

What experiences with First Nations culture do ESL students bring to the classroom?

Disrupting settler disposition in ESL students
through critical pedagogy

Edited PowerPoint Presentation

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http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/ah_tahkakoop_c_1816-96.html



<http://www.uregina.ca/esl/>



<https://ccde.usask.ca/learnlanguages/french>



en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oka_Crisis



<http://iqra.ca/2012/hard-truths-that-canadians-need-to-acknowledge-trc-releases-interim-report/>



<http://www.joanholmes.ca/commissions.htm>



<http://www.queensu.ca/international/incoming/esl>

- A 2013 study: ESL students' experiences with First Nations culture at the University of Regina.
- Literature review of Indigenous epistemologies gave a framework to approach the data collection and curriculum development that followed.
- I interviewed 9 students who were in the ESL program at the time of the interview: 6 individually and 3 students in one focus group.
- They are Katarina from Ukraine, Beth from Myanmar; Kelly from China and Rose from the Philippines and five men: Frank from China, Mohammed from Saudi Arabia, John from China, Mussa from the Emirates and Raif from Saudi Arabia (all are pseudonyms).

General findings:

- Either before arrival or shortly after, students confront, interrogate and negotiate the settler disposition they find in Canada.
- They have a lot of questions. Their tools for inquiry often, but not always, leave our students ill-informed and confused.
- When they learn about aboriginal people, they also learn about their place in the Canadian hierarchy.

Students confront the settler disposition

Students were unaware of the story or aboriginal people in Canada.

They relegated First Nations culture to the past, saying that they did not know that First Nations people were still here. If they knew about Residential Schools, they also relegated that story to the past.

They did not understand why First Nations people fight for their rights.

Students hear the settler disposition and negotiate decisions about it. Some seem to see a broader view that not all Aboriginal people fit stereotypes such as being lazy or violent. Others hear that they need to be careful and are afraid.

Students interrogate the settler disposition

Students are listening to others and piecing historical events together. They hear about Residential Schools, taxation systems, land claims and demonstrations, but they are seldom able to talk to a cultural expert to get answers. They don't have historical details or information about Treaties or Canada's legal system, Treaty land entitlement or status cards, so they don't have a framework to understand the pieces that they hear.

Students negotiate the settler disposition

Our students know that they need more knowledge about Canada's history, and they are looking for ways to answer their questions. They use their own context to draw comparisons. They use their knowledge of Canada's legal system.

- **John:** "I wanted to know their real cultural. I really want to know that because first I am in Canada. I want myself to integrate into Canadian culture. And aboriginal culture is a part of Canadian culture."
- **Mohammed:** "Saudi Arabia is different from Canada. Here, they had the land first, then people came from Europe, so it's different. But with us, it's our land also. I was, like, one of them, long time ago."

- **Frank:** I don't think they covered much in the ESL Program. I think they should cover more because it's good to know about Aboriginal people. It's their land after all.
- **Mussa:** I think a solution that might be helpful for students is to give them not lecture but invite Aboriginal volunteers, speakers to inform them and give a background information for students about Aboriginal traditions and about their life in the past and how they had a proud history.

- **Beth:** I also want to know about they have the same rights or not, but I just think that they have, but they have or not, I am not sure.

Simone: What makes you unsure about it?

Beth: Because this country and the government, they make everything item based on the constitution and the law, so everyone who live in the country has to lived by the law.

- **Katarina:** I want to know about them. I want to know something good. Not something like they struggle. It's good to know too, but something famous about them.
- **Katarina:** And the reason why, they have this life. We need to know because we see the bad part first. Maybe to prevent this one maybe we need to be a little bit educated to don't make stereotypes.

Research conclusion: ESL Instructors need to engage critical pedagogy to disrupt the settler disposition our students encounter

- Our students experience the settler disposition before arriving in Canada, or shortly after.
- They know the broad outlines of colonial history of Canada, but there are huge gaps and they often relegate the story of First Nations people to the past.
- They see contradictions and don't know how to explain them.
- Students confront and often reinscribe racial stereotypes.
- Some students use simplified binary thinking to interpret their knowledge, often with a good/bad dichotomy. Others have more sophisticated thinking.
- They want to learn more and they know what they want to learn. They need to have their experiences validated and explained.

Pedagogical activity

Pedagogical activity objective

- Students will ask a First Nations cultural expert about historical facts that challenge notions that Canada embodies freedom and diversity.

Pedagogical approach

- I used Inquiry-based strategies to get students to generate questions that interrogate the settler disposition, and then provided them an opportunity to ask those questions of an expert.

Pedagogical activity

Intermediate

- I found web pages on notable First Nations figures and events
- In partners, they summarized on paper in complex sentences
- They presented their summaries to one another and plotted them on a paper timeline
- They reviewed the timeline and wrote questions.
- They took their questions to a cultural expert at First Nations University.
- Students practiced all skills plus summary and question writing

Advanced

- In groups, students chose topics and researched them online
- They emailed summaries of the research to me and I created a presentation
- They presented their summaries to one another
- They reviewed the presentation and wrote questions.
- They took their questions to a cultural expert at First Nations University.
- Students practiced all skills plus researching, summary writing and writing questions

Conclusion

- Canada was built on notions of racial superiority that overtly privileged (even the poverty-stricken second class) European settlers and suppressed aboriginal people.
- We now have the tools to examine the consequences of colonialism in Canada, decolonize, reconcile and move forward in the spirit of the treaties.
- We have a responsibility to expose the colonial narrative that our students confront when they come to Canada, to give them tools to interrogate and disrupt this narrative as they build their Canadian identities.

- Questions? Contact me at: Simone.Hengen@uregina.ca

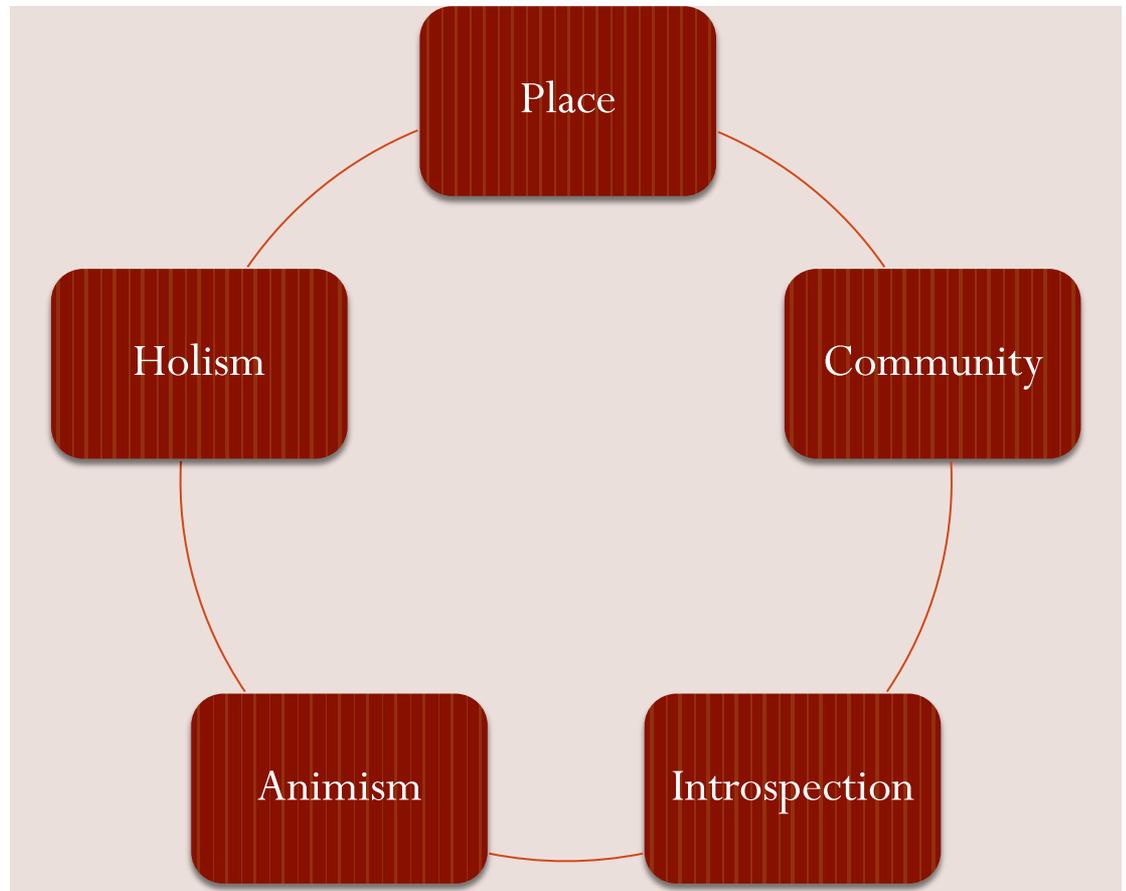
- Research bibliography:

Charmaz, K. (2004) Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Second ed. pp. 249-291). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Literature review of Indigenous epistemologies:

- Marie Battiste – Mi'kmaw
- Willie Ermine - Cree
- Sandy Grande - Quechua
- Margaret Kovach – Cree
- Linda Tuhiwai Smith - Maori

The crucial role
of decolonization



Indigenous Epistemologies Bibliography

Battiste, M. (2008). Research ethics for protecting indigenous knowledge and heritage. In N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln, & L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (pp. 497-510). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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