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See table of contents

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Editorial

Disrupting the Status Quo: Critical Research, Decolonization, and Indigenization

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In southern Winnipeg in Manitoba, we recently witnessed a change in the name of a major boulevard, from Bishop Grandin to Abinojii Mikanah. The former refers to a key architect of the "Indian Residential School System," and the latter means "children's road" in the Anishinaabemowin language. We agree with community leader Michael Redhead Champagne when he pointed out in a recent interview that "this is one *small* thing" the city of Winnipeg could do to honour survivors of these institutions (Global News, 2024-April 26). We also believe, however, that these small efforts, which have been met with resistance, are ways we can call attention to the ongoing dynamics of settler-colonialism, which is embedded in the roots of Canadian society, its road network, and, of course, our systems of education.

As settler scholars in education, we are committed in our work to contributing to the ongoing efforts to disrupt the naturalization of settler colonialism and provide important space for critical consideration of inequalities in education. As co-editors of CJE, we are dedicated to prioritizing the voices and perspectives of Indigenous and historically under-represented scholars as well as critical scholarship that supports meaningful change for equity-deserving communities. The authors in this issue shed critical light on the mechanics of colonialism, the systemic inequities that historically underserved Black students face, and the lack of resources that challenge learning and teaching in rural areas. Education systems need to step up through generative disruptions. Choosing to act differently from colonial and oppressive ways requires reflection and learning. The articles and authors in this issue invite you to engage in such reflection and learning. In

the pages of these articles, we hope you will find critical and meaningful moments and generative spaces for reflection and future actions that can support efforts toward truth and reconciliation.

In the article *Barriers to Engaging with Reconciliation in Canadian Education: Confusing Colonial and Western Knowledge*, Dustin W. Louie argues that the misconstrued conflation of colonial and Western knowledge/practices has been hindering relationship building, which is much needed for truth and reconciliation in Canada. He suggests that such clarification is especially important for resisting the divisiveness of colonialism, which excludes and delegitimizes knowledge systems and stigmatizes/oppresses cultural practices (e.g., the relationship to time). Building on the scholarship of Shawn Wilson (2008), an Opaskwayak Cree academic, Louie embraces the perspective that there is no single objective knowledge, but rather that knowledge is relational and created by lived experiences and epistemological traditions. Louie observes that while colonial practices are built on Western (or European or White) cultural practices, not all Western cultural practices are necessarily colonial. In other words, not everything Western has been used as a colonizing tool to oppress those who are not White or from Europe. Recognizing this distinction is critical for decolonization and reconciliation in the present and future Canada. Furthermore, he recommends embracing a way of thinking that moves beyond the Western perspective as the default, neutral, and superior lens through which we learn about the world. He suggests that we embrace anti-oppressive practices of knowledge building and sharing, and that we do so by considering and adding other ways of knowing, especially Indigenous perspectives, philosophies, and practices that can help us move toward truth and reconciliation.

In the article, *Challenges and Possibilities for Truth and Reconciliation in Teacher Education: An Engagement with the Literature*, Jennifer Tupper and Abiemwense Omoregie bring together current scholarship that provides insights into working towards the goals of truth and reconciliation, especially in teacher education. They assess 36 scholarly works that are instructive on how teacher education programs can invite students to engage with key approaches that can advance truth and reconciliation efforts. First, they identify several articles for teaching anti-racist/anti-oppressive approaches that highlight that racism is not just an individual issue but rather embedded in systems and structures. They then discuss critical pedagogy and offer techniques (e.g., storytelling and sharing) that move beyond the deficit views of racialized and Indigenous learners

and instead build relationships and facilitate learning from Indigenous philosophies. The approaches of decolonization and Indigenization have also been identified to refute and rectify colonial narratives and systems of oppression. In doing so, Tupper and Omoregie note that it is necessary to have the guidance of Indigenous scholars and Elders on Indigenous ways of knowing and relationship building. Finally, the authors identify a body of work that focuses on historical thinking approaches that can teach students that history is constructed and thus needs to be scrutinized, and that they can do so by examining primary sources and changing perspectives. The authors argue that these approaches can provide a fundamental paradigm shift in teacher education, shaping future teachers' ability to advance the goals of centering Indigenous perspectives and relationships with Indigenous learners and peoples in the Canadian education system and beyond.

The subsequent article concerns students in rural Canada. While not specifically about Indigenous students, we kept in mind that in 2016, 60% of Indigenous peoples in Canada were living in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2016). In the article, *Digital Literacies Learning Needs in Rural Ontario Elementary Schools: Teacher Insights*, Michelle Schira Hagerman and Sima Neisary examine the state of rural youths' digital literacy by interviewing more than a dozen teachers. Looking across 12 rural Ontario communities, Hagerman and Neisary find that Grade 4-6 rural youths lack access to broadband Internet services that would otherwise allow them to engage with the learning resources available digitally. This lack of access puts them at a greater disadvantage in developing skills at a rate that is comparative to that of suburban and urban young adults. Teacher reports on students' limited access to computers and the Internet for their schoolwork (and leisure usage) are appalling, raising serious concerns, which have yet to be explored, about digital inequality. While their study identifies various learning needs and challenges facing rural students, the interview data with teachers also provide unique insights into what excites youths in learning and honing their digital literacies. Their insights would interest readers who are exploring similar challenges in their educational contexts.

Finally, we turn to the article entitled *Exploring an Africentric High School Cohort from the Parents' Perspectives* by Karen Hudson, Barb Hamilton-Hinch, Mary Jane Harkins, Zhanna Barchuk, and Diana Seselja. This article sheds light on how colonialism continuously determines and shapes the opportunities, experiences, and outcomes of Black youth in Canada. Situated in Nova Scotia, where a large number of people of African descent have lived since 1604, the authors note the continuous lack of Black people's

perspectives, histories, and experiences, as well as the lack of Black teachers in the mainstream, Eurocentric education systems, which negatively affect the learning opportunities and outcomes of Black students. Echoing other articles in this issue, Hudson et al. argue that it is important to institutionalize pedagogical practices and curricula that value and respect historically underserved students, and focus on Africentric perspectives to disrupt the systemic inequities facing Black students. This study highlights the importance of involving parents of African ancestry in ensuring positive schooling experiences and the development of students of African heritage. In doing so, they envision, through the African-derived principles of Nguzo Saba, especially the principle of "Umoja," parents having a collective responsibility to be involved in their child's education. Their study teaches us about what we can learn from an Africentric High School Cohort program. Specifically, they focus on making schools more inclusive of parents of Africentric backgrounds in their students' learning experiences. Their study is also instructive in informing us about the barriers parents of African descent face in increasing their engagement with school activities and relationship building.

In conclusion, the articles in this issue offer timely and critical invitations to disrupt the status quo of the mainstream education system, where Indigenous, Black, and rural students continue to experience unequal opportunities and outcomes as they face systemic inequities. As you flip (or scroll) through the pages of this issue, we invite you to ponder the following questions:

- How are you taking up decolonizing and Indigenizing efforts in your work?
- What philosophical orientations are you taking in your approach? And why?

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