

Principles for Decolonizing Education

by Alyson Jones

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Principles for Decolonizing Education: A Literature Review

"...whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we now exist in relationship to each other and to this land. A land that has and still does exist first and foremost in relationship to Indigenous people. To be in good relationship with one another requires a critical conscious awareness and an acknowledgment of whose traditional lands we are now on as well as the historical and contemporary realities of those relationships" (Styres, 2019, p. 31).

In the current socio-political context it is more important than ever to listen to Indigenous voices about decolonization and education. Ideally settlers should read the works of Indigenous scholars directly, instead of a synthesis by a white settler such as myself. I acknowledge that I am not, and cannot ever be, an expert in Indigenous Studies or decolonization. But I would like to share my learning journey with readers so as to encourage other Cégep faculty and staff to continue their own.

I came to this project first by attending workshops about Indigenous pedagogies at Vanier College and other anglophone Cégeps in the Tiohtià:ke area. Seeking to learn more, I then applied for a pedagogical research project release from my college, which allowed me to conduct a literature review of pedagogical approaches for decolonizing and Indigenizing college courses, focusing on literature by Indigenous scholars, mostly from northern Turtle Island (Canada). A subsequent project provided a small budget for meeting with Indigenous pedagogical consultants concerning their feedback on my review and about specific pedagogical strategies for Cégep courses. The points below are gathered from that larger literature review, which also benefitted from feedback from consultants including Diane Labelle, Eileen Clearsky, Iako'tsi:rareh Amanda Lickers, Kahsennoktha George, and Katsisorokwas Curran Jacobs. I would like to thank them for their feedback on that larger review, and to thank Michelle Smith and Debbie Lunny for their assistance with this article. The ideas shared below are those of Indigenous thinkers, to whom I owe immense gratitude for their generosity and insights, and this particular synthesis and any errors or oversights are my own, offered here as a small part of the larger collective process of decolonizing post-secondary education.

Drawing from the literature by Indigenous scholars, I will focus below on five key principles for decolonizing and Indigenizing postsecondary education, both in our classrooms and across our institutions:

1. "Decolonization is not a metaphor" (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonization cannot happen without the repatriation of Indigenous land.
2. Decolonizing or Indigenizing education is not a multiculturalism project, and multiculturalism works against Indigenous sovereignty.
3. Decolonizing education requires settlers taking the responsibility for unlearning stereotypes about Indigenous peoples.
4. Decolonizing education cannot happen without acknowledging colonial privilege and "unlearning" Eurocentric, white-supremacist worldviews and ways of being.
5. Decolonizing or Indigenizing education means centering Indigenous ways of knowing and learning across *all* areas of the curriculum and institution.

These principles also imply a critical reflexivity and understanding of one's own relationship to ongoing settler colonialism: not for one's own benefit, but because it is the truth. In my own practice this means that I acknowledge that I am a white settler. I live and work in Tiohtià:ke, on the unceded lands of the

Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. I acknowledge that my privilege, and that of my white European ancestors and possibly my descendants, derives from occupying and exploiting the lands of Indigenous peoples. I acknowledge that at the moment I still work within a Eurocentric institution and that I am accustomed to a Eurocentric way of thinking. I have started learning from the Indigenous consultants named above and other Indigenous educators in Tiohtià:ke such as Fran Beauvais, Carina Deer, Tanu Lusignan, Kim Martin, Barbara Diabo, Don Barnaby, Cathy Richardson (Kinewesquao), and Vicky Boldo, among others, but I humbly acknowledge that I am relatively new to the field of Indigenous Studies, and that being a settler, I cannot ever expect to understand the extent of the oppression felt by Indigenous peoples.

1. Decolonization is not a metaphor

In their much-cited article "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang remind us that decolonization "brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (2012, p. 1). Elsewhere they refer to decolonization as the "rematriation of Indigenous land and life" (Smith et al., 2019, p. 13). They criticize the use of the term decolonization as a metaphor, as "a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools," for example, and warn against conflating decolonization with other social justice projects (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). They invite readers to pause and reflect upon what happens to a term like decolonization when it is over-extended to refer to any and all questioning of power relations and systemic oppressions.

The phrase "decolonizing education" has been used by many Indigenous authors, notably Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (as the title of her 2013 book), to address the devastating impacts that Eurocentric models of education have had on Indigenous peoples. Since Eurocentric education in Canada has been a key tool for eliminating Indigenous peoples through assimilation and genocide, it is crucial to transform educational institutions, which are still places of colonialism (Smith, 2012). Battiste further argues that decolonizing education is "not a process generated only for Indigenous students" (2013, p. 13), but for everyone. It entails advocating for *systemic* change, unpacking the powerful Eurocentric assumptions of education, and creating educational spaces that revitalize and center Indigenous knowledge "as a shared education norm" (2013, p. 107). According to Battiste, decolonizing education is about self-determination, deconstructing decisions about curricular knowledge, and re-energizing education and knowledge in the contexts of lives. ...It is not a singular or total theory, but multiple theories, strategies, and struggles. Its outcomes must account for the imposed tragedies and indignities colonial education has placed on Aboriginal people, and the need for systemic awareness of everyone and the reconciliation and healing in educational systems. ...It is also about restoring a balance in relationships and undoing the hegemonic authority over our lives. We are interdependent in our ecology and environment, and we will have to develop institutions, policies, and practices that go beyond signaling respect for cultural diversity and acknowledge their own interdependence with our place and the people of this place. (2013, pp. 107-108).

Tuck and Yang acknowledge that they are advocates "for the analysis of settler colonialism within education and education research" by Indigenous thinkers like Battiste, and they want others to join them in these efforts (2012, p. 3). But they warn that such alliances cannot be too easy: rather, decolonization is "necessarily unsettling" (2012, p. 7) and is only "accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity," not settlers' (2012, p. 35). Decolonization cannot happen unless control of the Indigenous lands that white settlers and settler institutions occupy is given back to Indigenous peoples.

"Indigenizing education" is another phrase that is used by many Indigenous authors. Citing Rauna Kuokkanen (2008), Métis scholar Adam Gaudry and settler Danielle Lorenz define Indigenization broadly as "a move to expand the academy's still-narrow conceptions of knowledge, to include Indigenous perspectives in transformative ways" (2018, p. 218). In their article, however, Gaudry and Lorenz critique how this is actually being carried out in postsecondary education. The authors find that despite using language about reconciliation, Canadian institutions purporting to "Indigenize" are mostly focused on policies of "Indigenous inclusion," such as increasing the number of Indigenous students, faculty and staff (2018, p. 226).

Instead, the Indigenous scholars that Gaudry and Lorenz interviewed suggest that there is a greater need to dismantle colonial educational systems so that Indigenous knowledges and ways of learning are centered. Gaudry and Lorenz call this process “decolonial indigenization,” which “wholly transforms the academy and fundamentally reorients knowledge production to a system based on different power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians,” including Indigenous autonomy and self-determination over education and the resurgence of community-based, on-the-land learning (2018, p. 223).

Decolonizing education cannot happen without acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty over land, life and education, as well as the colonial violence that has occurred towards Indigenous peoples and the *ongoing* practices that continue to try to separate Indigenous peoples from their lands. In Cégeps, the main way we see efforts to address dispossession of land is through land acknowledgements, which are increasingly common. Land acknowledgements are an important first step, but they cannot become mere lip service (Vallée, 2017). A land acknowledgement should be used, rather, as a teaching tool and as a form of “promoting activism by reminding everyone of the colonialist nature of our lives and its ramifications on the lives, languages and worldviews of displaced Indigenous peoples. It should bring us to think about the fact that we (settlers) continue to profit from living on the lands that were stolen from Indigenous Peoples” (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020). Above all, we must remember that land sovereignty is crucial: “there is no decolonization without Indigenous presence on Indigenous land and waters” (Smith et al., 2019, p. 1). What this means for teachers is that we must learn about the historical and contemporary efforts to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands, to introduce students to Indigenous perspectives on land so that they can understand both the different worldviews and knowledge systems involved in colonization and decolonization, and link classroom learning to real life land defense initiatives.

2. Decolonizing or Indigenizing education is not a multiculturalism project

A large part of decolonizing or Indigenizing education requires pedagogical approaches that espouse values to enable Indigenous student success. For many educational initiatives in Canada, however, this has implied mostly *adding* Indigenous content in school curriculum as part of multiculturalism, especially “cultural” content such as food, music, dance, and arts. Among other scholars, Verna St. Denis (who is a member of Beardy’s and Okemasis First Nation and grew up as a non-status Indian and Metis in parkland Saskatchewan) critiques this approach in her article “Silencing Aboriginal Curricular Content and Perspectives Through Multiculturalism: ‘There are Other Children Here’” (2011). She argues that by equating Indigenous rights with those of other racialized minorities in Canada, the discourse of multiculturalism “has been and is used to defend public schools against the need to respond to Aboriginal education” (2011, p. 312).

St. Denis explains that in Canada, “official multiculturalism was a political strategy that was introduced as a way to address contesting language, cultural, and land claims within the nation” and to address racial discrimination, but this strategy has been critiqued by many, including by racialized immigrants (2011, pp. 307-308). Indigenous scholars have especially pointed out that such an approach is misguided, treating Indigenous peoples as another cultural group who highlight the diversity of a multicultural Canada (St. Denis, 2011; Cote-Meek, 2014; Goulet & Goulet, 2014). According to these scholars there are several reasons this is dangerous.

First, Indigenous peoples cannot be classified as just another “diverse” cultural group: as original and ongoing inhabitants of Turtle Island (North America), they hold a unique standing. St. Denis states that Indigenous peoples “continue to argue that they are Indigenous sovereign nations because of their original continuing occupation and rights to the land” (2011, p. 308).

By inaccurately assuming shared commonalities among diverse groups... multiculturalism erases the specific and unique location of Aboriginal peoples as Indigenous to this land by equating them with multicultural and immigrant groups. Aboriginal people adamantly reject this equating of their Aboriginal position with ethnic minorities as a form of colonialism (St. Denis, 2011, p. 311).

At the international level, as well, Indigenous peoples' rights are distinct from the rights of minorities; this has been confirmed by the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007). In a recent talk as part of Dawson College's Peace Week (September 24, 2020), Kanien'kehá:ka Elder Kenneth Deer explained this point when discussing the history of UNDRIP, particularly Articles 3 and 4:

Article 3

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 4

Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions. (United Nations, 2007)

In her book *Decolonizing Education* Marie Battiste also highlights articles from UNDRIP, particularly Article 14:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. (United Nations, 2007, as cited in Battiste, 2013, pp. 82-83).

These and other rights in UNDRIP are distinct from the rights of minorities outlined in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Linguistic or Religious Minorities. That earlier declaration, from 1992, recognizes the rights of minorities to protect their identities and practice their cultures, languages, and religions without discrimination (and with assistance from the State), but it does not recognize their rights to self-determination and autonomous self-government (United Nations, 1992).

In her article St. Denis does not discuss UNDRIP, but she reminds us to beware of equating Indigenous peoples with racialized minorities within the discourse of multiculturalism, since that leads to educational administrators arguing that Indigenous students are not the only cultural minorities in schools, that "there are other children here," and that "with multiculturalism, we can't focus on one culture" (2011, p. 313). Accordingly, she argues, Indigenous groups "suggest that multiculturalism is a form of colonialism and works to distract from the recognition and redress of Indigenous rights" (2011, p. 308).

Secondly, multicultural education has an emphasis on curricular inclusion, and has been critiqued for limiting the inclusion of cultural others to "decorative" emphasis on food and the arts (St. Denis, 2011, p. 308). Simply including Indigenous "cultural" content keeps the project of decolonizing education easy for teachers and learners: they can think they're Indigenous while remaining comfortable with "safe" topics such as music, dance and arts, rather than dealing with the ongoing colonial violence, land dispossession, displacement, and cultural genocide that Indigenous peoples have been subject to, and are still faced with (Cote-Meek, 2014; Goulet & Goulet, 2014; Restoule & Chaw-win-is, 2017). This trivializes Indigenous content as "fluff," while at the same time teachers and schools "believe that they are becoming more inclusive and respectful" (St. Denis, 2011, p. 313).

Thirdly, reducing Indigenous content to "traditional" and "cultural" content perpetuates stereotypes of Indigenous culture as remaining in the past, incompatible with Western modernity. Black/Saginaw Anishinaabe scholar Kyle T. Mays argues that in this stereotype, Indigenous people are "lacking the ability to live in a world that has passed them by" (2018, p. 13). The equation of Indigenous peoples with pre-contact,

pre-modern “traditions” not only bolsters the stereotype that they are “people of the past incapable of engaging with modernity” (2018, p. 3), but also furthers the colonial project of assimilation by erasing their *ongoing* presence on Indigenous lands. This in turn fuels the stereotype that many Indigenous peoples today are not “authentic” because they are not “traditional”—especially if they live in urban contexts (2018, p. 2). Among other writers, Cherokee author Thomas King has famously addressed these stereotypes in much of his work, including *The truth about stories* (2003), *The inconvenient Indian* (2013), and his poem and short film “I’m Not the Indian You Had in Mind” (2007).

Thus instead of focusing on only cultural content, Indigenous ways of knowing should be integrated across the curriculum, not only in courses about Indigenous topics; and when focusing on Indigenous topics, cultural content should include *contemporary* examples of cultural resurgence and creativity, many of which focus on resistance to colonialism. This content should be framed within a context that acknowledges past colonial injustice as well as contemporary realities, including ongoing colonialism and racism (Cote-Meek, 2014; Goulet & Goulet, 2014; Lunny et al., 2016). On the other hand, many scholars and teachers also argue for not *only* discussing Indigenous content in terms of colonialism and harsh contemporary realities, as this could perpetuate stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as “passive, powerless victims” (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020). Content should thus balance distressing and uplifting topics, including examples of Indigenous peoples’ resilience, resistance, resurgence, agency, and creativity, both in the past and today (Simpson, 2011; Lunny et al., 2016; Vallée, 2017).

3. Decolonizing education involves Settlers taking the responsibility for unlearning stereotypes about Indigenous peoples

An important step in decolonizing education is for settler educators and students to unlearn stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and previous misrepresentations of national history. As educators Keith Goulet (Nehinuw Cree) and Linda Goulet (settler) remind us, “school curriculum represents the selective memory of national identity” (2014, p. 42). Many college teachers and students today are still surprised to learn the full history of colonialism from Indigenous perspectives, especially the history of purposeful genocidal acts and policies like the Indian Act and residential schools (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020). And this is not only history: Metis scholar Iseke-Barnes argues that if we are to teach about the need to decolonize, we must emphasize to students that “dispossession of land, controlling access to land and food, private ownership of land and controlling the economy are ongoing colonial strategies” (2008, p. 140).

Self-representation is especially important in overturning stereotypes. A key step that teachers can take is centering Indigenous perspectives and encouraging students to learn from Indigenous voices directly, while remembering that settlers cannot speak for Indigenous peoples and that we are still filtering these perspectives through our Eurocentric lenses. A great way to avoid misrepresentation is by inviting Indigenous guest speakers, especially Elders, to our classrooms and colleges. But this must be done carefully: we need to compensate speakers appropriately; we need to follow protocols about how to invite them, what to offer as gifts for their teachings, and other cultural protocols around smudging and talking circles; and we need to respect their emotional labor, especially around distressing topics, and respect limits on what they may share (Madden 2015, pp. 5-7).

Yet, it is important to recognize that it is not the job of Indigenous peoples to educate non-Indigenous people: settlers need to take responsibility for learning about settler colonialism and to present this in all aspects of our lives, personal and professional (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020). Furthermore, lobbying for a decolonized education system should not be the burden of only BIPOC communities or scholars, but the responsibility of settlers as well. As the Decolonizing pedagogies reading group at John Abbott College has concluded, “the onus is on all of Academia to commit to decolonization within and across disciplinary bounds” (Lunny et al., 2016, p. 13).

At the same time, the decolonization of education should be carried out with the consent and collaboration of Indigenous peoples and their communities (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018), so as to respect their self-determination and the principle of “nothing about us without us.” As mentioned in the CICan Indigenous

Education Protocol, decolonizing approaches must include Indigenous communities' input in building curriculum, and in pedagogical and institutional reforms (Colleges and Institutes Canada, 2014). Colleges need to hire Indigenous employees across all sectors of the institution, especially in administration. They should also form Indigenous advisory committees to oversee governance. As settlers unlearn stereotypes we must learn truthful representations, respect Indigenous self-determination, and begin to build better relationships with Indigenous peoples.

4. Decolonizing Education involves Unlearning Eurocentric thinking

If one process in decolonizing is for settler educators and students to unlearn stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and previous misrepresentations of national history, another process involves settlers recognizing the broader ideological context of settler colonial Quebec and Canada and unlearning Eurocentric thinking. Marie Battiste is a leader in promoting the importance of dismantling "cognitive imperialism" in education. According to Battiste (2000), cognitive imperialism is "the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview" (pp. 192-193). In Canada, Eurocentric knowledge and education have been advanced to the exclusion of other knowledges and languages, rendering Indigenous knowledges "unimportant, unrealistic, passé and invisible" (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020). For Indigenous peoples, cognitive imperialism has been about "white-washing the mind as a result of forced assimilation," Eurocentric education, "and living in a Eurocentric context complete with media, books, laws, and values" (Battiste 2013, p. 26).

Cognitive imperialism has traumatic consequences for Indigenous students, whereby internalized colonization promotes that they are inferior to, excluded from, and in conflict with Eurocentric education (Battiste 2013, pp. 26-27; see also Cote-Meek 2014; Little Bear 2000). Moreover, Eurocentric education does all students a disservice by presenting only one way of thinking, one way of being and one way of viewing the world.

In order to decolonize our teaching, non-Indigenous educators need to become aware of the privileges acquired and forcibly maintained by being part of the dominant, colonialist structure. This knowledge is crucial in understanding the injustices of maintaining a stratified social, political and economic system. It is a necessary lens in order to see the world in a different light. Only then can people be motivated to "unlearn" (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020).

We can begin by becoming familiar with the key aspects of Eurocentric thinking that permeate our Eurocentric educational system. Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear characterizes Eurocentric worldview as linear, singular, static and objective. This manifests in a linear sense of time, hierarchical structures and specialization, observing phenomena out of context, and emphasizing measurement and quantity over quality (2000, p. 6). Other scholars cited by Brooke Madden (who identifies as having mixed ancestry) further identify the following Eurocentric ideologies as being reinforced in the Canadian educational system: "individualism, competition, meritocracy, singular Truths, anthropocentrism, unidirectional learning (i.e. teacher educator -> teacher -> student), and disciplinary boundaries" (Tanaka et al., 2007, as cited in Madden, 2015, p. 5).

Such ideologies have resulted in competitive, hierarchical power relationships that permeate our institutions, including our schools. Goulet and Goulet explain that "because our education system was developed on a European model of schooling, exacerbated through colonization, the hierarchical relationships between administrators and teachers and teachers and students are normalized" (2014, p. 139). These ideologies are perpetuated in Canadian educational institutions through the safeguarding of Eurocentric content and values, through hierarchical and competitive relationships (within the institution, between teachers and students, and among students), and through the very ways of thinking about what constitutes "knowledge," "education" and "success." In Eurocentric thinking these have become objects one acquires, rather than lifelong processes that are subjective for each person (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020). Battiste writes that "in order to effect change, educators must help students understand the

Eurocentric assumptions of superiority within the context of history and to recognize the continued dominance of these assumptions in all forms of contemporary knowledge” (2013, p. 186).

Indigenous ways of knowing and learning disrupt and destabilize such cognitive imperialism. Kanien’kéha scholar Sandra Styres discusses such decolonizing praxis (“the practical application of the art and science of teaching”) in her classes:

Decolonizing praxis, by its very nature, resists mainstream approaches to teaching and learning as well as challenging taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the hidden curriculum within classroom practices. In the classroom, decolonizing praxis challenges colonial relations of power and privilege that are systemically embedded in academia. When decolonizing praxis is introduced into the classroom context, it discomforts and challenges taken-for-granted biases and assumptions. (2019, p. 31)

Such unsettling and discomfort is necessary for education to be decolonized; students and teachers should be given encouragement and support to voice their desires and needs in the process of undoing (D. Labelle, personal communication, November 30, 2020).

5. Decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogies center Indigenous ways of knowing

Many scholars argue that teaching only from a Eurocentric worldview does a disservice to *all* students. The exclusion of other worldviews “provides an incomplete picture of the world, which is detrimental to all people” (Vallée, 2017, p. 5). Anishinaabe scholar Jean-Paul Restoule and Chaw-win-is (Nuu-chah-nulth aht and a member of Tla-qui-aht and Cheklesah Nations) thus argue that including Indigenous values and ways of being is necessary because it provides a more comprehensive view of the world in all disciplines. They ask, for example, “[h]ow can we have a comprehensive understanding of history as a subject without engaging with Indigenous perspectives on historical events?” (2017, p. 9). This is the case not only for history or the humanities but for all disciplines, including science, geography, and especially sustainability studies.

Rather, Battiste argues, we should advance “cognitive and cultural diversity” (2011) and work on generating an “ethical space for decolonization” (2013). Following Cree philosopher and educator Willie Ermine (2007), who coined the term “ethical space,” Battiste highlights the “space that is created when Indigenous and Western thought are brought together” (Battiste 2013, p. 105). This in turn is similar to “two-eyed seeing,” a term coined by Mi’kmaw Elder Albert Marshall in 2004, meaning “to see from one eye with the *strengths* of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the *strengths* of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). Applying these concepts means embedding Indigenous values and ways of knowing in the curriculum so that all students can be enriched by these perspectives.

Reintroducing Indigenous pedagogies is not only a way to counterbalance cognitive imperialism and help Indigenous students succeed; according to Restoule and Chaw-win-is (2017), increasing numbers of studies demonstrate that these pedagogical methods are good for all students. These pedagogical methods include creating a classroom community; identifying the teacher as a fellow learner among students and not an expert on the material; focusing on holistic, life-long learning and respecting each student’s learning journey; balancing the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual development of each student; promoting student-led learning, group work and learning from each other; and integrating talking circles, storytelling, learning from Elders, experiential activities, land-based learning, and community engagement, among other approaches. Many studies support the claim that “including Indigenous education in the curriculum is not just more inclusive, it’s just good pedagogy (Restoule & Chaw-win-is, 2017, p. 9)—including research by Mi’kmaw educators in Nova Scotia (Munroe et al., 2013), who argue that “it is not only Indigenous students but all learners who can benefit from the revitalization of Indigenous knowledges (p. 319).

*“Including Indigenous education in the curriculum is not just more inclusive, it’s just good pedagogy”
(Restoule & Chaw-win-is, 2017, p. 9).*

This approach also includes making Indigenous knowledges, methodologies and pedagogical approaches integral when teaching about *any* topic, not just Indigenous-specific topics (Vallée, 2017, p. 14). Blending knowledge systems entails many complexities, and as Leanne Simpson and others have warned, we must beware of reifying and “othering” Indigenous knowledges within the academy (2014, p. 22). The process of exploring and embedding Indigenous knowledges must be ethical, requiring “respect, collaboration, and dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as points of negotiation for how and what can be brought together” (Battiste, 2013, p. 102). This is connected to the recommendations of CIGan’s Indigenous Education Protocol for ensuring that Indigenous people play a leading and properly remunerated role in this work. Many have found inspiration and a model for integrating Indigenous and Western knowledge systems in Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer’s book *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants* (2013).

Conclusion: Starting small

In the rest of my larger literature review, I focus on understanding Indigenous pedagogies, or ways of learning, within the context of Indigenous worldviews. As we go about decolonizing our classrooms, revising course content is important; but we should also pay attention to the ways we teach, so as to present Indigenous worldviews and pedagogies throughout our teaching and not only when addressing Indigenous topics (McGregor, 2012). More information about these pedagogical approaches can be found on the IDN’s Resource Board (see the Works Cited below). For settler educators wishing to include Indigenizing and decolonizing perspectives in our teaching, however, it is important to understand the arguments about decolonization and Indigenous peoples’ self-determination above.

As a settler teacher new to Indigenous Studies I have had fears about not doing decolonizing and Indigenizing work properly our teaching, but I have been inspired to begin this work by Restoule and Chaw-win-is’s argument to “start small” (2017, p. 17). They explain that even though Indigenous pedagogies benefit all students, many non-Indigenous teachers avoid Indigenizing their teaching because of their “hesitancies” and fear of “trespassing.” It is true that settler educators need to beware of cultural appropriation and potentially harming Indigenous students in their classrooms. This is why culturally sensitive training for teachers and staff is badly needed, as is understanding of the principles mentioned in this Bulletin. But as Restoule and Chaw-win-is argue, these moments of “hesitancies” can lead to pauses for reflection, which allow for learning to happen (2017, p. 16).

Moreover, Restoule and Chaw-win-is argue that fear of “trespassing” should not prohibit us from Indigenizing our teaching:

Trespassing has already happened since Canada is on Indigenous land. Not doing anything maintains the status quo, which we’ve already seen is problematic. The teacher who is paralyzed by analysis and fear of doing wrong is not excused from trespassing, as it has already happened. Hopefully, seeing things this way allows non-Indigenous teachers and policy-makers to get past making excuses and feeling sorry for themselves and getting down to action. Instead of asking, “Do I have the right to teach this material?” we should reframe the question as “What is my responsibility?” (2017, p. 16)

Starting small is what we need: Acknowledging what we don’t know is a great first step, thereby reducing the hierarchical power imbalance between teacher and students and inviting students to join us in our learning journeys. Centering Indigenous voices in writing, video, and other media is another great way to begin, especially by inviting Indigenous Elders and other guests to our classrooms to educate teachers and students together. This will furthermore allow us to develop relationships with community partners and to learn from them how we can better decolonize our classrooms and institutions. It is important to do this work ourselves and avoid tasking Indigenous students in our classes with the job of educating their classmates. As Restoule and Chaw-win-is suggest,

[e]very little bit we do to make things better in this area is a step in this journey. Let’s permit ourselves to dive in, admit to others we are not sure, but that we’re learning, ask for help, and be prepared to learn from

the mistakes we're about to make. Along the way, we must form relationships that serve as supports and also a check on what we're doing. ...*What should keep us focused on change is imagining the world we want our children to inherit, and what w*

This is not an easy journey, but it is one we all have the responsibility to join. Above all, this process of unsettling and decolonizing education needs to be accountable to Indigenous peoples—whose voices need to be centered across all subjects in the curriculum, and throughout all aspects of the educational institution. Yet much of the work is also for settlers to do. We can start small.

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