How Did We Get Here: Social Studies Education and the Historical Issues Inhibiting Our Moving Elsewhere

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Abstract

The issue taken up in this paper has to do with the ways in which Social Studies teachers might better take up issues of decolonization in their classroom practices. The purpose herein is twofold in that we might first define what decolonization looks like in classroom practice and then begin to understand why it is not a more common occurrence. What follows is a review of the literature to help us qualitatively define a working, and workable, definition of decolonization along with the overarching themes of communicative difficulties and issues of power. The hope is that teachers might be able to reflect upon these ideas and be better positioned to move forward in a reflective and transformative manner on issues related to Indigenous peoples, practices, and their historical importance, particularly in relation to the Alberta Social Studies curriculum.

Introduction

It was around the time that my son was born that I started noticing what I think of as the machinations of Western educational practices as they are executed in the institutions of schools. More specifically, I noticed a growing disconnect between institutionally how I was told to discuss Indigenous relationships and contexts with settler cultures, and how that worked in practice. Currently in Alberta, there is a push from the Department of Education, through the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) document (2018), to develop and apply "foundational knowledge *about* First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students."(italics added[1], P.

[1] This is to point out that, in spite of efforts otherwise, curriculum and administrative documents are still operating in a colonial fashion through their language choice.

6) There is also a political push from the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission through their 94 Calls to Action (2015). Interestingly, calls seven, ten, fourteen, and fifteen all make the call to work *with*, not for or about, Indigenous peoples on educational reform. If these calls are to be taken up in any meaningful way, there must first be an attention paid to *why they have not already been*.

This topic has become increasingly important as I have navigated towards it from different vantages. While I knew that something needed to be different in my experience of education, I did not know that decolonization would be the shores upon which I would land after seeing the ways in which Western institutionalized education continually failed to meet particular students' needs. Indeed, in some ways it seemed like their needs, particularly disadvantaged, poor, and demographically marginalized students' needs, were intended to not be met by the systems that were in place. Alternatively, the systems seemed to deliberately support a particular type of student by furthering their advantages at the expense of others. Prior experience with educational practices and systems other than Western academia prompted me to begin my search for alternatives in curriculum theory. Ultimately, issues of relationality, communication, and meaning making found in psychoanalysis opened me up to the possibilities inherent within particular Indigenous frameworks.

The move from knowing through Indigenous knowledge systems, as opposed to about them, is important to facilitate precisely because, as I pointed to earlier, Indigenous peoples are not calling for action to be done to them (as has been historically the case), but with them in a new imagining, particularly of education. If teachers are to take seriously this new imagining, it

would be unlikely that they could do so through the same frameworks of thought that have brought them to this point. As I have come to understand them, Indigenous epistemologies broadly center around these same concepts of relationality, communication, and meaning making with some particular focus on community, land, and ceremony. I believe that these central loci speak to an education system that is focused not on arithmetically measured outcomes that support the singularity of economy, but rather is focused on the well-being of the individual, the clan unit, and the whole of society and its environment. Utility, through job focused skills and financially savvy attitudes, is replaced with purpose, a focus on the individual's desires as they might best support the community as a whole. A small distinction, but a vital one.

However, in order for these ideas to become manifest in the traditional Western classroom, some other important work must first be done. Dwayne Donald (2009), Margaret Kovach (2009), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), and Eve Tuck (2009 & 2012) speak separately of decolonization as a particular means of taking back certain truths, power dynamics and sovereignty within education. This is where the crux of my project will focus but also with an eye to the future and wonder, once these hurdles are overcome, what possibilities might exist or begin to open up? Could Indigenous identity stand against the encroaching tide of "othering"[2] that current political discourses are so concerned with? Might education be framed in ways that reflect ideals of caring, compassion and community rather than economic utility? Ultimately this discussion of decolonization is offered as a starting point for teachers to reflect upon their own practices and understandings so as to potentially provoke discussion and change in our classroom

[2] This "othering" will be taken up with more detail. Suffice it to say here, it encompasses the idea that certain peoples, particularly Indigenous peoples, are historically and contemporarily framed as "other" to the dominant norm. See Donald (2009), den Heyer (2009a, 2009b), Tuck & Gaztambide- Fernandez (2013), and Willinsky (1998).

approaches. From here then, I will turn to various authors and their works to inquire as to where these resistances may be found in practice. Broadly, I will be categorizing works into those that outline issues of communication, of power, and of resistance. While trying to keep these works and topics separate, it is important to proceed with the caveat that there is an incredible amount of overlap to be found binding these issues together, making them all the more complicated to extract and address in isolation.

The purpose of what follows is to remind educators of the process of being in learning. What might be meant by that is this: teachers, in Western traditions, too often see themselves as the unassailable holders of knowledge that refuse to be intellectually vulnerable. Perhaps, with ears big enough to listen, we might be able to hear a different way forward than the one which we so tightly cling to in our desperation to not be seen as somehow weak or out of control. It is offered only as a guide, or perhaps just a cracking in the door to something, or somewhere, other than where we are currently.

Personal Connection

I feel that it is right to begin with where I believe myself to be currently situated before I dive into anything further. This idea of placing oneself in their research is informed by many of the practices and ideas that I will treat with in this paper, particularly Davidson & Davidson (2018), Kovach (2009), and Wilson (2008). These authors point to the importance of self-location in our research as it prepares us to answer the many ontological questions that might follow: Why did we do this research? Why did we do it this way? What is our purpose in this inquiry? Who am I in relation to this/these subject(s)? This work? My hope is that, by

beginning in this way, I might offer my respects going forward to those people whose ideas I speak about and speak to, while trying not to speak for them. That is neither my place nor my intention. My name is Kyle McCormack, a settler[3] descendant living in the geopolitical area currently called Canada. My father, John, is a direct immigrant from Scotland while my mother claims heritage on this land back nine generations, first in what became Ontario and then to what is now Alberta. I am told that her family was Scots-Irish originally, although there is a story I remember involving a French princess, though this has been (and will likely remain) unverified. I have two young children that are the wonder of my world and integral to this academic journey that I have undertaken. I am a teacher of Social Studies in Alberta and have been doing so now for over a decade. I am also currently a graduate student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta.

I began this journey looking for answers. Pulled hither and yon through my professional training and work, I was under the impression that things might improve educationally if I could only prove that there was a better way to do education than what was currently in use in my school and its geopolitical district(s). So started my journey into curriculum theory. While it is not necessary to document all of the leads that I chased down in my travels through the academy, it is necessary to note that it is here that I came across the concept of decolonization through the various works of Gert Biesta, Dwayne Donald, Kent den Heyer, Margaret Kovach, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and many others. It was through Kovach's (2009) work specifically that I came to understand the idea of decolonizing education as an "epistemological challenge

[3] I will use this term throughout, following Michael Asch's (2018) usage when referring to those who are "unequivocally members of the Settler community that originates with Europeans who began coming here with colonization and found when they arrived that there were peoples already here living in political societies;"(p. 29)

mounted by scholars about the nature of truth and reality in order to gain representation, voice and multiplicity of truth in the academy" (p. 28). It seemed that this was what I had been needing in my practice. But now, how to implement it?

I am not a person Indigenous to this land. I have no claim to it ancestrally, nor will I probably ever claim to beyond saying that it is currently where I live. There are a host of issues that arise from this professional directive specific to non-indigenous educators. These issues become further complicated for non-indigenous educators that already have reservations about, and subsequently question, the ways in which students are taught about the indigenous peoples of this land that we call Canada. As I delved further into the information that I could on decolonization as it related to education, I became increasingly aware of several things. First was that, as a settler scholar, I am prone to fall into a number of intellectual traps regarding Indigenous epistemologies not the least of which is that of assimilation: bringing knowledge and ideas into my own realm of understanding and then subverting it to my own ideas and prejudices. One hope of this project is to unpack and reflect on at least some of these issues so as to, at the very least, not fall into them too often.

Secondly, there are historical precedents and intentions found in learning about Indigenous ways of living and knowing, as opposed to learning from them. Passing indigenous knowledge off as something interesting before getting back to what is real, or true, is as great an act of ethnocentrism and colonialism as coming to this land in the first place was. This type of colonial logic is found by various scholars to be a demeaning, patronizing, or outright dismissive way to undermine Indigenous epistemologies while reinforcing and recentring colonialist

narratives and logics (Anderson, 2016; Asch, 2018; Donald, 2009, 2016, 2019; Kovach, 2009; Marker, 2014; Moreton-Robinson, 2016; Restoule & Nardozi, 2019; Smith, 2012; Tinker, 2004; Tuck & Gaztambide- Fernandez, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

I also found that I was not alone. Other teachers were wondering some of the same things that I was about how authentically we could attend to the intricacies and nuances of indigenous practices while still teaching in ways that we have come to habitually do. Settler guilt looms large in our professional side view while we attempt to reconcile Western educational practices with Indigenous. Tuck and colleagues do not present this as an easy task, indicating that things like moves to innocence are precisely the easy ways out from decolonization that should be avoided (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013). In this work, as I outline some ways that teachers might fall prey to these avoidances, I would argue that they are, indeed, avoidable whilst also remembering Tuck et al's admonishments that it will not be easy to do so.

On whose terms will decolonizing take place? A preliminary understanding of decolonization and where it might be coming from.

The aim of this specific literature review is to understand what some of the potential pitfalls and hurdles might be faced by teachers in Western academic institutions in their attempts to decolonize their classroom practices. To do that, there must first be a quick discussion of what might be meant by the term decolonization as it can potentially cover a broad territory, one that is not always in harmony with itself. *Decolonization* is defined by Tuck & Yang (2012) as "the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (p. 1). I personally found this to be an important

foundational understanding to decolonization as it was so ambitious and completely contrary to the narratives in both the mainstream and the curriculum that I have been teaching. I found it to be jarring to my sensibilities and wanted to find out if there was a way to begin approaching it in my teaching practice. From there, I was ready for Margaret Kovach (2009) to point out Graham Smith's (1997) work which:

> ...observes that a decolonizing approach, built upon critical theory, is particularly effective in analysing power differences between groups; that it provides hope for transformation; that there is a role for both structural change and persona agency in resistance; and that Habermas' notion of finding victories in small struggles resists a purist tendency towards an all-or-nothing approach to social transformation. (p. 80)

This unpacked two separate ideas for me: I needed to focus on the journey, rather than the destination, lest I become discouraged by a lack of immediate change (a failing to which I readily acknowledge I am already prone), and I needed to find a way to more narrowly focus decolonization in my daily practice, as utopic idealism will take us only so far in the day-to-day (Tallbear, 2016). That is why I turned to the idea of *Decolonizing education*, which Kovach (2009) gave us earlier. Dwayne Donald (2009) calls this a "...creation of an "ethical space" between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians…" (p. 4). This is, I think, an approachable ground to begin from, particularly for those of us tasked with taking up this challenge without having a particular background, history, or (perceived) personal investment in the process. It has the added benefit for teachers, I believe, in setting up their practice for a potential future with *Indigenization,* a term that Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2014) tells us is "making a space that is recognizably Indigenous- a space formed by inserting and asserting content, practices and

processes that culturally affirm Indigenous people, students, community and perspective" (p. 105). This would thus bring us back to Tuck & Yang's (2012) original assertion for what decolonization might be. While being in the here and now, it helps to also keep an eye on a potential future.

I would like to acknowledge that Tuck and Yang (2012) do not believe that decolonization can be taken up strictly as an epistemological exercise because: a) these exercises represent yet another move to innocence on the part of the settler, and b) decolonization must fundamentally be about the return of the land. My purpose here is to simply point out where some resistances to Indigenous ways of knowing and being might exist in a Social Studies teachers' practice and, if possible, look to some solutions that resonated with me personally. It is for this reason that I will continue forward with decolonization meaning a way to create space for, understanding of, and reflection upon Indigenous ways of knowing and being in an educational practice.

Lit Review: Potential Sticking Points

We may now attend to the question of why it is that issues of decolonization, reconciliation, and indigenization have not been taken up in more broadly meaningful ways in Social Studies classrooms. There are a number of (often unstated) presumptions that Social Studies educators bring into the classroom. One of the first, and most easily overlooked, is the assumption that both teachers and students are speaking the same languages, with the same coding in mind. This assumed means of knowing unintentionally, but infallibly, reinforces the perpetuation of what Donald (2009) calls *fort logics:* those frames of knowing that have at their

heart an "us" and inevitably, a "them" on the outside looking in. This, in turn, reinforces Hegelian historical constructions of history which reproduce power dynamics that do not want to surrender themselves so easily to either invasion or conquest. The many ways that these power dynamics defend themselves, whether it be through the propagation of myths or commodifying education, become the heart of what it is that Social Studies teachers particularly must attend to when we are speaking of not only historical events, but of the conceptions of these events and their impacts on the lives of individuals, societies, and nations.

How we understand is why we do not understand.

It is useful at this point to examine what some of the literature tells us about how we understand each other through our use of language, and then move to examine how this might interfere with our decolonizing efforts. In Gert JJ Biesta's (2013) work I was introduced to his conception of communication, derived from John Dewey and Jacques Derrida, as it relates to the act of education. Biesta (2013) speaks to the concepts of cooperation, deconstruction and that education *is* communication. Education as communication is "the process of sharing experience until it becomes common possession" as well as that "which insures participation in a common understanding" (pg. 29). Social studies education is then potentially a means to discover a mutually intelligible shared experience about our stories/ histories through a cooperative effort of understanding. It is only through this shared meaning and understanding making process that we might try to know what someone else thinks and feels.[4] This shared understanding cannot begin however, when there is a deliberate refusal to understand, or even engage with, another

[4] An earlier paper of mine looked into some ways in which some psychoanalytic frames supported, and expanded upon, many of these ideas. See Britzman (1986, 2011), Felman (1987), and Ogden (2001) for further insight.

perspective or opinion. I will take this up more thoroughly in the coming sections, but it might suffice at the moment to borrow Ahenakew's (2016) analogy of grafting by saying that we cannot achieve even hybridization, never mind Indigenization or reconciliation, so long as the Western educational viewpoint remains one of assimilation.

Biesta (2013) expands on Derrida's contention that a metaphysics of presence is locating something as self-sufficient and fully present to itself. The problem with this is that everything must become oppositionally related (good vs evil, etc.) at some point and is therefore impossible to situate anything as an absolute *thing* in and of itself (pg. 37). This reinforces the Hegelian logic of a common sense understanding of history in that historical progress is inevitable and that there are those left behind by, or outside of, that progress. (Willinsky, 1998) Donald (2009) comments on this through *fort logics*: "a particular four-cornered version" of history that sees Indigenous peoples "necessarily positioned as outside the concern of Canadians" (p. 3). Thus as we teach these unquestioned conceptions of history in a Social studies classroom, we are excluding the very people that we have been directed to include. While Ladner (2018) might suggest then, that "foundational myths must be dismantled and decolonized" (p. 249), Jardine (2016) would more gently point out that "we tend to see the world *through* our stories and don't tend to see those stories that could be told otherwise, stories that are told by others in a manner different from the way we tell them, and so on" (p. 235). This aligns with the aforementioned aim of decolonization in that this interrogation and troubling of the classroom frame, be it pedagogical or ontological, is precisely what is necessary to begin. Decolonization cannot simply be making the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing "conditional upon their incorporation

into the onto-epistemological norms and values of liberal pluralism" (Ahenakew, 2016; p. 327). Donald (2019) expands these sentiments even further:

> The complexity of these considerations cannot be addressed by simply replacing one story with another under the purview of inclusion. If a story...is infused or incorporated into curricula as just a story, and without the necessary care and attention given the ideologies, mythologies, and ways of becoming real human beings it describes, nothing good will grow from it. (p. 120)

According to Biesta, on the best of days, we might expect Social Studies education to be a Herculean effort in building a mutually intelligible story about how we have lived in this country now called Canada. We can now further compound this difficulty in relation to decolonization with both different languages and epistemologies. Deyhle et al (2008) explain that (From Hermes, 2005): ".... we don't have a shared understanding...English is noun-based, but all Indigenous languages are action-based. They are all defined by relationships to the thing. In essence, in thought...that's the problem. When we try to teach Ojibwe culture in an English context, lots of things become pretty shallow" (p. 337). Fellner (2019) explains further that while:

> While process-based Indigenous languages account for a holistic human in-relation and traditional makings help people actively embody and increasingly learn their gifts and purpose, noun-based English labels objectify and subjectify people, restricting them through categories that are created and implemented to privilege and perpetuate North American capitalism and nationalism. (p. 154)

This presents a very serious complication to the gap in understanding that was already going to be difficult to traverse. If, as Suina (2004) tells us, there are things that can be seen, heard and interacted with that can never be explained in English because that language lacks the capacity to do so, how are English speaking teachers doing justice to Indigenous ways of knowing (from Deyhle, 2008; p. 336)?

All of this has been necessary to say insofar as it is directly tied to both a) the ways in which people have difficulty communicating with each other in a presumably shared language, and b) how this communication is further complicated by pedagogical assumptions.

Indigenous epistemologies are most often driven by place, name, relationships, and the resulting connections between such which are most often expressed in the form of art, ceremonies, and stories. (Donald, 2016; Smith, 2012; Tinker, 2004; Wilson, 2008) Ceremonies are of particular importance because they represent an ongoing reframing of a relationship between two parties. Wilson (2008) shares the wisdom of Elder Lionel Kinunwa: 'A ceremony is not just the period at the end of the sentence. It is the required process and preparation that happens long before the event" (P. 60). This is furthered by Davidson and Davidson (2018) by acknowledging that "Each time we come together, we continue to add threads to the rope, and as we work together to remember our ancient knowledge, we reinforce our memories and keep our knowledge alive" (pg. 74).

This difference in understanding is most evident when we turn to one of the more contentious topics in a Social Studies classroom: treaties. It is important, if we are to begin decolonizing our practices, for teachers to understand, and respectfully articulate, what the vastly

different views are on how treaties were negotiated. While Elder Kay Thompson tells us that settlers were not given the land; they were given permission to use it, Asch (2018), in contrast to the ceremonial understandings above, points out that Canadian history is specifically demarcated by Confederation, with Canada and Britain as the main players (p. 35). "In short, this narrative creates the impression that treaty-making of any importance is an event that happened as a moment in our history and is one small step in the story we tell of our development as a civic nation" (Asch, 2018; p. 31). This does not reconcile with the idea that, as far as the Indigenous peoples of this land are concerned, "[Settler peoples] made the commitment to build a relationship with them based on our seeking to ensure that their well-being would be enhanced by our settlement" (Asch, 2018; p. 36). An interesting interpretation of Hugh Dempsey's (2015) work might even lead a teacher of history and social interaction to comment that treaties were meant to be ongoing reaffirmations and renegotiations of the relationships built between the parties involved. In either of these views, it is important to affirm that treaties, insofar as Indigenous peoples are concerned, were never meant to be a type of one-and-done affair.

One final note about understanding that will take us to the next issue is to discuss Settler logics and their "practiced epistemological refusal to recognize the latent relations of the settler colonial triad; the covering of its tracks." (Tuck & Gaztambide- Fernandez, 2013; p. 74) There are many ways in which Settler peoples try to duck the linguistic responsibilities that decolonization might bring. Between moves to innocence, (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013) colonial logics, (Donald, 2009, 2016, 2019; Marker, 2014; Ladner, 2018; Smith, 2012; Tinker, 2004) and institutional replication of neoliberal socio-political processes (Donald, 2016, 2019; Kovach, 2009; Ladner, 2018; Resoule & Nardozi,

2019; Smith, 2012; Tallbear, 2016) it is a small wonder that decolonization might even be a topic of conversation. To have this conversation at all runs contrary to those national narratives of the Canadian Settler subject's privilege, and sense of goodness and innocence which they will often defend with "timeworn stereotypes, despite being presented with facts to the contrary" (Restoule & Nardozi, 2019; p. 322). Decolonization then allows for a teacher's gaze to turn back upon themselves and their classroom practices to ask "What is it about my frames of knowing and understanding that I must deconstruct, or at least begin to reflect upon, that might allow good things to grow in my classroom?" These notions will be taken further when I speak about power relations troubling decolonization.

We do not understand because it is not in our interest to do so.

I previously mentioned that decolonizing/ decolonization covers a broad territory, one that is contested by Settler and Indigenous epistemologies. It would seem that control, especially of knowledge, is ultimately the most contested ground upon which decolonization takes place. As Moreton-Robinson (2016) puts it: "Knowledge and power are implicated in each other; knowledge is not only a product of power- it is a form of power" (p. 107). Taylor (2004) points to this when he describes the "typically conservative view of what history education is about, namely, a transmission-based learning model focused upon the acquisition of key facts and the commemoration of significant events of national importance" (p. 219). This is furthered by Tuck & Yang's (2012) contention that "(we are concerned with how) settler perspectives and worldviews get to count as knowledge and research and how these perspectives- repackaged as data and findings- are activated in order to rationalize and maintain unfair social structures" (P.

2). Purpel (2004) argues that this is all done in the guise of fair play and competition in order to continue the legitimation and maintenance of these structures.

There begins from here a major schism between Western and Indigenous ideals and conceptions of education. If teachers are going to begin decolonizing their classrooms and their practices, the most relevant question to begin with is this: "On what terms (or whose) should this rereading and reframing be done" (Donald, 2009; P. 4)? Classroom practices are dominated by Western epistemological frames whilst Indigenous sensibilities are called upon, or encouraged under the guise of inclusion, to present themselves for inspection, to be used or discarded as deemed appropriate. These ideas are taken up in various forms by Ahenakew (2016), Asch (2018), Donald (2019), Fellner (2019), Hendry (2011), Hokowhitu (2016), Ladner (2018), Restoule & Nardozi (2016), Smith (2012), Taylor (2004), and Tinker (2004). All of these conceptions allow for an "attempt to infiltrate and impose an internal "mapping" of submission and subordination" (Hendry, 2011; p. 102). continuing the narrative of "patriarchal white sovereignty, through its tautological function as the law, [to become] the final arbiter of indigenous claim" (Moreton-Robinson, 2016; P. 114).

Social studies teachers are then particularly tied to the narrative that they are required by the government, via the TQS (2018), to a kind of implementation wherein relationship, name and place are collected as "data", not as key underpinnings to understanding (Moreton-Robinson, 2016). While teachers may wish to alter their practices, many authors have noticed that, typically, there is no room for dissent, or "the other", within the Western academic framework (Donald, 2009, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2016; Marker, 2014; & Tinker, 2004). Fellner (2019)

writes that schooling is "...burdened with the pressures of whitestream education, and this firmly rooted and steeped in the dominating system of education and colonial narratives of deficit and pathology" (p. 153). Tinker (2004) states directly that the Western academy is based on "a culture that thinks itself as somehow universal and normative- and thus inherently superior- a position of intellectual fascism" (P. 107). This fascism is carried into both the processes of building the curriculum and delivering it. While Donald (2016) tells us that "we can say that curricula are compilations of stories we tell children about the world and their relationships to it [and] we can also say that particular stories are selected as curricula because they have been deemed most worth telling" (p. 12), Marker (2014) contends that "categories of what counts as history do not often correspond with the ways that traditional indigenous communities make meaning out of the past" (P. 97). Teachers are then left to navigate some turbulent waters. On the one hand, we have Tinkers (2004) assertion that "Indians understand that all life shares equal status and that value, personhood, and intelligence must be recognized in all life" (P. 108), while at the same time knowing that "...curriculum initiatives are predicated on a particular kind of being-*homo economicus*-who is primarily motivated by economic self-interest and the material gains that come with it" (Donald, 2019; p. 105). A beginning for this journey might be to ask not "Can we reconcile these two extremes?" but perhaps "Why am I being asked to?"

On whose terms will decolonizing take place?

What explicitly comes from these misunderstandings and grabs for power and control, is simply more of the same. This repetitive cycle consists of a two-fold issue constructed of compartmentalized commodity based learning practices which perpetuate, and are perpetuated

by, a well worn myth, retold to be more palatable, and assuring, to the current socio-economic aesthetic. Tupper (2009) sees this cycle as a *meta-narrative,* a vehicle for reproducing common-sense meanings of curriculum through invitations to only consider knowledge in particular and deliberate ways. “The underlying values which coalesce in one’s institutional biography, if unexamined, propel the cultural reproduction of authoritarian teaching practices and naturalize the contexts which generate such a cycle” (Britzman, 1986; p. 443). It is this implicit and unexamined cycle that is ultimately the heart of why we have not more actively taken up topics of decolonization and reconciliation in our practices and is what we must attend to if we are to do this work with any hope for change.

Britzman (1986), den Heyer (2009a, 2009b), Purpel (2004), and Tupper (2009) all speak to the compartmentalization, or the *thingification*, of educational practices. Britzman (1986) particularly tells us that, through social control, compartmentalization of curricula, and hierarchical controls, knowledge takes on the appearance of a product unrelated to the learner's experience (p. 444) that, in turn, “promotes particular images of power, knowledge, and values by rewarding particular forms of individual and institutional behavior” (p. 443). den Heyer (2009b) talks about this as a “standardized management paradigm” wherein “information is interpreted to be the knowledge students require and success is measured by the degree of acquisition” (p. 30). This, then, turns our classroom spaces into spaces where “what is most worth knowing is that which serves the persona of appearances, self-interest, or reinforces desires to be productively useful in and to the state” (den Heyer, 2009a; p. 12). These sophic mores, particularly as found in Social studies classrooms, actively seek to undermine the very curriculum that we are theoretically paid to teach. The curriculum of studies instructs teachers to

teach skills of problem solving, citizenship, and media literacy with no explicitly stated reasoning as to why this might be important outside of the fact that there is a test on it next Friday. The very way that we are institutionally acclimatized to teach runs contrary to the very concepts inherent in worldview, citizenship, and identity (Alberta Government, 2005). Students are very familiar with this neat and orderly sorting of knowledge, to the point that they are unconcerned with anything outside of what they need to know to get accredited in the course. They wish only to know what they need to know, and not have to think about it (den Heyer, 2009a).

This unthinking acceptance of the status quo is what allows Stanley's (1998) "grand narrative" to be told "as if the story were the past itself, unencumbered by interpretation or selective amnesia" (in den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; p. 613). This might well remind us of Donald's (2009) *fort logics,* as discussed previously. Social studies teachers, when pressed about why they are uncomfortable taking up Indigenous issues and perspectives in their practices, often cite a lack of knowledge of the material to be presented. Very rarely do they reflect upon why they do not possess the knowledge. It is because we were ourselves educated in the grand narrative which only allows for the *fantasy echoes* (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011) of I/ us/ we to be imagined as the protagonist in our historical narrative. Being the hero, we can't be the bad guy and so continually, habitually, gloss over any part of the story that might suggest otherwise, *especially* when we are charged with teaching students how to critically assess a historical narrative. I argue especially here precisely because of Britzman's (1986) argument that when "knowledge is reduced to a set of discrete and isolated units to be acquired… not knowing and uncertainty is perceived as a threat." (p. 450) Teachers, in their day to day practice, do not at all

deal well with, or reflect upon, this threat, this uncertainty, and in so doing "propel the cultural reproduction of authoritarian teaching practices and naturalize the contexts which generate such a cycle." (p. 443) If social studies teachers will not implicate themselves in their own learning, how do they ever expect their students to?

Some Implications and Reflections

All of this has been to point out that there are issues with what we do. Blume (2014), Chambers (2008), DuPre (2019), Eppert et al. (2015), Goulet & Goulet (2014) & den Heyer (2015) all speak to the moral implications and imperative behind this work. While Kovach (2009) articulates that we are"...anxious about the misinterpretations, appropriations, and dismissals that often accompany Indigenous ways of knowing within the academy…[the] transformative potential for academia in welcoming diverse knowledges is significant, but at what cost to Indigenous peoples?" (p. 12). From Winona Stevenson (2000): "...Cree Elders will most often preface statements by stating, 'I believe it to be true'. These words espouse relational validity, qualify knowledge as personal reflection from one's own life experience, and recognize other truths" (Kovach, 2009; p. 111).

I must acknowledge that this is a long project but must also acknowledge that it is in need of an urgent response. Baldacchino (2013), Croom & Kortegast (2018), den Heyer (2009), Sathorar & Geduld (2018), & Takacs (2003) all point to the reflexivity needed for this work to be successful. We must be looking at our daily practices and asking ourselves generative questions about what could be done and what this might look like if we succeed in reframing our classroom practices. Donald (2009) calls upon both Western Settler colonial descendants and

Indigenous peoples to work together in this venture of decolonization as that is the way that it must be done, as a "shared endeavor" (p. 4). Tuck and Yang (2012) insist that this endeavor must be shared so that everything is on the table, and they welcome those that come to the table ready to begin this process. The question now becomes are we, as Western Settler educators, of history and societal constructs, ready to meet at that table, and listen to what is being asked? Will all of our ancestors look back upon us now and appreciate the story that we have chosen to tell? Certainly, these are questions with no immediate answers, and truthfully there is much to be further examined here. I hope only that I have achieved my purpose in starting a conversation that might ultimately lead to some definitive actions and answers.

Conclusions

I don't believe that teachers in classrooms want to, intentionally or otherwise, perpetuate oppressive cycles of colonial logics to another generation of Canadians. I personally don't, and would hope that my practice, guided by this work, might offer some alternative to those that don't feel that they currently have one. Teachers, especially Social Studies teachers, desire a method, or series thereof, that will allow them to decolonize the curriculum while allowing them to meet the needs of the students that they work with because both are necessary and, as I have alluded to, both are being asked of us by various interested parties. Before anything else (un-learning, reconciliation, Indigenization) might happen in the classrooms, there must first be an awareness. Social studies teachers are tasked with educating students about good citizenship and multiple perspectives. My contention throughout has been that, if we are to do this well, and effectively take up any meaningful approach to such topics as reconciliation and Indigenous ways of knowing, Social studies teachers need to start decolonizing their practices. While it has

been pointed out that it might not be easy or immediately favorable to do so, it must be done before any meaningful change can have a hope of taking place. My hope is that, by first understanding what decolonizing education might be asking of us, we can begin reflecting upon the perpetuation of power dynamics, commodity-based practices, and myth telling that are present in our classrooms. Then might we ask ourselves "what stories do we want to live?" (Jardine, 2016; p. 234)

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