

---

## De/colonizing Preservice Teacher Education: Theatre of the Academic Absurd

Dénommé-Welch, Spy, [spy.denomme-welch@uregina.ca](mailto:spy.denomme-welch@uregina.ca)  
University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

Montero, M. Kristiina, [kmontero@wlu.ca](mailto:kmontero@wlu.ca)  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

### Abstract

---

Where does the work of de/colonizing preservice teacher education begin? Aboriginal children's literature? Storytelling and theatrical performance? Or, with a paradigm shift? This article takes up some of these questions and challenges, old and new, and begins to problematize these deeper layers. In this article, the authors explore the conversations and counterpoints that came about looking at the theme of social justice through the lens of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) children's literature. As the scope of this lens widened, it became more evident to the authors that there are several filters that can be applied to the work of de/colonizing preservice teacher education programs and the larger educational system. This article also explores what it means to act and perform notions of de/colonization, and is constructed like a script, thus bridging the voices of academia, theatre, and Indigenous knowledge. In the first half (the academic script) the authors work through the messy and tangled web of de/colonization, while the second half (the actors' script) examines these frameworks and narratives through the actor's voice. The article calls into question the notions of performing inquiry and deconstructing narrative.

**Key words:** decolonizing education; Indigenizing the academy; preservice teacher education; performing decolonization; decolonizing narrative; Indigenous knowledge; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Canada; North America.

Please cite this article as:

Dénommé-Welch, S., & Montero, M. K. (2014). De/colonizing preservice teacher education: Theatre of the academic absurd. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* [Online], 10(1), 136-165. Retrieved from <http://jolle.coe.uga.edu>.

### Prélude: A Word from the Wise

*For many Indigenous writers stories are a way of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.*

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 144-145)

Education has long been used as a tool to promote the social and intellectual ways of a ruling elite; it has been used as a tool to dominate and discriminate across the globe. We don't need to go far back in history to view examples of how schooling was used as a controlling mechanism. For example, during Argentina's Dirty War (1976-1983) those who were caught teaching literacy skills to children of poverty were made to "disappear." The same occurred under Pinochet's dictatorial rule of Chile (1973-1990), and during the Apartheid regime (1948-1994), Black South Africans were kept in the dark of illiteracy when those caught trying to teach were beaten, thrown in jail, and often executed.

Turning to Canada and the U.S., education was used to dominate and discriminate against Aboriginal Peoples. Indian Residential Schools and American Indian boarding schools were used to Christianize, civilize, and assimilate the "natives" by immersing them in Eurocentric ways. As documented in Titley's (1986) *A Narrow Vision*, Duncan Campbell Scott, a senior official with Indian Affairs in the early 1900's who promoted an assimilationist model of integration, was quoted saying:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone...Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department. (p. 50)

In a satire of Fulghum's (2004) popular poem "All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten," Grover (2006), member of the Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, demonstrated how colonial structures in schooling affected the psyche of those who experienced life in Residential Boarding Schools. In her poem, "Everything you need to know in life you'll learn at boarding school," she wrote:

Speak English. Forget the language of your grandparents. It is dead. Forget their teachings. They are ungodly and ignorant. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Indians are not clean.... Spare the rod and spoil the child. We will not spare the rod. We will cut your hair. We will shame you. Improve yourself. You'll never amount to anything. Speak English. (p. 90)

As illustrated in this excerpt, schooling has been a colonizer's tool used to "take the Indian out of the child" and "to destroy [Indigenous] languages, ways of life, cultural traditions, relationships with families, and the land" (Dwyer, 2010).

Ignorance of Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> peoples and cultures has served the interests of Canadian settlers and immigrants at the expense of Aboriginal Peoples, and school curricula has helped promote this status quo (Godlewska, Massey, Adjei, & Moore, 2013). Supported by an official apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper (June 11, 2008), the educational enterprise has begun to shift its position vis-à-vis Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Topics that matter to Aboriginal Peoples are finding their way to center stage in the classroom, and with the signing of the *Accord of Indigenous Education* (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010), these relevant topics have begun to emerge onto the stage of teacher education.

In the Accord, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) formally recognized that as educational leaders the association has a “role and responsibility to expand educators’ knowledge about and understanding of Indigenous education” (p. 2). The document highlights nine roles and responsibilities that teacher educators are called to respond; yet the way these roles and responsibilities would be carried out is neither prescribed nor defined. As noted in the Accord, teacher educators have a responsibility “to foster all education candidates’ political commitment to Indigenous education, such that they move beyond awareness and act within their particular sphere of influence” (p. 7). Both of the institutions at which the authors<sup>2</sup> of this article work are signatories of the *Accord of Indigenous Education* and thereby, recognize the role teacher education has to play in the reconciliation process of wrongdoings to Aboriginal Peoples.

Historically, Faculties of Education in Canada have done a poor job preparing preservice and inservice teachers to meet the learning needs of Aboriginal students. Teachers may lack awareness of particular learning styles of Aboriginal students and lack understanding of FNMI cultures, histories, and perspectives; furthermore, teachers must understand that many Aboriginal students and their relatives distrust the education system, where deep-rooted feelings are intimately connected to primary and/or intergenerational trauma caused because of their residential school experiences (Aboriginal Education Office and Ministry of Education, 2007). The process of colonization that has suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems and contributed to low levels of educational attainment and high incidences of suicide, incarceration, unemployment, and family or community separation among Aboriginal Peoples (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010) can also be blamed for teachers’ lack of awareness and understanding of Aboriginal topics. The cloud of colonization is sustained in teacher education programs because Indigenous education and Indigenous knowledge systems continue to be marginalized (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Government of Canada defines Aboriginal peoples as “the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian *Constitution* recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people — Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). Collectively, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples may be called “Aboriginal”; however, whenever and wherever possible, it is preferable to use land-based names.

<sup>2</sup> The collaboration between these authors began in the Faculty of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University where Spy worked as the Aboriginal education consultant prior to stepping into his new position as Assistant Professor at the University of Regina. The Indigenization efforts highlighted in this article refer specifically to those in progress at Wilfrid Laurier University. Although Spy is now working at the University of Regina, the coauthors continue their collaboration.

The Ministry of Education identified Aboriginal education as one of its key priority areas (Aboriginal Education Office and Ministry of Education, 2007), yet the responsibility of being able to address this priority area and bring Aboriginal topics to classrooms largely falls on classroom teachers. Commenting on the Accord, Marie Battiste (Taylor-Vaisey, 2010), Aboriginal scholar and activist eloquently said:

The biggest challenges to implementing the accord will fall to today's teachers. The education system has not included Aboriginal education, Indigenous peoples knowledge, Aboriginal peoples' protocols, and so on, and so everyone has to take it up and learn it.

Addressing the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Accord is further complicated because many faculties of education continue to omit Aboriginal topics from the curriculum altogether, or address it superficially, such as through a workshop or as a short elective. It is widely understood and accepted that these topics must be integrated into the preservice teacher education curriculum; Faculties of Education must improve the way faculty members help teachers make better choices to consider Aboriginal topics in meaningful ways. Teachers need the knowledge and skills to implement teaching and learning strategies that consider Aboriginal learners' strengths and needs, deliver a curriculum that reflects FNMI cultures and perspectives, and support Aboriginal student and parent engagement (Aboriginal Education Office and Ministry of Education, 2007). The imperative is necessary from a social justice perspective, but also from a practical standpoint considering that Aboriginal students are the fastest growing demographic in Canadian public schools today (Avison, 2004) and that the majority of teachers in Canada are non-Aboriginal (Toulouse, 2011). Furthermore, de/colonizing education is complicated because curriculum in public schools continues to largely represent Eurocentric and nationalistic ideals (Battiste, 2008).

Through our work, we join a collective, nation-wide initiative among Aboriginal Peoples and their allies to de/colonize<sup>3</sup> preservice teacher education in Canada through a movement to Indigenize the Academy<sup>4</sup> (e.g., Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004). We aim to bring topics that address Aboriginal history, colonization, racism, discrimination, and contemporary Aboriginal themes to preservice teachers' practical as well as philosophical repertoires. However, we are conscious that the majority of teacher education candidates has been educated in a colonized educational system that has not adequately addressed Aboriginal topics, and in many cases, have not been

---

<sup>3</sup> The slash "/" which is used in the word de/colonizing (or de/colonization, de/colonize) is purposefully used to indicate the ongoing need to question such theory and methodology and how it is applied in discourse and academic language. The slash denotes a conscious disruption of language, a signifier of the power of language where there is in fact a need to question what it is we are "decolonizing" (slash removed for emphasis). The power of language is emphasized through the slashing of words, and such dichotomy becomes scrutinized. This also questions how such terms within the academy become a form of recolonization. While the slash is largely used specifically in relation to this term, it is also applied to other relevant words as a way of questioning and highlighting potentially problematic or false expressions of freedom in the academy.

<sup>4</sup> We believe that bringing Indigenous teachings and worldviews to the academy serves all students, faculty members, and administrators. We agree with Jo-Anne Episkew (2012, August) who argued that Indigenization is a paradigm shift that needs to occur in the academy for everybody, but specifically for the benefit of Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff. Indigenization does not mean to "take over" or dominate, but can be likened to a paradigm shift that must see scholarship and learning as having a responsibility to the collective (Kuokkanen, 2007); must engage reciprocally in the creation and dissemination of knowledge in respectful ways; and furthermore, scholarship and research must influence the larger society and must be done for the benefit of all humanity.

addressed at all. This lack of knowledge will make infusing Aboriginal topics in mainstream educational contexts challenging, but not impossible.

Godlewska, Massey, and Moore (2013) for example, argued that Canadians in general are unaware about Aboriginal people in Canada. We see this unawareness reflected among our preservice teachers based on some of the data from our current research, which is presented later in this article. As we speak candidly to them about infusing Aboriginal topics into their teaching practice, many tell us that they remember learning very little about Aboriginal topics in either their elementary or secondary education and are concerned how they will be able to authentically do so. For example, many have said that they only became aware of Residential Schools and the Highway of Tears<sup>5</sup> because our program has an explicit focus on Indigenizing the curriculum.

### **Contextual Information about the Bachelor of Education Program at Wilfrid Laurier University**

The Faculty of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University is committed to de/colonizing and Indigenizing preservice teacher education. The Faculty houses a post-graduate initial teacher education program intended for those who have earned at least a Bachelor's degree in another discipline. Graduates of the program earn a Bachelor of Education degree that leads to teacher certification from the Ontario College of Teachers, the regulatory body governing the teaching profession in Ontario. The Bachelor of Education program runs for two semesters over the typical academic year, August through April. Wilfrid Laurier University currently prepares teachers for primary/junior (grades K to 6) and junior/intermediate (grades 4 to 10) divisions; the program welcomes approximately 130 students each year. The strength of the Indigenization process at Laurier lies in the small size of program where potentially fewer paths of resistance exist.

Beginning in the fall of 2010, we began the task of "Indigenizing" our Bachelor of Education program and curriculum in earnest. Since signing the Accord on Indigenous Education we have been developing different strategies that, as Mihesuah and Wilson (2004) described, would support the transformation of our program as an agent of de/colonization. These strategies included hiring an Aboriginal education consultant (a position Spy originally held), adopting a mandate expressing our commitment to Aboriginal education, and asking all faculty members to infuse their courses with Aboriginal content and perspectives across the program and curriculum. Of particular importance was the statement on Aboriginal Education that we crafted in consultation with Elders, community members, Aboriginal students, and staff. We view the statement as an organic document, one that should constantly evolve and be refined. The statement currently reads as follows:

The Faculty of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University understands the critical need to

---

<sup>5</sup> The Residential School system (a.k.a. The Indian Residential Schools) was a Federally-funded network of "residential" (boarding) schools for Aboriginal youth, which was administered and operated by Christian churches. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were often forcibly removed from their families and sent to these schools where they were forbidden to speak their Native tongue or practice their cultural beliefs. There are many reports of children experiencing physical, sexual and emotional abuse while at these schools. The Highway of Tears refers to a stretch of highway (Highway 16) in British Columbia, Canada, where there have been a series of unsolved murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls.

rethink the delivery and content of preservice teacher education that is more inclusive of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. We aim to raise awareness among preservice teachers about Aboriginal Peoples of Canada as a way to replace intolerance (e.g., racism, stereotypes) with acceptance toward First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples of Canada. Furthermore, we aim to promote greater awareness and knowledge among preservice teachers about Aboriginal cultures and concerns as a way to critically evaluate how schools can better incorporate culturally sensitive curricula and teaching methods, while building stronger relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, families and communities.

Preservice teachers were introduced to the Faculty's commitment to de/colonizing and Indigenizing the program at their very first meeting. We invited an Aboriginal Elder to open our program with a prayer of thanksgiving presented according to Haudenosaunee traditions. In the first few weeks of the program we introduced students to the common reading of a Métis playwright's work (elaborated upon later in the article), and students were introduced to Aboriginal topics in each of their preservice courses—all instructors were asked to include a statement of Aboriginal content on their syllabi. These were our first attempts to begin to de/colonize the preservice teacher education program.

### **Enter Survey Data about Preservice Teachers' Experiences with FNMI Topics: First Impressions Count**

From past experience we recognized that the majority of the students entering the Bachelor of Education program do not come from positions of experience or knowledge of Aboriginal Peoples and/or Aboriginal histories, languages, cultures, and worldviews. In order to investigate our assumptions, we administered a survey (see Appendix A) at the beginning of the year to understand students' prior knowledge and experience with FNMI Peoples of Canada. We had a survey response rate of 75%. The respondents represented different age demographics. Of those who completed the survey, 65 were between the ages of 18 to 25 years; 24 were between the ages of 26 to 35 years; seven between the ages of 36 to 45 years old; and one identified as being between the ages of 46 to 55 years old. The majority (92%) of respondents indicated that they attended high school in Ontario and the remainder was educated in Alberta, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, or outside of Canada.

Based on a content analysis of the survey data collected, we learned that in the year we collected the survey data (2013-2014), preservice teachers at Laurier did not have a wide variety of experiences learning about Aboriginal topics; they had very little to no previous experience teaching about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples to elementary and/or secondary students; had little training on how to integrate Aboriginal content and worldviews into their lessons; and generally felt uncomfortable and unprepared to teach about Aboriginal topics. Next, we expand on what the data were specifically telling us.

When asked how preservice teachers would describe their knowledge of FNMI topics in education, 54% said they had little to no knowledge. Qualitative feedback indicated that they recalled having studied something about FNMI in school, but remembered very little. For example, one student wrote: "Last time I studied FNMI was in grade 10 history. I don't

remember much.” Another student wrote, “My knowledge comes from the news, no real formal unbiased education about FNMI.” Responding to the same survey question, 41% indicated that they were “somewhat knowledgeable” of FNMI topics in education, indicating having taken Native Studies courses in university, or having addressed some of the topics as a student of history. Only 5% of the respondents indicated that they were “very knowledgeable” of FNMI topics in education, attributing their knowledge to having worked in Northern communities or on First Nations reserves.

When asked if preservice teachers had any previous experience learning about FNMI topics and issues in education, 36% indicated they did not have any experience; 44% said they had a “little bit” of previous experience. Some attributed this “little bit” of knowledge to what they had learned in the first few weeks of the teacher education program at Laurier; learning experiences in elementary, middle, or secondary school; having participated in FNMI festivals; having participated in arts and crafts creation; or having participated in a lecture or two during their undergraduate degree. The 20% of respondents who said they had previous experience learning about FNMI topics and issues in education indicated that they learned through university courses and site visits to First Nation reserves.

When asked if the preservice teachers had any previous training on FNMI topics, an overwhelming 87% indicated that they had not; 7% indicated that they had received a “little bit of training,” and only 6% indicated that they had received training. When asked if students had any previous experience teaching about FNMI topics and issues in education, 90% of respondents indicated that they had not; 6% had a “little bit” of experience; and 4% indicated they had experience. A related question asked how comfortable preservice teachers felt teaching about FNMI topics in the classroom and only 6% indicated that they felt comfortable; 9% said they felt uncomfortable; 26% felt somewhat uncomfortable; 24% felt neutral; and 35% felt somewhat comfortable.

In the survey, we wanted to understand what preservice teachers learned about FNMI education in the teacher education program. To this end, we asked participants to respond using an open-ended format. Typical answers included ways to accurately and respectfully integrate FNMI perspectives into the curriculum; have more knowledge about available resources; understand how to make FNMI issue relevant to non-FNMI people; understand more about FNMI history, as well as about contemporary topics; understand how to support FNMI students in the classroom. Only a few respondents indicated that they wanted to understand more about the impact of colonialism and how to address topics of equity and social justice as related to Aboriginal Peoples of Canada.

Not surprisingly, based on the initial findings and indicators from this survey there is still much work to be done to expand preservice teachers’ knowledge about and understanding of Aboriginal topics in education. Building on this notion, we began this work by compiling resources and children’s and young adult literature addressing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit themes that preservice teachers could use in their own teaching and learning. Such resources became a more tangible response to help support the learning and teaching of preservice teachers; this way they had some materials at their disposal to teach and learn from, as well as integrate into their own lesson units, plans, and modules. These materials and resources cover a

range of topics pertaining to Indigenous storytelling, histories, and cultures, which in some instances help fill in gaps within the curriculum. This starting point also complemented individual instructors' efforts to address Aboriginal topics in their respective courses.

In our attempts to infuse Indigenous content within and across the preservice teacher education program at Laurier we also introduced a common read event, which focused on Barker's (2013) award-winning play *The Hours That Remain*. In the play, Barker examined the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, drawing parallels to cases such as the Highway of Tears. Upon entering the program in the Fall 2013, all preservice teacher education candidates had to have read this play in preparation for the playwright's campus visit and public reading. Also, faculty and staff were encouraged to read the play, and course instructors were encouraged to incorporate aspects of the play into their courses where appropriate.

As a result, the actual scope of our de/colonizing work shifted and widened to some degree as we shifted our focus toward the spaces of theatre and elements of drama education through script reading and analysis. Consequently, while First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children's literature was a point of departure for us in terms of exploring social justice issues, it remains an integral part of our work, prompting us to look at difficult questions surrounding the notion of de/colonizing and/or Indigenizing education. We make some reference to children's literature that explores themes of social justice in this article, and in order to facilitate those who are searching for a point of departure to de/colonize their teaching practices, we provide a selected bibliography of children's literature (see Appendix B). However, our shift of scope not only considered the themes of social justice (e.g., traditional knowledge, land, identity, language, and colonialism) in children's literature, but also more aptly considered the complexities of what it means to unpack and deconstruct the very notion of de/colonization in preservice teacher education.

### **Positioning Ourselves Within the Indigenization Process**

In order to respond to the priorities set out in the Accord, we had to figure out ways to address the preservice teachers' general lack of knowledge and experience of Aboriginal topics so that they would be able to infuse Aboriginal content and perspectives in school curriculum in authentic and respectful ways. Taking advantage of Spy's artistic scholarship and Kristiina's passion for the arts, we decided to approach the writing of the remainder of the article taking artistic liberties via an "academic theatre" to deconstruct how we view the Indigenization process might take place with preservice educators. Consequently, this article uses elements of theatre practice to examine and generate relevant discourse around de/colonization by delving into a more narrative inquiry-based praxis. This quality of inquiry-based learning aligns with Lane's (2003) notions of "performative ethics," which he stated: "Such a performativity is analogous, in some respects, to trickster writing, in that it seeks to temporarily subvert and undermine fixed institutional structures with positive outcomes in mind" (p. 276). Whether or not this work troubles the reader, listener or performer, we can only strive for positive outcomes, and provide some tools for teachers and learners to interact more deeply with ways of analyzing and critiquing notions of de/colonizing through performative strategies.



## Enter the Voices of Advocacy and Aboriginal Allyship

**Spy.** As a scholar and artist, I find myself grappling with the implications of what it means to de/colonize or Indigenize the academy, among other spaces. I often find myself striving to understand the broader implications of this work in education, pedagogy, and curriculum. While much has been written on the topic of de/colonization, it is often discussed in relation to the “act of” or the “performing” of de/colonization. However, I ask the question what is that act or performance doing precisely? Over the years, I’ve begun to question these motives—specifically the superficiality of the language around de/colonization. More specifically, what does this look like beyond the context of the academy or the walls of a classroom? What does the work of de/colonizing actually look like on the streets, in community housing, or in public spaces where the layers of colonial structures overshadow these realities? How do we move beyond the loftiness of these words and begin considering the realities of how oppression works and what it actually feels like to live it? And to be clear the realities of academia are just as real as anything else, especially for those working within its oppressive structures to push through the glass ceiling, systemic racism, and token acts of de/colonization. I ask how the act of performing de/colonization contributes to our collective story and how this affects, for good or worse, our understanding of contemporary Indigenous experience where often we are challenged with the task of bridging past, present, and future.

My own background in the arts, specifically in professional theatre, music and opera, has compelled me to look at these ideas more in terms of the performativity of de/colonization. In simple terms I have begun to question the motives behind the act of de/colonization, not simply as a person of Indigenous<sup>6</sup> ancestry but also as an artist and academic. I was compelled to respond to these questions by writing the play *De/colonization: An act of p/reservation*, which is included later in this article, because theatre, as I know it, is a space to embody knowledge. I wrote this play with the intention of it being performed so as to provide learners and educators with strategies for exploring de/colonizing methodologies and Indigenous ways of knowing through theatre and performance. It is here that I started thinking about bell hooks’ (1995) widely-referenced statement about the need for the existence of a paradigm for social change, which conversely prompts me to ask: what paradigm?; whose paradigm?; and, is that enough to effectively do the work of de/colonizing?

Arguably, the act of de/colonizing our minds is not as a clean and simple as it sounds in theory. For instance, how can educators effectively teach young people about these topics when so many are themselves the product of a colonial education system? It takes more than simply learning to

---

<sup>6</sup> The term “Indigenous” is defined in various ways; for instance, in Canada it is often used as an umbrella term to include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. According to the United Nations (UN), there are nearly 400 million Indigenous people (United Nations, n.d.). While the UN has not officially adopted a particular definition for this term, it is recognized that “Indigenous peoples are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources. They have a special relation to and use of their traditional land. Their ancestral land has a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples” (United Nations, n.d.). Furthermore, the United Nations’ *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* affirms that “respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment” (United Nations, 2008, p. 2).

say “miigwetch” or acknowledging the history behind North American thanksgiving holiday traditions to make this learning meaningful, relevant, and transformative.

But these are merely some of the challenges we face. How can we ask teachers to teach when their own learning has been so deeply rooted in the colonizer’s version of history? Of course it is not simple to ask these questions, nor is it simple to answer them, particularly when it comes at the cost of questioning the entire fabric of our educational system that our country prides itself on. I think about my own education, and how I saw so little of myself as a person of Indigenous ancestry represented in the schooling I received. The only education I distinctly remember beyond my vague recollection of the unit on fur traders (with little to no mention of First Nations or Métis) in a French history class, were the racist statements that other children sitting in a desk next to me would make about Native people, or when I overheard adults in a restaurant, furniture store, or other public place make offensive comments, which are not worth repeating, about local First Nations people.

For many like myself, education is often an assault—or rather a form of twisted violence—on the mind, body, spirit, and imagination. This manifestation occurs through colonial structures where people perpetuate racist notions about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people time and again. This ranges from the “Indian chief” mascot we might find on team jerseys, or the inappropriate slurs written in the bathroom stall, or the dance routine portraying victorious cowboys shooting Indians in a musical, right down to the not-so-subtle eye rolling and sighs in the classroom when anything is mentioned about Aboriginal education. But what is the cause or meaning of this? Are Indigenous people that irritating and inconvenient? Where does this mentality stem from and how do we undo this? Finally, when do we begin the genuine work of healing from these scars?

**Kristiina.** Throughout my career in teacher education, I frequently reflect on Geneva Gay’s scholarship on culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2010) called teachers to be cultural mediators in the classroom in order to “provide opportunities for students to engage in critical dialogue about conflicts among cultures and to analyze inconsistencies between mainstream cultural ideas/realities and those of different cultural systems” (p. 45). To create an inclusive and culturally responsive corps of teachers, teacher educators must be prepared to work to this end.

Thinking about the need to acknowledge Canada’s First Peoples in the classroom and teacher education, I am reminded that I am a product of a colonized educational system. For example, in elementary school, I recall learning the words to “Land of the Silver Birch,” a poem by E. Pauline Johnson, member of the Mohawk of Six Nations Reserve, Ontario. The poem, “My Paddle’s Keen and Bright,” was set to music and often sung as a round in combination with a traditional Canadian song. I can see myself in the music classroom singing the end of the round “dip, dip, and swing; dip, dip, and swing,” and making the motions of paddling a canoe. However, I have no memory learning about the Six Nations Reserve, which is located a mere 45-minute drive from my elementary school, or about the multitude of First Nations in my general area. I have no memory learning about the injustices served to Canada’s First Peoples in an attempt to control and eliminate a perceived problem. I just remember learning a song that perpetuated potentially dangerous stereotypes of a Peoples stuck in the past, paddling canoes.

Schools are not politically neutral spaces—they perpetuate those hegemonic structures that are

rarely questioned. I wonder how my educational experiences might have been different had my elementary and secondary school teachers made their students aware of the injustices happening in our own backyards. Why did I have to go global in order to learn about social justice? I could have learned about social justice issues in my local context. Turning my thoughts to supporting social justice issues in the classroom I wonder how I can support future teachers to understand that global injustices are occurring within our own geopolitical boundaries. Racism, colonial domination, and control happens/ed in Canada—not just in Argentina, Chile, or South Africa. Channeling Geneva Gay, I think about our Indigenizing and de/colonizing work in teacher education that works to embody the 4 R's of Aboriginal education: respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991); I wonder, how K to12 educators (or beyond for that matter) can respect Indigenous knowledges and worldviews if teacher education does not respect these Aboriginal virtues?

### **Enter Voice Over: Symbol of Colonial Academic Speak**

For many Indigenous peoples and cultures across North America the importance of stories and storytelling has been vital in sustaining and preserving oral knowledge and worldviews. Stories are transmitted in different ways, through a variety of traditional and contemporary methods, including song and dance, visual arts, new media, film and video, theatre, and ceremonies. Quite often these stories speak to the histories of land, culture, and identity. Kovach (2009) explained: “Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging” (p. 94). Furthermore, she argues: “In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller” and that “oral stories are born of connections within the world, and are thus recounted relationally” (p. 94).

There is no doubt that such stories are about as diverse as the tellers who are telling them or that they carry distinct meanings within and beyond their respective communities and cultures. For instance, the body of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children's and young adult literature has grown exponentially over the past 30 years within Canada, which includes a rather extensive list of authors and illustrators, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, working in collaboration to pass on these narratives.

The themes covered in these texts include traditional and contemporary stories and illustrations, and aesthetically, historically, and politically they vary from territorial and cultural context to context. Similarly, Irwin, Rogers and Wan (1997) argued that for Aboriginal artists “understanding the relationship between land and culture is integral to understanding traditional and contemporary cultures, beliefs, and values” (p. 315). For instance, there are various stories of Raven and Coyote, among other Trickster tales, that will conjure up different (re)tellings and differing interpretations depending on the storyteller. In many instances these stories unavoidably include histories of colonial contact, which inevitably affects the way readers tell, read, and construe them. For example, in *A Coyote Columbus Story*, King and Monkman (1992) depicted a retelling of the Christopher Columbus story from a First Nations perspective. But as Smith (2005) stated: “Imperialism frames the Indigenous experience. It is part of our story, our version of modernity” (p. 19).

Another reality that has informed modern Indigenous experience is the effects of residential schools, which is the focus of various children's books and graphic novels, including: *When I*

was *Eight* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2013), *Fatty Legs: A True Story* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010), *Shi-shi-etko* (Campbell, 2005) and *Shin-chi's Canoe* (Campbell, 2008), and *Sugar Falls: A Residential School Story* (Robertson & Henderson, 2011). Consequently, there are numerous important teachings embedded within these stories that address the pre- or post-colonial/settler contact experience, thereby resulting in a range of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit themes in children's and young adult literature. Depending on how educators and learners read and understand these, such stories present critical ways of understanding and learning about Indigenous worldviews and perspectives. For instance, the stories about trickster figures or depictions of residential schools in children's literature are as diverse as the tellers themselves. But these works, whether they are intentional or not, present particular ways of seeing and contextualizing new knowledge and histories for learners and teachers. Iseke-Barnes (2009), who wrote about the role of Trickster stories in children's literature, explained:

This creates opportunities for exploration and expanding understandings of how we see our world and relationships within it and moving beyond boundaries created within Western values and beliefs. The fantasy world of Indigenous stories is a rich environment for learning about and reinterpreting our 'real world' (p. 47).

Building on this notion, the process of de/colonizing is complex, particularly within an educational system that has historically marginalized and subjugated Indigenous knowledges and cultures, and where many attempts to redress these injustices are often met with underfunded promises and lip service. Over the years this theory has become a catch phrase, garnering attention like an epic or melodramatic cliché. More and more the industry of de/colonization, much like notions of Indigenizing the academy, is becoming a product to cash-in. It is becoming a hot ticket item, and much like a theatre box office sell-out there are many who want a piece of the action. There is no shortage of people auditioning for lead parts, and who are even willing to settle for bit parts just to be a part of the spectacle. Such are the by-products of colonialism, where de/colonization presents opportunities to profit from generations of tragedy.

It is arguable that as scholars, educators, learners and activists, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, there are a number of questions that may surface, including: Who gets to write, speak, and access literature about de/colonization? Who gets to be heard and named expert(s) on matters pertaining to de/colonization? Could these hierarchical dimensions of language and practice potentially reinforce other forms of colonialism when being masked as de/colonizing strategies and initiatives? Its own superficiality has become a performance in itself, which arguably should be questioned and challenged. For instance, when doing the work of de/colonizing or Indigenizing the academy, are there ways to be mindful and critical of the ironic nuances that are inherently woven within this practice, which asks if this work is being done for personal gain (e.g. awards, book deals, or promotion), or if it is really being done for a wider-reaching purpose. Furthermore, is there a need to be careful of the outcomes that are being sought? Respectively, does this work to bring about real change in the academy, and is that change going to benefit Indigenous communities?

Similarly, there is a real ongoing challenge for Indigenous storytellers to convey these stories with the hope that they are not misappropriated or misrepresented by mainstream educational settings, which is as real and important as undoing historical wrongdoings. Furthermore, there

are just as equally challenging questions that could be posed about the role of storytelling in education and how it is used as a strategy for de/colonization, including: What stories or plays get to be told, and who gets to tell or write them? Is it the role of the storyteller or playwright to assume the responsibility for how the story is interpreted or used? What happens if and when the story is manipulated, distorted, misconstrued, misrepresented and misappropriated? Different forms of misappropriation and misrepresentation include “acting” First Nations by wearing paper headdresses and feathers in a Thanksgiving play, or beating on drum in a tom-tom fashion, or using a talking stick without referencing where this practice comes from and why it is being used.

Likewise, the challenge for some educators lies in being educated enough to know how to use different FNMI texts appropriately and to know to engage with the content meaningfully so that critical reading, thinking, and learning can occur within their classroom setting. Again, Iseke-Barnes (2009) argued, “Educators have an important role in helping children learn to read literature critically” (p. 24). Indeed, educators have an important role to play in terms of teaching and learning about Indigenous peoples and cultures. But ultimately, to do so effectively, educators must be willing and prepared to divest themselves of their positions of authority that inherently results from colonial privilege, while being open to the notion of learning alongside their students. Like Kovach (2009), Iseke-Barnes (2009) emphasized the importance of the Indigenous storyteller as teacher: “Storytellers are responsible in communities to the people, to keep the story alive, and to share it through their artful practice. Their art reflects the storyteller’s profound self-understanding and the significance of the story” (p. 26).

Children’s literature is by-and-large beginning to present some deeper ways of disrupting cultures of silence, and many contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit authors and illustrators, including their allies, are starting to bring a voice to Indigenous peoples and cultures into the broader Canadian educational context. What is significant about these stories, to borrow from Smith (1999), “is not that they simply tell a story” but that “these new stories contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place” (p. 144). Smith goes further to draw on the scholarship of Russell Bishop and posited that, “storytelling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the ‘diversities of truth’ within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control” (p. 145).

### **Enter Framework: To Be or Not to Be?**

*Indigenous theories not only challenge the language of colonialism but challenge western theoretical hegemony and provide the space for important critique of colonial relations of power, domination, and exploitation.*

Raven Sinclair (2004, p. 54)

It is through storytelling, and in this case a story told in the form of a play, that we believe preservice teachers might gain insights into how school curriculum is based on colonial structures. In our experience, one of the most difficult theoretical and practical concepts for preservice teachers to understand is how curriculum, which embodies colonial worldviews without question, oppresses and undermines Aboriginal Peoples. When thinking about engaging in the act of performing de/colonization, we draw on theories of theatre and performance

(Dénommé-Welch, 2009; Mojica, 2006), and ways of integrating Indigenous knowledge systems and aesthetics that challenge the framework of colonial thought. One such component includes collaborative process, where the act of storytelling through de/colonizing becomes a joint effort, and in the case of this article and research, this work becomes a process, and the learning through the performativity of de/colonization becomes more of a dialogue, between characters and an embodied experience through performance. As Gradle (2011) explained, “[d]eveloping this embodied awareness is important in teacher education because it expands the connections with others whom we teach, increases the sociocultural understandings that mature with reflection, and enables the silent transformation that often occurs in relationships with the more-than-human Earth” (p. 54).

As a result, we turned to some of the tools and forms we know well: scriptwriting, drama, theatre, among others. What resulted from this choice is a short scene depicting two archetypal characters, named *Elder* and *Curriculum*, and the voice of a *Narrator*. Through dialogue, the characters poignantly illustrate how curricular structures, which teachers typically enact in the classroom, strike discordant notes with Aboriginal teachings and worldviews. Through a series of humorous interchanges, hegemonic discourse, represented by Curriculum, begin to subside to noticing how teaching and learning through an Indigenous worldview can benefit all concerned.

To this end, the play presented at the end of the article can be used with preservice teachers as a way to facilitate a rich dialogue about what de/colonization might look and feel like in the contexts of mainstream schooling. Like any play that is written for the stage, this piece was developed with the intention that educators and learners could perform it within their own classrooms, and that it could be used as a starting point for exploring and discussing notions of de/colonization. It is through the art of scriptwriting and the power of performance that we were able to expand on some of the more complex notions of de/colonization methodologies. This way we could play on various discourses surrounding knowledge imperialism, education, and power dynamics to explore both Indigenous and Western hegemonies, by addressing various tropes and truths about teaching and learning.

To accompany the text, we recorded ourselves performing a reading of the script, which can also be used as a more illustrative study of the intricacies and examination of the performance of de/colonization. As a reader and listener, this opens up alternate ways and opportunities to process and analyze the complex subtleties relating to de/colonizing through storytelling. Again, Gradle (2011) explained, “Performances – whether carefully scripted or improvisational – provoke, invite, startle, enlighten, engage, and challenge our ideas about the world and each other, just as they can also encourage compassion and heighten our regard for others’ experience of the truth” (p. 55). Here we become actors working with a script, asking ourselves these questions, and reflecting on the meaning behind King’s (2003) words that “[t]he truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (p. 2). If that be the case, then what or who’s story/stories are we telling? Also, by telling these stories are we de/colonizing our minds and histories or are we simply ascribing and performing to the same old colonial narrative?

### **Enter Narrator: A Voice to Represent the ‘Other’**

NARRATOR: The act of de/colonization within or through the structures of education systems is a rather peculiar, complex, and even risky process to encounter. Quite often these are at odds with one another, especially with what has occurred over the past hundred years or more through the residential school system such as we have experienced in Canada. It is really little wonder as to why there continues to be so many hegemonic walls to address/redress, and furthermore dismantle. Whether there must exist a paradigm, as hooks (1995) argued, or one that simply needs shifting, the question is for whom does the paradigm or paradigm shift serve exactly? For instance, Loppie (2007) argued, “that a universal Indigenous paradigm does not exist” (p. 276). Indeed, there may never exist a universal Indigenous paradigm for as long as there is no single Indigenous worldview. But rather it is through recognizing the multiplicity and diversity of Indigenous paradigms and worldviews that learners and teachers will be able to gain more insights and appreciate the complexities of Indigenous cultures and knowledges. Still, educators are often compelled to examine the effects and consequences of these paradigm constructs, through historical and contemporary filters, and consider how this impacts learning and teaching.

Over the years there have been many scholars, artists, and activists (see for example, Coleman, 2004; Fusco, 1995; Gallagher & Booth, 2003; Gomez-Peña, 2000; Gomez-Peña & Peña, 2005; Irwin, Rogers, & Wan, 1997; Minh-ha, 1989) who have researched and published on topics of de/colonization and hegemony, as well as examined various intersections such as mis/education, health and wellness, land and environment, socio-economic and class issues, and the loss of cultural identity and language. However, Byrd (2006) argued that “[t]he problem with hegemony is that one never does have to think about it, and all too often, Native scholars and authors are left with the task of confronting the unthinking hegemonies that continue to shape academic knowledges about Indigenous People” (p. 83).

As a way of addressing some of the deeper questions about the impacts of colonialism on student learning, teachers, administrators, academics, parents, and communities need to also work through this process, and not only be the work of Indigenous People. Of course what this might look like in Canada will vary from school district to school district, province to province, context to context, and from reserve to non-reserve education. But there are several questions to ask to begin this work, for example: Where do we begin with this process? How can we make meaningful links in curriculum with the realities of the past and present, and how do we move forward with this knowledge? What knowledge do we hope to create, understand and explore in our classrooms that will ultimately help our task of teaching and learning these difficult histories? How do we grapple with the systemic, intergenerational impacts of colonialism and racism in education, and how do these effects continue to ripple throughout Canadian First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities?

Arguably, the process of de/colonizing is something that is playing out more like a story—or even a play—where the elements of tragedy and comedy come to exist if not else collide; ultimately, this is where the narrative of colonialism needs to be re-examined and re-written so that the voices and perspectives of First Peoples in North America and their descendants can be better understood and more fully appreciated. But still, this notion seems rather idyllic, which forces us to ask even harder questions such as whose shoulders does the work of de/colonization fall upon? Whose responsibility is it to continue doing this work of teaching, and for whose benefit? Who are the players performing this act of de/colonization and who is the audience? Are

these players teaching anything or simply entertaining, and is the audience even listening/learning?

By shifting our focus on this short play, this work can be performed in the classroom and used as a starting point to generate a conversation about the dichotomy and worldview of curriculum and traditional knowledge. But if not read or performed in the classroom, then this piece can be listened to with the recording that accompanies this article. When reading, performing or listening to this piece, one might want to keep the following questions in mind: How does theatre engage us in the process of de/colonizing? How does a script engage us as readers and listeners to consider the different ways we can process and interact with knowledge? How is script analysis used as a way to explore Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and histories, and become more critical of what knowledges are privileged in education? Scene shift.

### **De/colonization: An Act of P/reservation**

*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*  
(Proverb)

Time: significant but unreserved.

Location: Turtle Island.

List of Characters:

**CURRICULUM:** a stately individual who loves to wear the latest theory or method that can be found in a fashion magazine. Gender irrelevant.

**ELDER:** an unassuming individual who loves to wear memory and oral knowledge like a pair of well-worn jeans. Gender irrelevant.

*The action takes place on a fishing dock by a lake, away from the hustle and bustle of things. ELDER enters stage right, carrying a fishing pole and net. ELDER looks around—it is quiet—then walks over to the fishing dock and sits.*

**ELDER:** Well, guess I'm first. (*chuckles and casts a line into the water*)

*Moments pass when suddenly a crashing, thunderous sound comes clapping over the lake. From the opposite end of the stage—stage left—enters CURRICULUM all disheveled, carrying a satchel and fishing pole. CURRICULUM spots ELDER over by the dock.*

**CURRICULUM:** (*shouting miserably*) AND YOU CALL THOSE DIRECTIONS?

**ELDER:** (*turns to look*) Oh, hey! You made it finally, eh!

**CURRICULUM:** (*walks towards the fishing dock in frustration*) Or is that what you call deconstructing methodology? Sending me through the bush like some long lost concept? *Eh?* When you say go right and then go left, and then another left, turn here, turn there and



everywhere... well I hate to say it but that's a little unclear when you're walking through the bush! It's not like there's a street sign anywhere. Urgh!

**ELDER:** Okay, okay settle down!

**CURRICULUM:** You settle down!

**ELDER:** Settle down before you get yourself all convoluted. We wouldn't want that now would we?

**CURRICULUM:** No! My goodness –

**ELDER:** Remember the last time you got all hyper theoretical?

**CURRICULUM:** Okay. I get it. I'm calming down.

*CURRICULUM sits down. Takes a deep breath. After a few moments things begin to settle back into the same old calm and quiet. ELDER looks at CURRICULUM's fishing pole, and notices it is missing a hook and bait.*

**ELDER:** Want a hook?

**CURRICULUM:** Is that meant to be a joke? A *hook*? Yeah, real original! And do you want an icebreaker? (*shows a clenched fist*)

**ELDER:** Whoa! Easy. Yeah a hook. Looks like you're missing one.

*CURRICULUM looks at the fishing line and sees that the hook and bait are missing.*

**CURRICULUM:** Oh... well I must've lost it on my way here. Gimme one of yours!

**ELDER:** Excuse me?! That's appropriation.

**CURRICULUM:** You offered.

**ELDER:** Yeah, but the way you're talking it's as if you're going to keep it. I mean I don't mind sharing, but –

**CURRICULUM:** Okay, okay! Look I'm sorry. I got a little out of line there with my tone. May I please, please, pretty please use one of yours?

*Silence. ELDER looks in disbelief.*

**CURRICULUM:** Elder, I'm sorry. I'm sorry... For real.

**ELDER:** That's better. I got just the right hook for you. (*hands CURRICULUM a tiny humility hook*)

**CURRICULUM:** What's this?!

**ELDER:** Some humility.

**CURRICULUM:** As if I'll catch anything with this... I'd be lucky if I even catch a minnow. Wait a minute, is this meant to be abstract?

**ELDER:** Yup. Better than nothing. Won't you sit and ponder that awhile.

*Silence. CURRICULUM ties the hook onto the line and casts it out to the water.*

**ELDER:** You know something I noticed –

**CURRICULUM:** What's that?

**ELDER:** You're always jumping to conclusions...

**CURRICULUM:** If you say so.

**ELDER:** That's a lot of assumptions.

**CURRICULUM:** Alright, alright. I was wrong.

**ELDER:** How many times have you said that before? (*Pause.*) So much mis/information.

**CURRICULUM:** Are you gonna go on about that?

**ELDER:** Mis/education.

**CURRICULUM:** I get it.

**ELDER:** Mis/direction.

**CURRICULUM:** Look who's talking now! You can't even give simple directions!

**ELDER:** Oh, I gave you good ones. I recall saying: "Go down the good path, and when you get to the fork choose the right one." Well, did you?

**CURRICULUM:** Yes! I went right, just like you said.

**ELDER:** Nuh-huh, I said *choose* the right one.

**CURRICULUM:** Oh for goodness sakes! You're talking semantics.

**ELDER:** Then I must be talking your language. It's all word play after all.

**CURRICULUM:** Well, whatever, I'm here now.

**ELDER:** Exactly. You're *here* now.

**CURRICULUM:** What does that mean?

**ELDER:** Just that. You're *here* now.

**CURRICULUM:** Hmm.

**ELDER:** Yup.

*(Silence.)*

**CURRICULUM:** You know it's kinda nice getting away from it all.

**ELDER:** It is indeed.

**CURRICULUM:** So very... how do you say... *(begins snapping fingers to jog the memory)*  
Self... *(snap-snap)* Self... *(snap-snap)*

**ELDER:** Self-reflexive?

**CURRICULUM:** Oh yes! Folks everywhere are raving about that sort of methodology these days. D'you know much about it?

**ELDER:** Hmm. Do I know much about it?

**CURRICULUM:** I guess having some time alone to think isn't so bad.

**ELDER:** Where I come from we call that learning from the land.

**CURRICULUM:** How do you figure that?

**ELDER:** Just listen.

*(Silence. CURRICULUM tries very hard to listen for something, but just hears the sounds of breeze and leaves moving, and undercurrents of water.)*

**CURRICULUM:** I don't hear anything. What am I listening for?

**ELDER:** Just that. Anything. There's a lot to learn from just about anything.

**CURRICULUM:** Pulling my line! *(something starts tugging at CURRICULUM's fishing line.)*

**ELDER:** I'm not pulling your line.

**CURRICULUM:** No-no! There's something pulling my line.

**ELDER:** There you go! Already catching on.

**CURRICULUM:** Feels bigger than a minnow.

**ELDER:** Reel it in! Come on.

*(CURRICULUM starts reeling in the catch.)*

**CURRICULUM:** Feels like a winner! Feels like – *(the catch begins to rise to the surface)*. What in the world is this? Is that what I think it is?

**ELDER:** What's that?

*(Unbeknownst to CURRICULUM the catch is actually a tiny, but heavy turtle shell that has come up to the surface.)*

**CURRICULUM:** Is that a turtle?

**ELDER:** Sure looks like it.

**CURRICULUM:** But it doesn't have any arms or head.

**ELDER:** Yup.

**CURRICULUM:** But it's so heavy. Grab the net!

**ELDER:** Hmm.

*ELDER grabs the net and helps CURRICULUM pull the shell out of the water. CURRICULUM begins to unhook the turtle from the line. The turtle shell itself has a greenish glow to it.*

**CURRICULUM:** Well I didn't expect that. You sure there's fish in this lake?

**ELDER:** Oh I'm pretty sure. But looks like you caught something rather special there.

**CURRICULUM:** Whaddya mean? Looks like a dead turtle to me.

**ELDER:** Look a little closer.

*CURRICULUM takes a closer look at the shell and notices a fused line running all around it.*

**CURRICULUM:** That's weird.

**ELDER:** Why don't you open it?

*CURRICULUM looks at ELDER with a funny face, as if to say "what are you talking about?" but then thinks it over and decides "why not?"*

**CURRICULUM:** Why not? Seeing as it's my catch.

**ELDER:** Hmm.

*CURRICULUM begins prying the turtle shell open, but it gives some resistance as it's been fused shut for hundreds of years.*

**CURRICULUM:** Almost there. It's-it's... it's a tough one.

*CURRICULUM struggles but suddenly the shell begins to give way and starts to open up gradually.*

**CURRICULUM:** Well I'll be... Is this really for real? Am I dreaming? Elder? Elder?

*ELDER does not respond, but simply watches in amazement and silence as things begin pouring out of the turtle all over the earth: everything from lost languages, old ceremonies and prophecies, ways of seeing, ways of being, and ways of learning scatter everywhere, filling all the land.*

**ELDER:** Would you look at that! Isn't that amazing?!

**CURRICULUM:** This?! This can't be what I'm seeing...

**ELDER:** It is. The truth is no amount of rubbing, testing, assessing, re-writing, or erasing could ever make it or us all go away. It's all over the land. You see it now? It's everywhere *in* the land. In Turtle Island.

**CURRICULUM:** A turtle?

**ELDER:** Yes, a turtle.

**CURRICULUM:** But how can it carry so much for so long in such a tiny shell?

**ELDER:** For learning. For knowledge. For teaching.

**CURRICULUM:** (*repeats*) For learning. For knowledge. For teaching.

*They look to each other and repeat.*

**ELDER & CURRICULUM:** A paradigm shift.

**CURRICULUM:** I never ever saw the world quite this way.

**ELDER:** It takes practice. It takes effort.

**CURRICULUM:** Hmmm. Yup. I see what you're saying, Elder. It's the undoing. *(Silence.)* So are we suppose undo this or clean this up or something?

**ELDER:** Undo what?

**CURRICULUM:** This mess that's all over the place.

**ELDER:** No, leave it. These are things that are meant to teach whoever finds them. It's a mirror of what remains now... pieces and fragments –

**CURRICULUM:** Like splinters.

**ELDER:** Yeah, like splinters poking into the side of colonialism. *(laughs)*

**CURRICULUM:** That's one way to put it.

*(Silence)*

**CURRICULUM:** Well, thank you.

**ELDER:** For what?

**CURRICULUM:** For taking me fishing. For teaching me.

**ELDER:** Yeah well don't thank me yet. I'm still waiting for you to catch me some dinner. Now get to it.

**CURRICULUM:** Yes! Yes! I'm on it *(Casts the line out.)*

*ELDER and CURRICULUM sit and watch the water quietly, and carefully observe how the waves carry away pieces and fragments. Pieces and fragments of untold histories now blossoming across the land for all to learn.*

**Scene.**

## References

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2012). Aboriginal peoples and communities: Terminology. Retrieved from <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642/1100100014643>
- Aboriginal Education Office and Ministry of Education. (2007). Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education policy framework. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/fnmiFramework.pdf>
- Association of Canadian Deans of Education. (2010). Accord on Indigenous education. Retrieved from [http://www.csse-scee.ca/docs/acde/acde\\_accord\\_indigenousresearch\\_en.pdf](http://www.csse-scee.ca/docs/acde/acde_accord_indigenousresearch_en.pdf)
- Avison, D. (2004). *A challenge worth meeting: Opportunities for improving Aboriginal education outcomes*. Ottawa, Canada: Council of Ministers of Education.
- Barker, K. (2013). *The hours that remain*. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Playwrights Press.
- Battiste, M. (2008). The decolonization of Aboriginal education: Dialogue, reflection, and action in Canada. In P. R. Dasen & A. Akkari (Eds.), *Educational theories and practices from the majority world* (pp. 168-195). New Delhi, India: Sage India.
- Byrd, J. A. (2006). (Post) colonial plainsongs: Toward Native literary worldings. In Four Arrows (Ed.), *Unlearning the language of conquest: Scholars expose anti-Indianism in America* (pp. 81-93). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Campbell, N. I. (2005). *Shi-shi-etko*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books.
- Campbell, N. I. (2008). *Shin-chi's canoe*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books.
- Coleman, E. B. (2004). Aboriginal art and identity: Crossing the border of law's imagination. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 12(1), 20-40.
- Dénomme-Welch, S. (2009). Weesageechak begins to dance: Toward a pedagogy of performance and the possibilities for decolonizing the stage. *Canadian Theatre Review*, 138, 13-18.
- Dwyer, M. (2010, June 1). Deans sign accord on Aboriginal education. *Macleans On Campus*. Retrieved from <http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/2010/06/01/deans-sign-accord-on-aboriginal-education/>
- Episknew, J.-A. (2012, August). *Myth busters: First the academy, then the world*. Paper presented at the Indigenizing the Academy, Chilliwack, Canada.

- Fulghum, R. (2004). *All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Fusco, C. (1995). *English is broken here: Notes on cultural fusion in the americas*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Gallagher, K., & Booth, D. (2003). *How theatre educates: Convergences and counterpoints with artists, scholars, and advocates*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Godlewska, A., Massey, J., Adjei, J. K., & Moore, J. (2013). The unsustainable nature of ignorance: Measuring knowledge to effect social change first results of an online survey of Aboriginal knowledge at queen's university. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 33(1), 65-95.
- Gomez-Peña, G. (2000). *Dangerous border crossers*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gomez-Peña, G., & Peña, E. A. (2005). *Writing on performance, activism, and pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gradle, S. A. (2011). Performing to be whole: Inquiries in transformation. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 45(4), 54-66.
- Grover, L. L. (2006). Everything you need to know in life you'll learn at boarding school. In K. Blaeser (Ed.), *Trace in blood, bone, and stone: Contemporary Ojibwe poetry*. Bemidji, MN: Loonfeather Press.
- hooks, b. (1995). *Killing rage: Ending racism*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- Irwin, R., Rogers, T., & Wan, Y.-Y. (1997). Belonging to the land: Understanding Aboriginal art and culture. *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 16(3), 315-318.
- Iseke-Barnes, J. (2009). Unsettling fictions: Disrupting popular discourses and trickster tales in books for children. *Journal of Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 7(1), 24-57.
- Jordan-Fenton, C., & Pokiak-Fenton, M. (2010). *Fatty legs: A true story*. Toronto, Canada: Annick Press.
- Jordan-Fenton, C., & Pokiak-Fenton, M. (2013). *When I was eight*. Richmond Hill, Canada: Firefly Books.
- King, T. (2003). *The truth about stories: A Native narrative*. Toronto, Canada: Anansi Press.



- King, T., & Monkman, W. K. (1992). *A coyote columbus story*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books.
- Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). First Nations and higher education: The four r's-- respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3), 1-15. Retrieved from <http://jaie.asu.edu/v30/V30S3fir.htm>
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2007). *Reshaping the university: Responsibility, indigenous epistemes, and the logic of the gift*. Vancouver, BC, Canada: UBC Press.
- Lane, R. (2003). Performing history: The reconstruction of gender and race in british columbia drama. In S. Grace & A.-R. Glaap (Eds.), *Performing national identities: International perspectives on contemporary Canadian theatre* (pp. 265-277). Vancouver, Canada: Talonbooks.
- Loppie, C. (2007). Learning from the grandmothers: Incorporating Indigenous principles into qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(2), 276-284.
- Mihesuah, D. A., & Wilson, A. C. (2004). *Indigenizing the academy: Transforming scholarship and empowering communities*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Minh-ha, T. T. (1989). *Woman, Native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Mojica, M. (2006). Of borders, identity, and cultural icons: A rant. *Canadian Theatre Review*, 125, 35-40.
- Robertson, D. A., & Henderson, S. B. (2011). *Sugar falls: A residential school story*. Winnipeg, Canada: Highwater Press.
- Sinclair, R. (2004). Aboriginal social work education in Canada: Decolonizing pedagogy for the seventh generation. *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 1(1), 49-61.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Smith, L. T. (2005). On tricky ground: Research the Native in the age of uncertainty. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd. ed., pp. 85-107). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Taylor-Vaisey, N. (2010, June 8). Education deans and indigenous groups endorse new accord on education: "It's the right thing to do." *University affairs / Affaires universitaires*. Retrieved from <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/new-indigenous-accord.aspx>

Titley, E. B. (1986). *A narrow vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the administration of Indian affairs in Canada*. Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.

Toulouse, P. R. (2011). *Achieving Aboriginal student success: A guide for k to 8 classrooms*. Winnipeg, Canada: Portage & Main Press.

United Nations. (2008). United nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

United Nations. (n.d.). Indigenous peoples, Indigenous voices: Factsheet. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf)

## Appendix A. Survey to Investigate the Impacts of Indigenizing the BEd Program

Please print name: \_\_\_\_\_

For the following section, please check off the most appropriate answer.

1. How would you rate your knowledge of **First Nations** culture and history?
  - Very knowledgeable
  - Somewhat knowledgeable
  - Little to no knowledge
  
2. How would you rate your knowledge of **Métis** culture and history?
  - Very knowledgeable
  - Somewhat knowledgeable
  - Little to no knowledge
  
3. How would you rate your knowledge of **Inuit** culture and history?
  - Very knowledgeable
  - Somewhat knowledgeable
  - Little to no knowledge
  
4. On a whole how would you describe your **knowledge** of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in education?
  - Very knowledgeable
  - Somewhat knowledgeable
  - Little to no knowledge

Please specify:

---

5. Do you have any previous **training** on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education?
  - Yes
  - No
  - A little bit

Please specify:

---

6. Do you have any previous experience **learning** about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics and issues in Education?
  - Yes
  - No
  - A little bit

Please specify (i.e. what kinds of learning experiences):

---

7. Do you have any previous experience **teaching** about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics and issues in education?

- Yes
- No
- A little bit

Please specify (i.e. what kinds of teaching experiences):

---

8. How comfortable do you feel teaching about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit topics in your classroom?

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

9. Is there anything specific that you hope to learn about First Nations, Métis and Inuit education through this program?

Please specify:

---

10. With what ethnic/cultural group do you identify most?\_\_\_\_\_

11. To which age group do you belong?

- 18 - 25
- 26 - 35
- 36 - 45
- 46 - 55
- 56 - 65
- 66 +

12. In which province/country did you attend high school?

---

13. If contacted, would you be willing to participate in a post-experience interview in April 2014.

- Yes
- No

## Appendix B. Bibliography of Selected Aboriginal Children's and Young Adult Literature

**These titles can be purchased through [www.goodminds.com](http://www.goodminds.com), a leading source for purchasing bias-free teaching and educational resources related to Native American, First Nations, Indigenous, and Aboriginal studies. Goodminds is an Aboriginal-owned family business based on the Six Nations of the Grand River (Brantford) in Ontario, Canada.**

- Auger, D. (2006). *Mwâkwa talks to the loon: A Cree story for children*. Surrey, Canada: Heritage House.
- Bruchac, J. (2005). *Code talker: A novel about the Navajo marines of World War Two*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Bruchac, J., & Bruchac, J. (2001). *How chipmunk got his stripes*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.
- Campbell, N. I. (2005). *Shi-shi-etko*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books.
- Campbell, N. I. (2008). *Shin-chi's canoe*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books.
- Corbiere, E. (2010). *Porc and beans: An English / Ojibwe story*. Tottenham, Canada: Red Road Publishing.
- Dabcovich, L. (1997). *The polar bear son: An Inuit tale*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Denny, E. (2008). *Jenneli's dance*. Penticton, Canada: Theytus Books.
- Einarson, E. (2004). *The moccasins*. Penticton, Canada: Theytus Books.
- First Nations and Native Artists. (2010). *Learn and play with First Nations and Native art*. Vancouver, Canada: NativeNorthwest.
- Flett, J. (2010). *Lii yiiboo nayaapiwak lii swer: L'alfabet di Michif / owls see clearly at night: A Michif alphabet*. Vancouver, Canada: Simply Read Books.
- Football, V. (2010). *Edàni nogèè done gok'ejdi / how fox saved the people*. Penticton, Canada: Theytus Books.
- Goble, P. (1998). *The legend of the white buffalo woman*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.
- Grutman, J. H., & Matthaei, G. (1994). *The ledgerbook of Thomas Blue Eagle*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.
- Jameson, C. (2006). *Zoe and the fawn*. Penticton, Canada: Theytus Books.

- Johnston, B. (2010). *The gift of the stars: Anangoog meegiwaewinan*. Wiarton, Canada: Kegedonce Press.
- Jordan-Fenton, C., & Pokiak-Fenton, M. (2010). *Fatty legs: A true story*. Toronto, Canada: Annick Press.
- Jordan-Fenton, C., & Pokiak-Fenton, M. (2013). *When I was eight*. Richmond Hill, Canada: Firefly Books.
- Kilabuk, E. (2011). *The qalupalik*. Toronto, Canada: Inhabit Media Inc.
- King, T., & Monkman, W.K. (1992). *A coyote columbus story*. Toronto, Canada: Greenwood Books.
- Lewis, M. (2011). *Kaugjagjuk*. Toronto, Canada: Inhabit Media Inc.
- McDermott, G. (1994). *Coyote: A trickster tale from the American southwest*. Orlando, FL: First Voyager Books.
- Meshake, R. A. (2006). *Blueberry Rapids*. Guelph, Canada: Rene Andre Meshake.
- Mosionier, B. C. (2002). *Unusual friendships*. Penticton, Canada: Theytus Books.
- Native Northwest. (2010). *Discover the animals: First Nations and Native art colouring and learning book*. Vancouver, Canada: Native Northwest.
- Northwest Coast First Nations Artists. (2010). *Learn to count with northwest coast Native art*. Vancouver, Canada: Native Northwest.
- Penkziwol, J. E. (2005). *The red sash*. Toronto, Canada: Greenwood Books.
- Robertson, D. A., & Henderson, S. B. (2011). *Sugar falls: A residential school story*. Winnipeg, Canada: Highwater Press.
- Williams, M. (2001). *How Raven stole the sun*. New York: Abbeville Press.