

Living Between Truth and Reconciliation: Responsibilities, Colonial Institutions, and Settler Scholars

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Reconciliation must become a way of life. It will take many years to repair damaged trust and relationships in Aboriginal communities and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Reconciliation not only requires apologies, reparations, the relearning of Canada's national history, and public commemoration, but also needs real social, political, and economic change. Ongoing public education and dialogue are essential to reconciliation. Governments, churches, educational institutions, and Canadians from all walks of life are responsible for taking action on reconciliation in concrete ways, working collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples. Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us.

(The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, pp. 240-241)

We are at that crossroads in our country, the one where we face the decision of whether we strive for true reconciliation or whether we remain a country in denial. There is no more room for the politics of divisiveness. Now is the time where we must all come together as a nation not to just accept but begin to reconcile with what is our darkest stain. As Justice Sinclair so clearly pointed out in those days in Ottawa, this is not just a First Nations problem or issue. It is a Canadian one.

(Joseph Boyden, 2015, paragraph 23)

[Jesse] The University of Ottawa, along with its surrounding affluent neighbourhood of Sandy Hill, is curtained on its three sides by *rideaux*—the Rideau River (east), the Rideau Canal (west), and Rideau Street (north). The word “rideau” is from the French word for “curtain,” and is just one of many European words imposed onto this landscape by Canada’s settler society. In Ottawa, however, this one name seems to take on particular symbolic significance, suggesting all of the “curtains” we hang around ourselves as a settler society, hiding ourselves from seeing the colonized landscape we occupy. That these *rideaux* surround the University of Ottawa seems particularly fitting, given this institution’s complex colonial history. (It was originally founded by the Oblates, who also ran most of the Catholic residential schools in Canada, TRC, 2015a, p. 52.) The situation, however, extends beyond this one institution. The name “Rideau” hangs as a curtain over this entire colonial capital, disguising our ongoing presence on unceded Algonquin territory. If you follow Rideau Street west from campus, over the Rideau canal, it becomes Wellington Street, and runs past some of the central institutions that govern our settler state: Parliament, the Supreme Court, and the



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national archives. To the east, past the Rideau River, Rideau Street turns into Montreal Road, running through the less affluent neighbourhood of Vanier, where much of Ottawa's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit population has taken up residence. In the midst of Montreal Road's decaying architecture, the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, a beautiful new edifice of glass and stone, stands out as a major landmark, and a visual sign of Indigenous resurgence in these territories.

Residing and working among these geographical grids of signification, what are our responsibilities as settler educators and researchers? As curriculum scholars, we are particularly aware of how this colonial history has manifested itself in our educational curricula, which have historically looked elsewhere (to Europe or the United States) to define who we are here in Canada (Tomkins, 1981). In response to this history, Cynthia Chambers (1999) has challenged Canadian curriculum scholars to write about "the particular places and regions where we live and work" (p. 147), a theme which has since been taken up numerous times by Chambers (2003, 2008, 2012) and by others (Blood, Chambers, Donald, Hasebe-Ludt, & Big Head, 2012, Ng-A-Fook, 2007, 2014). As settler scholars, therefore, our research activities should not be directed solely to our immediate context of settler cosmopolitanism—a context that we have artificially constructed over the landscape. Instead, how do we begin to look beyond the curricular curtains to the pre-existing relational landscape, and its prior "natural context" that makes all of this possible (Henderson, 2000)? We live among a complex topography of relations that are "inscribed in our theorizing, as either presence or absence, whether we want them there or not" (Chambers, 1999, p. 147). In the work we have undertaken here, we have attempted to take on this challenge.

The complexity of Ottawa's colonial geography became particularly clear in the spring of 2015, when two conferences hosted at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education—the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS) and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE)—coincided with the ceremonies related to the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) final report on residential schooling. While both conferences made concerted efforts to create a central place for Algonquin Anishinàbeg voices, there was still a disconnect between these different events taking place in the same city. Some of the scholars attending the conferences took the time to join the Walk for Reconciliation down Wellington Street, or to attend the final TRC ceremonies, but to do so meant missing concurrent conference sessions. There are complex curricular issues here related to the coordination of a conference for local, provincial, national, or international communities of scholars. Yet if we, as Canadian educational researchers, cannot mobilize to engage with Canada's shameful history of "cultural genocide" perpetuated against Indigenous peoples through state sponsored educational programs like the Indian Residential Schooling system (TRC, 2015a, p. 1), how can we expect the rest of the settler population to do so?

Four years ago in this same journal, Smith, Ng-A-Fook, Berry, and Spence (2011) reflected on their various responsibilities to take up the history of residential schooling as settler researchers and educators. With the final release of the TRC report this spring, now is a good time for us to revisit their concerns, as a new group of settler curriculum scholars teaching and learning within this colonial capital. Our essay mirrors this previous publication in form and content. To do so, we present a series of reflective narrative snapshots (adapted from our presentations at the 2015 IAACS and CSSE conferences which were hosted at the University of Ottawa). In that previous publication, Ng-A-Fook (2011) drew on the work of Paulo Freire to argue that these multiple perspectives on residential school history represented the "theoretical limit-situations associated with appropriating Indigenous historical



knowledges” (p. 63). A limit-situation, according to Freire (1970/2005), is a situation that brings us up against the limits of our current understanding and forces us to expand our awareness. In his words:

People, as beings “in a situation,” find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. They will tend to reflect on their own “situationality” to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it. Human beings are because they are in a situation. And they will be more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it. (p. 109)

The TRC’s report calls for settler scholars and educators to revisit their past, present, and future limit-situations. As Julia Emberley (2013) notes, the testimonies of residential school survivors collected by the TRC are provoking a shift within Eurocentric epistemologies. “[O]ne important aspect of this epistemic shift,” she contends, “involves the recognition of a speaking subject that is situated in a field of multiple subjugated and non-subjugated interdependencies” (p. 143). The perspectives we present, therefore, are not intended to embody the authoritative voice of a single (colonial) epistemology, but four situated responses to how the TRC calls us forth as non-Indigenous scholars to enact reconciliation in our research and our teaching. In what follows:

1. Jesse presents an analysis of the inclusion (and marginalization) of Indigenous perspectives in Ontario’s civics curriculum, arguing that the continuing subjugation of Indigenous to Eurocentric perspectives indicates the need for more radical approaches to curricular decolonization.
2. Julie shares her conversation with a team of settler educators in a Quebec college context trying to indigenize their institution, and suggests the types of personal, collective, and institutional transformations that this work involves.
3. Ferne presents findings from her interviews with teacher candidates completing a voluntary practicum in an Indigenous community, and argues for more intentional inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and teaching methods in teacher education.
4. Nicholas addresses the different strategic ways in which his Faculty of Education is attempting to respond to the recommendations put forth by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education Accord on Indigenous Education, the 13 Principles, and TRC *Calls for Action*.

In presenting our situated perspectives on the TRC, we demonstrate how we continue to come up against limit-situations in our inherited settler epistemologies, and how these call us forth—past the curtains that hide the colonized landscape—to re/envision our future participation with Indigenous communities toward reconciliation. As the TRC (2015a) states: “Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us” (p. 241). And so we must begin.

The marginalization of Indigenous perspectives in the Ontario curriculum

[Jesse] The final report of the TRC (2015a) has confirmed what Indigenous scholars have long argued: that Indigenous peoples’ experiences of education in Canada have been shaped by a distant and colonial government that assumes it knows what children need better than their own families. Battiste (1998) calls this educational model “cognitive imperialism” (p. 17). As she describes:



This fragmented accumulation of knowledge builds on Eurocentric strategies that maintain their knowledge is universal, that it derives from standards of good that are universally appropriate, that the ideas and ideals are so familiar they need not be questioned, and that all questions can be posed and resolved within it. (p. 21)

The specific form of cognitive imperialism has changed, but the underlying logic continues. According to Weenie (2008), it currently translates into the experience of being placed on the periphery of the curriculum. Indigenous cultures are included, but in simplistic and tokenistic ways—what Battiste (2011) calls an “add-and-stir” approach—that in no way disrupt the central Eurocentric assumptions that govern our educational system (Battiste, 2013, Cherubini & Hodson, 2008, Donald, 2009).

In this section, I explore some of these issues by comparing the inclusion of Indigenous content in the current and previous versions of the Grade 10 Civics curriculum produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME, 2005, 2013). While such analyses are necessary across the curriculum, citizenship is a particularly problematic concept for Indigenous students (Deer, 2009), making civics an important place to start. In analyzing this curriculum as a *document*, I am not assuming that policy translates into classroom practice in a simplistic way. As Redwing Saunders and Hill (2007) have argued: “Although curriculum is structured in a rigid compartmentalized plan, good teachers integrate and find fluidity in their practice” (p. 1032). Nonetheless, a number of educational researchers have pointed to the powerful effects of policy documents in general (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskin, 2011, Lankshear, 1998), and *curriculum* policy documents in particular (Apple, 2004, Bergen & McLean, 2014). These authors indicate that, although the analysis of curriculum policy documents cannot give a complete picture of the effects of a policy, such analysis still provides important insights into the range of possible responses that the policy constrains or leaves open.

Ontario’s curriculum policy is structured by broad “overall expectations” followed by “specific expectations” that break these down into greater detail. Within the possibilities and limitations of such an outcomes-based approach, therefore, the 2013 Ontario Civics curriculum represents a clear effort to include more Indigenous content. In the 2005 policy document, only 3 out of the 33 specific expectations make any kind of explicit reference to Indigenous peoples, while the 2013 document has increased them to 12 out of the 37 specific expectations. This represents a certain degree of progress. Nonetheless, this simple quantitative increase does not resolve the core qualitative problem of Indigenous knowledges being consigned to the periphery. As the 2013 introduction states: “The expectations in these courses provide numerous opportunities for students to break through stereotypes and to learn about various social, religious, and ethnocultural groups, including First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people” (OME, 2013, p. 49). The word “opportunities” here performs a dual purpose, suggesting both possibility and contingency. None of the references to Indigenous peoples in either document occur within the overall expectations, which are the core outcomes teachers are asked to make reference to when evaluating students’ work. Furthermore, these references do not occur in the *formal* explication of the specific expectations. Instead, they are made reference to in the curricular and pedagogical examples. Indeed, the increased number of references in the 2013 document can largely be accounted for by the significant increase in the number of examples. At no point is there stated any *necessity* to teach these topics in the classroom.

Moreover, the references often work to further marginalize Indigenous histories and ways of knowing. For example, several of the 2013 references are simply the inclusion of



Indigenous governments as one of the “levels” of government in Canada, paralleling it with municipal governments as a “level” below the national and provincial. In this way, the civics curriculum fails to acknowledge Indigenous government as a *separate order*, grounded in the nation-to-nation relationships established through treaties (Henderson, 2013, Turner, 2013). The overall effect is that Indigenous perspectives are included in the curriculum, while simultaneously being pushed to the periphery. They are included only where they fit as a subcategory to what Donald (2009) calls elsewhere the existing colonial frontier logics that structure the policy document.

The marginalization of Indigenous peoples, and of their respective epistemologies, is perhaps most apparent in the model of human development found in the preface to the 2013 document (see Figure 1). This model is a variation of a First Nations medicine wheel, modified to include different concentric circles—an inner circle of “self/spirit” and an outer circle of “context” (OME, 2013, p. 4). In separating “self” from “context” in this manner, the model continues to perpetuate the long history of imposing colonial concepts, such as individuality, onto our understandings of Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999, pp. 47-50). These additions impose a Eurocentric way of thinking onto the medicine wheel, in which the different elements relate not through a relational totality but through an analytic hierarchy that subdivides the constituent elements.

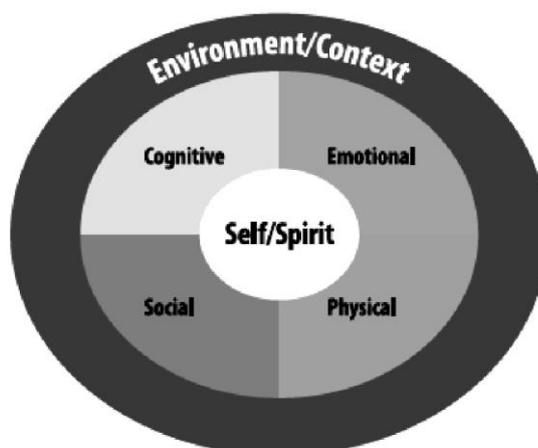


Figure 1: Human Development Model
(Source: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4)

This analytic subdivision is identified by Bell (2013) as an area in which the Ontario curriculum conflicts with Indigenous models of education. As she explains: “In the Ontario curriculum guidelines there is a breaking apart of concepts without relation to the whole which reflects the socio-cultural, historical, political time period of its writing” (p. 99). Bell goes on to provide an Anishinaabe model of the medicine wheel, which provides a productive contrast here (see Figure 2). While neither “self” nor “context” are explicitly included in Bell’s model, a careful reading suggests that both are present throughout it, but in a *relational* rather than an *analytic* form. “Self” is not an isolated, autonomous entity lurking in between mind, body, heart, and spirit, but a dynamic result of their relational interaction. Likewise, “context” is not a reality separate from and existing beyond the boundaries of self, but is dynamically related to mind, body, heart, and spirit—as self, society, and environment mutually constitute one another. Where “context” in the curriculum document is implied to be inert and objective, the Four Directions here are explicitly relational, for they are not merely a field within which the self can be placed, but are orientations a person always exists in

relation to. As Castellano (2000) argues, “the medicine wheel is not a model of rigid categorization . . . rather, it is a model of balance” (p. 30).

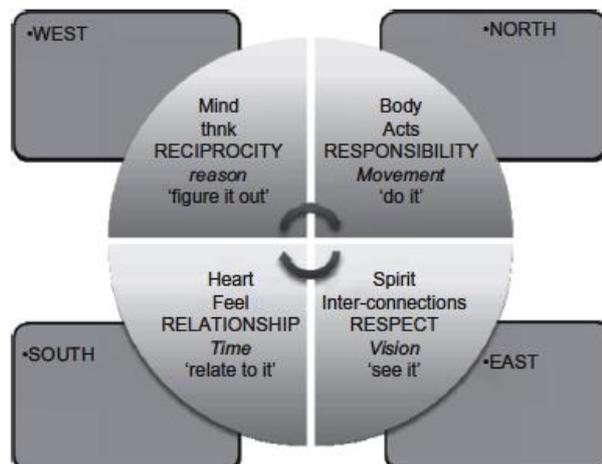


Figure 2: The Four Directions (Source: Bell, 2013, p. 96)

The problematic nature of the analytic model becomes clear in how it is taken up in the 2013 curriculum document. Because the elements are analytically defined and autonomous, they are more easily isolated, and the writers of the 2013 document de-emphasize context and emphasize self. The description that immediately precedes the figure frames how it is read:

Its components – the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social domains – are interrelated and independent, and all are subject to the influence of a person’s environment or context. At the centre is an “enduring (yet changing) core” – a sense of self, or spirit – that connects the different aspects of development and experience. (OME, 2013, p. 4)

“Context” here is de-emphasized through its placement in a subordinate clause, while “self” is emphasized through a lengthier description and the hierarchically-loaded introductory phrase “at the centre.” Furthermore, the 2013 document goes on to provide decidedly Eurocentric descriptions of the four elements of the medicine wheel, placing them at the service of an autonomous individualistic “self.” For instance, “social development” – which by most definitions would be primarily concerned with relationships – is described with the following examples: “self-development (self-concept, self-efficacy, self-esteem); identity formation (gender identity, social group identity, spiritual identity); relationships (peer, family, romantic)” (p. 4). Here the primary examples of “social development” are in fact forms of *self-relation*, with relationships to others only mentioned as an afterthought.

This appropriation of the medicine wheel in order to advance a Eurocentric model of the autonomous and individual self is typical of the way Indigenous cultures are used while also being kept to the periphery of the Ontario curriculum. We do not have time here to explore this in more detail, but we hope that we have given a glimpse of the complex limit-situations we must come up against if we want to truly advance reconciliation in our curriculum. When the TRC (2015a) calls for “Developing culturally appropriate curricula” as one aspect of a reformed Indigenous education policy (p. 197), the task required of us is far greater than the “add-and-stir” approach of including more tokenistic references within our existing curricula (Battiste, 2011). Rather we must rethink the symbolic bases of meaning that

define what it means to be a “citizen” in our society, and what alternate cultural and educational trajectories might enable a student to enter into these conversations.

In an article on decolonizing Canadian citizenship, Woons (2013) argues:

Many Indigenous peoples reject participating in shared institutions largely for symbolic reasons. They may feel their participation could be interpreted as legitimizing institutions that historically marginalized them. Moreover, the symbolism associated with Canadian institutions can seem, from an Indigenous perspective, as foreign or at least as irrelevant as Dutch, American, or Indonesian institutions. As mentioned previously, the symbolism within Canadian institutions makes the situation worse because it currently misrepresents Indigenous peoples. (p. 202)

Woons goes on to suggest that citizenship should be understood not as a shared monolithic identity, but a common sense of belonging, grounded in mutual respect. As the preceding analysis suggests, such respect for multiplicity is difficult to achieve in a standardized and state-controlled curriculum. Rather, as various scholars have contended (e.g., Donald, Glanfield, & Sterenberg, 2011, 2012, Simpson, 2014), it will likely require us to reform our traditional top-down approach to curriculum, in favour of an approach more responsive to students’ local communities and relationships with their environments.

Indigenizing Curriculum in Quebec’s Colleges

[Julie] As part of my current doctoral research, and as a pedagogical advisor at a college in Quebec, I have been documenting the emerging relationships between settler educators and Indigenous people, land, language, culture. I draw on *Aoksisowaato’op* (Blood et al., 2012), a Blackfoot concept used in curriculum studies, which reminds us of “the ethical importance of visiting a place as an act of ethical renewal that is life-giving and life-sustaining, both to the place and to ourselves” (p.48). In my curricular work with colleagues, we seek to understand what it means for settler scholars in Quebec to develop ethical relational pedagogy in our particular time and place.

Our initial step, as a team of teachers from various disciplines—Social Sciences, Arts, Multimedia, etc.—was an attempt at demarginalizing our positionality as social justice educators. A pedagogical process emerged, driven by an *intentionality* of engagement (Battiste, 2013, Gorski, 2008). Among us, some had a continuous, heart-felt commitment towards indigenizing the curriculum, while others wanted to know where to begin. Given that there are very few Indigenous students at our college, our endeavour provoked discussions on the *in-between* spaces of marginalization, relational pedagogy and processes of reconciliation. We wanted to reaffirm within the college that we saw First Nations, Métis, Inuit communities, culture, and history, as a full component of what Canadian education should look like (Chambers, 2008, Battiste, 2010).

Second, I observed that despite a strong intentionality towards reconciliation, most of the teachers on the team felt they did not *know* enough about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to bring Indigenous *content* to their students. A primary concern was on *accuracy of facts* and approaches in delivering appropriate class-content to their students, meeting their disciplinary criteria. We wanted to play a role in bringing Indigenous perspectives within our institution, without making cultural *faux-pas*. Together, we imagined a multidisciplinary initiative for the following academic year, to bring more teachers on board by providing more information on/with Indigenous peoples and perspectives in their curriculum.



Our intention was not to perpetuate the symbolic violences of colonialism. Yet, a pedagogical approach focusing on content might present a way around the tricky question of developing relationships with the specific Anishnaabe nation, whose land our college occupies. In fact, wouldn't it be easier to indigenize curriculum through a content-based, disciplinary approach? As Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) indicate, these are the limit-situations of a multiculturalist paradigm:

When being inclusive, whitestream curriculum begins to absorb and contain, consuming and erasing the other, by always-already positioning the accumulated knowledge as other to, less refined, more subjective and less reliable than the whitestream. The story is just a better story when there are more white people in it. (p. 82)

To go beyond such narratives, we had to move into a different pedagogical space, where teachers and students could relate, in person, with members of the Anishinàbeg nation. As a team, we envisioned this shift from content-based to relational pedagogy in our everyday practices. Tuning into the TRC's *Principles of Reconciliation* (2015b, p.4), we reached out to an Elder to assist us with our planning process. We invited Elders to share stories with our students of the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, language, and broken treaties.

These workshops sought to trigger students' curiosity, reflection and desire to foster further relationships between our nations. Students were welcomed to Anishinàbeg language through an opening prayer song. Some students were surprised by the opening prayer and practices, and wondered why these were permitted within our secular context. Our team of educators experienced the limit-situations of creating cultural divides within an intercultural paradigm. This resulted in a moment where the risk of reinforcing stereotypes, or creating further sense of "us" and "them," needed to be deconstructed. The focus on otherness needed to be transformed toward an inter-cultural relational space (Pretceille, 2013, Emongo & White, 2014). Such divisive politics can occur on multiple layers: in our institutional positionality as "marginalized educators" engaged in social justice, in our perceptions of teaching and learning, in our hesitations and errands in finding ways to relate, in the students' reactions to languages and cultural practices, in the very boundaries we create within ourselves. Students, and teachers, within and beyond our team, needed to visit this zone of discomfort in order to realize that they were hearing for the first time the language that has been spoken across this land since time immemorial.

So, how can we move beyond divisive politics in our pedagogy of reconciliation? *Aoksisowaato'p* brought a different dimension to our teaching. We were attempting to reconcile the relational dimensions of our curriculum and pedagogy. We strove to anchor our experience within the various places we inhabit—as program teams, as an institution, and with Anishinàbeg people in urban and on-reserve situations.

Entering into a second interdisciplinary project, we started to deconstruct our colonial discourse, questioning our identity as the descendants of settlers, immigrants, or first peoples, and reconstructing our pedagogy around relationships between teachers, with students, within our institutions and ourselves. In this fragile, third limit-situation, a shift of paradigm occurred where we became aware of the existing institutional boundaries that in turn create divisive forces, and recognized that these boundaries have shaped our experiences in becoming. We continue to work on going beyond without erasing them. Our pedagogies are now enriched by the perspectives and relations established within and outside our institution—including the Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan School. Elders, members of the educational board, and students



are present in creating collective dialogical spaces in which a conversation on major social justice issues such as reconciliation can begin at our post-secondary institution.

As Elder Gilbert Whiteduck offered a closing prayer at the IAACS conference, I felt a tension between proximity to an Indigenous voice and the cultural divide created through genocide of language and culture. My inner-voice, as a settler researcher, with all its good intentions, becomes frail. My certitudes, as a curriculum advisor, evaporate: I realise that what I haven't learned is more crucial to my individual becoming within a collective than any past experiences. I am still learning a key component, which is to be humbled, as a tiny part of a much larger ecosystem of reconciliation. In fact, the perpetuation of the symbolic violence of discourse still lives within us, in our curriculum, in our pedagogies, and sometimes in our attempts to change. As we accept to be transformed by the people on whose land we sit, we do it with the radical hope that it brings all of us closer to reconciliation. *Miigwetch...*

Pre-service teachers, curriculum, and Indigenous pedagogies

[Ferne] Scholars working in the area of Aboriginal education continue to stress the lack of knowledge non-Indigenous teachers have in terms of the intergenerational impacts of colonizing the Indigenous territories some of us now call Canada (Dion, 2007, Kanu, 2007, 2011, MacIver, 2012). Consequently, Indigenous scholars and communities are calling for teacher education programs to be more proactive in addressing the absence of historical and epistemological knowledge with teacher candidates before they transition to their future classrooms. During an interview, Justice Sinclair reminded us that:

Part of the misunderstanding that we see so prevalent in Canadian society is young adults, and adults in positions of leadership, constantly demonstrate a total lack of understanding and misunderstanding about who aboriginal people are ... and what non-aboriginal society has contributed and done to aboriginal people that has caused the situation to be what it is in aboriginal Canada. (quoted in Chiose, 2015, paragraph 4)

As a recent graduate of a Canadian Bachelor of Education program, coming to terms with my limit-situations as a non-Indigenous teacher teaching within this contemporary context, I have been reflecting on my experiences working with and learning from the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Algonquin community. Now during my graduate studies, I have spoken with non-Indigenous student teachers who have also had the same community service-learning opportunities to teach and learn from First Nations teachers at the Kitigan Zibi Kikinamadinan School. What follows in this section, are narrative snapshots of the limit-situations student teachers encountered through teaching at a First Nations band council administered elementary school.

Colonial Schooling: Reflections

Entering the program, student teachers⁵ had a similar (lack of) experience and understanding of Indigenous communities who live across the territories that we call Canada. Student teachers talked about the lack of representation in their lived experiences with the Ontario curriculum. Some student teachers acknowledge that there were Indigenous students in their classes. However, their histories and cultures were either absent or at the periphery of



the school curriculum (Weenie, 2008). When included, they encountered the ‘stereotypical’ arts and crafts projects often taught as they approached the “Thanksgiving holiday,” or in history courses where they learned about the fur trade and positive impacts of Settler-First Nations relationships. One student teacher, Nicole, mentioned knowing that “we were on their land,” whereas another, Sam, was aware that there are hidden things we don’t like to talk about as they may tarnish the Canada’s historical “peacemaking” image.

Their lived experiences echoed within my memories of learning about the First Peoples of Canada. In Grade 3 we did a two-week unit on the Mi’kmaq of Eastern Canada. Our teachers gave us booklets to fill out. We watched movies and read small stories. We moved unsupervised through small group stations. Later, during a Grade 10 school trip to the local Mi’kmaq reserve I learned that this First Nations community was not only a historical narrative. Indeed, they still existed! Taking our experiences as an example, it would seem our Bachelor of Education program would have quite a ways to go in preparing us to teach Indigenous histories and perspectives in our future classrooms. For the most part, such epistemologies of ignorance formed an important limit-situation for my lived experiences within the teacher education program at the University of Ottawa.

Provoking the Present Absence of Indigenous Histories within Teacher Education Programs

During my research, several teacher candidates expressed the possibilities and limit-situations of how well the Bachelor of Education prepared them to redress Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations within their future classrooms. And yet, the overall sentiment for most teacher candidates remained that they were unprepared to take up Indigenous histories and ways of knowing within the curriculum-as-planned, -implemented, and -lived with students (Aoki, 1986/2004). Consequently, teacher candidates frequently called for a compulsory course on Indigenous histories, knowledges, and perspectives. Moreover, the student teachers also wished there were more curricular and pedagogical examples throughout the program of how to bring Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing into their classrooms. Instead, during their schooling the curriculum placed more emphasis on the social and economic deficits of First Nations communities.

Nicole was grateful for the learning that happened during her community service-learning teaching placement at the Kitigan Zibi School. She did not feel the Bachelor of Education really prepared her for how to bring First Nations into her future classes. During our interview, she stated:

I feel like because it’s a concept that not everybody still to this day knows really enough about so they are doing a great job at educating us on what happened and how Aboriginal students feel on and off reserves, like we do have some perspective and they’ve been really focusing on that but actually putting it into practice in a classroom is a different thing. Students are sensitive right and how do you expose the truth without breaking too many hearts. (Nicole, April 2015)

She was not alone in this thinking. Sam reflected:

I think the hands on learning at the reserve, at Kitigan Zibi, did me more a favour than learning in the classroom could. Even in the program, in the classrooms I don’t think it came up all that much. We talk about socially, as the curriculum being Eurocentric, it still leaves out First Nations perspectives. (Sam, April 2015)



An attitude of ‘not my issue, I don’t have to deal with it’ was something Rebecca identified as a recurring theme in her classes when the topic of Indigenous Education came up. She felt the program should have focused on getting:

people to start looking at it as a relationship, where it doesn’t matter if you interact with First Nations people every day or never meet an Aboriginal person in your life. You are part of Canadian history that has since inception intertwined with Aboriginal communities and it’s your responsibility as a citizen to know what happened in history and educate others so it doesn’t happen again. (Rebecca, April 2015)

All three of these teacher candidates participated in an additional two week teaching practicum at the Kikinamadinan School.

Each candidate expressed that the experience at Kitigan Zibi was a significant influence in their preparation to teach future Canadian children about Indigenous histories and ways of knowing. During their teaching placement at Kikinamadinan School, the candidates had opportunities to see First Nation educators teaching and learning with Kitigan Zibi students. The teacher candidates stressed the importance of being able to experience a First Nations reserve that challenged the negative representations that are so prevalent in the media. While not necessarily leaving them prepared to teach about First Nations, the experience left them more willing to try, more confident to find resources to bring into the classroom, and more aware of what the intergenerational issues even are.

Reflecting on her learning, Nicole talked about feeling as though her learning happened fluidly, or unconsciously, with ideas and concepts becoming part of her internal framework rather than things she can reference explicitly. While she doesn’t yet feel entirely prepared to bring First Nations into her future classrooms, she does credit her experiences within the Kitigan Zibi community for enhancing her future capacity to address their absent histories in the classroom. Peter—one of the few male student teachers participating in the larger project—credits having visited and seen the reserve for making him more at ease to teach a unit on First Nations histories and perspectives. He tells us, “You can elaborate more having been there and worked with the people and having been part of their lives.” Reflecting on the common unease felt by several teacher candidates in terms of how they will incorporate Indigenous perspectives and history in their classrooms in accurate and respectful ways, Kevin commented that, “It just comes down to, you know, having humility. You’ve got to be humble about things. You can’t be afraid to try things or embarrassed or whatever. You can learn from your mistakes and improve upon them.”

In their final report, the TRC recommends for Canada to “provide necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms” (2015, p. 294). Focusing on the role of universities, Justice Sinclair said during the closing TRC events:

The commission is greatly concerned over the fact that universities continue to graduate people into important professional positions who don’t have an understanding, education, and respect of who Aboriginal people are and what they have to contribute in those areas. (quoted in Chiose, 2015, paragraph 10)

Perhaps what we can take from experiences such as those I’ve shared here is that it’s time for universities, in preparing new professionals, including in the field of education, to find new ways of having them learn about historical and contemporary issues and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. My research suggests that

community service-learning projects with Indigenous communities can address an important curricular absence that continues to exist within the teacher education program at the University of Ottawa. As Bell (2011) has suggested, the best way for universities to prepare teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods, and provide them with an understanding and respect of who Indigenous people are, may be to invite Indigenous educators or community members to do the teaching.

Visiting Places as Re-Visioning

Like relatives, places must be fed and cared for. Like family and old friends, places are visited and in return they care for us, they may gift us with dreams and answers to our prayers. Stay awhile; sit down; tell stories; eat and drink and offer something to those who came before, those who shaped this landscape and who were shaped by it; those who made our precious and precarious life possible. (Chambers, 2006, p. 34)

[Nicholas] Many people travel to Ottawa each year, the capital of Canada. They take tours of Parliament Hill, the Byward Market, Rideau Canal, Ottawa River, and our national museums. Prior to our gathering at the 5th *Triennial International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies* conference, we invited fellow curriculum scholars to visit and take refuge within our capital institution while sharing their research, stories, performances, and lived experiences. Our gathering took place within the institutional walls of a colonial capital, which sits at the base of the Ottawa valley and overlooks the confluences and tributaries of the Kichi Sibi (Ottawa River) that meander across and beyond the traditional territories of the Anishinàbeg who have lived upon this landscape since time immemorial. To acknowledge our respect to the Anishinàbeg people who came before us and shaped this landscape, some of us travelled to the Kitigan Zibi reserve where we ate, drank, and shared stories with Elders, school administrators, and teachers at their Community Centre and the Kikinamadinan School. Elders like Gilbert Whiteduck, a former Chief, discussed what has made and makes their precarious lives possible both on and off their reserve. Here “visiting,” as Chambers (2006) makes clear, “is a form of renewal, a way of renewing and recreating people, places and beings, and their relationships to one another” (p. 35). How might we then revisit the stories of truth and reconciliation inside and outside the contexts of public education as a way of renewing and recreating our relationships with one another?

During his welcoming as our opening IAACS keynote address, Gilbert Whiteduck reminded us that the cosmological, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual topographies of this landscape have provided, and continue to provide, a place, a gift, for us to meet and revisit the contested histories of, and contemporary relations between our peoples. The Anishinàbeg, he stressed that night, share a language, a gift from the Creator, which established their first relationships with Turtle Island since time immemorial. He discussed the intergenerational violence that his community has experienced and continues to experience at the hands of colonial corporate surveyors, politicians, police, and educational bureaucrats. Gilbert Whiteduck stressed that what we need now to move forward during these times of truth and reconciliation is not another call for small steps, but rather a radical step forward that re-en/visions our future relations as sovereign Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In 2007, several Indian Residential School survivors won a class action settlement agreement worth an estimated 2 billion dollars. The Canadian government officially



responded a year later with a public state apology for the violent intergenerational impacts of residential schooling. Soon after, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission travelled across Canada, listening to the stories of survivors, and facilitating various public commemorative events for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities⁶. Often forgotten within this recent sequence of events, however, is that First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and their leaders had been petitioning the Canadian government and its people to acknowledge their constitutional treaty obligations for several decades prior to the 2008 apology. Such obligations included land settlements, educational funding, and judicial and political recognition of First Nations sovereignty as part of Canada's Constitutional Act—what Henderson (2013) has termed constitutional reconciliation. Despite this momentum, opportunities to study the complexities of truth and reconciliation in terms of our historical and ongoing treaty obligations are for the most part absent from our school curriculum in Ontario and from the public memory of a settler nation-state (see Ng-A-Fook and Milne, 2014). And yet, although we now have several policies in place, our public educational institutions across Canada are in still caught up in the processes of implementing small steps in response to the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report (see <http://www.trc.ca>).

Here within the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, we are now caught between the processes of acknowledging truth and re-visioning Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations as reconciliation. On the one hand, we are attempting in collaboration with organizations like *Project of the Heart* and the Kitigan Zibi Educational sector to develop, implement, and live curriculum that addresses the intergenerational impacts of the Indian Residential Schooling (IRS) system within our Teacher Education program (see www.projectofheart.ca). On the other, and as we look toward the future, we have established a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FMNI) Advisory Committee comprised of different local Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational stakeholders, Kitigan Zibi Elders, school administrators and teachers, University of Ottawa professors, graduate students, and teacher candidates. One of the mandates of the FMNI Advisory Committee seeks to strengthen the consultative protocols between local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and the professors who are developing and implementing curriculum within our Teacher Education program. Elders stressed that our professors and administrators need to visit the Kitigan Zibi community and places that inform their teachings more frequently. In response, we facilitated a one-day retreat for all of our professors prior to the commencement of this year's teacher education program. And yet, much more work toward re-visioning and renewing our relations still needs to be done.

The FMNI Advisory Committee has sought to develop various ways in which they can leverage existing policy documents like the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) *Accord on Indigenous Education* to challenge how:

The processes of colonization have either outlawed or suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems, especially language and culture, and have contributed significantly to the low levels of educational attainment and high rates of social issues such as suicide, incarceration, unemployment, and family or community separation. (ACDE, 2010, p. 2)

Our Teacher Education program has responded to such calls to action by making *First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education: Historical Experiences and Contemporary Perspectives* (PED 3138) a mandatory course for all incoming 2016-2017 candidates. When compared to



some of the other universities across Canada this is a small, and long overdue, step. Such programmatic re-visioning responds to the TRC's (2015c) call to action on *Education for Reconciliation*:

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to: i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students. ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms. (p. 7)

At our FMNI Advisory Committee meetings we are now discussing the content, developing protocols for Elders, and establishing the necessary expertise of course instructors.

To facilitate such re-visioning and renewal, our program like the ACDE Accord on Indigenous Education is now committed toward:

- Supporting a socially just society for Indigenous peoples;
- Reflecting a respectful, collaborative, and consultative process with Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge holders;
- Promoting multiple partnerships among educational and Indigenous communities; and
- Valuing the diversity of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing and learning. (p. 5)

And yet, the biggest obstacle that continues to create limit-situations for re-visioning and implementing the TRC *Calls to Action* is often the lack of “know how” or “radical leap of faith” within our Faculty of Education and local school boards. For example we do not have any Elders or Indigenous scholars who are doing research or teaching as regular professors within our Faculty. In turn, we are limited by the epistemological and ontological limit-situations that inform our worldviews as non-Indigenous educators. Therefore another small step forward for our Faculty and others will be a commitment toward hiring the necessary professional expertise—either as regular professors or as consultants—who can help us develop, implement, and sustain such re-visioning toward renewal and reconciliation. Our newly elected Federal government has revised its policies and principles toward Indigenous peoples who have inhabited Turtle Island since time immemorial. At the University of Ottawa there is an institutional and political commitment toward enacting policies of reconciliation that move beyond pedagogical and curricular strategies that promote historical and cultural awareness. We are calling for teacher educators, teachers, and teacher candidates to become political actors, engaged citizens, within each of their particular spheres of influence.

On June 29 2015, universities across Canada committed to 13 different principles, which “acknowledge the unique needs of Indigenous communities across Canada and their goals of autonomy and self-determination” (see <http://sass.uottawa.ca/en/aboriginal/principles>). Much like the *Calls to Action* and *Accord on Indigenous Education* these principles asks universities to:

- Recognize the importance of indigenization of curricula through responsive academic programming, support programs, orientations, and pedagogies;



- Recognize the importance of providing greater exposure and knowledge for non-Indigenous students on the realities, histories, cultures and beliefs of Indigenous people in Canada; and
- Recognize the importance of fostering intercultural engagement among Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff.

(see <http://sass.uottawa.ca/en/aboriginal/principles>)

In our research, personal, and professional lives as non-Indigenous Canadian teachers and citizens Jesse, Julie, Ferne, and myself are committed toward such principles. We continue to challenge and provoke policymakers toward re-visioning the provincial school curricula. We are collaborating with the Kitigan Zibi Education sector and other educational stakeholders to revisit the present absence of Indigenous histories, knowledges, and perspectives within our institutions and respective curricula. In light of these proposed principles, our radical hope is that such small steps back, and forward, will create a place for us to visit, share stories, eat, drink, listen, and renew our relations as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians during such times of reconciliation.

Concluding Between Truth and Reconciliation

[Jesse & Julie] For us, as settler scholars and educators, a first step in the process of reconciliation is an acknowledgement of the land, and it's meaning for the people that have been living across these territories since times immemorial. As we have suggested in various ways through our conference presentations at IAACS and CSSE, and through the resultant reflections we present here, this acknowledgement must be more than a formality. We must tear back the curricular curtains of colonialism and engage in building sustained and meaningful relationships with local Indigenous communities, and with the landscape that sustains all of us. In the words of the TRC (2015a):

Together, Canadians must do more than *talk* about reconciliation; we must learn how to *practise* reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. (p. 21)

From our perspectives and lived experiences, we have suggested here that this involves encountering the limit-situations of our monolithic Eurocentric epistemologies, and reimagining our curriculum development, teacher education, and professional development within local and relational contexts.

In this spirit, allow us to pull back the curtains one more time to look upon the landscape of Ottawa, where IAACS and CSSE took place alongside the TRC's closing ceremonies on unceded Algonquin land. We can follow the Rideau River or the Rideau Canal north to where they empty into the Ottawa River. At the centre of what is now called The National Capital Region, the Chaudière Falls are an ancient sacred site for the Anishinaabe nation. For much of the last century, however, the falls have been dammed and closed off for industrial purposes (Payne, 2015). The Anishinaabe have maintained their claim to the area, and the late Elder William Commanda envisioned this site as a space for reconciliation. As described by Macdougall (2014):



The vision for the site that Commanda named “Asinabka”, an Anishinaabe word meaning “place of glare rock,” includes the creation of Indigenous and Peace Centres on the downstream Victoria Island and the undamming of the falls, along with full public parkland on the two adjacent islands in question.

The two-fold vision is based on “healing, strengthening and uniting all Aboriginal peoples” and “sharing Indigenous values and culture with all others.” (p.1)

Recently, a condominium development plan—named “Zibi” from the Anishnaabe word for “river” —has been put forward with the intent to build a “one of a kind world-class community” on the site, while recognizing its situation on unceded Algonquin land. Although the plan includes stated intentions for working “together with the Algonquin-Anishinabe people to raise public awareness of Anishinabe culture and forge opportunities for mutually beneficial social and economic collaboration” (Windmill Developments, 2015, para. 3), including the collaboration of various members of the Anishinàbeg nation, it has met many layers of internal and external opposition. The famous First Nations architect Douglas Cardinal has been a vocal opponent of the plan, advocating a return to William Commanda’s vision for the region (Payne, 2015). Meanwhile, Kirby Whiteduck, chief of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, has defended the plan as a practical step toward reconciliation:

To see Zibi as simply a greedy condo project, a meagre job generator or a dubious financial transaction is to miss the bigger, more positive story of reconciliation. Working in partnership with the private sector is the only option that can deliver true and lasting benefits to current and future generations. (Whiteduck, 2015, para. 13)

Should sacred land become prime real-estate, even with cultural and economic accommodations? This question has resulted in heated debate, with various Algonquin communities in the region taking both sides (Payne, 2015).

We are certainly not in a position to answer this complex question here, particularly given Whiteduck’s (2015) warning against non-Indigenous interference undermining the self-determination of the Algonquin people. We raise this issue, however, as yet another example of the complexity of the landscape within which we are operating. The site of the contentious debate over the Zibi development is a short walk from the Delta Ottawa, where the TRC held its closing ceremonies. It is not much farther to the University of Ottawa, where we hosted IAACS and CSSE, and attempted to engage with reconciliation—though often in very abstract ways. Yet it is precisely in such practical questions of sovereignty over land and resources that ethereal concepts like *decolonization* and *reconciliation* become meaningful (Tuck & Yang, 2012, Turner, 2013). This, in turn, points us back to the long road ahead of us if we truly want to pursue reconciliation. As the epigraphs from the TRC and Joseph Boyden at the beginning of this paper suggest, as a nation we currently find ourselves in between truth and reconciliation. Thanks in a large part to the work of the TRC, we are finally beginning to recognize the magnitude of the harm we have done. Yet there is a great distance between knowing this and making it right. As researchers and educators, this work calls us beyond theoretical engagement, toward building and sustaining relationships with Indigenous communities. It also calls us, following Cynthia Chambers, toward genuine engagement with the landscape that underlies and sustains our colonial institutions—with its complex past and with its uncertain future.

Notes

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⁵ All names used to reference the student teachers have been changed.

⁶ To see a timeline on the establishment of the Indian Residential Schooling system and ensuing Truth and Reconciliation Commission consult the following website: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-timeline-of-residential-schools-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-1.724434>.

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