

## Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

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### **Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada**

Edited by Sheila Cote-Meek and Taima Moeke-Pickering

Published by Canadian Scholars Press, 2020, 316 pages

ISBN 9781773381817

### **Reviewed by**

Zuhra Abawi

Assistant Professor of Education (Ontario Programs), Niagara University

While educational policies and institutions across Canada have increasingly enacted measures to respond to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's* (TRC) 94 Calls to Action, much of these initiatives fall short of critical action and transformation. The inability of educational systems, both K-12 and Post Secondary Education's surface-level, 'feel good' approaches to diversity and reconciliation conjure up 'white amnesia' (Moeke-Pickering et al, 2006), which systematically erases both historical and ongoing oppressions of Indigenous people in Canada. Education has long been at the forefront of the erasure of Indigenous people in Canada, from Residential Schools to curricular and pedagogical approaches that render Indigenous people, knowledges and contributions invisible.

*Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada* explores responses and initiatives of the Canadian academy to the TRC's 94 Calls to Action across Canada. The text is divided into two themes and contains 16 chapters. The first section is Indigenizing Epistemologies: exploring the place of Indigenous knowledges in post-secondary curriculum, including Indigenizing of the curriculum and pedagogy. The second section is entitled: Decolonizing Post Secondary Institutions: building space in the academy for Indigenous peoples, resistance and reconciliation. The volume features contributions from both Indigenous scholars and allies from multiple Canadian post-secondary institutions.

In the first chapter, Angelina Weenie centres Indigenous epistemologies in the academy by drawing on her own positionality as an Indigenous woman in relation to

land-based pedagogies, passed down to her through stories as a child. Weenie emphasizes the importance of using Indigenous languages to know and understand Indigenous epistemologies. Weenie advocates for collaboration with the land, community, Elders, and traditional knowledge keepers in order for land-based education to be authentic.

Patricia D. McGuire's chapter provides an Anishinaabe perspective on land knowledges as the basis for relationships, and the shifts and continuity that inform Anishinaabekwe dialogue of storied land. Colonialism and Eurocentric patriarchal norms and constructions of women have silenced Indigenous women's relationships with the land and each other.

Bryanna Rae Scott embeds her identity as a Metis woman and representative of a Metissage context, the hybridization of identities informed by colonialisms and transculturism (Donald, 2009). Scott contends that in order to move forward with the TRC Calls to Action, reconciliation in education must acknowledge and be reflective of Indigenous perspectives that go beyond additions to the dominance of the Eurocentric curriculum.

Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla and Amanda Holme's chapter introduces IT (Indigenous Thinkers) as resistance to the marginalization of Indigenous scholars, lands and knowledges by the Western academy. The IT initiative aims to disrupt hegemonic knowledge production and norms by decolonizing methodologies through practices of Indigenous relationality and collectivity.

Evelyn Steinhauer and colleagues converge as a group of Indigenous and ally scholars that teach in the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) at the University of Alberta. The authors and colleagues critique how institutional norms of knowledge and measurement might impede decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenization of the program.

Celeste Petri-Spade's auto-ethnography documents her experience as an Indigenous, woman, Anishinabekwe Assistant Professor in the settler-colonial academy. The fear and feelings of being professionally unsafe are resisted through a performance auto-ethnography of a personal and poetic narrative to re-centre Indigenous women's perspectives as anti-colonial resistance.

Lynn Lavalée depicts a chilly climate for Indigenous scholars in the academy reinforced through anti-Indigenous racism, microaggressions, and the systemic devaluation of Indigenous contributions and knowledges. Lavalée calls for significant structural changes at senior administrative levels and within governance structures to build capacity with Indigenous communities.

Emily Grafton and Jerome Melancon assert that academic decolonization and Indigenization can, if initiated by settlers, be mainstreamed by reproducing inaccurate accounts and misrepresentations of Indigenous people that are normalized by settler-colonial discourses. Indigenous people must therefore determine the parameters for decolonization and Indigenization in the academy.

Chantal Fiola and Shauna MacKinnon give an account of their efforts as faculty members to decolonize their department by providing a small, safe and intimate learning environment in the inner-city that is accessible to Indigenous students. They offer strategies for other institutions to entrench decolonial and social justice programming in their departments.

Fiona Purton, Sandra Styres and Arlo Kempf convey the findings from a study following the implementation of a new required Indigenous education course at a teacher education program in Southern Ontario. The authors utilize course evaluations as data to suggest that although the ways that teacher candidates experienced the course are indicative of pervasive neo-colonial norms, teacher education can still be a site of transformation, if courses are not taken solely for practitioner purposes.

Donnan, Aitken, and Manore highlight the increased attention placed on Indigenization in the academy following the release of the TRC. The authors note that ‘soft’ reforms tend to be implemented and call for reforms that go beyond surface level changes, such as increased Indigenous representation at faculty, staff and administrative levels as well as engaging in authentic partnerships with Indigenous communities.

Michelle Coupal advocates for decolonizing the ways that truth and reconciliation are being mobilized in light of ongoing neo-colonial resistance to Indigenous sovereignty. Coupal underlines the divergences in conceptualizing reconciliation between settler and Indigenous people. Coupal calls for a “pedagogy of witness” (p. 221), by teaching Indigenous literatures from a relational space where students are positioned as ethical witnesses and active listeners to the stories, histories and lives of Indigenous peoples, rather than passive celebratory consumers that commodify Indigeneity.

Linda Pardy and Brett Pardy identify as white settlers and employ narrative inquiry to draw on their collective experiences engaging in critical reflective work. The authors suggest strategies for non-Indigenous faculty to participate in decolonization work without appropriation. The authors argue that decolonization process cannot be based on an institutional checklist; it is a process that requires critical self-reflective practice and the unlearning of settler privilege.

Keri Cheechoo reflects on her identity and journey in education as a Cree woman, scholar and poet. Cheechoo utilizes poetic inquiry to carve space for Indigenous voices marginalized by hegemonic, Western constructs of academic writing. Cheechoo documents her own oppressive experiences of schooling, such as being pushed out due to pregnancy. Cheechoo contends that in light of these experiences, safe spaces cannot exist for Indigenous faculty and students due to the implications of ongoing intergenerational trauma.

The all-encompassing arena of digital technology as a site for settler-colonial resistance in education is discussed in the final chapter by Moeke-Pickering. By drawing on social media as an example to disrupt settler-coloniality and patriarchy, Moeke-Pickering describes how these mediums of exchange facilitate support, community and awareness that can mobilize Indigenous self-determination, decolonization, mentorship and solidarity.

Cote-Meek and Moeke-Pickering's volume speaks to the importance of Canadian educational institutions, often the sites of past and ongoing settler-colonial violence and appropriation of Indigenous lands, resources and knowledges, lack of action-based practice in dismantling the norms and structures of settler hegemony. The lack of Indigenous representation within the Canadian academy is noted throughout the text and speaks to the continual marginalization of Indigeneity from academic spaces. The volume highlights the necessity to reframe and reconceptualize notions of truth and reconciliation from Indigenous perspectives, memories, and spaces as central to the decolonization of the academy.

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