

The Importance of Being an Ally in Indigenous Education

by

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*I would like to respectfully acknowledge that I work and learn
on the traditional territories of the
Kwanlin Dïin First Nation and Ta'an Kwach'an Council.*

Abstract

This project is a framework for three days of professional learning, enabling Yukon educators to establish lasting relationships with Yukon First Nations communities whose learners' achievement and graduation rates are significantly lower than non-First Nations learners (Auditor General of Canada, 2019). Indigenous students are disconnected in classrooms, yet colonial perspective teaching continues.

Through this project, non-Indigenous allies are developed for Yukon First Nations communities, essential to disengage systemic racism and colonization in schools. Bishop (as cited in Wallace, 2011) explained:

Allies are distinguished by several characteristics: their sense of connection with other people, all other people; their grasp of the concept of collectivity and collective responsibility; their sense of process and change; their understanding of their own process of learning; their realistic sense of their own power - somewhere between all powerful and powerless; their grasp of "power-with" as an alternative to "power-over;" their honesty, openness and lack of shame about their own limitations; their knowledge and sense of history; their acceptance of struggle; their understanding that good intentions do not matter if there is no action against oppression; their knowledge of their own roots (p. 164).

Educators are positioned to be curious and learn to fulfill their responsibility to embed Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing in curriculum, resulting in increases of achievement and graduation rates for Indigenous learners.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

A Shift in my Teaching

Teaching children has been a part of who I am from some of my earliest memories. From the age of eight, playing with my younger sister, I knew I would be a teacher. We would play school, and I was always the teacher. My aunt always told me I should be a teacher, and as a young woman at the age of sixteen, I began to formally to teach children gymnastics. After many years of gymnastics instructing, raising three children of my own and substitute teaching in Port Hardy, Fort Nelson and Whitehorse, I decided to go back to university as a single mom and earn certification as a teacher. At this point, I knew I loved to teach, so after four and a half years of university and working full-time I was able to begin my career. During my first year as a grade seven math teacher, I worked hard on assessment for learning with my students, hoping to prepare them for grade eight. I had gained some knowledge about the Indigenous groups and their cultures in the Yukon while completing my undergraduate degree, and I had even attended a cultural camp, but I wasn't including Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in the classroom.

After my first year of teaching, the of my school principal asked staff to include a unit of Indigenous content within long-range plans. This began my interest to deeply understand how to infuse Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in my teaching. As a mother of three children whose father is Cree, I began to wonder how the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in the classroom would impact their learning. My youngest child has a strong connection to her Cree culture, and I have wondered if she might still be in school if Indigenous culture had been honoured in her schooling; at the age of fifteen, she dropped out of school and found it difficult to return.

As an educator in a northern elementary school, I observe some Indigenous content in classrooms, in the form of artwork or an annual culture week, that are shallow cultural teachings (Hammond, 2015). I began to wonder how I could infuse Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into the classroom in a deeper way, so I started asking questions about math with one of our territory's knowledge keepers. I embarked on a journey that was much bigger than I had anticipated, and the first piece of curricular content I included in the classroom that year turned out to be a positive learning experience for myself and the students. Through story, and visits with Knowledge Keepers, students learned curricular content from an Indigenous perspective; they were engaged and curious. Furthermore, Indigenous students in the class became the experts whenever their culture was included. After this experience, I became aware of the importance of working towards decolonizing my classroom practices. Some teachers in the Yukon try hard to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into their teaching, and I am hopeful that there will be deeper culture included daily for future learners.

Context

Fourteen First Nations, each with distinct traditional territory and cultural practices as well as some with shared language and culture, reside in the Yukon region of Canada (Council of Yukon First Nations, n.d.). I live and work on the traditional territory of the the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, whose language is Southern Tutchone. During the 2018-2019 school year, I taught a multi-age class with grades six and seven. The Yukon Territory follows the British Columbia curriculum, an integral part of which is weaving First Nations knowledge and perspectives throughout the curriculum (BC's New Curriculum, n.d.). The Yukon Department of Education requires a unit called the First Nations Programs and Partnerships (FNPP). This unit believes that "All students benefit from understanding First

Nations perspectives” (Yukon Schools, 2019). In 2017-2018, I was given the opportunity to work with the FNPP to change the elaborations to reflect a Yukon First Nations view within the BC redesigned curriculum. Even though the Yukon has included these elaborations from a local territorial perspective, some teachers are still struggling to incorporate First Nations ways of knowing and doing into the daily classroom experience.

Justification of the Project

When an educator includes First Nations ways of knowing and doing in the classroom, deeper cultural understanding results for both non-First Nations students and teachers. It also gives First Nations students the opportunity to share with their school community who they are and where they come from, allowing First Nations students to feel less marginalized. The First Peoples Principles of Learning (Chrona, 2014) are more than just content; these principles encourage educators to pursue ways of teaching that give First Nations learners a place to feel grounded in self and personal history (Chrona, 2014). With the loss of culture due to previous generations attending Residential Schools (Chrona, 2014), school is one of the few places where Indigenous learners can learn and understand about their histories, language and culture. Educators have a responsibility to ensure that Indigenous learners have access to deep culture (Hammond, 2015, p. 23) in the classroom. This personalized way of learning can benefit all learners, Indigenous or non-Indigenous because of the collective ways of Indigenous culture. A collective community makes for a more inclusive environment for learners.

Non-Indigenous educators may struggle to teach deep culture, many of whom make requests for support from teaching resources. In order for Indigenous students to feel a sense of belonging, and increase their successes in school, the absence of deep culture in classrooms requires remediation.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to address factors that impede non-Indigenous educators from teaching deep culture in the classroom. What are the barriers preventing non-Indigenous educators from teaching deep Indigenous culture, and what do non-Indigenous Yukon educators need to enable them to infuse deep Indigenous culture in learning environments?

The goal of this project is to create professional development for Yukon educators to begin to formulate the tools needed teach deep culture in the classroom. Bishop (as cited in Wallace, 2011) explained,

To be allies is to take our relationship with Indigenous Peoples seriously and actively engage in our own practice of decolonization. It entails making visible when and how we specifically act in ways that reinforce colonial legacies, unlearning such patterns of domination ("power over") and focusing upon strategies of alliance-building that creates "power with". (p. 156)

In order for non-Indigenous educators to become allies, caring relationships need to be built, the fundamental building blocks of the professional development framework presented in this project.

Definition of Terms

Aboriginal: people inhabiting a land before the arrival of colonists.

Elaborations: additional suggestions within the BC curriculum for Indigenous teachings.

First Peoples Principles of Learning: A set of general learning principles to reflect Indigenous pedagogy.

Indigenous: a collective name for the original peoples of Canada which include, the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Residential Schools: government sponsored religious schools that were established around 1880 in Canada to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Euro-Canadian culture. The last school was closed in 1996.

Surface/Shallow/Deep Culture: Surface culture is observable elements of culture such as food, dress, holidays, and artwork. As seen in *Figure 1*, shallow culture is unspoken rules about social norms and everyday interactions (such as speaking with Elders, personal space, and eye contact in conversation). Deep culture refers to deep values and ideals that shape actions and decisions. “It is the bedrock of self-concept, group identity, approaches to problem solving and decision making” (Hammond, 2015, p. 24).

Non-Indigenous Educator Allies: Educators who realize their own biases and worldview. They understand how imperative it is to decolonize the classroom, and this requires building relationships with Yukon First Nations communities. Non-Indigenous Educator Allies put their egos aside and understand that Yukon First Nations leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers lead the way in decolonizing education.

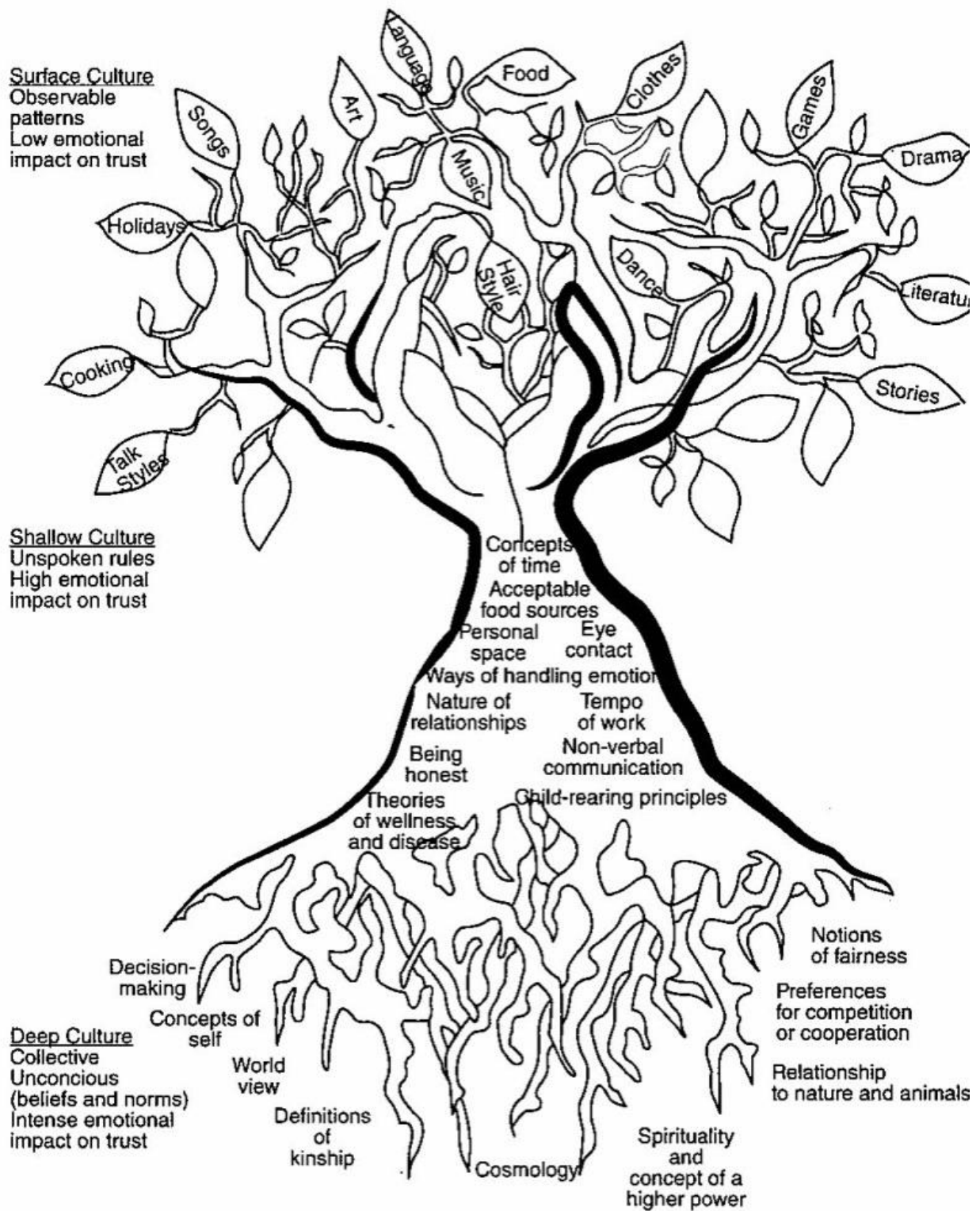


Figure 1. Levels of culture. From *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*, by Z. Hammond, 2015, p. 24. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review brings awareness to the reader of the Residential School legacy, and the effects it has had on Indigenous peoples in Canada. The resulting intergenerational trauma is reflected upon, and how the trauma that has been experienced by Indigenous peoples has affected their way of living and frequent lack of success in the education system. Once the reader has some understanding of Residential Schools and intergenerational trauma, the concepts of Indigenizing education and decolonizing the classroom are explained.

The Yukon Territory serves as the focus of how its education system is slow in implementing Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into classrooms. The Yukon Department of Education was audited in 2009, acknowledging that there were significant student achievement gaps between First Nations and non-First Nations students. As of 2019, these gaps remain considerable (Auditor General Report, 2019, p. 3). There are barriers making it difficult for non-Indigenous educators to teach Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing in the classroom, and these barriers are discussed in the final section of the literature review.

Residential Schools and the Effects on Canada's Indigenous People

There is a part of history that very few people speak about in Canada today. A shared history of residential schools is part of a shared Canadian past about which many educators know little. Residential schools began operating in the 1880s as a way to “assimilate” (Boese, Neufeld & Starzyk, 2017, p. 1) Indigenous peoples in Canada. Children were either taken from their parents, or parents were told to take their children to Residential School. Indigenous children were forced to abandon their culture and adopt the Eurocentric values taught at the schools.

Government and academic investigations have concluded that Indian residential schools (IRSs) in Canada subjected thousands of students to horrific experiences and contributed significantly to the present poor welfare of many Aboriginal children, lagging Aboriginal educational and economic success, jeopardized Aboriginal languages and cultures, health problems among Aboriginal peoples, and the overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples in the criminal justice system. (Barnes & Josefowitz, 2018, p. 1)

Residential schools were introduced to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian society by removing Indigenous children from their families and culture. While at residential school, Indigenous children were not allowed to speak their native language or practice their culture. “In 1885, the federal government’s Annual Report included a declaration that Aboriginal children in residential school should no longer be allowed to speak their mother tongue” (Fontaine, 2017, p. 187). This initiated a cultural genocide that began to systematically erase language and culture from Indigenous communities across Canada; it was a way of separating, isolating and controlling Indigenous families and communities, so the Canadian Government could gain control of their land and resources (Thielen-Wilson, 2014). Over 150,000 First Nation children were sent to Residential Schools, and this practice continued for over 100 years (Thielen-Wilson, 2014, p. 182).

For one hundred years, Indigenous children not only had their languages and culture stripped from them, they also endured mental, physical and sexual abuse. Students that attended Residential schools were often neglected, which led to poor health and sometimes even death (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). Residential schools were likely to have unsanitary conditions, and the students were often poorly fed, which led to a variety of health problems. Due to these conditions, infectious diseases like tuberculosis was contracted by many children during their time at Residential school, thus many Residential school students would succumb to

the disease as adults (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2016). Abuse and lack of care were not the only parts of the Residential school system that made it difficult for Indigenous children; there was also the lack of quality education that made it difficult for their futures after completing their time at Residential school.

The inequalities and racism that Indigenous people face today began with government and religious organizations that required the attendance of Indigenous children at Residential Schools to remove Indigenous language and culture (Boese et al., 2017). The quality of education that Indigenous people experienced was not equal to that of non-Indigenous students. Residential Schools were underfunded, and poor care was given to Indigenous students (Wilt, Maltby & Cook, 2017). The attitude that Indigenous people were lesser than non-Indigenous Canadians began with the institutionalized Residential Schools, and this attitude continues to be prevalent today in many aspects of Canadian society.

Educating non-Indigenous Canadians about the effects of Residential Schools is an important part of the healing that is required in Canada. According to Boese et al. (2017, p. 2) three separate surveys were conducted asking non-Indigenous Canadians if they know about Residential schools. According to the surveys, 51%, 54% and 66% of non-Indigenous Canadians had knowledge of Residential schools (Boese et al., 2017, p. 2). These surveys were conducted from 2008 to 2016 respectively. The final survey organized by The Canadian Public Opinion in 2016, shows somewhat of an increase in non-Indigenous Canadians' knowledge of Residential schools (Boese et al., 2017, p. 2). Education about Residential Schools needs to more prevalent in school systems so that Canadians will have a better understanding of their effects and the long-term impacts that it has had and continues to have on Indigenous communities.

Understanding what occurred in Residential Schools is essential to making the connections between Residential School survivors, their children and grandchildren. The last Residential School closed as recently as 1996, so Canadians need to know how this recent past is affecting Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. Understanding this shared history and the need for reconciliation begins now, as Justice Sinclair states “reconciliation is for us much more than a five-year journey, it is a generational journey” (Milloy, 2014, p. 18-19). Residential Schools continue to affect intergenerational Indigenous peoples today, so Canadians have a responsibility to be a partner in the healing.

Intergenerational Trauma and the Classroom

Indigenous learners in classrooms may have difficulty attending to their studies due to intergenerational trauma they are experiencing from a history of Residential schooling in their families (Feir, 2016). In schools, Indigenous learners may display a distrust of their teachers, and learners may seem disconnected from the learning environment. This lack of trust has been programmed into young Indigenous learners from parents and grandparents who attended Residential school. The lack of trust in the education system, and the abuse that Residential school survivors have endured, continues to be passed along in families in many cases (Dionne & Nixon, 2014). It was presumed that Residential school students were unable to learn to the same levels as non-Indigenous children; many of the survivors left school with no more than a grade three education due to low expectations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2016). According to Statistics Canada (2011) Indigenous learners’ graduation rates across Canada are 20% less than those of non-Indigenous learners. In the Yukon, Indigenous learners graduate at a rate of 27% less than non-Indigenous learners (Yukon Education, 2018).

Indigenous culture and language are being lost due to their restrictions within Residential schools and the intergenerational trauma that has resulted. Many parents who attended Residential schools could not or would not continue their cultural teachings with their own children because they had been forbidden to practice their cultures while being housed at these sites (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2016). During the time of Residential Schools, there was shame attached to speaking one's native tongue, and many First Nations refused to teach their own children and grandchildren their first languages. As a result of families not speaking their Indigenous first languages, the number of fluent speakers has become fewer and fewer in Indigenous communities. There is a danger of losing many of the Indigenous languages across Canada as more fluent speakers age and pass away. With a lack of culture and their first language, Indigenous students who currently attend schools in Canada, most often feel out of place, and they carry intergenerational trauma that has been passed down from parents and grandparents that attended Residential School.

Indigenous children who have had family members that have attended Residential Schools are more likely to have negative outcomes in public schools (Feir, 2016). The intergenerational trauma which started with Residential Schools, has been passed down through generations, and this trauma continues due to exposure "to traumatic experiences of violence, sexual abuse, accidental death, suicide, discrimination, and oppression. The trauma here is intergenerational because "economic, social, and political dependence, the effects of colonization, are intergenerational" (Gagne, 1998, p. 368). More recently, the study of epigenetics has suggested that the DNA of Residential School survivors has been altered by the psychological and physical trauma they endured which is being passed down to subsequent

generations (O'Neill, Fraser, Kitchenham & McDonald, 2018). As a result, Indigenous families continue to live in a traumatized environment.

A lack of trust in the school system is a significant part of the traumatization that Indigenous students experience. Attributable to intergenerational trauma, Indigenous parents and grandparents have a general mistrust of the school system. Young Indigenous students attending school, may also have self-regulation issues and other behavioural disturbances in the classroom. These students will often feel disconnected, and as a result, Indigenous students are treated with lower expectations than non-Indigenous students. Because of these low expectations, Indigenous students may feel unmotivated to learn, and a number of students will end up in lower level coursework in school (Whitley, 2014). Due to a lack of understanding on the part of the colonized school system, Indigenous students continue to feel misplaced and isolated in the classroom.

Indigenizing Education

Indigenizing education can take on many forms. According to Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) there are three areas of indigenizing education: inclusion, reconciliation and decolonization. Further, Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) speak of indigenizing university education, but their research can transfer to elementary and post-secondary schooling. Inclusion education at the university level would require more Indigenous teaching staff and students (2018). Post-secondary education inclusion involves not only hiring more Indigenous teachers but employing more Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers to interact with classes. Reconciling education involves recognizing and weaving Indigenous ways of knowing into the classroom in a deeper sense than just exhibiting Indigenous artwork on the wall of the school (Hammond, 2015). As a result, students and staff in schools will be able to “change how they think about, and act toward,

Indigenous people” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 5). The third area of embedding Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, or indigenizing education, is decolonization. Indigenous decolonization “exposes places where dominant structures must be re-made to embrace other than the dominant ways of knowing and doing” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 6). School systems still use colonial ways, so it will require a large shift to change the ways in which schools currently operate.

Indigenizing the school system requires efforts from all parties involved, but the colonizers will have to work towards a mindset that is open to asking, and listening to Indigenous communities in order to understand how to indigenize schools. Working towards inclusive Indigenization has begun in the Yukon, yet more growth in this area is needed. Inclusive practices are occurring in some classrooms, and Indigenous students are beginning to share who they are and where they come from. With the addition of Indigenous language speakers and liaisons in some Yukon schools, young people and their families are beginning to feel more confident with their place in education.

Teachers are graduating from a Yukon based Indigenous teaching program that emphasizes the cultures of the Indigenous peoples in the territory, and Indigenous language is included in this program as well. Improvements to ensure more inclusive classrooms and workplaces for Indigenous peoples have not been very successful, and the Report of the Auditor General of Canada (2019) states that progress in this area is slow (p. 18). Additionally, the Joint Education Action Plan (Auditor General of Canada, 2019) between Yukon First Nations and Yukon Education, was not moving at the originally established a pace. Cultural inclusion standards were expected to be implemented in all Yukon schools, including: addressing systemic racism, improving learning standards for all students, and increasing academic achievement rates

for all students (Auditor General of Canada, 2019). The report states that some schools pursued these actions, but there were schools that had not.

Another action plan was to implement a Kindergarten Yukon First Nations Immersion Language program; it has not been implemented into a Yukon school since this action plan was brought forward in 2014. Although there has been some effort to have inclusive Indigenization in the Yukon, the five-year plan of Yukon Education has yet to be realized. Within this five-year plan, reconciliation included the establishment of First Nations languages and culture within Yukon schools.

Reconciliation within the schools of the Yukon would have Yukon First Nations control and be responsible for their first languages, according to the five-year plan. The Yukon Education Department did not create policies or guidelines that examined the amount of, or scheduling of, First Nations language instruction in their schools. Without policy or guidelines, ensuring control and responsibility, and without a concrete program for oversight, it would be difficult for Yukon First Nations assume their responsibility as planned. On average, only about 38% of students from kindergarten to grade seven were enrolled in First Nations language classes, and there was only about 3% of students still in these classes after grade seven (Auditor General of Canada, 2019, p. 19).

Reconciling curriculum was another aspect of the report where the Yukon Education Department displayed a lack of consistency. Firstly, the Auditor General's report found that there had not been any additional resources given to the First Nations Partnerships Unit since the 2010-2011 fiscal year (Auditor General of Canada, 2019). Secondly, teachers felt that they didn't have enough knowledge and resources to integrate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing. There has not been enough Indigenous curriculum developed and training in the

Yukon for all grade levels, so teachers can feel confident integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing (Auditor General of Canada, 2019). Education in the Yukon has a journey to undertake in order to decolonize learning in the classroom for teachers and students. In order to realize reconciliation, the work involves decolonizing current educational practices, from educational leaders' actions to practices in the classroom.

Indigenous decolonization challenges current colonial practices in the classroom. Decolonizing schools includes examining structures that are embedded in curriculum delivery, paying attention to teachers' worldviews and looking at where learning takes place (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Munroe, Borden, Orr, Toney and Meader (2013) state, "moving towards decolonization requires extensive transformation of education where learning is rooted in Indigenous knowledges rather than treating these knowledges as an "add-on" or "other" way of knowing" (p. 320). With over one hundred years of racism and a paternalistic way of delivering education to Indigenous learners, decolonization will require intensive training of teachers, before they will be able to provide educational opportunities for all learners that are embedded in Indigenous ways of knowing doing. Yukon teachers who identify as having Indigenous descent are less than 20% (Auditor General Report, 2019, p. 21). The need for cultural training emerging from the Auditor General's report surfaced when teachers were surveyed to identify what they might require to feel more comfortable teaching First Nations ways of knowing and doing in the Yukon. Teachers suggested having access to First Nations Elders, a full-time cultural resource person in schools, workshops to help teachers understand how to integrate culturally appropriate lesson plans, sample lesson plans for all grade levels, and a list resources that supports the new curriculum (Auditor General of Canada, 2019).

Colonized education, from the time of Residential Schools, involves students learning in a classroom. This method of education can be difficult for Indigenous students. From an Indigenous worldview, learning on the land from a more wholistic perspective is an important part of culture (Munroe et al., 2013). Bringing students onto the land to learn from an Indigenous perspective are opportunities for students to gain an understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Learning outside of the classroom also allows more context for curriculum, benefiting all learners. Not all Yukon schools have had land-based activities for students according to the Auditor General of Canada report (2019). An improvement in this area will allow for more decolonization of the education system. It is important to think about the goal in pursuit of decolonization. The Yukon has begun to move towards the decolonization process, but Yukon Education has not taken enough steps to offer education in the territory that reflects Yukon First Nations culture and language (Auditor General of Canada, 2019).

Implementing Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing into Yukon Schools

Understanding the ways in which Indigenous students learn is necessary to implementing Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in the curriculum. It involves creating a learning environment that incorporates community because Indigenous culture is a collective society, making the structure of colonialized school environment difficult for Indigenous students. This collective way of being is the way Yukon First Nations have always lived. Publicly stated, as far back as 1977, their culture is one where “All possessions belonged to the group and individuals did not suffer unless the whole group was in need” (Yukon Indian People, 1977, p. 9). Yukon First Nations students have been raised to think of how they can better their communities and the Eurocentric way of schooling has not improved outcomes for Yukon First Nations students. Classrooms have a history of colonialism, and with the colonization of Canada, society has

become individualistic (Rinne, Steel & Fairweather, 2012). Teachers in Yukon schools are mainly non-Indigenous, so an individualistic way of being is currently leading the education system. Presently, less than 20% of teachers in the Yukon are of Indigenous descent (Auditor General Report, 2019, p. 21). It is evident that the current system structure is not helping Yukon First Nations students, who are lagging behind non-First Nations students (Auditor General Report, 2019). During the 2017-2018 school year, Yukon Nations students scored much lower on the Yukon Foundation Skills Assessment. Furthermore, the percentage of Yukon First Nations who drop out of school before graduating is substantially more at 37% compared to Yukon non-First Nations students at 14% (Auditor General Report, 2019, p. 7). Realizing First Nations ways of knowing and doing in Yukon schools is a task for which everyone has responsibility.

The BC curriculum is encouraging more inclusion of First Nations ways of knowing and doing in Yukon schools, but it is a matter of actualizing them into practice. Teachers fear they don't have the expertise or knowledge to properly decolonize classrooms, but in order for this movement to happen, it is necessary to think about the relationships between educators and Yukon First Nations communities. According to the 2019 June Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, "more than 55% of the teachers who responded to our survey did not feel that they had the tools and resources needed to integrate First Nations culture into their teaching" (Auditor General Report, 2019, p. 21). Other jurisdictions in Canada have had some success weaving Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into classroom curriculum, but there are still many educators struggling with the delivery.

Difficulties with implementing Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, stem from two main areas: teachers lacking knowledge of Canada's colonial past, and the lack of curricular

material in schools that accurately portray the shared history with Indigenous peoples (Godlewska, Rose, Schaepli, Freake & Massey, 2017). In order to teach Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, there will need to be opportunities for teachers to learn about our shared history with Indigenous peoples of Canada, and develop caring relationships with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous students. When teachers can truly understand how Indigenous peoples have been treated for over one hundred and fifty years, connections can be made with Indigenous communities which will ease transitions for teachers to implement Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into the curriculum.

Barriers to Integrating Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing

Infusing Indigenous culture into current education practices, holds many challenges for educators, from elementary school to the university level. Throughout Canada, embedded colonial practices pose many challenges for education systems to overcome in order to successfully weave Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into classrooms. One of the first ways to help educators realize the importance of this work is to ensure an understanding of current Eurocentric ways of teaching which stem from a colonial past (Iseke-Barnes, 2008).

Assimilation by the Canadian Government has been the goal for Indigenous peoples for well over one-hundred and fifty years (Fontaine, 2017). Understanding how Indigenous education can be integrated into the colonial classroom is at the forefront for many educators, but to transform classrooms it will take more than just the development of a new curriculum. Simply teaching a unit with Indigenous content, using paternalistic colonial ways, will not positively serve young Indigenous people and will not embrace the way Indigenous education is intended to be delivered. Without a deep understanding of regional Indigenous culture, it will be difficult for teachers to confidently weave Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into their classrooms.

When educators become students, and begin the work of becoming aware of their colonial past, they encounter the emotional aspects of the information and impact that have deeply influenced learners. “At times students do experience considerable stress and emotional upset in learning about topics including genocide, slavery, racism, sexism, violence, and oppression” (Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 133). When learning about these aspects of shared history it is important that social supports are in place (Iseke-Barnes, 2008).

It is essential for teachers to take personal responsibility for their actions by proactively working towards changing educational settings, recognizing the oppression of Indigenous peoples and making a concerted effort to reverse this oppression (Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 134). As teachers move through their journeys to grasp and reflect on the shared colonial past, they will be more prepared to weave Indigenous ways of know and doing into their classrooms. With a deep understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing doing, teachers will be more prepared to appreciate and create a learning environment that includes curriculum representing the Indigenous community in their respected locations. What is promising, is that Indigenous ways of knowing and doing creates an inclusive classroom that acknowledges each learner’s diversity (Katz & Lamoureux, 2018). This aligns very well with the current British Columbia and Yukon curriculum.

The recently revised British Columbia curriculum, which the Yukon follows, has Indigenous ways of knowing and doing woven throughout. These ways of knowing and doing are “very old ideas embedded in Indigenous knowledges” (Munroe et al., 2013, p. 319). Recognizing that educators are learning and working on the traditional territories of Indigenous communities will also help create a sense of humility and respect for the people that lived there before the land was colonized. Teachers have an opportunity to learn from Indigenous students

by observing and listening in the classroom, and socially, an Indigenous student may respond differently than a non-Indigenous student. Even though Indigenous learners speak English in classrooms, it is more likely that their thinking and ways of being are much more in line with their Indigenous language (Munroe et al., 2013, p. 321). As well, Indigenous students are raised to look after the younger children in their communities, yet it is common to separate older and younger children on the playground at school (Ball, 2012). This is another example of how colonial ways in the school system differ from Indigenous values. Ball (2012), explains through (Speilmann, 1998) how Indigenous communities see themselves in the colonial world. “A First Nations worldview can best be understood by paying careful attention to how people talk about the world around them in terms of relationships, the environment, family, community, and the spiritual world” (Spielmann, 1998, as cited in Ball, 2012, p. 288). Educators have a distance to go on the journey to look at education with this lens.

If teachers are able to weave Indigenous ways of knowing and doing successfully into the classroom, there is potential for Indigenous students to improve their academic performance (Ball, 2012). Before the integration of these ways of knowing and doing, there are other areas schools and teachers need to acknowledge, such as, racism within the school staff members, current school practices or structures that may not align with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, lack of resources, and a general lack of knowledge of Indigenous culture (Deer, 2013, p. 179). Expecting teachers to integrate something as rich and diverse as Indigenous culture without sufficient background will make it difficult for Indigenous ways of knowing doing to be a relevant part of the current education system. Teaching and reinforcing Eurocentric values continues to alienate Indigenous learners (Hansen, & Antsenan, 2016). Teachers need to have had a “transformational experience” (Kanu, 2005, p. 54) before they truly have the desire to

infuse Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into their classroom. For many teachers a transformational experience may not occur without current and heartfelt professional development that is locally designed with Indigenous communities.

Chapter 3 - The Design Process and Rationale

Design Process

As a non-First Nations Yukon educator, I have been very interested in infusing First Nations ways of knowing and doing into the classroom since beginning my bachelor of education. I earned my Bachelor of Education from the Yukon First Nations Teacher Program, and throughout my degree, I was taught Yukon First Nations culture and language. Fascinated by the focus on Yukon history and First Nations communities within each course, I became more aware of the rich cultures and languages of the region. This awareness was also heightened when I realized the extent to which First Nations communities have been marginalized and oppressed in recent history.

When the British Columbia curriculum was released in draft form, I began thinking about how I might include Yukon First Nations culture into my practice. This curricular shift made sense to me, and I felt a responsibility to include First Nations ways of knowing and doing in my teaching. When I began my journey of decolonization in the classroom, I was a teacher of French and Math. In French classes, I started each lesson with a circle, one of the first ways I could include Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing, with my limited experience of local Indigenous culture. While teaching Math, use of the circle became a focus with my students and, at the suggestion of a Tlingit Knowledge Keeper, I developed a unit about circles using a Tlingit seasonal calendar.

After developing the integrated unit about circles, I stood before the Yukon's Elder group, who approve First Nations curriculum, to ask permission to move forward with my unit. My meeting with the curriculum working group provided more insight into the important aspects of this teaching unit since it wasn't just about Math and Art; it was about having students

understand the connection Yukon First Nations peoples have to the land. This experience led to the realization that I needed to invite Elders and Knowledge Keepers into the classroom to share their experiences with students. During that school year, I extended invitations to an Elder and Knowledge Keepers, which led students to connect with their work in the circle unit to the guests. It was an invaluable exchange. Students began to understand connections to the seasons, the land and their personal growth through a Yukon First Nations world view. Genuine pride in their circle unit emerged and Yukon First Nations students were able to share their experiences, feeling connected to the curriculum. Connections made by the First Nations students allowed them to be experts in our class learning, increasing their pride. This shift in the learners further reinforced that teaching the Indigenous students required a connection to who they are and where they come from.

During the second summer of my M.Ed. program, I was immersed in the local Indigenous ways of knowing and doing at Vancouver Island University. After participating in different Indigenous activities and speaking with local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, I was made acutely aware of the importance of my own journey of reconciliation. My heart told me I needed to further immerse my students into Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing. The realization that it isn't just the artwork on the wall or an extra unit of study became quite obvious. Moving forward, my goal would be to foster relationships with Yukon First Nations Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Through family and personal curiosities, I have been fortunate to experience Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Realizing that integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and doing may not be as natural for other Yukon educators, and with the encouragement of a professor, this project design was created as a year of professional development in collaboration with Yukon

First Nations. It is a collaboration where non-Indigenous educators follow the lead of Yukon First Nations on journeys of reconciliation to decolonize Yukon education. It is intended to bridge non-Indigenous educators with Yukon First Nations communities and to form lasting relationships where collaboration and students are at the centre.

Rationale

This proposal for professional development is designed to develop understanding for educators who are facing challenges including Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in their teaching. In order for educators to understand the needs of Indigenous learners in the Yukon, it is necessary to experience the teachings of the Elders and Knowledge Keepers in a supported community of learners that focuses on relationship building.

Colonization in the classroom has a long, embedded history of Eurocentric bias. For decades, educators have been taught with this Eurocentric view, learned to teach with this lens, and have reinforced those perspectives daily. Society is full of stereotypes and low expectations of First Nations students, therefore expecting non-First Nations educators to assume the task of decolonizing education, without real direction or deep understanding, is a daunting task. It might seem easy enough to assemble or design units of study that contain Yukon First Nations content, but does this really allow educators to truly understand First Nations learners? In order for educators to truly understand *how* to incorporate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into the classroom, the initial step is building relationships with First Nations communities and individuals.

This first stepping stone in relationship building with Yukon First Nations communities is gaining knowledge. Relationships are key to trust and they hold value for Yukon First Nations learners. In order for educators to understand and weave Indigenous ways of knowing and doing

into their work, a better understanding of *why* is required. Educators have a limited understanding of the impact resulting from shared history of residential schools and racism of low expectations because most teachers in Canada did not learn this part of history during their own education. After listening to residential school survivors and their families and by grieving about those harmful practices, teachers realize the importance of incorporating First Nations ways of knowing and doing in their classrooms and are more empathetic to First Nations learners. Simply reading about shared history and taking some classes, reinforces disconnection between teachers and their First Nations students because these do not require the work of relationship building.

The purpose of this proposal is to help create friendships and partnerships with Yukon First Nations communities and professionals in education. It is an opportunity to uncover truths, and find ways to promote reconciliation, and decolonization with Yukon First Nations, to maximize learning. The Auditor General Report (2019) explains that little progress has been made to meet the needs of First Nations students in the Yukon. The Department of Education and Yukon First Nations are supposed to collaborate concerning First Nations language and culture, but Yukon First Nations representatives felt that the Department of Education would tell them what they were going to do instead of consulting with them about what they should do (Auditor General Report, 2019, p. 17).

“Listen and learn from our experiences and perspectives and tell your own stories of learning from and learning with Indigenous people” (Dion, 2016, p. 472). The time has come for non-First Nations educators to step to the side to allow our First Nations leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to take the lead. It is important for non-First Nations educators to establish relationships with First Nations communities in order to be able to weave and teach First Nations

ways of knowing and doing in the classroom. Simply adding a unit of study to the curriculum is not enough to bridge the relationship gap; this is Eurocentric thinking. How can an educator truly teach from their heart about First Nations when they have no connection to the learning? Educators continually ask students to make connections with their learning; it is equally important for educators to ask themselves the same question. To begin the journey to reconciliation, it's important to recognize and accept where each person is on their journey (Auditor General of Canada, 2019).

Chapter 4 – The Design

Reconciling Education by Creating Lasting Friendships and Partnerships

Due to a colonial past, educators have been programmed to teach from an individualized and paternalistic worldview. “What is needed is for Canada to transform itself to embrace our true, shared culture and history – to understand that we are all, in fact, in this together (Fontaine, 2016, p. viii). Education has shifted with a curriculum that requires different work therefore educators need to develop caring communication and relationships with Indigenous communities to ensure that inclusive education incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing doing. Yukon First Nations are the leaders in this area, and non-First Nations educators will only benefit from the rich, diverse culture Yukon First Nations has to offer.

Project Proposal

Three days of professional development are proposed for educators to develop background, understanding and an action plan for reconciling education and decolonizing their classrooms. These days are called *Healing our Shared Past: Honouring Reconciliation by Transforming and Decolonizing Education*. Information about the professional development series will be shared with staff through posters in schools that are co-developed with Elders, see *Figure 2*.

Prior to participation, educators will complete a series of pre-requisite actions so that they can arrive at the sessions ready to push their learning forward. For the purposes of this project, *educators* refer to participants who are teachers, educational assistants, learning assistant teachers, and principals.

Educator Preparation

Within the school setting, preparation must begin before the three professional development days that are encompassed by *Healing our Shared Past*. During the preparative time, educators will:

1. Complete the First Nations 101 course within their schools. This is a one-day course that describes self-governance and important moments in Yukon First Nations history.
2. Spend a minimum of one class per week in a First Nations language class, learning alongside their students.
3. Participate in a workshop: The Blanket Exercise or Understanding the Village.
4. Introduce themselves in the language of the First Nations Territory they stand on.
5. Complete the required reading, “A Knock on the Door” (Fontaine, 2016).
6. Spend time with the cultural expert or First Nations language instructor in their school learning about proper protocol when interacting with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper (Yukon First Nations Protocols, n.d.).

During one school year, educators will participate in three days of professional development at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Participants will be Yukon Department of Education Educators, Yukon First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and other Yukon First Nations community members.

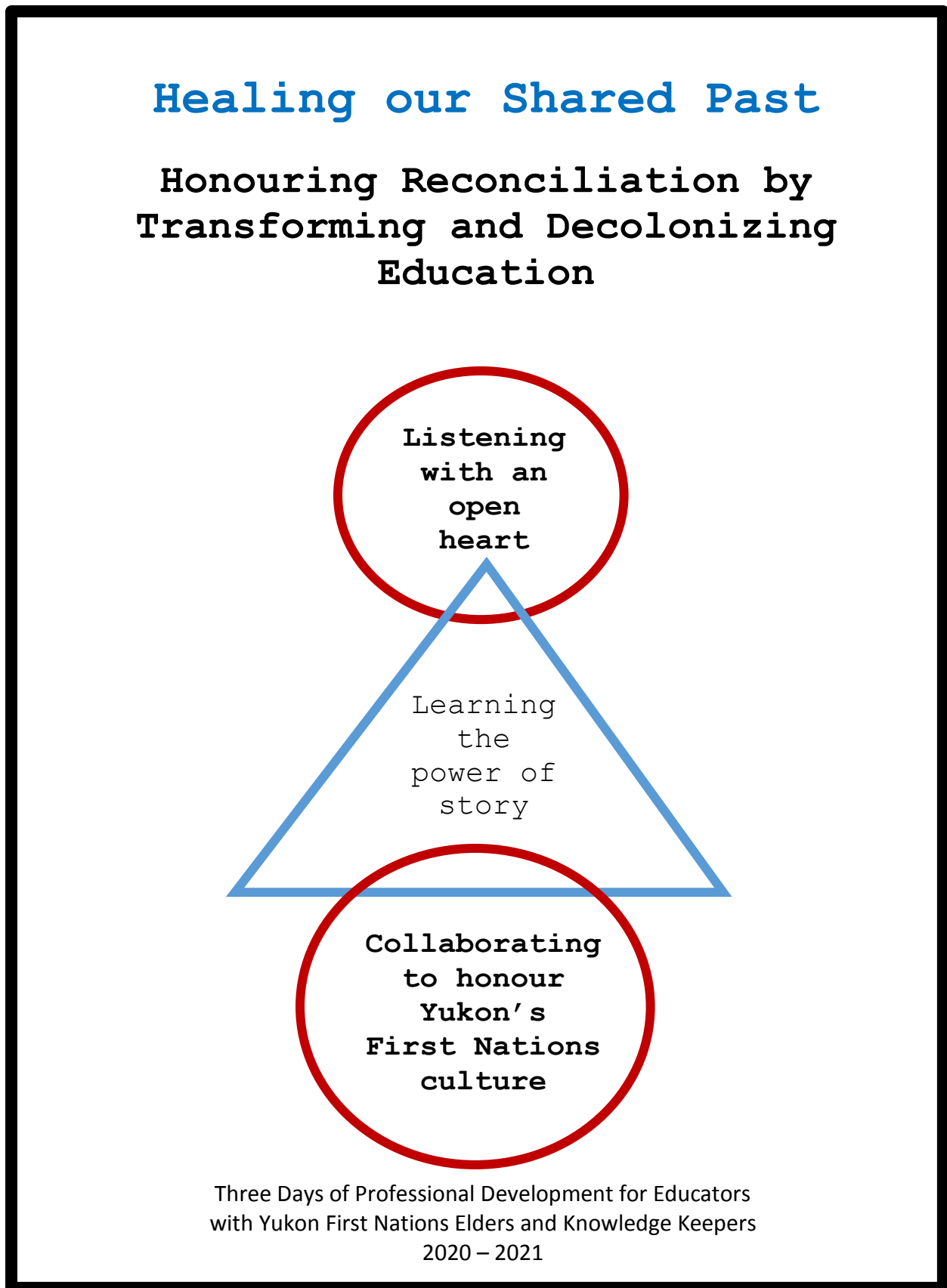


Figure 2. Sample poster to inform and recruit educators for *Healing our Shared Journey*.

Day One – Listen, Listen, Listen*Who am I? Where do I come from?*

Educators will spend the morning listening. It will not be easy. Counselors will be on site for anyone needing assistance coping with feelings that may become powerful. The purpose of this session is to build capacity for empathy and understanding in educators.

Planned structures include:

- Organizing educators to assigned seats in a circle.
- Honouring the territories on which sharing and learning will occur.
- Opening the day with a morning ceremony or prayer as per the Yukon First Nations protocols.
- Ensuring that a Yukon First Nations speaker/mediator begins the day with introductions, setting a pattern that each participant in the circle will follow.
- Removing distractions. Educators' will listen; no paper for writing, or cell phones, during communications in the circle.

The sequence of presentations and interactions includes:

- Hearing from families and individuals about their residential school experiences.
- Speaking with intergenerational survivors.
- Learning about the effects of Residential Schools on education today.
- Learning how First Nations families feel about the school system and how their children are coping.
- Respecting Elders by serving their lunch first; educators will help serve Elders.
- Eating lunch with someone new to initiate and further develop relationships.
- Asking questions following lunch.
- Reflecting orally, educators will be given opportunities to speak about their experiences of the day.

- Closing the day based on local traditional protocol.

Preparation work for Day Two requires educators to answer the following questions and bring that information to the next session for sharing:

Do you know all of your First Nations students in your classroom?

What is their First Nation and its traditional language?

Day Two – Storytelling*Communication and education.*

The purpose of this day is to build capacity for empathy and understanding in educators by utilizing storytelling. The sequence of presentations and interactions includes:

- Listening to stories from Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
- Learning the value of oral storytelling in education and why it is so important to include in classrooms.
- First Nations storytelling is also a history lesson.
- Lessons from story.
- What can students can tell us through story?
- Mapping in the information learned from the homework since Day One.
- Respecting Elders by serving their lunch first; educators will help serve Elders.
- Eating lunch with someone new to initiate and further develop relationships.
- Asking questions following lunch.
- Reflecting orally.
- Examining territory resources, to be able to tell stories in the classroom.
- Closing the day based on local traditional protocol.

Preparation work for Day Three requires educators to invite an Elder or Knowledge Keeper into the classroom to tell a story and prepare to share that experience at the next session.

Day Three – A Wholistic Way of Being*The land and spirituality.*

The purpose of this day is to develop beginning understanding the connection to the land, culture in the community, and the value of spirituality. The sequence of presentations and interactions includes:

- Listening to stories from Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
- Exchanging experiences about inviting a story teller into the classroom.
- Listening and observing in small groups about topics including: dancing, singing, drumming, artwork, understanding what the land has to offer, and understanding a wholistic way of being as a First Nation.
- Understanding First Nations Spirituality: what is it, why is it important, and can it be a part of a classroom culture?
- Learning about ceremony, its value and meaning.
- Respecting Elders by serving their lunch first; educators will help serve Elders.
- Eating lunch with someone new to initiate and further develop relationships.
- Examining curriculum in small groups, beginning to understand how to connect it to Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing.
- Asking questions following lunch.
- Reflecting orally.
- Closing the day based on local traditional protocol.

Demonstrating their understanding of these professional development days will culminate four weeks later when educators connect the curriculum to Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing. Reflections of this connection will be shared with educators' respective principals,

and, principals will share their reflections with their area superintendent. All reflections will be forwarded to Yukon Education's FNPP unit for review. From these reflections, FNPP will be able to work with educators to develop more resources to incorporate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into the curriculum.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Summary

The aim of this project is to encourage partnerships and friendships between non-Indigenous educators and Yukon First Nations community members. Evidence suggests that non-Indigenous educators in the Yukon often feel they are lacking in knowledge and resources to integrate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into the classroom. Inconsistent infusion of Yukon First Nations ways of knowing in the classroom has resulted in Yukon First Nations students continuously lagging behind non-First Nations students in schools (Auditor General Report, 2019).

To ensure consistency in the Yukon Territory, it will be imperative that Yukon Educators have access to professional development that is relevant and allows for a deep understanding of the wholistic ways of Yukon First Nations. “Indigenous knowledge is now seen as an educational remedy that will empower Aboriginal students if applications of their Indigenous knowledge, heritage and languages are integrated into the Canadian educational system” (Battiste, 2013, p. 87). Before embarking on the three days of professional development, *Healing our Shared Past: Honouring Reconciliation by Transforming and Decolonizing Education*, it is imperative that educators have acquired prior knowledge, as described in the Educator Preparation section.

Listening with an open heart and mind is required during the three days as educators begin their journey of reconciliation with Yukon First Nations experts. Developing an understanding of the wholistic nature of Yukon First Nations culture is the aim of the school year while non-First Nations educators develop the skills and resources to weave First Nations ways of knowing and doing into their classrooms. After each professional development day, educators

will be required to continue their journey within their respective schools. For the following professional development day, educators will share their experiences, or homework, with a Knowledge Keeper, or Elder, assigned to them during the previous professional development day.

Discussion

As educators in the Yukon Territory move forward, they are responsible to ensure First Nations students receive an education that is inclusive and infuses Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing. If Yukon Education and Yukon First Nations can collaborate to develop understanding and programming that will include Yukon First Nations in the curriculum, Yukon's First Nations students will have opportunities to close the achievement gap. Collaboration with Yukon First Nations leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers needs to be done with respect. As well, egos should be put aside, and educators will be required to be ready to listen.

In order to become an Indigenous ally, educators will be required to become students with the ability to listen with humility. Yukon First Nations Elders and Knowledge Keepers are invaluable resources, and it will be necessary to listen and learn from them in a way that may be unfamiliar to some educators. Attending the proposed professional development days, *Healing our Shared Past: Honouring Reconciliation by Transforming and Decolonizing Education*, will provide some context for educators to understand the importance of infusing Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into the curriculum.

During the three days, participating educators will listen to stories, build relationships and begin work to develop Yukon First Nations culturally relevant material to incorporate into classrooms. Building relationships will be key for educators as they embark on the journey of

reconciliation. As educators begin the transformation into decolonizing their classrooms, the relationships and friendships they develop with Yukon First Nations communities will be imperative to the journey. Reminding ourselves why this journey is important, Demmert (2001) states

Aboriginal language and cultural programs, and student identification with such programs, are associated with improved academic performance, decreased dropout rates, improved school attendance rates, decreased clinical symptoms, and improved personal behaviour of children. (p. 9)

Thus, the power of developing positive cultural identity in the early years goes far in helping children adjust to school life (Ball, 2012, p. 290).

Becoming an ally in Indigenous education needs to be a priority for educators. Gaps in achievement and graduation rates in the Yukon will not be reduced unless educators and Yukon First Nations communities work together to make reconciliation a reality.

Limitations

Format.

The format of the three-day professional development sessions is reliant on having three full days of professional development dedicated to solely Yukon First Nations education. Requiring three days away from schools may be a limiting factor due to the time commitment and its cost. According to the Auditor General Report of Canada (2019), Yukon Education is dedicating only one professional development day of the entire 2019-2020 school year to Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing. It is important to recognize that, “Effective professional learning takes place over a period of time. It is not a one-shot workshop” (Donohoo,

2017, p. 52). If Yukon Education cannot dedicate more than one day to this important work, it may be problematic to secure this three-day format during the course of the school year.

Another limitation of this design is ensuring teachers complete the pre-requisite work in a timely manner. Educators who don't read the required readings, and participate in the language class with their students, will find their learning sporadic. Teachers may not place priority on learning how to introduce themselves in the language of the territory, further limiting their acquisition of local Indigenous understandings and respect for the territories where they learn and teach.

Overcoming bias.

Due to the shared history of Residential Schools in Canada, embarking on reconciliation, doesn't move forward without barriers. The country continues to live with systemic racism against Indigenous peoples, where some individuals still think Indigenous people need to "just get over it", an expression that is commonly heard. Assuming that non-First Nations educators will freely embark on three days of professional learning about Indigenous ways of knowing and doing with enthusiasm may be unrealistic; it will take time and patience to encourage educators to realize the benefits of this work. As Nakata asks, "how can non-Indigenous teachers do this when they have their biases and may already be challenged in this area? (p. 2)" (as cited in Baynes, 2015, p. 82). Overcoming these biases will require working with educators, and reaching their hearts, to embrace the value of weaving Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into the curriculum.

Financial limitations.

Implementing three days of professional development for Yukon educators will be costly due to the geography size of the territory. In order for all educators in the Yukon to participate, it

would require several three-day sessions to be scheduled throughout the school year. Depending on the size of the staff of each school, there are many sites where only one school staff will be able to attend at a time. The maximum number of staff members in attendance should not exceed 50. At least twenty Elders and Knowledge Keepers will be needed, combined along with a mediator/facilitator. On the first day, counseling supports need to be available, due to the sensitive nature of the content. Lunch can be catered on site, and this, too, will have a cost. Rental of the Kwanlin Dun facility will range from \$300-\$2000 each day, depending on the rooms required. The facilitator, Elders and Knowledge Keepers will need to be paid; funding can either come from Yukon Education, Yukon First Nations or a combination of the two. Dedicating funds to this training may be difficult, and dependent on the government's commitment to improving outcomes for Yukon First Nations students.

Recommendations

Implementation timelines.

Ideally, the three days of professional development will be completed during the course of one school year (2021-2022). During the previous year, 2020-2021, educators will be expected to have completed the pre-requisites as stated in the design. When educators can complete all three professional development days within one year, it allows for continuity and meaningful learning.

Supports.

Supports for teachers.

Teachers will need time process and work with the information they learn at each professional development day. If possible, teachers should be given collaborative time within the school day, once a week, to work with a co-worker on how to infuse Yukon First Nations

ways of knowing and doing into the classroom. This will require creative scheduling, or funding for replacement teachers, so there are opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Ensuring there are mentors within Yukon Education for teachers will be an asset as well. Mentors will be teachers that have been successfully incorporating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into their classrooms. These educators may be found within home schools, or there may be time and funding required for offsite visits to other schools.

Support for educational assistants.

Educational assistants will require extra time with the teachers in order to ensure that both parties are working towards the same goals with students. Time should also be available for collaboration with other educational assistants to share information about their work to embed Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing.

Support for learning assistant teachers.

Learning assistant teachers will require time to collaborate with teachers within their school, to ensure consistency when working with students. Additionally, opportunities for learning assistant teachers to work with educators in the same role from other schools would be ideal.

Support for principals.

Principals will need time to collaborate with other principals to ensure equity and continuity across the Yukon. As well, extra funding for replacement teachers will need to be available to allow for collaboration of teachers, if other scheduling possibilities are not possible. Common language, and expectations, from principals will encourage teachers, learning assistants and educational assistants to complete the pre-requisite work before the three professional development days.

Action Plan

Moving forward with this framework will require the input of Elders and Knowledge Keepers to establish each day's content. A facilitator, knowledgeable of Yukon First Nations ways of know and doing, will be imperative to creating three days of rich learning and sharing. The First Nations Education Commission, Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Education (FNPP Unit) and the Yukon Native Language Centre will be major stakeholders in developing and agreeing on funding and content. Realistically, *Healing our Shared Past* could begin in the 2020-2021 school year if the organizing work began at the beginning of 2020. In order for this plan to become a reality, joint approval from Yukon Education, the First Nations Education Commission, and the Council of Yukon First Nations is required.

Summary

The *Healing our Shared Past* professional development days provide a framework to enable educators and Yukon First Nations collaboratively increase the use of Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing into schools Yukon-wide. Yukon First Nations Elders and Knowledge Keepers who are willing to teach Yukon educators about the importance of infusing their ways of knowing and doing is imperative. Of primary importance will be for educators to recognize their role as learning apprentices, step back, put aside their Eurocentric views, and listen with humility as Yukon First Nations Elders and Knowledge Keepers share who they are and where they come from.

Through my journey, I have been fortunate to learn a little about the rich Yukon First Nations cultures and languages. It is with humility and a curiosity to learn that I look forward to continuing this journey of reconciliation and decolonizing my classroom on the Kwanlin Dun and Ta'an Kwach'an territories on which I learn and work. Kwànàsch

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