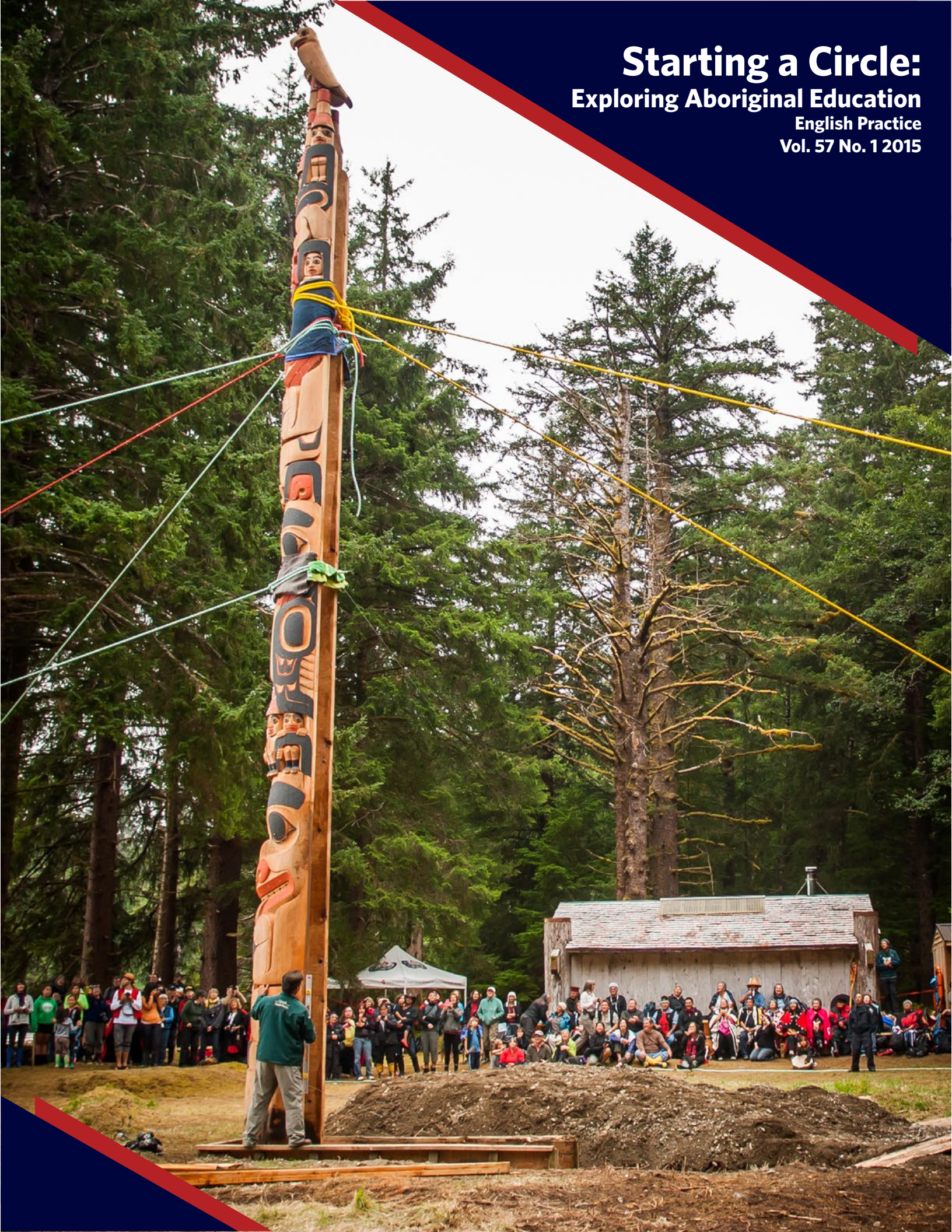


Starting a Circle:

Exploring Aboriginal Education

English Practice
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Totem Pole Artists: Jaalen Edenshaw assisted by
Gwaai Edenshaw and Tyler York.



Welcome to *Starting a Circle: Exploring Aboriginal Education*. Editorial

A Haida pole raising requires vision, knowledge, skill, organization, and coordination amongst many people. Ultimately it requires that people work together to achieve a common goal – regardless of their age, gender, background, or ancestry. Similarly, in this issue, we have brought together diverse contributors united in their desire to improve educational experiences and outcomes for Aboriginal students, as well as for all students, by increasing understanding of Aboriginal history, pedagogical practices, and ways of knowing.

In this issue, you will find many stories, resources, ideas, and perspectives emerging from this common goal. You will find inquiries into teaching English First Peoples courses as a non-Aboriginal educator; stories about teaching in Nunavut; and, reflections on how shifts in public consciousness regarding Aboriginal issues in Canada have informed the experience of being an Aboriginal educator. There is a collaborative learning sequence based in culturally responsive pedagogy focused on protecting an ecosystem and honouring cultural heritage; as well as, a description of an ongoing inquiry project from the Burnaby School District focused on representing Aboriginal culture in the classroom. One author shares how progress is made through engaging in respectful yet critical dialogue regarding pedagogical practices that are less than honouring; while, another shares about the possibilities of merging strengths from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pedagogical practices. An award winning Vancouver Island based poet shares about her initiative known as The Elder Project, which helped Aboriginal students connect with the stories of Elders through poetry. And, a teacher and graduate student shares her poetry on decolonization. You will also find many online resources to support your teaching, planning and classroom inquiries.

No matter where you find yourself and which perspectives align most with your beliefs, we hope that this issue provides you with knowledge and support for organizing and coordinating what you need to take the next step on your learning journey in the context of Aboriginal education. Here's to coming together in collaboration and starting a circle without end.

Yours in learning and community,

Pamela Richardson
Sara Florence Davidson
Ashley Cail

Pamela Richardson is an Assistant Professor at Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC, and Head of the Masters of Educational Leadership program in the School of Education & Technology. She believes poetry is essential to our humanity. Through poetry we cultivate essential connections with ourselves, one another and our natural world.

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Nambidu, Ma'łbidu, Yudaxw Bibakwam-manexw (One Little, Two Little, Three Little Real People)

Salon

Education has seen many changes since my Golden-Key kindergarten performance 52 years ago when we sang “One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians” wearing construction paper feathered headbands. It is now not unusual to hear a Kwak’waka version of that song; in fact, I’ve been known to take out my drum and sing it with my youngest grandchildren. It’s fun and easy to sing, but I never sing it without wondering what it must have been like for my mother, a proud Kwagw̓ woman, to sit in those little kindergarten chairs, watching my class performance. I am sure that if she felt any discomfort, it would have gone unsaid. Likewise when I brought home egg carton totem poles or when the grade 4 school play cast the two brown-skinned boys as drunks.

In those days (and perhaps still in these days) it was better not to be “identified.” As a child, I had no awareness of or appreciation for the ways that my mother protected me and my sisters by letting us blend in. Like other Canadians, I was also not aware that children my age were attending residential schools. I do, however, recall as a child wondering why so many of my cousins in the north had been held back in grade 1. I was always in awe of my cousins’ skills and knowledge when it came to real-life needs and responsibilities. Even at that young age, I knew their challenge with school had to be something about the school, not something about them. My childhood questions about the school system have been prominent in my life path as a mother, a grandmother, an educator, a policy maker, and a researcher.

Promising changes are underway. Indigenous educators and leaders have worked hard to draw attention to the issues of exclusion, discrimination, and denigration and to effect positive change. It has been acknowledged across the field that the public education system has underserved and largely failed to address the learning needs and unique skills of Aboriginal students and has been a major force in disrupting Indigenous knowledge transmission and lifeways. Efforts to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students have seen interventions and approaches in a model of Aboriginal education that is what we do to and for Aboriginal students. These focused interventions have had varying results. Today there is certainly room to change the system to better meet the needs of Aboriginal students, but an important movement is taking place in the field: the increasing recognition that the K-12 system has underserved all students by excluding teachings about Canada’s Indigenous-settler relations and understandings of and engagement with local peoples and territories.

In British Columbia teachers are being invited to infuse Indigenous content and pedagogy into their teaching. Indigenous communities, educators, and students have developed much of the theoretical approach and practical materials to support this shift; one of these is the teacher resource guide, *In Our Own Words: Bringing Authentic First Peoples Content to the K-3 Classroom* developed by the First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations Schools Association (2012). Others have been developed through partnerships that break the traditional patriarchal treatment of Indigenous peoples in the education system, such as many of the Enhancement Agreements (EAs) between school districts and local Indigenous communities. These agreements serve as an impetus to develop Indigenous-centric pedagogy and material; the EAs “stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture and languages to Aboriginal student development and success” and call on school districts to work with communities to provide “strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located” (Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements, 2015).

¹ In the BC public school system parents have an opportunity to self-identify their children as being of Aboriginal ancestry.

² I use Settler following recent work of constructing Settler as the majority identity in Canada created in relationship to land and privileged by settler colonialism, which is not determined by race or the experience of any particular level of privilege. See Lowman, E. L., & Barker, A. J. (2015). *Settler: Identity and colonialism in 21st century Canada*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Press.

³ “To make a whole person” (SENCOTEN).

Resources in this vein are expanding in number and scope, from the broad—for example, *Shared Learnings* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch, 2006), a support guide for teachers developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education—to the local—such as School District 79's Aboriginal Curriculum Integration Project (Aboriginal Education Department, n.d.). These efforts also have the public support of major provincial education agencies and stakeholders, including both the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education and the BC Teacher's Federation (2015). Yet teachers often tell us that they feel unprepared to deliver Indigenous educational content. At the University of Victoria, I teach IED 373: EL TELNIWT and Indigenous Education, a required course for all BEd and PDP students. Students in the course often express their dismay at having learned so little about Indigenous peoples and relations in their own K 12 education. They wonder why it is in their third year of postsecondary education that they are hearing about Canada's legacy of residential schools, learning the names of the peoples and the languages of the territories where they live and work, and reading literature by Indigenous authors for the first time. One of my goals as an instructor of this course is to share with them knowledge on how to begin using Indigenous educational materials and approaches. This will develop their ability to take informed risks in bringing Indigenous content into all aspects of their role as new teachers.

Whereas my mom was intentionally silent to protect me, and perhaps to protect herself, I am now in a position where it is safe for me to "identify" and to speak up. So when my grandson shared his discomfort with his recent social studies assignment, I wasn't silent. The assignment involved creating a personal totem pole according to ascribed animal characteristics. Like my grandson, I thought the learning activity trivialized the social importance of poles and crests. My immediate response was to suggest an alternative assignment that would foster deeper learning about Indigenous peoples in BC. Perhaps he could write an essay that described the significance of poles, or he could write about Indigenous protocols and the importance of using only crests that one has a right to use, or maybe he could write about the imposed colonial laws that resulted in the confiscation of poles and other significant objects by the Canadian government as a means of assimilation. Of course, my grandson did not receive the idea of an alternative assignment well; he had already spent an hour cutting and colouring in class and just wanted "to do what everyone else was doing."


Instead of an alternative assignment for my grandson, the experience turned into an opportunity for respectful and critical conversations amongst adults. My daughter and son-in-law met with the teacher to talk about their concerns and more appropriate ways to infuse authentic Indigenous content into the classroom. I searched the authors of the text where the assignment originated, and we have begun a respectful dialogue. I think we all agree: The intention to include Indigenous content in K-12 education is good, and to get this right requires working together in respectful ways. Critically, this is not about getting it 'right' on the first try; rather, it is about educators of all backgrounds attempting to thoughtfully and respectfully infuse Indigenous content into their educational practice and then to participate in conversations and critical reflection to prepare for and improve the next attempt. In this way we can work together in productive and respectful relationships to create rich learning environments in which Indigenous students can see themselves reflected in their educational experience and all students can develop and benefit from knowledge of the First Peoples of the lands where they live and learn.

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Endnotes

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Where Waters Meet:

Merging the Strengths of Aboriginal and Mainstream Educational Practices to Improve Students' Experiences at School

Salon

When I began teaching in 2001, I noticed that many of my students of Aboriginal ancestry were struggling academically. Upon further investigation, I discovered that the six-year Dogwood completion rate for Aboriginal students was approximately 50%. Though these rates have steadily improved to approximately 60% (BC Ministry of Education, 2013), we continue to struggle to meet the academic needs of Aboriginal students. As I continued my research and classroom observations, I began to explore the possibility that many of the challenges Aboriginal students have with conventional schooling may emerge from conflicts between Aboriginal and mainstream educational practices.

Before continuing, I would like to point out that it is common practice to consider Aboriginal students as a singular group, particularly in the education system in British Columbia. However, I would like to recognize that all Aboriginal students are diverse and even shared ancestry does not result in similarities between students. As Rebecca Chartrand (2012) explains in her article on Anishinaabe pedagogy, "although the word Aboriginal provides a common denominator to capture three collective but distinct groups (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) in Canada, it is yet another form of racialization" (p.145), as it fails to recognize the distinctions between nations. That said, I also recognize that many Aboriginal students may be experiencing similar challenges with mainstream educational practices based upon their shared history and experiences.

Traditional Educational Practices

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, Aboriginal people in Canada had their own ways of passing on knowledge from one generation to the next (Schissel and Wotherspoon, 2003). Practices such as oral story-telling, apprenticeships, and ceremonies were used to help to prepare future generations to survive and to know their history (Haig-Brown, 1988; Hampton, 1995). There are clear distinctions between these traditional Aboriginal teaching practices and those used today in mainstream schools. However it is possible to conceive that the strengths of traditional Aboriginal teaching practices and contemporary teaching practices can be combined to meet the current educational needs of all students including those of Aboriginal ancestry.

Traditionally, Aboriginal teaching was based on experiential, informal learning that was integrated with life (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, p. 39), and educational practices relied upon teaching that was holistic, relationship-based and collaborative, contextualized, practical, and continuous. Today, many Aboriginal educators and researchers argue that the holistic perspective of education is absent and the goal of contemporary education is the assimilation of Aboriginal students into mainstream society (e.g., Battiste, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Silver, Mallett, Greene, and Simard, 2002).

Mainstream educational models are based upon the knowledge and values of Euro- Canadians, and as such, they privilege a Euro-Canadian worldview. As a result, students who have been raised with a different perspective of the world may experience challenges with the curriculum. Because of the distinctions between mainstream and more traditional Aboriginal educational practices, students wishing to succeed within the former context must often let go of many aspects of the latter. In addition many qualities of these models are mutually exclusive, leaving the student to choose between the two. A specific example of this can be provided by my father's experience in school.

When my father went to school, he brought with him his traditional understanding of appropriate social behaviour. When the teacher would ask a question, he would not raise his hand to respond even when he knew the answer, as it would have been rude to do so. The challenge for my father was that in order for him to be successful within the mainstream context, he needed to reject his traditional education likely

¹ For the purposes of this discussion, references to Aboriginal students are not intended to encompass all Aboriginal students, nor are they meant to imply that the suggestions made here are not applicable to non-Aboriginal students. Furthermore, references to general Aboriginal perspectives may not apply to specific nations or communities, as I recognize that each one is distinct.

transmitted to him by respected Elders in his life. To violate these teachings would have meant showing disrespect to these teachers and to himself.

Aboriginal students need to determine ways to be successful within the mainstream education system without losing their traditional ways of being in the world. As Elizabeth Penashue, an Innu Elder explained,

education is good as long as you do not lose your culture. It is very important that your culture is not lost. Because the young people were born from their mother and their mother is linked to that culture, therefore that child should not lose that culture. A person can live in today's world and still have their culture. (Kulchyski, McCaskill, and Newhouse, 1999, p. 213)

For many Aboriginal students, learning within the contemporary Euro-Canadian context is compartmentalized, independent, decontextualized, and theoretical. Furthermore, it has an endpoint and the curriculum is based upon Euro-Canadian values. All of these factors mean that it is in direct and immediate conflict with the traditional ways of transmitting knowledge.

Learning is Compartmentalized

Learning in the mainstream system, particularly in secondary schools, is divided into separate subject areas. At this level, the subjects are further fragmented by the fact that they are taught by separate teachers, in separate classrooms. Students learn about subjects separately and because teachers are usually experts in limited fields, they are unwilling or perhaps unable to facilitate learning experiences outside their areas of expertise. Integration of additional curricular areas is rare, as it would require planning and coordinating with other teachers.

The holistic approach, which means that every aspect of a task is taught regardless of which curricular area it might fall into, does not usually occur within this type of educational model. Furthermore, attempts to incorporate Aboriginal content through celebrations and individual study units can have the opposite effect. As Lynda Curwen Doige (2003) describes there can be challenges with

Native Awareness Days, which feature speakers in traditional dress, traditional foods, and displays of Aboriginal artifacts. Such initiatives are designed carefully and executed by concerned teachers and parents whose goal is to increase students' appreciation of aspects of Aboriginal culture and make students aware of existing stereotypes. However, the methods have served ultimately to emphasize differences to such an extent and in such a way that the gap between people of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures is widened, not bridged. (p. 150)

Furthermore, "traditions are only one aspect of the ever-changing dynamic within a culture. So to focus on traditional dress, food, music, ceremonies, and artifacts freezes a culture in time and perpetuates stereotypes" (Curwen Doige, 2003, p.150).

Learning is Independent

Another critique of the mainstream education system is the focus upon independence and competition. Aboriginal students who may be accustomed to working together or independently for the purpose of contributing to a collective goal may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with this focus upon individual achievement. As Eber Hampton (1995) explains, "the competitive success of the individual is an implicit value of Western schools and, as such, is in direct conflict with the Indian value of group success through individual achievement (p. 21).

In addition, Aboriginal students being educated within the mainstream context learn the material from a designated teacher with whom they may have no significant connection. This individual is often an outsider who is unfamiliar with the culture and traditions of the community. They have been hired to teach, and their

expertise may not be immediately apparent to Aboriginal students. Furthermore, it is expected that based upon their position as a teacher, they will unquestioningly and immediately be treated with respect by students who have been taught that respect is earned by the individual not the position (Dunn, 2001).

Learning is Decontextualized and Theoretical

Within the mainstream education system students learn material in a classroom away from the content of the lesson, and the skills are learned separately from the tasks to which they relate. As a result, students sometimes struggle with how the material is relevant to them. Not understanding the significance of what they are learning can be particularly challenging for Aboriginal students who may not be familiar with people for whom mainstream education has been equated with improved social and economic conditions.

Children who grow up around adults for whom schools have served as an avenue for upward social and economic mobility as is the case for many mainstream students tend to put up with a curriculum they find meaningless because they trust that doing well in school will benefit them in the long run, just as it benefited others they know. (Villegas and Lucas, 2002, p. 71)

Learning has an Endpoint

Because traditional Aboriginal perspectives are that learning is ongoing, it is difficult to conceive that by a certain age a student has learned enough information that no further learning is required. The somewhat arbitrary decision that a student has completed his or her education at the age of eighteen or upon the completion of a degree conflicts with a more Aboriginal perspective that learning is ongoing, or that learning a particular skill is not complete until it has been mastered. Within the mainstream context, teachers are viewed as experts and held up as examples of those who have reached the endpoint in their education, and as such are able to guide students to reach their own endpoint.

Learning is based Upon Euro-Canadian Curriculum

Curriculum in the school system is based upon Euro-Canadian values, and it privileges the worldview of this group. The “life experiences and the values of Aboriginal students and their families, differ significantly from what they experience in the schools, which are run largely by white middle class people for the purpose of advancing the values of the dominant culture” (Silver, Mallett, Greene, and Simard, 2002, p. 29). Although this may assist Aboriginal students to be successful within the mainstream context, it may leave them unable to make a meaningful contribution to their own community.

Due to the focus upon Euro-Canadian beliefs and values, the Aboriginal perspective is frequently missing from the curriculum, which leaves the Aboriginal students with the belief that their history and culture is unimportant. Furthermore, even if the culture is present, “it is presented from a Eurocentric perspective. Often, this presentation is inaccurate and not very nourishing” (Battiste and Henderson, 2000, p. 88). It would be wrong to argue that formal education does not “open doors to future social opportunities, but it is also affected by, and often reinforces, the social positions and experiences that accompany people into schooling” (Schissel and Wotherspoon, 2003, p.10). Furthermore, because the Euro-Canadian model reflects the dominant belief system of Canadian society, students who remain unsuccessful at navigating this system may remain at a social and economic disadvantage when compared with those who have been able to master the system. It is however, not an impartial system; it is one that perpetuates Euro-Canadian values. It is also one that may result in the displacement of traditional cultural knowledge, if it is successfully mastered.

While I was teaching English Language Arts in an Aboriginal community, I found that I was making the same corrections on many of my students' papers. These corrections had to do with the local dialect. Students were writing sentences correctly according to the local dialect; however, they were incorrect according to the grammatical rules of Standard English. I found myself struggling with how to positively

reinforce the language that the students were bringing into the classroom, and still give them the choice to communicate in Standard English if they wished. As we discussed the two kinds of English, they came to the conclusion that they would be judged poorly by outsiders if they used their local dialect. I attempted to convey to them that they could still choose to use their dialect as an act of resistance; however, I could not help but feel that they took away the message that their local dialect, the language taught to them by their parents and families, the language of their comforting and storytelling, was somehow inferior.

There are many challenges with contemporary attempts to educate Aboriginal students, indeed Euro-Canadian attempts to educate Aboriginal students have been problematic at best and devastating at worst. It is important to recognize, however, that many of these challenges with contemporary education may be based upon the conflict between traditional Aboriginal teaching practices and mainstream teaching practices. I believe that it is possible to educate Aboriginal students in a way that is respectful and inclusive. By integrating the strengths of both Aboriginal and contemporary Euro-Canadian teaching practices, it is possible that Aboriginal students will develop the ability to be successful in both contexts.

The Merging of Aboriginal and Contemporary Educational Practices

As has been indicated previously, Aboriginal ways of knowing are often undermined within the contemporary Euro-Canadian school system. However, as Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) counter,

schools can sometimes introduce indigenous students to their roots in ways that evoke powerful responses. In short, formal education, or schooling, is critically important for its ability to provide the kinds of experiences, knowledge, skills, and credentials required for success in contemporary Aboriginal communities and Canadian society. (p. 2)

They also recognize, however, that this may not be without consequences for students of Aboriginal ancestry. Nevertheless, we need to recall that educational practices do not need to be mutually exclusive. Although Aboriginal and mainstream educational practices differ from one another, there are contributions from both practices that can promote academic achievement for Aboriginal students. In endeavoring to integrate the strengths of both perspectives, we can be guided by the words of

Elders in a gathering in 1972 [who] declared that in order to survive in the 20th century, we must really come to grips with the white man's culture and with white man ways. You must stop lamenting the past. The white man has many good things. Borrow. Master and apply his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general cultures. To be fully Indian we must become bilingual and bicultural. In doing so, we will survive as Indian people, true to our past. (Couture, as cited in Gamlin, 2003, p.16)

Learning can be Holistic

Aboriginal students may prefer a holistic or integrated approach to learning. This reflects an Aboriginal world-view where everything is interrelated and all relationships are important. It also reflects the importance of family and place (Nichol and Robinson, 2000, p. 498). Learning does not need to be compartmentalized and separate, as it is within the contemporary school system. Without dramatically changing the structures of the school, educators can work together to create cohesion across the various discipline areas. Learning strategies used for achieving literacy and numeracy, relevant to all curricular areas, can be integrated into each class. This may assist in providing continuity for Aboriginal students. Furthermore, fundamental teachings such as respect and compassion, as well as "ways of being" in a Euro-Canadian context can be modeled for students in all situations.

Being holistic in our approach may also mean that we can acknowledge that there are other explanations and understandings in our instructional practices.

When I was teaching a course on Aboriginal Education in Canada, a teacher candidate approached me to express frustration about feeling pressured to teach lessons that made him uncomfortable and in which he did not believe. He explained that he firmly believed in the western scientific explanations and felt that he would be lying to his students if he had to present Indigenous perspectives on some of the content he had to teach. I suggested to him that being inclusive does not mean that we lie about our own beliefs rather that we accept that the students in our classes may have other explanations for what we are teaching. I further suggested that we need to ensure that we remain open to these other truths that our students bring with them into our classes and recognize that they may hold those truths as closely as he held his scientific beliefs.

Learning can be Relationship-Based

Students, in particular adolescents, enjoy activities that involve social interaction therefore educators can use the students' desire to socialize to their advantage. In her description of how to motivate Northern learners, Sharon Swanson (2003) suggests that, "the classroom should provide a social environment where personal interaction takes place. The use of cooperative learning groups provides a supportive learning environment, and activities that allow cooperative work in the classroom do a good job of retaining interest" (p. 67). Maxine Matilpi (2012), an Aboriginal educator, learned early in her career

that it was important for the students to see themselves but also that they are seen, recognized, re-recognized, and known by others. They accomplish knowing by hearing each other and by coming to see their story as connected to a bigger story. (p. 212)

Relationships can also be formed between the educator and the students, the importance of which cannot be underestimated (eg., Goulet, 2001; Taylor, 1995). Darryl Bazylak (2002) also advocates for the building of relationships with his recognition that "strong, healthy relationships built on trust and mutual respect contribute to the educational success of Aboriginal students [and the] strength of the student-teacher relationship often dictates the level of success the student achieves in school" (p.145). Furthermore, as John Taylor (1995) points out, even carefully planned lessons can be ineffective if the student-teacher relationship is weak, however with a stronger relationship, the teacher "has a foundation for demanding more from the student" (p. 236).

It is also necessary to consider how this relationship moves into the broader context of the community and how educators' interactions with the family and the community influence their relationship with the student. This is of particular importance in Aboriginal communities where relationships make up a vital part of the social structure of the community. The relationship between educators and the community in which they teach has a tremendous impact on their ability to be effective in the classroom. How the educator navigates these relationships will greatly influence how he or she will be perceived by both the community and the students (Taylor, 1995). Educators who do not share the ancestry of their students may find it challenging to determine the appropriate level of participation. Those who engage themselves too much may be perceived as being too involved in a culture that is not their own; however, those who choose not to engage at all risk inadvertently ostracizing their students.

Although few students express the thought openly, they are concerned about what their non-Native teacher thinks and feels about their reserve. They want their teacher to like and respect the community. Obvious isolation is interpreted by students as a rejection of the community and, indirectly, of themselves. (Taylor, 1995, p. 226)

As John Taylor (1995) goes on to point out, students of Aboriginal ancestry are often struggling with their identity and educators have the capacity to have either a positive or a negative impact. It is my hope that educators will attempt to counteract the many negative influences, such as prejudiced attitudes, poverty, stereotypes, that Aboriginal students must contend with, and all which influence their self-image. The relationships the educator develops with "students, other teachers, parents, and the community will greatly influence how they are perceived, and this will alter their effectiveness as teachers" (p. 225).

Relationships can also be formed between the students and the curriculum. Incorporating information about historical contributions that Aboriginal people have made to the various curricular areas is a way to foster connections between the Aboriginal students and the curriculum. This can also validate Aboriginal ways of knowing, without diminishing their importance or implying that Aboriginal people and their ways of knowing exist solely in the past or are restricted to particular content areas. Well-meaning educators may attempt to insert generic components of Aboriginal culture into the curriculum to meet a need for Aboriginal content; however, this has the potential to trivialize knowledge that may be meaningful and sacred to a particular group of Aboriginal people.

Learning can be Contextualized and Practical

As Ray Nichol and Jim Robinson (2000) argue, "by contextualizing learning, students discover that education is meaningful and relevant to their own lives" (p. 500). This may mean teaching students outside of the classroom environment, so that they can see the immediate applications of their lessons. It may mean bringing in guests or experts in a particular field, so that students are able to learn about later applications of the curriculum they are learning in class. Role models from the community who are willing to discuss the education they needed to obtain employment in their field may also assist with this particular endeavour.

As mentioned previously, education within the mainstream context can be too theoretical for some students because the applications of school-based learning may not be immediately obvious to them. Classroom activities comprised of predominantly textbook activities may fall into this theoretical category for some students. The inclusion of work experience and other such undertakings mean that students can immediately use what they are learning. Providing students with opportunities to job shadow and apprentice with masters in a field of interest to the student can also provide them with valuable skills, while reflecting traditional Aboriginal teaching practices. Educators unable to make such long-term arrangements can bring professionals into the classroom or go on field trips to accommodate short term learning experiences outside of the classroom.

Learning can be Continuous

Learning within the mainstream context does not need to have an endpoint. Rather than being examples of individuals who have fully completed their education, educators can model the concept of continuous education for their students. For example, a non-Aboriginal educator who attends a community event may rely on his or her students to provide an understanding of the event as well as to teach him or her appropriate protocols and practices. This will challenge the traditional hierarchies established within the school system, where the educator is viewed as the expert, or one who has attained the height of his or her educational achievement. In this context, the student becomes the expert and plays the role of the educator for the duration of the event. As John Taylor (1995) shares, "it is important to let students teach you what they know about the topic. Teachers may be more knowledgeable about a topic they have researched, but the student is dealing in life experiences and knows things that non-Native persons do not know" (p. 237).

Finding the Balance between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian Ways of Knowing

Educators cannot ignore the knowledge and experiences that Aboriginal students bring to school. "To

overlook the resources children bring to school is to deny them access to learning. To overlook the resources children bring to school is to deny them access to the knowledge construction process" (Villegas and Lucas, 2002, p.73). Equally important, however, are the Euro-Canadian educational practices and the recognition of the importance of being academically successful within this system. Currently, the mainstream system reflects the dominant worldview within Canadian society, and to deny Aboriginal students an education in this system may inhibit their future success. Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson (2000) advise that Aboriginal educators need to

balance traditional Indigenous ways of knowing with the Eurocentric tradition. They must respect and understand other ways of knowing. They must embrace the paradox of subjective and objective ways of knowing that do not collapse into either inward or outward illusions, but bring us all into a living dialogical relationship with the world that our knowledge gives us. (p. 94)

It would seem that this recommendation is relevant to all educators, as all students have a right to an education based upon the strengths of the Euro-Canadian as well as the traditional Aboriginal systems.

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Sara Florence Davidson

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School in “The Place That Never Thaws” Salon

Heather is an experienced teacher and now an arts educator at Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada, and Dale is a writer. In this paper, we share personal stories and use a duoethnographic approach (Sawyer & Norris, 2013) to reflect on our educational practice at *Ummimak* (Muskox) School in Grise Fiord, Nunavut during the 2003-04 school year. We also speculate about how to work proactively and personally as part of a professional community towards this end.

At 76 degrees 25' north latitude, *Aujuittuq*, (the place that never thaws), or Grise Fiord, on Ellesmere Island, is the most northerly civilian community in the country. Located on the shores of Jones Sound, 1,160 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, it is not far from the North Pole. When we taught there, most of the 150 inhabitants were Inuit whose first language was Inuktitut. Despite its huge geographical landmass, Ellesmere Island, the southern tip of which is about 3,460 km north of Ottawa, is considered so remote by southerners that many maps of Canada omit it altogether.

Ummimak School involved about 50 students enrolled in grades K-11, five full-time teachers and two part-time educational assistants. We used a combination of the new Nunavut curricula, which was still under development (the territory of Nunavut came into being in 1999), and curricula from the Northwest Territories and Alberta. Heather taught the high school grades and Dale was a full-time substitute teacher.

Very small classes meant it was possible to establish close, positive relationships with students. However, attendance would greatly vary in each class, depending on the time of year. During the “dark season,” there was complete darkness from mid-November until early February. Then “light season” arrived within weeks and we experienced 24 hours of daylight. Each extreme posed a challenge to students and teachers in terms of their focus and energy.

Colonization in the High Arctic

Grise Fiord was created by the Canadian government in 1953, in part to assert sovereignty in the High Arctic during the Cold War and in part to discourage “dependency” by the Inuit on government programs (Dick, 2001; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). A handful of Inuit families from Inukjuak (formerly Port Harrison), Quebec, and Pond Inlet, both far to the south, were relocated after being promised homes and game to hunt. However, on their arrival, they found no buildings and very little familiar wildlife. Although the families had been told they could return home after a year if they wished, this offer was rescinded and they were forced to stay. Years of hardship led to some deaths. The inhabitants now hunt seals, narwhal, beluga whales, polar bears and musk ox over a vast range each year. Eco-tourism and government provide employment as well.

In 1993, the Canadian government investigated the earlier relocation program and the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples entitled *The High Arctic Relocation: A Report on the 1953-55 Relocation*, recommended a settlement. As a result, the government paid monies to the survivors and their families, and finally offered a formal apology in 2010.

Duoethnography

As duoethnographers (Sawyer & Norris, 2013), we view life history as an informal curriculum. We see meaning not as something fixed but as something we create and explore through dialogue. By juxtaposing narratives of difference we open new experiences and perspectives. As researchers our dialogue is not only between the two of us, but also between us and our perceptions of cultural artifacts from our lives including memories, stories, compositions, and critical incidents. We explicate our assumptions and perspectives by examining such artifacts and engaging in collaborative critique. We invite readers into the discussion by

¹ All names besides our own have been changed to protect personal privacy.

writing in the first person and avoiding the abstract authoritative voice. Our voices alternate in sections of our paper.

In addition, we note how narratives work within the culture as a whole (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). If, as educators working for social justice, we engage in action at the expense of personal reflection and analysis, we may risk re-enacting oppressive narratives. Therefore critical self-analysis through personal reflection and analysis of our internalization of colonialism, domination and unjust discourses is necessary. In this way, our actions can be informed, language reconsidered, and discourse reframed.

Dale

I recall my first day of substitute teaching like it was yesterday. It'll be engraved in my mind forever. The kindergarten to grade two teacher had called in sick, and the first class was gym. Tom, the principal, spent about 20 minutes with us while we went through some of their athletic drills, like running back and forth across the gym and walking behind each other in an orderly fashion following specific lines painted on the gym floor. Then, about 20 minutes into the 40-minute period, he gathered them together and whispered in my ear, "You're a natural, I'll leave you with them," and exited the gym in a stealth-like manner.

So there we were, the large male *qallunaat* (white person) substitute teacher looking cautiously at a small group of tiny Inuit children, who in turn were looking back in the same manner. The silence was palpable, and although it seemed like a lifetime, it lasted only seconds. Then, after a nervous smile from me, they started running and scrambling throughout the gym in reckless abandon; everyone except for brothers Abraham and Eric, who began to wail and flail at each other right in front of me. Trying to break up their continuous fighting and herding everyone back into some semblance of order took most of the rest of the class. Most teachers have years of university education classes plus lengthy school internships. I had 20 minutes and then baptism by fire. It took learning on the job to a whole new level.

Heather

In its use of Inuktitut, the very name of *Ummimak* School modeled a positive view of our students' Inuit heritage. As I entered the building for the first time my eyes were drawn to a variety of Inuit cultural artifacts, which were proudly displayed. These included a handmade *ulu* (an all-purpose women's knife), a *qulliq* (soapstone oil lamp) and an ingenious pair of handmade wooden eye protectors with small slits, used historically as "sunglasses" against the harsh arctic glare.

I was intrigued by our teacher professional development opportunities, which included traditional sewing techniques, as these are valued skills to be passed on to younger generations. Soon I spent an afternoon making slippers with Miriam, the kindergarten to grade 2 teacher and a skilled artist. I chose blue wool Melton cloth. Decorating them with white, pink and purple yarn, I recall blushing with delight when Miriam praised my careful stitching! Also, during my individual professional development week in mid-winter, I paid my school board funding to Millie, a local craftsperson and artist, who taught me how to sew with fur using my mother's vintage muskrat coat. The women of the community were, on the one hand, interested in the fur of this unknown southern creature, but on the other hand, critical of the dryness of an old chemically dried hide in contrast to the naturally processed hides with which they were familiar.

Each Friday afternoon the whole school participated in "Culture". These experiences, guided by adult members of the community who were financially compensated for their time, stand out in my mind more than any others because I was the *learner*. There were a variety of activities over the year. One day under the leadership of a few community Elders I took a small role in the preparation of a muskox hide. Staked out in the traditional manner, our hide dried for many weeks in the sun and wind behind the school.

Land-based activities were a valued and regular part of the curriculum. During light season, we organized picnics. On those brilliant but still bitterly cold Friday afternoons, students and teachers alike would pile on *qamutiks* (long slatted wooden sleds), which were pulled by snowmobiles or dog teams. On one of our expeditions, Olaf, a renowned local sculptor, demonstrated carving. Deftly wielding his huge knife, he expertly sliced blocks of hard snow to create huge beautiful abstract forms. The rest of us watched in admiration and helped as we were able. Riding off at the end of the afternoon, I looked back and reflected on the ephemeral nature of these art works. By mid-summer, they would eventually drift away and melt into the Atlantic Ocean.

Dale

One Friday afternoon in late March a resident expert named Peter arrived to teach our intermediate and senior boys how to build an *iglu* or traditional winter shelter. Light season was really coming into its own with the temperature hovering around minus 50 degrees that afternoon with an extremely bright sun. Warm clothing and sunscreen were definitely the order of the day. (I told people down south that this was a place where you could contract frostbite and melanoma at the same time). My students were not really prepared for it by any stretch of the imagination, practically or mentally, as they ambled their way out behind the school with light coats, no hats, some in running shoes and most of them with their hands in their pockets and their heads down.


The *iglu* construction began with Peter expertly cutting blocks of hard snow from the bank along the road with a long snow knife. This was the only tool he used for the entire construction. I had always thought *iglus* were made from ice. My students were fooling around and Peter had to take them to task for ruining some of the limited hard packed snow available for the project. After cutting out blocks, the boys and I hauled them down to a flat area on the field. Soon after the arduous process started, my students complained so often that they were cold, that I finally relented and let them return to the warm school. For the rest of the afternoon, it would be only Peter and me.

After he cut and I carried a sufficient amount of blocks, the construction of the *iglu* began: first in a circular shape, then gradually narrowing to a dome. Peter stood inside while I lifted and helped him place the blocks, interlocking them one on top of the other. With each block, he would use the snow knife to pound and fit the blocks perfectly in place. We would then use the shaved snow to fill the small gaps between each block. The last few remaining blocks had to be shoved through the small opening that served as an entrance for him to lift up and complete the top of the dome.

It took us the better part of the afternoon to complete it, and during the construction, many members of the community stopped by on their snow machines to watch us with great interest. Some came down to talk as well. With the strenuous, continuous physical activity, the extremely frigid weather almost became a non-issue. In fact, I started to feel quite warm. I remember the sweat pouring down my forehead and into my eyelids, which eventually froze shut. I'd have to continually pry them open with my fingers. Of course, Peter wore less apparel than me, being more acclimatized to the elements and having knowledge of the physical activity involved in building an *iglu*.

I remember being so proud while a photo was taken of us standing out front of the *iglu*-me with a huge grin in big boots and a parka and Peter with a much lighter jacket and smaller boots holding a can of coke with his eyeglasses frosted and foggy from the cold and exertion.

When the *iglu* was completed, the whole school came out to see it. Each student took a turn going inside. It was quite a source of school pride. Even our intermediate and senior boys, fresh from the warm gym, came out and went inside the *iglu*. The comical irony of this experience was that when it finally came time for me



to enter, I was too big to fit through the small entrance! I was the only one who ended up not being able to go inside and enjoy the fruits of my labour.

Concluding Thoughts

In this paper, we have narrated stories about learning to integrate Inuit content in our educational practice in one school. More than 10 years later, Heather works proactively as part of a professional community *towards the same ends*. She recently audited an on-line course, Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education, through the University of British Columbia. She will soon teach an art education methods course in a new Memorial University Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) program as part of the Nunatsiavut Agreement in Labrador. Dale continues to write, drawing on both personal reflection and analysis.

Taima (that is all)!

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Heather McLeod

Heather is an associate professor (arts education) at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland where she teaches undergraduate and graduate arts/arts-based curriculum courses. She is currently Interim Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programs). Previously she taught in public schools in British Columbia and Nunavut and worked for the BCTF.

Dale Vanelli

Dale is a writer, editor and researcher from Trail, British Columbia. He previously worked for government holding many positions including communications officer, assistant for Cabinet Ministers, and an Information and Privacy Analyst. His article, "Memories of Gyro Park", was published recently in a book entitled *A Trail to Remember*.

The Elder Project

A Way Toward Knowledge

Salon

I am a poet and a former secondary teacher with seven books in the world. I like to say that poetry is the shortest distance between two hearts, and in the past five years I have seen this happen many times. I have seen First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth sitting with their Elders, turning their Elders' stories into poems. Two hearts connecting.

There are now 12 Elder Projects . They can be viewed online at: theelderproject.com/home

In 2008, I was commissioned by the Alberni Valley Museum to write poems from archival photographs and journals, in celebration of the 150th birthday of the Province of B.C. The poems were combined with photographs and displayed in the museum. After I wrote the first twenty poems, I realized that a whole population was being ignored: the First Nations people. The Tseshaht, the Hupacasath, the Ahousaht, the Nuuchah-Nulth, who had been there thousands of years before the arrival of the white settlers, were being ignored. Jean McIntosh, the museum's director, agreed.

Two chairs were set up in the Museum, and many First Nations people came with their stories. They became my teachers. I learned about the rich life they had with their families. And it was from them that I learned of the darkness of the residential school experience. I wrote in one of my poems how they were "raised with the sacred/ the seasons of the moon/ to honor the earth, the elders."

A year later, I met Barb Stoochnoff, a teacher at Chemainus Secondary School and I told her about the book I had written for the Alberni Museum project: *What Were Their Dreams*. She asked me to come to her class of First Nations students and teach them to be poets. And so I arrived, magnetic poetry and photographs in hand, and I worked with them to find the words for their own stories. Denise Augustine, of the Aboriginal Education for the Cowichan Valley School District, after she saw how readily the students had written poetry, said "Let's do something." And so the first Elder Project was born.

Denise and I compiled a list of questions for the students to ask the Elders that would give the students an idea of the life the Elders had lived. I trained the students to write poetry. I distributed photographs, some of which had been given to me by the Elders I met in Port Alberni, and gave the students a pile of Magnetic Poetry words. The students, sometimes working together, wrote small poems, getting an idea of how to write the short lines of a poem. Later, the Elders arrived, and the students turned their stories into poems, which were then published in *The Elder Project* in 2010.

Denise wrote in the introduction:

This project connected our youth with their Elders. People hunger now more than ever for connection with one another. These stories connect us to our past, our family and our community. The confidence and creativity that has been developed has been magical to watch. (3)

Together With the Children, was published in 2010, with students and Elders from Vernon School District 22 and the Cultural Immersion School at the Okanagan Indian Band. Sandra Lynxleg, District Principal for Aboriginal Education in Vernon, organized the project. I happened to be in Vernon, saw a brochure featuring the Aboriginal Education program and called her up. I took a copy of *The Elder Project* for her to see and she immediately wanted to be involved in the project.

Later, Sandra wrote in the introduction: "Read these poems. You'll ride in a canoe. You'll see turpentine poured on a head. You'll eat hard tack cookies. Smell a box of crayons. As you turn each page you'll meet us and learn more about who we are (1)."

In 2011, the third book *The Elders Speak* was published, and it involved students from Chemainus Elementary, Crofton Elementary and Penelakut Island Elementary. Students who participated in the first book acted as assistants for these students, and they helped the younger students write their magnetic poetry poems, sometimes sat in on the interview with the Elders, and provided valuable support. One poem, written by Kali Jack and Tyson Jack for their Elder, Danny Norris, captures the spirit of the project's intent:

My Elder, Danny Norris

I grew up around wood stoves and sawdust stoves.
We had a small house, 18 people,
no running water.

There were roses outside,
a smokehouse for drying fish.
We made sure our chores were done first,
then we could go and play.

We had to eat at the table
because the Elders were talking, teaching us.
We swallowed their knowledge; (4)

Another poem from *The Elders Speak*, was written by Ann Marie Louie, who was 13. She wrote it for Laura Antoine, an Aboriginal support worker at Chemainus Elementary. Ann Marie knew Laura, and she did not know her story until she sat down with her and asked her the questions.

I went to Westholm Indian Day School,
Grades 1-6.
Racism was bad.
The janitor called us "dirty little Indians."
He was a military person,
shined the floors, didn't like us to use the bathrooms.

They gave us rotten apples to eat.
There were worms in them.
They gave us dog biscuits to eat,
Powdered milk that tasted like paint.
Sometimes I threw up.

I was supposed to speak English.
If I spoke my language, I would get hit on the head
with a metal ruler.

I would go home, the blood dripping from my head; (21)

This poem, written by Tristin Louis for Juliette Rivet and published in the fifth Elders Project book *Xe'Xe'*, captures her life in a unique way.

I sat at the valley and saw my people.
I smelled the fish and dried meat.
I saw an eagle fly on a church steeple.
This is where my people meet.

My grandpa was a chief and shaman,
he taught us our native ways.
It was taken from me in a school
and my life changed in every way; (29)

The seventh book, *Wisdom of the Elders* involved students from Stelly's Secondary School in Saanich in 2013. One of the pictures I gave to the students is of Dolly Watts, age 11, on her way to Port Alberni Residential School in 1946. She is on a train, smiling. She does not know what awaits her. Ernie Bill wrote this poem:

Dolly

She smiles a blooming smile on the outside
inside it's a cruel world
on the train of bitter moment; (3)

Connecting with the Elders, the eighth in the Elder Project series, took place in 2013 in the Rocky Mountain School District 6, in three communities there: Kimberley, Golden and Invermere. Denise Porter, who was the Aboriginal Education Support Worker in Golden, wrote, "The real gift of the *Elder Project* was in the intergenerational connections that were made, and will live on, not only in a physical form, but also in the minds and souls of the participants" (14).

I worked with different Inuit youth, many of whom are bi-lingual, fluent in Inuktitut and English, for the tenth book *Their Working Hands, Their Golden Words*. Simeonie Merkuratsuk, one of the youth wrote this:

Our Elders, Our Future

I can see it in their eyes:
what the Elders went through.
It was hard.
Hunger.
Danger.
Travelling.
Relocation.
Their hard working hands,
their golden hearts; (22)

These Elder Projects have changed me and given me a new understanding of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, and they have deepened my compassion. My greatest hope is that the books that are produced will find their way into classrooms where the students can learn to view First Nations, Metis and Inuit people as the gifted human beings they are.

The goal of an Elder Project is to have the students hear the stories of their Elders, to take the stories into themselves, and to write poems which will then go out into the world, with healing for everyone who reads them.

Wendy Morton

Wendy Morton has six books of poetry, and a memoir, *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast*. She has been WestJet's Poet of the Skies, Chrysler's Poet of the Road.

She is the recipient of the 2010 Spirit Bear Award, The Golden Beret Award and was made an Honorary Citizen of Victoria in 2011 for her contributions to the arts. In 2012 she was awarded The Colleen Thibaudeau Outstanding Contribution to Canadian Poetry from the League of Canadian Poets.

She is the founder of the Elder Project, which connects First Nations students with their Elders. The students turn their Elders' stories into poems, which are then turned into lovely books.

Beyond Theory

Salon

My context as an Aboriginal teacher

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the teaching practices in relation to Aboriginal peoples' lives, through the use of current event stories, and overall, a questioning of Canadian consciousness and awareness. It is intended to portray the reflections of an Aboriginal teacher and how mainstream media affects teaching practices during a time of tremendous changes in Aboriginal communities.

I am an Aboriginal teacher, with mostly secondary teaching experience, but I currently teaching in a middle school. This topic interests me because I have taught Social Studies from grade seven to 12, throughout my career. I have also taught BC First Nation's Studies 12 for five years, and during this time students were always interested in Aboriginal topics, including learning more about the variety of protests and movements taking place. My personal interest stems too from my own Aboriginal background. I began to search for answers to students' questions and ended up on a personal quest to understand why Aboriginal peoples' history was unnoticed by the average student. It began as I designed lesson plans that I expected would interest students, to have them question the quality of life of Aboriginal people in Canada.

As a Secwepemc person, my interest in Aboriginal topics has not only influenced my teaching practice in the form of lessons but also my career path. I began to get more involved with a variety of Aboriginal education committees. I have taught in my own traditional territory for my entire career, which allows me to highlight local history in my lessons. I am in a unique situation as one of a small number of Aboriginal teachers who teaches in regular classes within my district.

The changing landscape of awareness

Reflecting on a 14-year career in Aboriginal education, with most of my experience in a secondary school setting, much has changed in the last decade, in terms of awareness of Aboriginal topics. Importantly, there were major events that occurred politically, economically and socially for Canadian Aboriginal people. Specific changes began with the Residential School Task Force's uncovering of thousands of heartbreaking stories through their years of research, mostly noted after the final release of the Royal Commission in 1996. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People dedicated an entire chapter explaining the legacy of Residential Schools which led to the federal government's response to the legacy, and eventually, the official Residential School Apology in 2008 by the federal Government of Canada. With recognition of Aboriginal peoples' past and current situation, the official apology was presented in 2008, by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, which marked a pivotal changing point for awareness around Aboriginal issues and in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. This change marked a reality for the average Canadian regarding the lives of Aboriginal people. The apology sparked a new understanding among mainstream Canadians and revealed the realities within Aboriginal peoples' lives and communities. Both in the past and current situations the apology cast a new light on the Government of Canada, in terms of its treatment of Aboriginal people.

Rather than the eruption of a violent outbreak of protests though, the apology sparked a technology charged flood of facts, and a surge of interest in mainstream Canadians for understanding our shared history. It revealed the reality within the Residential Schools and the past hardships endured by former students of the Residential School system. Due to the apology and the subsequent financial restitution offered to Aboriginal people across Canada, many Aboriginal people were forced to relive their ordeals in order to apply for the funds set aside by the Federal Government. Many Canadians were outraged at the amount of information kept "secret" and only exposed to mainstream consciousness via the decades of work of the Residential School Task Force. Some former residential school students launched personal claims and class action lawsuits against the federal government for the injustices they endured while attending the schools.

Once the Residential Task Force had revealed those thousands of heart wrenching stories, one thing became clearer: it was time for action. It was that need for action that prompted the apology. To some Aboriginal people, it meant the ordeal was over, while to others it left a desire for further change. Many wanted the federal government to be held accountable for its legacy. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission resulted after the apology, and was one way the government could begin to rectify the past and its relationship with Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The Commission eventually began a series of public hearings where former students could publicly share their stories, and the stories were witnessed by many thousands of people. Vivid images of these hearings emerged showing not only Canadians, but the rest of the world too, what Aboriginal people had endured through the schools. It also showed the incredible strength of Aboriginal people in overcoming emotional and physical abuse, and the need for their own healing to break its damaging effects for themselves.

Time for action. Idle No More.

As mentioned, in the years following the apology many changes have taken over Aboriginal peoples' lives. One such change came as the result of the political movement called "Idle No More". This movement, which called for not sitting idle as things changed around them, sparked interest within Aboriginal communities and created a rapid succession of public political protests shown to the world via multimedia. Thousands of videos and images showing the injustices Aboriginal people were experiencing crossed Facebook, Twitter, and email. Images ranged from communities in poverty to protesting the environmental impacts felt from mining and oil extraction occurring within or near Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people used dancing, drumming, Elders speaking the language, and flash mobs as a way to create a noticeable protest to the world. The vivid images demonstrated the increasing concerns of Aboriginal people and federal government changes to the Indian Act. In the fall of 2012, three Chiefs in Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan walked to parliament and, while dressed in buckskin and feathers and holding a strand of wampum beads that symbolized their relationship with the federal government, they attempted to enter and face the Prime Minister. Also, throughout the winter of 2012, well-known Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat endured months of a hunger fast on the parliament grounds. Both of these actions became turning points for Aboriginal issues and placed the spotlight, once more, on the Canadian government to act.

Seeing the news reports, stories, and protests via social media put the focus on taking action. People expected the government to respond to the visible definite problems. In combination with work for social change accomplished over the 1990s and into the 21st century, these events brought self-declaration and self-determination for Aboriginal people into the forefront. In 2012, this meant that Aboriginal people were becoming well-versed in historical and generational issues stemming from colonization and the creation of Canada, the movements that sparked random protests throughout the country, and creating global awareness of Canadian Aboriginals.

What this has meant for me as an Aboriginal teacher: Questioning still

These movements have changed Aboriginal teaching throughout this previous decade by creating more clarity through the detailed and vivid information in a steady stream across social media. These issues are now talked and written about in more detail than ever before and not only by Aboriginal people. Also, the information can easily be accessed online by the mainstream public. As a result, these issues can reach and impact the classroom, not only through a teacher-student method, but a student-student method is more likely now. It has become modern and almost trendy to take an interest in Aboriginal issues and invest time searching for meaning in regards to the events that lead up to this point in history.

As a teacher, and reflecting on my lessons for my courses, my own awareness of the impact of the Residential School Apology and the Idle No More movement brought me to reflect on my classroom lessons at the same time. I considered questions such as: How much time did I spend talking about the impact of residential school? How many of my students had families that were impacted? Did it differ for Metis students? How much did my teacher colleagues know of the history of residential schools and their legacy? How long will residential schools continue to have an impact? Will it be generations?

So many questions surfaced for so many people. Many Canadians, for example, did not know what had happened to the Aboriginal students who attended these schools. As the layers began to be uncovered in the media and on social media, I reflected upon my own lessons and discussions about the Residential School Apology and legacy. I hoped learning about these topics would have an impact on my own students. But stories of residential school survivors shared via multimedia left me questioning what impact these stories being shared publicly might have on my students awareness of Aboriginal topics and Aboriginal peoples. It was not only the impact of these stories on me as they surfaced during my years of teaching, but the influence of these stories upon who I was, my history, and the fact that I was an Aboriginal teacher teaching these lessons. Would the fact that it was my history change students' experience of these topics? This has remained an unanswered question for me. My reflection on the years of teaching these courses, and my use of the material we covered, also raised these questions: Would my lessons be enough to raise awareness of the things that directly affected my own life? Would they change anything, in the long term, regarding student empathy or understanding of Aboriginal issues? As an Aboriginal teacher how could my teaching practice become more effective to bring about positive change?

Where do we go from here?

Personally, understanding the overall changes that are occurring for Aboriginal people during this period of time leaves me with two big questions to ponder. Due to significant events like the Residential School Apology and its aftermath and the lasting effects of the Idle No More movement, the inequalities faced by Aboriginal people are clearly laid out in the open. What impact will these revelations and movements have on me, my children, and my community? My own Secwepemc community will also experience impacts from these changes that are occurring. The second question is: what does the future have in store for the status of Aboriginal people? The idea of distinct status, decided when the rights of Aboriginal people were enshrined in the Canadian constitution, creates an avenue for thought provoking ideas, yet, clusters us in to a segment of society separated by a document. What change will satisfy the needs of Aboriginal people? Over a period of time, the idea of distinction did not become watered down by policies, in fact, it actually grew. Aboriginal people search for answers about land, about the Indian Act, and government relationship with them. It's now moved beyond theory: most of what Aboriginal people have opened up about to the world has proven to be true. By sharing their experiences and stories, they shed light on disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. My understanding of this, as a teacher, comes from my own involvement in Aboriginal peoples' lives, partly in my own community but mostly from the Aboriginal students in my classroom. Once I began to search for the proof in regard to my questions, I became more aware of Aboriginal people and their rights. Textbooks provide a starting point for so many topics, but Aboriginal peoples' lives truly are not understood solely from what is written but by finding answers to questions raised when learning about differences and through further research. And so, I began to share more openly about my own background with my students and invited them seek answers to topics they raised. I began to allow them to raise questions about what they see when using social media and use it as a starting point for them to search for their own answers about Aboriginal history and the legacy that remains of the residential school system.

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Brenda Celesta

Weytkp, my name is Brenda Celesta. I have been a teacher in School District 73 in British Columbia for the past 14 years, mainly teaching in secondary, but currently teaching Grade 7 Core courses and Social Studies 8 and 9 in Middle School. I was raised in my community, Simcpw, located near Barriere, BC.

Reflection

Salon

Each day
beauty greater than
any prairie dream.

To Musqueam and Coast Salish people
Thank you for
this honour,
your sharing & tolerance;
Allowing us to gather here,
on unceded
traditional
territory.
I modestly offer
deep gratitude &
apologies
one day we'll be
Better People.



Introduction

I have written the following poem in answer to the question “in what ways might the history of First Nations education present challenges to mainstream assumptions about schooling and society in North America?” which was given as an assignment in a graduate level course at the University of British Columbia. I have chosen the poetry format in keeping with decolonizing methods sometimes suggested or used in research (e.g., Diversi & Moreira, 2012; Madden, Higgins, & Korteweg, 2013). As a decolonizing approach, poetry is able to access the heart and mind of both reader and writer, through avenues that may not be available in a more persuasive essay. Furthermore, poetry is beginning to be recognized for the specific advantages it can offer to research methodology (Glesne, 1997; Lahman et al., 2011). Notes and themes, especially those that require acknowledgement of previous scholarship, are placed in the column on the right, leaving the poem in its entirety on the left. The primary thesis of this poem is that colonialism and its partner, neo-liberalism (Smith, 2012), have and continue to have a severe and lasting impact on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies. When trying to find the root cause of Indigenous students’ underachievement, we must shift from an individual deficiency paradigm to examine the colonial framework that forms the learning environment for most Indigenous students (Battiste, 2013; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Although I have not presented any solutions in the present work, I have developed some suggestions for decolonizing special education services elsewhere (Yee & Butler, 2014).

Reflection

I stand at the crosswalk
in front of my house,
willing the appearance
of the little white man
to lead me through
these troubled times.
Why won't this
goddamn light work?

Beside me
bulldozers tear out weeping willows
so the children of our gods
can release their
Maserati ballad
to the iCloud.
An airplane
roars in the atmosphere,
sonic booming the virtues of
retail therapy as
a balm for our
bleeding wounds.
Car after endless car
races by me.
Drivers
turn up numb
turn off heat
to get through
another day of
work,
just
like
every
day ...

a break in traffic

I follow the path
like a lifeline
towards a
slim salvation.
Arriving at the trailhead
Tall Dark Cedar extends
a handsome bough.

Self-location

Opening with a self-reflection is necessary to make the author's interpretive lens apparent to the reader (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Baker & Baker, 2010).

As part of my self-location, I offer a critique of Western society in general. Despite somewhat of an 'outsider' status I have been educated and employed in a Western paradigm. I identify most closely with this culture and take responsibility for reform within this sphere. I see neo-liberalism as a driving force of decay within Western society (Chomsky, 2014; Giroux & Giroux, 2008; Smith, 2012). Neo-liberalism has replaced our essential cultural norms and robbed us of our ability to experience life as human beings (Chomsky, 2014).



I Accept

Silence suddenly surrounds me
like an old friend
I don't visit often enough and
who is surely dying.
I shed my garish clothes -
the shirt a little girl made for me
in faraway Bangladesh,
while the roof caved above her;
the shoes that
protect me from a world
I can't feel anymore;
the women's jeans that
hold me in
fashion
after my friend taught me how
to roll the cuff
properly.
My naked toes touch
the forest floor
like a baby who finds her Mother
for the first time.

I lie down on her breast
and feel
the quiet rise and fall
as she breathes
her life into me.
I cover my skin
with the dust of those who
came before me
pulling them in
through my pores
until I
fade away.
Trace the face of my
ancestors
among the cedar and needles.
Green eyes and flaxen curls
dancing through a field of wheat
blown wild by the prairie wind
on her parents' farm,
where they all have callused hands.
The land that used to suckle bison is
fixed now, with wheat and oats.
But she flees like a whisper

Acknowledging ancestral connections is not only essential for self-location, but has also been recognized as a decolonization strategy for Indigenous people (Corntassel, 2012). I would like to suggest that this would be a useful strategy for non-Indigenous people as well, as a way to shed the neo-liberal norms we currently live by and revitalize the rich cultural protocols our ancestors brought to this country. In this case I describe my mother and father, and briefly acknowledge the privilege our families have experienced as a result of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples' land. Although many of our cultural traditions were lost in their generation, my parents still form an important link to past generations, and have provided me with the first and lasting lens through which I see and understand the world.


with the colour blind
black sheep
across to the horizon
and doesn't say goodbye.
While nestled here by the Elbow
a young man sighs
after a long day of
cooking chop suey
for all the local farmers.
He turns his
slanty eyes to the stars
seeing diamonds.
Standing on ancient burial grounds,
he reaches up to grab one but
Danny calls out
and he
runs to meet his friends instead.

Each gave me
these eyes
rolling in my head.
Pop them out
and set them down among the ferns -
just for now,
safekeeping from the world

Rise
and move to sit
with a cluster of
seedlings
smiling brightly.
Newborn green
needles and leaves
play with
 small beads of water
 dropping, jumping, falling or
 cradled in gentle arms
they shoot forth from
an impressive old stump.
The nurse log
that gives them strength,
sustenance to grow
up towards the light.
The ancient tree,
a witness to
shocking
transformation.

A natural metaphor was chosen for the discussion of Indigenous education because of deep and interdependent connections to nature described in the literature (Cajete & Pueblo, 2010).

This metaphor describes what I understand to be some key aspects of Indigenous Education: based in experience and action, purposeful, respectful of individual agency, and guided and sustained by teachers (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009; Okakok, 1989).



Beginning from
a time when
he and his cohorts
were sovereign.
Compassionate, but
quick-tempered,
sentries to
our Mother's fertile interior
when men sat with him as brothers.
Homelands stretched on
into eternity
it seemed.
no one could have expected
Later on escaped
the angry metal teeth
of visitors
who reeked with
the sour stench of greed.
Watched
as many brothers fell
bent or broken,
while steel and glass
began to
overshadow the canopy.
In this very spot
where shale now catches our feet
a man stood
in a brown uniform
and tied a ribbon around
young Hemlock
to mark the path of progress.
Eventually he returned
ripping roots of
ancient neighbours
to make a trail, he said
"For all to enjoy!"
After that came the
English ivy
Granny planted
in her ornamental
English garden.
Cuttings offered
to improve the lot
of neglected
wilderness.

This part of the poem describes a process which is only partly metaphoric, where the experience of trees in the forest can be seen to mirror the colonial experience of many Indigenous peoples in Canada (Alfred, 2009).

The myth of hegemony and colonialism is that all people will benefit from development (Ives, 2004; Stoler, 2008).

English Ivy is the primary metaphor for Western education in this poem. I have previously heard it used as a metaphor for colonizing forces from a classmate, and have shaped it to fit with the theme of the forest.

All around,
smooth, shiny
evergreen leaves
spread
dis-ease,
took hold
and ran
 choking quiet mosses
 unassuming lichens
 crowding out ferns
and climbed
 over fallen soldiers
 grasping at those
 still somehow standing
pushing roots
 into unwilling bark
 tenacious holdfasts
up and up until
it emerged in the sunshine
at the top of the canopy,
even then reaching ever higher,
never fearing the fate of Icarus.
While below
Douglas Firs snapped
under the weight of the
oppressive burden.
Cedars were a strangled
casualty of ambition.
At some point it seemed prudent
to cease the destruction
or at least hide the bodies.

But how can ivy stop being ivy?
It doesn't know how to be different.

Time swirls in the skin
of the stump here now.
An old gnarled face
couched in tragedy.
We are all so
changed,
it's hard to distinguish
what should have been.
What will be?
Seedlings have been gathered
and transplanted


I wanted non-Indigenous people to be able to see themselves as participants in colonization, which is why I compared it to the Grandmother innocently planting Ivy in the wilderness. Colonizing structures are created by a very few cultural elite, but are then carried on by those who only marginally benefit from the spread of ideas (Stoler, 2008; Stoler, 1989). Many times these people spread ideas from a place of good intention, but the destruction can be catastrophic. Although not mentioned in the poem, this is why I feel that humility is more important than good intentions when thinking about decolonization (Yee & Butler, 2014).

Even Western stories of caution are not enough to dissuade colonial forces.

There have been some criticisms of Harper's apology and subsequent reconciliation processes (Corntassel, 2012; Lowry, Dewar, DeGagné, & Rogers, 2012), but at the very least there is a recognition in Western society that a problem exists.

To stop colonialism, we need to decolonize Western society and institutions (Regan, 2010).

Indigenous communities are struggling, as are Indigenous students in Western education systems (Battiste, 2013; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).



transported
transmingled,
estranged from our Mother
amongst the concrete
bright lights and
angry noise
where
it's so hard to see
the sun.
The ostentatious glare
of iPhone
won't support
photosynthesis.
Saplings are studied
with fixed eyes.
What could be their deficiency?
We look with minds accustomed to
a barren existence,
crowded with white noise
and distraction.
The whole structure so flawed
there's no way to spot
the stain.

I sigh.
brush the dirt from my arms,
find my eyes over by the fern
where I had entrusted them,
put on my fashion, my face.
I catch my reflection.
I look like I just emerged from my Mother
filthy, unkempt, uncivilized
"geezus where were you?"
I turn towards home
I think some jackass
is dancing on tv tonight.

Western psychology tends to focus on a deficit model, where the student has some deficiency which is causing challenges in the classroom (Bailey & Betts, 2009; Bui & Turnbull, 2003). Although some Indigenous students may undoubtedly struggle with special needs, it is also true that the current learning environment, a direct result of colonial history, is actively interfering with their learning and achievement (Yee & Butler, 2014).

There are two ways of interpreting the hard work of decolonization. A hegemonic perspective would try to trivialize and belittle the process (Ives, 2004), whereas an anti-hegemonic or decolonizing perspective may place utmost importance on decolonizing journeys (Giroux & Giroux, 2008; Regan, 2010). Non-Indigenous people who opt to attempt decolonization are frequently questioned in their choice. Critically, this is not a 'home' space for us yet. We are still visitors to the decolonization process. It is easy and comfortable to maintain the status quo, and we are often complicit and complacent.

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Nikki L. Yee

Nikki L. Yee is a PhD student at the University of British Columbia, and a former teacher. She is interested in exploring the concept of decolonization for non-Indigenous peoples, and the implementation of an integrated decolonizing-self-regulated learning pedagogy that will help non-Indigenous teachers support Indigenous students in inclusive classrooms.

Indigenizing the English Classroom – One Story at a Time

Investigating Our Practice

One of the first questions I am often asked when people learn that I teach English First Peoples (EFP) is, “are you Native?” and the second question that invariably follows is, “how many Native students are in the class?” I am not an Indigenous person, and to the best of my knowledge, neither are any of my current students. For the past three years, we have successfully offered English First Peoples 12 at Vancouver’s Gladstone Secondary, an Eastside school with a very ethnically diverse population including a small number of students who identify as Aboriginal. In its first year, the course sign up was very low, but Gladstone’s administrative team and English Department Head, Ray Guraliuk, recognized the significance of English First Peoples 12, and the class ran with only 18 students. The following year we ran two classes and are now looking at introducing English First Peoples 10 in the near future.

Yup! Same. At New Westminister Secondary (NWSS), we offered the EFP 10 and 12 to our students the first year after the First Nations Education Steering Committee’s (FNESC) BC Provincial pilot of the English First Peoples curriculum in 2009. It didn’t run. The following year we managed to build a class of 24 Grade 12 students who were ready to dive into unfamiliar waters. In the three years we have been able to run the course, approximately 100 students have enrolled, thanks to the support of the New Westminister Aboriginal Coordinator, Bertha Lansdowne, our English Department Head, the New Westminister School District, and our school administrators. Each year I tell my students—some Aboriginal, mostly non-Aboriginal—“You guys are special, you know. Of the 2000 students attending NWSS annually, you are the only students curious enough to look at your culture and ask hard questions.”

In the Vancouver District, I encourage interested colleagues to develop the course in their schools, but their responses are often the same: “we offer the course, but we can never get kids to sign up,” or “we’re interested, but no one feels confident teaching Aboriginal literature” or the most common response: “isn’t that course just for Aboriginal students?”

True that! Who knew that running a course that aims to fill the cultural gaps left behind by our previous educators would face resistance? I’m naïve I guess. Every year I put on my dancing shoes and visit every Grade 9 and Grade 11 English class to promote the course, and even then I attract only a small number of kids. You know what? I even promise that our Aboriginal Cultural Facilitator will teach us how to make bannock! The students who are interested are worried that the universities won’t accept the credit, and their parents are worried that the course is too easy. I guess changing the course of history isn’t as easy as listing a new course on our school’s course selection guide.

We—Shirley Burdon at Gladstone Secondary in Vancouver, and Mary-Jo at New Westminister Secondary—would like to share our experiences of introducing and teaching English First Peoples developed by FNESC. Our aim is not so much to discuss the theoretical underpinnings or pedagogy inherent within English First Peoples 12, as it is to share the more practical aspects of introducing and supporting the course, recommending resources, and highlighting the creative strategies that make the course so engaging for both students and teachers.

Colleagues also often ask how I, Shirley, came to teach Aboriginal Literature in the first place. I was fortunate to study with Deana Reder, a Metis professor in both Native Studies and English, while studying in Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) Masters of Arts for Teachers of English (MATE) program. Her objectives were to encourage all of us to teach more Native Literature in our classes. I had read more than one Thomas King

novel, but I also quickly learned that there was a large body of work unknown to me. While I was aware of the concept of colonization and the existence of residential schools, I didn't fully understand the impact of either on Canada's Aboriginal population. My classmates and I were troubled by a colonizer-settler version of history that dominated many of our classrooms and textbooks. Consequently, I wondered just how I could teach Aboriginal literature. What did I know of the Aboriginal experience that I hadn't learned from a book? I think these concerns may explain why, despite the excellent resources available such as the FNEC Teachers Resource Guide, more teachers in the Lower Mainland, particularly non-Indigenous teachers, aren't teaching English First Peoples. Our unfamiliarity with Aboriginal literatures, or our apprehension about saying the wrong thing, is intimidating and prevents people, even though they're interested, from taking up the course. This is where reaching out and making connections with members of Aboriginal communities is so important. People like Deana Reder, Dolores van der Wey (SFU Education Faculty and a consultant for the FNEC Teacher's Resource Guide), and Loretta Williams (our school's Aboriginal Youth Worker) were all so encouraging with their support and guidance.

Can I tell you a story of generosity? The legend goes: in five years, five women tirelessly developed, wrote and implemented the English First People 9-12 curriculum which included a grade 12 provincial exam. That's a WOW by any standard. What transpired from this impassioned journey were FNEC's Nine Principles of Learning: the foundation of the course.

Four summers ago, I packed up my backpack and headed to Kamloops for the FNEC Summer Institute to meet this amazing group of innovators. Standing in circle, I was struck by my own Vancouver-centric perspective (Duh! Colonialism is a hard shadow to shake). At the FNEC Summer Institute, I was one of a small handful of teachers from the big city gathered in a large circle of teachers from all over the province. Intimidated, I kept my mouth shut and my ears open. One of the nine principles of learning asks teachers and students to be patient, when it is your time you will find the answers you need. In the dry summer air of Kamloops, surrounded by educators, all with a compelling personal story to tell, I was accepted. Individually, participants patiently listened to me, told me stories and guided me to a deeper understanding of my role as an educator of First Nations Literature. And it is that whole hearted sense of generosity that I gently tucked in the side pocket of my backpack and carried back on the bus along with a tear soaked copy of Sherman Alexie's The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, which I won as a door prize.

Understanding our role as educators and our relationship to the text really is important, isn't it? When a non-Indigenous teacher sets out to explore Aboriginal literature in the classroom, one of the first and perhaps most important steps is understanding how our role is influenced by our position of privilege; the second step is listening, really listening to Indigenous voices and perspectives, especially when they diverge from the canon-based literature and criticism that is traditionally the core of most English teachers' training. We have to be conscious of the cultural values and assumptions we bring to our own reading, and we have to be willing to create a significant space for Indigenous worldviews. However, this does not mean rejecting Western literature or pedagogy, rather it means recognizing Indigenous literatures and interpretive viewpoints as equally valid and placing them at the centre of our practice as opposed to the margins. As a teacher, for me this has meant acknowledging my own position as a Euro-Canadian within dominant culture. This has also meant exploring Indigenous criticism and literary theory. While it is not essential for teaching English First Peoples 12, it has enriched my understanding of the material significantly. Even though Aboriginal artists write in English, they bring their own cultural and critical sensibilities to the text, which in turn provides an additional, powerful interpretive lens through which to read. The addition of a new cultural voice can sometimes feel overwhelming, but it is also exhilarating and has been one of the joys of teaching this course – I'm not only teaching my students, I'm learning along with them.


I totally get that. Teachers are like elastics already pulled too far, and our sides are beginning to fray under the tension. Often I struggle to bring in another worldview into my classroom: Aboriginal, African American, LGBTQ, Asian, Southeast Asian, Christian, Muslim, Disabled, British, American, Canadian—

waaaah! In the EFP Teacher Resource Guide (FNESC, 2008), you will find the Lil'wat term "Cwelelep" which describes learning and teaching as "being in a place of dissonance, uncertainty in anticipation of new learning, to spin like a dust storm"(p. 12). That is how I feel when I approach my reading list of possibilities. It is the challenge of our generation to keep it together if we believe in multiplicity. So, I remind myself to just think universally and the pieces seem to fall together. After all, the study of literature asks us to discover our shared human experience: our common denominator. In a presentation at Emily Carr University, Richard Van Camp helped me see that stories are like money, when we trade them we are all richer. So perhaps by broadening our perceived role as teacher to "literary coach" we might give over the burden of determining what stories that are "significant" and allow our students to explore the stories they need to become "significant." The "Lil'wat Principles of Teaching and Learning" term "A7xekcal" reminds us that "teachers help us to locate the infinite capacity we all have as learners" (FNESC, 2008, p. 12). And, if I pour all of these ideas into my brain and push the smoothie button, I begin to understand that it is in the intimate act of trading stories where we find our teachers.

And, the stories offer so much for both students and educators; they are accessible, engaging and so relevant to students' lives. Pedagogy and theory aside, students quite simply love the course. English First Peoples 12 content is contemporary, mature and slightly edgy, and it examines issues such as personal identity, sexuality and relationships, and family dynamics – topics that appeal to teenagers regardless of their ethnicity or heritage. Both Mary-Jo and I have found that the class draws very strong, creative students. The themes more specific to Indigenous writing, such as cultural loss and residential schools, resonate with those interested in social justice and global issues, while the alternate view of Canadian history and current events provides opportunities for cross-curricular learning and collaboration. Additionally, the themes and issues addressed in English First Peoples are relevant within a multi-cultural setting. Though students may not be familiar with the Aboriginal experience specifically, they can and do relate to the experience of being "other" within a dominant culture. Finally, and perhaps unexpectedly for some students, is the resilience, optimism, and humour inherent in so much of what we study – this is not a course about oppression but rather about empowerment and resurgence.

According to the authors of the program the Indigenous ways of knowing are a reflection of cultural values which are significantly different than the dominant European way of knowing. Teachers are encouraged to follow the nine principles of teaching and learning. Embedded in the principles, teachers and students are asked to revisit texts more than once; we are guided to take responsibility for our actions and set consequences; we explore and value stages of life lessons; we are required to make personal and collective reflections; we need to broaden our understanding of the teacher/student dynamic in order to grasp the concepts presented in the stories; and we are required to invite Aboriginal community members into the classroom. (FNESC, 2008). No, this is not an easy course. The students who take the course are brave, curious and political—oh boy they are fun students to teach...

Yes, these students are fun to teach, and yes, the course is not easy. However, I suppose that the assumption of English First Peoples 12 as "easy" or as an elective is also another reason why the course is not more widely taught in the Lower Mainland. Many people mistakenly assume English First Peoples 12 is meant for Aboriginal students only, or more commonly that the course is in fact remedial. One of the key pieces of information that needs to be communicated to administrators, colleagues, students and parents is that the course is the academic equivalent of English 12 and is accepted by all major post secondary institutions in BC. In fact, many of the works taught in the course frequently appear on university reading lists, so the course is excellent preparation for college or university. But this isn't why schools should offer the course or why students should take it. The reasons are more significant and the benefits are more substantial than a check mark on a university application. We are still grappling as a nation and as individuals with the legacy of residential schools, and a version of Canadian history that only tells one half of the story. At the heart of English First Peoples 12 is the idea of learning together, of sharing, of listening and really hearing stories -- stories about the First Peoples and stories about ourselves.



My students have a real sense that they are experiencing something transformative. And they are. In Metro Vancouver we know how difficult it is to build a bridge, but it is because of the architects of this course that my students and I are able to connect to our collective colonial experience and begin to understand what it really means to be Canadian—toll free.

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Shirley Burdon

Shirley Burdon teaches English and English First Peoples at Gladstone Secondary in Vancouver. Her interests include Indigenous, Canadian, and Medieval literatures. She completed her MA in English Literature through SFU's MATE program. She resides in Coquitlam with her husband, daughter, one dog, and two cats.

Mary-Jo Hunt

Like so many of us, Mary-Jo Hunt has lived here and there. Her European ancestors migrated to Turtle Island in the late 1800's, blindly benefitting from the early treaties. Her classroom motto is "Inside our stories are the lessons we need, so tell me a story so I can learn".

"Stronger Together": A Burnaby School District 41 Teacher-Inquiry Project

Investigating Our Practice

What is the purpose of public education in British Columbia in the 21st Century? Is it to prepare children for future careers? Or is it to mold them into engaged and active citizens? Or is it to unleash their full intellectual potential? Or is it to create a society that welcomes diversity and is truly inclusive?

Most people would say that all of these plus others are the goals of our system.

And of course they are.

The challenge becomes when these goals conflict with each other. For instance, can schools fully prepare students for future careers and ensure that they take on social justice issues? Should schools create specialized separate programs for students of differing abilities, or insist that classrooms remain diverse so they reflect the world we live in?

What takes precedence?

There are no easy answers to these questions. These tensions are at the heart of what make public education so complex and, often, so political.

In Burnaby, we have taken on the challenge of creating a model of Aboriginal education that emphasizes it for all students in the regular classroom. Relative to other districts in British Columbia, our Aboriginal student population is quite small and spread out throughout all of our 50 schools. This initially posed a challenge for us as some staff wondered why Aboriginal content and worldviews should be integrated into classrooms when other cultural backgrounds were more heavily represented. We responded by sharing that we were not valuing one culture over another but are more concerned with trying to more strongly represent Aboriginal culture in our classrooms so that we all appreciate and preserve the long rich history of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia and in Canada. It is an essential part of the story of our province and our country.


To do so, we believe that we need to authentically and meaningfully integrate Aboriginal stories, worldviews, and principles of learning into the classroom experience. We want to move from a classroom practice that has a one-off unit or lesson on an Aboriginal novel, for instance, to one where Aboriginal content and perspectives are an on-going part of classroom instruction.

This is a challenging and lofty goal. It requires teachers to not only re-think their beliefs and classroom instruction but also take some action to change their students' educational experience.

To help us reach this goal, we turned to Dr. Sharon Jeroski, Judith King and Naryn Searcy's *Through A Different Lens Project in School District 67 (Okanagan Skaha)* for guidance and inspiration (see <http://differentlensblog.blogspot.ca/>). They helped us realize the most powerful structure for supporting teachers with this challenging goal was one that was supportive, collaborative, thought-provoking, and iterative.

Our team of 25 Burnaby teachers met for five half-day sessions over the 2014 - 2015 school year. Each session consisted of three parts.

At the beginning of each session, we spent some time on a topic that the team identified as one they would like to explore; for example, we spent time unpacking FNESC's Principles of Learning; the meaning behind acknowledging territory; and cultural appropriation versus cultural appreciation.



The middle part of each session was devoted to time for teachers to engage in their book clubs. The book clubs are a teacher version of literature circles. Each teacher on the team chose a book by an Aboriginal writer to read and discuss with his or her peers. They chose from: *An Inconvenient Indian*, by Thomas King; *Indian Horse*, by Richard Wagamese; *Tilly: A Story of Hope and Resilience*, by Monique Gray; *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School*, by Bev Sellars; *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie; and, *The Orenda*, by Joseph Boyden. Teachers came to their groups with annotated sticky-notes prepared to share their thoughts, questions, and connections.

The final part of our session was for collaborative planning. Each teacher shared what he or she had done in the classroom since the previous session to meet our goal of integrating Aboriginal education for all students. After their share, they created a next-steps plan and shared their commitment to action with the entire group.

The iterative nature of this structure encouraged teachers to take action, share, reflect, and then take another step forward.

We also asked each teacher to document their journey by taking a few pictures of their work and writing about what they did, how it went, and their next steps. We used these writings and pictures to turn into blog posts – see <http://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/aboriginaleducation/> for specific examples from teachers' classrooms.

One blog post shares the story of an English teacher at Byrne Creek Secondary who had each of her English 10 students create an inquiry question, such as "How do we overcome fear?" The students then approached all of their shared readings, such as Richard Wagamese's *Keeper N' Me*, and their choice readings through this lens. The culminating project for the course was to create a YouTube video with their synthesized thoughts on their question. This is a powerful example of how classroom teachers can make instructional choices that provide a meaningful Aboriginal educational experience for all students.

Does an Aboriginal education for all students benefit all students? We deeply believe it does.

We have observed more students and staff developing a deeper understanding of some of the grave injustices Aboriginal peoples have faced, including the role of residential schools and the '60's Scoop. We have observed how students and staff have had a growing curiosity and appreciation of Aboriginal history and stories. And, they have shared how they have taken these growing understandings to others in their school communities and to their families and friends.

The over-arching purpose for us in this project is to help create a more just and more compassionate society so that our young people know how to live next door to each other and how to work with each other. We want to build understandings between people. We want our young people to appreciate the strengths and promise in all people. We believe that to do this we must create a classroom experience that pulls in all people, all stories, and all world-views.

This is our vision for BC's public education system.

Ben Pare

Ben Pare is an English teacher and currently the Literacy Consultant in the Burnaby School District 41. He has enjoyed being a member of the Gr 10-12 ELA Curriculum Writing Team and a Critical Thinking Core Competency development team.

English First Peoples: The Course We Can't Ignore

Investigating Our Practice

"Ms. Searcy we have to change the reputation of the English First Peoples classes. People are insulting the program." These words were spoken to me in the hallway by a student of Aboriginal ancestry who had previously taken my English First Peoples (EFP) course.

"What are they saying?" I asked, dreading the reply.

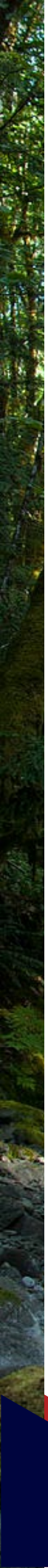
"They're calling it 'stupid English' and saying that all we do is study teepees." At that point I did my best to appear confident, but I'm sure the devastation registered on my face. Since our school introduced EFP 10 and 12 in September 2013, I have not faced a situation that has filled me with more disappointment or more anger. I was heartbroken for this student who cared so deeply about the program and was now faced with it being a point of ridicule. The comment had in fact come from a single student (who had never taken EFP), but it was made out loud in front of others. I was furious, as I thought of the amount of work and effort by so many people to make the First Peoples program a reality in our school. This was intolerable. I felt physically sick.

We have now completed our second year of offering EFP courses in our building, and looking back at my conversation that day, I realize that it symbolized some of the best and the worst elements of our implementation journey. From a positive perspective, a student of Aboriginal ancestry had become personally invested in the course and cared about its reputation in the school. On the negative side, it highlighted the two largest obstacles I have noticed over the past two years: the first being the systemic and embedded racism within our educational system and society at large. The second (which is of course rooted in the first) being the general assumption that an Aboriginal course must, by definition, be easier or less academic than a "regular" one.

For those not familiar with the English First Peoples program, it is the academic equivalent of provincially required high school English. The courses have provincial exams (worth 20% and 40% in grades 10 and 12 respectively) and virtually identical learning outcomes. The difference in the English First Peoples program is that authors of Aboriginal ancestry create all texts. The English First Peoples program also comes with the expectation of being taught using Aboriginal pedagogy, which places higher emphasis on experiential learning, collaboration, connections with the local community, and oral language. In other words, while having almost identical final assessments to English 10, 11, and 12, the method of course delivery looks quite different than a traditional language arts classroom. These are not high school English courses that have simply replaced George Orwell with Thomas King.

Unfortunately, it has been far more difficult than I anticipated to overcome the perception that anything with Aboriginal content must therefore be less challenging or less rigorous than established courses. As someone who has taught "regular" English 12 for over a decade, I would laugh at the notion of Aboriginal texts being "easy" if it wasn't so tragically rampant. If anything, the texts that we study in EFP 12 are more difficult than those used in English 12 because of unique cultural perspectives, heavy emphasis on metaphor and symbolism, and non-linear plot structures that challenge even the strongest academic students. Novels such as *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson and *Green Grass Running Water* by Thomas King are often studied at the university level (I was first introduced to King's work in a fourth-year Canadian Literature class at UBC). Despite this reality, the first assumption many students (and parents) make is that EFP 12 is not a course that will adequately prepare graduates for future options such as post secondary education.

Some schools and districts have found teachers who accept the importance the English First Peoples



program but have struggled to successfully implement these classes due to low student registrations. Despite being introduced in 2008, only a very small percentage of students in British Columbia take these courses. A comment I have heard from teachers in a number of districts around the province is, that the courses are offered every year, but not enough students sign up. The EFP courses are well designed, contain engaging and memorable texts and represent the voices of those who have been largely ignored in Canada's literary tradition, yet they are not being taught in the majority of schools in British Columbia. It is essential that all students see these voices represented in our education system and that we find a way to make these courses more widely offered. There is no "recipe" for the introduction of EFP in a particular school or district, but here are a few of the most significant observations I have made over the past year and a half in regards to the challenges of implementation:

- 1. Teachers do not need to be of Aboriginal ancestry to teach these courses.** The EFP curriculum comes with a detailed teacher's guide and numerous recommended activities and resources. It is no longer acceptable for teachers to say that they don't want to teach these courses because they are afraid of "doing it wrong" or making a mistake. Not offering the courses at all is a much greater disservice to all students, particularly those of Aboriginal ancestry. In the words of our district principal of Aboriginal Education, Anne Tenning, "Teachers need to be willing to take a risk, and reach out for help, and step out of their comfort zones. We all need to be allies in the implementation of Aboriginal content. It should be a part of every student's educational experience as this is very much a shared Canadian history." Anne is absolutely right. Regardless of our own cultural background, as educators this should matter to all of us.
- 2. The experiential nature of the course will attract students, but be prepared for backlash.** Feedback from students over the past year and a half has demonstrated that they love the experiential nature of the course that gets them out on the land and working directly with local community members. Engaging activities such as inquiry projects and outdoor lessons have been key factors in generating interest in the program over the past two years. However, I have found that I need to constantly defend our activities to those who believe that "academic rigour" can only be achieved through students writing essays in their desks. We do write numerous essays in EFP, but we also connect to texts through physical activities in the local environment and in collaboration with community members. I need to continually articulate the links between these activities and preparation for traditional standardized assessments such as the provincial exam.
- 3. Engagement with the Aboriginal community takes time.** One of the most challenging and rewarding elements of teaching EFP courses has been developing relationships and partnerships with local community members and groups. The challenge comes from the time required to contact local experts and arrange guest presenters or field trips; however, it would be next to impossible to teach the course without the involvement of your school and district based Aboriginal Education team and members of your local community. All relationships take time and effort to develop, but I have found that the most memorable and authentic experiences that students have in EFP are when they are directly involved with local community members.
- 4. Creating a collaborative learning environment is essential.** Similar to experiential learning, the intense focus on collaboration in EFP has both drawn students into the courses and become a point of criticism for those who advocate for more traditional classrooms. When I surveyed my grade 12s this year, the most consistently positive memories from the course were the class sharing circles and opportunities to get to know their classmates. In many Aboriginal pedagogies learning is approached from a communal and collaborative perspective as opposed to an individual and competitive one (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008). The students strongly respond to this concept, but it can be criticized for not adequately preparing students for the competitive world of university. Time spent on "community building" can be seen as time lost for the development of academic skills. These fears are unfounded (and I have discovered that community building only results in a stronger commitment to academic objectives), but it may initially meet resistance.

The conversation I described at the beginning of this article was an intensely negative experience, but it also provided motivation to continue to implement the English First Peoples curriculum in our school. To date, enrolment has been steady and there have been many positive comments about students enjoying the classes or wanting to sign up next year. I believe perceptions are changing, both about the importance of infusing Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, and about the ability of English First Peoples to adequately prepare students for post secondary education. The fact that students now recognize the terms “EFP” and “English FP” in our school is a big step forward.

In a sharing circle last week, a student reflected on his reaction to reading Richard Wagamese’s novel *Indian Horse*. He described how the novel made him realize for the first time how truly horrific the experience of residential schools had been. Shortly afterwards, (during the same sharing circle), two other students revealed that their grandparents were residential school survivors and their experiences closely resembled those described in the novel. I remember the first student’s eyes widening as he recognized the direct and personal connection between a book he had read and the lives of his classmates. The connection to the text became real and his personal understanding of a societal issue became more profound. Suddenly the topics discussed in the course weren’t just abstract concepts from the past but issues that affected his classmates and friends.

Preparing students for life after high school is essential but so is providing them with experiences that will allow them to contribute to repairing historical injustices and to navigate an increasingly complex and diverse society. Introducing the English First Peoples curriculum into our school has been challenging, but our students are telling us that the efforts are worth it.

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Naryn Searcy

Naryn Searcy has taught Senior High School English for the past 13 years, and she is also an M.A. student at the University of British Columbia. Her current focus is exploring the First Peoples Principles of Learning within a public school setting. She is of Scottish and British ancestry.

Culturally Responsive Teaching through Collaboration

Teaching idea

I believe inclusive education honours and stretches my students. All students can learn; we learn through encountering difference. Recognizing Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing is a moral imperative for me. I believe that integrating Aboriginal content into student learning, in an authentic way, needs to be a lens we use as we develop learning opportunities for students. Too often, educators shy away from teaching First Nations, Inuit, and Metis history, culture or language worried that they may misrepresent or may not know enough to honour the information. We need to move past stand-alone lessons where students learn about the topic of First Nations people in isolation and have students experience learning in more meaningful and living contexts. By working with our Indigenous colleagues and community members, we can build our own understandings of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis ways of knowing and being to become culturally responsive teachers (Gay, 2000) better equipped to design learning experiences for all.

As a vice principal, I enjoy creating learning sequences with colleagues. What is a better way to get to know staff and students than to learn side-by-side co-planning, co-teaching and co-reflecting? Collaboration helps me grow – and cross-curricular collaboration helps me to create more holistic and deeper learning for students. For this particular sequence, I was fortunate to work with Dom Butcher (Social Studies teacher), Alan Clark (librarian), Nicole Williams (Aboriginal Support Teacher), and several community members.

The framework we used to plan the sequence was “connect, process, transform, reflect” (Brownlie & Close, 1992). We wanted students to become critical thinkers, using open-ended strategies that welcomed more than one possible answer, where students needed to support their thinking, and make personal and content connections to deepen their learning. As we planned, we considered:

- How will we connect the students to the learning experience?
- What will we have students process (diverse texts/experiences) to scaffold our tasks?
- How will students personalize and transform their learning with voice and ownership?
- What will we do purposefully, to help students reflect on the strengths in their work and to set goals for future learning?

Pre-planning and context

Spectrum Community School has approximately 1100 students. It is a semestered grades 9-12 school. The classes we focused on for our collaboration were two grade ten social studies classes. The blocks were set up so students had Social Studies daily for eighty minutes. The sequence took a week with additional time outside of class for students to finish their tasks. The learning outcomes addressed were from Science 10, Social Studies 10, and English 10. One of our goals was to show how easy it is to integrate learning outcomes from different disciplines. As we sat down to begin our collaboration, we identified the ideas we wanted to consider as we began our planning. The following factors were important to our group:

- Demonstrating positive stewardship in protecting an ecosystem and honouring cultural heritage while fostering collaboration in our community

- o Connection to our community (Knockan Hill Park – Garry Oak ecosystem)
- o Cultural connection
- o Stewardship and sustainability
- Integrating technology to enhance learning
- Justifying an opinion with evidence from multiple sources and experiences

Why Garry Oak and Camas?

Our school is geographically located very close to Knockan Hill Park, which has a Garry Oak ecosystem. Garry Oak ecosystems are currently at-risk. We wanted our students to explore this particular topic as it is “in our backyard.” Camas, which grows in the Garry Oak ecosystem, is culturally significant to our area. For more information watch Cheryl Bryce, Lands Manager for the Songhees First Nations, explain the importance of Camas and the impact of the declining Garry Oak ecosystem in this clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKTxP_zy_mA - Cheryl Bryce.

The learning sequence took us approximately a week. We share this sequence to offer an example of teachers working together to develop our practice. Our team hopes that this sequence offers inspiration for your own collaborations, co-planning, and co-teaching between content areas teachers and Aboriginal support teachers.

The Learning Sequence

Essential Questions

- Is there value in protecting the Garry Oak Ecosystem?
- What is the cultural/historical significance of Knockan Hill?
- What factors must we consider when determining land use?

Tasks:

1. In the role of a community stakeholder, justify the significance of the Garry Oak Ecosystem.
2. Support the Garry Oak Preservation Society by eradicating invasive species from Knockan Hill Park. You will volunteer at Knockan Hill to help with invasive species removal after learning different methods for effective removal.

Connecting

- We took our students to the Knockan Hill Park and met with a representative from the Friends of Knockan Hill Society as well as a curator of botany from the Royal BC Museum. We split the group in two and both groups had the opportunity to hear about the history of the park and the plant species in the park. Students brought digital devices so that they could take pictures and catalogue indigenous and invasive species on a wiki for use in the future.
- On our second day together, students used a SMARTLearning strategy G.O.S.S.I.P. to reconnect with their learning from the Knockan Hill. Students spent a few minutes brainstorming important ideas they learned at the park and then shared their ideas and gained new ideas from others.
- Students then reviewed the wiki photos that they uploaded.
- Our librarian, Alan Clark, then wove in a piece from the Hunger Games and the importance of

understanding plants for survival. We discussed the camas bulb – making a very significant local cultural connection.

- Hidden Object – 20 questions – we concealed a Lewis Woodpecker in a box and had students play 20 questions to guess the item. The Lewis Woodpecker was once native to the Knockan Hill but is now extirpated. We discussed the significance of an ecosystem losing indigenous plants, animals, and birds.

Processing

To further extend the learning, we had students participate in two activities to build their skill of justification. In order for them to be successful on their task, they needed to understand how to justify their opinion with evidence. We also wanted them to experience ‘being in role’ as they would be asked to take a role in their justification of the significance of the Garry Oak Ecosystem.

▪ Garry Oak Survivor

- o Students were each assigned a native species card and then we introduced five invasive species one by one. After each card was introduced, students had to determine and justify which native species would survive. Eliminated plants (students) moved to the side of the room. Once we had eliminated all the species not able to survive the invasive species, those left – the survivors, had to justify which one would be the ultimate survivor. Each survivor presented the facts on why they should be named the ultimate survivor and the other students voted for one. Students wrote to justify which plant species would be left standing.

▪ Rezoning Activity

- o Students were asked to prepare a city councilor for a rezoning meeting. The councilor did not have enough time to fully prepare for the meeting and it was their job to review all the information and prepare briefing notes indicating if he should vote yes or no to rezoning Knockan Hill Park to a residential area.
- o Students were in teams of three and were given a press package. The press package included the following items:
 - Information about the size of Garry Oak Ecosystems on the lower island (1800 and 1997).
 - An article “Restoring Camas and Culture to Lekwungen and Victoria: An interview with Lekwungen Cheryl Bryce” by Briony Penn – Focus Magazine June 2006
 - Knockan Hill Park: A Botanical Assessment by Nancy J. Turner, Ph.D. written February 6, 1990 (Indigenous and invasive species).
 - The Two Girls Up in Sky Country (First Nations legend. Violet Williams, pers.comm.1990) – shared with us by Nancy Turner
 - Current real estate prices in the area
 - Powerpoint slides with definitions and information about ecosystems, ecological importance of the Garry Oak, cultural importance of blue camas
 - Cheryl Bryce video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKTxP_zy_mA)
- o Students reviewed the materials as a team and then developed their briefing notes using the frame:
 - We believe you should vote yes/no because... Students then listed their justification
- o Students came back to the classroom and one member of each team became the councilor. The councilors sat in a circle, with their colleagues standing behind them for support, and presented their vote with justification.

Transforming

- o We revisited the tasks with the students.

- o Task One- eradicating invasive species - was completed on site at Knockan Hill with the Friends of Knockan Hill Society. Students spent a half-day working on removing invasive species.
- o Task two - in the role of a community stakeholder, students justified the significance of the Garry Oak Ecosystem.
- o We brainstormed a list of people who might take a stand for or against the Garry Oak Ecosystem (realtors, developers, city councilors, students, botanists, historians, elders, naturalists, etc).
- o We created a T-Chart with the students setting up the criteria for the assignment (see Figure 1)
- o Students then selected a role and a way to demonstrate their learning (open choice and format - examples included: podcast, magazine, letter, essay, video, political cartoon etc.)

Reflecting

Students were asked to notice strengths in their work. Then students were asked to share new ideas, connections and questions with partners.

Conclusion

After we concluded our work, we reflected on our learning as educators as well as the learning of our students. We noticed that students were actively engaged and accountable throughout the learning process. Each activity was used to scaffold both the content and the learning skills necessary for students to transform their learning. All students were able to successfully complete the task (with varying levels of mastery) and felt confident justifying their opinion with evidence. We felt that we had authentically woven Aboriginal content into the learning and students reflected that they had a better sense of the culture and history of our area. Most importantly, we felt we had honoured some of the First Peoples Principles of

Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational.
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Teacher Reflections:

Why is it important to incorporate Aboriginal content into our lesson sequences?


"Aboriginal content is often an untold historical, ecological and cultural legacy that is relevant and important to acknowledge, appreciate and learn from."

Dom Butcher

Do you feel that you are confident in your background knowledge about Aboriginal voice/experience? If no, what gave you the confidence to proceed?

"I feel confident in my ability and background knowledge to share the Aboriginal voice as others, some of them First Nation, have shared it with me. That said, the original First Nations' voice needs to be heard, sought out and appreciated through text, e-resources, or in person. Historically this perspective has been overlooked, silenced and under appreciated. We need to change this."

Dom Butcher



"One of the favorite aspects of my job as a teacher librarian is to work with staff members to plan and instruct curriculum units. Teaming up with a group of educators and community members who are passionate about the subject of Aboriginal history and culture during this unit was greatly rewarding. This collaborative approach to the topic exposed students to a rich collection of knowledge, resources and learning opportunities."

Alan Clark, librarian

"Having a bit of Athabaskan First Nations background, learning about Knockan Hill's native species as well as the Aboriginal story was very interesting for me. Instead of reading from a textbook, we went out on a nature walk and seeing the plants in real life enriched the learning experience for the students in my class. We all still remember that trip to this day and a lot of us even remember the endangered species we talked about. The interactive lesson really influenced me as well as some of my classmates. It felt very personal because the Garry Oak Ecosystem is right in our neighbourhood, and we could easily connect with content of the story! My great grandma used to go on walks to collect berries and other things. And my grandma, when she taught First Nations language, would take her students on walks to introduce them to popular herbs that the First Nations used. I think the walk reflected Aboriginal values."

Jenna, student

I really enjoyed working on the Garry Oak Ecosystem project. I got to learn about an ecosystem that I never really knew much about beforehand. It was great that we were able to take a field trip to a park near our school and actually walk around this ecosystem. It was also great that we had the opportunity to be guided by an expert in the field and showed all the plants and species indigenous to this ecosystem. I learned the environmental importance and cultural importance and how to help maintain the Garry Oak Ecosystem. After completing the project I felt I now had a greater respect for the environment around me and responsible to help maintain it.

Shaun, student

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T-Chart for Garry Oak



Name: _____ Date: _____

Criteria	Evidence
Sophisticated/Specific Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Voice and word choice – consistent for the role you are choosingNO HALLWAY TALK – shouldn't sound like a conversation with a friend.	
Thesis Statement/Opening Comments/Central Idea <ul style="list-style-type: none">What are you going to prove?Your statement needs to be specific and powerful in whatever format you choose.	
Hook: How are you going to engage the reader/viewer? Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ask a questionUse an interesting fact or quotationWrite a short anecdote	
Examples/Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">What evidence and details are you going to use to support your position?Facts are important and should be woven into your project	
Information: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cultural/historical significanceEcological significance	
Use of Images: Incorporate 5 significant images into your project <ul style="list-style-type: none">RelevantSupport your positionSpeak/Write/Inform the viewer about the significance	
Solid Conclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Leave the reader/viewer with something to think about!!!	

Tammy Renyard

Tammy Renyard is a principal in School District 61. She is passionate about working side by side with teacher to implement lessons designed to deeply engage learners in the learning process. Tammy has led workshops and classroom-based learning rounds for middle and secondary educators in B.C., Alberta, the Yukon, and in the Northern Territories.

Online Resources to Enrich Our Work with Students

Check This Out

With the advent of the new BC curriculum, we have an opportunity to refresh our practices and the resources we use with our students. The renewed efforts to provide an inclusive view of our colonial history in BC is cause for celebration.

When we move beyond our reliance on a single source to teach a unit or lesson, our practice becomes more richly varied and comprehensive. Based on our diverse background knowledge, experience, and comfort with the material different resources are right for us at different times and in different ways. The following is a small sampling of useful and interesting websites we might use to enrich our work with students. This is not a comprehensive list, but hopefully it will provide you with at least one new resource to share with your students.

First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) firstpeoplesprinciplesoflearning.wordpress.com

- Each principle is unpacked and explained in some detail
- Each principle is linked to relevant non-Aboriginal education theory to facilitate connections to existing practice
- Provides background and context for the FPPL as well as discussion on authentic resources and appropriation

BC Treaty Commission bctreaty.net/index.php

- Interactive timeline for treaty negotiations
- Information about the six stages of treaty negotiation
- Opportunity to request a speaker-visit from the commission
- Documents/presentations (video) to the Senate Standing Committee of Aboriginal Peoples

First Nations Education Steering Committee fnesc.ca


- First Peoples curriculum and classroom resources
 - o English First Peoples, K-7 resources & Math First Peoples
- Contact information to get your own FPPL poster
- Information about the development of First Peoples curriculum

Companion site to the traveling museum exhibition “Where are the Children” wherearethechildren.ca/en

- A digital version of the exhibition, including many photographs and written and audio segments
- Information-rich timeline of the history of residential schools in Canada
- Residential school survivors share their stories (videos)
- Lists of books/resources, organized by level
- Everything on the site is also in French (except the video stories)

First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers vancouver.ca/files/cov/First-Peoples-A-Guide-for-Newcomers.pdf (A City of Vancouver publication)

- A product of a dialogue project between Aboriginal and immigrant communities
- Useful for everyone as a general survey/ starting point for grades 4 and up
- Many links to further reading, source material, and videos
- Focuses primarily on the region occupied by the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish/ the City of Vancouver. Also includes information relevant to all BC.



First People Cultural Council, parent site to: fpcc.ca/Default.aspx
firstvoices.com/en/home

First Voices

- Resources to promote the learning of Indigenous languages
- Audio recordings of stories, songs, and alphabets, phrases
- Lists of “first words”
- Grammar and pronunciation guides, where contributed

First Peoples Language Map of BC maps.fphlcc.ca

- Interactive map of languages
- Lists of nations and languages with statistics
- List of Community Champions, individuals who are working to maintain languages

Celia Brogan

Celia Brogan is a teacher-librarian in Vancouver. She has served on the BCTELA executive committee for eight years and on the executive committee of the Vancouver Teacher-Librarians' Association (a chapter of BCTLA) for two years. She enjoys working with colleagues to mobilize the knowledge in our collective practice.



BCTELA

BC Teachers of English Language Arts