

Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage

Learning knowing sharing: Celebrating successes in K-12 Aboriginal education in British Columbia.

by Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem and Jan Hare

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There is a great need in teacher education to provide thoroughly researched teaching exemplars and stories of success in K-12 Aboriginal education in Canada. This need aligns with recent policy imperatives such as those advanced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Final Report* (2015) and the Association of Canadian Deans of Education's *Accord on Indigenous Education* (2010). Among their many recommendations, the policies assert the need for teacher education reform to ensure that schools carry out responsibilities to create a more meaningful Aboriginal education for all learners. This is no small feat, given that over the past 150 years, the Canadian education system has employed culturally genocidal policies and practices in an attempt to both tacitly and overtly assimilate, erase, and eradicate Indigenous ways of knowing (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The legacies of these practices and policies still permeate most educational settings, with Eurocentric forms of education dominating classrooms through pedagogical practices that promote systemic racism by determining that expectations for Aboriginal learners are low and by treating Indigenous knowledges (IK) as an add-on to curriculum and school or district-based initiatives (Battiste, 2000). However, the new

book *Learning, sharing, knowing: Celebrating Successes in K-12 Education in British Columbia*, edited by Jo-ann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiem) and Jan Hare shines a bright light of hope for educators, academics, school districts, and professional organizations that want to carry out the above-mentioned recommendations and ensure that Aboriginal ways of knowing are meaningfully integrated into K-12 programs, services, curriculums, and pedagogies (xii). To create this publication, the British Columbia (BC) Principals' and Vice Principals' Association partnered with the Indigenous Education Institute at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education, and authors Archibald and Hare, who are the former and current associate deans of Indigenous education.

The authors fulfill the book's goal by celebrating recent developments in BC Aboriginal education and sharing a unique range of stories that illustrate 'how' educators, academics, schools, districts, universities, and Aboriginal organizations are creating change and innovative transformation in K-12 education. The contributing authors in this book share eighteen stories of Aboriginal success within the diverse and rich context of Aboriginal education in British Columbia. Archibald and Hare provide a strong introduction by detailing significant local, provincial and national policy directives that historically and contemporarily guide Indigenous education in BC and Canada. Respectful consideration is given to all regions of BC in order to ensure diversity. Rural, urban, public, and First Nation schools, research and professional networks, and other province-wide settings are all represented in the book's stories. The authors' thoughtfully provide background information for those new to Indigenous World views and ways of knowing by detailing epistemological and ontological connections to the book's four themes: transformational change, relationships, learning processes & identity.

The book's success stories are written by educators, administrators, faculty, graduate students and advocates, and cover a diverse range of topics, including: Aboriginal enhancement agreements, Indigenous language revitalization, curriculum and program development, technology, Elders, Aboriginal community and family engagement, policy development and leadership. Each chapter (story) addresses the following questions: "What is working well? How do you know? What contributes to success? How have you overcome challenges? What is the impact of your project? What messages do you have for educators, parents, schools, professional associations, government, or teacher education programs?"

However, the authors do not shy away from the challenges in current educational settings that create barriers to teaching and learning Aboriginal education. This is a significant asset. Most stories begin with an honest, authentic appraisal of what has not worked in the past. This appraisal encourages the reader to recognize how the various contributors have courageously moved through their challenges in order to achieve success. The authors emphasize that “commitment, effort and cooperation” are required to make changes in order to ‘do’ Aboriginal education differently and create transformational change for all learners.

The book also provides a fair balance between Eurocentric and Indigenous understandings of success. Most chapters provide district and B.C. Ministry data for student achievement, which is primarily based on student graduation rates. However, success is not focused solely on conventional Eurocentric markers (external factors that emphasize individual academic achievement, merit, competition, and superiority). Rather, the concept of success is broadened by Indigenous epistemological and ontological understandings, which ensure that a wholistic understanding of success is woven through the stories. A wholistic understanding of success ensures that a student’s physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs are met by their schooling and life experiences (Pidgeon, 2008). The concept also emphasizes strong interconnections between students’ families and communities throughout their schooling and life experiences (Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014). As most authors in the book note, there are many non-academic activities that promote wholistic success for Aboriginal learners and communities that can be more important than externally defined conceptions of success. Further, wholistic success and wellbeing is measured throughout the course of a person’s life. It is interesting to note that the editors have chosen not to define wholistic success in their introduction, given that given that it is a central concept in numerous stories throughout the book. However, the book’s stories provide rich examples of wholistic success that enable readers to gain a solid understanding of it.

As a professor of Indigenous education, educators often ask me questions such as, “what constitutes successful Aboriginal pedagogical practices?” “How can systemic transformation for Aboriginal education happen?”; and, “What are successful curricular exemplars for Indigenizing the curriculum?” This book provides answers to these questions and is a much-needed resource for those involved in teacher education reform. However, it is also relevant to professionals in other areas, since the questions that the

editors thoughtfully included in their introduction alongside the book's major themes are intended to serve as guides for youth workers, administrators, faculty, and graduate students pursuing professional development. My hands are raised high in appreciation for this 'gift' that has been given.

References

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