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Abstract

In this article, I examine truths and misunderstandings of colonization. An interrogation of the conflation between colonial and Western practices is explored through established literature and in practical examples of relationships to time, the Indian Act, and the term "Settler." By first establishing accessible and shared definitions of reconciliation and colonization, common misconceptions and predictable pitfalls in Indigenous movements can be resolved. By attending to the confusion of terms the circle can be expanded ever so slightly to welcome more allies into the movement. Intentionally deceptive narratives position the work of reconciliation, or any social justice movement, as being anti-White and divisive. In the pursuit of equity and healing, it is essential to maintain the core values of care and dignity in methods of emancipation and resist succumbing to colonial tactics of delegitimizing any knowledge system, even those of our oppressors.
Keywords: decolonizing education, Indigenous education, reconciliation, anti-oppressive education, social justice education

Résumé

Dans cet article, j'examine les réalités et les confusions concernant la colonisation. J'explore la question de la fusion entre les pratiques coloniales et occidentales à travers la littérature existante et dans des exemples concrets de rapports au temps, à la Loi sur les Indiens et au terme « colon ». En établissant d'abord des définitions accessibles et partagées de la réconciliation et de la colonisation, des conceptions erronées communes et des pièges prévisibles relatifs aux mouvements indigènes peuvent être résolus. En remédiant à la confusion qui entoure ces termes, il est possible d'étendre quelque peu le cercle afin d'accueillir davantage d'alliés au sein du mouvement. Des récits intentionnellement trompeurs présentent le travail de réconciliation, ou tout autre mouvement de justice sociale, comme étant antiblanc et polémique. Dans la poursuite de l'équité et de la guérison, il est essentiel de maintenir les valeurs fondamentales de souci des autres et de dignité dans les méthodes d'émancipation, et de résister aux tactiques coloniales de délégitimation de tout système de connaissance, y compris celui de nos oppresseurs.

Mots-clés : éducation décolonisatrice, éducation autochtone, réconciliation, éducation anti-oppressive, éducation à la justice sociale

Introduction

Commitments at the ministerial, district, and school levels (Chrona, 2022) in most regions of Canada irrefutably reveal that despite small and vocal pockets of resistance, schools prioritize a spectrum of approaches to reconciliation from equity, diversity, and inclusion to anti-oppression. While convincing those occupying the fringes to value equity may prove a generational project, the vast majority of unsure or even resistant learners and community members can become allies with additional clarity differentiating between the truths of reconciliation and the aspersions critics cast upon the movement. Intentionally misleading narratives position the work of reconciliation, or any social justice movement, as being divisive and anti-White (Robinson, 2022). There are, of course, components of reconciliation that require truthful acknowledgement in resolving historic and contemporary harms, and approaches must be grounded in care, while resisting embodying colonial teachings of delegitimizing the ways of being outside of

our own culture. Beyond creating innovative programmatic, pedagogical, and governance interventions for societal change, it is essential to expand the circle of learning communities committed to reconciliation.

A point of apprehension some folks carry into reconciliation is misunderstanding the differences between what is deemed colonial and Western. The aim of this article is to illuminate the differences by examining Euro-Western (Western) cultural practice in comparison to a settler-colonial practice. In my experiences working alongside school leaders and senior leadership in social service organizations, I have witnessed an incorrect comprehension of practices perceived to be colonial. In many instances anything Western is labelled colonial, giving an inherently problematic connotation to practices associated with European or White culture. This is not to say that myriad Western cultural traditions and practices have not been wielded as colonial tools, but instead emphasizes recognizing the importance of discerning the differences between cultural practices and colonial systems. And, how the same practice can be a cultural tradition in one context and a tool of colonization in another.

Additional complexities emerge due to the inextricable links between Western cultural practices in the Canadian context and the oppression and violence committed against Indigenous people. As an Indigenous scholar it can prove challenging, or even unpleasant, to reconceptualize the systems of our oppression and seek redemption for Western cultural practices by imagining them outside of a colonial context. To do so is *unpleasant*, since I am expending energy protecting colonizers from experiencing the delegitimization that Indigenous, and other marginalized communities, have endured for centuries. However, it is essential to maintain the core teachings of decolonization, and our humanity, in the pursuit of social justice. One way this can be realized is by differentiating between Western cultural practices in colonial societies and the theoretical spaces, or potential futures, where the same cultural practices could be present in forms devoid of colonial harm. The aim of decolonizing projects is not to embody colonizing tactics and become the colonizer.

To be clear, I want to emphasize that my scholarship is founded on anti-oppressive approaches and not diversity-based interventions. Ahmed (2006) contends that diversity-based approaches are often associated with ideas of equality, whereas anti-oppression requires interrogating our own collusion with systems and acts of oppression. By contending that everything Western is not inherently colonial, I am not limiting disruptions or

rejecting critical and decolonizing approaches. The aim of this article is not to eliminate or even reduce accusations of systemic colonial oppression experienced by Indigenous people, but instead to properly direct indictments toward acts of oppression and not to all enactments of Western culture. As a mixed-race First Nations academic, the focus of my scholarship and teaching is uncovering colonial elements in Canadian systems and collaborating to create practical interventions to disrupt these harmful ways of thinking and being. In the pursuit of reconciliation, it is critical to maintain the core values of decolonization in methods of emancipation and resist succumbing to colonial tactics of delegitimizing any knowledge system, even those of our oppressors.

The design of this article challenges multicultural conceits by positioning decolonization, anti-racism, and recognition of the implications of power imbalances at the heart of interventions. St. Denis (2011) challenges multiculturalism by claiming it does not address racism in our society and that Indigenous people are not simply just one amongst a myriad of cultures in the Canadian context. Furthermore, she argues that "Aboriginal groups suggest that multiculturalism is a form of colonialism and works to distract from the recognition and redress of Indigenous rights" (p. 308). Multiculturalism neglects to recognize the implications of power and history, which have uniquely impacted Indigenous people.

In this article, I begin by establishing my personal context and identity to ground knowledge and teachings in a good way. From there, to align understanding, shared definitions of reconciliation and decolonization are established. In the following section, decolonizing and anti-oppressive scholars' views on reconciliation or social disruption are unpacked to chart productive pathways forward. Next, I examine the conflation of colonial and Western through the contexts of relationship to time and the Indian Act. While the conceptualization of colonial and Western can be perceived as abstract, there are real world consequences to confusing terms. Lastly, I will extend this approach to the related issue of differentiating between a Settler and a Colonizer. A primary aim of this article is to ground the readers to understand the differences, distinctions, and complex intersections between colonial practices and cultural knowledge to aid in the extension of the circle of reconciliation.

Knowledge Is Relational

Aligning with the scholarship of Opaskwayak Cree academic, Shawn Wilson (2020), I adhere to Indigenous paradigms that assert that all knowledge is relational. From this perspective there is no objective knowledge, but instead knowledge created in relation to our ontological and epistemological realities and lived experiences. In order to establish a sense of my relationship to the knowledge presented in this article, it is critical that I share a bit about myself. I am a mixed-race First Nations scholar from Nadleh Whut'en and Nee Tahi Buhn First Nations (Beaver Clan) of the Dakelh people. I am an associate professor at the University of British Columbia, director of the Indigenous Teacher Education Program (NITEP), and have extensive experience in Indigenous education, while leading a number of districts, organizations, and agencies across western Canada through decolonizing and Indigenizing transformation. I grew up in rural northern British Columbian communities raised by a single mother with three brothers and a sister. Living in multiple towns and cities in my territory, which had substantial Indigenous populations, I was educated in schools that were completely absent of Indigenous representation in our learning. Growing up mixed-race in diverse rural contexts and then working as a professor in decidedly urban and homogenous academic spaces has influenced my relationship to, and understanding of, colonization.

Defining Reconciliation, Colonization/Decolonization

Prior to engaging in discussions identifying differences between colonial and Western, it is productive to establish my interpretation of terms that will be foundational in this text. Too often, organizations make commitments to reconciliation or decolonization without first establishing a definition, which can result in leaders becoming mired in confusion or working on incongruous projects that lack intentionality. Due to a lack of consistency of defining terms and collective approaches, commitments made by senior leadership land on school-level leaders, teachers, or frontline workers to translate into practice. The following definitions are based on scholarship I created working alongside dozens of Indigenous communities, school districts, government agencies, and social service organizations, refining my understanding with each keynote, conversation, and collaboration.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is often regarded as a synonym for apology, which misses the aim of the age of reconciliation we inhabit (Fox, 2021). By limiting our approach to an apology, we assume we are reconciling for the historic and not the contemporary. I rely on Judge Murray Sinclair's definition, which states that reconciliation is about creating a relationship of mutual respect (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). Well beyond an apology, reconciliation is an attempt to create an equitable society that no longer oppresses Indigenous people and removes the harmful components that emerge through both systemic and interpersonal means, and attends to the impacts of generational systems of colonization.

It is important for educators and scholars to resist viewing reconciliation as attending to only the manifestations of colonization and not the root cause. The lack of mutual respect Judge Sinclair speaks of can be traced to the underlying relationships between Settlers and Indigenous people that have histories of dehumanization, devaluation, and delegitimization. By solely attending to the symptoms as they arise, an opportunity is missed to address the root causes that lead to future emergence of colonization if unchecked. The complicated work assumed when claiming reconciliatory pursuits is dismantling the ongoing and intergenerational impacts of the symptoms of colonization, while also disrupting root causes by attending to relationships.

In response to claims of pursuing reconciliation, I typically ask, "What are you reconciling for?" In many cases, educators understandably struggle to produce anything beyond a vague response. They only know it is compulsory in our times and they are in earnest pursuit. If there is a response, it is typically a statement about reconciling for residential schools. Furthermore, when drilled down a little further, it becomes apparent that physical and sexual abuses are the primary components of the institutions that require reconciling. While it is imperative to hear and comprehend the widespread physical and sexual abuse, and for victims to be recognized, we must resist limiting understanding of colonization to residential schooling, and to think the sole problem with these institutions was the physical assaults. If the investigation of residential schools ends with physical and sexual abuse then society fails to appreciate the colonial foundations of the institution and how the attitudes and assumptions behind their creation are still pervasive in Canadian education and widespread in society.

In reflecting on the creation of residential schools it is important to understand the justification for and design of the institution. Early Settler government policy was based on a racist assumption that Indigenous folks could not succeed in the Western world (TRC, 2015), which was clearly motivated by usurping Indigenous lands and eliminating claims and Nationhood. Residential schools told Indigenous peoples "You are not good enough the way you are, you need to be like us." Reflecting on Baldwin's (2021) quote, which states that colonization requires the colonized to replace their own ways of "feeling, thinking, and acting," by the "feeling, thinking, and acting of the strangers who dominated him" (p. 43), we get to the heart of these institutions. A primary tool of residential schools was removing children from the influences of their families while shaming their ancestors, culture, and identity (Miller, 1996). The intention was to generate internalized oppression and disruption that led to the abandonment of their culture and achieve cultural genocide. It is imperative to expand our understanding of residential schools to situate our reconciliatory approaches in response to pervasive and destructive elements of this system and the avaricious agenda of colonizing forces.

Simultaneously, intentional campaigns of destruction targeted Indigenous communities to ensure they could not function, reducing their autonomy while increasing reliance on Western governments (Monchalin, 2016). Recognizing colonization as a campaign, instead of a single act or institution, helps us make connections between the past and present colonial agenda. Settler scholar Patrick Wolfe (2006) states that, "Invasion is a structure not an event" (p. 389). The Indian Act, disenfranchisement, residential schools, the pass systems, banning of the potlatch, the sixties scoop, water crises, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and scores of colonial acts are intrinsically connected and represent the state's domination and harm of Indigenous people. Often society views the struggles in Indigenous communities as a deficiency in its culture or individual mettle, rather than the intended design of an oppressive system created with this exact outcome in mind. When non-Indigenous Canadians learned of the discovery of the bodies of 215 Indigenous children on the Kamloops residential school site or generations of violence against Indigenous girls and women, they have often understood these injustices as an aberration, rather than, and more accurately, as a continuation of the colonial violence that has characterized the treatment of Indigenous people for all of Canadian history. These high-profile examples are just further evidence of the dehumanizing, devaluing, and delegitimizing treatment of Indigenous people and the myriad ins-

titutions designed to ensure ongoing and brutal control. The flagrant disregard for human life and disempowerment of Indigenous families to intervene or get answers in residential schools is not an aberration, it is perfectly in line with a system that restricted movements (Storey, 2022), removed status (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018), denied equal citizenship, imposed poverty (Monchalin, 2016), sterilized (Black et al., 2021), and committed cultural genocide (Battiste, 2019). Colonization has been all-encompassing, yet invisible or overlooked by non-Indigenous Canadians until recent decades (Holmes et al., 2015). Continuing momentum from the emerging recognition of the horrors of residential schools can manifest in the comprehension of the overall colonial agenda and the underlying harmful relationship between Indigenous people and Settlers that made it possible.

Gazing beyond the obvious horrors of residential schools is necessary to accept that colonial acts requiring reconciliation are still prevalent. If educators focus strictly on the realm of physical forms of abuse, we tell ourselves that we no longer perpetrate these acts and are reconciling for the past, and overlook the ways we reproduce colonial mentalities. In these instances, we can justify that an apology would suffice. Instead, expanding to include reconciling for the impacts of colonization, or the ways in which Indigenous people have been stripped of their culture and made to adopt Western ways of knowing, a recognition of rampant practices across schools, the justice system, health care, and countless other Canadian institutions are evident (Monchalin, 2016). When schools or organizations claim they are working toward truth and reconciliation it is imperative to think critically about what Canada is reconciling for and how the approach challenges colonial norms.

Discipline-Specific Reconciliation

I often ask organizations to examine the role their field occupied, both past and present, in the colonial agenda. Instead of focusing on broad apologies, can specific disciplines disrupt ongoing colonial practices? For example, when working with a collective of physicians I challenged them to identify their collusion with colonization. It was decided that Indigenous people are deprived of equal access to medical attention for a whole host of reasons. Pushing further, we unpacked some of the reasons, which included an unsafe environment for patients to name their Indigenous identity due to fear of negative care and stereotyping (Smylie & Firestone, 2015). In this instance, reconciliation for physi-

cians is more than recognizing the histories of harm in residential schools, or histories of trauma in their field (Mosby, 2013), but recognizing the continued reproduction of colonization and disrupting it.

When reckoning with the physical and sexual abuse in residential schools, appropriate acts of reconciliation may include addressing intergenerational trauma, providing resources to survivors, and widespread acknowledgement. However, if we extend the scope of reconciliation to the past and present colonial agenda, practices, and outcomes, perhaps reconciliation is a shifting of current practices that still fall under the colonial framework. When Indigenous folks continue to call for reconciliation, we are not demanding another apology. Instead, perhaps look closer at our current practices and unearth how colonization continues to be perpetuated, and reconcile by fundamentally changing. By disrupting the systems, we are heeding Judge Sinclair's call to create a relationship of mutual respect (TRC, 2015).

Inheriting Legacies that Require Reconciliation

A complicated component of reconciliation is contending with the histories of the institutions, as educators or in social services, that we now represent. As a university professor I am saddled with the legacy of post-secondary institutions in Canada, which carry the earned scepticism and distrust of Indigenous communities (Stonechild, 2006). Some years ago, in a research project I led, Indigenous parents sent disgruntled letters questioning our motives when we attempted to interview Indigenous students. My hurt feelings and frustration were consoled by an Indigenous friend who helped me recognize that distrust was directed at the system I now represented, which had warranted letters ensuring the safety of Indigenous children. Indigenous people have a history of being harmed and disenfranchised by researchers, so their apprehension was just and wise.

Settler scholar Sarah Kizuk (2020) reminds us to differentiate between guilt and shame when acknowledging Settler engagement in acts of reconciliation. Guilt is in response to an action, whereas shame is a reaction to a state of being. The legacy of the institutions that some of us represent may be the source of our guilt, since Settlers benefit from systems of colonization that continue to harm and oppress Indigenous people and other folks of colour. Moreover, it is important to reflect that contemporary acts of colonization are often more insidious when compared to overt practices of earlier gene-

rations. It is also possible that Settlers carry shame from the state of being a Settler when uncovering historic and contemporary systemic and interpersonal oppression. Beyond the state of settlerism there is the legacy of the institutions they represent, which Kizuk fears can result in attempts to rehabilitate the Settler image, instead of attending to the historic and contemporary harms of colonization. Regardless of the discipline, there is a history of colonization and a potential for shame. Our end goal in decolonization is not to impose shame, but to create real change; however, this emotion is a likely experience along the pathway of transformation. For those of us in education, social work, the justice system, and health care, there is a plethora of information available to understand and recognize the legacies we take on when entering fields as Indigenous or allied practitioners.

Defining Decolonization

I shift next to decolonizing, which I understand as de-centring of Whiteness and challenging the agenda, practices, violence, and fallout of historic and contemporary manifestations of colonization (Fanon, 1961/2004). In my view, decolonizing is one of the two streams, along with Indigenizing, that lead to a state of reconciliation. Indigenizing is the embodiment or practice of Indigenous Knowledges in typically colonial or Western spaces. Even in the two simplified definitions it is easy to discern the significant difference. Indigenizing creates spaces for Indigenous knowledges in systems and public places, while decolonizing asks us to reflect upon the ways in which we have been trained to view and exist in the world.

This article engages with colonization of the mind, not necessarily physical or geographic representations. It is typically easier to comprehend physical acts of colonization, but the insidious nature of colonizing the mind leaves our society, both the dominant and marginalized communities, trapped in cycles of harm and dehumanization. Fanon (1961/2004) contends that "in the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values" (p. 42). The provocative and intellectually challenging nature of decolonization can appear too fraught for many scholars and practitioners to meaningfully venture into. In relation to Indigenizing approaches, decolonizing is drastically more challenging to recognize and disrupt as it entails interrogating our core beliefs and reflecting upon how we are unconsciously trained to think, show privilege, have high or low

expectations contingent on identity, and carry unconscious assumptions about people and ways of knowing from non-dominant cultures. Decolonizing requires recognizing and shifting our unconscious mental processes that then influence our actions. The demanding prerequisite of decolonizing is contemplating and acknowledging the fact that everyone is complicit in colonizing influences.

First Component of Decolonization

It should be noted that dialogue around reconciliation and decolonization are contested and nuanced, and what I am presenting is an accessible version that I have developed and works for me and privileges decolonization of the mind. I break down decolonization into three components. The first is challenging the Western perspective, story, or truth as the default lens through which we all view and comprehend the world, history, knowledge, actions, Indigenous peoples, their culture, and ways of knowing. The single story (Adichie, 2009) pushes colonial values by telling society that only one group's perspective matters, their story is the one that should be re-told, and their lens is the most reliable and only one necessary to view and interpret the world through. Moreover, Battiste (2011) states that, "All Eurocentric scholarship … accepts the notion that the humanity has a single center (Europe) from which culture-changing ideas originate and a vast Indigenous periphery (non-Europe) that progresses as a result of diffusion from that single center" (p. xviii). Through the monopolization of truth and perspective the West has controlled the understanding of history, which positions Indigenous people as primitive and vulnerable (Furniss, 1997). Dei and Jaimungal (2018) state that, "by discounting, delegitimizing, and discrediting other bodies of knowledge, we have all been limited in understanding the complete history of ideas, events, practices, and occurrences that have shaped and continue to shape human collective growth and development" (p. 3). Decolonization, in relation to this aspect of colonization, is not removing or devaluing the Western lens, but instead adding the perspectives, stories, truths, and lens of non-Western people as equally valuable. However, there must be a recognition of the unearned monopoly Western perspectives have received in the previous centuries and how this skewed idea of universality has diminished our understanding of the world. Expanding from this idea, this element of decolonization requires more than simply deciding to decentre Western perspectives and truths, but also a reflecting and accounting of the unearned privilege

and advantage centuries of the monopolization of truth has bestowed upon White folks. However, it is critical to remember that decolonization is not the removal of White perspectives, but a recognition and raising up of the multiplicity of viewpoints.

Second Component of Decolonization

The second component of decolonization is disrupting the assumption of Western knowledge as neutral or the natural way of humanity. Through this form of colonization colonized people are required or assumed to adhere to Western cultural practices and ways of being in order to be heard, recognized, and valued in society. Dei and Jaimungal (2018) argue that "Western Knowledge systems have often masqueraded as universal knowledges, shunning other ways of knowing, or appropriating such knowledges without due credit" (p. 2). Moreover, actions are evaluated and assumptions are made based on assumed shared practices. Ways of being are expansive and often invisible, as culture is something we are raised in and cannot always discern. Practices include, but are not limited to, body language, communication, community organization, decision-making structures, societal roles, nature of relationships, patterns of work, and other elemental aspects of society. Through colonial movements we have been trained to view Western culture as either neutral or the standard we should all embody, and the criteria through which we are evaluated. Similar to the first aspect of colonization, the expectation is not that we should remove or demean Western traditions, but that we make space for other cultural practices to be recognized as equally relevant and human. Again, decolonizing is adding and not removing.

Third Component of Decolonization

The final aspect of decolonization is dismantling assumptions of White supremacy. It is commonplace for educators to bristle at the term White supremacy, thinking we are referring to White supremacists. White supremacists are those who intentionally, overtly, and often violently uphold White supremacy, whereas White supremacy is creating hierarchy of races and ways of being. In this article I rely on Bell et al.'s (2016) definition of White supremacy, which claims that "this belief system holds that white people, white culture, and things associated to whiteness are superior to those of other racial groups" (p. 138), and that "unlike overt white supremacist groups, this racial ideology may be unexamined

and unconscious" (p. 138). I have witnessed defensive reactions countless times during keynotes, where audience members folded their arms or visibly resisted when introduced to the concept, or approached me after the talk to negotiate the application of a new term that feels less incendiary to them. However, it is essential to recognize the unconscious, systemic, and pervasive ways in which society has been conditioned to perpetuate White supremacy. Moving away from solely defining White supremacy by the violent, intentional, and overt factions we see in media representations acknowledges the vast majority of White supremacy that occurs through normalized and unintentional acts of lowered expectations, assumptions, ignoring, and avoiding (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

To give an example of everyday acts of White supremacy, we only need look to most mainstream education systems in Canada. When I completed high school in the late 90s in northern British Columbia, the content was based on the White experience and perspective. History was viewed through the eyes of White Canadians and Western Europeans, and literature came from their lived experience. Moreover, we communicated using Western norms, more-or-less applied Christian morality in a secular school, and completely disregarded other cultures' experiences, pedagogical or curricular norms, and ways of being. Moreover, this went completely unexamined and mostly unrecognized, modelling for us the acceptance or expectation of rejection or disregarding of non-White experiences and cultures. Through practice the schools implicitly stated, "This is the stuff that is important and valuable (White experiences), and this is the stuff that is not (everything else)." Taken a step further, schools tell you the knowledge necessary to flourish in the world. Despite growing up in communities that were more than one-third Indigenous, none of the knowledges in school represented my community. Recent ministerial mandates have required a senior level Indigenous course in the graduate requirements guidelines in British Columbia, which is a tacit recognition that in 2023 there remained an absence of Indigenous Knowledges and representation in mainstream schooling.

An additional description of this aspect of colonization is found in an article by Poitras Pratt et al. (2018) and contends that "in order to pursue decolonization, we must also untangle the complex web of internalized oppression created by colonization. Furthermore, decolonization requires the colonizer to recognize and challenge their own socialized presumptions of superiority" (p. 5). The two sections of this quote address White supremacy first for the colonized and then the colonizers. For the colonized, they need to challenge the ways in which they have been socialized and constantly bombarded with

messaging that they are inferior to White folks, that their ways of being are uncivilized and primitive, and that they, both individually and collectively, have not contributed—nor have anything to contribute—to "civilized" society. For the colonizers, they must question their ingrained assumptions of superiority, which are often unconscious but no less harmful. Since these assumptions are not conscious or overt, many believe they are not subjected to them. However, research has shown that internalized dominance is pervasive and that we do not treat everyone the same, as we often believe and claim (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Examining colonization of the mind in greater depth allows a consideration of what is counted as valid sources of knowledge in modern society. Theories of knowledge, or epistemologies, relate through a given discipline or society the legitimate sources of knowledge. In Canadian society Indigenous folks are often not counted as legitimate sources of knowledge (Battiste, 2011). Moreover, their systems for creating and conferring knowledge are delegitimized and razed, and their sources of knowledge are repudiated as mystical, unscientific, and unsophisticated. Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2010) identifies epistemologies as "the knowledge nested within the social relations of knowledge production" (p. 41). Building on Kovach's contention, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leeanne Simpson states that, "This knowledge might come to us from relationships, experiences, story-telling, dreaming, participating in ceremonies, from the Elders, the oral tradition, experimentation, observation, from our children, or from teachers in the plant and animal world" (2001, p. 142). The delegitimization of Indigenous Knowledges and ways of being serves as the justification for the devaluing and silencing of Indigenous peoples that perpetuates cycles of marginalization and harm.

The delegitimization of Indigenous epistemologies or sources of knowledge aligns with all three components of colonization, since it diminishes Indigenous perspectives, requires us to align our ways of being with dominant cultures, and is based upon an assumption of White supremacy. Dehumanizing Indigenous people and delegitimizing Indigenous Knowledges justifies usurping Indigenous lands and the oppressive supervision of Indigenous people.

The previous paragraphs highlight the necessity of intentionality when differentiating between Western or colonial. The pernicious and nefarious histories of colonization warrant serious consideration before branding any practice as part of such a harmful legacy. Building from the established definition, a shift to engaging with Indigenous, allies, and scholars of Colour to find guidance in our approach to decolonizing is necessary.

Decolonizing Scholars on Colonial vs. Western

An examination of decolonizing scholars from diverse fields of study and backgrounds finds tangential references to the ideas presented in this article. However, it does not occur with explicit comparisons between Western and colonial, but instead by sharing statements that I contend are challenging our methods of anti-oppression, recognizing the validity of Western traditions in decolonizing movements, and unpacking notions of colonization. Decolonizing scholars can direct our thinking on this complex topic, while challenging assumptions of problematizing Western ways of knowing as a foundation of decolonizing projects.

Dei and Jaimungal (2018) discuss the legitimacy of Western perspectives and ways of knowing:

> To be clear, we do not refute claims that western intellectual traditions are relevant or useful to understanding the world today. No knowledge system offers a complete understanding of the world. … The problem, as we see it, is the assumed dominance, supremacy, and legitimacy of western knowledge that works to oppress, suppress—and delegitimize—other ways of knowing, thinking, being, living, and imagining. (p. 3)

Contrary to critics of social justice, the work of decolonization is not based upon problematizing the West or Whiteness. Instead, it is problematizing the "assumed dominance, supremacy, and legitimacy of western knowledges" (Dei & Jaimungal, 2018, p. 3), not the knowledges themselves. When envisioning the West we must decouple cultural norms from the imposition of said norms.

Battiste (2019) claims that in Canada, colonization "has racialized Aboriginal peoples' identity, marginalized and delegitimized their knowledge and languages." (p. 106). Moreover, perceiving the work of decolonization as "disrupting those normalized discourses and singularities and allowing diverse voices and perspectives and objectives into 'mainstream' schooling" (p. 107). The singular voice is acknowledged as a key danger of colonization, limiting our exposure to a single perspective that claims to represent the voice and experiences of all people. Decolonial interventions then would not seek to dismiss all Euro-Western cultural practices as inherently problematic, but to recognize them as one amongst many legitimate perspectives and sources of knowledge. Extending

this work beyond cosmetic changes demands not only challenging perspectives, but also recognizing power disparity is present where such oppression can emerge in the first place, and our work in decolonization both addressing the symptoms and the root causes of power and control.

Brazilian critical scholar Paolo Freire cautions advocates of social justice to resist merely turning the tables of colonization: "In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity … become in turn the oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of humanity of both" (2010, p. 44). The dehumanization that emerges from unequal power relations in colonization can understandably lead the oppressed to become critical of the entire culture from which their oppression is born. Fanon (1961/2004) reminds us of the tendency of the colonized person to imagine wielding power: "We have seen that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler—not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler" (p. 51). Maintaining our goals of decolonization is a commitment to ridding ourselves of the teachings of colonization, while resisting the adoption of colonial values as a tool of our emancipation.

This does not mean refraining from loudly criticizing the ways Western structures and individuals in society have wielded power and used their social positioning to oppress. If a foundation of teaching in movements of reconciliation is decolonization and the recognition of diverse ways of knowing is legitimate and important, then hypocrisy can be resisted by refusing to turn around and practice the colonial tradition of diminishing the cultural knowledges of those outside of our own community. On this journey we must question or pursue the separation of Western cultural traditions from the systems of oppression wielded by Western society. There are reasonable questions that challenge the potential of untangling Western cultural practices from systems of colonization, and honestly, this is not the work of colonized people, or this article. Instead, what I am advocating for is the maintenance of our anti-oppressive teachings on our pathway of decolonization and the resistance of wielding colonial tools of discrediting and delegitimizing knowledge systems. Perhaps some of the future work of Settler scholars and practitioners, on our pathway to reconciliation, is to consider how to disentangle their ways of knowing from systems and mechanism that have granted them unearned privilege and power in society.

Differentiating between Colonial and Western

Concepts of Time

At a Canadian studies conference in Iceland, I bore witness to an example that later clarified the difference between colonial and Western culture. The conference was chaired by a Scandinavian academic who graciously welcomed the visiting scholars, provided preparations for the upcoming days, and imparted a hint of cultural knowledge to accompany us into the conference proceedings. We learned that Scandinavian cultures practice a strict adherence to time. Events start precisely as advertised and take up no more time than has been set aside. In reflection, much later, I considered the complex web of culture that allows this relationship with time to make sense amidst countless other practices, protocols, theories of knowledge, geographical spaces, family relations, patterns of work, and relationships to reality.

Conversely, when I lived in northern Uganda there was an entirely dissimilar relationship to time. Meeting times or schedules were flexible and approximate. Much like the Scandinavian example, relationships with time in Ugandan culture made sense within their complex cultural framework, which included geography, transportation, familial and community relationships, work schedules, and immeasurable aspects of cultural norms that govern formal and informal practices.

Indigenous Knowledges are often dismissed and devalued in ways that perpetuate colonization. Internalized oppression and constant socialization into colonial mindsets have led Indigenous and other oppressed people to collude with stereotypical perspectives. For instance, in Uganda I routinely heard Black folks insist on meeting schedules that did not adhere to "African time" (Babalola & Alokan, 2013). Similarly, in my youth I witnessed Indigenous people from my community pejoratively refer to running on "Indian time" (Chisholm Hatfield et al., 2018). Indigenous relationships to time, or myriad other Indigenous Knowledges, are misconstrued through stereotypical assumptions of laziness or primativeness, instead of as part of an elegant web of culture. Since colonization infects with an unconscious assumption of White supremacy, whenever discrepancies are encountered between Western and Indigenous cultures, our default is to interpret differences as deficiency in Indigenous ways of being.

When considering Scandinavian relationships to time, it is important to remain conscious not to misunderstand cultural tradition as a colonial practice without deeper investigation. Often, I witness White colleagues in Canada branding anything Western as being colonial, which is essentially problematizing any cultural practice stemming from Western or European traditions, since the term "colonial" justifiably holds a negative connotation. Western Knowledges and norms are, of course, reasonable expressions of humanity, whether we talk about strict adherence to time or other more nuanced cultural expressions. Cultural knowledge transforms into colonial tools when, from a standpoint of power or dominance, we impose said practices on those outside of our community and position our practice, or way of being, as the only or superior way, and therefore reinforce the dominant position. In our Scandinavian conference example, a number of explanations emerge as to why a strict adherence with time in this context is cultural expression and not a colonial practice.

First, the conference organizer led the teaching by identifying a strict adherence to time as a cultural value fixed in his community. A colonial practice is not typically identified as rooted in a specific culture, rather an assumption of shared universal value or practice. For example, if we think of the capitalist or consumerist values that are embedded in systems of Western schooling (Gerrard et al., 2022), we recognize an absence of conversation or interrogation of their inclusion. In these instances, there is either an assumed or demanded adherence to the same values without acknowledging the cultural and ideological influences. At the conference, a strict adherence to time was named as a cultural practice, which acknowledges diverse human experiences.

Second, a strict adherence was not positioned as the superior method of relating to time. Much like visiting friends and playing house rules in a familiar card game, we open ourselves up to practices untethered from our norms when spending time outside of the familiar confines of our families, friend groups, and culture. We do not envision our house rules as the standard, but recognize flourishes and structures unique to our context, which add to our pleasure and competition. The conference organizer did not enter into a diatribe about disrespecting time and position differing relationships as faulty. Instead, they were naming localized cultural values fit for the conference proceedings. Euro-Canadian scholar Linda Goulet and Nehinuw scholar Keith Goulet (2014) contend that "European thinkers ignored empirical evidence that did not reinforce their constructed stereotypes of Indigenous people" (p. 37). The positioning of Indigenous Knowledges as

impoverished in comparison to Western culture is a hallmark of colonization, which was conspicuously avoided in the approach used at the Icelandic conference.

Clear harms arise when norms and practices are taken from the context in which they elegantly fit amongst the complex fabric of culture and imposed upon a community with their own established ways of being. In this instance, one does not need significant imagination to comprehend the problems that would arise by imposing Ugandan relationships to time in a Scandinavian community, which would result in immediate and downstream disruption of norms. Colonization imposed a wide array of Western cultural practices that disrupted Indigenous livelihoods, one of which is understood through the example of relationships to time. Thinking back to the discussion of looking beyond the abusive components of residential schooling, we can begin to appreciate the long-term implications of intentional and intensive interventions that forced ways of being upon Indigenous children.

The Indian Act

The Indian Act is the foundational document of the modern colonial system in Canada. Both in overt aspects, since it is the primary system designed to control Indigenous people and their lands (Joseph, 2018), and through insidious ways it is colonial due to impositions of criteria for establishing who is an Indian. At the inception, and current iterations, of the document Indian status was not based upon Indigenous community systems for conferring belonging, like the balhats system in my community (Fiske & Patrick, 2000). Instead, Indigenous people were expected to abide by Western systems of belonging or taxonomy, with identity passed through the paternal lineages, and a litany of professions, educational opportunities, voting rights, or free movement, disqualifying Indian status (Monchalin, 2016). Moreover, contemporary Canadian systems of conferring identity continue to disregard Indigenous input and perspective. The Daniels Decision (Magnet, 2017) acknowledges Métis status to anyone who can prove Indigenous ancestry that fails to meet the ancestry requirements of Indian status. This occurs without the recognition or agreement of the Métis Nation.

The Indian Act, in this case, is both the primary tool of colonization and also within the tool contains a secondary imposition of cultural practices. If we reflect upon the differences from cultural to colonial practices, let us think of this example. The Wes-

tern practice of democratic voting need not be colonial depending on the context. Within appropriate cultural spaces or shared consent, democratic voting should be without colonial implications. However, in the Indian Act, the chief and council system imposed upon Indigenous people contained elements of community democracy based upon Western voting practices. The imposition of Western democratic traditions in Indigenous spaces that have their own histories of complex and functioning democratic principles (Crowshoe & Manneschmidt, 2002; Fiske & Patrick, 2000) mutates what was once a cultural knowledge (democratic voting) into a colonial practice (imposition of the chief and council system).

In discussions of democratic voting practices we cease from identifying them as colonial full stop, but should in the instance of chief and council systems. Clearly, this is a simplification of differentiations between Western systems of government and colonial systems. Western democratic systems are inextricably linked with colonization, since they are the mechanisms through which colonization has been achieved. The imposition of Western democratic principles that harmed, marginalized, and oppressed Indigenous people can be impossible to distinguish from a colonial process. However, in this theoretical example, there are spaces where the same democratic systems can be a cultural practice, just not in the Canadian context where they have eclipsed and destroyed functioning Indigenous systems that pre-dated them. Moreover, democratic voting is only one in the litany of examples inside the Indian Act of imposing cultural norms on Indigenous communities. However, are we recognizing how the same practice can be either cultural or colonial depending on the context? Moreover, by differentiating between the two practices we hone our skills in discerning between cultural knowledge and colonial practices.

Colonizer or Settler?

Akin to misconceptions of colonial and Western is confusing the characterization of Settler. In discussions I have witnessed recurring practices of non-Indigenous folks assuming Settler denoted a negative connotation. Much like identifying everything Western as colonial, it is harmful to indistinguishably position Settler as colonizer. Monchalin (2016) states that:

> Settler colonialism happens when "foreign family units move into a place and reproduce" and …. Eventually settlers take over lands and attempt to

> destroy the people who live there. This form of colonialism involves master narratives forming the settlers as "superior" and as representative of so-called progress and civilization. (p. 71)

Venturing to remove colonialism from the Settler in this description, what remains? In this context Settler is recognized as the "foreign family units [who] move into a place and reproduce" (Monchalin, 2016, p. 71). Colonialism is the component that aspires to dominate people and lands and positions oneself as superior. In my experiences in multiple communities, I have witnessed Indigenous people being good hosts and receptive to foreign family units settling on their traditional territory. What remains unacceptable are the colonial components that destroy lands and position Settlers as superior, while failing to acknowledge the unceded and stolen lands on which they prosper. When positioning oneself as a Settler, we need not reproduce the negative legacy of the colonizer if we are intentional in our actions. By claiming Settler status, we must be conscious to avoid imposing ways of knowing, assuming dominance and control, and positioning ourselves as superior or agents of progress, which have been rampant in previous generations of Settlers.

In, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada*, Settler scholars Lowman and Barker (2015) engage with the complexity of claiming or refuting Settler identities:

> *Settler.* This word voices relationships to structures and processes in Canada today, to histories of our peoples on this land, to Indigenous peoples, and to our own day-to-day choices and actions. *Settler.* This word turns us toward uncomfortable realisations, difficult subjects, and potential complicity in systems of dispossession and violence. *Settler.* This word represents a tool, a way of understanding and choosing to act differently. A tool we can use to confront the problems and injustices in Canada today. *Settler.* Is analytical, personal, and uncomfortable. It can be an identity that we claim or deny, but that we inevitably live or embody. It is who we are, as people, on these lands. (p. 2)

Lowman and Barker's (2015) definition unearths the vast discrepancies between what Settlers have been historically and the potential of the future. In claiming Settler identity, a reckoning with history associated with previous generations and current enactments of

colonization is imperative, even if someone is a first-generation Canadian. Colonial legacies must be understood but need not direct future generations of Settlers who can heed calls to choose to act differently. Settler is a complicated term, but an identity that is alive and always forming. Challenging the colonial underpinnings of Settler and Indigenous relationships is one of the pathways of redemption of the Settler identity. Settlers must intentionally interrogate their own practices, ways of thinking, and systems that have granted them unearned power and privilege to eradicate the insidious colonial agenda and attend to generations of harm.

Previous sections highlighted the mechanism through which Western cultural knowledge becomes colonial practices through acts of imposition. Similarly, the Settler becomes colonizer through acts of superiority and control. By claiming Settler status the new generations, conscious of colonial legacies, can be intentional in their relinquishing of power, superiority, and control to renew the Settler identity in Canada.

Conclusion

In courses I have collaborated to design in both K–12 and post-secondary contexts, a consistent criticism used to reject reconciliatory efforts through equity, diversity and inclusion, and decolonization, is that we are dividing students and problematizing Whiteness. These criticisms emerge without an examination of the curriculum or insight into the courses. While this article may read as theoretical differentiation between two terms, clarity around this topic has substantial practical implications in the pursuit of reconciliation or social justice programming. It would be fair to anticipate a level of pushback in any social justice-focused program from folks holding on to privilege, but we can limit resistance to those opposed to concepts of equity by clearly stating our intentions of ensuring human rights and differentiating between how we recognize colonial and Western. Moreover, we can clarify that the work of reconciliation and decolonization is not based on the removal of Western ways of being, but de-centring, acknowledging hegemonic structures, and attending to the harms of centuries of colonization.

The goals of decolonization are to expand whose story and truth matters, the ways of knowing and being that are represented in society, and the disruption of centuries of White supremacy. While the aim of this work, challenging misunderstandings and misappropriation of the term colonial, is only a small fraction of the change we are

working toward, my theory of change is incremental and not revolutionary. Change happens through hundreds, if not thousands, of small projects, teachings, and approaches that gain momentum until a critical mass is formed. There is cause for optimism in the critical mass that has formed over the last generation that has led Canadians to face difficult histories and invest in the challenging work of reconciliation. Progress is neither linear nor assured. Those pursuing reconciliation are required to remain vigilant and challenge ourselves to push societal understanding and approaches to healing. In refining the conceptualization of reconciliation and decolonization, a common language is established through which we can push together and get slightly closer to a society that recognizes Indigenous people in circles of mutual respect.

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