Perspectives and Pedagogies for Aboriginal Education

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Pedagogy and Protocols of Place

Treaty Six Territories
My Work

• Seeks to raise consciousness and resist Eurocentric privileges, frameworks and norms
• Seeks decolonizing education that advances cognitive and cultural diversity
• Generates pedagogy of holistic knowledge and learning
• Recognizes distinctive Aboriginal learning processes and outcomes from place
• Reclaims Indigenous knowledge, voice and visions to restructure learning
My Courses

- Decolonizing Aboriginal Education (EIND. 851.3)
- Cross Cultural Research Methodologies (EIND. 855.3)
- Cross cultural and First Nations Education (Edft.335.3)
- Aboriginal Epistemology and Pedagogy (EIND. 450.3)
EUROCENTRISM

• A European ‘centre’ characterized by superiority, progress, hegemony, and monopoly over all other knowledge systems.
• Characterized as a singularity in notions of universal and diffused to the periphery.
• Dominant theory legitimimized in science, educational and public institutions, publications/print, etc.
Cognitive Blocks created by Public Education

• Students rooted in Eurocentrism
• Attitudes of superiority and difference as deficiency in discourse
• White dominance and advantage normalized as status quo
• Insufficient exposure to FNMI (one 3 cu Native Studies Course required in education)
• Little knowledge or critical perspectives on their location
Cognitive Imperialism

• Built on imperialist knowledge and damaging assumptions
• Reflected in privileging of colonial languages, discourses, knowledge, practices, Euro-Anglo cultural origins, protocols
• Creates ‘othering’ and ‘different’
• Inflicts soul wound on Indigenous peoples and on the land
Decolonizing Awareness

- Every researcher/student has been a victim and beneficiary of the same educational system.

- Few persons are privileged with the knowledge of how to achieve a decolonized education.

- We all must become critical learners and healers within a wounded space.
Diverse characteristics of Aboriginal Peoples in Saskatchewan

- First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- 6 languages in Saskatchewan
- Over 75 FN reserves (population: <100 to >5000)
- Diverse langscapes/regions
- Diverse Experiences within Place: Rural/urban/North, South/provincial public, FN Schs
Similarities in Experiences among Diversities

- Colonization
- Marginalization
- Powerlessness
- Exploitation
- Racism
- Violence
- Cultural Imperialism

- Place-based cultures
- Languages
- Worldviews
- Spiritual/Flux/Animistic
- Relational
- IK
- Resilience
“I have worked in literacy for fifteen years, and I know that almost 99.9 percent of learners that come into literacy programs have dealt with major trauma in their lives, and there are a lot of blocks.”

Nancy Cooper

“We have the emotional drop-out from the institutions before the physical drop-out; we need to dismantle fears if we are to engage spirit; fulfill their needs, not ours, but our learners’ needs.” Ningwakwe George
Setting Ground Rules:

– Listen actively—respect others when they are talking
– Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing: “I” instead of “they”, “we,” and “you”
– Respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks—focus on ideas
– Participate to the fullest of your ability—community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
– Instead of invalidating somebody else’s story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
– The goal is not to agree—it is to gain a deeper understanding.
– Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses—they can be as disrespectful as words  (EdChange Awareness Activities)
Reading Reviews

• Students need to find their locations, voice and agency in their readings, writings, and discussion.

• Each student is responsible for up to 4 readings, give a brief summary, and identify 4-5 quotes from which they are to comment from their experiences, linking ideas, other readings, teachings, ‘ah-hah’ moments, or moments of discord, etc.

• Questions given before reading help to identify key concepts.
Other Strategies

• Relational work is paramount to success
• Invite Elders and Aboriginal scholars to share their stories, research, experiences, guidance
• Learn protocols of place and diverse ways to engage local communities, organizations, Elders
• Students assignments connected to place: processes of deconstruction and rebuilding
• Talking circles, community engagements, group work
• Share conceptual and vocabulary discourses of academia in books, glossaries, reference works
Decolonization: Two-Prong Project

• Deconstruction:
  Exposing political, moral and theoretical inadequacies of colonialism and culturalism in education.

• Reconstruction:
  Transforming education and unleashing the potential of students in global diverse knowledge societies
Deconstruction

- Develop awareness and critique of Eurocentric, colonial bias and its racialized negative discourses and values and its effects on everyone
- Examine Constitution (Section 35 (1), laws (Indian Act), policies, history and differential treatment and resources of Aboriginal peoples
- Address intergenerational trauma, cognitive assimilation, loss of languages, IK, past and present negativities and traumas associated with the past, including lateral violence, internalized racism
Reconstruction

- Help students to see value and benefits from Indigenous knowledges in their lives and education: science, humanities, and visual arts, etc.
- Aim for theory and practice to heal present and past traumas
- Provide ways to reconstruct, reclaim, restore, renew Indigenous presence, identities, knowledges, and self-determination.
Inclusive Pedagogies

• Make explicit socialization in a racist culture and interconnectedness of oppressions related to race, class, gender, abilities, sexualities

• Accept heterogeneity and diversity as the norm.

• Rethink what distinctiveness and difference means when considering FNMI and how they are represented.

• Re-conceptualize ‘mainstream’ as changing and fluid place with many voices, experiences, and knowledge, not as status quo.
Aboriginal Rights and the Courts

Where there is an Aboriginal right, there is a corresponding right to teach that right.

Many Sources of Inspiration

- Canada’s Constitution: Aboriginal treaty rights
- Canada’s apology for Indian Residential Schools
- SSHRC Research in Aboriginal Programs
- Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Convention on the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination, etc.
- Activism and Voices of the Indigenous Renaissance
Authors on Indigenous Worldviews

- Gregory Cajete
- Richard Atleo
- Oscar Kawagley
- Kathy Absolon
- Karla Jessen Williamson
- Betty Bastien
- Leroy Littlebear
- Jo-ann Archibald
- J. Y. Henderson
- Herman Michell
- Willie Ermine
- Martin Nakata
- Tyson Yankaporta
- Shawn Wilson