Decolonizing Possibilities in Special Education Services

Nikki L. Yee
University of British Columbia

Deborah L. Butler
University of British Columbia

Abstract

Colonial contexts continue to shape the experiences of Indigenous students, especially in special education, even as educators work to respond to Indigenous perspectives. In this article we first apply a decolonizing critique to consider how colonialism affects special education programming, then survey Indigenous and decolonizing scholarship to (re) imagine how educators may start to address these concerns. Our analysis suggests that educators (1) engage in critical self-examination, (2) adopt holistic assessment strategies, (3) explore teaching practices emerging from decolonizing perspectives, and (4) examine and (re)imagine service delivery models. Educators may use these ideas as a springboard for exploring more contextualized decolonizing possibilities.

Keywords: inclusive education, special education, decolonization

Résumé

Les contextes coloniaux continuent de façonner les expériences des élèves autochtones, en particulier en enseignement spécialisé, et ce, même si les éducateurs s'efforcent de s'adapter au point de vue autochtone. Dans cet article, nous utilisons une critique de la décolonisation afin d'examiner comment le colonialisme affecte les programmes d'éducation spécialisée, et nous sondons le savoir autochtone et de décolonisation pour (ré)imaginer par où les éducateurs peuvent commencer pour répondre à ces préoccupations. Notre analyse permet de suggérer aux éducateurs de : (1) s'engager dans un autoexamen critique, (2) d'adopter des stratégies d'évaluation holistiques, (3) d'explorer les pratiques d'enseignement émergeant des perspectives de décolonisation, et (4) d'examiner et de (ré)imaginer des modèles de prestation de services. Les éducateurs peuvent utiliser ces idées comme un tremplin pour explorer des pistes de décolonisation plus contextualisées.

Mots-clés : éducation inclusive, éducation spécialisée, décolonisation

Introduction

Lawrence came to class,
answered all my questions,
schooled the kids on
First Nations politics, but
declined to jump
the hoops I had
carefully laid out
as judge of students'
performance.
I grasped for ways to reach him.

Stories in the teachers' lounge,
they didn't help.
But faded lead scratches
on the back of a report whispered
            "Dyslexia."
Why didn't I know?

Lawrence walked a tightrope
stretched across time
and ancestral place.
He played along
but his eyes were dull.
And when he walked home
at the end of the term,
he never looked back.

While I sit here,
10 years on,
with Lawrence
on my mind.
            –Nikki Yee

As two non-Indigenous scholars and educators, we found little research that considers Indigenous learners like Lawrence. Nikki, Lawrence's former teacher and special educator, was particularly frustrated with her inability to support Indigenous students meaningfully. Deb, a professor at the University of British Columbia, noted that much of the research in educational psychology lacks explicit connections with Indigenous perspectives. The national context set by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), and the provincial context of educational partnerships and curricular innovations in British Columbia (BC Ministry of Education [BCMofEd], 2015), inspired us to begin expanding the scope of the discussion around decolonizing possibilities in special education.

We understand the complex challenges faced by students and educators as part of colonial structures embedded in Western societies (Battiste, 2013; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Cote-Meek, 2014; Wolfe, 2006). Literature suggests that challenges are particularly salient in special education, where disability rates among Indigenous students far exceed those of non-Indigenous students (Auerbach, 2007; BCMofEd, 2018). Further analysis is needed to explore possible reasons for this disproportionate representation, and what might be done to address it. Thus, our research questions asked:

1. How can a decolonizing perspective help us better understand why Indigenous students are disproportionately represented in special education programming?
2. How might special education systems and inclusive classroom teaching practices in provincial schools be (re)imagined to address the needs of Indigenous students?

In this article, we rely on literature first to describe the educational experience of Indigenous students and their teachers, and then to provide a framework for understanding colonialism and decolonizing possibilities. We apply these perspectives to construct a critical understanding of special education as it applies to Indigenous students, and then engage with Indigenous and decolonizing perspectives to begin (re)imagining possibilities within the field. We selected literature for this analysis based on its prominence within Indigenous scholarship, its compatibility with our objectives, and in consideration of local Indigenous cultures. We undertake this exercise as a first step in understanding how to support Indigenous (and all) students through special education programming, and to enact what we see as our responsibilities to truth and reconciliation in Canada.

Within this framework, sensitivity to terminology is important. We recognize the vast cultural and individual diversity among and within Indigenous Nations, and refer to specific Nations where possible. Otherwise, we use the term *Indigenous* to refer collectively to the Original Peoples of the land now known as Canada (Younging, 2018), who have a common history as environmental stewards, and as resilient survivors of colonial programs (Cote-Meek, 2014). At times we use the term *Indigenous (and all) students* to prioritize the experience of Indigenous Peoples, but to recognize that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples exist in relationship to one another (Donald, 2009). This connection is pronounced in educational contexts where pedagogical approaches that work for Indigenous students are likely to benefit all students (Hare & Davidson, 2019).

Colonialism

Understanding the impact of colonialism is key for examining why Indigenous students have particular experiences within the Western education system, and why teachers are not better equipped to address the needs of Indigenous learners. Cote-Meek (2014) provides a four-dimensional definition of colonialism, which suggests that (1) the colonial agenda, at its core, is about acquiring land for the benefit of settler nations (see also Tuck & Yang, 2012); (2) it is a culturally embedded worldview intended to create divisions among people so that human and natural resource exploitation is easier (see also Donald, 2012; Stoler, 1989); (3) it is physically and symbolically violent, primarily toward Indigenous Peoples (see also Fanon, 1963; Pidgeon, 2009); and (4) it continues as a social force in today's society (see also Maracle, 2017; Wolfe, 2006). Importantly, colonialism is so deeply embedded in Western culture that it has become normalized and difficult to detect by members of that society (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). This normalization means that colonial structures may be unknowingly maintained, even by people who oppose them (Stoler, 2008). Indigenous perspectives are thus critical to help identify and resist this injustice in Canadian society (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Colonialism in education. Colonialism has had an enormous impact on the lived experiences of Indigenous students, and more specifically in relation to the Western educational system. Cherubini and Hodson (2008) note that "Aboriginal academic achievement is influenced by a complex mix of socioeconomic, sociohistoric, and sociocultural realities that are the residue of the colonizing efforts that continue to underscore

the contemporary reality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada" (p. 5). Notably, research has demonstrated that the educational experience of Indigenous students has and continues to be marked by multilevel racism, including verbal abuse, psychological abuse, self-fulfilling prophecies of low expectations, social marginalization/isolation, lack of professional support or attention, and rules and procedures that create barriers for students (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2016; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Indigenous students often feel they do not belong in schools, and many have identified feelings of low self-esteem, low self-worth, and low motivation in relation to school (Cooper, 2012; Cote-Meek, 2014). These findings have been consistent over time and across Canada (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2016; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Yee, 2020). Some students avoid racism in school by distancing themselves from Indigenous cultures and communities (Cote-Meek, 2014; Davidson, 2016), leaving school prior to graduation, or doing poorly in their classroom work (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002).

Colonialism in special education. Within this colonial context, Indigenous students with special needs face additional barriers that are seldom discussed. Table 1 shows that nearly one in five Indigenous students are identified as having special learning needs, twice the rate for non-Indigenous students (see also Auerbach, 2007; Michell, 2012). But little is understood about why these rates differ so dramatically (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2007). Are disabilities more prevalent in Indigenous communities, or is systemic bias inflating numbers? Little evidence suggests that special education instruction is shaped in consideration of Indigenous students (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2007; Mallett, 2008), or Indigenous perspectives that tend to embrace the diversity and contributions of all learners (Clouston, 2007; Phillips, 2010a). Cree researcher Curtis Mallett (2008) argues that students receiving special education programming are among the most vulnerable learners, but that special education programs are less likely to involve culturally sensitive pedagogy, being more heavily influenced by practices in Western psychology and colonial conventions.

Table 1

Representation in Special Education Programming

Special Education Category	Indigenous Students	Non-Indigenous Students
Total designated students across categories	19.8%	9.8%
Learning Disabilities	5.2%	3.1%
Behavioural Disabilities	5.9%	2.1%
Gifted	0.2%	1.0%

Source: Based on statistics taken from BC Ministry of Education (2018).

Compounding the problem, teachers and other professionals working to support students may not feel confident about designing educational practices in ways that account for cultural and colonial sensitivities. Although a gap in the literature exists in specific reference to Special Education Teachers, many educators question their abilities to bring Indigenous perspectives into the classroom (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2015; Deer, 2013; McGregor, 2019). Teachers may feel that they lack background knowledge (Dion et al., 2010; Milne, 2017), or may feel discomfort, guilt, or defensiveness about colonial content (Deer, 2013; Milne, 2017). Furthermore, educators who explore Indigenous perspectives in the classroom may worry about how materials or methods will be received by the community (Deer, 2013; Milne, 2017). This apprehension may partly stem from the invisibility of colonial narratives (e.g., stereotypes) around deficiency and divisions (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Davidson, 2016; Donald, 2009), especially in terms of special education (Bailey & Betts, 2009). Thus, although implications for teachers and Indigenous students are markedly different, they may similarly feel overwhelmed by the colonial context of schools and society.

The Special Education Context

For the purposes of this article we adopt a complex understanding of special education services as encompassing diverse connections both vertically, within the educational system, and horizontally across agencies and departments. This systemic view opens the possibilities for change at multiple entry points, not only within schools (e.g., supporting a teacher or Educational Assistant working directly with a child), but also across levels

(e.g., from schools to school districts/divisions to a Ministry of Education) and support systems (e.g., including social workers, or physical therapists).

For Indigenous students in particular, special education services are embedded in and interconnected with complex bureaucratic structures, both vertically and horizontally (Mallett, 2008; Richardson & Powell, 2011) that are also shaped by financial considerations (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013). Alongside systems and structures that shape general education, special education has its own additional levels of administration that may include the school, district, provincial, federal, and band levels. Furthermore, because students with special needs tend to be more vulnerable socially, economically, and medically, a multitude of horizontal systems are often coordinated to address their needs in school (Richardson & Powell, 2011). These social systems may include health care professionals, Child and Family Services, community organizations, and so on.

In North American contexts, these interconnected systems can more firmly root special education within a paradigm of dis/ability that makes innovation difficult (Mallett, 2008; Richardson & Powell, 2011). Special education is currently grounded in Western cultural views of dis/ability related to medicine and science (Bailey & Betts, 2009; Richardson & Powell, 2011). This grounding can be seen in much of the vocabulary in special education that is tied to medical notions of assessment, individual deficiency or delay, and intervention (Bailey & Betts, 2009; Richardson & Powell, 2011). Perhaps for these reasons, special education systems may not be completely prepared to cultivate students' contributions and talents through inclusive environments.

Decolonizing Possibilities

A possible way forward might lie in an analysis of this multifaceted problem using a decolonizing perspective. Decolonization may be understood as an ongoing and active process that challenges colonial cultures, and builds from relationality among people to restore Indigenous sovereignty and lands (Deloria, 1970; Donald, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). A decolonizing perspective encourages a critical examination of power structures that maintain the privilege of some and the marginalization of others (Battiste, 2002), while at the same time encouraging action toward the creative (re)imagining of more humanizing social relationships and systems (Donald, 2012; Smith, 2000). Using this lens

to examine the obstacles faced by Indigenous learners may illuminate key practices that unintentionally maintain power imbalances and undermine student learning.

In the following sections, we describe insights that surfaced from a critical review of literature that might help educators begin to imagine ways that programming and practices within general and special education might change to become more supportive of Indigenous students. To that end, we discuss how the literature informed understanding about our two research questions, in turn.

Understanding the Problem: Colonial Impacts Within Special Education

A decolonizing lens helped us examine systemic factors that create barriers for Indigenous students so that we could (re)imagine ways to address challenges at an appropriate meta-level. Our critical examination suggested that colonial impacts in four areas might contribute to challenges in regular education classrooms and disproportionate representation of Indigenous students in special education: (1) environmental risk factors, (2) assessment and identification of students with special needs, (3) learning contexts and teaching approaches, and (4) administrative structures.

Environmental Risk Factors

The unexpected number of Indigenous students in special education could be partly attributable to environmental factors that have put them at greater risk for experiencing disability. Colonialism and intergenerational trauma have created social and economic conditions that present a high risk for severe medical and cognitive challenges for Indigenous students (Bombay et al., 2009; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). For example, rates of otitis media (inflammation of the middle ear that causes hearing loss) spiked from almost nonexistent to 80% of Inuit children when they were relocated to government housing and began eating store-bought food, rather than living off the land as according to cultural traditions (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). If children cannot hear due to ear infections, their oral language is likely to be delayed, with later implications for reading. More than coincidence, James Daschuck (2013) argued that colonial policies have directly targeted Indigenous health and well-being as a strategy

for the Canadian government to acquire Indigenous lands. Furthermore, ongoing colonial policies and practices, which have led to substandard housing, high rates of unemployment, and diminished cultural practices and political autonomy, create an environment where high rates of disability, accidents, and self-destructive behaviours are more likely to occur (Bombay et al., 2009; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). These connections suggest that greater learning, behavioural, and medical challenges exist for Indigenous students because their communities have been systemically targeted by colonial policies over time.

A further problem is that Indigenous families are often required to leave their home communities if they wish to access education for their children with special needs (Clouston, 2007). The lack of appropriate federal funding for on-reserve special education programs (Phillips, 2010b) or medical support (Durst et al., 2001) may force Indigenous families to move to urban areas so students with special learning or medical requirements can access services through provincially funded schools (Clouston, 2007). This requirement compounds the adversity Indigenous families and students may face by taking them away from their culture, families, and community supports, and subjecting them to higher levels of racism (Clouston, 2007; Durst et al., 2001). Colonial policies and programs not only have the effect of increasing numbers of Indigenous students who need special education services, but in some cases, may also intensify students' needs.

Assessment and Identification of Students with Special Needs

In addition to socio-economic conditions that create high levels of emotional, cognitive, and medical challenges, assessment processes may artificially inflate disability rates among Indigenous students. Evidence suggests that Indigenous students are over-diagnosed in various areas due to a mismatch between diagnostic tools and Indigenous experiences and understandings of the world. For example, research illustrates the cultural bias of norm-referenced cognitive tests, where Indigenous examinees consistently perform lower than the norm (Klenowski, 2009; Mushquash & Bova, 2007; Nelson-Barber & Harrison, 1996). Similarly, developmental milestones are frequently based on Western psychological understandings, despite some recognition of diversity within developmental stages (Bailey & Betts, 2009). Since formal diagnoses are typically based on cognitive

tests and milestones, this bias may significantly contribute to an underestimation of Indigenous students' abilities or achievement.

Furthermore, Eurocentric standardization may not take into account strategies for cultural preservation that have emerged in response to colonial pressure. For example, a significant proportion of Indigenous kindergarten students are diagnosed with communication disorders (Auerbach, 2007). Communication disorders would be typically targeted for intervention so that children may learn how to manipulate language sounds and syntax according to the conventions of standard English. However, Peltier (2010) suggests that many diagnoses of speech and language disorders are due to the persistence of Indigenous English dialects, which diagnostic tools do not consider as legitimate (see also Sterzuk, 2008). In some cases, these dialects may be ingenious strategies for preserving the cultural and linguistic features (e.g., structure, pronunciation, worldviews) of Indigenous languages that are endangered or extinct (Peltier, 2010). In this light, well-intentioned speech and language remediation may actually work to compromise cultural connections and heighten contemporary colonial experiences. Indigenous dialects may also transfer into written language and lead to higher rates of diagnosed learning disabilities (LD).

Furthermore, colonial experiences do not seem to be considered in diagnostic criteria meant to prevent misdiagnoses of LDs. For example, LD identification criteria suggests exclusion if English is not the first language (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2003); however, this exclusion would not apply in the case of Indigenous English dialects, where English may be the only language spoken in an Indigenous community (Peltier, 2010). Examiners are also asked to consider how learning contexts may be at the root of low achievement, rather than an LD (Fletcher et al., 2003). However, some examiners may not grasp the full impact of colonialism in educational settings. For example, Indigenous students may feel disinterested in or marginalized by content with a Eurocentric emphasis (Battiste, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011), in comparison to their peers. In this case, Indigenous dialectical manifestations or lack of achievement brought on by content that privileges EuroCanadian perspectives may be misinterpreted as symptoms of LD.

Similarly, behavioural disorders may present where the relevance of content and behavioural expectations vary across community, cultural, and school contexts. For example, research suggests that efficient hunters attend to multiple stimuli in the environment; however, these same behaviours may lead to a special education referral in

school contexts that require focused attention (Baydala et al., 2006). When examining brain scans of Indigenous students in a community where hunting was an important cultural and sustenance activity, Lola Baydala et al. (2006) found that many students who displayed symptoms of behavioural disorders in school actually had neurotypical brain patterns. This finding suggests that contextual and cultural expectations may have a significant impact on behavioral and attentional diagnoses (Baydala et al., 2006). Since examiners who diagnose learning and behavioural disabilities generally base identification on outward behaviours, and may not have access to brain scans or be familiar with cultural contexts, it is possible that Indigenous students are over-diagnosed as having behavioural disabilities.

Learning and behavioural disabilities are the categories where rates of disability are highest for Indigenous learners (Auerbach, 2007; BCMofEd, 2018), but fundamentally, these kinds of disorders are identified through social comparison to a Western cultural norm (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The nature of these diagnoses suggests that diverse children who do not fit with this norm because of cross-cultural characteristics or a lack of interest in EuroCanadian content and ways of understanding the world may be vulnerable to misdiagnosis.

Learning Contexts and Teaching Approaches

As noted earlier, classroom contexts and teaching approaches influenced by colonial paradigms may intensify students' learning challenges in some cases (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2009; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Instruction unintentionally rooted in colonial assumptions, which may facilitate achievement for a group of mostly non-Indigenous students, has been identified as contributing to underachievement or the discontinuation of academic studies for some Indigenous students (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). In this way, sustained colonial influences on curriculum, teaching methods, and classroom routines may affect Indigenous students' learning trajectories and behaviours so that they become disproportionately represented in special education programs.

Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2013) suggests that the colonial narrative taught in schools, with heavy reliance on EuroCanadian history, literature, language, and worldviews, may work actively to marginalize Indigenous communities and histories, and thus create a barrier to learning for Indigenous students (see also Cote-Meek, 2014). More

specifically, classroom content may be influenced by colonial conceptions of what is important for students to learn (Battiste, 2013; Cote-Meek, 2014; Donald, 2009). For example, Indigenous people may be included in lessons about the fur trade in Canada. However, the story rarely questions the legitimacy of European claims to the land, discusses Indigenous oppression or exploitation within this mercantile system, or describes acts of Indigenous resistance in a positive light. As such, this kind of lesson can carry the subtle message that knowledge coming from Indigenous families and communities is questionable and not to be trusted (Battiste, 2013).

In addition, colonialism may affect what counts as knowledge, and valid methods of constructing knowledge. For example, a foundational assumption of Western education is that knowledge ought to be objective, or removed from personal and contextual influences, rather than subjective (Aikenhead, 2008). This assumption may be challenged from Indigenous perspectives that suggest knowledge is built from the identity of a person (e.g., Burkhart, 2004). Science and math education are common areas where Western ways of conducting scientific inquiry or mathematical methods are privileged, while other ways of approaching problems are marginalized (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Lowan, 2012). Asking students to participate in a curriculum that subordinates their culture and identity may provoke student resistance, manifested as poor attendance and a lack of achievement, school dropout, or more severe behaviours (Cooper, 2012; Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2016; Kohl, 1991; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002).

Furthermore, the influence of colonialism on social relationships in the classroom and school may directly affect how students are able to learn from collaborative or other socially mediated learning activities. Perspectives in educational psychology suggest that some learning strategies are unique to a group situation (Hadwin et al., 2018; Volet et al., 2009). Groups must work together to stay on-task and cooperatively solve a problem or complete an activity. In a classroom where learning often occurs in either a large or small group, unequal power relations may cause Indigenous students to question their knowledge (Battiste, 2013) and contribute less to group discussions, whereas other students may more aggressively monopolize discussions. Both actions may hinder the ability of the group to create an effective and efficient strategy that is informed by the thinking and diversity of all group members. In this way, colonialism may affect the ability of all students to benefit from learning opportunities, and to construct socially mediated learning strategies for future use.

In addition to general classroom practices, there are standard interventions within special education that may perpetuate colonial hierarchies and authority structures, rather than cultivate cultural understandings, autonomy, and the development of cognitive skills needed for students to become contributing community members. As suggested earlier, some language and behavioural interventions may inadvertently distance students from crucial links to culture and place. Moreover, when interventions are used in ways that focus on behaviour rather than cognition, students may be trained to comply with social norms rather than to develop critical capacities. Generally speaking, contexts that require compliance with imposed norms are at high risk of reinforcing colonial hierarchies and divisions and may inhibit all students' ability to (re)imagine themselves and social structures. Instructional methods that are based solely around teaching behaviours are dangerous in their potential to diminish the value and contributions of people who have special needs. These interventions are thus inconsistent with the British Columbia Ministry of Education's (2016) stated educational values, as well as with Indigenous notions that emphasize the value and contributions of all community members (Lovern, 2008; Phillips, 2010a). In sum, learning contexts for both general and special education classrooms may be deeply embedded in Eurocentric and colonial paradigms that could actually impede learning for Indigenous (and all) students and lead to erroneous judgements of disability for Indigenous learners.

Administrative Structures

Lastly, research suggests that bureaucratic and cross-agency networks and accountability procedures can serve not only to maintain colonial hierarchies (Mallett, 2008), but also to intimidate and discourage participation by Indigenous parents of children with and without special needs (Clouston, 2007; Milne, 2016). Designated roles within these hierarchies are typically infused with the power to facilitate or frustrate funding for services meant to support students with special needs (BCMofEd, 2016). This makes each level of a vertical hierarchy (i.e., government to district to school) beholden to the demands of the upper levels, if they are to support students adequately. Furthermore, the multitude of complex procedures, formal meeting and document structures, and technical vocabulary may serve to alienate parents (e.g., BCMofEd, 2016), effectively shutting them out of educational decisions (Ledoux, 2006). This alienation of parents means that the special

education system does not have access to an important resource that could mitigate colonial contexts that lead to disproportionate diagnoses among Indigenous students.

Special education programming is also often subject to the cooperation of horizontal social or community agencies (BCMofEd, 2016; Mallett, 2008). Schools may depend entirely on these organizations to provide programming or physical adaptations that enable them to include students with intense medical or physical needs. This inter-agency entrenchment means that the special education system is deeply tied to neighbouring hierarchical systems and more resistant to educational innovation (Richardson & Powell, 2011).

Increased interaction with multiple levels of educational administration and other systemic structures has made the area of special education particularly vulnerable to colonial influences that run throughout various systems and may contribute to the over-identification of Indigenous children as having special needs. For example, the medical model that special education has borrowed from overlapping agencies reinforces the view that special needs are a problem within the student to be remediated (Bailey & Betts, 2009; Mallett, 2008), rather than as diversity that contributes to the community (Clouston, 2007; Phillips, 2010a). The impulse to see difference as deficiency, may be reinforced by funding structures that require diagnoses in order to gain access to desperately needed educational funds (Mallett, 2008). Therefore, systemic structures within special education actually reward the over-identification of disabilities, especially in situations where students may need intensive supports.

Summary

Our critical analysis in relation to our first research question suggested that colonialism affects Indigenous students' interaction with special education services in numerous ways. First, colonialism creates an environmental context for Indigenous communities where more children are likely to develop disabilities. Second, due to biased assessments and a lack of understanding across cultural and colonial contexts, students are more likely to be diagnosed with a disability, where none may exist. Third, Eurocentric and colonial influences in the classroom may cultivate behaviours commonly associated with high incidence disabilities. Special education support may target compliance to colonial narratives rather than critical thought and cognitive development. Fourth, bureaucratic

structures and systems that influence the administration of special education may serve to encourage colonial divisions and over-identification of Indigenous students. Although the colonial challenges embedded in special education systems may seem daunting, our analysis also suggested that there are many ways that motivated educators may begin to address the needs of Indigenous (and all) students by creating decolonizing possibilities within special education.

(Re)imagining Policies and Practices to Meet the Needs of Indigenous Learners

In the following section we draw from Indigenous and decolonizing literature to begin considering how special education systems, in connection with inclusive classroom practices, could better support Indigenous (and all) students, in response to our second research question. Four themes emerged from our analysis of the literature, which flow from the areas of concern previously identified: critical self-examination, holistic assessment measures, the use of decolonizing teaching approaches, and decolonizing special education service delivery models. Rather than providing definitive answers, these ideas are meant to act as an inspiration for educators and educational leaders to begin (re)imagining decolonizing strategies relevant to their own contexts.

Critical Self-Examination

Self-examination within a decolonizing framework is something all Canadians could do to create a social atmosphere that challenges colonial practices and policies (Snelgrove et al., 2014; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Self-examination is particularly important for educators motivated to address biases they may not even recognize (Cote-Meek, 2014; Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2016). By engaging in critical self-examination, educators can challenge colonial narratives that may deeply shape thoughts and actions, and become open to imaginative new ideas, power-sharing practices, and transformation of social relationships (Christian & Freeman, 2010; Regan, 2010).

A critical self-examination may involve an introspective look at how Canadians themselves may be complicit, with or without their own knowledge, in the ongoing,

culturally embedded colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples that serves to disconnect them from the land (Maracle, 2017; Regan, 2010; Snelgrove et al., 2014). People may reflect on routine actions and assumptions, and the purposes they might serve in a system based on privilege and marginalization (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). This kind of self-examination may support the humility that opens the heart and mind for significant moments of transformation, and prepare educators for working more closely with Indigenous students, families, and communities (Battiste, 2013; Maracle, 2017; Regan, 2010).

Educators may begin to reflect on their own positionality in colonial history through respectful engagement with authentic Indigenous resources (Dion, 2007; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Strong-Wilson, 2007). Potawatomi-Lenapé scholar Susan Dion (2007) and Theresa Strong-Wilson (2007) asked educators to self-examine using a prompt such as a picture of their childhood, or a story that was formative in their understanding of the world. The artifacts or stories they identified were then placed within the context of colonial history as understood through Indigenous perspectives (Dion, 2007; Strong-Wilson, 2007). In this way, the colonizing narratives educators had come to trust were replaced or challenged by engaging with Indigenous perspectives.

Although there is no one approach to decolonization that is going to be the answer for every person, critical self-examination in relation to Indigenous perspectives is a crucial first step. This kind of self-examination may help unlock rigid colonial structures that currently create risk factors for Indigenous youth.

Holistic Assessment of Special Needs

To further address the disproportionate representation of Indigenous students receiving special education services, cultural and colonial biases in assessment must be addressed. Following a Response to Intervention model (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006), our analysis suggests that formal psychological assessment should only take place after educators have explored decolonizing possibilities within the classroom, including classroom assessment (Philpott, 2007). Although there are few definitive examples of decolonizing assessment measures for classroom use, the literature generally talks about open-ended, formative assessment that attends to power dynamics and cultural contexts as being supportive of Indigenous students (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Hynds et al., 2016; Klenowski, 2009; Tan, 2012). In some cases, culturally sensitive learning trajectories have

been developed in partnership with local Indigenous community members so that educators have a contextually based touchstone from which they may assess more specific skill development (e.g., Lipka et al., 2013). If contextually sensitive assessment measures could help educators gain a better sense of Indigenous (and all) students' strengths and needs, learning in the classroom could become more effective and fewer formal assessments would be needed (Klenowski, 2009).

Most theorists argue, not for the complete dismissal of standardized tests, but for consideration of these tests as just one component in a more holistic view of the child's experiences that may be causing learning challenges (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Mushquash & Bova, 2007). The Canadian Council of Learning (2007) has developed some holistic models of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learning that may be used to assess students in terms of emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and physical needs, with a view to community contexts and lifelong learning. Holistic assessments may also surface multifaceted strengths to build from in addressing learning challenges. These frameworks do not specifically address colonial environments, but may be more sensitive to impacts of colonialism than a cognitive assessment. In addition to providing more complete and accurate diagnoses, this process may also work to demystify assessment practices and place other forms of knowledge, and other knowledge keepers, on equal footing with Western psychology and professionals, further opening special education to decolonizing possibilities.

Decolonizing Teaching Approaches

Educators may explore decolonizing possibilities by emphasizing Indigenous perspectives as an integral part of inclusive classroom teaching. Building from that view, much of the literature emphasizes the importance of creating authentic and caring relationships as key for supporting Indigenous (and all) students, and as a teaching practice consistent with Indigenous approaches (Cajete, 1999; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Donald, 2009). According to the literature, Indigenous students may thrive where teachers use instructional approaches that sustain Indigenous cultures and languages, while critically addressing colonial worldviews (Battiste, 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Cote-Meek, 2014). Culture can be further incorporated into classrooms through either broad curricular immersion (e.g., Davidson & Davidson, 2018; McCarty & Lee, 2014), or through

more specific, discipline-based approaches as a way to enrich Western educational practices (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Marker, 2011). These kinds of classroom practices have been found to support Indigenous students' academic achievement, motivation, and personal well-being (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Deyhle, 1995; Reyhner, 2017). Taken together, they may start to address the misdiagnosis of Indigenous students who may be experiencing learning or behavioural challenges in reaction to colonial contexts.

As a specific example, science instruction based on Indigenous relationships that extend to the land can powerfully support cultural connections and decolonizing potential in the classroom (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Cajete, 1994). In this approach, Indigenous and Western paradigms may be presented in equal measure, challenging Eurocentric assumptions of what constitutes knowledge (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). Although incorporating cultural and linguistic knowledge into the classroom offers tremendous decolonizing potential, caution should be exercised by non-Indigenous teachers who risk cultural appropriation, or errors in interpreting cultural practices and symbols (Haig-Brown, 2010). To ensure respect for cultural protocol involving intellectual property, programs with a focus on Indigenous knowledge need to be implemented by, or in humble collaboration with, Indigenous experts in the field (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

Teachers may also consider using Indigenous literature or other resources to build on the contributions of Indigenous experts who visit the classroom (Grass, 2017; Whitley, 2014). Culturally responsive materials and stories provide an opportunity for Indigenous students to see themselves and their communities as having critical academic knowledge (Battiste, 2013; Kanu, 2011). Indigenous perspectives may present an alternative to colonial narratives and normalize the experience of Indigenous Peoples (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In addition, literature can be used with children to open hearts and minds to diverse experiences (Hargreaves, 2012). Expert Indigenous knowledge can thus be extended beyond isolated visits and integrated more deeply into classroom learning.

Teachers can further cultivate a decolonizing lens by layering in critical perspectives and approaches, which examine the causes and consequences of power and privilege (Battiste, 2013; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). In critical pedagogy, educators surface and analyze power dynamics their students may be experiencing both in and outside of the classroom (Freire, 1970). These approaches may involve Indigenous perspectives in

a critique of social systems and (re)imagination of social relationships (Battiste, 2013; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Smith, 2000). A critical approach may be appealing for non-Indigenous educators because it allows them to speak from the expertise of their own lived experience with colonial privilege and injustice (e.g., Christian & Freeman, 2010; McIntosh, 2020), and allows teachers and students to be collaborators in the journey toward decolonization.

The best approach for any one teacher likely depends on a myriad of community and personal factors. But overall, exploring decolonizing possibilities in the regular classroom can help to maintain Indigenous (and all) students' interest (San Pedro, 2017), and may decrease learning and behavioural challenges by building on the strengths Indigenous students bring to school. However, as part of the special education services delivery model, decolonization in the regular classroom can only be helpful if incorporated with an inclusive practice where students with special needs are also encouraged to expand their cognitive abilities, and where their contributions may be valued (Clouston, 2007; Lovern, 2008; Phillips, 2010a).

In this case, existing Western models of inclusion may be helpful in facilitating decolonizing aims. Models such as self-regulated learning (SRL) support students to understand themselves as learners, to shore up their motivational resources, and to act strategically to meet their own learning needs within the framework of self-identified goals (Butler & Cartier, 2018; Zimmerman, 2002). Socio-constructivist models of SRL build from what students bring to the learning environment as a way to co-construct knowledge and strategies for learning (Butler & Cartier, 2018). Other inclusive models such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL; BCMofEd, 2010) are focused on environments that create opportunities for students with disabilities and differences to learn at their own pace by supporting student autonomy. The use of these Western models in conjunction with decolonizing pedagogy may facilitate the movement toward new relationships based on valuing diversity, in a manner that can be understood and facilitated by existing educational systems.

Decolonizing Service Delivery Models

As a first step toward (re)imagining a decolonized special education bureaucracy, districts and Indigenous communities might engage as equal partners in a process of

co-constructing a common vision of education (Apthorp et al., 2002; Lamoureux, 2018; McGregor, 2019). Examples of this partnership can be found in BC at the provincial (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2019) and district levels (Kitchenham et al., 2016). A common vision can then inspire and guide people to enact relationships and practices that deepen the potential of decolonization throughout the system.

The vision of education might be informed by literature that emphasizes the importance of relationships between communities, schools, families, and agencies as a way of providing critical supports for Indigenous (and all) students (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Ledoux, 2006; McGregor, 2019). For example, Mallett (2008) describes a consultative-collaborative approach used by a Band school to support students with special needs. He emphasized the importance of creating rich interconnections between general and special education programming in an inclusive environment, along with high levels of collaboration among teachers, educational assistants, and administration (Mallett, 2008). In addition, Mallett (2008) presented a conceptual framework for institutional development and recommends infusing Indigenous paradigms into government regulations to produce a hybrid model of administration. These kinds of initiatives can provide a jumping off point for administrators to consider decolonizing possibilities for special education, in relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

Decolonizing special education systems is thus possible, but also involves several challenges. One requirement of Mallett's (2008) approach is the establishment of respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, who may have different goals and ideas, or who may wish to pursue their own vision of education. Furthermore, the cooperation of various vertical and horizontal levels of bureaucracy is needed to move forward in a coordinated way. In this case, it is likely that significant transformation can only occur through deliberate and purposeful connections developed through patience and respect.

Summary

Our critical analysis in relation to our second research question suggested that exploring decolonizing possibilities in special education could start with small steps. Educators, and all Canadians, can choose to engage in critical self-examination through relationship with Indigenous perspectives to reduce the impact and influence of colonial polices,

programs, and legislation. Educators could address the disproportionate representation of Indigenous students in special education programming by using holistic assessment measures that give a more complete picture of students' strengths and challenges. Holistic assessment, together with teaching practices that support and/or provide space for Indigenous students' culture and language, may not only prevent misdiagnoses, but may also support teachers to address the needs of Indigenous students so that learning and behavioural challenges do not become problematic. Educators can provide in-class supports for diverse Indigenous (and all) students by layering Indigenous perspectives into inclusive classroom approaches like SRL, UDL, or differentiated instruction. Significant transformation may occur by extending these efforts beyond the classroom to create a common vision of education to guide the system as a whole. We do not mean that these suggestions will be a solution for all people in all contexts. Instead, we invite educators to engage with these ideas as a springboard for critique and (re)imagination in their particular environments.

Implications and Future Directions

In this article we have identified several systemic factors that may contribute to the disproportionate representation of Indigenous children in special education programs. This analysis has identified four main areas of colonial pressure that make it more likely for Indigenous students to be represented in special education: risk factors associated with the colonial impacts on social and economic environments of many Indigenous families; special education assessment policies and practices; learning contexts and teaching approaches in both general and special education classrooms; and administrative structures in which special education is embedded. The examples provided in this article may serve as a springboard for all educators to examine their own system and practice to consider how colonialism may be shaping their policies, instruction, and routines in ways that marginalize Indigenous students and inflate demands on special education services.

As a complement to our identification of systemic challenges, our analysis also uncovered the generative possibilities of decolonizing perspectives. In this article we argued that colonial challenges may be addressed by engaging in a critical self-examination within a decolonizing framework, using holistic assessment measures that prioritize

Indigenous cultural perspectives, exploring decolonizing potential in teaching approaches, and in working to decolonize service delivery models in relationship with Indigenous Peoples. Many of these recommendations could be taken up throughout the educational system without drastic changes to current policies or legislation. More substantive transformation in social relationships may follow from changes to the educational landscape that may occur when many people take small steps to appreciate the contributions of diverse Indigenous students, families, and communities.

Despite the hopeful directions provided by existing literature, more research is needed about how Indigenous students are experiencing special education programs, and what can be done to improve services. Furthermore, students and educators could benefit from research examining the effectiveness of inclusive teaching approaches layered or integrated with Indigenous perspectives, and the impacts of holistic or decolonizing assessment measures, both within the classroom, and in formal psychological assessments in particular. Could these kinds of decolonizing approaches affect the educational experiences of Indigenous students like Lawrence, described in the opening of this article? Special education systems, practices, and experiences are rarely examined with a decolonizing lens. Research in this vein may do much to support the aspirations of Indigenous (and all) students and communities working toward respectful relationships and decolonizing potentials.

References

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2013). *High cost special education program: National program guidelines*. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Aikenhead, G. S. (2008). Objectivity: The opiate of the academic? *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *3*(3), 581–585. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-008-9126-9

Aikenhead, G. S., & Michell, H. (2011). *Bridging cultures: Scientific and Indigenous ways of knowing nature*. Pearson Canada.

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Association.

Apthorp, H. S., D'Amato, E. D., & Richardson, A. (2002). *Effective standards-based practices for Native American students: A review of research literature*. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

Auditor General of British Columbia. (2019). *Progress audit: The education of Aboriginal students in the BC public school system*. Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia.

Auerbach, S. (2007). *Special needs students in First Nations schools: Inclusion in school-based special education programs*. First Nations Education Steering Committee & First Nations Schools Association.

Bailey, B., & Betts, P. (2009). Culture and special education. *International Journal of Special Education*, *24*(3), 78–84.

Barnhardt, R., & Kawagley, A. O. (2005). Indigenous knowledge systems and Alaska Native ways of knowing. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *36*(1), 124–148.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations*. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich Publishing.

Baydala, L., Sherman, J., Rasmussen, C., Wikman, E., & Janzen, H. (2006). ADHD characteristics in Canadian Aboriginal children. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, *9*(4), 642–647. https://doi.org/10.1177/1087054705284246

Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2009). Intergenerational trauma: Convergence of multiple processes among First Nations peoples in Canada. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, *5*(3), 6.

Brendtro, L. K., Brokenleg, M., & Bockern, S. V. (2014). Environments where children thrive: The circle of courage model. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, *23*(3), 10.

British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCMofEd). (2010). *Universal design for learning in BC*. Special Education Technology. http://www.setbc.org/Download/LearningCentre/Access/bcudl_review6_small.pdf

British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCMofEd). (2015). Introduction to British Columbia's redesigned curriculum. https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum...bc.../curriculum_intro.pdf

British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCMofEd). (2016). *Special education services: A manual of policies, procedures and guidelines*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/inclusive/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf

British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCMofEd). (2018). *Aboriginal report 2013/14 - 2017/18: How are we doing?* Governance and Analytics Branch.

Burkhart, B. Y. (2004). What Coyote and Thales can teach us: An outline of American Indian epistemology. In A. Waters (Ed.), *American Indian thought: Philosophical essays* (pp. 15–26). Blackwell Publishing.

Butler, D. L., & Cartier, S. C. (2018). Advancing research and practice about self-regulated learning: The promise of in-depth case study methodologies. In D. H. Schunk, & J. A. Greene (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance* (2nd ed., pp. 352–369). Routledge.

Butler, D. L., Schnellert, L., & Perry, N. E. (2017). *Developing self-regulating learners*. Pearson Canada.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education*. Kivaki Press.

Cajete, G. (1999). Reclaiming biophilia: Lessons learned from Indigenous people. In G. Smith, & D. Williams (Eds.), *Ecological education in action: On weaving education, culture, and the environment* (pp. 189–206). SUNY Press.

Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Redefining how success is measured in First Nations, Inuit, and metis learning*. Canadian Council on Learning.

Canadian Teachers' Federation. (2015). *CTF survey on teachers' perspectives on Aboriginal education in public schools in Canada: Summary report*. https://www.pdffiller.com/jsfiller-desk16/?projectId=441621331#9723f6b260d7c1d54321fa84f09ed4d8

Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *78*(4), 941–993. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308323036

Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (2008). Cultural continuity as a moderator of suicide risk among Canada's First Nations. In L. J. Kirmayer & G. Valaskakis (Eds.), *The mental health of Canadian Aboriginal peoples: Transformations, identity, and community*. UBC Press.

Cherubini, L., & Hodson, J. (2008). Ontario ministry of education policy and Aboriginal learners' epistemologies: A fundamental disconnect. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, *79*. https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjeap/article/view/42760

Christian, D., & Freeman, V. (2010). The history of a friendship, or some thoughts on becoming allies. In L. Davis (Ed.), *Alliances: Re/envisioning Indigenous – non-Indigenous relationships* (pp. 376–390). University of Toronto Press.

Clouston, J. E. (2007). *A qualitative study of experiences of Aboriginal caregivers of children with developmental disabilities* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Manitoba.

Cooper, L. M. (2012). *Succeeding where others have failed: Re-engaging Aboriginal high school students* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Prince Edward Island.

Cote-Meek, S. (2014). *Colonized classrooms: Racism, trauma and resistance in post-secondary education*. Fernwood Publishing.

Daschuk, J. W. (2013). *Clearing the plains: Disease, politics of starvation, and the loss of Aboriginal life*. University of Regina Press.

Davidson, S. F. (2016). *Following the song of k'aad 'aww (dogfish mother): Adolescent perspectives on English 10 First Peoples, writing, and identity* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of British Columbia.

Davidson, S. F., & Davidson, R. (2018). *Potlatch as pedagogy: Learning through ceremony*. Portage & Main Press.

Deer, F. (2013). Integrating Aboriginal perspectives in education: Perceptions of pre-service teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *36*(2), 175–211.

Deloria, V. (1970). Power, sovereignty, and freedom. In V. Deloria (Ed.), *We talk, you listen* (pp. 114–137). Macmillan.

Demmert, W. G., & Towner, J. C. (2003). *A review of the research literature on the influences of culturally based education on the academic performance of Native American students*. Northwest Regional Educational Lab.

Deyhle, D. (1995). Navajo youth and Anglo racism: Cultural integrity and resistance. *Harvard Educational Review*, *65*(3), 403–444. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.65.3.156624q12053470n

Dion, S. D. (2007). Disrupting molded images: Identities, responsibilities and relationships-teachers and Indigenous subject material. *Teaching Education*, *18*(4), 329–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210701687625

Dion, S. D., Johnson, K., & Rice, C. (2010). *Decolonizing our schools: Aboriginal education in the Toronto District School Board. Toronto District School Board*. https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/docs/Decolonizing%20Our%20Schools%203.pdf

Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group. (2016). *BC Antiracism research: Final report*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/ways-to-learn/Aboriginal-education/abed-antiracism-research.pdf

Donald, D. T. (2009). *The pedagogy of the fort: Curriculum, Aboriginal-Canadian relations, and Indigenous métissage* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Alberta.

Donald, D. T. (2012). Forts, colonial frontier logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian relations: Imagining decolonizing educational philosophies in Canadian contexts. In A. A. Abdi (Ed.), *Decolonizing philosophies of education* (pp. 91–111). SensePublishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-687-8_7

Durst, D., Bluechardt, M., Morin, G., & Rezansoff, M. (2001). *Urban Aboriginal persons with disabilities: Triple jeopardy*. Social Policy Research Unit, University of Regina.

Fanon, F. (1963). *Wretched of the earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.). Grove Press.

Fletcher, J. M., Morris, R. D., & Lyon, G. R. (2003). Classification and definition of learning disabilities: An integrative perspective. In H. L. Swanson, K. R. Harris, & S. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of learning disabilities* (pp. 30–56). Guilford Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2006). Introduction to response to intervention: What, why, and how valid is it? *Reading Research Quarterly*, *41*(1), 93–99.

Grass, S. (2017). The First Nations education Steering Committee and the First Nations Schools Association's Indian residential schools and reconciliation teacher resources. In J. Archibald, & J. Hare (Eds.), *Learning, knowing, sharing: Celebrating successes in K-12 Aboriginal education in British Columbia* (2nd ed., pp. 4–14). Office of Indigenous Education, UBC and British Columbia Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association.

Hadwin, A., Jarvela, S., & Miller, M. (2018). Self-regulation, co-regulation, and shared regulation in collaborative learning environments. In D. H. Schunk, & J. A. Greene (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Haig-Brown, C. (2010). Indigenous thought, appropriation, and non-Aboriginal people. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *33*(4), 925–950.

Hare, J., & Davidson, S. F. (2019). Learning from Indigenous knowledge in education. In G. Starblanket, & D. Long (Eds.), *Visions of the heart* (5th ed., pp. 203–219). Oxford University Press.

Hare, J., & Pidgeon, M. (2011). The way of the warrior: Indigenous youth navigating the challenges of schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *34*(2), 93–111.

Hargreaves, A. (2012). These shared truths: Taking back our spirits and the literary-critical practice of decolonization. *Canadian Literature*, *214*(214), 94–100.

Hynds, A. S., Hindle, R., Savage, C., Meyer, L. H., Penetito, W., & Sleeter, C. (2016). The impact of teacher professional development to reposition pedagogy for Indigenous students in mainstream schools. *The Teacher Educator*, *51*(3), 230–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2016.1176829

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2007). *Formative evaluation of the department of Indian and northern affairs Canada: Special education program*. Government of Canada.

Iseke-Barnes, J. M. (2008). Pedagogies for decolonizing. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *31*(1), 123–148.

Kanu, Y. (2011). *Integrating Aboriginal perspectives into the school curriculum: Purposes, possibilities, and challenges*. University of Toronto Press.

Kitchenham, A., Fraser, T., Pidgeon, M., & Ragoonaden, K. (2016). *Aboriginal education enhancement agreements: Complicated conversations as pathways to success*. BC Ministry of Education. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/Aboriginal-education/research/aeea_report.pdf

Klenowski, V. (2009). Australian Indigenous students: Addressing equity issues in assessment. *Teaching Education*, *20*(1), 77–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210802681741

Kohl, H. (1991). *I won't learn from you: The role of assent in learning*. Milkweed Editions.

Lamoureux, K. (2018). Peace leadership and the language of reconciliation. In S. Amaladas, & S. Byrne (Eds.), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (pp. 157–176). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315642680-11

Ledoux, J. (2006). Integrating Aboriginal perspectives into curricula: A literature review. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, *26*(2), 265–288.

Lipka, J., Wong, M., & Andrew-Ihrke, D. (2013). Alaska Native Indigenous knowledge: Opportunities for learning mathematics. *Mathematics Education Research Journal*, *25*(1), 129–150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13394-012-0061-4

Lovern, L. (2008). Native American worldview and the discourse on disability. *Essays in Philosophy*, *9*(1), 113–120. https://doi.org/10.5840/eip20089123

Lowan, G. (2012). Expanding the conversation: Further explorations into Indigenous environmental science education theory, research, and practice. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *7*(1), 71–81. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-012-9379-1

Mallett, C. D. (2008). *Special education service delivery in a provincial jurisdiction: First Nations perspectives for an interdependent and inclusive model of student support services for band operated schools in Manitoba* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Manitoba.

Maracle, L. (2017). *My conversations with Canadians*. Book Thug.

Marker, M. (2011). Teaching history from an Indigenous perspective: Four winding paths up the mountain. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 97–112). UBC Press.

McCarty, T., & Lee, T. (2014). Critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and Indigenous education sovereignty. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 101–124. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.q83746nl5pj34216

McGregor, C. (2019). *Improving transitions for Indigenous learners through collaborative inquiry: AESN transitions research report, 2016-2018*. For the Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education (NOIIE).

McIntosh, P. (2020). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In On privilege, fraudulence, and teaching as learning: Selected essays 1981–2019* (pp. 29–34). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791-4

Michell, T. J. (2012). *Aboriginal persons with a developmental disability in British Columbia: The current landscape*. Community Living British Columbia.

Milne, E. (2016). "I have the worst fear of teachers": Moments of inclusion and exclusion in family/school relationships among Indigenous families in southern Ontario: Family/school relationships among Indigenous families. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie*, *53*(3), 270–289. https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12109

Milne, E. (2017). Implementing Indigenous education policy directives in Ontario public schools: Experiences, challenges and successful practices. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, *8*(3). https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2017.8.3.2

Mushquash, C. J., & Bova, D. L. (2007). Cross-cultural assessment and measurement issues. *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, *13*(1), 53–66.

Nelson-Barber, S., & Harrison, M. (1996). Bridging the politics of identity in a multicultural classroom. *Theory into Practice*, *35*(4), 256–263.

Peltier, S. (2010). Facilitating language and literacy learning for students with Aboriginal English dialects. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *32*(Supplement), 114–142.

Phillips, R. (2010a). "Try to understand us": Aboriginal elders' views on exceptionality. *Brock Education: A Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, *20*(1), 64–79.

Phillips, R. (2010b). Special education in First Nations schools in Canada: Policies of cost containment. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *56*(1), 72–81.

Philpott, D. (2007). *Assessing without labels: Inclusive education in the Canadian context*. Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs, Lakehead University.

Pidgeon, M. (2009). Pushing against the margins: Indigenous theorizing of "success" and retention in higher education. *Journal of College Student Retention*, *10*(3), 339–360.

Regan, P. (2010). *Unsettling the settler within: Indian residential schools, truth telling, and reconciliation in Canada*. UBC Press.

Reyhner, J. (2017). Affirming identity: The role of language and culture in American Indian education. *Cogent Education*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311 86X.2017.1340081

Richardson, J. G., & Powell, J. J. W. (2011). *Comparing special education: Origins to contemporary paradoxes*. Stanford University Press.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Vol. 3). Canada Communication Group.

San Pedro, T. J. (2017). "This stuff interests me": Re-centering Indigenous paradigms in colonizing schooling spaces. In D. Paris, & H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 99–116). Teachers College Press.

Smith, G. H. (2000). Protecting and respecting Indigenous knowledge. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 209–224). UBC Press.

Snelgrove, C., Dhamoon, R. K., & Corntassel, J. (2014). Unsettling settler colonialism: The discourse and politics of settlers, and solidarity with Indigenous nations. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *3*(2), 1–32.

St. Denis, V., & Hampton, E. (2002). *Literature review on racism and the effects on Aboriginal education*. Prepared for the Minister's National Working Group on Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Sterzuk, A. (2008). Whose English counts? Indigenous English in Saskatchewan schools. *McGill Journal of Education*, *43*(1), 9–19.

Stoler, A. L. (1989). Rethinking colonial categories: European communities and the boundaries of rule. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *31*(1), 134–161. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015693

Stoler, A. L. (2008). Epistemic politics: Ontologies of colonial common sense. *The Philosophical Forum*, *39*(3), 349–361. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9191.2008.00303.x

Strong-Wilson, T. (2007). Moving horizons: Exploring the role of stories in decolonizing the literacy education of white teachers. *International Education*, *37*(1), 114–131.

Tan, K. H. K. (2012). How teachers understand and use power in alternative assessment. *Education Research International*, Article ID 38246, 1–11. https://doi. org/10.1155/2012/382465

Tomlinson, C. A., & Imbeau, M. B. (2010). *Leading and managing: A differentiated classroom*. ASCD.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *1*(1), 1–40.

Volet, S., Vauras, M., & Salonen, P. (2009). Self- and social regulation in learning contexts: An integrative perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, *44*(4), 215–226.

Whitley, J. (2014). Supporting educational success for Aboriginal students: Identifying key influences. *McGill Journal of Education*, *49*(1), 155–181. https://doi. org/10.7202/1025776ar

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the Native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, *8*(4), 387–409. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240

Yee, N. (2020). *Review of Inclusive and Special Education: Interim Update*. Prepared for Yukon Department of Education. https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/edu/review-inclusive-special-education-interim-update_1.pdf

Younging, G. (2018). *Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous peoples*. Brush Education.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory into Practice*, *41*(2), 64–70.