an understanding of these topics as a result of the curriculum, felt that they and their peers would benefit from more explicit discussion in class around the concepts of colonialism, racism, decolonization and appropriation. (p. 118)

We are now convinced that meaningfully including Indigenous perspectives in our work is essential to ensuring that educators learn about more than aspects of Indigenous culture, and that educators are also given opportunities in their teacher education programs and in their professional development to explore the depths of Indigenous-settler relationships on this land. Having a critical understanding of the colonial past and present of the Canadian nation seems to be connected with an increased willingness and readiness to teach Indigenous content in future classrooms (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014).

Since our findings emerged, we have been interested in how the pedagogical strategies we use can promote understanding in teacher candidates and inspire them to imagine how they can teach curriculum which stands in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and resists neocolonial curriculum. In this article, we will explore how the "Build a Community" exercise, an embodied activity, contributes to a process of learning for participants. We will speak about how this drama can be an effective way to broach subjects such as colonization, Indian Residential Schools, stereotypes, and settler privilege—concepts which often can be challenging to

convey in the teacher education program attended by mainly settler teacher candidates at OISE/UT.

Our Identities

Aliesha Arndt is Kanien'kehá:ka and was raised in the city of Toronto, Ontario. She has completed a Master of Teaching degree at OISE/UT and it was during her time enrolled in that program that she became a member of the DKP. Prior to joining, Aliesha worked for several years with First Nations young people, both on and off reserve. The "Build a Community" exercise was one of the tools she used in her work to encourage understanding and promote reconciliation. She introduced it to the Deepening Knowledge Project team when she arrived. "Build a Community" was first introduced to Aliesha as the "Build a Village" exercise, when she was trained to facilitate it in preparation for a role focused on youth and reconciliation. After bringing it to the DKP, Aliesha worked with Nancy and Angela to modify the script and create a broader curriculum to frame and provide context for the exercise.

Dr. Angela Nardozi is a settler on Turtle Island who grew up in Markham, Ontario. She graduated from the BEd program in 2008 and became employed at OISE/UT after working and researching with a First Nation community in Treaty Three territory. She served as project manager of the DKP from 2011 to 2016, and became responsible for co-developing and co-presenting workshops in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program with Indigenous colleagues about Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous-settler relationships (Nardozi & Mashford-Pringle, 2014). She is now a sessional lecturer in the Master of Teaching program and writes a popular blog for educators incorporating Indigenous content called Listen & Learn[3].

Nancy Steele also identifies as a settler on Turtle Island. She was born and raised in the United States and, after living for a time in England, immigrated to Canada in 1976. Nancy began teaching in 1969 and spent the majority of her career teaching in the Toronto District School Board with a focus on social justice and conflict management. She was a sessional lecturer at OISE/UT from 2005 to 2015, working with teacher candidates in the consecutive and concurrent ITE programs and later in the Master of Teaching (MT) program. She joined the DKP at its inception and was a coordinator for Central Option, a professional learning community of approximately sixty students each year which had Indigenous education as one of its focuses. Nancy continues to work with the DKP at OISE/UT, co-creating and co-delivering workshops with teacher candidates on Indigenous content and pedagogy.

Transformation, Reconciliation, and Drama

One of the fundamental beliefs underpinning the work of the Deepening Knowledge Project is that learning about Indigenous perspectives and content is not just for the benefit of Indigenous students but for all students living on this land, regardless of ancestry. In her chapter "Learning from Indigenous Knowledge in Education" (Hare, 2011), Jan Hare (Anishinaabe) also speaks to the importance of making space for both Indigenous and settler peoples to learn about Indigenous realities. Hare (2011) affirms the importance of this learning to contribute to healing of Indigenous-settler relationships, stating that:

> Reconciliation between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada requires both widespread awareness and understanding of the colonial history we must now all struggle to overcome as well as a deep respect for the future that Aboriginal people hope to build for our children, families, and communities. (p. 107)

In our work, we have found that information alone is not enough to move most settlers to take responsibility as treaty beneficiaries for their part in Indigenous-settler relationships. This is partially because of Canada's formal education system and the dominant North American culture that most settlers have been immersed in during their entire lives. In many cases, this has worked to shield them from Indigenous realities. Kerr (2014) argues that:

> People in settler nation-states have been immersed in problematic narratives that impose a view that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada occupy separate realities, leading to faulty assumptions that Indigenous concerns, perspectives and realities should be the preoccupation solely of Indigenous peoples. (p. 97)

Both Indigenous and settler peoples are tied to colonialism and Cannon (2012) argues that teacher education must be a site where non-Indigenous peoples learn about histories of settler colonialism. Getting all teacher candidates to understand that they have a role in this process and that this material is for all students has been a challenge. Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005) and Schick and St. Denis (2005) speak about the reality of teacher candidates across Canada who begin their training mainly unaware of concepts of White supremacy and social privilege. Indeed, teacher training as a whole in Canada continues to be built upon neoliberal and ultimately colonizing values (Sanford, Williams, Hopper, & McGregor, 2012). The discourse of multiculturalism, also present in education, is criticized by many, including Kanu (2011) and St. Denis (2011), for rendering Indigenous peoples as another so-called minority group rather than acknowledging their original and longstanding place on this land.

To teach this in the future, we agree with Kerr (2014) that not only do teacher candidates need to learn content, they need to:

> engage in a critical practice of questioning their own impositions and priorities and that requiring teacher candidates to engage with Indigenous perspectives is a request to understand the material and discursive aspects of the context in which they desire to teach in—a Settler nation-state—and it should be an essential ethical requirement for any teacher in this context, not something separate. (p. 97)

However, we have faced real practical challenges with this task and sympathize with Kerr (2014) as she ponders the challenge: "How I will do this work of engaging with difficult knowledges, as an instructor, in a way that does not result in an epistemic collision with my students and a refusal to engage" (p. 97).

Colonization is a process which unfolds geographically and economically (Tuck & Yang, 2012), but in our classrooms we are interested in beginning to interrupt its processes for the individual—emotionally, mentally and physically—so that students begin to think about its local and global ramifications. Ng (2012) is one scholar who conceptualizes colonization as taking affect in these body-based realms. Battiste (2000) articulates the concept of *cognitive imperialism* and Ahmad (2003) speaks of *Occidentosis* or *Western-stuckness*. How can we interrupt and perhaps bring about a process of unsettling our colonial past and present?

We theorize the "Build a Community" exercise as an *embodied learning* experience, as articulated by Dr. Roxana Ng. According to Ng (2012), Embodied Learning pedagogies are those which combine mindfulness and engagement with the whole body. Through these modalities, these pedagogies work to (re)integrate body, mind, and spirit (Ng, 2012, p. 360). We are not the only ones to use a theatre exercise in teacher education in an attempt to interrupt colonial processes of content delivery. Butterwick and Selman (2012) write about the embodied theatre practice they brought to their teaching at the University of British Columbia as being an effective way of revealing oppression, and that by setting firm boundaries within the class and the exercise itself, they are able to help teacher candidates safely explore their emotions and avoid guilt paralysis (pp. 67-68).

The OISE Context

Our work is located at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), formerly in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program which was the largest Bachelor of Education program in Ontario up until its closure in the spring of 2015, and currently in the Masters of Teaching (MT) program. The authors have been part of the Deepening Knowledge Project (DKP) team[4], a special project that was ini-

tiated in 2008 by two professors, Dr. Restoule and Dr. Broad, with the aim of attracting Indigenous peoples to OISE/UT's teacher education programs. The group of Indigenous and settler professors, instructors, and graduate students they assembled realized that to achieve this goal in the long-term, more Indigenous content needed to be embedded in the ITE curriculum. Members of the DKP have been involved in teaching and research towards this end (Nardozi & Mashford-Pringle, 2014; Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014). They coordinated and delivered in-class workshops to all teacher candidates about Indigenous perspectives. The DKP team has also developed a popular website for teacher resources.[5] In 2012, the DKP began working within the Master of Teaching program at OISE/UT to graduate qualified teachers; this work continues solely within the MT program as it completely replaced the ITE program in fall 2015.

The "Build a Community" Exercise

The "Build a Community" exercise that we facilitate is our own adaptation of a widely used script that goes by multiple names, including "Build a Village" and "The Circle and the Box." These exercises are often programmed via training delivered in cross-cultural and Indigenous healing contexts. Aliesha first encountered the exercise while attending training for a role focused on youth in reconciliation.

In our adaptation, "Build a Community" is a teacher-facilitated exercise that assigns participants different community roles (children, parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents/Elders, and protectors). The exercise requires that, one by one, these groups form concentric circles with the children in the centre, their parents around them, followed by the layers made up of the aunties and uncles, the grandparents, and finally the hunters, gatherers, and warriors. Within the centre circle that the children have formed, items are placed that reflect different values and aspects of culture that Indigenous and settler people alike hold as central to their way of life and identity. Before beginning, the facilitators invite all participants to create these items; we have found that this activity initiates the investment participants have in the community and is co-created in the exercise.

As participants take their place within the circle, the facilitator connects each role to its community obligation and importance to the survival of the community. Our goal is to connect to aspects of how all communities function rather than simply to describe a First Nation community pre-contact. Another key understanding that is communicated explicitly by the facilitator and implicitly by the structure within the exercise is the value of children and those that guide them, and the value of knowledge keepers

and providers. This is meant to foster the understanding among participants that everyone in a community contributes to its success. Here, facilitators make connections between First Nation understandings about community, and beliefs and values held by communities in Canada and around the globe, creating a point of connection for all participants in the "Build a Community" exercise.

Upon having each participant situated within the exercise and individually connected to it in whatever way works for them, the facilitator then takes the group through what colonization has done to First Nations communities across Turtle Island. With the introduction of disease, prohibition of cultural practice, the implementation of the reserve system and rations, Indian Residential Schools, and finally the intergenerational impact each of these chapters of history has had on First Nation peoples in Canada, participants begin to see the circles they created falling apart. Facilitators encourage participants to remain physically, emotionally, and mentally present during the process by asking questions designed to have participants access what they are feeling in the moment and to imagine what someone who held the role they now occupy in our imaginary community might have been feeling.

Eventually, what remains are only remnants of the community participants had built. The children and objects representing identity that once formed the nucleus are almost entirely missing and those people originally meant to preserve and support the community are nearly eliminated. At this point, participants are asked to bring mindful awareness to their own experience and to think about their own communities and stories. They are then asked to try to visualize and empathize with First Nation communities who actually experienced the events that were briefly described. Among the final questions posed to participants is, "Now, how do we fix this?"—a question that most often leaves participants wondering how anyone could dare assume that the best way to fix years of colonization is to just "get over it." From here, the facilitator then uses the emotion and newfound understanding participants have gained through their participation in the exercise to host a dialogue on healing, reconciliation, and the roles all Canadians can take up in those processes.

Reflections on the Exercise

When Aliesha first encountered a version of the "Build a Community" exercise several years ago, she struggled immensely with its contents. She had trained with the person credited with creating its structure, and she shared her story with Nancy and Angela of adapting the script she was taught in order to address the concerns she had from her particular expe-

riences with the exercise. As a First Nations young person, she felt that the way the exercise she experienced was delivered framed the lived experience of First Nations peoples solely as realities plagued with violence and addiction. Without any real focus on Indigenous strength or resistance included in this initial exercise, she wondered if her peers were left with a patronizing or patriarchal understanding of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous histories. She worried that the frequent use of words such as "Indian," "alcoholic," "addict," "helpless," and "victim" would solidify and perpetuate existing stereotypes and power dynamics in the minds of participants. She also worried about how this thinking might inform the process of relationship building and reconciliation. What was missing was another dimension to the script that moved beyond stereotypes and tapped into this powerful teaching moment. Aliesha's adaptation moved the focus of the "Build a Community" exercise away from the stereotypes, shame, and humiliation placed on First Nations people. Recrafted, the experience leads to an increased understanding of intergenerational trauma, legacy issues among some First Nations families, and the need for healing: a process that bridges the historic context of colonization with the process of truth telling that is at the heart of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. By reimagining the exercise in this way, Aliesha no longer felt it made herself and other Indigenous peoples vulnerable and the subjects of a settler gaze. Instead, the focus of the exercise had now shifted to highlight a need for healing and the reconciliation of history and relationships in both Indigenous and settler communities.

In her adaptation of the "Build a Community" exercise, Aliesha felt that both Indigenous and settler participants would leave the exercise with an understanding that all Canadians are a product of the history of colonization in Canada and are surviving its impacts, rather than solely focusing on what she terms "Indian trauma." In the version she adapted, participants are still asked to attempt to understand the perspective of Indigenous peoples but in a way that honours their own past and present circumstances. Through questions which encourage mindfulness and inner reflection, Aliesha's version allows each individual's experience to help them better understand Canadian history and what it has meant for Indigenous peoples.

Aliesha built a script around this exercise to provide to those being trained and, then with the support of co-authors Nancy and Angela, created a series of suggested topics and prompts to encourage teachers who facilitate the workshop to incorporate "Build a Community" into a broader unit. Our collective hope was to promote knowledge of Indigenous histories, stress the importance of oral accounts, and provide a clearer

understanding of current realities of Indigenous and settler relations. As this process unfolded and we began to examine the "Build a Community" exercise more closely, our team made connections to the concept of embodied learning (Ng, 2012) and began to theorize together about how the exercise could be used to facilitate a transformation in learning, understandings of Canadian history, and pedagogy. Ultimately, we wanted the teacher candidates we work with to use the exercise to facilitate a similar process with their students.

Implementing the Exercise

In our work, we have found that implementing a variety of pedagogical strategies is effective in reaching most teacher candidates. For some candidates, theoretical readings are what make the difference; for others, a guest speaker from a First Nation, Inuit, or Métis community may inspire them to begin to look critically at their teaching practice. However, these strategies do not capture everyone and often still leave teacher candidates wondering exactly what they can teach once they enter their own classrooms. Most teacher candidates we encounter in our work report having little knowledge about Indigenous peoples and communities (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013; Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014). By layering strategies, we can reinforce information, reach as many teacher candidates as possible, and demonstrate that there is not just one way to teach content specific to Indigenous issues.

Nancy had been using drama structures in her Indigenous-focused cohort to explore primary/ junior Indigenous picture books about Indian Residential Schools since the inception of the Deepening Knowledge Project. As a former teacher, she was aware of the transformative power of drama. She had found that, to the extent that participants identify with the roles they are playing, they experience what happens in the drama as happening to themselves. This leads to the development of empathy for those whose lived experience the exercises depict. Despite the fact that these adult teacher candidates knew they were in a dramatic role-play, many reported intense feelings of loss and newfound empathy for Indigenous children during these activities. One teacher candidate wrote to us after the school year and shared:

> I was profoundly moved by the rich significance of the exercise. The silent, collective graveness that emerged from empathy amongst us was palpable and with it came the realization—symbolically communicated through drama—that we are all part of this story, and have a role to play in its unfolding (personal communication, June 23, 2015).

Training Teacher Candidates

We recognize the potential that the "Build a Community" exercise has to be an effective tool to promote healing and reconciliation in teacher training. We imagine a future where it is used in all classrooms in Canada to bring about understanding of contemporary Indigenous-settler relations. Nancy and Angela recognized from their work that while teacher candidates may come with or develop a sense of the importance of including Indigenous perspectives on a variety of subjects in classrooms, many have expressed a lack of confidence or even a fear of teaching this material (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014). The reasons candidates give for this lack of confidence vary from not knowing enough to being afraid of reactions from Indigenous and settler parents and administrators (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, & James, 2014). To encourage the candidates to incorporate this exercise, we felt that candidates not only had to obtain the script but also needed to experience the "Build a Community" exercise for themselves and engage in discussion about concerns that could arise, before they could bring it to their future classrooms.

Our team decided to develop and deliver training sessions for candidates at OISE who were interested in adding the exercise to their teaching, a practice we continue to this day. Our goal is to prepare teacher candidates to bring this to their students with confidence but also with care.

One of our primary concerns was to prepare the candidates the best we could to facilitate "Build a Community" in a way that was safe for Indigenous students who may be in their classrooms. This was critical for all of us, especially after Aliesha shared her discomfort in her first experience with the exercise. To do this, we decided to incorporate two components in the training. The first was explicit discussion on practical ways to create a healthy space for Indigenous and settler students and ways to build relationships with Indigenous and settler parents or guardians. The second was to include the "Build a Community" exercise script in a package that came with pre- and post-exercise lesson suggestions that teachers could then use to prepare and debrief both groups of students.

We held our first training in April 2015 and invited all teacher candidates and MT students who had participated in the "Build a Community" exercise at least once before, along with all OISE/UT instructors. In all, we had 15 participants. Aliesha led the training, with assistance from Angela and Nancy. Participants were each given roles and took the lead in facilitating the workshop, as they would in their future classrooms. As the activity unfolded, we paused and reflected frequently along the way, either to answer participant questions, to explain aspects of the context further,

or to point out areas that the future facilitators might want to use as teaching points and/or questions that are likely to arise from students and how best to address these kinds of questions. The teacher candidates who decided to participate in the training were all enrolled in Central Option, meaning they had a focus on Indigenous education which was unique to them at OISE/UT. They had also attended one or two different sessions of "Build a Community" led by our team, meaning they had previous experience with the exercise.

Critical Elements of an Effective Exercise

When used in classrooms, the "Build a Community" exercise shows promising potential to contribute to participants' journeys towards healing relationships and reconciliation. For this potential to be realized, we believe that there are certain elements that must be present. As we prepared teacher candidates to take up the workshop, we attempted to highlight a number of important elements for them, as discussed below.

The role of the facilitator is crucial to the success of the "Build a Community" exercise, including its potential as a conduit of embodied learning.
As was shared earlier, Aliesha's first participation in one form of this exercise left her feeling uneasy and upset as she considered her own feelings and those of her fellow Indigenous participants, and the impressions she could only imagine the settler participants were developing. To avoid this, we believe educators who wish to be facilitators must be trained in what terminology is best to use throughout the workshop. They also must become familiar with the historical realities and intergenerational impacts of the events that unfold in the workshop.

The facilitator must create a healthy space for all participants in the room.
It is the responsibility of the facilitator to create a healthy space for the "Build a Community" exercise to unfold, whether he or she is a classroom teacher and has an ongoing relationship with the students or is meeting the students for the first time that day. A healthy space is important so that participants are encouraged to feel welcome and so that the learning takes place in an environment where everyone has the chance to be listened to and included, if they so wish. This also means that participants know that they have the right to absent themselves if they need to at any time and seek out additional supports where needed.

When training the teacher candidates, we spoke to them explicitly about strategies for developing a healthy space for Indigenous students and what might make that space unsafe or one where Indigenous partici-

pants might be further oppressed. The first suggestion we had for them is to pay special attention to who is speaking. Care should be taken to ensure that settler people do not dominate the conversation but also that Indigenous participants are never called upon to speak on behalf of all Indigenous peoples. The second was to ensure that if comments or questions based on implicit or explicit racist assumptions are brought up, that they are dealt with knowledgeably and immediately, and in a non-defensive manner. In this way, the facilitators promote mutual understanding and create a space where communication and knowledge is used to challenge the underpinning colonial frames tied to stereotypes that are the basis of racist assumptions.

It is also important for all facilitators to remember that there may be participants in the exercise who have either personal or familial experience with child apprehension and may be in the system at the present moment. To ensure that they and all participants are aware of what is going to unfold, we eliminate the element of surprise by giving a brief explanation of what will happen during the exercise before we begin. In our script, the facilitators explain that each person will be invited to take on a role of a community member, that no one will have any lines or be asked to "play a character" but that we will instead witness and feel what transpires when the Colonizer arrives, including when children are taken away. At this point, we remind participants of the different ways that they are invited to take care of themselves in the space, including asking for support from a facilitator or other participant, or absenting themselves from the exercise. Our script also reminds all participants before beginning to treat one another respectfully within the exercise, in remembrance that we are reviewing real histories and contemporary realities that may comprise the lived or ancestral experience of members of our group.

Facilitators must recognize that, while for some the exercise may be an introduction to Indigenous history, for intergenerational survivors like Aliesha the exercise is part of a healing dialogue that can at times be emotionally painful. This history and the legacies resulting from colonization are part of a living history that is embodied in the lived realities of survivors and their families as many struggle to move from a life of survival to a path of healing. This may mean beginning the conversation with a group by establishing a set of boundaries for the exercise and the ensuing conversation. One tool that we have used in the past is the framework of "courageous conversations" which identifies principles that are laid out to navigate all interactions (Singleton & Hays, 2008).

Facilitators may also want to prepare participants for the feelings they might experience as the exercise unfolds. When hearing about Indigenous

perspectives on historical events for the first time, it has been our experience that settler people commonly feel guilt and anger, and sometimes become resistant and feel that they are targets of blame. Participants should be briefed about these and other emotions, and instructed to acknowledge and sit with them while, at the same time, continue to be fully present in the workshop. As the "Build a Community" exercise unfolds, participants should be reminded that the exercise is not meant to assign blame to individuals but rather to reveal important history and current events in Canada, and encourage each participant to use this new knowledge to challenge and examine their own beliefs about that history and its consequences in our society. We have found that by the end of the exercise, settler participants often begin to express thoughts that recognize that settler people continue to be implicated on a systemic level in the oppression of Indigenous peoples.

Facilitators must be prepared to deftly respond to the questions that are posed to them during the exercise.

This is connected to creating a healthy space; how the facilitators answer the questions that may emerge as the "Build a Community" exercise unfolds is critical for setting the tone. Deftly answering questions means that when questions are asked, facilitators must really listen to them, and take into account who is asking and who is listening, while the asking is occurring. Facilitators should ask themselves not only what this participant is asking but also what assumptions the participant is basing his or her question on; they should also consider whether they should address those as well. In our experience, questions are sometimes posed based on problematic stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and about history. Exposing and addressing those assumptions and stereotypes creates room for rich learning experiences for participants.

It is also critical that facilitators model kindness and humility in the delivery of the workshop. This response goes far to create a healthy space for Indigenous participants who will see that, while the exercise is going to take on and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, it does not place them in the position of being a representative for all Indigenous peoples. For settler participants, our aim is for them to be challenged to look at how they are complicit in colonialism in their present life but not to take on the entire burden of historical wrongs. Most importantly, neither group of participants should feel judged as they participate. Since the exercise is as much about creating the conditions for a conversation as it is about the conversation itself, it is important for facilitators to be clear that they do not have all the answers and that together the exercise provides the chance

to think about what they do not know and what they still need to explore.

It is perfectly acceptable for facilitators to not know all the answers, and to own and express the experience of not knowing when this occurs. So many settler pre-service teachers express a fear of "not knowing enough" when it comes to Indigenous content. We feel that while some knowledge is essential to successfully facilitate this exercise, there will always be a feeling for many that they do not know enough. Instead of preventing them from addressing these issues in class, teachers can model the process of "not knowing" to their students and perhaps even take the opportunity to discuss with them potential reasons for this gap in their knowledge, such as the historical exclusion of Indigenous peoples from the curriculum and/or misinformation that has been perpetuated in the Canadian school system. Questions which remain unanswered can also become a launchpad for future classroom or individual inquiry and research, on the parts of both students and educators.

A successful facilitator embraces the diverse and organic teaching moments that arise during each iteration of the "Build a Community" exercise.

The opportunities to make connections for participants and expand their knowledge and experience differ each time the "Build a Community" exercise runs and depend largely on the participants who are involved. Participants are playing a variety of roles within the community in the exercise and, for a mere moment, they have the opportunity to embody intense emotions and experiences.

As we were going through the script during one facilitator training, a number of moments arose which presented the opportunity to address the origins of settler privilege over Indigenous peoples on this land and we encouraged trainees to do so. We know that subjects like settler privilege are often difficult to broach with settler students because they often deny them or become emotional, get defensive, and shut down, as they do in discussion about White privilege (Solomona et al., 2005). The "Build a Community" exercise does not require settler teacher candidates to read theories to face their privilege but invites them to feel and embody the emotional truth. Butterwick and Selman (2012) say that embodied theatre practice can bring about experiences and shifts that are "felt in the body, often before intellectual interpretation" (p. 66). Negative emotions and resistance often arise when we intellectually teach about privilege but by transferring us all—mindfully—to the colonial space where we can see/visualize the conflict, the injustice, and the privilege or lack thereof in those spaces. The facilitator only has to point it out during the exercise and name it.

Among the most important learnings teacher candidates and students can experience is to learn about and understand the notion of privilege. Without recognizing privilege, people do not see the complexity of situations and may refer to feelings of pity and view Indigenous peoples through the lens of paternalism. A skilled facilitator will be able to spot the moments where privilege can be highlighted and do so in a way that invites all participants to the discussion. Because the activity is embodied, participants can see the origins of privilege and places where their lived experiences diverge or converge with those reflected in the drama around them.

Incorporate and foster mindfulness throughout the exercise.

The mindfulness components of the "Build a Community" exercise are crucial to enable and foster a shift in understanding for participants. Facilitators should carefully lead participants to reflect and bring mindful attention to these aspects of themselves at the points indicated in the script we provide for them. Prior to running the exercise, facilitators should review the mindfulness pieces in the script and ensure that they are appropriate for and relatable to their audience. These exercises within the "Build a Community" process can help participants visualize and participate in the activity and embody the learning in a way that goes beyond reading a text.

The mindful engagement built into the "Build a Community" exercise may trigger a transformative experience; that is, it may facilitate a change in the understanding and perceptions of the history of Canada that participants hold. We have found in our research with teacher candidates that transformation is an essential component to their willingness to incorporate Indigenous content into their future classrooms (Kanu, 2011; Zurzolo, 2007).

Impact of the "Build a Community" Exercise

In our experience in facilitating the exercise with children as young as eight years old, we have continually witnessed the willingness of the children to listen and their bravery to feel the story that is being told. In listening to their feedback during the debrief portion of the exercise, we have been filled with hope as children tell their own stories and express their own desires for reconciliation. Often as children reflect on the history, they come back to their inability to even imagine what it would be like to be taken away from their homes, how it would feel to be told that their identity needed to be eliminated, or what it would be like to watch the dismantling of their entire communities. These are the levels on which children have

proven to relate to and identify with the history they are taught throughout this exercise.

Because of this empathy that children allow themselves to feel, other points are raised nearly every time we facilitate the exercise. Children ask how something like this could have happened in Canada, why they have not heard about it before, and what we in our communities are doing to make it right. This kind of empathy and these important questions fuel meaningful conversations about the nature of colonization, healing, reconciliation, and privilege that students often continue even after leaving their session. It is interesting to note that while we push for teachers to situate the exercise within a larger unit on Indigenous history and present-day realities, often after having participated in the "Build a Community" exercise the children themselves ask to learn more. We have been asked repeatedly by young people what they need to do to make sure that everyone hears this story, how and where they can learn more about Indigenous peoples in the past and present, and what they can do to be a part of reconciliation.

We have struggled with whether or not children as young as eight are ready to digest this painful history but each time we facilitate the "Build a Community" exercise they prove to us that not only are they willing and able to take it in they are ready to become allies on the journey to reconciliation. We have had students approach us after the exercise to let us know that they plan on telling their parents and friends about what they have learned, something we always remind them is a huge part of reconciliation.

This newfound understanding and the desire to spread that knowledge is a part of Aliesha's own journey to healing and reconciliation as a Mohawk woman and intergenerational survivor of Indian Residential Schools, as the voices of these children fuel her in the work she does. The hope that stems from the next generation's desire to create change is Aliesha's and our collective motivation, and it is something we witness each time we enter a room full of young people ready to participate in the "Build a Community" exercise. We strongly believe that the learning we have witnessed in young people is transformative in nature and should be motivation enough for teachers of all backgrounds to learn to carefully bring the "Build a Community" exercise into their classrooms.

Conclusion

The end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's work provides an opportunity for Indigenous and settler peoples to find ways to fundamentally transform the relationship between the two groups and this country. This is going to require, among other actions, spaces within

educational institutions where Indigenous and settler peoples of all ages can come together and build positive relationships. It will also require settler peoples to unlearn and revisit their understanding of Indigenous peoples, histories, and current communities.

During his presentation at the 2015 *Decolonizing the Spirit Conference* at OISE/UT from whence this chapter emerged, Bryan Loucks articulated a question which we have been intimately engaged with as well: "How do you provide sensitive content without alienating (settler) teachers?" We are not interested in making excuses for settler teachers (DiAngelo, 2011). We do wish that they could all take in Indigenous perspectives that they were not exposed to throughout their own education, embrace them, and seamlessly incorporate them into their classrooms. But through our teaching we have found that this is often not the case. Settler teacher candidates instead display a variety of resistances (Restoule & Nardozi, in press). What we must do then is find a way to do this such that it does not alienate teachers, as Loucks stated. And we must do this well so that Canadians receive better information about Indigenous peoples as quickly as possible. Teachers need to go beyond dream catchers, teepees, and totem poles, and explore the complications of the historical and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples in this country. A carefully crafted facilitation of the "Build a Community" exercise amidst broader learning about Indigenous peoples, histories, and realities has the potential to create a transformative experience for participants and trigger a broad shift in their ideas of history and current events. At the closing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the commissioners clearly recognized that Indigenous history and current realities have a significant impact on all Canadians and, as such, it is the responsibility of all Canadians to walk the path towards healing relationships and reconciliation. We three authors believe strongly in this vision and are excited by the good work that educators across this country are doing to explore this responsibility. We strongly believe that embodied practices are an effective addition to this work.

Notes

[1] http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-report-calls-for-broad-recommendations/article24761778/

[2] http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/education-only-way-forward-says-gov-gen-david-johnston-as-trc-ends-1.3098297

[3] http://www.angelanardozi.com/listenandlearn

[4] The project is funded by the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

[5] www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge

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