Exposing the Colonial Mind:
Epistemologies of Ignorance and Education in Ontario, Canada

by

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Abstract

This dissertation weaves Indigenous and decolonial scholarship together with recent work on ignorance to consider the constraints and possibilities of decolonizing education in the current Canadian context of reconciliation. While the study of knowledge and its nature has been the focus of Western thought since ancient times, it is only recently that scholars have begun to grapple with ignorance as a social and political phenomenon in its own right. Ignorance, as these scholars use the term, is not a neutral or incidental absence of knowledge, waiting to be filled. Rather, it is epistemological, a powerful organizing logic that emerges from and works to sustain strategic methods of not knowing that, consciously or not, function to perpetuate the status quo, privilege, and domination. Ignorance in this sense is deeply tied to settler colonialism. To survive as a political and economic system, settler colonialism requires normalization of the ways of thinking that legitimate denigration and subjugation of Indigenous nationhoods. This dissertation elucidates the role of formal education in Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, in encouraging the formation of political subjects with deep, and often unacknowledged, investments in the maintenance of settler colonial relations of power. My colleagues and I worked with over 200 Indigenous educators to develop a research tool that seeks to assess how Ontario high school graduates are learning to think about colonialism and its relationship to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people(s) and Canadian society. This co-designed questionnaire was then disseminated to the first-year cohorts at 10 Ontario universities (over 42,000 students). Results from this study, together with findings from analysis of the most recent generation of Ontario K-12 curricula and textbooks, demonstrate the endurance of colonial modes of thought and their role in undermining the epistemological and affective orientations necessary for the development of decolonizing relations. I argue the importance of epistemic responsibility to
enacting the decolonizing promise of new educational emphases. Moving racism and colonial violence to a different place in Canadian public consciousness requires disrupting the economies of value and attention that work to perpetuate colonial ignorance and legitimate ongoing Indigenous dispossession.
Co-authorship

This dissertation follows a manuscript-style format in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Geography and Planning and the School of Graduate Studies at Queen’s University. All four data chapters are either in review or in preparation for submission.

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As first author I took the principal role in design of analysis, interpretation of results, and writing of all manuscripts. A. Godlewska provided expertise in project design and implementation, guidance on writing and analysis, and financial support for the project. J. Rose contributed to curriculum analysis (Chapter 5) and survey design (Chapter 6). L. Korteweg advised on survey implementation and provided valuable insight on teacher education (Chapter 6). A. Coombs contributed statistical expertise (Chapter 6). L. Morcom contributed to survey design and provided valuable insight on teacher education (Chapter 6).
Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that all of the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author. Any published (or unpublished) ideas from the work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with standard referencing practices.

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List of Abbreviations

OME………………………………………………………………Ontario Ministry of Education
IRSSA……………………………………………………Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement
RCAP …………………………………………………Royal Commission on Aboriginal People
TRC ………………………………………………………Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDRIP……………………………….United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Glossary of Terms

‘Aboriginal’ is a legal term used by the Government of Canada to define the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people(s). I use ‘Aboriginal’ in this dissertation in three contexts:

1) When discussing legal proceedings that, in the language of the Canadian Constitution and court system, refer to the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples as ‘Aboriginal rights’;

2) When referencing or referring to specific quotes or policy documents that use the term;

3) In the context of Newfoundland and Labrador, where it is the preferred language for reasons linked to the decades-long fight by the Indigenous peoples of the province for recognition as Aboriginal peoples (Hanrahan, 2003).

Decolonization is about “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 1). Certainly, decolonization can mean different things to different people at different places and times. But it cannot be “a metaphor…for other things we want to do to improve our societies” (2012, 1). Following the work of Tuck and Yang (2012) and Green (2003), I consider that decolonization involves four principal dimensions:

1) Attending to how those with the most power have shaped societies at individual and social levels;

2) Identifying and challenging the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values that stem from the history of colonization and continue to create injustice;

3) Centering the values, goals and interests of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in transforming what is important in society; and
4) Advancing structural changes in political power, land and resource rights, self-determination, and social institutions including education, justice, media, and health care.

**Epistemology** refers to pervasive rules of thought that, consciously or not, are shared by groups of people. These rules of thought shape the way the features and relations of a given reality become known.

The term ‘**Indigenous**’ refers to the diverse peoples whose ancestral territories and traditional systems of law and governance have been subordinated by settler colonial nation-states and institutions. In Canada, ‘Indigenous’ encompasses First Nations, Métis and Inuit territories and communities as well as forms of identification and governance that exist beyond those defined under the Indian Act. I use the names of specific nations and communities whenever possible.

**Neoliberalism** is a theory and practice of political economy that understands human wellbeing as optimizable through reform of relations between and amongst people and places according to the vocabulary of a capitalist market. Concerned with producing and governing people as rational and self-interested individuals inclined towards market engagement and economic ‘rationality’, neoliberal strategies include privatization and cutback of public services and resources, increasing competition, and managerialism (Castree, 2006; Larner, 2000; N. Rose, 1993). Although neoliberal rationality undoubtedly plays a key role in organizing contemporary social relations and institutions, it is important to avoid framing neoliberalism as an inevitably dominating force. As J.K. Gibson-Graham (2008) argue, framing economy as an ontological given and neoliberalism as all-encompassing denies the creative and coalition-based modes of exchange long practiced by communities affected by political and economic restructuring. Obfuscation of these strategies only works to reinforce the teleology upon which neoliberal
ideologies are based (Freire, 1998; Povinelli, 2011). I do my best in this dissertation to account for both the prevalence and failures of neoliberal governance.

Some scholars find the term ‘settler’ useful because it makes explicit the material benefits and epistemological inheritances that have and continue to accrue to non-Indigenous people through Indigenous dispossession (Lowman & Barker, 2015). Other scholars warn that “settler” risks obfuscating complex global networks of privilege linked to racialization, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and forced and voluntary international migration (Adefarakan, 2011; Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Dei, 2011; Phung, 2011; Sehdev, 2011). In this dissertation, I follow the distinction made by Jafri (2012) and Dhamoon (2015) between what they call “settler complicity” and “settler privilege.” As Jafri argues, while all people living in Canada are complicit in settler colonialism through living in and benefitting from stolen/unceded Indigenous territories, the material and structural advantages that accrue from doing so are not even. Instead of focusing on the moral character of non-Indigenous individuals, it is better to understand settlerhood as a “field of operations into which we become socially positioned and implicated” (Jafri, 2012, n.p; Dhamoon, 2015). This approach is important because it reformulates the focus from conditions that “subjects possess” to “the strategies and relations that produce social and institutional hierarchies” (Jafri, 2012, n.p.). I have sought to write this dissertation in a way that attends to these key issues.

**Settler colonialism** is distinct from, but related to, extractive colonialism. Although often beginning as, and co-existing with, extractive colonialism, settler colonialism entrenches relations of domination through control of territory. Colonists do not ‘go home’ as in Algeria or India after decades of wealth and labour expropriation, but work to displace and ultimately
replace Indigenous societies, erasing the distinction between colony and metropole embedded in extractive colonialism (Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1965; Strakosch & Macoun, 2012; Veracini, 2011a; Wolfe, 1999). Whereas extractive colonies maintain intimate political, economic, and identity ties with the metropole, settler societies seek constantly to legitimize, justify, and mythologize their belonging in the new place, betraying the fragility of settler jurisdiction even as they seek to mask it (Benton, 2009; Ford, 2010; Mackey, 2016; Pasternak, 2014, 2017). It is consequently important to conceive of settler colonialism not as monolithic but as “an ideological project” that serves to “confer legitimacy upon a complex constellation of institutions and processes” (Nadasdy, 2003, 4). Settler colonialism is a more-than-material process.

‘Responsibility’ in this dissertation refers not to a predefined set of actions for which individuals can be lauded or blamed, but to the word’s etymological core – respons – meaning “entering into relation to respond” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). As many scholars have argued, responsibility cannot be essentialized, as its form and content are embedded within the ‘power geometries’ of relational space (Massey, 2004; Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge, 2012; Raghuram, Madge & Noxolo, 2009; Sin, 2017). In this dissertation, I situate responsibility as “entering into relation” to suggest that it is the process of response that most requires critical attention.
“The beliefs and attitudes that were used to justify the establishment of residential schools are not things of the past: they continue to animate official Aboriginal policy today. Reconciliation will require more than apologies for the shortcomings of those who preceded us. It obliges us to recognize the ways in which the legacy of residential schools continues to disfigure Canadian life and to abandon policies and approaches that currently serve to extend that hurtful legacy.”


“We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them.”


In the quotations above are two views of reality: an Indigenous view of Canada as a colonial country with a powerful legacy of destructive policies toward Indigenous peoples, and a state view of Canada as an innocent place, untouched by colonialism. The contrast is particularly striking, as Stephen Harper is the Prime Minister who in 2008 issued a state apology for the harm inflicted on Indigenous people(s) by the Indian Residential School system (1870s-1996). This was a more than 100-year government policy of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families for placement in under-resourced schools, dedicated to the assimilation of Indigenous children and communities and the clearing of land for Euro-Canadian settlement: a
settler colonial project. How can such contradictions exist within a society and within a single mind? It takes sustained intellectual, affective and cultural work, conceived and carried out across multiple sectors of society, to secure and render unexceptional the ongoing expropriation of land and resources from Indigenous to non-Indigenous economies (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Writing in the context of Canada, Papachase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald (2011, 91) notes that “the significance of colonialism as a social, cultural, and educative force has not yet been meaningfully contemplated” in Canadian contexts, a silence that is symptomatic of “deeply learned habits of disregard” for the experiences and critical perspectives of Indigenous people(s). This dissertation focuses on the role of formal education in perpetuating the uneven economies of attention and value identified by Donald, Moreton-Robinson, and many other Indigenous and decolonial scholars as instrumental to the maintenance of colonial systems of privilege and domination (Battiste, 2013; Cannon & Sunseri, 2011; Simpson & Smith, 2014; L.T. Smith, 1999). Focusing on formal education in Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, I argue that socially-sanctioned and cultivated colonial ignorance is central to the formation of political subjects with deep, and often unacknowledged, investments in the maintenance of settler colonial relations of exploitation.

I examine this problem of cultivated ignorance, and the role of formal education in perpetuating it, through the lens of what feminist, critical race, and decolonial scholars call an “epistemology of ignorance”. Ignorance, as these scholars use the term, is not a neutral or incidental absence of knowledge, waiting to be filled. Rather, it is a powerful organizing logic that emerges from and works to sustain strategic methods of not knowing that, consciously or not, perpetuate the status quo, privilege, and domination (Calderon, 2014; May, 2006, Spivak, 1987; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Ignorance in this sense is
not the obverse of knowledge, subsumable into the study of knowledge. It is a social and political phenomenon in its own right, requiring special attention to popular, intellectual, and institutional methodologies of exclusion and hierarchies of importance that while epistemological - about the nature of knowledge - rapidly become ontological: about who or what particular groups of people are or are not. Ignorance in this sense is tied intimately to the violence of colonialism. An epistemology of ignorance is a “violent operational logic” that works to uphold the ontological hierarchies from which racism and colonialism thrive (May, 2006, 110). This logic is rooted in historic operational practices that favour particular methods of perception and function to foreclose “other-than-dominant epistemes and refuse to seriously contemplate their existence” (Kuokkanen, 2008, 63; Spivak, 1987, 1999). Ignorance is institutionalized, promoted through law, political structures, education, and popular modes of representation, to the extent that it allows the epistemically privileged to deny involvement in its maintenance (Bergin, 2002; Medina, 2013; Mills, 2007; Steyn, 2012). An epistemology of ignorance is an epistemology of epistemic intolerance. To survive as a political and economic system, colonialism requires ignorance of other forms of relation.

A key example of the disciplinary function of a colonial epistemology of ignorance is the work of the modern Canadian treaty process to subsume Indigenous land rights into private property regimes. Framed by provincial and federal governments as threats to the forms of certainty attractive to global capital investment, Aboriginal title in Canada is made exercisable insofar as Indigenous communities agree to extinguishment of that title and conversion of collectively-held lands into fee-simple title that can then be bought and sold (Blackburn, 2008; Blomley, 2014, 2015). Socially-sanctioned and strategic refusal to account for traditional ways of relating to land, sustained through the legal realist position that minimizes the potential of oral
narratives as evidence, supports arguments that Indigenous economies of value be subordinated to the political and economic interests of the Canadian state (Milward, 2009; Pasternak, 2017; Rossiter & Wood, 2005; Sparke, 1998). An epistemology of ignorance cultivates unawareness of other ways of knowing and relating, and masks that exclusion, by framing some ways of knowing and relating as the only possible truths. That Indigenous modes of relation become known not on their own terms but as threats to be managed and disciplined, demonstrates the material nature of an epistemology of ignorance (de Sousa Santos, 2015). Absences, exclusions, and failures to imagine otherwise are constitutive of the way the world, shaped by colonialism, functions.

The assignment of ontological characteristics that cast some knowers as more reliable than others is central to the obfuscation of ignorance. While the greatest insight into the dynamics of violence comes from those most harmed by it, socially approved acceptance of what counts as valuable knowledge often works to silence those with just that essential insight, by casting their embodiment and personhood as intellectually, morally, and politically suspect (Alcoff, 2005, 2007; Dotson, 2011; Fricker, 2011; hooks, 2000). As Eva Mackey (2016) demonstrates in her ethnography of conflicts over land rights in southwestern Ontario and northern New York State, characterizations of Indigenous people(s) as savage, immoral, and as living contradictions of economic development were at the core of local opposition to the efforts of the Caldwell First Nation, Cayuga Indian Nation and Onondaga Nation to reclaim ancestral territories. Rooted in visceral and often deeply emotional responses to the challenges Indigenous land claims were perceived to pose to jurisdictional certainty and economic prosperity, these violent forms of knowing Indigenous people(s) functioned to reassert settler authority to dictate the parameters of belonging. Whether recognized by their interlocutors as such or not, “settler
structures of feeling” work in powerful ways to maintain colonial fantasies of entitlement and authority (Mackey, 2016; Rifkin, 2013). Mackey’s work points to the affective labour performed by a colonial epistemology of ignorance.

Produced and upheld by often hidden but staunchly defended interests linked to significant social inequalities, an epistemology of ignorance is also challenging because it is diffuse, working at personal and collective levels in ways that are constantly reinforcing. Colonial ignorance is wilful as it works to serve the interests of those most advantaged by colonialism while effectively obfuscating the ways it promotes those interests. Yet it is also social, produced through individual conscious and unconscious prejudice, passive complicity, neglect and avoidance, and through the considerable force of social consensus and accepted knowledge that sanctions, encourages, and proliferates such disengagement (May, 2006; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). Pervasive social ignorance moulds subjectivities into performers of ignorance, even though individuals and groups may not intend to exclude or be excluded, or be aware of playing either part (Alcoff, 2007; Dotson, 2011; Steyn, 2012). Indeed, whether or not individuals or groups intend to marginalize, or understand that marginalization to be legally, morally, or socially warranted, is not a meaningful measure of the degree to which violence is taking place. Ignorance is social in that it is both a personal and collective accomplishment. An epistemology of ignorance is a powerful social force because it allows strategic denial of its own existence.

This dissertation investigates the social nature of colonial ignorance through the lens of formal education in Ontario. Indigenous and decolonial scholars and educators have long argued the potential of formal education to encourage the development of relations restorative of Indigenous nationhoods (Assembly of First Nations, 1972, 1988; Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002; Battiste, 2013; Brayboy, 2005; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Couros, Montgomery, Tupper,
Since 2015, the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have stimulated considerable activity on the part of schools, colleges, universities, and Ministries of Education to respond to what the Commission has identified as a “broad lack of understanding of the unjust and violent circumstances from which modern Canada emerged” (Sinclair, 2015). Chapter 2 reviews current debates on reconciliation in neoliberal-multicultural contexts to suggest the possibilities and constraints of decolonizing education in Ontario. I argue that while the TRC’s work to move racism and colonial violence to a different place in Canadian public consciousness may encourage new types of settler subject attention, this shift cannot occur without careful attention to the relations of power underpinning and organizing the contemporary reconciliatory moment.

Chapter 3 argues the importance of epistemic responsibility for decolonization. Coalescing at the height of European colonial expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries, many of the modern disciplines, including geography, anthropology, history and law, have been instrumental in developing and defending systems of thought and practice that serve to legitimate colonial exploitation (Bell, Butlin & Heffernan, 1995; Chakrabarty, 2009; Driver, 2001; Fabian, 1982; Godlewska & Smith, 1994; Johnson & Murton, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2000; 2007). Colonial ways of thinking work to render the dispossession of Indigenous bodies and territories as just, certain and inevitable. These include: the fantasy of knowledge as always already open, accessible, and awaiting discovery; the framing of history as progressing through stages culminating in western Europe; the construction of culture as other and of the past; the rendering of land and peoples into commodities to be exploited; and faith in
the marketplace as the source and adjudicator of value, (Alcoff, 2007; da Silva, 2011; Deloria, 2003; Fanon, 1967; Massey, 2005; Povinelli, 2011; A. Smith, 2012; L.T. Smith, 2012; Said, 1993; Stoler, 2016; Wynter, 2003). Inherent to each of these logics of dispossession and central to their maintenance is the characterization of Indigenous worldviews and practices as moral and intellectual failures, always waiting for and in need of correction and completion, in the name of spiritual, economic and social advancement. Chapter 3 reads the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault and Australian place theorist Jeff Malpas through the lens of critical Indigenous and decolonial theory to argue the decolonial importance of shifting attention away from the so-called “Indian problem” (Alfred, 2010) and towards the limits of knowledge and the entrenchment of those limits in historically conditioned and socially sanctioned axes of dominance. I argue that the redistribution necessary for decolonization will not be sufficient without a fundamental shift in understanding and experiencing power and relationships in and with place.

Chapter 4 extends and complicates this argument, through a methodological reflection on the process of co-designing a research tool with over 200 Indigenous educators and community members across Ontario. This research tool, disseminated to over 42,000 first-year university students in the fall of 2014, aims to support efforts to decolonize education by investigating how students are learning to think about colonialism and its relationship to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and Canadian society. Drawing on our – my and Anne Godlewska’s – experiences of co-designing the Awareness questionnaire in place, I work through what it might mean to attend to the entrenched, productive, and material nature of colonial ignorance, from a place of deep critical engagement with the experiences, theories and practices of people(s) historically excluded from the academy as knowers. Colonial ignorance is a powerful structuring force that
shaped the course of the questionnaire’s co-design. Yet, when approached from a place of humility and ongoing reciprocity, ignorance may also constitute a critical opening to more restorative forms of relation.

Education in Canada has long functioned as a tool of colonialism and racism. From what is taught and what omitted from curricula (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010; Kanu, 2011); through how content is taught (Battiste, 1998, 2002; 2013; Cannon & Sunseri, 2011; Donald, 2011, 2012; Forget & Panayatova, 2003; Tupper & Capello, 2008), through differential access to education that reinforces and sometimes defines social structure (Dei, 1997; Friedel, 2010; Milloy, 1999; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), and through the mindsets of teachers and teacher educators (Cannon, 2012; Dion, 2007, 2009; Higgins, Madden & Korteweg, 2015; Pratt & Danyluk, 2017; Tupper, 2013; Waldorf, 2014), schools have functioned to confer legitimacy on the knowledge and ways of knowing of dominant groups and maintain socially-sanctioned power imbalances. Chapter 5 argues the culpability of the most recent generation of Ontario curricular documents and associated textbooks in encouraging a colonial epistemology of ignorance. While Westbury (2008, 3) considers that single-issue criticism of curricula and texts is unlikely to improve them given the multiple competing interests at play in curriculum design, such an approach shields a black-box process from criticism, especially from perspectives excluded from the negotiating table. I agree with Schick and St. Denis that curriculum is “one of the significant discourses through which white privilege and ‘difference’ are normalized” and thus a critical site for analysis and reform (2005, 298).

Critical analyses of the 2003-2015 Ontario curricula and texts have focused on the treatment of residential schooling, the Indian Act, and the 1969 White Paper (B. Smith, 2014;
Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010; Smith, Ng-A-Fook, Berry & Spence, 2011), silences and appropriation of Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge (Kim, 2015; Kim & Dionne, 2014), and (mis)representations of racism (Ali, Salem, Oueslati, Andrew & Quirke, 2011; Montgomery, 2005, 2006). I build on this literature in Chapter 5 to consider how a colonial epistemology of ignorance intersects with neoliberal-multicultural governance to encourage the formation of political subjects who understand justice as already achieved. Curricular documents and textbooks approved for use in the social studies and Canadian and World Studies stream between 2003 and 2015 consistently deny colonialism, relegate Indigeneity to the distant past, and omit discussion of Indigenous critical perspectives, philosophies and territories. They also reinforce racialized hierarchies of being, portraying Canadians and their government as generous and benevolent and Indigenous peoples as inherently deficient and deteriorated. I argue that these ontological assignments encourage amongst Ontario’s youngest generations a logic of relation premised on Indigenous disappearance. They also encourage affective attachments to Indigenous deficiency that, whether conscious or not, work to legitimate the discourses of Indigenous incapability and blame that underpin contemporary neoliberal governance (de Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010; Holmes, Hunt & Piedalue, 2015; Macdonald, 2011; MacKinnon, 2015). I argue that such cultivated orientation is easily mobilized to relegate decolonial critique to “conditions of unheardness,” a dynamic that works to uphold the “unequally occupied rhetorical space” that sustains settler-colonial relations of dominance (Davies, 1994, 108; May, 2006, 110). Chapter 5 undertakes a forensic analysis of the language and structure of the 2003-2015 curricular documents and texts to demonstrate the depth and pervasiveness of a colonial epistemology of ignorance. Even though nine textbooks associated with the 2003-2015 Canadian and World studies curriculum were reviewed by First Nations and Métis educators, critical
Indigenous perspectives are frequently undermined in the texts, through exclusion from chapter review questions, segregation of content, and imposition of settler voice. I argue that the decolonizing promise of new curricular emphases will not be realized without the full participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators from across Ontario in the design and implementation of curricula, textbooks, and especially teacher education programs.

Chapter 6 considers how colonial ignorance functions to undermine what Cree scholar Willie Ermine calls “the ethical space of engagement” (Ermine, 2007, 193). The co-designed Awareness questionnaire was disseminated to the first-year cohorts at 10 Ontario universities in the fall of 2014. Most students report that they learned most of what they know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples from their K-12 education. The impact of the 2003-2015 Ontario social studies and Canadian and World Studies curriculum and texts is apparent in student responses. Statistical analysis indicates that students who graduated from Ontario high schools are substantially unaware of contemporary Indigenous presences and vitality. The majority of students do not understand the fundamental laws structuring conditions of life for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, nor do they see the contributions Indigenous peoples make to all aspects of Canadian society. Although they know slightly more about what is happening with regard to Indigenous peoples today, students have little sense of the historical circumstances and forces that shape current events. Overwhelmingly, students seem to believe that wherever Indigenous people are, they are not here; not present and by implication not relevant to their daily lives. This perceived absence is deeply political, because it works to limit points of connection to the longstanding efforts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people(s) to engage residents of Canada in decolonizing relations. As Willie Ermine (2007, 195) argues, an ethical space of engagement becomes possible when all people involved attend to the “deeper level
thoughts, interests, and assumptions that will inevitably influence and animate the kind of relationship [they] can have.” Findings from the 2014 Awareness study indicate that such epistemic responsibility is not being encouraged in formal education in Ontario. However, results also indicate that when students have opportunities to engage with Indigenous perspectives and topics, it can make a difference to what students know and think. These findings suggest that while curricular reform is key to eradicating mass ignorance and encouraging the epistemic responsibility necessary for decolonization, it cannot occur in isolation. Teacher education programs must play a central role in enacting the promise of new curricular emphases.

In her book *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know*, Minogiizhigokwe Kathy Absolon situates research as re-search, a lifelong process of “coming to look again” (2011, 21). Framing research as re-search is important, she argues, because where we come from and how we choose to affiliate shapes the questions we ask and, importantly, how we hear the answers (42; also Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As learners and searchers, we “accept responsibility for our intentions, understandings and knowledge” by sharing where we come from, why we are doing what we do, and who we are doing it for (2011, 68). I take up these questions here.

I came to Canada as an international student over a decade ago to pursue post-secondary education in English. Born in Mexico to Romansh Swiss and Ecuadorian/Spanish/Swiss parents, I have Mexican and Swiss nationality and many mixed feelings about where home is. As representatives from Canadian universities were keen to impress when I visited their stalls at a recruitment fair in Zurich in my last year of high school, Canada was a friendly, welcoming place, full of easy access to nature (I went home with a brochure for Banff National Park) and vibrant cities. That imagery, combined with the ease of obtaining a student work permit and the fact that Canada has some of the lowest international tuition fees amongst English-speaking
countries, drew me in, as did my vague sense that life as a queer person would be easier in Canada than elsewhere. Writing this now as I sit at my desk in Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territories, I see more clearly the mutual entanglements of global networks of privilege and language, the selling of safety and multicultural harmony in neoliberal times, and historical and ongoing colonial violence. This dissertation has emerged in part from my desire to think through what it means, as a newcomer and recent permanent resident, to benefit from a national imaginary that is rooted in laws developed as tools for Indigenous dispossession (see Ford, 2011; Pasternak, 2017). Every day and in myriad ways, the presences, ways of knowing, and laws of Indigenous peoples refute the powerful fiction of settler jurisdiction. They also suggest pathways towards relations more restorative of dignity and respect for all human and more-than-human entities. This dissertation is a moment in thinking, conversation, and relationships that will continue.

One of the most important moments towards this dissertation took place in a longhouse in Kahnawake in early 2014. I was there because Jan Hill, Director of the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre at Queen’s, had generously agreed to send a summary of my then-PhD project to her network of contacts in Haudenosaunee communities across Ontario, Quebec, and New York State. At the time, my PhD was focused on the 1794 Jay Treaty, an agreement between Britain and the newly-independent United States that sought to stem ongoing hostilities by establishing the parameters of future trade between the United States and European nations. Crucially, the Treaty guaranteed unrestricted Indigenous movement and trade across the boundary line established by the Treaty of Paris, which today constitutes the Canada-U.S. border between its eastern terminus on the Atlantic coast and Lake of the Woods, about 400 kilometres west of Lake Superior. Representatives of the British Crown met with Haudenosaunee and
Anishinaabe allies multiple times over the course of the Jay Treaty’s development and ratification, confirming that neither it nor the Treaty of Paris ending the American Revolutionary war would interfere with the rights of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples to govern themselves or with their nation-to-nation relationship with the British Crown. I was drawn to this historical moment for what it said about the fragility of Canadian claims to unilateral legal jurisdiction, and hoped to speak with Haudenosaunee people about that.

In the meeting in the Kahnawake longhouse, people in the room spoke about law, but not in the abstract sense I was familiar with from poring over legal cases and academic work on settler colonialism, political philosophy, and the institutionalization of Indigenous dispossession. Law was vital and alive, embedded in language and the land, enacted through respect for ancestors and care for the coming generations (P. Williams & Nelson, 1996). People expressed and enacted sovereignty without ever using that word, and in my many attempts to write afterwards, I struggled to find the language and imagination to reflect what was shared with the depth and nuance it required. At around the same time, I was working with Anne Godlewska as a research assistant on the Awareness Project (described in detail in Chapter 4). This involved traveling together to meet with First Nations, Métis and Inuit community leaders, Elders and educators across Ontario to co-design a knowledge test reflective of what they considered all Ontario high school graduates should know about colonialism and Indigenous peoples to be responsible citizens and treaty partners. In these meetings people shared stories and experiences that made me think much more deeply about ignorance and the dynamics of settler colonialism. Eventually, a friend suggested that the difficulty I was having to write well about Haudenosaunee sovereignty might in fact be symptomatic of the problem of colonial ignorance.
After a lot of worrying and with Anne’s encouragement, I shifted the focus of my dissertation accordingly.

In *Breaking the Silence*, published by the Assembly of First Nations Health Division in 1994, an anonymous residential school survivor declares “My story is a gift. If I give you a gift and you accept that gift, then you don’t go and throw that gift in the wastebasket. You do something with it” (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, 161, quoted in McKegney, 2016, 197). This dissertation is part of my effort to “do something” with the gifts that have been shared with me. I do not think that anything I write here presents a ‘solution’ to the damages wrought by colonization, as if “a change in settler viewpoints could ever on its own obliterate colonial relations” (Mackey, 2016, 12). But I do think that epistemic responsibility is a necessary component of the “radical imagination” Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred identifies as central to decolonization (Alfred, 2010). This epistemic responsibility needs to be encouraged in formal education. Responsibility in this sense is more than the performance of behaviour to be lauded or condemned. It is also to ask “what is our gift? And how shall we use it?...This is our work, to discover what we can give” (Kimmerer, 2013, 347; Kuokkanen, 2008).
CHAPTER 2

The problem of reconciliation: A literature review

“…when I was asked to do this paper I had some misgivings, for if I were to be honest, I must tell of things as they were; and really, this is not my story, but yours.”

- Kanienkehaka man, when asked in 1965 to recount his residential school experience for a Department of Indian Affairs report. Quoted in Milloy, 1999, pg. xviii.

“…a truth and reconciliation commission may be one small window of opportunity…to use our imaginations to begin the long process of transcending cycles of violence—restorying our shared history in decolonizing, transformative ways.”

- Paulette Regan, Unsettling the settler within, pg. 205

This dissertation takes place in the context of reconciliation, a discourse that in Canada has been amplified most recently by the activities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2008-2015) and the release of its interim and final reports (TRC 2012, 2015). The TRC is the most recent iteration in a long lineage of federal inquiries into the inequities lived by Indigenous people(s) in Canada, including most recently the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Following the release of the TRC’s findings in 2015, two of three federal parties campaigned for the 2015 election on promises to implement the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action. The Calls to Action detail steps governments and all people in Canada must take to address the legacies of the residential schools in child welfare, education, health care and justice. The Liberal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has since committed to “renew[ing] the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples” based on “nation-to-nation…recognition,
rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership” (Trudeau, 2017). After nearly a decade of explicit Progressive Conservative attack on Indigenous land and resource jurisdiction, and refusal to engage with Indigenous leadership on key issues including acknowledgement of residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador and a national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women, such frank statements of support for Indigenous rights might strike a refreshing note. Yet glowing and ambitious rhetoric around justice for Indigenous peoples has also been at the core of earlier political eras. In the 1960s, it culminated in the blatantly assimilative 1969 White Paper, a policy that, in the name of equality, proposed to eliminate Indian status and lands, effectively framing Indigenous peoples as ethnic minorities with no more rights to land and self-determination than any other group in Canada (Manuel & Derrickson, 2014; 2017). Similarly glowing and ambitious rhetoric around the achievement of justice also followed the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ 1996 Gathering Strength report, now known colloquially as “Gathering Dust.” As the late Secwépemc leader Arthur Manuel emphasized, colonialism is not a mere matter of past bad behaviour, redeemable through promises of “sunny ways.” It is the foundational system of Canada.

The concept of coloniality is a powerful lens through which to think through the power relations at play in contemporary Canadian discourses of reconciliation. Coloniality is distinct from colonialism, though they often co-exist (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). While colonialism is a particular political and economic formation based on the subjugation of one nation or people by another, coloniality is historically and geographically specific. It refers to the assemblages of practices and intellectual justification developed by European elites to enact the conquest of the Americas. Coloniality is, in this sense, inextricable from modernity (Grosfoguel, 2007). Operating through the mutually constitutive processes of capitalist accumulation and the social
construction of race, coloniality is a matrix of power, serving to supplant Indigenous modes of social, political and economic organization while upholding structures of privilege that secure global processes of capitalism, patriarchy and heteronormativity (Lugones, 2007; Quijano, 2007). Coloniality survives well beyond the official limits of colonial administration.

In 2006 Canada became the most recent country in the world to undertake a state-sponsored process of reconciliation. This was in response to a series of class-action lawsuits advanced in the late 1990s by over 80,000 survivors1 of the Indian Residential School system (1870s – 1996) against the federal government and the Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, and United churches. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), negotiated in 2005 between the Assembly of First Nations, government, churches, and legal counsel representing survivors, implements and governs reparative strategies designed to acknowledge and compensate child removal and abuse. The development and settlement of the IRSSA emerged in response to three court cases: the civil suit Blackwater v. Plint (1998, 2001, 2005) and two subsequent class action lawsuits, Cloud v. Canada (certified in 2004) and Baxter v. Canada (certified in 2006). In Blackwater v. Plint (1998, 2001), the British Columbia Court refused to acknowledge loss of culture and language through residential schooling as an actionable tort on par with sexual abuse. In Blackwater, Indigenous students’ pain and suffering were individualized and framed as a consequence of bad behaviour on the part of a few perpetrators (Blackburn, 2012). Shortly after the first Blackwater decision, Cloud and Baxter

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1 The use of the term “survivor” to describe former students of residential schools is contested. “Survivor” has been mobilized primarily by organizations, such as the Assembly of First Nations, to bring together former students of the residential school system to initiate compensation and health support programs. An Indian Residential School Survivor Committee also governs the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Murray Sinclair, Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has expressed discomfort with the term, stating that former students of the residential schools and their families have done much more than survive. I have chosen to use “survivor” in this dissertation to account for the violence of the residential school system, which in Canada is all too often still denied (see Environics, 2016).
were filed as class action lawsuits, opening the possibility for legal recognition that residential school survivors share similar experiences of harm and that “systemic negligence resulting in the loss of language and culture” constitutes wrongdoing for which the Government of Canada is legally culpable (Thielen-Wilson, 2012, 183). By 2006, Baxter had consolidated all residential school class and individual lawsuits in the courts at the time and was seeking $100 billion in damages from the Government of Canada and another $100 billion from the churches. Using the language of intergenerational abuse and genocide, the Baxter suit emphasized the “wider colonial policy and legislation which gave rise to IRS institutions” and sought to demonstrate that culture, language and family connection “were ‘lost’ by an Indigenous collective, rather than just by individuals” (Thielen-Wilson, 2012, 233-4). However, cultural loss as an actionable tort has never been tested in the Canadian courts. Following the failure of its appeal of Cloud and Baxter in 2005, the federal government hired retired Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci to negotiate a settlement agreement. The IRSSA is the culmination of those negotiations.

Developed from principles of restorative justice, the IRSSA includes payments for common experience, an independent assessment process, funding for health supports and commemoration projects, and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which in its current form began its work in 2009. Headed by Anishinaabe Manitoba Justice and Senator Murray Sinclair, journalist Dr. Marie Wilson, and Cree lawyer and Chief Wilton Littlechild, the TRC saw itself as establishing the truth about the residential schools. It also sought to lay groundwork for relations restorative of Indigenous nationhoods. The TRC worked to do so by creating spaces for the voices of residential school survivors and their families. It also situated the schools in concurrent colonial policies and practices including: forced relocation and theft of Indigenous land; displacement of traditional forms of governance through the Indian Act; the criminalization and
suppression of Indigenous languages and ceremonies, and government refusal to engage with the full scope and spirit of constitutionally-protected treaty and Aboriginal rights. The TRC also invited residents of Canada to take part in collective dialogue around the legacies of the schools and their implications for future relations.

Developed in Canada, the IRSSA and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are part of a growing international trend. Especially since World War II and the Holocaust, state-sanctioned “scenes of repentance” have gained increasing moral, political, and economic traction in the international arena, often mobilized as “evidence” of transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic authority (Derrida, 2001, 28; Trouillot, 2000). Rooted in Abrahamic conceptions of forgiveness and redemption, these state gestures of regret frame the naming, acknowledgement, and exposition of past harm as central to the prevention of future atrocity (Gibney, 2008; Henderson & Wakeham, 2013; Nobles, 2008). The IRSSA shares with similar initiatives, such as South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission on human rights abuses during the apartheid era, the liberal notion that more inclusive citizenship can be achieved through truth-telling and reparations.

The IRSSA is also distinct from international reconciliatory efforts. It is the first such agreement in the world to be negotiated under judicial supervision rather than through legislation or executive order (Regan, 2010). The TRC is also the only commission globally to focus specifically on colonization and Indigenous-settler relations, and, particularly, on the abuse of children. The TRC’s explicit call for new forms of settler-subject attention to racism and colonial violence may help to push such reflection to a different place in Canadian public consciousness. Yet how this call will play out in the context of a heavily resource-dependent, increasingly
neoliberalized society with a history of marketing itself on the world stage as a place of tolerance and peace remains an open question.

Many scholars point to the assimilationist dangers embedded in the uptake of the TRC and its Calls to Action. As Métis scholar and artist David Garneau (2016) argues, the term reconciliation is itself problematic, as it presumes a prior state of harmonious relations that can be returned to. This spatio-temporal configuration demands the relegation of colonial violence to a past that can then be transcended, allowing justice to be framed as a matter of empathic response to suffering, rather than of extensive capital transfer and land restitution (Alfred, 2009; Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Corntassel, Chaw-win-is & T’lakwadzi, 2012; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009; Regan, 2010; Woolford, 2004). While many individuals speaking before the TRC refused the relegation of residential schools to a “sad chapter” of Canada’s history, many commentators, often non-Indigenous, have tended to focus instead on “healing,” “forgiveness” and “moving on,” notions that place “the burden of restoring relations squarely on the shoulders of survivors” (Robinson & Martin 2016, 6). Through its elision of collective accountability to the legacies of colonialism, empathy-as-justice works in effect to retrench the moral claims to goodness and generosity long mobilized to legitimate colonialism (Boler, 1997; Cowlishaw, 2003; Jacobs, 2009; Simon, 2013; Stoler, 2016). This dynamic denies enduring power relations while enabling consumptive modes of engagement.

Other scholars warn that prevailing liberal-multicultural modes of governance in Canada may work to reduce reconciliation to a series of programs and services that do not fundamentally challenge settler jurisdiction. As a political formation, liberal-multiculturalism coalesced in North America and Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II in response to anticolonial and civil rights movements that challenged the racial hierarchies institutionalized through the
Nazi regime, colonialism, and segregation (Melamed, 2006; Winant, 2001). Rooted in the Hegelian understanding that subjectivity is constituted through recognition by others, liberal-multiculturalism frames reciprocal recognition as central to the cultivation of a just society (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). In this framework, it is the defining role of the state to affirm the contributions of minority groups to shared social life and formally recognize group rights to accommodation, autonomy and/or self-determination (M. Williams, 2014). Liberal-multicultural regimes of governance cast inclusion in the nation-state as liberatory. Yet the primary issue framing state-Indigenous relations “is not racist exclusion from citizenship, but forced incorporation into the state” (Rifkin, 2011, 350). While it has been argued in Canada that since Cree political leader Harold Cardinal’s repudiation of the assimilationist agenda embedded in Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s 1969 White Paper, state approaches to Indigenous rights have become more enlightened, now framed in the language of mutual recognition (Cairns, 2000), state-defined recognition regimes risk retrenching colonial relations of dominance. Casting Indigenous peoples as one minority amongst many, in need of adequate recognition and representation, manages Indigenous interests in self-determination in ways that preclude substantive Indigenous jurisdiction (Coulthard, 2007, 2014). Such disciplinary strategies are deeply entangled in state interests in securing unilateral sovereignty and fostering the forms of jurisdictional certainty attractive to capitalist investment (Blackburn, 2005; Desbiens, 2004; Lawrence, 2012; McCreary & Milligan, 2014; Pasternak, 2017). As the TRC emphasized in its final report and 94 Calls to Action, an exclusively liberal-multicultural approach to addressing the legacies of the residential schools is incompatible with decolonization.

Other scholars point to how the logic of reparations for harm done may retrench settler colonial projects of neoliberal citizenship. As Athabascan scholar Dian Million (2013a) notes,
the 1996 final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was the most detailed investigation of Indigenous-settler relations ever conducted in Canada, recommending substantial changes in governance, health, education, and law to enact Indigenous self-determination. RCAP also brought to public light for the first time the abuse wrought by the residential school system. That the majority of RCAP’s most substantive calls for Indigenous political empowerment have been bypassed or ignored and that public focus is now on the harm done through residential schooling is revealing of the interplay between settler colonial and neoliberal logics. The premise underlying the IRSSA that residential school experiences constitute trauma in need of healing effectively moves the focus from one of Indigenous political self-determination to one where “self-determination becomes intertwined with state-determined biopolitical programs for emotional and psychological self-care” (Million, 2013a, 6). Collective grievances are rearticulated as well-being and physical and mental health, for which individuals, having received reparations and health supports, are now responsible. Robyn Green likewise demonstrates the retrenchment of neoliberal logics in federal government responses to Indigenous demands for redress. While since the 1982 repatriation of the Canadian Constitution, Indigenous peoples have advocated for jurisdiction and land restitution using the language of social debt and public investment, successive governments have reinterpreted these requests as opportunities for “economic investment, guaranteed to produce social inclusion for Indigenous peoples” (2015, 473). In this approach, self-determination is elided and Indigenous people(s) are made responsible for providing ‘proof of value’ for designated monies and programs – most of which are significantly underfunded - which ‘evidence’ can then be mobilized to justify further state intervention or retraction (Green, 2015; also Cameron & Levitan, 2014; de Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010; Stanley, 2016). Government translation of Indigenous self-
determination into participation in capitalist modes of exchange works in effect to re-stabilize settler colonial jurisdiction.

Recently, scholars have begun to theorize how liberal-multicultural governance works to cultivate mentalities that limit points of connection to decolonial critique such as that advanced by the TRC. Linking the insights of Michel Foucault on governmentality – the ‘conduct of conduct’ – with recent work on affect – communicative actions linked to feeling and emotion through which people conduct themselves and conduct others – this scholarship is concerned with “what structures feeling” and “what feeling structures” (Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009, 62; Ahmed, 2004; Rifkin, 2013; R. Williams, 1977). Settler colonialism endures through “the quotidian feelings and tendencies” through which it is “continually reconstituted and experienced as the horizon of everyday potentiality” (Rifkin, 2013, 323). One powerful consequence of the assumption of settler state sovereignty embedded in liberal multicultural governance is its allowance of “fantasies of entitlement” that enable non-Indigenous people to understand themselves as hardworking, rightful land owners victimized by Indigenous land claims (Mackey 2016, 105). This “jurisdictional imaginary” is deeply racialized (Bannerji, 2000; Calliste & Dei, 2000; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Mackey, 2002; Razack, 1998). The denial of systemic racism and colonialism enabled through multiculturalism allows those racialized as white to imagine themselves as always already knowledgeable of and sympathetic to difference, a narrative of generosity and benevolence that, when confronted, often provokes emotional responses that shut down attempts to situate critically whiteness, racism, and colonialism (Lund & Carr, 2010; Picower, 2009; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; St. Denis, 2011; Schick, 2014). Deeply spatial, this resistance is both produced by and works to retrench racialized perceptions of who does and does not have the right to belong in particular places (Ahmed, 2007b; Baldwin, Cameron &
Kobayashi, 2011; Schick, 2014). Conceived and taught as expressions of “good intentions” and as the culmination of a “moral identity of tolerance,” multicultural forms of relation are often presented as beyond reproach (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, 211; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010; B. Smith, 2014). Such denial of enduring power relations enables “passive empathy,” or the tendency to situate oneself as a judging, but ultimately inactive subject, not implicated in systems of dominance and oppression (Dion, 2009). This dynamic continually displaces the burdens of racism and colonialism onto other shoulders, while enabling discourses of blame. The affective attachments enabled by liberal-multicultural governance constitute powerful barriers to the cultivation of decolonizing relations.

That land rights actions, mobilization against murder and child removal, and other Indigenous methods of self-assertion frequently engender vitriol and indifference is also indicative of the affective dimensions of settler governance. As theorists of settler colonialism argue, settler colonial subjectivities are produced not only through denial of enduring Indigenous presences and vitality, but through desire to disappear settler identity itself by rendering settler presences as natural, inevitable, and certain (Mackey, 2016; Strakosch, 2016; Wolfe, 2006; Veracini, 2011a). Yet Indigenous methods of self-assertion make inescapable the fact that living in this place – in all its banality – is predicated on the privileges produced through ongoing efforts at genocide. This fact calls into question deeply held and often taken for granted beliefs around private property, the rule of law, and the relationship between economic accumulation and progress. Rooted in deep fear of the dissolution of subjectivities of certainty and innocence, anxiety in the face of Indigenous self-determination is both symptomatic of settler jurisdictional fragility and functions to re-stabilize it (Henderson, 2016; Mackey, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is this fear of dissolution that traps settlers in a state of “arrested development between
defensive positions” and encourages the formation of the settler as a “parochial subject, who continuously coils, reacts, disavows, and lashes out” (Henderson, 2016, 57). Settler colonialism endures through its psychic dimensions.

The “manufactured scarcity” produced through regimes of private property is a particularly powerful dimension of psychic resistance to decolonial critique (Henderson, 2016, 78). The notion that land can be owned individually and that land rights accrue to those who render it productive within the framework of a capitalist economy coalesced through the dispossession drive that underpinned European colonial expansion (Blomley, 2014, 2015; R.A. Williams, 1990). In contemporary Canada, individual ownership and the drive towards ever-greater accumulation of resources continue to be configured as the condition of access to resources. This possessive regime disciplines subjects to understand themselves as dependent on an “expansionary economy as a matter of their very survival” and this is especially so in an era of neoliberal restructuring (Henderson, 2016, 78; Strakosch, 2015). Characterized by withdrawal of state support for social services, decentralization of government, amendment of labour and environmental protections to favour the interests of business, and efforts to push Indigenous-settler relations “out of the visible terms of sovereign encounter” and into the terms of the market, neoliberal governance encourages subjects to invest in the assumption that the jurisdictional certainty attractive to capital investment is the only ground from which political projects can be built (Strakosch, 2015, 4; Mackey, 2016; Pasternak, 2017). These investments in jurisdictional certainty undermine the possibility of substantial, meaningful shifts in state-Indigenous relations. In this sense neoliberal governance is not new but maintains and exacerbates the dispossession drive that is at the heart of settler colonialism. It also furthers the fragmentation and dissolution of social solidarity already weakened through institutionalized
hierarchical social orders, which themselves coalesced through European colonization of what are now known as the Americas. Neoliberal settler colonialism encourages investment in the maintenance of structures of privilege and exploitation.

Settler colonial anxiety over loss of jurisdictional certainty, exacerbated through neoliberal governmentality, is a powerful social force. Yet it is likewise important that this subjectivity is neither inevitable nor monolithic. However powerful, the presence of anxiety and fear also attests to the slippages, cracks, and failures of neoliberal settler subject formation. After all, if neoliberal settler colonial subjectification were complete, Indigenous and decolonial unsettlement would not provoke response (Henderson, 2016). It is these moments of failure that offer opportunities to move beyond affective responses of anxiety and fear and engage instead in the centering, “restoring,” and dismantling of the mythologies and investments central to settler colonialism (Lowman & Barker, 2015; Henderson, 2016; Regan, 2010). Settler colonial logics of dispossession are constitutive of the present moment. Yet while powerful, they are neither inevitable nor monolithic. Dispossession is an ongoing struggle to which all people living in Canada are continually recommitted, or from which we might dissent.

The calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the institutionalization of nation-to-nation relations suggest a pathway towards justice distinct from that envisioned through the lens of settler colonial, multicultural, and neoliberal logics. The cornerstone of the Commission’s vision for future relations is the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP’s provisions require that the federal government repudiate terra nullius legal argumentation in land claims negotiation, commit sufficient resources to working in partnership with Indigenous nations to advance jurisdiction and self-determination, and ensure
the full participation and informed consent of Indigenous communities in the negotiation of legislation to address inequities in child welfare, education, health care and justice (TRC, 2015). Crucially, the TRC also calls on Ministries of Education, colleges, universities, and teachers to commit to fostering in Canadian classrooms the transformation of settler consciousness necessary for nation-to-nation relations (TRC, 2015). With its focus on youth and the future, this long-term view challenges entrenched settler colonial interests that would relegate the structures and attitudes underpinning the residential school system to a distant and isolated past.

That (neo)liberal-multicultural governance functions to mask the endurance of colonialism and racism suggests the limits of a multicultural approach to decolonizing education in Ontario. In Ontario, Indigenous education has been framed largely in the language of cultural inclusivity. Indigenous histories and cultures began to be taught in Ontario schools in the 1960s as a consequence of a shift in federal policy away from Indigenous assimilation through residential schooling. The majority of residential schools in the province were closed in the 1960s and 70s (the last school, in Stirland Lake, did not close until 1991) and over 60% of Indigenous students were integrated into the public school system, where they continued to face

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2 The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed by the UN General Assembly in 2007, culminating decades of work by Indigenous people and communities to advance recognition of their rights in the international arena. Although the Declaration does not carry the force of law, it does set standards for the conduct of nation-states towards Indigenous peoples living within their borders (Champagne, 2013). Canada voted against the Declaration during its ratification. In 2010 the federal government under Stephen Harper issued a Statement of Support in which it emphasized that the Declaration is an aspirational document and that Canada would “interpret the principles expressed in the Declaration in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution and legal framework” (Government of Canada, 2010). In May 2016, Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett officially removed Canada’s objector status at a New York meeting of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Fontaine, 2016). However, when presenting before the Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly in July 2016, Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould declared that adopting UNDRIP into Canadian law is “unworkable” and a “political distraction” (Government of Canada, 2016). Most recently, the NDP government of British Columbia has committed to implementing UNDRIP, yet emphasizes that its implementation will not involve compensation for past injustices (Hunter, 2017).
the racism that motivated the residential school system (Kirkness, 1999). It was the work of Indigenous families and communities who pushed for the teaching of Indigenous cultures and histories in schools that, together with growing urbanization in the 1960s and the galvanization of Indigenous sovereignty movements by the 1969 White Paper, worked to ease some of the burden on Indigenous students in public education and restore some of what was lost through residential schooling (Friedel, 2010). Ontario’s Native Studies program, developed in the 1990s through the considerable efforts of Indigenous educators across the province, is a contemporary legacy of this work (Chaput, 2012, 2016). The province’s approach to Indigenous education, on the other hand, has shifted according to prevailing policy discourses around diversity and the nature of its value. While after the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, recognition of diversity was conceived as a positive advantage in constructing and unifying the nation, since the mid-1990s there has been a shift towards diversity as important insofar as it offers a competitive edge in the global marketplace (Joshee & Sinfield, 2010). This approach stresses “the necessity for greater market choice and accountability and the imperative to create hierarchically-conditioned, globally-oriented state subjects” (Mitchell, 2003, 388). Students are prompted as individuals to develop “a self in relation to the market rather than to the state” (Sears, 2003, 11). In Ontario, this shift has manifested in the introduction of regimes of standards and accountability; an increasingly explicit link between education and employment preparation; and, most recently, a renewed emphasis on education as a tool for social cohesion (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2007; Martin, 2012; Pinto, 2012; Taylor, 2005). Although globally, discussion of social cohesion has emerged as a challenge to the erosion of social and economic stability wrought by economic globalization, the uptake of social cohesion in Ontario education policy “does not ultimately call into question the basic neoliberal project” (Joshee & Sinfield,
2010, 62). Instead, diversity is cast as something to be managed, equality is understood as sameness, and assimilation into dominant political and economic logics is framed as the only possible and desirable educational outcome.

The 2007-2016 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework exemplifies this trend. Developed by the Ministry of Education under the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty, the Framework seeks to identify and remedy differences in attrition and graduation rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Although important in its recognition that these differences exist, the Framework’s focus on an “achievement gap” assumes Indigenous student deficiency, when the real issue is one of ongoing cognitive imperialism and failure of teachers and teacher education programs to attend to the enduring colonial legacy of Eurocentric education (Battiste, 2013; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Cherubini, 2010; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir & Muir, 2010). Even though the Framework calls for better integration of Indigenous content into curricula and teacher education programs, such integration is still framed as a matter of “build[ing] capacity to support identity building, including the appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives, values, and cultures by all students, school board staff, and elected trustees” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, 18). Such an uncritical focus on multicultural display “obscures the fact that differential access to power is produced through racial formations, not through lack of familiarity with the cultural practices of other peoples” (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, 307). The “add and stir” model of incorporating Indigenous cultures into provincial curricula, texts, and teacher education likewise risks essentializing them and retrenching discourses of Indigenous authenticity. Indigenous students are encouraged to identify with anthropological (colonial) definitions of Indigeneity, while the role of colonial and racial formation in ordering those definitions is obscured (Kanu, 2011; Marker, 2004, 2006; St. Denis,
With its assumption of Indigenous student deficit and cultural appreciation as a remedy to that presumed deficit, the Framework is entirely in keeping with a “globalized neoliberal culture of accountability…often used to disguise systematic inequality through superficial indicators of progress” (Butler, 2015, 29). The Framework’s neoliberal-multicultural approach denies the structuring and mutually constitutive forces of colonialism and systemic racism.

That the Ontario Ministry of Education is beginning to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 2015 Calls to Action suggests that pathways towards decolonizing education may be widening. At this time, the Ministry of Education is consulting with First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and organizations to revise the updated 2013/2015 curricula in response to the TRC’s Calls to Action. These revisions integrate much more critical content into mandatory curriculum directives, including emphasis on Indigenous territories and legal systems and critical perspectives on colonialism and racism. The curriculum revisions are still in pre-publication but should be verified and confirmed by the fall of 2018, though it is not yet clear how many of the recommended changes will be included in the final document (personal communication, L. Korteweg and T. Fiddler, December 14, 2017). Given the role of curriculum in setting the tone for both textbook production and teacher education programs, it is possible that these changes will encourage deeper consciousness of and challenges to “the colonial and neo-colonial practices that continue to marginalize and racialize Indigenous students” (Battiste, 2013, 69). However, if the role of a decolonizing education is to encourage relations restorative of Indigenous nationhoods, “the subjectivities produced alongside…knowledge acquisition must also be considered” (Gebhard, 2017, 4; Comeau, 2005; TRC, 2015). The deep entrenchment of discourses of Indigenous deficiency in (neo)liberal-multicultural governance risks that non-
Indigenous people, in coming to know more, retrench themselves as benevolent experts in fixing “the Indian problem” (Alfred, 2010; Gebhard, 2017). “Knowing more” about colonialism does not necessarily entail critique or challenge of the processes of racialization and capitalism that sustain it (Gebhard, 2017; Jones with Jenkins, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2008; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Srivastava & Francis, 2006). Nor does increased knowledge necessarily disrupt the binary of self/other that sustains perceptions of colonialism as having little, if anything, to do with non-Indigenous people in Canada. This self/other binary enables strategies of distancing, complacency, and paternalism, a dynamic that places the burden of explaining colonialism onto the shoulders of Indigenous scholars, teachers, and communities, while allowing privileged subjectivities to remain unchallenged (Cannon, 2012; Dion, 2009; hooks, 1988). Decolonizing education requires “changing the subject” in ways that center Indigenous, diasporic, and settler colonial relations (Cannon, 2012, 21). Such education would foreground the need for all people to consider and transform their own investments in and relationships with settler colonialism.

A decolonizing pedagogy would also disrupt the notion of an autonomous liberal subject who can be improved through education. Discourses of improvement, betterment and progress have been and remain foundational to colonialism (Baldwin, 2012; Stoler, 1995). Since the late 19th century, education in Canada, and in Ontario in particular, has operated as a realm for the cultivation and justification of imperial, Anglophone, white, bourgeois, and masculine conceptions of moral superiority and goodness, and, by extension, moral responsibility (Comeau, 2005; Valverde, 1991). These narratives of benevolence and generosity obscure how educational rhetoric around good character, moral responsibility, and improvement have functioned to discipline Indigenous and non-white immigrant communities into subjectivities more acceptable to white Anglophone sensibilities, while making impossible economic competition and thus
retrenching hierarchies of wealth (Backhouse, 1999; Bednasek & Godlewska, 2009; Comeau, 2005; Furniss, 1995; Milloy, 1999). As I argue in Chapters 3 and 4, framing the decolonization of education as a matter of improved settler morality and character is incompatible with justice, as it requires knowing Indigenous people(s) as deficient and in need of rescue. In re-stabilizing privileged subjectivities and once again eliding the fundamental issue of land and its restitution, efforts to secure goodness are simply “moves to innocence” that serve to uphold and retrench systems of domination and exploitation (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 1). A decolonizing education would focus on political analysis and action rather than on securing moral visions of united community.

Although education has a critical role to play in facilitating more critical consciousness of the contemporary endurance and mechanisms of settler colonialism, it is important to note that this consciousness, in and of itself, is not equivalent to the transformation of political, legal, and economic structures necessary for decolonization. Tuck and Yang (2012, 21) make an important distinction between decolonization and “a curricular-pedagogical process of…settler harm reduction.” While education can - and should - cultivate methods of relation that work to resuscitate “practices and intellectual life outside of settler ontologies” and work to mitigate contemporary environmental crises and concentrations of violence and poverty, “settler harm reduction” is not the same as or generative of Indigenous resurgence (Tuck & Yang 2012, 21). Resurgence must come from and be rooted in the lifeways and philosophies of Indigenous people(s) and communities (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Corntassel, 2012; Simpson, 2014, 2017). The key role of public education, then, is to denaturalize and disrupt epistemologies of relating in and with place that function to discipline and subjugate Indigenous brilliance.
Disrupting colonial epistemologies of relation requires moving away from a “fantasy of entitlement” in which researchers, teachers, and students “assume the happy position as potential knowers on an open epistemological territory awaiting anyone with the desire to explore” (Jones with Jenkins, 2008, 17). It entails a focus on critical historical consciousness, openness, humility, and reciprocity where we are – in place. Such a focus on relations in place does not entail singular solutions in singular locations, but an affective and epistemological orientation towards what one knows and how one comes to know it where one is (Absolon, 2011; Cannon, 2012; Larsen & Johnson, 2016; Wildcat, 2001; Wilson, 2008). This begins from a place of respect for “the limitations, as defined by Aboriginal peoples, of what knowledge is held for certain holders, who can access the knowledge, and in what contexts it can be shared” and it is Indigenous people “who must provide the standards, principles and protections that accompany the centring of Indigenous knowledge, and articulate and clarify the visions for how these can support self-determination, healing and the future” (Battiste, 2013, 69, 73). I take up this critical focus on place and its implications for decolonization in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

The significance of awareness in place

“If our normative theories should start where we are...we should start...by reflecting on the details of the actual injustices that surround us, rather than by speculating about what a perfect justice might be.”

- José Medina, The Epistemology of Resistance, pg. 12

“The act of turning around, of shifting one’s orientation and redirecting the momentum by which one was previously impelled, offers possibilities for perceiving differently, for seeing and engaging in ways that...compel a reconceptualization of the terms of occupancy for everyone.”

- Mark Rifkin, Settler common sense, pg. 336

This article brings together two theorists of epistemology and ontology to argue the importance of attending to the limits of what we know. Grounded in the insights of Indigenous and decolonial theorists on the structuring force of colonial ignorance and the importance of epistemic responsibility, we weave together the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault’s sensitivity to epistemological limit - why we think the way we do - and Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas’ emphasis on place as a condition of being, to argue the centrality of awareness-in-place to decolonizing relations in settler-colonial societies such as Canada. In reading the work of Foucault and Malpas in this way, we argue the political importance of
looking within Western traditions for currents that challenge problematic settler colonial
dynamics and push towards deeper engagement with Indigenous epistemologies and societies.

Much work remains to be done in the academy, and in the discipline of geography in
particular, to address colonial epistemological violence. In her recent assessment of the
ontological turn in human geography, Kwakwaka’wakw scholar Sarah Hunt (2014) delineates
how, despite growing interest in Indigenous philosophies of place and being, Indigenous
geographic knowledges and the voices of Indigenous scholars remain relegated to the periphery
of geographic theory: Indigenous knowledges are cast as suitable for definition and analysis, not
as the ground from which substantive rethinking of colonial geographic hegemonies might
proceed (also Louis, 2007; Shaw, Herman & Dobbs, 2006). In whose name, she asks, is
knowledge about Indigenous ontologies generated? Whose interests does that knowledge serve?
Decolonization, Hunt argues, is not about incorporating Indigenous ontologies in pre-existing
intellectual frameworks, but requires attending to the discourses through which Indigeneity is
made known. This process necessarily involves becoming “unhinged, uncomfortable, and
stepping beyond the position of ‘expert’” (Hunt 2014, 31; also Sequoya, 2005).

Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson likewise foregrounds the decolonial importance of
attending to the historical roots, performative effects, and material consequences of thought.
Drawing on her research on belonging and the legacies of the Indian Act in her home community
of Kahnawake, Simpson situates her work as part of a longstanding Haudenosaunee ‘politics of
refusal’ defiant of settler colonial attempts to render Haudenosaunee people into knowable, and
therefore disciplinable, subjects. Sensitive to how community perspectives on band membership
could be mobilized to promote academic portrayals of Indigenous communities as inherently
divided, dysfunctional and therefore ‘undeserving’ of self-determination, Kahnawakero:non,
Simpson included, simply refuse to speak directly on the subject. As Simpson argues, rather than making Indigeneity intelligible in the eyes of the academy, which has long been complicit in creating knowledge about Haudenosaunee communities in ways that serve to constrain Haudenosaunee capacities for self-rule, the politics of refusal demands attention to who benefits from that intelligibility and why (A. Simpson, 2011; 2014). Decolonizing the academy, Simpson and Hunt demonstrate, demands changing the focus, approaches and priorities of research.

The deeply self-interested modes of knowing identified by Hunt and Simpson can be understood as “possessive investments” that function to maintain an epistemology of ignorance in settler colonial societies (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, 22; Garneau, 2016). While the greatest insights into the racialized, gendered, classed, and anthropocentric operations of settler colonial power come from those with intimate experience of its violence, socially approved acceptance of what counts as valuable knowledge often works to silence those with just that essential insight, by characterizing their knowledge and their being as intellectually, morally, and politically suspect (Dotson, 2011; Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013). These ontological investments are easily mobilized to relegate decolonial and anti-racist critique to a “condition of unheardness” that, whether conscious or not, works to uphold the “unequally occupied rhetorical space” that sustains extractive political and economic relations (Davies, 1994, 108; May, 2006, 110). Intensely politically productive, an epistemology of ignorance is a powerful organizing logic that emerges from and sustains entrenched material inequities.

Recent critiques of the discourse of reconciliation mobilized in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008–2015) emphasize the discourse’s entrenchment in and reproduction of a colonial epistemology of ignorance. Reconciliation, as it has been taken up in many non-Indigenous circles, continues to rest on the discursive production of an “Indian
problem” that can be solved through the well-meaning and generous interference of a knowing multicultural state and public (Alfred, 2010; Coulthard, 2014; de Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010; Regan, 2010; Robinson & Martin, 2016; Strakosch, 2016). This orientation towards Indigenous deficit and completion through settler benevolence obfuscates the systemic and ongoing nature of colonial violence. Crucially, it also deflects attention away from the ongoing social formation effected by such racialized economies of value and attention, pre-empting imagination of more restorative relations (Ahmed, 2005; Alfred, 2009; Mackey, 2016; Nicoll, 2004, 2005; Srivastava, 2005). As Dian Million argues in the context of the reparations process launched through the class-action lawsuit initiated by survivors of the government-sponsored and church-run Indian Residential School system (1870s to 1996), the will to know Indigenous people as victims does a particular form of work. That work evacuates the collective and systemic nature of colonial violence, while enabling non-Indigenous people to play the role of benevolent bystanders to narrations of pain that, once complete, are construed as having no bearing on future relations (Million, 2013b). Eva Mackey likewise elucidates the moral and political investments at play in contemporary discourses of reconciliation in her critique of the 2008 Apology to Former Students of the Indian Residential Schools by then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In failing to situate the residential schools as part of larger and ongoing structural, state-sponsored and racialized legal processes of breaking treaties and appropriating land, and by framing the schools instead as isolated incidents born of the misguided judgements of past individuals, the Apology focused attention on the moral character of these individuals - and by implication the superior moral character of those who recognize past immorality – rather than on the uneven material inheritances wrought by ongoing colonial violence. Colonial violence could thus be relegated to a distant past, transcendable by a unified, forward-looking
nation (Mackey, 2013). The framing of reconciliation as a matter of empathic response to past harm evacuates the material structures of land appropriation, sustaining the colonial epistemology of ignorance that supports ongoing land appropriation.

The failure of contemporary discourses of reconciliation to escape the bounds of colonial denial demonstrates the social and political importance of critical consciousness of the material and epistemological immediacies of colonialism. A central aim of the 2008-2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the history and intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School system was to expand and extend the epistemic responsibilities of non-Indigenous people in Canada. Emphasizing the ignorance that persists in Canadian society around the nation-to-nation relationship enshrined in the 1763 Royal Proclamation and the 1764 Treaty of Niagara, and affirmed through the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the TRC made education a key part of its reconciliatory vision. A decolonizing education would foreground colonialism as a shared condition, which all people in Canada must engage and challenge in ways that respect the Indigenous legal foundations of Canada and support the ongoing enactment of Indigenous knowledge traditions (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Anishinaabe Elder Mary Deleary, speaking at a TRC-sponsored Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum in 2014, pointed in particular to the centrality of place to responsible nation-to-nation relations:

I’m so filled with belief and hope because when I hear your voices at the table I hear and know that the responsibilities that our ancestors carried ... are still being carried...even through all of the struggles, even through all of what has been disrupted [...] we can still hear the voice of the land. We can hear the care and love for the children. We can hear about our law. We can hear about our stories, our governance, our feasts, [and] our medicines. [...] We have work to do. That work we are [already] doing as [Aboriginal] peoples. Our relatives who have come from across the water [non-Aboriginal people], you still have work to do on your road. [...] The land is made up of the dust of our ancestors’ bones. And so to reconcile with this land and everything that has happened, there is much...
work to be done [...] in order to create balance (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, 9).

Critical historical consciousness, mutual respect, and responsibility to land, humans, more-than-humans, and ancestors past and present, the Commission emphasized, are the ground upon which decolonizing relationships are built.

The responsibility in and to place invoked by Elder Mary Deleary and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenges the investments in universal truth enabled by traditions of foundationalism and reductionism in Western thought, which investments have served to legitimize extractive and assimilative colonial mentalities and practices. In these traditions reality is cast as rooted in the human: all phenomena are framed as always appearing in the world as objects in relation to human subjects (Malpas, 2012a). In Europe as a result of the influence of the 17th and 18th century writings of Isaac Newton, René Descartes, John Locke, and Gottfried Leibniz, the relationship between human subject and other came to be understood as one of separation, in which the subject, as the thinking mind, knows the world as an array of objects existing in extended space prior to and external to it (Casey, 1997, 187-193). The roots of this thinking are ancient, though ancient philosophers understood material existence as subordinate to place, as place shapes what is possible for bodies. It was Christian thinkers who posited unbounded divine space as the underlying condition of material existence (Casey, 1997, 50-53, 106-115; Grant, 1981). Through the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, those studying the natural world and society gradually de-emphasised the divine yet retained non-local, non-particular unbounded space as the underlying condition of existence. This epistemological orientation allowed the subsumption of phenomena to location within that space, thus enabling measurement, the elaboration of explanatory laws, and the exploration and categorization of diversity according to variance from a decentred, universal view of (human) nature, all to better
understand the divine and the nature of life in it (Casey, 1997, 137-193). As Edward Casey has observed, this emphasis on the calculable distance between things relegated place to a system of purely relational positions within space, essentially gutting place of the sensation and response essential to being. Place became subsumed in space, part of a universal network of relations in constant flow (Casey, 1997, 285-289; Agnew, 2011; Malpas, 2012b). In this epistemology emphasis is on phenomena as individual nodes within systems of connection.

The reduction of phenomena including place to individual discrete points within networks of flows is one way of coping with enormous complexity and existential uncertainty. Yet, as Indigenous and decolonial scholars demonstrate, the isolation and sense of mastery enabled by such reduction can, has, and does enable colonial violence. Framing phenomena (trees, landscapes, animals, individuals, societies…) as separate and distinct, essentially as non-sensory and unresponsive objects of analysis and potential exploitation, supports the development of hierarchies of utility that within a racialized, gendered, classed and anthropocentric society take particular forms (Deloria, 1995; Johnson & Murton, 2007; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Murton, 2012a, 2012b; A. Smith, 2006; Sundberg, 2014). It also enables a “spatial schema” in which the bodies, speech acts, and economies of value of Indigenous people(s) become marked as not belonging. Within colonial spatial logics, Indigenous people(s) can be invoked and made visible, but only in ways that present them as unrooted and spectral, absent from place (Goeman, 2013, 9). Deeply entrenched in the settler colonial spatial imagination, this epistemology is difficult to overturn, in part because self-interest is at stake, but also because “one pernicious aspect of colonial power is that it shapes perceptions of reality,” and in doing so, legitimizes the illusion of the deep “permanency and inevitability” of existing
power relations (Waziyatawin, 2012, 76). Disrupting the perceptions of reality that sustain colonial power is central to decolonizing relations.

The nation-to-nation relationship affirmed through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission points to the need for non-Indigenous people in Canada to attend to the epistemic investments that support the shape of the world created through 500 years of European colonialism. Learning to “listen differently” to the testimonies and critical perspectives of Indigenous people(s), from a place of “vulnerability, humility, and a willingness to stay in the decolonizing struggle of our own discomfort” is central to decolonial unsettlement (Regan, 2010, 13). As settler colonialism is a fundamentally shared condition, building decolonizing relations requires re-imagining and re-articulating knowledge and power through “a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies” (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012, 3). This must come from a place of understanding that settler colonialism and the systems of thought that sustain it are not inevitable or monolithic but historically and geographically specific formations (Benton, 2009; Dhamoon, 2015; Ford, 2010; Mallon, 2011). Michel Foucault’s insights into the historically contingent nature of being, the pervasive and deeply embedded nature of power, and the constitution of ethics, read together with Jeff Malpas’ emphasis on the importance of place to being, suggest a way towards the epistemic responsibility called for by Indigenous theorists that is afforded by critical consciousness in place.

**Foucault and the geography of epistemological limit**

While the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault has been claimed by many as a spatial thinker, little attention has been paid to the importance of limit in his work. The geographic strength of Foucault’s work is more than his discussion of particular spaces (of incarceration, of medicalization, of education, etc.), his use of spatial metaphors, or his
references to the discipline of geography. What makes Foucault’s work geographical is his interest in the limits inherent to epistemological orientation. Limit in the Foucauldian sense is not the boundary between presence and absence (i.e. the empty spaces on European explorers’ maps), but is constitutive of particular configurations of knowledge (e.g. the ontological and epistemological claims made by empty spaces on European explorers’ maps). Limit, then, refers to the bounds of conception/perception, which limits, as Foucault worked to demonstrate, are socially produced, historically and geographically contingent, deeply linked to power and hierarchy, and profoundly productive in their uneven constitution of the world.

Socially produced, for Foucault the limits of conception/perception are not totalizing or static. In the last years of his life, Foucault shifted his emphasis away from an explicitly social focus on the role of techniques of domination in the formation of the Western subject, towards theorizing how domination could be resisted (see Foucault’s last three lecture series: *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1981-82); *The Government of Self and Others* (1982-83); and *The Courage of Truth* (1983-84), as well as the posthumously published Volumes 2 (1985) and 3 (1986) of *The History of Sexuality*). True resistance, for Foucault, lies in “care of the self”, in which individuals work to understand the techniques of domination that govern their practices so as to evaluate their own objectification and decide on appropriate courses of action. Far from a solitary or narcissistic exercise, care of the self is a deeply social practice, as it is through encounter with others that one can begin to unlearn what has been taught socially and draw strength to persist in thinking and acting otherwise. Foucault sees the limits of conception/perception as dynamic insofar as individuals undertake an ethics of care of the self.

Foucault’s work on epistemic responsibility is an evolution of his thinking on governmentality. By governmentality Foucault meant the “conduct of conduct” or the forms of
activity that shape the conscious and unconscious actions of a person or persons in ways that align with social norms (Foucault 2000). Foucault sought to identify and contextualize the boundaries of such conceptions of conduct through historical analysis of changing social attitudes in Western Europe, specifically towards medicine (The Birth of the Clinic (1973)), imprisonment (Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison (1975)) and sexuality (History of Sexuality Vol. 1 (1979)). In these books Foucault was interested in “studying the constitution of the subject across history” that “has led us to the modern conception of the self” (Foucault, 1982 [1993], 202). Several years after writing the first volume of History of Sexuality, Foucault expressed dissatisfaction with the approach he had taken:

I thought that the techniques of domination [of the subject] were the most important…now, I wish to study those forms of understanding which the subject creates about… self…. I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization…[one] has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques – techniques of domination and techniques of the self….The contact point…[at which how] the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think, government (Foucault 1982 [1993], 203).

Foucault’s investigation of the historical transformation of governance demonstrates the importance of the self and its associated boundaries of conception/perception for ethics. Counter to the idea that there exists an essential self to be discovered and expressed, Foucault illustrated that the self is fundamentally a social creature, as epistemologies of selfhood are themselves socially conditioned and historically and geographically contingent (Foucault, 1985, 1986, 1988, 2000a, 2000b, 2007). Socially conditioned and epistemological limits both shape the self, and are shaped by the self through encounter with other entities (Foucault 1985, 1986). Ethical being, Foucault argues, lies not in seeking freedom from external control or influence, but in understanding how, why, and by whom we are governed, in order to govern differently.
Historical erudition is central to Foucault’s exploration of the uneven, dynamic, myriad-scaled contours of epistemological limits. It is by rendering historic the ways of thinking that shape contemporary Western societies (manifest in the medical establishment, the prison system, the heterosexual family unit…) that Foucault can begin to demonstrate the historical-geographic contingency of those epistemological limits. Consciousness of the dependence of epistemological limits on hierarchy and domination, and of how epistemological limits work to reproduce hierarchy and domination, illuminates how the microphysics of epistemological limits, and perhaps ultimately their macrophysics, might be subverted. Foucault’s historical-philosophical project offers two critical insights. The first is that the self, the social, and the historical are fundamentally intertwined, because in being in the world, we both perpetuate and are constituted by historically-conditioned boundaries of conception/perception, including epistemologies of being. The second insight is that critical creative engagement with these limits requires historical consciousness: awareness that things have not always been what they are, that things are always more than what they appear to be, that the ways things are today are linked to, but not necessarily subordinate to, the ways they and others have been before, and that our actions today shape the future: nothing is inevitable. For Foucault, historical consciousness is fundamental to ethics: the point of historical inquiry is to illuminate the epistemological contours that shape how things come to be in the present, in order to invigorate critical creative engagement with them.

The significance of epistemological limit for place and space

Foucault’s argument that the self, the social, and the historical are fundamentally linked is important to the conceptions of place and space that have emerged from phenomenological
thought in the 20th and 21st centuries. In the phenomenological tradition, place is understood not as location or locale within abstract extended space, but as integral to the possibility and creativity of human experience. One of the most rigorous phenomenological theorists of place and space is philosopher Jeff Malpas. Both Foucault and Malpas are engaged in clarifying the nature of being in the world, and are each concerned with breaking down the division between self and other that is embedded in Western thought. In this section we demonstrate that while Foucault and Malpas both take a contextually rich approach to theorizing human experience, their respective intellectual strategies are grounded in two different epistemologies of self. The difference, we argue, is important, because each epistemology of self facilitates a different ethical orientation. We explore the ethical problems associated with each conceptualization of the self, and suggest how these problems might be reconciled.

Malpas’ work is an explicit theorization of place, space and subjectivity. While in much contemporary thought the idea of space as abstract extension, and place as location or locale within the realm of abstract extension, is assigned ontological status (they just are), Malpas’ work demonstrates that place and space are twin and epistemologically-contingent concepts: how one is understood affects the other, and how place and space are understood depends on epistemological orientation. Although place and space are related ideas, for Malpas place is the primary concept, as material entities must always first exist somewhere. Yet location within a spatiotemporal frame does not alone capture the richness of place. Nor is place, Malpas argues, a purely subjective construct. Place is an “open and yet bounded realm within which the things of the world appear and within which events can ‘take place’…. [it is] that wherein the sort of being that is characteristically human has its ground” (1999, 33-34). While how place is conceived and perceived is epistemologically contingent, for Malpas place exists ontologically as the condition
of subjectivity and epistemology. Subjectivity, Malpas argues, is inextricable from agency and place, as embodied action requires grasp of “the difference between the world, and the things in the world, on which one acts, and that which is part of oneself through which, or by means of which, one acts,” an awareness that is only possible in place (Malpas, 1999, 113). Place is also dynamic and “open,” in the sense that it has both flexible boundaries and possibilities of containment, and is simultaneously always “bounded,” or individuated, by the forms of life that ‘take place’ within it. Places are bounded by flexible, constantly changing relationships, that both shape us and that we shape by our actions and through our mental constructions (memories, personal attachments, autobiographies…). Space, on the other hand, refers not to abstract boundless extension, but is the realm in which movement, activity and encounter are possible (Malpas, 1999, 136). Space in this sense is integral to place because it is only through experience and engagement with other entities beyond one’s immediate location that consciousness of self and others in place is possible. Self and other are for Malpas irreducible, distinct components of subjectivity.

Malpas and Foucault both understand the self as social, but there is an important difference between them. For Malpas, the self is social in that a creature’s grasp of its own subjectivity requires awareness of and engagement with other subjectivities, activities for which a grasp of space, or consciousness of the possibility of multiplicities of subjectivity, is essential (1999, 141-46). For Foucault, the self is social both because historically and geographically conditioned boundaries of conception/perception shape subjectivity, and because creative negotiation of those limits requires encounter with other entities. In Foucault the emphasis is on the role of socially-produced epistemological limit in the constitution of the self, whereas Malpas is most interested in theorizing the inherent spatiality of subjectivity. The difference rests in the
epistemology of self: for Malpas, the self has an integrity that comes into existence through encounter with others, and through memory and self-narrative. Foucault also sees the self as creative, but as primarily socially (historically) influenced.

The difference between these two epistemologies of self is a consequence of the weight given to ontology in Malpas and to epistemology in Foucault. Malpas sees ontology not as reductionist singularity, but as inquiry into “what it is that grounds the possibility of multiplicity” (Malpas, 2012b, 230). Epistemology, for Malpas, is secondary to ontology, a structure in keeping with phenomenological thought, which frames conscious, embodied materiality as the condition of knowing. Malpas’ work builds on that tradition by theorizing place as both the condition of conscious embodied materiality and as shaped by the limitations of physicality, that is, the mortality of the body. Malpas theorizes subjectivity as emerging through the relation-driven boundedness of place. In his work, the self is prior to those relationships (1999, 141-46, 163, 175-77). Foucault, on the other hand, privileges epistemology over ontology. For Foucault the very idea of the self is historically and geographically contingent, and how we go about forming a coherent sense of ourselves is shaped profoundly by historically-conditioned boundaries of conception/perception. Foucault’s work suggests that epistemology shapes ontology: the contours of socially-produced knowledge and institutions influence humans to a much greater degree than do the limitations of being.

The difference between Malpas’ and Foucault’s respective epistemologies of self is important, because each approach proposes a different ethical orientation. Drawing on literature and especially on the work of Marcel Proust, Malpas argues that identity is inextricable from place, to the extent that “recovery of self can only take the form of recovery of place – both a recovery of specific places as well as the recovery of an encompassing ‘place’ within
which…life can be grasped as a whole” (Malpas, 1999, 177). For Malpas ethics begins in the relation of the self to the self. Recovery of the self requires orientation to the personal past and questioning of one’s memory and self-narrative. Foucault similarly argues that the conscious relation of the self to the self is foremost to ethical being, but his orientation is to the present self and to the deeply historical and often taken for granted conditions influencing it. For Foucault, consciousness of the historical (social) nature of the self avoids nostalgia and enables critical and dynamic engagement with the social norms and expectations of the present.

There are dangers to both Malpas’ and Foucault’s epistemology of self. Structuring the self as having prior ontological coherence is problematic because it facilitates an epistemology of unexamined perception. The assumption that being just *is* fixes the present, and therefore also the past and future, into determined trajectories, stifling engagement and change, and leaving oppressive structures unchallenged while obfuscating complicity in their perpetuation (see Lévinas, 1979). The danger lies in passive acceptance of hierarchy and domination, and, taken to the extreme, rejection of social inquiry that might illuminate the contours and mechanisms of oppression. Yet over-privileging the social in the constitution of the self is also problematic, because it risks the dissolution of the embodied self and thus refusal of the very possibility of ethics. If everything one does is socially conditioned, how responsible is one for anything; further, why engage in any action when the social consequences are always already known?

Balancing Foucault’s and Malpas’ conceptions of the self suggests the importance of orientation towards awareness in place. While Foucault’s work demonstrates the socially contingent nature of the self, Malpas’ work suggests the transformative possibilities of conscious engagement with the everyday and immediate details of embodied being: in place. Orientation towards awareness in place focuses attention on the contingency of economic and social
privileges on historically and socially conditioned hierarchies of importance and practices of settler colonial extraction, and sensitivity to how these conditions shape circumstances for us and for others (Medina, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). This entails balancing the distinctiveness and incommensurability of experience with critical examination of the interests served by colonial, racialized, gendered, classed and anthropocentric logics of social differentiation, as well as constant attention to how such spacings shape what one does and does not perceive, value, and engage with, and the nature of that engagement (Ahmed, 2006; Rifkin, 2013; Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is through such ongoing and often difficult and uncomfortable practice that the possibilities and necessity of relating differently continually emerge.

The task is enormous. Yet, as reading the work of Foucault and Malpas together suggests, the possibility of transformation lies in the everyday, subtle, tenuous moments of choosing to act in ways that challenge the desire for completion supported by logics of social differentiation and yield space, voice and power to those marginalized by these logics. This transformation cannot rest in the assignation of prescriptive horizons against which progressive action can orient itself, because “this incitement to wait, to be patient, to bracket harm until the impasse has been resolved and the account given, is part and parcel of how power is organized” in contemporary late liberal societies (Povinelli, 2011, 190; Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge, 2012). A focus on place demands immediate attention to the world-making tactics available to us and to others and the ongoing encouragement and facilitation of world-making capacities. Place is politically powerful when based in an epistemology of the self as a simultaneously embodied and socially-conditioned creature, with creative critical capacity to act.
An epistemology of awareness in place necessitates a shift from learning *about* to learning from and with. As recent critiques of contemporary discourses of truth and reconciliation attest, the will to know, even empathetically, can direct attention away from the discourses that delineate the bounds of acceptable knowledge around personhood, land, and self-determination (Absolon, 2011; Bawaka Country et al., 2015; Hunt, 2014; Larsen & Johnson, 2016; Regan, 2010; Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012). Building decolonizing relations instead requires consciousness of the bounds of epistemology and of the co-constitution of epistemology and being: what is unknown does not represent a natural limit of knowledge, to be overcome through the accumulation of more knowledge, but is an outcome of bounds of conception/perception that are historically (socially) produced. Attending to these bounds requires shifting away from the relativistic claim that different people(s) have different perspectives on the same phenomenon, towards what Julie Cruikshank, drawing on Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, calls perspectivism, or the idea that “the world is inhabited by a range of beings – human and non-human – who all apprehend that world from distinct vantage points” (Cruikshank, 2012, 244). The strength of an epistemology of awareness in place lies in its humility, its respect for the existence and critical creative capacities of other entities, and its sensitivity to power.

**Conclusion**

This article has read the critical currents afforded by Michel Foucault’s analysis of power and Jeff Malpas’ phenomenological thought through the lens of Indigenous and decolonial theory to suggest the socially transformative possibilities of epistemic responsibility in place. Building on the insights of Indigenous and decolonial scholars into the structuring force of epistemologies of ignorance, the dynamics of colonial denial, and the violence enabled by traditions of place
disconnected from being and responsibility, we have argued that building decolonizing relations
demands orientation towards the limits of conception and perception in place. This is not about
creating a new sub-discipline or field to carve off territory for a new generation of geographers.
Indeed such domestication would subvert the “re-imagination and re-articulation of power,
change, and knowledge” necessary for decolonizing relations (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012, 3).
Rather, it is about taking the focus off one’s most self-interested self to pay attention to the
socially and historically conditioned contours and consequences of epistemological
presuppositions about one’s place in the world.
“Attempting to build non-violent knowledge must, perhaps, inevitably be done along the frontier – between worlds, between cultures and languages, between histories and territories. What tools do we have? Many, including the law, history, the archive, the academy, and writing itself, have also been the tools of colonialism. And given the history of our world, could it be any other way? To build non-violent knowledge with tools steeped in violence may be the core of our project…it is a challenge we can take on creatively and ambitiously, with the purpose of transforming both their use and their meaning.”

– Florencia Mallon, *Decolonizing Native Histories*, pg. 18

“The assumption held by dominant cultures and our pedagogies and research programs—that everything is in principle knowable—forms not only the epistemological basis for our being and knowing but also our fantasies and desires for a better, less fragmented world. Such progressive desires are important, but they must also be seen as based in fantasy—a redemptive fantasy of unity that attempts to overcome history and ongoing effects of colonization. Such fantasy is a necessary but always troubled ingredient in cross-cultural work.”

– Alison Jones with Kuni Jenkins, *Working the Indigene-colonizer hyphen*, pg. 17

This article argues that decolonizing research begins in attention to inherited colonial thinking and ways of being. Drawing on our – my and Anne Godlewska’s - experiences developing a research project that seeks to center the knowledge, experiences and ways of being of Indigenous people and communities in the re-education of residents of Canada, we suggest the nature and
subtleties of colonial ignorance, defined not as a passive or incidental absence of knowledge, but as the outcome of ways of understanding the world and one's place in it that are socially-sanctioned, cultivated across social realms, and deeply linked to racialized, gendered, classed, anthropocentric and intersecting forms of power (Calderon, 2014; May, 2006; Medina, 2013; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). Situating ourselves as both researchers and participants (Bodone et al., 2004; Norris, 2008), we engage in critical reflection on the shifts in language and consciousness engendered through working with over 250 First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members to co-design a research tool. This research tool seeks to assess how Canadian high school graduates are learning to think about colonialism and its relationship to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and Canadian society. We approach the tensions and points of connection involved in this collaborative work through the lens of recent scholarship on ignorance. Although the study of knowledge and its nature has been the focus of Western thought since ancient times, it is only recently that scholars are beginning to grapple with ignorance as a social and political phenomenon in its own right. We draw on this work and that of critical Indigenous and decolonial theorists to suggest the importance of attending to “the forcefield of colonialism’s conceptual web, in which many more of us than often acknowledged remain entangled” (Stoler, 2016, 9). Thinking otherwise, as Michel Foucault reminds us, is always the critical challenge.

The colonial nature of ignorance

Kikuyu novelist and scholar Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o argues that colonization involves much more than control of territory: the entrenchment and maintenance of extractive economic and political relations demands inculcation of systems of thought that frame such relations as not only
legitimate, but inevitable. Colonization requires ignorance of the beauty of other forms of relation (Wa Thiong’o, 1994). Indigenous leaders and activists in the settler colonial context of Canada likewise point to how colonial ignorance functions to maintain exploitative relations between the Canadian state and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. This ignorance, they argue, is not neutral or incidental. It is epistemological, cultivated through media, legal decisions and especially education, in ways that work to naturalize racialized hierarchies of being and knowing, refuse the systemic and enduring nature of colonial oppression, and, in so doing, dull response to inherited injustices (Battiste, 2013; Bear & Andersen, 2017; Calderon, 2014; Environics Institute, 2016; Manuel & Derrickson, 2017; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). This ignorance is a powerful social force, because it works to justify and maintain extractive political, economic, and social relations, while sanctioning abnegation of epistemic responsibility. An epistemology of ignorance encourages unawareness of how subjectivity is shaped by the social positions, power relations and ways of knowing that emerge from colonial, racial and patriarchal oppression (Alcoff, 2007; Fricker, 2011; Mills, 2007). It works at personal and social levels to present the status quo as natural and inevitable, thus allowing the epistemically privileged denial of the systemic nature of oppression and their own involvement in its maintenance (Medina, 2013; Whitt, 2016). This observation does not absolve individual responsibility but does help to explain why ignorance is such a powerful social force.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) on the history and legacies of the Indian Residential School system (1870s-1996) called upon Ministries of education, school boards, universities, colleges and teachers to commit to remedying mass ignorance. Citing the “broad lack of understanding of the unjust and violent circumstances from which modern Canada emerged,” the Commission made the nation-to-nation relationship
enshrined in the 1763 Royal Proclamation and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples the guiding principle of its work (Sinclair, 2015). Challenging and altering the imagination of people in Canada about this relationship, the TRC argued, is fundamental to meaningful social transformation (TRC, 2015). Indigenous leaders and activists have long fought for greater community input in the design of inclusive, culturally responsive, anti-oppressive education (Assembly of First Nations, 1972, 1988; Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002, Battiste, 2013; Couros et al., 2013; Kirkness, 1999). Building on this work, the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have prompted educational institutions across Canada to enhance their efforts to identify and confront the systemic prejudice embedded in course content, funding priorities, administrative decision-making, and the priorities of teachers, teacher educators, faculty and staff (Côté-Meek, 2017; Favel & Stoicheff, 2015; Macdonald, 2016; TRC, 2015; Trimbee & Kinew, 2015). The research tool and larger project discussed here engages with and works to support efforts to decolonize education, by exploring, in quantitative and qualitative terms, the relationship between formal education and Canadians’ “significant lack of understanding and respect for First Nations, Métis and Inuit ways of understanding the world, which translates into a lack of understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit rights in Canada” (Turner, 2006, 8). The Awareness project has three components. As education in Canada is controlled by the provinces, the team undertakes critical analysis of K-12 curricula and Ministry of Education-approved textbooks in each province, paying close attention to contradiction within and between texts, courses, and grade levels, the subtle (or not so subtle) insertion of settler

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3 The term “awareness” is important because it points to the living and embodied nature of knowledge. We name the project in this way not to deny colonial ignorance or to suggest that ignorance is easily overcome, but to emphasize the importance of epistemological sensitivity in place. Awareness and ignorance always co-exist and their limits are as alive as we are. The decision to name the project the “Awareness Project”, as opposed to the “Ignorance Project” is a strategic one, given the endurance of settler resistance to the term “ignorance.” It was also the terminology preferred by the Indigenous educators we worked with.
voice and values, silences and misinformation, and undermining strategies including segregation and decontextualization (Anderson, 2012; Bickmore, 2006; Godlewska, Rose, Schaefli, Freake & Massey, 2016; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s observation that “Real power lies with those who design the tools,” the team then develops a questionnaire, including a test of student knowledge and questions about students’ education, attitudes and demographics, through a co-design process with First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators from communities associated with participating universities and colleges, as well as staff members, academics, students, and administrators (L.T. Smith, 1999, 38). The aim is to develop a tool that allows fine-grained assessment and analysis of the relationship between knowledge considered by Indigenous educators to be vital to responsible citizenship, and students’ formal education, attitudes, and experience. The aim is not to assess individual students but to investigate the sources, prevalence and nature of ignorance and racism, in order to develop the kinds of reporting and data that may advance change.

The Awareness questionnaire is designed to encourage critical reflection and learning. The research team visits first-year and fourth-year classes at participating universities and colleges to invite students to participate in-class in the online questionnaire. While knowledge is assessed in the first year questionnaire through a multiple choice knowledge test, the exiting questionnaire comprises both multiple choice and open-ended questions to allow students to respond in greater depth. Completing the questionnaire in class signals that the topics are important to the college/university and engages students and faculty in the research. High completion rates also ensure good quality data. Students are shown the correct answers to multiple choice questions as they complete questions. At the end of the survey, students are given their total score and score by category (culture, governance, history, geography, current
events) and directed to a resource webpage. Following completion of the survey, with Elders present, students ask questions and participate in discussion around the topics raised by the questionnaire. Following analysis, the team returns the raw (anonymized) and analyzed data to Indigenous community liaisons, administrators, and faculty at each college or university, for use in implementing and advocating for internal curricular and co-curricular reform. We also share findings with Ministries of Education, the media, and academic venues, with the aim of stimulating government and public attention to the nature of colonial ignorance and the necessity of addressing it. In this research the Awareness project joins many others in working to make educational institutions more accountable to Canada’s colonial past and present.

**Unsettling pedagogy**

Analyzing colonial ignorance from within a colonial society poses significant challenges, foremost amongst which is decolonizing our own ways of thinking and being, as a Swiss newcomer and recent permanent resident of Canada (Laura), and as a child of Polish and French World War II refugees (Anne). As beneficiaries of a colonial system in which whiteness “enhances one’s life chances as configured through the logic of capital” and as academics trained in the Western academy, we bring to this work sets of experiences, relationships, and knowledges shaped profoundly by the power and privilege these embodiments signify and accrue in contemporary dominant political and socio-economic systems (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, xx; Macoun, 2016; Narayan, 1988). We also bring an abiding commitment to accountability to these legacies and the unearned advantages they confer (Lowman & Barker, 2015; Macoun & Strakosch, 2012; Maddison, Clark & de Costa, 2016). As critical Indigenous and decolonial theorists argue, decolonization is a structure, not an event, requiring ongoing critical
consciousness of the systemic nature of oppression, its articulation along racialized, gendered, classed, and anthropocentric lines, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and every day, subtle, tenuous moments of conscious action towards relating otherwise (Dhamoon, 2015; Redwing-Saunders & Hill, 2007; Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 1999). In research contexts, this entails undoing the opacity of academic knowledge production, foregrounding the researcher as part of the research, making legible the interests the research serves, being open about difficulties and failures, and orienting the research in ways that support the ongoing enactment of Indigenous knowledge traditions (Al-Hardan, 2014; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Patel, 2014; A.C. Wilson, 2004). In this article we lay out our experiences of the methodological and epistemological negotiations embedded in the co-design of the first-year Awareness questionnaire, as we carried it out in Ontario with over 200 First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge holders from communities associated with 10 Ontario universities, as well as staff, academics, students, and administrators. This entailed approximately 60 meetings with sometimes as few as one person and as many as 30 over a period of 10 months and a total travel distance of 16,000 kilometres (about 10,000 miles). To each meeting we brought the survey, as modified by previous co-designers, and reviewed each question, word for word, for importance, accuracy, and resonance with co-designers’ experience and understanding. The questionnaire underwent considerable evolution as a result of this process, as did we. We learned precisely because we worked face to face with knowledge holders in their homes and places of work or community, a process of “falling into embodied awareness of living in Indigenous sovereignty” (Nicoll, 2004, 17). In such places co-designers shared what they felt and we used all of our

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4 These universities are: University of Windsor, University of Guelph, Wilfrid Laurier University, McMaster University, University of Toronto, Trent University, Queen’s University, University of Ottawa, Laurentian University and Lakehead University.
senses to understand their meaning: we were “unfixed and uncomfortable” and in our vulnerability began to understand (Daza, 2008, 76; Gaudet, 2014; Regan, 2010). We trace the questionnaire’s and our own “methodological becoming” through the co-design meetings and offer critical reflections on them, discussing the key role of our institutional partners, the importance of humour, the relationship between language and imagination, and assumptions we held that presented significant opportunities to shift how we relate (Mountz et al. 2003, 29; Al-Hardan, 2014).

There are some dangers to attending to this project of co-design and our experiences of it in this format. Focusing on changes to the questionnaire and our own consciousness risks reinforcing a liberal pedagogical model that frames consumption of knowledge-about-the-other as the endpoint of justice. Such a pedagogical approach is deeply problematic, as it is oriented around desire to secure the goodness and redemption of “those who now know,” rather than around naming and disrupting systemic and organizational structures of racism and colonialism, a dynamic that is itself deeply racialized (Ahmed, 2005, 2007a; Esson, Noxolo, Baxter, Daley & Byron, 2017; hooks, 1988; Jones with Jenkins, 2008; Mahtani, 2014; Nayak, 2011; Srivastava & Francis, 2006; Tarc, 2011). We attend to ignorance not in this liberal pedagogical sense of an individual absence waiting to be filled, but as a social and structuring force linked to material and epistemological inheritances that, in this context, influenced the shape and course of the co-design of the Awareness questionnaire. Focusing on ignorance in this sense is important for three reasons. First, it foregrounds the material nature of ignorance: absences, exclusions, and failures to imagine otherwise are present, real, and organize the way the world, shaped by colonialism, functions. Second, it emphasizes that decolonization is not an endpoint but a demanding and ongoing process, requiring constant attention to the limits of understanding or “care of the self”
(Ettlinger, 2011, Foucault, 2012). Lastly, it suggests the transformative possibilities afforded by humility, generosity, and uncertainty, not in the sense of the “resilience” and “flexibility” celebrated and promoted through neoliberalism, but as an ongoing, self-conscious refusal to mobilize the “axiomatic knowledge and action that have emerged from fantasies of colonial entitlement and certainty” (Mackey, 2016, 132). We attest both to the depths of colonial misrecognition and to the power of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being to shift social worlds.

Who we worked with

Indigenous educational leaders at each university are the most critical people to the project. The unique position of these leaders bridging the gap between highly privileged educational institutions and Indigenous communities allowed us to connect with individuals and organizations whose insight shaped our work. Off-campus community leaders, friendship centres, and educational institutions on reserves gave generously of their time and insight because of their high regard for the work of these Indigenous educators and advocates and their interest in the project. The quality of relationships Indigenous leaders had built was also evident in the number of people we met with on campus and the range of their experience (Indigenous student services staff, faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, members of the university’s Aboriginal Education Council, Elders in residence, equity advisors, top level administrators…). Committed to practical results, at meetings they observed and judged our words and actions and gave gentle advice. Universities worked with us, facilitating meetings and sharing student data, thanks to the generosity of our partners and the respect of most universities for their Indigenous leaders and for the project. The questionnaire’s transformation is summarized in Figure 1.
**Figure 2.1.** Summary of co-design changes to the Ontario Awareness questionnaire, 2013-2014.

Each column in Figure 2.1 represents a group of co-design meetings, which generally spanned 2-4 days (while the columns usually conform to meetings associated with particular universities, we also met with individuals and other educational institutions). Test questions and themes are
on the left, and the questions kept in the final survey are in dark green on the right, with curriculum questions in light green. Rows highlighted in blue indicate where a question was eliminated. Purple marks the addition of a new question, and red where the question underwent a major rewrite. Orange indicates a moderate but important change and yellow means that there were minor wording changes. No question was left unmodified. Questions were eliminated from all themes, but mostly from geography, and most but not all of these eliminations occurred early on in the process. Thirteen new questions were added, only two of which were later eliminated. Some environments were especially critical. The university in column 2 was our earliest set of meetings. At the university in column 12, co-designers helped sensitize the questionnaire to issues in northern Ontario.

**Learning co-design: the social environments of meetings**

Traveling to meet co-designers in their cultural and personal homelands put into sharper relief the inherited epistemological baggage we carried with us. As representatives, however reluctantly, of an oppressive educational system and society, we often encountered suspicion and from time to time hostility (though always expressed with great restraint). Listening to silence and accepting tension made us better perceive our expectations and open ourselves to ways of relating differently (Bell, 2008; Lévinas, 1998). We also felt the power of humour to encourage egalitarian relationships and ease vulnerability (Howe & Scherzer, 1986; Kuipers, 2009). As we learned we became more adept at discerning layers of meaning in criticism, which, together with improvements to the survey, eased later meetings.

Sometimes humour worked to bridge expectations around social etiquette. To one meeting, our first in Ontario, we brought small sachets of tobacco as thanks for people’s time.
After introducing ourselves and the project, we gave a sachet to each of the eight people present. Only one person immediately accepted the gift. We were discomforted by this, unsure whether it constituted rejection. However, after some humorous suggestions for the questionnaire, including one to add ‘Mohawk’ as an incorrect answer for a question on Indigenous opposition to the Alberta oil sands ‘because Mohawks are always protesting everything!’ we realized that participants were waiting for us to clarify our intentions and express willingness to listen before accepting any gifts. This difference in expectation around communication and gift giving was bridged through laughter. By the end of the meeting everyone had taken the tobacco.

We felt the power of humour again in the second co-design meeting, at a friendship centre in southwestern Ontario. In this meeting academic authority was challenged and mutual respect restored through humour. One person critiqued a test question asking which province is home to the greatest number of status First Nations individuals, suggesting that we move away from status First Nations. Anne explained that we concentrated on status First Nations because Indian status is the focus of government population statistics, and suggested alternative terminology. The co-designer repeatedly rejected these alternatives, and all the words in between, eventually to the extent that silence became the only possible response. During this prolonged exchange the six other group members watched in silence. Finally, Anne turned to her and exclaimed ‘you’re yanking my chain!’ She grinned and replied ‘yes, I am!’ There was laughter and the tension eased. The exchange emphasized the importance of respecting silence, that who has the right to define always matters, and that humour works in powerful ways.

Sometimes humour acknowledged the difficulty of communicating across experience. In a meeting early on in the process at a southwestern Ontario university, a co-designer patiently helped us clarify wording and develop new questions. About halfway through review of the test, during discussion of a question on systemic racism, he suggested that there were other manifestations of systemic racism not included in our answer. Through discussion the structure of the question changed to all-of-the-answers-are-correct. After Anne suggested a possible third correct answer, he turned to her and asked ‘can you lift up your hair?’ There was a beat of perplexed silence and he said with a smile ‘I want to see how many ears you are hiding under there!’ There was laughter and the meeting proceeded with renewed energy.

**Challenging colonial epistemological inheritance**

The critical perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members shifted the project in key ways. While we had initially conceived of the survey in fairly static terms – how much do students know, how does that knowledge, or lack thereof, compare across provinces – co-design transformed the questionnaire into a living educational tool, grounded in the experiences, histories, and networks of relationships of the people and places we worked with (Malpas, 1999; S. Wilson, 2008). Co-designers’ critical perspectives emphasized the entrenchment of colonial epistemological inheritance in the language of the questionnaire, and heightened our sense of the importance of using language that would likewise challenge the thinking of students.
The importance of place

We came to Ontario having designed a questionnaire in Newfoundland and Labrador. Meetings with co-designers in Ontario sensitized us to the diversity and specificity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit experience in different parts of Canada and deepened our sense of the importance of openness to the co-design process. We felt the limits of our expectations and the importance of receptivity most keenly in the translation of two test questions aimed at exploring student awareness of Indigenous presence. Developed in Newfoundland and Labrador, the first question asked students to identify the reserve closest to their university campus, and the second to identify the locations of three named Indigenous communities on a numbered map of communities in the province. Through these questions and especially the map we sought to challenge the deeply held prejudice that there are no Indigenous peoples on the island of Newfoundland, a mythology perpetuated in the Newfoundland and Labrador curriculum (Godlewska, Rose, Schaefl, Freake & Massey, 2016; Hanrahan, 2003). In Ontario, co-designers suggested that we add a question on traditional territory. While at the time we did not anticipate replacing the reserve and map questions, co-designers saw traditional territory as much more important than reserves. Soon thereafter we dropped the reserve question as it became clear that reserves are not most important to many Indigenous people(s) and anyway, when there are multiple reserves near campus, as is the case in much of Ontario, the question becomes technical, about knowledge of distance rather than awareness of presence. Yet with that question gone, the map question seemed to us even more important - we were particularly attached to it because we had devoted resources to the map’s construction and wanted to maintain some comparability between provinces. But co-designers often thought the map question too difficult (and it was). It took another month and three more sets of meetings before we decided to drop the map question.
and understood traditional territory as replacing both it and the question on the reserve closest to the university. Focusing on reserves risked vacating Indigenous forms of governance and authority that exist beyond those imposed through the Indian Act. It also risked perpetuating colonial discourses of authenticity that present reserve culture as the primary and only culture of Indigenous peoples. Co-designing these questions emphasized the failure of Cartesian representational strategies to do justice to the diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit experience. It also emphasized that provincial contexts matter.

The range of experience of people we worked with also broadened the scope of the questionnaire, a development that deepened our conceptualization of the issues at hand. We initially phrased a question on changes in legal definitions of Indian status as ‘Why might federal government changes in legal definitions status definitions lead to divisions within and between communities?’ This decision was rooted in our experiences in Newfoundland and Labrador, where we felt co-designers’ anger at often arbitrary, punitive and exclusionary government definitions of identity and belonging. In Ontario, one person pointed out that asking why changes in status might lead to community divisions presupposes those divisions, and does not allow that changes in status definitions might sometimes also lead to greater community self-determination. The language of the question shifted to account for this: ‘What happens when there are changes in legal definitions of status?’ with an all-of-the-answers-are-correct structure that included community self-determination in an answer. While our initial focus on the violence of status laws emerged out of the affective relations of co-design meetings in Newfoundland and Labrador, this orientation, along with many others, broadened and deepened through engagements with other co-designers in different contexts (Ahmed, 2006; Malpas; 1999).
Co-designers’ insights also enhanced the educational dimensions of the questionnaire. When we began in Ontario, a question on gender discrimination in the Indian Act focused on the 1985 Amendment to the Indian Act, which restored “Indian” status to some First Nations women and their children who had had their status removed by the federal government because they married non-status men (Lawrence, 2004). For people we worked with it was more important that students understand the ongoing assimilative effects of Indian Act gender discrimination. They embedded explanation of the Indian Act’s gender provisions in the question, focused the question on the effects of the discrimination, and rephrased the correct answer to emphasize attack on Indigenous family structures and traditional governance. These changes were especially important as they emphasize the educational power of providing richer context in the question itself, an insight we carried with us to meetings going forward.

**Colonial prejudice is systemic and enduring**

Co-designing the questionnaire emphasized the depth and pervasiveness of colonial ignorance. Ignorance in this sense is not a matter of faulty individual cognition. Nor is it a collective absence of knowledge yet to be acquired. It is an outcome of structural methods of not knowing that, consciously or not, perpetuate the status quo, privilege, and domination (May, 2006; Mills, 1997; Steyn, 2012; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). Such ignorance is both a social and individual accomplishment. Institutionalized and promoted through education, law, political structures, and popular modes of representation, an epistemology of ignorance molds individuals and groups into performers of ignorance, even though they may not intend to exclude or to be excluded or be aware of playing either part (Dotson, 2011; Fricker, 2007; Steyn, 2012). But it is also in an individual’s self-interest to ignore the contingency of privilege on historically and socially
conditioned hierarchies of importance and practices of extraction and how these conditions shape circumstances for us and for others (Bell, 2008). Co-designing the questionnaire reinforced the importance of co-design to shifting social worlds.

The critical perspectives of people we worked with deepened the language of the questionnaire to better account for the violence of the 19th and 20th century residential school system. When we began in Ontario, the questionnaire contained three questions on the residential schools: what was allowed in the schools, who ran the schools, and a question on the Prime Minister’s 2008 apology. Co-designers sharpened the connection between the schools and cultural attack, suggesting that the question on what was allowed in the schools shift to focus on what was forbidden, and developing a new question on the contemporary consequences of the residential schools. They also turned these two questions into check-all-that-apply, in order to educate students about the intent and consequences of the schools while ensuring that their selections are accurate reflections of their knowledge.

Co-design similarly deepened the language of the questionnaire to account for systemic racism. In its first iteration on a pilot survey at our home university, a question focused on the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prisons, with the aim of educating students about some of the systemic inequities in Canadian society (Rymhs, 2008). We dropped the question in Newfoundland and Labrador as co-designers felt that it would reinforce already well entrenched prejudices, but brought it back in Ontario after sharpening the question to focus on imprisonment as an indicator of systemic racism. In Ontario, a person pointed out that there were many expressions of systemic racism not included in our answer, including biased policing and high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the question shifted accordingly.
designers’ comments made explicit the mutual entanglements of racism and ongoing colonial violence.

Co-designers also emphasized continuity between past and present attacks on Indigenous land rights, asking that we add two questions: the first comparing when Euro-Canadian women and First Nations and Inuit people were granted the right to vote, and the second focusing on early 20th century government strategies to limit land claims. The aim of both questions was to show students how the Canadian government has worked to undermine Indigenous land rights and limit avenues of resistance to that attack (Mathias & Yabsley, 1991). Co-designers also critiqued a question on the May 2000 Nisga’a land claim settlement, stating that the most important thing about the Nisga’a settlement was the extinguishment of the Nisga’a’s Aboriginal title. We initially did not change the correct answer, as we considered that the role of the Nisga’a nation in setting legal precedent for the recognition of Aboriginal title in Canada was most important for students to know (Foster, Raven & Webber, 2011). It was through ongoing conversations with co-designers on restrictions on Indigenous sovereignties imposed through the modern land claims process that we came to understand the systemic nature of extinguishment policies and their use as a tool for land expropriation.

The failure of the federal government to recognize the systemic and enduring nature of colonialism became especially clear in the development of a question on Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 2008 Apology to Former Students of the Indian Residential Schools. Early on in the process, a person told us that the correct answer as written did not capture the narrowness of the apology: the Prime Minister apologized only for the abuse and assimilative aims of the residential schools, not for the government’s many attempts to eliminate Indigenous cultures and values, its failure to uphold treaty agreements, or its culpability in underfunding the schools,
creating policies of forced attendance, and allowing widespread disease and abuse to continue
despite knowledge of their existence (TRC, 2015). This discussion spanned our visit to this
university, as while we were aware of the narrowness of the apology, it took us some time to
recognize that we had embedded language in the correct answer that suggested a more
comprehensive apology. In the final version of the question, the incorrect answers were
expressed in a way that showed students the depth and breadth of colonial violence and by
contrast, the limitations of the 2008 apology.

**Indigenous peoples are thriving and will continue to thrive**

Co-design foregrounded the importance of imagination to life and emphasized the fundamental
link between language and epistemology (Basso, 1996; Wa Thiong’o, 1994; Wittgenstein, 2009
[1953]). Questions came to emphasize Indigenous cosmologies, community self-determination,
and language revitalization, decentering colonialism as the only story of Indigenous lives. We
became more critical of the epistemology underpinning government statistics, and saw the
importance of taking every possible opportunity in the questionnaire to challenge discourses of

One of the most difficult questions to develop was on the meaning of land to Indigenous
peoples. The process of developing a question that touches upon issues fundamental to
Indigenous cosmology illuminated the endurance of Euro-colonial conceptions of space-time and
the importance of challenging them (Cajete, 2000; Deloria, 2003). We began in Ontario with a
co-designed version of the question that focused on the notion of belonging: people belong to the
land more than it belongs to them. Ontario co-designers told us early on in the process that
Indigenous understandings of land were more about relating than belonging, but as we could not
find the language to express that, we made no change. A few meetings later, someone again pointed out the centrality of relationships. He suggested that the question focus on what, traditionally, land represented for Indigenous peoples, and helped us phrase the correct answer. This implication that Indigenous cosmology is not of the present, however, was challenged in the next meeting. There, the question shifted to focus on what land continues to mean to Indigenous peoples. Still later on, co-designers suggested that the question avoid the traditional/modern dichotomy altogether, by focusing on the meaning of “all my relations,” a phrasing that emphasizes the relational nature not only of land, but of being. Different co-designers saw different problems with the survey questions, demonstrating the importance of a broad and iterative approach to co-design.

People we worked with also emphasized community self-determination, which led to removal of questions suggestive of deterioration and focused questions instead on Indigenous vitality. Co-designers pointed out that the focus of the test questions was quite negative, which, while educationally important, might be mitigated by ending the test with a new check-all-that-apply question on the positive changes driven by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people/s. Other questions were replaced entirely. In Newfoundland and Labrador, visits to northern communities and conversations with Inuit educators and students led us to develop a question on challenges faced by northern Indigenous communities: the dangers posed by poor quality housing, the social and economic costs of attending university far from home, and the limited availability of nutritious foods. The goal of the question was to attune students to the difficulties Indigenous students from northern communities might face. In Ontario, co-designers pointed out that focusing on challenges faced by northern communities does not encourage critical thought about the underlying reasons for those challenges. For a time we maintained two questions: the
consequences of integration into wage labour economy, and how Inuit have worked to maintain their way of life. After it became clear that the question on the consequences of wage labour reinforced opposition between culture and economy, we dropped the question and understood that the question on how Inuit maintain their way of life captured all that was essential.

The process of developing a question on Indigenous languages likewise emphasized the importance of not contributing to discourses of Indigenous decline, and made us much more critical of the claims to expertise embedded in government-generated statistics. Co-designers were very critical of a question on the number of endangered and viable Indigenous languages in Canada today. Derived from the 2004 *Learning about Walking in Beauty* report, the goal of the question was to educate students about one of the most violent aspects of colonialism. In formulating the question we relied on data collected by linguists and statisticians at Statistics Canada. Early on, some co-designers expressed anger at the implication that despite significant community-based language revitalization, some Indigenous languages might not survive. It took us some time to hear the essence of their critique and move away from statistics and a focus on loss. In later meetings, when people pointed out that the question, as phrased, was not explicit about the source of its information, nor did it give students a sense of the number of Indigenous languages spoken before European contact, the question became more explanatory and shifted to focus on the three most widely spoken Indigenous languages. This version of the question went out to over 40,000 first year Ontario university students in the fall of 2014, but, like the rest of

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6 The Queen’s University pilot study (2010) was developed in consultation with Indigenous educators and drew from the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies’ 2004 *Learning about Walking in Beauty* report, a Canadian Race Relations-funded study of student awareness of Aboriginal peoples which itself involved considerable consultation. The following table summarizes the differences between the study and the Awareness project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study differences</th>
<th>Pop. Sampled</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Admin Partners</th>
<th>Delivery Mode</th>
<th>Stats Analysis</th>
<th>Regionally specific</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Demographic questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking in Beauty</td>
<td>Not avail.</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>In class</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No (1 test)</td>
<td>Coll/Univ</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Awareness</td>
<td>40-50K</td>
<td>5-10K</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>In class</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Coll/Univ</td>
<td>Multi-yr</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the questionnaire, its development is ongoing. Most recently, co-designers’ insights have rewritten the question to focus on language learning. Co-designers’ critical comments have emphasized the necessity of combating settler-colonial tropes of Indigenous decline.

Treaties are living and entail responsibility to engage

Through co-design the questionnaire also came to emphasize the treaty responsibilities of all governments and people in Canada. Through words and actions people we worked with highlighted the living nature of treaty obligations, challenging the historical imagination perpetuated in Canadian law and in provincial curricula and teacher education programs that treaties are singular events with little contemporary relevance (Asch, 2014; Borrows & Coyle, 2017; Couros et al., 2013; Tupper & Cappello, 2008). In discussion of a question on government resettlement of Indigenous communities, co-designers pointed out that not all resettlement took place without prior consultation: treaties such as the Robinson-Superior Treaty and Treaty 3 involved extended negotiation on the part of Anishinaabe leaders for reserve land, annuities, and unencumbered hunting and fishing rights, all to ensure long-term cultural and political autonomy (Long, 2010). Co-designers recommended that we focus instead on why treaties were signed in the first place, which led us to replace the resettlement question with a question on the difference between reserves and traditional territory.

The people we worked with also emphasized the living nature of treaty obligations, challenging the “settled expectations” and “fantasies of entitlement” so often mobilized by residents of Canada to deny even the possibility of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination (Mackey, 2016; Rifkin, 2013). We began in Ontario with a question on who in Canada is affected by treaties, the correct answer to which was ‘All people living in Canada.’
Co-designers initially recommended focusing on responsibility: ‘affected by treaties’ was replaced with ‘obligation to uphold treaties.’ Other people then made the question more explanatory and more precise, arguing that as treaties are nation-to-nation agreements, the correct answer should distinguish between governments and people, and between First Nations, Mètis and Inuit governments and the government of Canada. Co-designers also challenged the widely-held prejudice that First Nations and Inuit students receive free post-secondary education, by emphasizing treaty obligations in a question on the post-secondary education funding available to First Nations and Inuit students. Treaty language in the questionnaire worked to disrupt narratives of liberal-multicultural equality that omit from visions of justice the centrality of treaties and the ongoing relationships of critical historical consciousness, respect and responsibility they entail (Borrows & Coyle, 2017; Ermine, 2007; Donald, 2012).

**Balancing social worlds**

Sometimes co-designing the questionnaire involved disagreement over what students should be expected to know. Discussing these differences made the questionnaire more reflective of the diversity of co-designers’ knowledge and experiences, and consequently a much better instrument. Identity terminology was an important concern. Some people preferred using “Indian” (in quotation marks) to signal the term’s failure to encompass Indigenous forms of identity and value. Others saw no need for quotation marks as students should understand that Indian is a legal term. We followed the majority preference and used quotation marks.

Disagreement also revolved around whether questions were too easy or too difficult. Co-designers were willing to drop a question on whether the First Nations, Mètis and Inuit population is increasing or decreasing, as to them the answer was obvious, but our findings so far
suggest the importance of the question: the vanishing Indian myth is alive and well amongst first
year university students in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador and this is linked to the
portrayal of Indigenous peoples in Ministry-approved curricula and texts (see Chapters 4 and 5;
also Godlewska et al. 2016; 2017a, 2017b; Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016). Sometimes
disagreement centred on what students should be expected to know about Indigenous cultures.
Some co-designers stressed the importance of questions on Indigenous cultural practices and
teachings. Other co-designers were not comfortable with the prospect of exposing traditional
knowledge. We chose ultimately to focus culture questions on language, cultural persistence, and
Indigenous contributions to the arts. Recently, through work with St. Lawrence College in
Kingston, Ontario and with colleges and universities in British Columbia, we have begun to
formulate questions that reflect the wisdom of Indigenous ways of thinking and being, with the
aim of showing students their vitality and importance. We will continue to develop such
questions as the project moves to other provinces. Disagreements reinforced the importance of
mutual autonomy and respect to strong relationships, demonstrating the importance of co-design
to the development of richer approaches to social reality. This living process of challenge,
discussion, and reframing is why the Awareness questionnaire cannot, and should not, be created
from book knowledge. While books and academic journal articles are invaluable sources of
learning, they are necessarily limited in their scope, content, and form of voice. The affects
engendered through reading written text are also different from those that emerge from face-to-
face engagement. As a research tool that is fundamentally about decolonizing knowledge, it is
vital that the questionnaire reflect many minds and many different experiences.
Conclusion

This article has traced shifts in language and consciousness generated through co-design of a questionnaire aimed at assessing how Canadian post-secondary students have learned to think about colonialism and its relationship to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and Canadian society. Co-designing the questionnaire in place with First Nations, Métis and Inuit community leaders and educators transformed it into a powerful educational tool that emphasized the systemic nature of colonial violence, the failure of colonial modes of categorization to define Indigenous identities and territories, the vitality of Indigenous languages and cosmologies, and the living nature and importance of nation-to-nation relations. It was through ongoing negotiation of language with First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members that the questionnaire began to encompass the language and imagination with which to challenge colonial ignorance and convey the diversity, vitality and strength of Indigenous peoples in ways that encourage student self-reflection and self-education.

The shifts described here attest to the social importance of research tools grounded in multiple experiences. They also raise important questions about voice and benefit. The account given here is necessarily partial and fragmented. While we brought up the possibility of co-authorship to people we worked with, academic publication was not most important to most co-designers, revealing the limits of an economy of value rooted in academic social worlds. We have since moved to other forms of reciprocity. Métis artist and Elder Maria Campbell speaks to the responsibilities of researchers: “Reciprocity is a big teaching in our community, that what you take, you have to give back. And there are responsibilities to taking people’s power…whether it’s their stories or their friendship, or just making a place in the community . . . you can’t just go and take that power. You’ll get sick…” (quoted in Dewar et al., 2013, 15). We
continue to carry with us the importance of careful listening, relinquishing control, and attending to the limits of thinking and being to fostering decolonizing relations. These gifts have shaped the Awareness project as well as our ongoing efforts to share the project and its findings in ways that support the decolonization of education in Canada. The process is necessarily fraught and complex, as intention and goodwill do not in themselves constitute the ground or endpoint of decolonization (Ahmed, 2005; de Leeuw, Greenwood & Lindsay, 2013). We have found, though, that the task of finding language to express non-violent knowledge requires the best of everyone involved: humility, openness, generosity, humour, and vision of what we want to move towards. The capacity to be vulnerable, learn and change our minds is perhaps the most important tool we all have.
CHAPTER 5
How Ontario curricula and textbooks cultivate colonial ignorance

“Beliefs about the natural supremacy of the white race, the inherent superiority of European culture, the uncritical acceptance of the validity of science and technological advancement, continual expansion, capitalism… these are the legacies of the colonial imagination.”

- Taiaiake Alfred, *What is radical imagination?*, pg. 2

This article reviews the Ontario Canadian and World Studies curriculum and associated textbooks as an opportunity to study how students in Canada’s most populous province have been taught to think about colonialism and its relationship to Indigenous peoples and Canadian society. We analyze the representation of colonialism and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in the suite of Grade 1-12 curricular documents and associated textbooks that constituted Ontario’s social studies and Canadian and World Studies stream between the early 2000s and 2015, which curricula and texts have informed the understanding of a generation of Canadians. We also investigate the 2013 updated Grade 1-10 social studies, history and geography curriculum and the 2015 revised Grade 11 and 12 Canadian and World Studies curriculum. In analyzing these curricula and texts we suggest the extent to which colonial misinformation and ignorance have been cultivated in Ontario social studies, history, geography, civics, economics, law, and politics courses.

The Ontario curricula and texts are an important focus of study. The 2015 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada on the history and legacies of the Indian Residential School system (1870s-1996) underscored the need for better education across Canada about colonialism and its relationship to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. The
Commission emphasized that the nation-to-nation relationship enshrined in the 1763 Royal Proclamation and 1764 Treaty of Niagara and affirmed through the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the ground for decolonizing education (TRC, 2015). Ministries of education, school boards, universities, colleges and teachers bear particular responsibility for cultivating in Canadian classrooms the critical historical consciousness, mutual respect, and responsibility upon which nation-to-nation relationships are built (TRC, 2015). By delineating the characterization of colonialism and Indigeneity in the most recently completed Ontario curricular cycle (2003-2015), and by analyzing the structure of the new 2013/2015 curriculum, this article suggests some necessary steps towards improving education in Ontario. We demonstrate the need for better quality control of curricula and textbooks and the importance of sustained involvement of First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators at all levels of curricular and text design, with special attention to the training of teachers.

This article weaves the insights of critical Indigenous and decolonial theorists on the settler-colonial nature of education together with literature on epistemologies of ignorance to argue that decolonizing education demands careful attention to the subtle and not-so-subtle messages conveyed through curricular and text structure and content. While curricula and textbooks are not necessarily what is taught, and what is taught is not necessarily what is learned, their structure and content do set standards for instruction and influence how teachers select topics, as well as how they choose to teach them. These choices have profound consequences for how students learn to see themselves and others (Apple, 2004; Anderson, 2012; Donald, 2012; Godlewska et al., 2016; Hickman & Porfilio, 2012; Priestley, Edwards, Priestley & Miller, 2012; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Stanton, 2014). The forensic analysis presented here demonstrates the subtlety and depth of colonial epistemologies of ignorance and the consequent need to
foreground the knowledge, experiences and wisdom of First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders and educators in educational reform.

**Theorizing cultivated ignorance**

In Canada, many Indigenous leaders and activists, as well as decolonial and anti-racist scholars, attest to the force of ignorance in sustaining exploitative relations between the Canadian state and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Ignorance of the power relations at play in resource extraction, land claims, identity definition, health, education, child welfare and the justice system works to uphold and retrench inequities faced by Indigenous people(s) (TRC, 2015; RCAP, 1996). Recently, social theorists drawing on the insights of critical race and feminist thought have begun to theorize ignorance as a phenomenon that is as political as knowledge. Ignorance, as they use the term, is not a lack of knowledge or a passive gap in knowing, to be ameliorated through the acquisition of new facts. Rather, it is structural, systemic, and deeply politically productive, about the conscious and unconscious forms of unknowing that shape entire ways of understanding the world and one’s place in it (Calderon, 2014; Mills, 1997; 2007). An epistemology of ignorance emerges from particular social conditions and is functional in preserving those conditions (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; May, 2006; Medina, 2013; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). It is social, cultivated through popular, intellectual, and institutional methodologies of exclusion, especially education (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2012; Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011; Tupper, 2013). While ignorance in this sense is epistemological - about the nature of knowledge – it rapidly becomes ontological - about who or what particular groups of people are or are not (Steyn, 2012; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). Linked to staunchly defended interests, an epistemology of ignorance works to uphold significant social inequities.
An epistemology of ignorance is resistant to disruption, because it is both socially enforced and socially enforcing. The greatest insight into the operations of racialized, gendered, classed and anthropocentric power comes from the socially marginalized. Yet socially-approved acceptance of what counts as valuable knowledge often works to silence those with just that essential insight, by characterizing their knowledge and identity as intellectually, morally, and politically suspect (Dotson, 2011; Fricker, 2007; Mills, 1997, 2007). Through individual conscious and unconscious prejudice, passive complicity, neglect, avoidance, and the considerable force of social consensus and accepted knowledge that sanctions, encourages, and proliferates such disengagement, social ignorance moulds individuals and groups into performers of ignorance, even though they may not intend to exclude, be excluded, or be aware of playing either part (Alcoff, 2007; Dotson, 2011; Medina, 2013; Steyn, 2012). Ignorance is social in that it is both a personal and collective accomplishment. This does not absolve individual responsibility but does help to explain why ignorance is such a powerful social force.

Education in settler-colonial societies is central to the reproduction of a colonial epistemology of ignorance. As recent work in Australia and the United States has emphasized, curricula and texts play a key role in naturalizing the discursive logics that work to legitimate Indigenous assimilation and rescue the futurity of the settler nation-state (Calderon, 2014; McConaghy, 2000; Maddison & Stastny, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Similar dynamics are at play in Canada. The 2003-2015 Ontario curricular documents and textbooks are complicit in the cultivation of a colonial epistemology of ignorance. Through segregation and past placement of Indigenous content, omission of Indigenous critical perspectives, philosophies and territories, denial of colonialism, and reinforcement of racialized hierarchies of being, the curriculum and texts encourage a logic of
relation premised on Indigenous disappearance. This marginalization of critical Indigenous perspectives continues in the new 2013/2015 curriculum.

**Methods**

We examined the representation of colonialism and Indigeneity across a range of subjects and across all grade levels, paying close attention to silences and misinformation, contradiction within and between texts, courses, and grade levels, and undermining strategies including mischaracterization, segregation and decontextualization (Anderson, 2012; Bickmore, 2006; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). We focused on the English-language curricular documents and the 62 associated Ministry of Education-approved textbooks for Grades 1-6 (ages 5-12) social studies courses, the Grades 7 and 8 (ages 13-14) history and geography courses, and the Grade 9-12 (ages 15-18) Canadian and World Studies courses. Curricula and texts for these courses were identified using the Ontario Ministry of Education Trillium List website (http://www.trilliumlist.ca/). We concentrated on these courses because most Ontario students study in English and because the majority of these courses are required for all students. If Indigenous content is not found in these courses, it is unlikely to be found in others. We excluded Native Studies courses as according to the most recent Ministry enrolment data, less than 2% of students take them (Government of Ontario, 2015).

The analysis presented here is informed by experiences working with over 200 First Nations, Métis and Inuit community leaders and educators, as well as faculty, staff, students and administrators at 10 Ontario universities, to design a questionnaire assessing what post-

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7 Some of the textbooks on the Trillium List pre-date the 2003-2015 curriculum. This is likely due to the high costs and long timelines of textbook production. Their inclusion means they are Ministry approved for the 2003-2015 curriculum. As of this writing, the new textbooks for the 2013/2015 curriculum have not all been released. Analyzing these texts is an important avenue of future work.
secondary students are learning about colonialism and Indigenous peoples. The work of many minds and many different experiences, the process of co-designing the Awareness questionnaire was a critical decolonizing experience for us as a Swiss newcomer and recent permanent resident of Canada (Laura), a child of Polish and French World War II refugees (Anne), and a working class settler scholar (John). The work presented here is part of this ongoing process of decolonizing. The first section elucidates how the structure and content of curricular documents works to sustain a colonial epistemology of ignorance. We then analyze this dynamic in Ministry-approved textbooks and investigate the new 2013/2015 curriculum, and conclude with reflections on the implications of epistemologies of ignorance for educational reform.

Analyzing the 2003-2015 curricular documents

The structure of the 2003-2015 Ontario curriculum is central to its sustenance of a colonial epistemology of ignorance. Content related to Indigenous peoples is consistently framed as optional and historical, a dynamic that works to centre settler subjectivity while deflecting attention away from Indigenous knowledge, experiences and critical perspectives. This dynamic takes two forms. First, comprehensive community-driven content is found only in Native Studies courses, which are not required, are not offered consistently year-to-year, and in most Ontario schools are not offered at all (Chaput, 2012; Cherubini et al. 2010; Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010). Second, within the social studies and Canadian and World Studies curricular documents, Indigenous topics are frequently relegated to parenthetical examples, implying that Indigenous peoples are peripheral to Canadian history and geography. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the proportion of optional and mandatory Indigenous coverage in courses required to graduate in Ontario (Table 1) and courses from which students may choose to fulfill their credit requirements (Table 2). In this article Indigenous content is considered mandatory if it is the central focus of a
curriculum directive, such as in Grade 6 “Describe the attitude to the environment of various First Nation groups (e.g., Nisga’a, Mi’kmaq, James Bay Cree) and show how it affected their practices in daily life” (Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) 2004, 33). Content is considered optional if it is relegated to parenthetical example, such as in Grade 11 Law “Describe historical and contemporary situations in which rights in Canada have been denied (e.g. rights of Japanese during World War II, First Nation rights to land and veteran’s benefits, women's rights, rights of physically or mentally challenged persons)” (OME 2005, 227). Taken together, the proportion of mandatory and optional coverage across all required courses is 14.6%, and less than a third of that coverage is mandatory (4.1%). Only one unit in one course, Grade 6 Social Studies’ “First Nations and European explorers,” contains more mandatory than optional content. Given the discomfort of many teachers with Indigenous subject material, it is unlikely that parenthetical content is being taught with any consistency across the province (Deer, 2013; Dion, 2007;
Higgins, Madden & Korteweg, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Optional (%)</th>
<th>Mandatory (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Heritage and Citizenship: Relationships, rules, and responsibilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Canada and World Connections: The local community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Heritage and Citizenship: Traditions and celebrations</td>
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<td>Canada and World connections: Features of communities around the world</td>
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<td>Canada and World connections: Urban and rural communities</td>
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<td>Social Studies</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>Canada and world connections: Canada’s links to the world</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>7.7</td>
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<td>British North America</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Conflict and Change</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>The themes of geographic inquiry</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Patterns In physical geography</td>
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<td>Geography</td>
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<td></td>
<td>History</td>
<td>The Development of Western Canada</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Canada: a changing society</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Patterns In human geography</td>
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<td>Geography</td>
<td>Migration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography of Canada (Applied)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Canadian History since WW1 (Academic)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Canadian History since WW1 (Applied)</td>
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<td>Civic</td>
<td>11.8</td>
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Table 4.1: Summary of optional and mandatory Indigenous content in required courses, 2003-2015 social studies and Canadian and World Studies curriculum.

In non-required courses aimed at post-secondary preparation, the proportion of optional and mandatory coverage drops to 5.1% and 1.1%, respectively. Amongst Workplace and Open\(^8\) courses the proportion is even lower, at 3.9% and 0.8% (Table 2). Of the 18 courses geared

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\(^8\) High school courses (Grades 9-12) in Ontario are divided into three streams: 1) courses aimed at post-secondary preparation; 2) courses aimed at workplace preparation; and 3) “open” courses that have no prerequisites and are therefore open to all students.
towards students interested in pursuing post-secondary education, 11 have no mandatory coverage of Indigenous topics. Given the dearth of required coverage in high school courses and the flexibility of the Ontario high school graduation requirements, it is possible for students to graduate high school having had no exposure to topics related to colonialism and/or Indigeneity after Grade 10 History.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Optional (%)</th>
<th>Mandatory (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>The individual and the economy (University/College)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Making economic choices (Workplace)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>The Americas: geographic patterns and issues (University/College)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical geography: patterns, processes and interactions (University/College)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Geographics: The Geographer’s Toolkit (Workplace)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Travel and tourism: a regional Geographic perspective (Open)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History</td>
<td>American History (University)</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>World History to the Sixteenth Century (University/College)</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian history and politics since 1945 (University/College)</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian history and politics since 1945 (Workplace)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>World History since 1900: global and regional perspectives (Open)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law Understanding Canadian law (University/College)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding Canadian law (Workplace)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Canadian politics and citizenship (Open)</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Analyzing current economic issues (University)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Canadian and World Issues: A geographic analysis (University)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>World Geography: Human patterns and interactions (University)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>World Geography: Urban patterns and interactions (College)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>The environment and resource management (University/College)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1.6</td>
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<td>Geomatics: Geotechnologies in action (University/College)</td>
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<td>History</td>
<td>Canada: History, identity and culture (University)</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<td>World history: The West and the World (University)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>World history: The West and the World (College)</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adventures in World history (Workplace)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Canadian and International Law (University)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Canadian and World Politics (University)</td>
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</table>

Table 4.2: Summary of optional and mandatory Indigenous content in non-required courses, 2003-2015 social studies and Canadian and World Studies curriculum.

Content related to Indigenous peoples is also consistently placed in history courses, a structure that casts Indigeneity as past, succeeded and superseded by the non-Indigenous, settler present.
Nearly all required Indigenous coverage is concentrated in Grade 4-8 history units and courses (Table 1). After Grade 7 there is no mandated discussion of First Nations or Métis in Ontario, suggesting to students that all that is important about Indigenous peoples in the province occurred centuries ago and that contemporary Indigenous peoples exist elsewhere in Canada. The relegation of Indigenous content to optional and historical contexts in the curriculum implies that Indigenous peoples are incidental to Canada past and present. By obfuscating contemporary Indigenous presence and vitality, the structure of the curriculum works subtly to dull students’ awareness of inherited injustices, reinforcing an epistemology of ignorance.

The content of the Ontario 2003-2015 curriculum also promulgates an epistemology of ignorance, by upholding a vision of the past, present and future as devoid of vital and distinct Indigenous autonomies. The curriculum omits sustained and coherent discussion of Indigenous territories, philosophies and critical perspectives, a dynamic that upholds a view of Canada as made solely by settlers while obscuring the situated nature of that perspective and its work in securing “settler futurity” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 1). The curriculum consistently avoids the fundamental issue of Indigenous land and its colonial appropriation. For instance, in Grade 6, students are required to “compare key social and cultural characteristics of Algonquian and Iroquoian groups (OME, 2004, 33).” Yet the complex networks of alliances and treaties between and amongst the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, English, and French that shaped trade and European settlement in the St. Lawrence Valley are not discussed (on these alliances and treaties see Borrows, 1997; Havard, 2001; Simpson, 2008). In fact the closest mention of Indigenous lands in the entire K-12 curriculum is a parenthetical aside in Grade 9 Geography: “illustrate and explain the regional distribution patterns of various peoples across Canada (e.g., Aboriginal peoples, Francophones, immigrant groups),” the focus of which is contemporary and delinked.
from territory (OME, 2005, 31). The term “colonization” is likewise never used in reference to what became Canada. Instead European arrival is referred to as “contact”, “settlement”, or “migration” (OME, 2004, 2005). In early grades, where mandatory discussion of Indigenous topics is concentrated, the focus is on settler benefit: “Identify and explain differing opinions about the positive and negative effects of early contact between European and First Nation peoples (e.g., growth of First Nation peoples’ dependency on trade goods; impact of the fur trade on the economy and environment; effect of attempts to convert the Huron Nation to Christianity)” (OME, 2004, 34). In this directive it is not clear what is positive or negative or for whom, an ambivalence that works to absolve colonial violence and justify ongoing settler presence.

The only realm in which Indigenous ways of thinking and being are considered is in relation to the environment, which treatment is cursory, general, and prejudicial. The discussion is limited to a single directive in Grade 9 Geography: “explain the ways in which the traditional ecological knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, including their concepts of place, wilderness, and boundaries, influences how they interact with their environment” (OME, 2005, 32). The sophistication, richness, diversity, and distinctiveness of Indigenous ecological knowledge across Canada is collapsed and Aboriginal peoples and “their environment” are framed in isolation, suggesting that while Indigenous knowledge might be important to Indigenous people/s, it has no relation to territory and no relevance to other traditions. The exclusion of Indigenous territories and worldviews in the curriculum reinforces an epistemology of ignorance: in the absence of other stories, the curriculum’s own perspectives are naturalized and normalized.

The curriculum also frames Indigenous peoples as open to study and categorization. This will to know Indigeneity works to secure settler epistemology as the “arbiter of citizenship,
The characterization of technology as gift, and the insinuation of Indigenous passivity and simplicity in the face of European/Euro-Canadian technological sophistication, works to absolve colonial violence and justify settler presence.
The curriculum’s colonial perspective is reinforced through its uncritical approach to sources, a dynamic that reinforces an epistemology of ignorance by discouraging critical thought about how the past is understood, by whom, and why. In Grade 6, for instance, students are required to “communicate the results of inquiries about the effects of early contact between First Nation peoples and early European explorers (e.g., the causes of the disappearance of the Neutral Nation…)” (OME, 2004, 32). How the “disappearance” of the Neutral Nation is approached matters a great deal, yet disappearance is presented as fact. While accounts circulated through the 17th century Jesuit Relations characterize the Neutral Nation as destroyed by the Haudenosaunee, Haudenosaunee oral traditions emphasize the adoption of the Neutral into Haudenosaunee society (Garrad, Abler & Hanks, 2003; Thwaites, 2006; Warrick, 2012). The movement of 1,800 Haudenosaunee to Neutral territory on the Grand River (Haldimand Tract, southwestern Ontario) in 1784 from what became New York state thus constituted a return to a homeland (Hill, 2017). The distinction is important, as while the Jesuit Relations accounts have enabled legal arguments that the Haudenosaunee are not Indigenous to what is now Ontario and are consequently exempt from collective protection under Section 35 of Canada’s Constitution, Haudenosaunee accounts of their history suggest otherwise (Green & Dickason, 1993, 82-85; Mitchell v. Ministry of Natural Resources, 2001). In presenting the “disappearance” of the Neutral nation as self-evident and omitting other accounts, the curriculum collapses the past into a single narrative that, through exclusion of Indigenous accounts of their histories, is easily mobilized to undermine contemporary Aboriginal rights.

The curriculum’s silence around Indigenous histories, traditional governance and territories and around the systemic and ongoing nature of colonial violence works in subtle ways to legitimate contemporary Canadian political formulations that dissociate Indigenous peoples
from land and political and economic self-determination. In high school courses from Grade 10 onwards, multiculturalism is cast as the field within which rights can take place, and government is cast as an innocent and benevolent arbiter of Aboriginal rights. This dynamic is well captured in the Grade 10 History directive “identify contributions to Canada’s multicultural society by regional, linguistic, ethnocultural, and religious communities (e.g. Aboriginal peoples, Franco-Ontarians, Métis, Black Canadians, Doukhobors, Mennonites, local immigrant communities)” (OME, 2005, 55). In this framework, the sovereignty of the Canadian state is taken as given and Indigenous peoples are relegated to one amongst many ethnic minorities to be accommodated, a characterization that allows conflicts around land, resources, and cultural continuity to be reduced to a matter of majority rule (Bannerji, 2000; Coulthard, 2014; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Razack, 1998). In Grade 12 Canadian and International Law, this framework is projected into the distant past: “identify historical and contemporary examples of conflicts between minority and majority rights (e.g., Riel Rebellion…First Nation land claims),” an attempt to normalize the epistemological structures that secure dominance of the Anglo-Canadian state (OME, 2005, 242). The existence and diversity of Indigenous sovereignties and legal traditions are disavowed, while the government and multicultural rhetoric are presented as innocent of alignment with assimilative interests.

The curriculum also frames multiculturalism as the end point of justice, a dynamic that perpetuates a colonial epistemology of ignorance. By emphasizing “the role of government in the development of social justice for Canadians” and avoiding sustained and coherent discussion of key assimilative government policies including the Indian Act, the 1969 White Paper, residential schools, the 60s scoop, and land and resource dispossession, the curriculum denies the endurance of assimilative policies (OME 2005, 152; Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010). Crucially,
these formulations obscure the social and intellectual interests served by speaking “as if previous generations suffered an irresistible collective delusion that we ourselves have thrown off” (Whitt, 2016, 439; Povinelli, 2011). The progress narrative at play in the portrayal of Canadians and their government as generous and benevolent and Indigenous people(s) as stuck in the past and in deterioration is easily mobilized to relegate decolonial critique to a “condition of unheardness” (Davies, 1994, 108). Whether conscious or not, this narrative of progress works to uphold the “unequally occupied rhetorical space” that sustains extractive political and economic relations (May 2006, 110). The curriculum’s portrayal of justice as achieved epitomizes how an epistemology of ignorance functions.

Analyzing Ministry of Education-approved textbooks

In Ontario there is a close relationship between the curriculum and textbooks. The Ontario Ministry of Education outsources textbook review and approval to Curriculum Services Canada (CSC), an incorporated, not-for-profit pan-Canadian standards agency for learning resources. As Ontario constitutes the largest English-language student market in Canada, and as publishers pay a fee to have their textbook reviewed by CSC, there is strong incentive for publishers to align texts as closely as possible with curricula (Rollans & de la Chenelière, 2010). It is unsurprising then that the textbooks approved by the Ontario Ministry of Education for use between 2003 and 2015 repeat and expand on many of the characterizations of colonialism and Indigeneity present in the curriculum.

Colonial apologia

Like the curriculum, the K-12 texts do not discuss Indigenous dispossession. Instead, texts present European exploration as an inevitable outcome of the heroic pursuit of knowledge, a
framing that reinforces the process through which Eurocentric knowledge and behaviour become unmarked, unbounded and endowed with mastery (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Some texts portray European exploration as the first major scientific expansion of human horizons: “Today's explorers are searching the depths of the oceans, the animal and plant worlds, our solar system, the hidden world of microscopic life, and our own past...these explorers - like the explorers of the past - are extending the boundaries of our knowledge” (Asselstine, 2000d, 51). Grade 6’s *Discovering First Peoples and First Contacts* likewise considers that “…not all exploration took place in the past. There are still new frontiers to be discovered and modern explorers to take up the challenges” (Francis, 2000, 56). Other texts frame exploration as heroism. Grade 6’s *Tapestry 6* includes a game called “Paths to Fortune,” the goal of which is to "discover some of the difficulties explorers faced in opening trade routes" (Asselstine, 2000b, 22). Grade 4’s *Tapestry 4* reinforces the guts-and-glory approach to exploration through subtle cues inviting student judgement. The text displays two fictional travel brochures. The first brochure is for Wanuskewin Heritage Park and invites visitors to learn how to build a tipi, bake bannock, tan a hide, and visit “an actual dig site and view reconstructed encampments” (Asselstine, 2000b, 134). The colours are dull gray and brown and the fonts are hard to read. The second brochure celebrates the 500-year anniversary of John Cabot’s landing in Newfoundland. The tone is congratulatory and builds excitement: “The Matthew was bound on a voyage of discovery, searching for oriental treasure in the far east...Come and explore Newfoundland and Labrador 500 years later" (135). The colours are bright and cheerful and the fonts are bigger. The message is clear: Indigenous peoples are past and boring; exploration is exciting and fun. Students are invited to judge which message is more effective and which brochure they find more appealing
without guidance on critical literacy, encouraging reinforcement of the epistemological orientations underpinning the exercise.

Silence and lack of context around key colonial assimilative policies and historical moments are also pervasive in the texts. Several texts undertake extensive discussion of colonialism and imperialism globally, but make no mention of colonialism in Canada (Draper & Healy, 2003; Gini-Newman, 2001; Quinlan, 2003; Ruypers, 2005). Other texts discuss key historical moments but give little or no context for the actions of Indigenous peoples (Bogle, Quinlan & d’Orazio, 2006; Hundey & Maggarey, 2000; Skeoch, Hopkins & Delaney, 2001). When high school textbooks (Grades 10-12) mention Indigenous peoples at all, the focus is primarily on poverty, unemployment, poor health, and low educational attainment faced by First Nations people on reserves. Yet they provide little context or explanation why these exist, a silence that not only discourages critical thought about the systemic nature of colonial violence, it works to legitimate the discourses of incapability and blame entrenched in contemporary neoliberal governance (Clark, Wallace, John & Earl, 2006; Bolotta, 2002; Healy, 2007; on discourses of Indigenous incapability see Macdonald, 2011; Mackinnon, 2015). In focusing primarily on First Nations reserves, these texts also neglect the presence of Métis and Inuit and of First Nations people in urban areas.

**Settler history is history**

In keeping with the curriculum, several texts frame settler history as the totality of history. In the absence of autonomous Indigenous histories, territories, and legal traditions, settler presence is natural and inevitable and colonial violence absolved. The Grade 3 text *Discovering Canadian Pioneers* naturalizes settler possession of land from the outset, beginning Chapter 1 with a story about a fictional English family traveling through the woods to reach a plot of land near what is
today Peterborough, Ontario. The mother says “I can hardly wait to see the new land that will be *all* ours one day” (emphasis original, Gutsole & Gutsole, 1998, 3). Later, in a section emphasizing the physical labour involved in clearing the land, the father reiterates that “When I have the trees cleared back as far as the curve of the stream, this land will be ours” (8). The message of settler possession through labour is reminiscent of Lockean justification for colonial settlement, reinforced through silence around the presence and extent of First Nations peoples and territories. Other texts naturalize the existence of Canada by projecting the nation into the distant past and slotting Indigenous peoples into a narrative of national development. Grade 3’s *Tapestry 3* states that “The first Canadians were the native peoples” (Asselstine, 2000a, 62) and Grade 6’s *Discovering First Peoples and First Contacts* declares the Iroquoians “Canada’s first farmers” (Francis, 2000, 10). The Grade 10 history text *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* frames the nation as timeless, describing the arrival of Europeans as one of the “external forces that shaped Canada” (Gini-Newman, 2002, 6). The text then considers that it is only now that Indigenous people are healthier and better educated that they are “beginning to make their mark in Canada” (394). Such patronizing portrayal neglects the pivotal roles of Indigenous people(s) and political philosophies in shaping the governance of New France, British North America, and Canada (on this see Borrows, 2010; Borrows & Coyle, 2017; Brooks, 2008; Sawaya, 2001). This characterization perpetuates terra nullius (empty land) logic and casts Indigenous peoples as passive non-agents, thereby reinforcing assumptions of settler dominance.

*Indigenous peoples do not exist today*

Many textbooks associated with Ontario’s K-12 curriculum frame Indigenous territories and cultures as past, weak, or non-existent, undermining contemporary Indigenous claims to territory and self-determination, while legitimating settler land possession. In some texts, the association
of Indigeneity with the distant past is blatant: in the first chapter of Grade 5’s *Tapestry 5*, for example, “the ancient past is made up of events that happened long ago and in many places around the world.” The text then presents an image of a student who says “I’ve heard about many different peoples who lived in the past - Aztecs, Native peoples of North America, Vikings and Egyptians…” (Asselstine, 2000c, 8). Other texts relegate Indigenous peoples to the past by placing Indigenous content first in a section or chapter and then making no further mention of Indigenous peoples (Asselstine, 2000b; Asselstine, 2000c; Bisset & Permanand-Collins, 2004; DesRivieres, Bain & Chasmer, 2004). Still other texts suggest that change is antithetical to Indigenous cultures, a contortion of time and space that through omission of contemporary Indigenous vitality discourages critical thought about the interests served by that omission, reinforcing an epistemology of ignorance. In Grade 4’s *Tapestry 4*, a chart comparing the Inuit community of Uqsooqtoq in the years 1900 and 2000 emphasizes discontinuity (Asselstine, 2000b, 158). Other texts insinuate that “real” Indigenous cultures are static. Grade 8’s *Human Geography: Discovering Global Systems and Patterns* juxtaposes an image of a man in furs hunting on the land with another of two boys on bicycles in front of a satellite and asks students “What evidence do you see of outside cultural influences (cultural diffusion) in this Inuit community?” (Busato & Takacs, 2002b, 253). Grade 9’s *Geography Now* discusses Haida artist Bill Reid and states that Reid “introduced the great art traditions of the northwest coast Aboriginal peoples to modern audiences [and] brought modern ideas to Haida artists” (Draper, Andrew, Duncan & Roth, 2006, 161). The Grade 12 World History text *Legacy: The West and the World* likewise reinforces the traditional/modern hierarchy in a section on the 1990 conflict between Kanienkehake:ka (Mohawks) and Quebec police over the building of a golf course on traditional burial grounds: “At Oka…Native warriors met modern, western warriors” (Gini-
Newman, 2002, 13). The portrayal of Indigenous cultures as static and past works to undermine contemporary Indigenous claims to territory and resources, while reinforcing the epistemological hierarchy that underpins such portrayal.

As early as Grade 3, maps and other geographic strategies suggest that Indigenous peoples and contemporary land title do not exist in parts of Canada. In *Discovering Canadian Pioneers*, there is a map of Ontario showing early European settlements along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. While Haudenosaunee territory is marked, Anishinaabe territory is not, erasing the Mississauga, Ojibwe, Odawa, Algonquin and Nipissing nations from southern Ontario (Gutsole & Gutsole, 1998, 6). In a section on “How the GTA grew”, the Grade 3 *Discovering Communities* text contrasts the urban expansion associated with British settlement with Indigenous peoples’ use of a “trail” in the region, a spatial marginalization reminiscent of *terra nullius* (Bisset & Permanand-Collins, 2004, 38). Grade 4’s *Discovering Canada* introduces students to pictorial mapping with a map of Canada covered in symbols. The only Indigenous symbols are an inuksuk and kayak in Nunavut, a person using an ulu in the Northwest Territories, and a totem pole on Haida Gwaii in British Columbia. Grade 4’s *Our Country, Canada* mentions Indigenous peoples only in sections on the Arctic, Cordillera and Hudson’s Bay lowlands regions. Maps in other texts restrict “Indian territory” to the Ohio valley (Aitken, 2006; Cruxton, 2008; Ursel, 2001). Textbook portrayal of Indigenous peoples as past, in decline, and delinked from territory undermines contemporary Indigenous rights. These forms of “knowing” emerge from and sustain entrenched settler colonial interests.

*There is a hierarchy of knowledge and being*

In Ministry-approved textbooks knowledge is characterized as the exclusive domain of the Western scientific tradition. Indigenous worldviews are static and irrational, antithetical to
knowledge itself, a strategy that reinforces the “unequally occupied rhetorical space” that upholds an epistemology of ignorance (May, 2006, 110). This dynamic begins as early as Grade 5 and is particularly prevalent in discussion of Indigenous origins. Grade 5’s *Tapestry 5* includes a fictional student-teacher exchange in which the teacher says “Some Native people believe that their ancestors have lived in North America since the beginning of time. Scientific evidence suggests that people began populating the Americas 15,000 to 25,000 years ago...” (Asselstine, 2000c, 10). In a spectacular display of ignorance, the text conflates the commonly held Indigenous view that Indigenous peoples have lived here since “time immemorial” with the phrase “the beginning of time.” “Time immemorial” is an important statement about who remembers the past, how, and why. The replacement with “the beginning of time” is absurd and makes a mockery of Indigenous perspectives, and is reinforced through contrast with “scientific evidence” for the Bering Strait theory (Deloria, 1995). The text’s invocation of the authority of the Western scientific tradition, ventriloquized through the authority figure of the teacher, works to obscure the racism embedded in its characterization of Indigenous origin accounts. The Grade 6 text *Discovering First Peoples and First Contacts* is similarly dismissive of Indigenous origin accounts. Chapter 1 describes a Haudenosaunee origin story followed by “Europeans who came to live in Canada developed their own understanding of how humans first came to America.” After describing the Bering Strait theory, the text declares “no matter which story you believe, they both agree on an important point: the Aboriginal people lived in America long before anyone else.” Yet at the bottom of the page there is a map showing the Bering Strait crossing with a caption describing the theory (Smith & Pelech, 2002, 2). The text reduces Indigenous and European accounts to a simple matter of differing perspective, a contortion that obscures the
power relations at play and allows acknowledgement of Indigenous prior presence without undermining the larger argument around the validity of Indigenous knowledge traditions.

Progress narratives and survival-of-the-fittest logic similarly denigrate Indigenous personhood and justify assimilation. In Grade 7 Physical Geography: Discovering Global Systems and Patterns, Indigenous peoples are technologically unsophisticated and therefore open to assimilation. The text states that “Humans have learned how to use technology to improve living conditions. As technology changed, so did the use of natural resources. But, some groups of people did not change their ways of life” (Busato & Takacs, 2002a, 170). Then, after describing the impacts of disease, ranching, and rubber extraction on the Yanomami of Brazil, the text invites students to participate in the development of assimilative policies:

"What if the president of Brazil asked for your advice? She would like to help the Yanomami leave behind their traditional technology so that they can take advantage of better health care and deal with outsiders coming onto their land. She asked you to suggest three things that would be given to the Yanomami to help them change their way of life for the better. What would you suggest?" (173).

Policies related to Indigenous peoples, the text suggests, are so obvious and straightforward that children can develop them. Grade 8’s Discovering the Human World likewise takes a survival-of-the-fittest approach, considering that “As people interact with and change the Earth's environment, certain species of animals and plants can no longer survive….The same can be said about cultural diversity. Some cultures cannot survive in an environment that is overrun by North American and European influences” (Busato & Takacs, 2002b, 189). Later the text asks “Why is a culture with no writing much more likely to die out than one that has writing?” (191). Grade 10’s Canada: A Nation Unfolding considers that Canadian northern expansion in the 1950s caused “problems of adjustment” for Indigenous peoples (Quinn & Chandler, 2001, 303). Assimilationist rhetoric continues in an even more pointed fashion in Grade 11’s Canada
Travels: “In cases where one country has taken over another country by force, the people must often change the way they live. They must adapt to a new way of life or new culture. This change might occur over time, as in the case of Aboriginal peoples in Canada or the Aborigines in Australia” (Healy, 2003, 150). The texts invoke racialized hierarchies of being to portray the assimilation of Indigenous peoples as inherently desirable and inevitable. This dynamic works to secure both the settler nation-state and the epistemology that legitimates it.

Moral claims about government and the nature of Indigenous rights in textbooks naturalize the authority of the Canadian state. Texts consistently portray government as benevolent and generous with regard to Indigenous rights, yet are silent about the instrumental work of Indigenous leaders and activists in advancing protection of those rights. At the same time, texts present Indigenous struggles for self-determination as irrational, criminal and taking advantage. This appropriation and negative characterization of Indigenous struggle is deeply racialized, constituting a “possessive investment” in the goodness of white Canadians that serves to rescue “settler innocence” while undermining critiques that illuminate the contours and mechanisms of systemic racism and colonialism (Lipsitz, 2006, 1; Tuck & Yang, 2012, 1; Srivastava, 2005). As early as Grade 5, textbooks frame prejudice as a historical phenomenon addressed successfully in contemporary times by government initiatives (Francis, 2000, 34; Draper, Andrew, Duncan & Roth, 2006, 63; Clark, Wallace, John & Earle, 2006). Other texts describe contemporary Canadians and their government as enlightened benefactors who have moved beyond colonialism and racism. A grade 10 history text relegates racism to the past and excuses it, stating that “the racist attitudes toward Aboriginal people led many immigrants to believe they were doing something positive for these people” (Gini-Newman, 2001, 41). The text then lauds the inclusion of Aboriginal and treaty rights in the 1982 Constitution with no
discussion of the sustained efforts of Indigenous leaders to advance that inclusion. A grade 9 text takes a similarly congratulatory approach, lauding “Canadians and their government” for realizing “that the Aboriginal people of Canada have been treated unfairly over the centuries” (Clark, Wallace, John & Earle, 2006, 204). The same text makes no mention of the work of Indigenous leaders and activists to challenge assimilative policies. Still other texts are more explicit in their undermining of Indigenous people and rights. Some texts present the evacuation of Indigenous self-determination as a foregone conclusion: “government treaties deprived Aboriginal peoples of the right to govern themselves” (Clark, Wallace, John & Earle, 2006, 201); Indigenous peoples “lost their ability to control their own destiny” (Healy, 2007, 189). Others present Aboriginal rights as inherently criminal. A grade 11 Law text places discussion of Aboriginal and treaty rights in a chapter on “Defenses for the Accused” and warns students that “there are times when Aboriginal peoples may argue that they have an Aboriginal or treaty right to act in a way that would be illegal for anyone else” (Blair, 2003, 263). A grade 10 Civics text considers that Canadian governments “have signalled their willingness to give Aboriginal communities more control” but “they always have a bottom line…Aboriginal peoples must respect the laws of this country and the rights of its non-native citizens” (Wrobel & Wrobel, 2001, 147). One text even implies that inequities do not really exist, reinforcing the portrayal of Indigenous people as untrustworthy: "Many workers, such as visible minorities, women, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities, have already adjusted to [new] employment situations, whether by choice or necessity...and thus have a subtle advantage" (Busato & Takacs, 2002b, 79). Textbooks’ portrayal of Canadians and their government as inherently benevolent and Indigenous people and rights as criminal and untrustworthy reproduces a racialized colonial
“economy of credibility” (Fricker, 2007, 1), particularly insidious as it undermines critical thought about systemic racism and colonialism while enabling discourses of blame.

*Undermining through placement*

The organization of textbook content also contributes to the reproduction of an epistemology of ignorance. Texts frequently relegate content related to colonialism and Indigenous peoples to sidebars, callouts and appendices, which content is not taken up in the main text or in chapter review activities – a dynamic that is also present in texts reviewed by First Nations or Métis educators. Sometimes texts exclude Indigenous content from chapter review questions even when it is a core part of a chapter. While Grade 7’s *Their Stories, Our History* discusses many important themes related to Indigenous people,⁹ questions to students and chapter review assignments rarely address this material, focusing instead on commemoration, celebrating Canada’s history, whether or not General Brock was a hero, and who won the War of 1812 (Aitken, 2006). Similarly, in Grade 10’s *Canada: Face of a Nation*, a chapter discusses the Oka crisis, the Sparrow and Marshall cases, the conflict at Ipperwash and the death of Dudley George, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and land claims. Yet the only related review question asks students to “Create a ‘living museum’ of Aboriginal culture and concerns in the 1990s” (Bolotta, Gerrard & Shortt, 2000, 333). Grade 11 World History’s *Stories of the Century* contains several powerful sections linking the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous peoples in Canada to those of Indigenous peoples in Australia and South America. The chapter review questions do not address these topics, implying that while the global nature

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⁹ For example, traditional Mississauga life and spirituality, First Nations’ perspectives on proselytization, challenges to the Wendat destruction trope, Haudenosaunee treaty making as a political and economic strategy to encourage peace, the relationship between the 1763 Royal Proclamation and contemporary land and treaty rights, and contemporary cultural continuity and the diversity of Indigenous perspectives.
of colonialism might be of interest, it does not warrant serious reflection (Gardner & Parsons, 2005). Grade 11’s *American History* (Myers, 2008) includes some thoughtful review questions in chapters focused on the 17th and 18th centuries. More recent colonial violence, the Dawes Act, the Indian Appropriation Act, the massacre at Wounded Knee, and the Indian Reorganization Act are not taken up in the review sections, discouraging critical reflection and suggesting that they are irrelevant to contemporary North America.

Even when Indigenous voices are included, texts frequently sidestep their critique. A callout in Grade 7’s *Physical Geography: Discovering Global Systems and Patterns* includes a quote from Tshenish Paseen, Utshimassiu Elder opposing the Voisey Bay nickel development in Labrador: “It seems like the government has stolen our land...the company didn't discover the minerals. Our people discovered the minerals...” The text does not engage with this critique, emphasizing instead that “if negotiations break down, protests may follow” (Busato & Takacs, 2002, 181). Similarly, in a callout box on the Innu of Davis Inlet, Grade 12’s *Economics Now* does not elaborate on a statement from Chief Simeon Tshakapesh on broken government promises to provide schools and running water and instead emphasizes poverty and addiction (Bolotta, 2002, 346). In Grade 12’s *Geonexus: Canadian and World Issues*, in a chapter on the Canadian Arctic, there is a quote at the side of the page from an Inuit Elder from Tuktoyaktuk: “Canada needs to take some ownership, but it would be really nice if the Canadian government would talk to the people who live here before deciding what should be done about Arctic sovereignty” (Draper & Healy, 2003, 436). No further reflection is included in the text.

Other texts pick up Indigenous content in the chapter review activities but the questions themselves are leading. Grade 8’s *Their Stories, Our History* is explicit about the exclusion of Indigenous voices from Canadian Confederation. It emphasizes the nation-to-nation nature of
treaty agreements and Canadian government failure to uphold them. It explains in detail why the Red River Métis resisted settler encroachment. It highlights the assimilative aims of the Indian Act. It discusses the importance of the buffalo economy and the role of settler sport hunters and traders in decimating the buffalo population. And, it emphasizes First Nations’ and Métis adaptation and resilience to settler pressures. Crucially, the text encourages a thoughtful and critical approach to the past, cautioning against the distancing strategies enabled by a moralistic approach: “The danger in making moral judgements is that we see terrible events as the result of bad people, not a set of circumstances. Moral judgements can allow people of the present to dismiss the lessons of history. Such thinking can prevent people from learning from the past and taking action to ensure a better present and future” (Haskings-Winter, 2007, 154). However, on the next page, in an activity asking students to write a journal entry reflecting on the Indian Act, a sample student's entry reads “Today we can see that their thinking was flawed. I think fewer people judge other cultures as being better or worse. Every culture has its strong points and its weak points” (155). This passage exemplifies the power dynamics inherent to an epistemology of ignorance: the authority of the text is used to contradict critical Indigenous perspectives and argue that “we know better now.” Such discourses of innocence and benevolence deny the systemic nature of colonialism, working to relegate decolonial critique to a “condition of unheardness” while reinforcing liberal-multicultural governance (Davies, 199, 108). Settler voice is also present in Grade 8’s Flashback Canada, where, after a section emphasizing that First Nations saw themselves as independent nations negotiating with the representative of the British Crown, the chapter ends with: "This would present another challenge to the new country of Canada” (Cruxton, 2008, 50). The text later asks, “What challenges does the increase in the number of urban Aboriginals present to the government?” (198). In this text too some of the
most critical questions, including questions on residential schools and the Indian Act, are placed in figure and image captions rather than in the chapter review activities. Grade 12’s Canadian and World Politics likewise undermines critical Indigenous perspectives. One chapter thoroughly discusses Indigenous political organization\textsuperscript{10} and ends with the statement that Indigenous leaders are “working for Aboriginal peoples to be recognized not as one of many ethnic minorities, but as a ‘nation’, with greater powers of self-government, autonomy and sovereignty” (Ruypers, 2005, 152). Yet the chapter review activity undermines this clear critique of multiculturalism and articulation of distinct Indigenous political traditions and sovereignties, invoking the perspectives of three white, male commentators. The text then invites students to debate Aboriginal sovereignty as a class. After a section on fishing rights, Grade 11’s Law in Action invites students to “Discuss other circumstances where government regulation of Aboriginal and treaty rights might be justified” (Blair, 2003, 109). With so little respect paid to Indigenous perspectives, it does not take much to reinforce colonial mentalities. Several texts sideline critical Indigenous perspectives and content through peripheral placement, silence, and prejudicial review questions, reinforcing an epistemology of ignorance. That these strategies are expressed most clearly in textbooks reviewed by Indigenous educators suggests the depth of investments in settler innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

**The problem with optional content**

In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Education released an updated Grade 1-10 social studies, history and geography curriculum, followed in 2015 by a revised Grade 11 and 12 Canadian and World

\textsuperscript{10} This includes discussion of the structures of the Blackfoot and Haudenosaunee Confederacies, the work of Haudenosaunee leaders in pursuing international recognition of nation-to-nation agreements, the imposition of band councils through the Indian Act, residential schools, forced removal of children for adoption, the ban against hiring lawyers to advance land claims, treaties, and important Supreme Court cases including Sparrow, Delgamuukw, and Powley.
Studies curriculum. The design of the new curricula involved consultation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit representatives and educators, as well as fact checking by First Nations, Métis and Inuit reviewers on the first draft (Callan, 2016). The content of the new curricula is much improved – for example, it discusses traditional territories and treaties. However, over 98% of Indigenous content is still framed as optional, including material related to key assimilative policies including the Indian Act and residential schools (OME, 2013a; 2013b; 2015). Placing content into optional examples is one way of allowing schools and teachers to tailor curricula to their student populations. Yet, as the recent withdrawal of a new Grade 3 text due to its whitewashing of reserve creation attests, placing Indigenous content into optional contexts means there is less incentive for textbook publishers to ensure accuracy and quality (Lee-Shanok, 2017). Additionally, most teachers have themselves not been taught well about colonialism and Indigenous peoples and the majority of Ontario teacher colleges do not prioritize such education11 (Dion, 2007; 2009; Higgins, Madden & Kortweg, 2015; Nardozi & Mashford-Pringle, 2014, Pratt & Danyluk, 2017; Strachan & Kidder, 2016). Without better teacher education and better quality control of textbooks on the part of the Ministry of Education and Curriculum Services Canada, it is unlikely that the new curriculum will foster the sustained and responsible engagement with the history and legacies of colonialism called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This article has undertaken a fine-grained thematic analysis of the 2003-2015 Ontario curricula and texts to demonstrate the extent to which a colonial epistemology of ignorance has been cultivated in Ontario K-12 education. Building on the insights of decolonial, feminist, and

11 In its 2016 response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Ontario provincial government stated that Ontario teacher education programs are required to include mandatory Indigenous content (Government of Ontario, 2016). How much content, what kind of content, and how integrated this content is with other aspects of the program is unclear.
critical race scholars on the dynamics of an epistemology of ignorance, we demonstrate how strategies of exclusion and denigration persist at all levels of textbook and curriculum design and publication, in ways that work to naturalize racism and discourage the epistemic responsibility central to building decolonizing relations. Texts reviewed by Indigenous educators are a key challenge to the misinformation and prejudice promoted in the majority of texts and curriculum. Yet even within these texts critical Indigenous perspectives are undermined at every turn, demonstrating the depth and perniciousness of an epistemology of ignorance and the role of textbooks in retrenching discourses of settler innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012). While the updated curriculum is in some ways much improved, its transformative potential is severely constrained by the relegation of content pertaining to colonialism and Indigenous peoples to optional contexts. As many current teachers were educated under the 2003-2015 curriculum, and as many teacher colleges do not make decolonial education a priority, it is unlikely that optional content is being taught in any consistent or coherent way across the province.

The aim of this article has been to point to the complexity and subtlety of the challenge. The consistency of silence, omission, and prejudicial characterization across the 2003-2015 curricula and texts suggests that they are not incidental but reflective of deeply-held, socially-sanctioned interests. Whether conscious or not, these portrayals likely have had a significant influence on student consciousness. Serious educational reform requires responsibility on the part of the Ministry of Education and teacher education programs to confront the mythologies of progress, certainty, and benevolence that uphold a colonial epistemology of ignorance. Centering the leadership of First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators from across Ontario in all levels of conceptualization and implementation of curricula and texts, with special attention to the training of teachers, is fundamental to the development of a decolonizing public education.
“The initial educational struggle...has been to sensitize the Eurocentric consciousness, and educators in particular, to the colonial and neo-colonial practices that continue to marginalize and racialize Indigenous students. This does not come easily to Eurocentrically educated Canadians, for it requires their unlearning...of conscious and subconscious notions of meritocracy and superiority...and of how privilege is constructed and maintained in a racist society.”

- Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*, pg. 69

This article shares the results of the Ontario Student Awareness questionnaire, part of a project that investigates how post-secondary students in provinces across Canada have learned to think about colonialism and its relationship to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and Canadian society. Disseminated online to 42,916 first-year students at 10 Ontario universities in the fall of 2014, the questionnaire sought to engage students in learning more and better about Indigenous peoples and topics and to explore barriers to that learning. Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s observation that “Real power lies with those who design the tools”, the questionnaire includes a multiple-choice knowledge test co-designed with over 200 First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members across Ontario, as well as questions on where students learned what they know, their social attitudes, and demographics (L.T. Smith, 1999, p. 38; Ermine, 2007). The knowledge test and associated questionnaire reflect what First Nations, Métis and Inuit people associated with Ontario universities believe all residents of Ontario and
Canada, especially university-level students, should know to be able to act responsibly as treaty partners and fellow citizens and neighbours.

In Canada, many Indigenous leaders and activists, as well as decolonial and anti-racist scholars, consider that the principal barrier to decolonization is ignorance. Ignorance of the structural injustices at play in land claims and land use negotiations, resource extraction, governance and jurisdiction, identity definition, health, education, child welfare and justice systems all works to uphold and retrench inequities faced by Indigenous people(s) (Coulthard, 2007; Dion, 2009; Environics Institute, 2016; Maddison, Clark & de Costa, 2016; Regan, 2010; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Ignorance in this sense is not a mere absence of knowledge, to be alleviated through the acquisition of new facts. Rather, it is systemic and foundational to structural methods of not knowing that are deeply linked to power and hierarchy (Calderon, 2011; May, 2006; Medina, 2013; Steyn, 2012; Sullivan & Tuana, 2007). Such methods of not knowing are embedded in and cultivated through social institutions. Such institutions include media, the justice system and especially education, through what is taught and what omitted from curricula and textbooks (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Calderon, 2014; Kaomea, 2000; M. Rose, 2007; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013), through how content is taught (Battiste, 2013; Cannon, 2012; Donald, 2012), and through the mindsets of teachers and teacher educators (Dion, 2007; Higgins, Madden, & Korteweg, 2015; Waldorf, 2014). As many decolonial scholars demonstrate, education in Canada has long played a central role in cultivating modes of rationalization that work to legitimate racism and Indigenous assimilation (Battiste, 2013; Cannon & Sunseri, 2011; Coté-Meek, 2014; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis 2009; Vincent & Arcand, 1979). Consequently, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission emphasized in its 2015 final report, Ministries of Education, schools, colleges and universities
bear particular responsibility to foster in Canadian classrooms the critical historical consciousness and mutual respect upon which nation-to-nation relationships are built (TRC 2015; also see Dion, 2007; Tupper & Capello, 2008; Tupper, 2013, 2014). The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has prompted educational institutions across Canada to enhance their efforts to identify and confront the systemic prejudice embedded in course content, funding priorities, administrative decision-making, and the priorities of teachers, teacher educators, faculty and staff (Coté-Meek, 2017; Favel & Stoicheff, 2015; Macdonald, 2016; Trimbee & Kinew, 2015). Yet, as the quantitative results reported here suggest, many Ontario students lack even the most basic understanding of colonialism and Indigenous presence identified by Indigenous educators and community members as necessary for cultivating the ethical relationality central to decolonization (Ermine, 2007; Donald, 2012b). This article makes three key contributions: 1) It is the first in-depth investigation of student learning of its kind, combining co-design, a large sample size, rigorous statistical analysis, and careful attention to the language and structure of curricula and texts. 2) The article shares the question topics considered important by over 200 Indigenous educators and community members, which is important for curriculum writers and policy-makers and relevant for teachers and developers of teacher education programs. And, lastly, 3) we suggest that ignorance runs deep and is multifaceted, requiring concerted and coordinated effort on the part of Ministries of education, school boards, Faculties of Education, and post-secondary institutions to challenge it. Teachers can only act in a certain range of influence when they have to contend with inadequate curriculum. Yet curricular reform is but one part of the equation. Teacher education programs are also accountable to shifting their colonial conditions and challenging systemic ignorance in ways that foster decolonizing relations as called for by the TRC.
Methods

We developed the Awareness questionnaire over a period of 10 months through over 60 meetings with over 200 First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members affiliated with 10 Ontario universities. An iterative process, to each meeting we brought the questionnaire and went through it, word for word, for importance, accuracy, and resonance with co-designers’ experiences and understanding. Co-designing the questionnaire transformed its structure and content and foregrounded the importance of listening and decolonizing our own ways of thinking, a process that is ongoing.

We disseminated the Awareness questionnaire online to the first-year cohorts at 10 Ontario universities in the fall of 2014. Given the difficulty of surveying Grade 12 classrooms across Ontario, we focused on first-year university students as a proxy for what students have learned from their K-12 education. Of the 42,916 students invited to participate, 5,150 (12 percent) responded to the questionnaire, 2,899 of whom graduated from high school in Ontario and completed the questionnaire. The following analysis focuses on these 2,899 students as it is possible to examine the influence of the K-12 Ontario curriculum.

The Awareness questionnaire contains 93 items across six sections designed to determine:

1) where students learned what they know (26 items);
2) what they think of what they have learned (8 items);
3) knowledge (36 items);
4) social attitude (10 items);
5) demographics (e.g., age, gender, the nature of their schooling) (11 items); and
6) reactions to taking the test (2 items).

We assessed knowledge through the co-designed knowledge test, which is composed of 36 multiple-choice questions designed to appraise awareness of:

1) Indigenous presence (geography);
2) past realities that have shaped today’s circumstances (history);
3) First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural continuity (culture);  
4) laws or circumstances structuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit lives (governance); and  
5) what is happening for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada today (current events).  

For analysis, we coded each test question into one of these mutually exclusive categories: geography (7 items), history (7 items), culture (8 items), governance (7 items), and current events (7 items). We also classed topics according to whether or not and to what degree they are in the 2003-2015 Ontario curriculum, which guided most of the education received by these students.  

We examined statistical differences in participants’ performance through paired-sample t-tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA). The null hypothesis for these analyses was that demographic groupings would not influence awareness. For demographic variables with two groupings, we employed a paired t-test. For demographic variables with three or more groupings with equal variance, we used an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferonni correction ($\alpha=0.05$). The Bonferonni correction reduces the chance of a type 1 error (i.e., rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true) (MacDonald & Gardner, 2000). For demographic variables with three or more groupings with unequal variance, an ANOVA ($\alpha=0.05$) with a Games-Howell post-hoc test was used. Where there were significant differences, we calculated Cohen’s $d$ or partial $\eta^2$ as a measure of effect size (Cohen, 1988). We examined statistical differences in participants’ responses within check-all-that-apply items using contingency tables (cross tables) and Pearson’s chi-square tests of independence (chi-square test). We employed a chi-square test using z-test of column proportions with Bonferonni adjustments to significance level ($\alpha=0.05$) to identify significant differences. The null hypothesis for these analyses was that demographic groupings would not influence awareness. We completed all data analysis using Statistical Program for the Social Sciences version 22 (SPSS v. 22).
As the questionnaire was a knowledge test rather than an opinion or satisfaction survey, and as it focused on a controversial topic that many Canadians prefer to avoid, we expected a low response rate. We have since moved to in-class surveys and raised response rates to above 80 percent. While gaining access to university classrooms is a significant challenge, conducting the survey in classes enhances the educational opportunity for students and instructors. If the low response rate creates a bias in the data, it is that these students are probably more interested and knowledgeable than most, as they took the time to complete the questionnaire on their own time (i.e., not in class).

**Student performance on the knowledge test**

The distribution of the data suggests that students have had little exposure to the test question topics. The average score on the test was 24.28 percent ($SD = 16.06$ percent, range = 0 to 86 percent). Students’ test scores were distributed relatively normally, with a floor effect, meaning that more students performed below the median than above it. If this were a typical university test, designed to reflect what students have learned in any given course, such a distribution would require careful reconsideration of the test instrument. However, this test was co-designed with First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators to reflect the knowledge they deem students *should* know. The test is consequently not restricted to topics mentioned in the K-12 curriculum. However, students do perform better on questions covered in the curriculum. We coded each test question according to whether it was in the 2003-2015 Ontario curricular documents and associated textbooks, which guided the K-12 education received by these students. We focused on Grades 1-6 social studies courses, the Grades 7 and 8 history and geography courses, Grade 9 geography, and Grade 10 history and civics. The rationale for focusing on these courses is two-fold: they are mandatory for all students and have the greatest likelihood of including content
related to colonialism and Indigenous peoples. Based on our analysis of the curriculum and
textbooks, we organized test questions into three categories: covered in core courses (4 items),
maybe covered (13 items), and not covered (19 items). Table 1 provides a summary of students’
performance by test question theme and nature of coverage in curriculum and associated
textbooks.

Table 5.1. *Student performance by test question theme and nature of coverage in mandatory
social studies and Canadian and World Studies courses (2003-2015).*
The curriculum highlights one Indigenous athlete (Jordin Tootoo) and one Indigenous musician (Susan Aglukark) multiple times. The Awareness test question asks students about 9 Indigenous athletes and 6 musicians, two of which are Tootoo and Aglukark. We conducted a paired samples t-test to assess whether students performed better on test questions covered or maybe covered in mandatory courses compared to questions on topics not mentioned in these courses. Students performed significantly better on material that was definitely or maybe taught ($M = 25.54, SD = 17.79$) compared to topics not mentioned in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Question topic</th>
<th>Nature of coverage</th>
<th>Average student performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
<td>Athletics*</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musicians*</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widely spoken languages</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All my relations</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inuksuk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inuit cultural persistence</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive changes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current events</strong></td>
<td>Upholding treaties</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences of residential schools</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential school apology</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systemic racism</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-secondary funding</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idle No More</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in status</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography</strong></td>
<td>Reserves versus traditional territories</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Off reserve</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FN,M, I population**</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional territories</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oil Sands</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Languages spoken in Ontario</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ring of Fire</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Canada’s Constitution</td>
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<td>Royal Proclamation</td>
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<td>Indian Act gender discrimination</td>
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<td>Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Council of Three Fires</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Forbidden in residential schools</td>
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* The curriculum highlights one Indigenous athlete (Jordin Tootoo) and one Indigenous musician (Susan Aglukark) multiple times. The Awareness test question asks students about 9 Indigenous athletes and 6 musicians, two of which are Tootoo and Aglukark.

** First Nations, Métis and Inuit.
curriculum ($M = 22.34, SD = 16.68$); $t_{2898} = 13.66, p < 0.001$. These results indicate that students retain what they are taught, signalling the real potential of teacher education and curricular reform for improving education about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics in Ontario.

Students performed best on questions pertaining to current events ($M = 34.3, SD = 24.87$). Students scored highest on a question asking who has an obligation to uphold treaties (40.7 percent correct). This was followed by questions on the Prime Minister’s 2008 Residential School Apology (39.1 percent), the availability of federal post-secondary funding for First Nations and Inuit students (36.8 percent), the effects of changes in legal definitions of Indian status (33 percent), and the Idle No More movement (24.3 percent). Troublingly, nearly a fifth of first-year respondents (17.7 percent, $n = 512$) believe that all Indigenous students receive free post-secondary education, a finding that demonstrates the important role schools, universities and colleges must play in fostering respect for First Nations’ treaty rights and Inuit constitutional rights.

To respect the knowledge students do have, we structured some questions as check all-that-apply, allowing more nuanced analysis. Two of the current events questions, the manifestations of systemic racism and the consequences of residential schools, are questions that require ‘check-all-that-apply’ answers. The frequency of each answer indicates that students are more aware of some aspects of systemic racism and the consequences of residential schools than of others. While nearly 70 percent of respondents identified biased coverage in mainstream media as a manifestation of systemic racism, only 55.3 percent identified unsolved crimes against women, 54.7 percent identified omission in the curriculum, and 50.3 percent identified overrepresentation in prisons. Moreover, only 11.7 percent of students selected all of these four
correct answers, suggesting that nearly 90 percent do not understand the depth and breadth of systemic racism. Similarly, while two thirds of students are aware of the role of residential schools in attacking First Nations, Métis and Inuit ways of being, many have little sense of the ongoing trauma wrought by the schools. The seven correct answers to this question fall into two categories: four answers focus on the traumatic and ongoing impact on individuals and families and three answers focus on cultural loss. Of the 66.7 percent of participants who selected all three cultural loss options, only 42.3 percent were also aware of ongoing trauma. Of the 34.7 percent of participants who were aware of the traumatic and ongoing impact of the schools, 80.9 percent answered all parts of the question correctly. This pattern suggests that cultural loss is forefront in the awareness of the majority of students but many are unaware that Indigenous people continue to live with the trauma inflicted by the schools. There is another risk with the focus on cultural loss. Narratives of degradation in the absence of narratives of strength and resurgence reinforce discourses of Indigenous damage and decline, a mentality that easily supports settler interests (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Million, 2013; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). That these students are much more aware of loss than they are of resurgence demonstrates the need for better education about residential schools. Such education, promoted through both curriculum content and teachers’ pedagogical strategies, would foreground the historical and contemporary stories, knowledge and experiences of Indigenous people(s) and emphasize that colonialism is not the only story of Indigenous lives. It would also help students develop the critical consciousness to identify the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values that have come from the history of colonization, in order to challenge them (Battiste, 2013; Regan, 2010; TRC, 2015; Tupper, 2014).
Students did second best on culture questions \((M = 31.01, SD = 20.65)\). Students’ responses to the culture questions suggest that while they have some general awareness of Indigenous ways of knowing and the importance of language and culture, many do not see Indigenous people(s) as part of Canadian society. Students performed best on a question on widely spoken Indigenous languages (60.9 percent, the best-answered question on the test) and scored relatively well on questions on the meaning of the phrase “all my relations” (39.5 percent) and Inuit cultural persistence (36.4 percent). Students did less well on a question on First Nations, Métis and Inuit athletes (30.5 percent), though still above the test average. Students did most poorly on questions on the Inuit inuksuk\(^{12}\) (9.9 percent), authors (16.4 percent), musicians (21.1 percent), and positive changes led by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people (26.5 percent). Low scores on the authors and musicians questions, despite their presence on the curriculum, suggest that many students are not taught well about Indigenous contributions to the arts. Similarly, while over 60 percent of respondents selected “pride in identity,” “cultural rejuvenation” and “language recovery” as correct answers to the question on positive changes led by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, they were less likely to select “post-secondary graduation” (49.7 percent), “self-government” (47 percent), or “business ownership” (40.8 percent). This suggests that while two thirds of respondents have some awareness of Indigenous cultural vitality, they do not necessarily see cultural vitality as linked to success in business, self-government, and post-secondary education. Together with students’ poor performance on the arts questions, these results suggest a prevailing misconception that Indigenous people are not present in contemporary arts, post-secondary education, government or business.

\(^{12}\) We follow the Inuit-preferred spelling rather than the English-language “inukshuk”.
The pattern of responses to questions on governance suggests that when students learn about governance at all, that learning focuses on the interpretation of Indigenous rights by the Canadian state rather than on the territories, philosophies and critical perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people(s). While students performed close to the test average on governance questions \((M = 24.62, \text{SD} = 20.02)\), their performance on individual questions varied according to whether the question focuses on the Canadian government or on the roots of Indigenous rights. Students did best on questions focused on the Canadian government’s framing of Aboriginal rights, scoring above the test average on questions on Aboriginal and treaty rights in the Canadian Constitution (26.5 percent correct) and trends in the Canadian government’s approach to land claim agreements (24.5 percent). Students scored more poorly on questions that emphasize the pre-European-contact origins and enduring nature of Indigenous land and resource rights: Aboriginal title, treaties, and scrip (19.8 percent), the 1763 Royal Proclamation (9.2 percent) and the 2003 Powley case (8.1 percent). Such an uncritical approach to governance allows denial of the existence and diversity of Indigenous sovereignties, works to reduce conflicts around land, resources, and cultural continuity to a matter of majority rule, and portrays government as innocent of assimilative interests (Grande, 2015; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Coulthard, 2007, 2014). Together these work to undermine imagination of Indigenous resurgence and futurity.

The most important, deliberate, cultivated and sustained act of legislated racism in Canadian colonial rule is the Indian Act. Yet students have little understanding of its aims or ongoing existence and effects. Only 18.9 percent of students understand the role of the Indian Act in legislating and subordinating Indigenous identities and sovereignties. Only 38 percent answered a question on the ongoing assimilative effects of the gender discrimination embedded
in the Indian Act correctly. There is nearly a 20 percent difference in student performance on the two Indian Act questions. This is probably less a reflection of students’ superior knowledge of its gendered impacts than of the structure of the test question: co-designers advised us to focus on the effects of gender discrimination; consequently, it was necessary to explain its nature in the body of the question. This enhanced the educational value of the question but also made it a little easier, increasing students’ score. Overall, these governance questions require in-depth and critical education about the disciplining of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and rights through Canadian law. It is unlikely that students could, or should, learn this from the media or informal discussion.

While students have some awareness of the role of government in attacking Indigenous ways of being and knowing, they do much less well on questions that demand sensitivity to Indigenous autonomies and awareness of the numerous government strategies to sever Indigenous connections to land. Students performed below the test average on history questions ($M = 23.19$, $SD = 20.46$). By far the best-answered history question is a factual question on who administered the residential schools (47.4 percent correct, the second-highest score on the test). Students did much less well on questions requiring deeper awareness of assimilative practices: the assimilative aims of the residential schools (28.1 percent) and government relocation of Inuit (27.9 percent). Students performed even less well on questions that emphasize Indigenous sovereignties, scoring 14 percent on a question about the Métis nation and 12.7 percent on a question on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Council of Three Fires. Students did most poorly on questions that highlight government strategies to limit Indigenous peoples’ avenues of resistance to colonial attack. 17.4 percent knew when First Nations and Inuit could vote. Only 3.5 percent understood some of the early 20th century government strategies to limit land claims.
Students’ poor performance on these history questions reflects the breadth of the gap between the history they have been taught and the history deemed important by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Ontario. This gap is deeply political, because it discourages young Canadians’ critical understanding of Canada’s colonial nature. It also works to dull students’ responses to collective inherited injustices, by allowing them denial of epistemic responsibility (Ermine, 2007; Medina, 2013; Whitt, 2016).

Student unawareness of Indigenous presence, either here and now, or in resource extraction disputes, for example, limits their capacity to engage respectfully with Indigenous people(s) on issues of major importance to all people in Canada today. It is significant, then, that students performed least well on questions assessing awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit presence ($M = 22.29$, $SD = 18.29$). Students did relatively well on a question on Indigenous languages spoken in Ontario (34 percent). However, they scored very poorly on a question on whose traditional territory their university campus is built (3.3 percent correct, the lowest score on the test) and a question on whether the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same (8 percent, the second-lowest score on the test). This suggests that while students have some awareness of the Indigenous nations in Ontario, they have little understanding of Indigenous presence where they are. It is likewise important, given the commitment of the Canadian government to resource extraction and the disproportionate impact of that extraction on Indigenous people(s) (Cameron & Levitan, 2014; Preston, 2013), that students do not do well on questions on resource projects of considerable regional and national importance. Only 8.8 percent of respondents were aware of some of the consequences of the Ring of Fire mining project in northern Ontario. Nearly 90 percent could not name the Indigenous nations grappling with the extraction of the Alberta oil sands. These results
demonstrate that universities have a crucial role to play in awakening students to what is happening around them and encouraging sensitivity to relationships between signs in their daily landscape and events and structures at play in Canada, especially with regard to Indigenous peoples and territories. Students did better, though not well, on questions focused on reserves: the percentage of First Nations people who live off reserve (26 percent) and the difference between reserves and traditional territory (39.4 percent). That students do better on reserve questions is a reflection of the Ontario curriculum. The curriculum focuses predominantly on First Nations reserves, neglecting the presence of Métis and Inuit and of First Nations people in urban areas. It is also silent about Indigenous territories and omits critical Indigenous perspectives on land theft, removal, and resource extraction.

The prevalence of “Don’t know” and incorrect responses can teach us even more about the nature of student ignorance. Average performance is raised or lowered by outliers in the group, but where more individuals in a population answer correctly than answer “Don’t know”, we can say that there is greater awareness about that topic in the population. Conversely, when more individuals answer incorrectly than “Don’t know”, we can say that misconception prevails in the population. Five test questions stand out. Encouragingly, more students answered correctly than “Don’t know” on questions about widely spoken Indigenous languages (60.9 percent correct vs. 33.6 percent Don’t know), who administered the residential schools (47.4 percent correct vs. 39.8 percent Don’t know) and treaties (40.7 percent correct vs. 38.3 percent Don’t know).

Troublingly, misconception is widespread on whether the population of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people is increasing, decreasing or staying the same. Nearly three times more students think that “The population is decreasing” than answered “Don’t know” (65.2 percent vs. 22.4 percent). This belief is politically important, as it feeds discourses of ongoing Indigenous decline, a
mentality that works to naturalize settler presence (Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016; Wolfe, 2006). Importantly, students who say they learned most of what they know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit from their formal education are significantly more likely to consider that the population is decreasing ($p < 0.001$). This result accords with our analysis of the 2003-2015 K-12 Ontario social studies and Canadian and World Studies stream. Despite the fact that the Indigenous population is not only growing but is the fastest growing population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011), the 2003-2015 Ontario curricula and texts consistently frame Indigenous peoples and topics as of the distant past, succeeded and superseded by the non-Indigenous, settler present. Misconception is also apparent in student responses to a question on the proportion of First Nations people living off reserve. Although at least 70 percent of First Nations people in Canadian provinces live off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2013), the majority of students think that most First Nations people live on reserve (41.6 percent incorrect vs. 32.4 percent Don’t know). Together with students’ poor performance on the population question and on the traditional territory question, these findings suggest a prevailing misconception that wherever Indigenous people(s) are, they are not here, a conviction shared by first year university students in Newfoundland and Labrador (Godlewska, Schaefli, Massey, Freake, Adjei, Rose & Hudson, 2017; Godlewska, Schaefli, Massey, Freake & Rose, 2017). As in Ontario, curricula and texts in Newfoundland and Labrador are encouraging this mentality (Godlewska, Rose, Schaefli, Freake & Massey, 2016).

Non-Indigenous students performed much less well on questions about current events, culture, governance and geography than did Indigenous students, perhaps because Indigenous students have learned about these topics from sources beyond school. We investigated differences in student performance based on self-reported identity (Figure 5.1).
The difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students’ performance was significant for four of the five question themes: current events, \( t(2702) = 2.852, p = 0.004, \text{cohen’s } d = 0.24; \) culture, \( t(2702) = 3.568, p < 0.001, \text{cohen’s } d = 0.30; \) governance, \( t(2702) = 4.941, p < 0.001, \text{cohen’s } d = 0.40; \) and geography, \( t(2702) = 5.071, p < 0.001, \text{cohen’s } d = 0.40. \) There was no significant difference between non-Indigenous and Indigenous students on historical questions, \( t(2702) = 1.596, p = 0.111. \) That non-Indigenous students score nearly 10 percent lower on geography, governance and history questions than they do on culture and current events questions suggests that they are least aware of the history of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada and of contemporary Indigenous presence.

It is fair to say that the questionnaire was an educational tool for these students if only because it taught them that there was much they did not know. We asked students two questions before and after the knowledge test: whether they consider that they should have been taught more and whether they feel informed. Figure 5.2 summarizes student perceptions of whether they should have been taught more.
An exact McNemar’s test showed that students were significantly more likely to believe they should have been taught more after taking the test (p < .001), indicating that many students are not aware of how much there is to know about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

We also asked students whether they feel informed about Indigenous peoples and topics. Many more students considered that they were not very informed after taking the test (Figure 5.3).
That many more students report not feeling very informed after taking the test suggests that even limited exposure enhances student understanding of the gaps in their knowledge. It also suggests that the knowledge students do have is not necessarily the knowledge considered by First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators to be most important. This shift in pre- and post-test student responses was, however, not statistically significant ($p = 0.42$).

Students are good judges of what they know. We conducted a one-way ANOVA to compare students’ perceptions of how well they were informed to test performance and this yielded significant results, $F(2, 2807) = 113.2, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. Students who felt informed ($M = 31.22, SD = 19.43$) or somewhat informed ($M = 30.97, SD = 17.39$) performed significantly better than students who did not feel informed ($M = 21.34, SD = 14.41; p < 0.001$). There were no differences between how students performed if they felt informed or somewhat informed.
Where students learned what they know

Where students learn what they know differs significantly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Students also learn differently about First Nations, than about Métis and about Inuit. We asked students how much they learned about First Nations, Métis and Inuit from their personal experience, their own initiative, their formal education, media, friends, family, Indigenous persons, and work, volunteer or internship experience (Figure 5.4).
All students consider that they learned most about First Nations, much less about Métis and least about Inuit. All students feel that they learned more from school than from any other source and least from work/volunteer experience. That Indigenous students report learning “quite a bit” in school may be a consequence of better teaching in schools with higher proportions of Indigenous students (Archibald & Hare, 2017). These students may also have taken Native Studies courses in high school. This strong suite of courses, developed through the considerable efforts of Indigenous educators across the province in the 1990s, was to be available to any interested student. Yet provincial enrolment requirements and the prevailing prejudice that Indigenous topics are only relevant to Indigenous students, has meant that Native Studies courses are often not offered consistently year-to-year and in most Ontario schools are not offered at all (Chaput, 2012; Strachan & Kidder, 2016). Nevertheless, when these courses are available, students probably learn a great deal.

While formal education was an important source of knowledge for all students, Indigenous students are significantly more likely to learn from other sources as well, $F(24,$
Indigenous students are significantly more likely to have learned what they know from personal experience \((p < 0.001)\), personal initiative \((p < 0.001)\), family \((p < 0.001)\); First Nations, Métis or Inuit persons \((p < 0.001)\); friends \((p = 0.003)\); and work, volunteer or internship experience \((p < 0.001)\). However, non-Indigenous students are significantly more likely to have learned what they know from formal education \((p = 0.014)\). Media is also an important source of knowledge. That non-Indigenous students perform significantly less well on the test having learned most from formal education and media, suggests the need for better integration of the knowledge and experiences of First Nations and Métis people(s) and especially Inuit in formal education.

**Quality of formal education**

Student reporting on the quality of their education suggests that they know when they have been taught well or poorly. We asked students how well they were taught in four grade categories: Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6, Grades 7-8, and Grades 9-12. Students could respond “Misinformed”, “Not taught”, “Poorly taught”, “Adequately taught”, “Taught well”, “Taught exceptionally”, “Don’t remember” and “Not applicable” (Figure 5.5).
Figure 5.5. Student reporting on quality of teaching about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics in grades 1-12.
Students consider that they were taught best about First Nations and least well about Inuit, with Indigenous content clustered in Grades 4 through 8. Students also considered they learned very little in early grades or in high school, patterns consistent with the curriculum. Worryingly, in each grade category between 20 and 50 percent of students consider that they were not taught about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics. This too is a reflection of the curriculum, where over 80% of Indigenous content is framed as optional. That so many students report not being taught suggests that teachers may not be engaging with material construed as optional. This finding reinforces the need for better teacher and administrative training on the importance of Indigenous topics for all people in Canada, especially as nearly all Indigenous content in the new 2013/2015 curriculum is framed as optional (Nardozi & Mashford-Pringle, 2014; Pratt & Danyluk, 2017; Redwing-Saunders & Hill, 2007; Strachan & Kidder, 2016). Encouragingly, students who report that they were taught well or exceptionally about First Nations, Métis and Inuit in middle school and high school (grades 7-12) score significantly higher on curriculum questions ($p < 0.05$). Likewise, students who knew enough to consider that they had been misinformed scored significantly higher on residential schools questions, $t(2897) = 2.16, p = 0.03$.

**Learning from Indigenous people(s) matters**

Some research has shown that increasing contact between people of different backgrounds and experience can foster empathy and reduce prejudice (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew & Wright, 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008). Other research suggests that this effect depends on the quality of the contact (Askins & Pain, 2011; Denis, 2015). In this study, we found that greater interaction with Indigenous people and topics increased students’ test performance, enhanced
their willingness to engage with Indigenous perspectives, and made them more willing to imagine issues from Indigenous points of view. We asked students to describe the quality of their interaction with Indigenous persons (Figure 5.6).

![Graph of student reporting on the nature of their contact with Indigenous persons.](image)

**Figure 5.6.** Student reporting on the nature of their contact with Indigenous persons.

The quality of contact students had with Indigenous people had a significant effect on their test performance, \((F(6, 2868) = 58.79, p = 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11)\). Students who considered that they had “sustained” or “occasional but significant” interaction with Indigenous people performed better on the test than students who reported having little contact, no contact, or were not sure \((p < 0.001)\).

Caring about First Nations, Métis and Inuit well-being is also linked to better test performance. We asked students two questions: how much they care about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and how much they care about social justice issues faced by Indigenous people/s (e.g., disproportionate poverty, murder of women, inequity in housing, education, incarceration, and health) (Figure 5.7).
Figure 5.7. Student reporting on how much they care about First Nations, Métis and Inuit well-being.

Nearly 70 percent of respondents report caring about Indigenous people and about social justice. About a quarter of these students care no more or less about Indigenous well-being than about any other people or issues in Canada. Fewer than 5 percent do not care at all. These findings are probably not representative of the entire Ontario student population, as the students who took the time to complete the survey likely care more than most. A two-way ANOVA investigating the relationship between how much participants care about Indigenous wellbeing and their test performance yielded significant results, $F(4, 2717) = 4.417, p = .001$. While higher levels of care about Indigenous people increased students’ test scores, how concerned participants were with social justice issues did not affect test performance, $F(4, 2717) = .882, p = .4874$. However, the interaction effect was significant, $F(15, 2717) = 1.962, p = .015$, meaning that the effect of participants who cared more about Indigenous wellbeing was greater when participants also cared more about social justice.
Family interest also had a significant impact on students’ test scores. We asked students to characterize the interest of their immediate family members in First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics. Students could choose one of six set phrases (Figure 5.8).

![Figure 5.8](image)

**Figure 5.8.** Student reporting on the interest of their immediate family members in topics related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

The majority of students encounter silence in the home. Nearly a quarter of students say their families are interested in First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics (mildly interested and significantly interested combined). Worryingly, over 10 percent consider that their families are bored by the whole topic or think Indigenous topics do not matter anymore. A one-way ANOVA showed that how students answered this question had a significant effect on their test score, (F(7, 2891) = 42.3, p < 0.001, partial η²= .093). The more interested a student’s family, the higher the student scored on the test (p < 0.05). Even those students who consider that their families feel that it is all in the past and does not matter anymore perform better on the test than those who say that it never came up as a topic of conversation (p = 0.004). In other words, any engagement on
the part of students’ families with Indigenous topics is associated with increased knowledge in this group of students.

*Students’ interest*

Students’ exposure to Indigenous perspectives and topics is also linked to their interest in learning more. We asked students what might be the cause of any limitation to their knowledge about Indigenous peoples and topics in Canada. Students could choose one or more of nine set phrases (Figure 5.9).

![Figure 5.9](image)

*Figure 5.9. Student reporting on the limitations to their knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics.*

The vast majority of students consider that the principal barrier to their knowledge is inadequate coverage in school, reinforcing the need for better education. Nearly a third of respondents consider that Indigenous topics are not relevant to them. A smaller, but still substantial proportion of students consider that they do not want to know. The nearly 10 percent of students
who indicate that they have learned things they have had to unlearn are likely more aware than most, as are the students who say that their knowledge is not limited.

Importantly, students who indicate that they are not interested in engaging with Indigenous topics are significantly less likely to have interacted with First Nations, Métis or Inuit people or had exposure to Indigenous topics. Chi-square tests showed that students who say “My family is not First Nations, Métis or Inuit so it is not relevant to me” ($X^2 (6, N = 2869) = 46.76, p < 0.001$) or “I don’t want to know about these issues” ($X^2 (6, N = 2869) = 16.20, p = 0.013$) are significantly less likely to have had sustained engagement with Indigenous people. Students who say they don’t want to know are also less likely to have been taught about Indigenous peoples in high school ($X^2 (7, N = 2899) = 40.44, p < 0.001$). Both of these groups of students are significantly less likely to consider that they should have been taught more ($X^2 (2, N = 2899) = 87.19, p < 0.001$); ($X^2 (2, N = 2794) = 239.84, p < 0.001$). That lack of exposure to Indigenous topics and perspectives negatively affects students’ willingness to engage with them reinforces the importance of centering Indigenous territories, philosophies and critical perspectives in public education.

While engagement with Indigenous people and topics affects student interest, so do family attitudes. We asked students how they would characterize the views of their immediate family members towards First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics. To respond, they could choose one or more of seven set phrases (Figure 5.10).
Again, overwhelmingly, students encounter silence in the home. While at least 25 percent hear expressions of pride and concern (i.e., they are concerned about FNMI people, they are proud of FNMI people), nearly 30 percent receive more negative messages (i.e., they feel that FNMI people receive privileges, does not matter anymore). Independent samples t-tests indicated that students who considered that their family members are proud of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are significantly more interested in Indigenous peoples and topics, \( t(276.5) = 11.54, p < 0.001 \). However, students who say that their family members feel that First Nations, Métis and Inuit people receive privileges are significantly less likely to be interested in social justice for Indigenous people(s), \( t(780.98) = 2.00, p = 0.046 \). These students also report caring less about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, \( t(770.36) = 2.01, p = 0.045 \). Troublingly, these students are also more likely to say that they feel informed, \( t(2805) = 3.12, p = 0.002 \). These findings reinforce the need for a public education system that counters familial prejudice.
Students’ political views

Exposure to Indigenous perspectives and topics also affects students’ attitudes towards social inequity. We asked students how they feel if First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have fewer advantages and opportunities than they do. Students could choose one or more of ten set phrases (Figure 5.11).

![Figure 5.11](chart.png)

*Figure 5.11.* Student reporting on how they feel if First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have fewer advantages and opportunities than they do.

The responses fall into five categories: delegation of responsibility; taking personal responsibility; ambivalence; fear; and apathy. Over 60 percent of students delegate responsibility for inequity to the Canadian government. Fewer consider that they want to address inequity, though this is the second-most popular answer amongst these students. That over a fifth of students wonder if the inequities faced by Indigenous people are worse than the ones they face suggests that many of the students in this sample experience social marginalization of one sort or another or perhaps it expresses ambivalence. Another fifth express fear that addressing inequity
would entail loss of the advantages they have (“I fear losing” and “my family has worked hard”). Approximately 10 percent are apathetic about inequity (It is inevitable, must move on, does not concern me). The prevalence of fear and apathy is particularly indicative of the barriers at play in challenging systemic racism (Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Tupper, 2013). Yet engagement with Indigenous people is statistically significant here too. Students who say that inequity does not concern them are significantly less likely to have had sustained engagement with Indigenous people, \(X^2(6, 2869) = 20.61, p = 0.002\). The same is true of students who consider inequity inevitable in any society, \(X^2(6, 2869) = 19.6, p = 0.003\). These results suggest the social and political importance of engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and topics.

**Where students were educated**

We also found social attitudes linked to where students completed their Grade 1-12 education. We asked students where they attended most of their primary and secondary education (Figure 5.12).

![Figure 5.12](image)

*Figure 5.12. Where students completed the majority of their Grades 1-8 and 9-12 education.*
The vast majority of students attended school in urban and suburban areas. About a fifth completed their schooling in small towns. Fewer than 10 percent were educated in rural areas and 0.1 percent of respondents were educated in remote areas. While where students were educated had no significant impact on test performance, it did on social attitudes. Chi-square tests indicated that students who say their immediate family members feel First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples receive privileges are significantly more likely to have completed Grades 1-12 in rural areas ($X^2(7, 2899) = 42.36, p <0.001$) or small towns ($X^2(7, 2899) = 33.36, p <0.001$). Students who indicated that they did not want to know about Indigenous peoples and issues are significantly more likely to have completed high school in cities ($X^2(7, 2899 = 24.14, p <0.001$).

That urban students are more closed to knowing about Indigenous people(s) and colonialism may be linked to longstanding practices of Indigenous erasure from urban lands (Lawrence, 2004; Peters, 2011).

Where students are attending university also affected test performance. Bearing in mind that at the time of survey most students were in their first semester, we conducted independent samples t-tests and chi-square tests to investigate whether test performance and social attitude varied by university. These yielded significant results. Students at northern Ontario universities scored significantly higher on the test than students at southern Ontario universities, $t(315) = 3.00, p = 0.003$. Students attending universities in small cities or towns (population < 500,000) scored significantly higher than students at universities in large cities, $t(2650) = 5.58, p < 0.001$. Additionally, students at small universities (student population < 20,000) scored better than students at large universities, $t(2897) = 6.1, p <0.001$. Chi-square tests indicated that students attending large, urban universities are significantly more likely to report that Indigenous peoples and topics never came up as a topic of conversation at home, ($X^2(9,2899) = 41.86, p <0.001$).
These results suggest that large, urban universities may have the most work to do in enhancing awareness of Indigenous peoples and topics in their student body.

The analysis presented in this article reflects the knowledge and social attitudes of university students who graduated from high school before the implementation of the updated K-8 and Grade 9-12 Canadian and World Studies curricula. Released in 2013 and 2015, respectively, these curricula were designed with input from First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and in many ways are much improved - for example, traditional territories are now discussed. However, over 98% of Indigenous content, including material on the Indian Act and residential schools, is optional (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; 2015). Making content optional is one way of allowing teachers and schools to tailor curriculum to their student populations. Yet many Ontario teachers have themselves not been taught well about colonialism and Indigenous peoples (Dion, 2009; Higgins, Madden & Korteweg, 2015; Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). Additionally, the majority of Ontario Faculties of Education do not prioritize Indigenous-focused curriculum or pedagogy across their programs (Nardozi & Mashford-Pringle, 2014; Gallagher-Mackay, Kidder & Methot, 2013; Waldorf, 2014). As Dion (2012) found in her study of Métis content in Ontario teacher education programs, despite significant advances in teacher education, the prevailing attitude amongst non-Indigenous instructors and teacher candidates remains that Métis content is mostly irrelevant outside schools with high proportions of Métis students. The new curriculum’s placement of Indigenous content in optional terms thus risks perpetuating the “unequally occupied rhetorical space” fostered by colonial history and

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13 At this time the Ministry of Education has consulted with First Nations and Métis educators and organizations to revise the updated 2013/2015 curricula in response to the TRC’s Calls to Action. These revisions integrate much more content into mandatory directives and are currently being rolled out across the province for implementation by school board. The curriculum revisions are still in pre-publication but should be verified and confirmed by fall 2018.
Eurocentric cognitive imperialism and demonstrated by the generation of university students who participated in this Awareness study (May 2006, 110; Battiste, 2013; Code, 1995). This dynamic, together with the findings presented here, emphasizes the necessity of improving teacher education to the point where Indigenous topics, critical perspectives, and worldviews are mandatory for all students’ learning in Canada. While different regions of Ontario may face different challenges in educating their students, educational institutions from kindergarten to university have key roles to play in fostering the critical historical consciousness, mutual respect and ethical stance central to nation-to-nation relationships (Donald, 2012; Ermine, 2007).

**Conclusion**

Quantitative results of a knowledge test and associated questionnaire co-designed with over 200 First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators across Ontario demonstrate that first-year university students in the province have been taught ineffectively about colonialism and its consequences for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and Canadian society. A number of things are clear from this quantitative analysis. Most students are not sufficiently interested to take part in a questionnaire on Indigenous topics on their own time. While students are most aware of topics in the news, many know remarkably little about the history of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada or about contemporary Indigenous presence and vitality. Students have little sense of the systemic nature and ongoing consequences of colonial violence. Many do not see Indigenous people as part of Canadian society, and the vast majority do not understand the roots of Indigenous rights and take an uncritical approach to Canadian governance. Overwhelmingly, students seem to believe that wherever Indigenous people are, they are not here: not present and by implication not relevant to their daily lives. This perceived absence is deeply political, as it works to limit points of connection to the longstanding efforts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit
people and governments to engage residents of Canada in respectful relations (de Costa & Clark, 2016; Donald, 2012; Ermine, 2007). While the Indigenous students who participated in this survey could and did turn to family and Indigenous persons for their knowledge, non-Indigenous students often rely on formal education and media. Non-Indigenous students’ poor performance on the knowledge test highlights the breadth of the gap between what is taught in formal education—through curriculum content and pedagogical approaches—and the knowledge considered important by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Ontario. However, when students have opportunities to learn from Indigenous people(s), knowledge systems and topics, and when we teach students to engage with, care about and be accountable to this relationship core to Canada, it can make a significant difference to what students know and think. We will be returning to Ontario universities in 2018 to survey the exiting student cohort. We will conduct at least some of these surveys in classes to increase response rates and engage students in dialogue and reflection. Qualitative results from this 2014 study (forthcoming) and results from surveys of exiting students will further enhance the analysis of student learning presented here.
CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Coming to look again

“What if...the ‘righting of wrongs’ requires some wronging of perceived rights, like: displacing ourselves from the center of the world; interrupting our desires to look, feel and 'do' good; exposing the source and connections between our fears, desires, and denials; letting go of our fantasies of certainty, comfort, security, and control…What would decolonization look like, then?”

- Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew & Hunt, Mapping interpretations of decolonization in the context of higher education, pg. 36-37

“When will we know we are reconciled?”

- Ian McIntosh, When will we know we are reconciled?, pg. 3

This dissertation has argued that attending to and transforming cherished presuppositions about knowledge and its nature is central to the development of decolonizing relations. Focusing on education in Ontario, Canada’s most populous province and the seat of federal government, I have demonstrated how a social commitment to ignorance functions to uphold and retrench colonial logics of dispossession. Ignorance in this sense is not a neutral or incidental absence of knowledge, waiting to be filled, “as if dispossession occurs by accident…rather than being the strategic structure it is” (L.B. Simpson, 2017, 12). Rather, ignorance is systemic and inherent to the reproduction and legitimation of colonial relations of dominance. It is about socially-sanctioned investments in “knowing wrongly” that are cultivated, to the extent that they are
made banal, natural, and beyond critique (May, 2006, 109). Its repetition and ordinariness are part of what gives the performance of ignorance such social power. Education in Ontario has played a key role in making ordinary colonialism and the systems of racialization and capitalist accumulation that sustain it.

Ontario is not alone in fostering the epistemological and affective orientations that sustain colonialism. In Newfoundland and Labrador, curricula and texts are persistent in their insistence that, ultimately, all people in the province are settlers, a formulation that dismisses Indigenous prior presence as the ground of Aboriginal rights. Through repeated invocation of the Bering Strait theory of human migration and through consistent portrayal of Indigenous people(s) as primitive, the curriculum and texts work to convert treaty and Aboriginal rights to privileges (Godlewska, Rose, Schaefli, Freake & Massey, 2016). The effect of this rendering of rights into unearned advantages is apparent in students’ qualitative responses to the Awareness questionnaire: when asked to describe three of the most important things they know about Indigenous peoples, the most prevalent student response was “they receive privileges” (Godlewska, Schaefli, Massey, Freake & Rose, 2017). This formulation, reinforced by Ministry-approved textbooks, has serious affective consequences, as it serves to not only vanish Indigenous sovereignties and deny the endurance of colonialism, but to legitimate dismissal of critique that suggests otherwise. In British Columbia, too, the structure and content of the most recent generation of curricula and texts work to deny colonialism and secure ongoing Indigenous dispossession. Colonialism is presented either as a past phenomenon that Canada has moved beyond, or as a problem of elsewhere. Emphasis is on Canadian nation-building and autonomous nationhood; Indigenous people(s) are rendered antithetical to modernity and economy; the transformation of the natural world into resources to be bought and sold is portrayed as an
unquestionable good; and students are frequently invited to inhabit imaginatively the role of colonizer (Schaeft, Godlewska & Lamb, in press). That similar, though not identical, colonial strategies are at play across three very different Canadian educational jurisdictions suggests the depths of investments in colonial ignorance. It is also indicative of the complex interplay between and amongst national and regional discourses around identity, Indigeneity, and capitalist economies of value (see Desbiens, 2004; 2013). Delving further into this relationship is an important avenue of future work.

New curricular emphases developed in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action may help to shift racism and colonial violence to a different place in Canadian public consciousness and encourage relations more restorative of Indigenous nationhoods. Yet the deep entrenchment of colonial ignorance, its links to power and self-interest, and the affects of innocence and certainty it enables are powerful barriers. At the very least, enacting the decolonizing promise of new curricular changes in Ontario requires the full and well-compensated participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and communities from across the province in the design and implementation of educational resources and teacher education programs. It also requires that all people engaged in education, whether in schools, colleges, or universities, consider and work to disrupt the economies of value and attention that perpetuate colonial ignorance and work to secure ongoing Indigenous dispossession.

Perhaps one of the most critical dimensions of this epistemic responsibility is attending to how neoliberal settler colonialism works to constrain and condition the responses available to its own violence. Decolonization is a “messy, dynamic, and contradictory process” and this is so because “the violences of colonialism affect nearly every dimension of being” (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012, 2; Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew & Hunt, 2015, 22). Increasingly, neoliberal affects
of desire for coherence and prescriptive resolution are being inculcated institutionally through increased demands for productivity, diminished job security, and decreased resources (Ahmed, 2007a; Mullings, Peake & Parizeau, 2016). These very real pressures risk that the difficulties, ambiguities, tensions, and paradoxes of decolonizing work become disciplined to fit “optics of social accountability and responsibility” (de Leeuw, Greenwood & Lindsay, 2013, 381; denHeyer, 2009). Given that a defining characteristic of settler colonialism is its urge to “produc[e] the conditions of its own supercession,” any effort to further a process of “settler harm reduction” must be attuned to its own limits (Veracini, 2011b, 180; Tuck & Yang, 2012, 21).

This is not because failure is inevitable, but because the depths of colonial interest in maintaining the status quo run so deep (D.B. Rose, 1996). Decolonization is not a goal to be checked off. It is in continual emergence, about ongoing processes of attention and care attuned to the failures of settler colonial relations of domination and the micro-possibilities of change.

Education, Leroy Little Bear reminds us, is a philosophy of relation: how one situates oneself in the past, present and future, how one comes to self-understanding, and how one approaches the unknown are always deeply learned and thus pedagogical questions (Little Bear, 2009). A central argument of this dissertation has been that a pedagogical orientation towards awareness in place is vital to challenging neoliberal settler colonial logics that work to vanish Indigenous presences and frame the disappearance of Indigenous sovereignties and lifeways as inevitable. Such a critical pedagogical focus would foreground Indigenous territories, vitalities, and critical perspectives, in ways that dismantle binaries between self and other that perpetuate distancing, complacency, and paternalism. It would also involve creating conditions within and beyond the classroom for students to proceed slowly, think carefully, and situate themselves critically within relations of power, in ways that challenge and disrupt the epistemological and
material immediacies of colonialism. Colonialism endures through quotidian and often unconscious decisions around what we choose to engage with and how. A focus on awareness in place demands immediate attention to the world-making tactics available to us and others. All people in Canada have a vital role to play.
References


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January 8, 2014

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Anne Godlewska  
Queen's University  
Department of Geography  
D-329 Mackintosh-Corry Hall  
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

Dear Dr. Godlewska:

Re: REB Project #: 102 13-14 / Romeo File No: 1463676  
Grantiing Agency: N/A  
Grantiing Agency Project #: N/A

On behalf of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project titled, "Assessing and Addressing Awareness of Aboriginal People".

Ethics approval is valid until January 8, 2015. Please submit a Request for Renewal form to the Office of Research Services by December 8, 2014 if your research involving human subjects will continue for longer than one year. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project. Research Ethics Board forms are available at:

https://www.lakeheadu.ca/research-and-innovation/forms

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

Completed reports and correspondence may be directed to:

Research Ethics Board  
c/o Office of Research Services  
Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1  
Fax: (807) 346-7749

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Maundrell  
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/scw
APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF APPROVAL / New</th>
<th>Modifications to project / Time extension</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Principal Investigator and school/department</td>
<td>Anne Godlewska (Geography, Queen's University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of Project</td>
<td>Student Awareness of Aboriginal Issues in Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>REB file number</td>
<td>2014-02-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of original approval of project</td>
<td>March 19, 2014</td>
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<td>Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final/Interim report due on</td>
<td>March 19, 2015 and annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions placed on project</td>
<td>Final report due on July 31, 2024</td>
</tr>
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During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than the original timeline (e.g., you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate REB form.

In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

Susan James, Chair
Laurentian University Research Ethics Board
McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB)  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support, MREB  
Secretariat, GH-305/H, e-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Application Status: ✔ New  □ Addendum | Project Number: 2014 055

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:
Assessing and Addressing Awareness of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Investigator(s)/Supervisor(s)</th>
<th>Dept./Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>E-Mail</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Godlewsksa</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>613-540-108</td>
<td><a href="mailto:godlewsk@queensu.ca">godlewsk@queensu.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Co-Investigator(s):
J. Anderson, R. Monture, S. Van Koughnnett, L. Schaeffli

Student Investigator(s)  

Co-Investigator(s):

The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB:

- ✔ The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification.
- □ The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification.
- □ The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below:

COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS: Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.

Reporting Frequency:  
Annual: Mar-20-2015  
Other:

Date: Mar-20-2014  
Vice Chair, C. Anderson:
March 12, 2014

Dr. Anne Godlewska
Professor
Department of Geography
Queen’s University
D-329 Mackintosh-Corry Hall
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

Dear Dr. Godlewska:

RE: Amendment for your study entitled: G GEO-145-13 Student Awareness of Aboriginal Issues in Canada; ROMEO# 6007670

Thank you for submitting your amendment requesting the following changes:

1) To improve and clarify your approach as follows:
   a) To not ask universities to share student emails with you or to handle that data but ask them to send a letter of invitation with a link to the Fluidsurveys survey account at Queen’s embedded in it;
   b) To ask the students who respond to the survey to provide their student numbers and email addresses so that they can be entered into the draw and also so that you can link year one responses with year four responses;
   c) To ask the university to provide some basic demographic data on the students who respond to the survey, i.e. gender, birth date, projected graduation date, if Canada is not the country where they completed their secondary education; if Canada, the postal code of their high school, their year of study, their major or field of study, their faculty and whether they are part- or full-time at university. As some universities have only some information for some of their students, to ask such questions on the questionnaire;
   d) To notify GREB that you are constantly modifying the questionnaire as part of your consultation process with First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples, academics and administrators and to make the form of your questions follow multiple choice best practices;
   e) Once the data is received, to password protect the file and separate out the data from the identifier (linking the records with a discreet identifier) and storing the two excel files on different computing devices in a locked on-campus office to which only the PI has access.

2) Revised attachments: (1) Complete Ontario Survey March 09 2014; (2) Letter of Information Model 10 March 2014; (3) E-mail invitation to student re Awareness survey model 10 March 2014.

By this letter you have ethics clearance for these changes.

Good luck with your research.

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair, General Research Ethics Board

c.: Ms. Laura Schaefl, Collaborator
Dr. Anne Godlewska  
Geography Dept.  
Queen’s University  
Kingston, ON  

April 25, 2014  

File #: 23430  
Title: Student awareness of Aboriginal issues in Canada  

Dear Dr. Godlewska,  

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has given approval to your proposal entitled "Student awareness of Aboriginal issues in Canada".  

The committee strongly suggests and encourages you to encrypt any data that is being collected that contains any personal or identifying information. Please add a statement to your consent form concerning this. For help with encryption services, please contact Trent's IT Department.  

Please add a running footer to your consent form, with the date of Trent REB approval and consent revisions number (e.g., 01-Jan-12, Version 2), so that the consent form used can be easily identified in future.  

When a project is approved by the REB, it is an Institutional approval. It does not undermine or replace any other community ethics process. Full approval depends upon the approval of all other bodies who are named as stakeholders in this research.  

In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) your project has been approved for one year. If this research is ongoing past that time, submit a Research Ethics Annual Update form available online under the Research Office website. If the project is completed on or before that time, please email Karen Mauro in the Research office so the project can be recorded as completed.  

Please note that you are reminded of your obligation to advise the REB before implementing any amendments or changes to the procedures of your study that might affect the human participants. You are also advised that any adverse events must be reported to the REB.  

On behalf of the Trent Research Ethics Board, I wish you success with your research.  

With best wishes,  

Dr. Chris Furgal  
REB Chair  
Phone: (705) 748-1011 ext. 7953, Fax: (705) 748-1587  
Email: chrisfurgal@trentu.ca  
c.c.: Karen Mauro  
Compliance Officer
Responsibility of Researcher and Supervisors

When you receive approval from the REB please remember that:

1. You are responsible for not deviating substantially from the methodology that was approved by the REB. If you do so, an annual status form has to be submitted to the REB as an amendment to the protocol stating the changes. Only upon approval of the form can you change the methodology.

2. You cannot start the collection of data or gathering research until approval has been given from all organisations vetting this application.

3. All copies of approvals from other organisations need to be submitted to the REB (preferably at the time of application when possible).

The tri-council states that university ethics committees should insure all researchers working with human participants add a statement to consent forms that provide contact information allowing participants to contact administrative staff responsible for ethics applications. We at the Trent REB believe that it is consistent with research participants rights and general research accountability that a statement outlining for participants that in addition to contacting the researcher for clarification regarding research, that they may also contact the Trent REB at the office of Research Administration with regard to any ethical questions they may have. Thus we ask that from now on all consent forms include a statement advising that research participants can also contact the Trent Research Ethics Board by either phoning Karen Mauro at 748-1011 x 7896 or emailing her at kmauro@trentu.ca.
The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:

- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:

- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: Date: May 1, 2014

L. Kuczynski
Chair, Research Ethic Board-General
Certificate of Ethics Approval
Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Marie Claire</td>
<td>Godlewska</td>
<td>Others / Queen’s University</td>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Schaeflie</td>
<td>Others / Queen’s University</td>
<td>Co-investigator</td>
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File Number: 08-14-04

Type of Project: Professor

Title: Student Awareness of Aboriginal Issues in Canada

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy) : 09/22/2014
Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy) : 09/21/2015
Approval Type: Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments: N/A
This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed in the section above entitled “Special Conditions / Comments”.

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the “Modification to research project” form available at: http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html.

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Germain Zongo
Protocol Officer for Research Ethics
For Dr. Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB
June 2, 2014

Dr. Anne Godlewska
Queen's University
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D329
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

Copy sent via e-mail to: anne.godlewska@queensu.ca

Dear Dr. Godlewska,

Re: Assessing and Addressing Awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit People

Thank you for providing your request to access students for research purposes (as outlined in the Provost’s Guidelines on Access to Faculty, Students and Staff for Research Purposes), the outline of your proposed research project, confirmation of your ethics review from Queen’s University, and your signed confidentiality agreement to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions.

On behalf of the Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions, I am pleased to confirm that you may have access to University of Toronto students for the purpose of your study.

I note that in your study students will sign a letter of informed consent prior to participating. In keeping with the University’s past practice with respect to full-cohort surveys (e.g. NSSE), we request that University of Toronto student information be aggregated with other Ontario university data prior to publication.

You may wish to note that our office does not grant permission for the deployment of divisional/departmental staff and resources to access student information. The deployment of those resources remains a local decision. I understand you will continue to work with David Newman (Director, Student Life) to coordinate the use of these resources for the purposes of your data collection.

Please accept my best wishes for your research endeavours.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Meredith Strong
Director, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students and Student Policy Advisor

Per Jill Matus
Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions

cc: David Newman, Director, Student Life, University of Toronto
REB Clearance
1 message

ethics@uwindsor.ca <ethics@uwindsor.ca> Thu, Jan 30, 2014 at 3:13 PM
To: Anne Godlewska <godlewsk@queensu.ca>
Cc: "Laura Schaeffi (Research Coordinator)" <laura.schaeffi@gmail.com>, "Russell Nahdee (Research Coordinator)" <mahdee@uwindsor.ca>, "Clayton Smith (Co-Investigator)" <csmith@uwindsor.ca>, "ethics@uwindsor.ca" <ethics@uwindsor.ca>

Today's Date: January 30, 2014
Principal Investigator: Anna Godlewska
REB Number: 31374
Research Project Title: REB# 14-009: "Assessing and Addressing Awareness of Aboriginal People"
Clearance Date: January 30, 2014
Project End Date: October 31, 2017
Milestones:
Renewal Due-2014/01/14(Pending)

This is to inform you that the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB), which is organized and operated according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the University of Windsor Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects, has granted approval to your research project on the date noted above. This approval is valid only until the Project End Date.

A Progress Report or Final Report is due by the date noted above. The REB may ask for monitoring information at some time during the project's approval period.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. Minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered when submitted on the Request to Revise form.

Investigators must also report promptly to the REB:
 a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
 b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
 c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

Forms for submissions, notifications, or changes are available on the REB website: www.uwindsor.ca/reb. If your data is going to be used for another project, it is necessary to submit another application to the REB.

We wish you every success in your research.

Pierre Boulos, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board
Lambton Tower, Room 1102 A
University of Windsor

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=cf5c2bee3d&view=pt&search=inbox&th=143e4c94cf84c6b3 1/2
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October 23, 2013

Dear Anne,

REB # 3810
Project, "Student Awareness of Aboriginal Issues in Canada"
Expiry Date: November 18, 2014

Your project was previously approved by the Research Ethics Board at Queen's University on January 21, 2013. I have reviewed your proposal on behalf of the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University and determined that it is ethically sound.

If the research plan and methods should change in a way that may bring into question the project's adherence to acceptable norms, please submit a "Request for Ethics Clearance of a Revision or Modification" form for approval before the changes are put into place.

If any participants in your research project have a negative experience (either physical, psychological or emotional) you are required to submit an "Adverse Events Form" to the Research Office within 24 hours of the event.

According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must complete the "Annual/Final Progress Report on Human Research Projects" form annually and upon completion of your project. All forms, policies and procedures are available via the REB website: http://www.wlu.ca/research/reb.

All the best for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Basso, PhD
Chair, University Research Ethics Board
Wilfrid Laurier University

/pb