



# Settler Education: Acknowledgement, Self-Location, and Settler Ethics in Teaching and Learning

Scott Kouri

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Article abstract

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## **SETTLER EDUCATION: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, SELF-LOCATION, AND SETTLER ETHICS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

**Scott Kouri**

**Abstract:** This paper begins with a critical exploration, from the location of a settler, of how land acknowledgements and practices of self-location function in child and youth care teaching and learning. I critically examine settler practices of acknowledgement, self-location, appropriation, consciousness-raising, and allyship. I use the concepts of settler ethics and responsibilities to underline the importance of accountability in child and youth care pedagogy. I argue that settlers have a responsibility to take action within the challenging ethical landscape of teaching and learning within the settler colonial context. My overall aim is to contribute to the critical and decolonizing literature in child and youth care from the location of a settler educator and child and youth care practitioner.

**Keywords:** child and youth care, youth work, settler colonialism, teaching and learning, ethics, pedagogy, identity, acknowledgements, self-location

**Scott Kouri** is an instructor in the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, 3800 Finnerty Road, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2. Email: [skouri@uvic.ca](mailto:skouri@uvic.ca)

### ***Territorial and Relational Acknowledgements***

I begin by acknowledging that I write from the location of a settler living on the territories of the Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples. I acknowledge that they, and other Coast and Straits Salish peoples, are the first and rightful inhabitants of the lands and waters that are now called South Vancouver Island, Georgia Strait, Juan de Fuca Strait, and Puget Sound. More than 20 distinct First Nations currently live in this area and their stories recount their continuous occupation here since the land was created. I acknowledge that historical and ongoing colonization has devastated many Indigenous communities in what amounts to genocide. I acknowledge that settlers like myself are responsible, individually and as a group, for the violence and oppression Indigenous people have suffered and continue to suffer. Settler colonialism is a particularly brutal form of colonialism “in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). I understand that settlers, including myself, are not guests or visitors on these territories but have illegally and violently made a home on Indigenous land. Ongoing colonization, particularly in its current relationship with the neoliberal state and global capitalism, is inseparable from my current way of life, the academic institutions I work within, and the governments that administer Canadian society.

The University of Victoria, where I have studied and taught, and written this paper, is a colonial structure built on stolen lands of the Lekwungen peoples (Cheryl Bryce, 2018, personal communication). Our programs privilege dominant Western knowledge and our academic relationships are saturated in power relations structured by colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and racism (McCaffrey, 2011). It is through the painstaking work of Indigenous teachers, students, and community members, such as Cheryl Bryce, Lands Manager for the Songhees First Nations, and Shanne McCaffrey, Cree Métis faculty in child and youth care, that our individual and collective consciousness is raised. In such a context, I am humbled by my Indigenous friends, teachers, students, and mentors who have been generous and patient with me as I come to be aware of my own colonial past. I am specifically indebted to my teachers and colleagues in child and youth care and particularly want to acknowledge my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Sandrina de Finney. Much of my learning has come from the oral and relational teachings that she has shared with me during my graduate studies. Dr. de Finney has germinated and nurtured many of my academic contributions and particularly what is contained in this paper. The trust and commitment she has shown me far outweigh my ability to acknowledge them within the strictures of academic style. Settler academics, including myself, have an enormous responsibility to find practices of transparency and accountability to balance the generosity shown to them by Indigenous teachers, supervisors, and colleagues.

My experiences with Indigenous peoples, families, and communities I have met through my counselling work have also shaped me, my practice, and this paper. The ideas that I have developed

for this paper were influenced by my experiences as a counsellor with Penelakut Tribe. I acknowledge the oral, relational, and emotional labour of those who helped guide my practice and worked with me. I am particularly grateful to my friend and mentor James Charlie, a Penelakut Elder who spent years introducing me to his community and supervising my work as a counsellor. My hope is that this paper extends what I learned in ways that help to bring other settler people into better relationships with Indigenous peoples.

To be accountable to Indigenous peoples means, for me, to interrupt colonial erasures and to subject myself and the practice of child and youth care — both saturated in colonialism — to criticism. For too long, child and youth care teaching and learning has recapitulated settler colonial values and practices. For example, child and youth care ethics have often been framed in highly individual or philosophic terms, neglecting the social contexts of practice (Kouri, 2015a; Saraceno, 2012). Analyses of settler colonialism and the voices of Indigenous peoples are consistently absent from child and youth care courses and literatures that purport to prepare students for practice. To challenge these omissions means centring Indigenous people's work as well as challenging other settlers to undo our habits of ignorance and violence. My view of this profound commitment has been that undoing settler colonialism will require a variety of approaches, not the least of which is establishing collaborative relationships between Indigenous people and settlers. Part of my learning has been to respect the space that Indigenous people need in order to decolonize (Coon et al., 2016). Another has been to actively seek out and participate in relationships that defy the colonial mandates — relationships in which Indigenous knowledge is privileged and I take on the work of listening, studying, and extending our mutual understanding of the need to undo colonial power.

### *Aims and Structure of this Paper*

With respect to settler colonial relations to land and life, the question of the aims and approaches of teaching child and youth care is pertinent. This paper brings together critical literatures on identity, decolonization, and child and youth care praxis to rethink the politics and ethics of teaching and learning child and youth care. The purpose of this paper is to critically grapple with the concepts and practices of acknowledgement, self-location, and appropriation from the location of a settler. First, I contextualize ethics within contemporary colonialism and explore practices of self-location and territorial acknowledgement to identify ethical tensions particular to settlers. I then engage with the concepts of consciousness-raising, citational practice, and allyship to explore how settlers have challenged and can challenge settler colonialism and support Indigenous people. Throughout the paper, I argue that settlers have a responsibility to take action within the troubled and thorny ethical landscape of learning and teaching child and youth care within the settler colonial context. My overall aim is to contribute to the critical and decolonizing literature on learning and teaching in child and youth care from the location of a settler.

### *Settler Ethics*

By foregrounding challenges, contradictions, and ongoing manifestations of settler colonialism, I attempt to outline the ethical dimensions of child and youth care pedagogy. Ethics, in this sense, is not only about providing a moral compass, values statement, or codified approach to decision making that would help ground a professional identity or practice. Instead, I also use ethics as a troubling site for critically reevaluating our practices, investments, knowledges, and who we are as settler people (White, 2007; White et al., 2017). By applying decolonizing critique, I aim to map settler colonial influence in child and youth care pedagogy, explore approaches to teaching and learning, and challenge notions of a straightforwardly ethical praxis.

Settler ethics, for me, means taking my own location as a mixed-race White male settler as the starting point and attempting to undo the overlay of colonialism that continues to impose contradictions between my present self and a more ethical life. Many of the reflections I share regarding teaching and learning in child and youth care come from years as a student, instructor, and counsellor. Some reflections come from learnings I received from clients about how colonialism and capitalism cause harm in their lives. Many reflections underscore how I benefit in many ways by the racialized, gendered, and colonial systems that perpetuate the very harms I work to address. While such experiences bring up guilt and shame, they also bring heightened awareness and greater motivation towards ethical practice. In this way, engaging with young people, families, and communities has been an opportunity to open myself to an ongoing process of change. Benefitting from such experiences in terms of payment and educational and career advancement is problematic, and I try here to engage with this problem by making it visible and trying to open conversations about it in child and youth care classrooms and literatures.

Settler ethics for me, therefore, is about scrutinizing how my positionality informs my research and how my affects and emotions (desire, guilt, denial, shame, hope, and love), interests, and investments are involved in knowledge generation and action. Part of the work in sharing this approach with other settlers is to buffer some of the backlash that predictably arises as we confront our complicity in colonialism. For too long, the weight of educating settlers about colonialism has fallen on Indigenous people, along with the brutal reactions, such as denial, anger, pity, and heroisms (White saviour and social justice warrior complexes, etc.) that such consciousness-raising entails. Settler ethics therefore includes discussing, accounting for, disrupting, analyzing, unsettling, and challenging settler identities and knowledge. It means developing new practices of pedagogy, supervision, solidarity, and peer collaboration (Kouri & Smith, 2016; Reynolds, 2010a). It includes working towards new ways that child and youth care students and educators can undo our heteronormative, patriarchal, racial, class, and colonial attachments. What is required, I believe, is a settler ethics that is connected to context, responsible in relationship, and accountable to those from whom their learning comes. My hope is that these deliberations help to develop the ethical coordinates for undoing the settler subject's grip on the land, knowledge, and bodies of those who have been on this land for millennia.

### *Settler Colonial Contexts*

The land that is currently known as Canada has been the home of Indigenous peoples for millennia. Cindy Blackstock (2003), Gitksan scholar and director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, explained that although there is significant diversity amongst the cultures, societies, and language groups that make up First Nations and Inuit peoples, “They are all bound together by a perspective that supports a holistic interdependent worldview, communal rights and a commitment to sustainable decision making” (p. 3). Over thousands of years, Indigenous peoples across the continent of North America, known to some of them as Turtle Island, developed complex and functional systems of politics, economics, education, health, and spirituality (Chansonneuve, 2005). Although anthropological and prehistoric evidence demonstrates that cultures and societies were being established well over 10,000 years ago in Turtle Island, Indigenous peoples have a number of creation stories to account for their own history and origins (Chansonneuve, 2005; Watts, 2013). Prior to European contact, the ethnically and linguistically diverse Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island were independent, yet had “established intricate systems of political and commercial alliances among themselves” (Henry et al., 2000, p. 134).

Although the first contact that Indigenous peoples had with Europeans is usually traced to John Cabot’s meeting with the Beothuk people or the voyages of Christopher Columbus, Henry et al. (2000) explained that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have had contact for over a thousand years and that these contacts can be classified into four distinct periods. The first period includes intermittent contact between Indigenous peoples and Europeans, such as the Norse and the Basque, starting in about 1000 CE, and a sustained European presence from the end of the 15th century until the 18th century. Henry et al. characterized this period as one of mutual tolerance and respect, with some exceptions. The second period began in the 18th century, propelled by French and English battles for imperial supremacy in North America. It was marked by the formation of trading and military alliances, as well as increased conflict and death. Indigenous peoples suffered enormous population declines as European diseases spread across the continent, while at the same time the European population grew with increased immigration and settlement. The displacement and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is indicative of the third period of Indigenous–European relations, which occurred at different times across the continent. The third period is “marked by a continuing saga of expropriation, exclusion, discrimination, coercion, subjugation, oppression, deficit, theft, appropriation, and extreme regulation” (Henry et al., 2000, p. 120).

The fourth period, which continues today, is described by Henry et al. (2000) as distinguished by negotiations and renewal. Following the end of World War II, the authors explained, public awareness and Indigenous political mobilization increased in response to the ongoing racist attitudes and policies directed towards Indigenous peoples. Today, these mounting tensions between the colonial state and Indigenous nations can be seen in protests against radical environmental extractivism (Preston, 2017), targeted attacks on Indigenous women and girls (de Finney, 2014), and legal actions within state frameworks, processes, and courts (Coulthard, 2009).

Furthermore, Vanessa Watts (2013) showed that settler colonialism also includes epistemological contexts that mark out difference through knowledge paradigms, often with the effect of delegitimizing Indigenous knowledge, practices, and cosmology. Indeed, as Tuck and Yang (2012) explained, in settler colonial contexts,

land is what is most valuable, contested, required, both because settlers have made Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. (p. 5)

This passage reminds us of three things: first, colonialism is about land; second, colonialism is ongoing; and third, colonialism has consequences for knowledge and for who we are as people. Tuck and Yang (2012) stated that “decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 1). Furthermore, they argued that any movement, regardless of its utopian, critical, or socially just aims, may be incommensurable — may share no common ground — with decolonization if Indigenous futures and sovereignty without a settler state are not at the forefront. Particularly, they reject settler attempts to reconcile guilt and complicity through metaphorizing decolonization or appropriating it within other critical, liberal, or social justice work. According to Tuck and Yang, settler colonialism is first and foremost the theft and occupation of Indigenous land.

In an era of Indigenous resurgence, it is the responsibility of settlers to find new ways of relating to Indigenous people and to one another. For too long, discussions about colonialism have been met with empty apologies, backlash, appropriation of the other’s pain and culture, and ambiguous relationships in the name of allyship. As settlers, we need to take actions that support Indigenous people in their efforts to create material change, a practice not always foregrounded in discourses on decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012), particularly in child and youth care where ahistorical and apolitical portrayals of children, families, and communities are still ubiquitous. While practices of self-location and territorial acknowledgements are fraught with contradictions, developing an ethical space of deliberation will hopefully move us past our blind collusion with colonialism and better prepare us and our settler students for decolonizing child and youth care education.

### ***Settler-Location***

In my undergraduate education in child and youth care at the University of Victoria, self-location was used as a tool for teaching students to recognize that identity is situated in structures of social privilege and power. Self-location was combined with Indigenous teachings regarding the importance of understanding both one’s own ancestral land-based history and the histories that one’s ancestors participated in that relate to the lands one now lives on. I now better understand how the ideas I held before entering the program were inextricably tied to systems, discourses, and practices that marginalized other people and ways of knowing and living. Throughout my



education, and even more poignantly as I began to practise as a counsellor, I was confronted with complex dilemmas related to my social location and ways of knowing. Now, as a graduate of child and youth care and an instructor, I have been further challenged by a generation of students seeking social justice through decolonization, economic and gender equity, anti-racism, and environmental sustainability. This paper takes self-location as a starting point to examine child and youth care pedagogy and praxis and articulate some of the challenges and possibilities of teaching and learning from a critically informed and socially located perspective.

The act of positioning oneself follows a feminist politics of location that understands knowledge and identity as always situated, embodied, and intersected by power (Braidotti, 2011; McIntosh, 1988). Self-location relates to the embeddedness of identity within local and global political, economic, and social systems that structure experiences of oppression, discrimination, power, and privilege. Identity factors that impact experience, especially those of privilege and oppression, include, but are not limited to, gender, skin colour, race, age, caste, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion, ability and health, culture, socioeconomic class, geographic location, citizen status (migrant, immigrant, displaced, refugee), Indigeneity, and education level (Association for Woman's Rights in Development, 2004). Locating oneself or becoming visible (Skott-Myhre, 2006) as a White settler is a practice of making power and its functions transparent, and thus available for analysis and contestation.

Within settler colonialism, Whiteness is a central organizing discourse that structures relations of power including epistemological supremacy and material inequality. McIntosh (1988) argued that White individuals benefit from systematic privilege rooted in histories of racism and exploitation. Frankenberg (1993), furthermore, explained that “white people are not required to explain to others how ‘white’ culture works, because ‘white’ culture is the dominant culture that sets the norms. Everybody else is then compared to that norm” (p. 21). White supremacy is often invisible in its more insidious structural forms, and its functioning is invisible in particular to White people, while painfully obvious to many racialized people. Alan Lawson (1995) argued that locating the settler subject is an ethical and political necessity in that it challenges a “self-serving forgetting of the entangled agency of one’s history as a subject with that of the displaced Native/colonized subject” (p. 20). In many ways, Whiteness and coloniality are ubiquitous, which makes them difficult to criticize, particularly for White settlers.

White supremacy and Eurocentric assumptions underlie many traditional models of child and youth care. National curricula and practice standards are grounded in assumptions of individualism, meritocracy, objectivity, and cultural essentialism, and they generally do not represent or respond to the realities and experiences of diverse populations (de Finney et al., 2011; Yoon, 2012). Critical research in child and youth care (e.g., de Finney, 2010; di Tomasso, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007) suggests that practice approaches that conceptualize and respond to differential experiences of inequity related to identity, political, and sociocultural factors are important for improving practitioner responsiveness to Indigenous, racialized, visible minority, immigrant, and marginalized children and youth. Preparing students for such work would require



a deconstruction of child and youth care theories and values steeped in colonization and Eurocentrism, and a curricular commitment to approaches that value Indigenous knowledge and practices. Locating oneself, therefore, is an essential first step in critiquing the power which underlies White settlers' continued dominance in the areas of defining the field, elaborating practice theories and approaches, and having leadership roles in teaching and learning.

As a child and youth care practitioner and educator, I occupy the position of a White settler. I am middle-class, home-owning, employed, educated, able-bodied, cisgender, straight, married, and a father of three boys. Through these social locations, I have access to power and privilege. I have, for example, always been able to easily access education, work, and health care; I am not racially profiled in my daily activities (walking, shopping, driving, etc.); I can travel freely with a Canadian passport; and I have not been subjected to racial, gender, or class discrimination. As an educator and counsellor, my voice is imbued with expertise, my pronouncements are credited with a high degree of truth, and my words have a power that is independent of their content. I have never been subjected to formal assessments of my parenting or been threatened with the apprehension of my children. I have always had access to food, shelter, and clothing.

As I work and write on colonized lands, my identity as a settler person whose family is part of the waves of immigration and land occupation from Europe and the Middle East is undeniable. Who I am as a student and educator has been shaped by this history, and it is one of my ethical practices of accountability to acknowledge my identity and be visible in terms of my role in the continued occupation of Indigenous territory in North America. As a third-generation Lebanese–English White-skinned settler living and working on Coast Salish territories, I recognize historical and contemporary colonialism's insidious functioning as well as Indigenous people's continued resistance. Specifically, I have lived on the traditional and unceded territories and waterways of the Songhees, WSÁNEĆ, and T'Sou-ke peoples for nearly 20 years as well as worked with peoples of the Esquimalt, Pacheedaht, Lyackson, Stz'uminus, and Penelakut nations on their lands. I recognize that historic and ongoing colonization is foundational to Canadian nation building and settler life here (Kouri, 2015b).

Canadian educational, governmental, and social systems construct settler privilege and power upon ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples — peoples whose cultures, lands, and languages were systematically undermined in efforts to appropriate and occupy these lands and steal their resources (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The intentional spread of disease, treachery and duplicity in treaty-making, and the direct use of military, carceral, and police violence that characterized nation building continue to operate through Canadian policy, decision making, and political force (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Prisons and death camps for children, euphemized as residential schools, were integral to the Canadian, Christian, and capitalist projects of genocide and land appropriation (Richardson & Nelson, 2007). The racism, classism, and sexism that accompanied Canadian colonial nation-building has, at this point, become the norm, and the languages, philosophies, beliefs, and histories of Euro-Western settlers the dominant ideology (Watts, 2013). Ongoing settler colonialism takes the form of child

apprehension practices, economic and resources extractivism, violence against Indigenous women and children, and the carceral system (de Finney et al., 2018).

### *Challenges of Territorial Acknowledgements*

Addressing the oppressions that are the foundation of settler society and subjectivity begins with the acknowledgement of Indigenous presence, history, and land. At an individual level, this process requires learning, self-reflection, and cultivating living relationships. At institutional levels, verbal acknowledgements of Indigenous territory vary greatly, from single rote and mispronounced sentences to acknowledgements arising from deeply cultivated relationships with local Elders and knowledge keepers. As a settler academic, my acknowledgements of Indigenous territory are troubled for a number of reasons, many of which perpetuate colonial relations to some degree. For example, we settler academics who now practise territorial acknowledgements simultaneously make colonialism visible and continue to appropriate what is not ours. The acknowledgement of territory is an Indigenous practice embedded in histories of peacemaking, alliance-building, and kinship systems (de Finney et al., 2017); for Indigenous peoples, the practice follows protocols situated in tradition. As settler people we now take up an acknowledgement and identification practice that was never ours; that is, we take something that is not ours in order to make visible the ongoing act of land theft and occupation. Territorial acknowledgements, in this way, illustrate a key axiom of colonialism: settler attempts to challenge or undo colonialism inevitably replicate it.

We might also, through our acknowledgements of territory and social location, be consciously or unconsciously attempting to move ourselves to a place of innocence by differentiating ourselves from less knowledgeable settlers (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Attempts at accountability through acknowledgements and positioning are never perfect, simple, or clean. As “visitors” and “guests” who will not leave, our practices of recognizing our settlement often more deeply ingrain it as we move ourselves to a place of less guilt and shame. Visitors and guests are often invited, bring gifts, act in accordance with the laws of the home community, and leave before their welcome is worn out. Euphemizing our violent settlement as visitation and finding ways of offering reconciliatory answers to calls for true decolonization adds further insult to a history of treachery and lies.

Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2016) critiqued recognition discourse, arguing that recognition of historical injustice, such as former Canadian prime minister Steven Harper attempted in his June 2008 “apology” for residential schools (Parrott, 2014), leaves open the possibility of interpreting past actions as innocent by making the truth of atrocity a revelation about the present. In Simpson’s analysis, Harper called the residential school system a “mistake” without naming the genocide that transpired or any criminal or political intent. Far from redressing settler colonialism, such forms of recognition obfuscate historical harms and obscure the ongoing dispossession and violence of colonialism. Simpson (2017) criticized the government’s position as a *fait accompli* and argued that settler narratives enact “notions of a fixed past and settled present” (p. 18).

Settler acknowledgements of Indigenous territory often gloss over nuanced aspects of Indigenous people's struggles for self-determination and internal tensions related to sovereignty. For example, in the territories I currently live in, there are conversations internal to Indigenous communities about cessation of rights or ceding of lands with regard to treaty negotiations. In classroom contexts, Settler educators, disconnected from this history of struggle, consistently make facile political statements, such as calling lands "unceded" or "treaty", without any awareness of the legal or political implications of these words. Other settlers use acknowledgements to silence actual conversations about decolonization and Indigenous rights. In classrooms and other educational spaces, acknowledgements seem at times to be no more than a ritualized preface to the "real work" of the meeting, giving settlers a token gesture to reference as a way of forestalling more focused or politicized discussions. Acknowledgements can, in this way, be used to say, "We've acknowledged colonialism already, we don't need to talk about this any more." Compared to a past where one could protest the erasure of coloniality from discourse, acknowledgements can provide settlers with a token claim that they are doing antiracist or decolonizing work. -Words alone can be unhelpful and even harmful if not supported by affective, ethical, political, and material transformation.

### ***Consciousness-Raising and Education***

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC; 2015) recommended changes in education so that young settler people could learn more than their parents did about colonization, the residential school system, and Indigenous cultures, peoples, and histories. Adult settler educators are now encouraged by the Canadian state and provincial education ministries to work with Indigenous people to update the public school curriculum to more accurately portray the history of colonization and Indigenous presence. As settler Canadians, however, many of us did not learn this history accurately, nor did we have any relationships with Indigenous people. We are being asked to educate without ourselves having done much work in attending to the affects or ethics of such practices. A recent study in Ontario, for example, showed that there are significant challenges in implementing Indigenous content in schools due to a lack of awareness of colonialism and Indigenous content, as well as within-school intimidation among settler educators (Milne, 2017). In summing up the implementation of the TRC recommendations, Cindy Blackstock (quoted in Forrest, 2017) said, "There's lots of good talk and not a lot of action in terms of translating those political statements into real change" (para. 8). While some work is being done on curriculum content and teacher training, the quality of the work is debatable at best, lacking any adequate analysis or plan for attending to the affects and cognitive dissonance produced by such education.

As settler Canadians become more aware of their own and Indigenous histories, there is a clear need for people working in human services to understand and translate powerful affects into new forms of ethics. Some scholars, such as Michael Asch (2014), believe that increased awareness might produce a more lawful citizen who relates meaningfully to treaty law and settler responsibilities. To overcome colonial relations, Asch argued, settlers must recognize themselves

as honourable people who can and must live according to the principle of law. To me, Asch underestimated both the potential backlash of settler people as they are challenged to confront their coloniality and, on the other end of the spectrum, the radical possibility of settlers undoing colonialism (Kouri, 2015). Other non-Indigenous authors (e.g., Fitzmaurice, 2010; Kouri & Skott-Myhre, 2016; Morgensen, 2011; Regan, 2010; Ritskes, 2013; Veracini, 2008) have contended that such a radical change, in which settlers participate in active decolonization, is possible. To approach such change, however, the systems of Whiteness, patriarchy, capitalism, and other facets of identity and power that contribute to settler hegemony must be confronted, and alternatives must be provided so that children, youth, and students do not feel immobilized by and further alienated from these debates.

Elaine Swan (2017) discussed the collective ignorance of Whiteness and suggested that praxis entails questioning epistemologies that sanction such ignorance; that is, “how our practices of knowing, unknowing and not knowing relate to racism and colonialism, and are motivated, deliberate and self-serving” (pp. 555–556). She suggested that challenging ignorance requires listening for distortions, omissions, and limitations in our knowledge. Understanding and undoing our entanglements with racialized and colonized others, including incongruences present in our epistemologies, provides opportunities for such analysis. Challenging collective ignorance and attending critically to the affects attendant on consciousness-raising will, it is hoped, help to dissipate the fragility that underlies Whiteness and its perpetuation (DiAngelo, 2011). Swan called for a praxis of listening that attends to accounts and analyses of racism and colonialism by minoritized peoples and recognizes their credibility. Such listening takes commitment and vulnerability, because Whiteness is structured to avoid the pain and responsiveness required in deep listening.

In terms of pedagogy, there is a need for instructors who are able to work with the anger, resentment, shame, and guilt that surface around issues of colonization (Kouri, 2014). This process begins with people in power understanding their own histories and the implications those histories have in colonialism, and then working with their own affective reactions. For too long, Indigenous people experienced violent backlash as they alone shouldered the work of educating settlers. Settler educators also need to struggle with the ethics of their positionality as it intersects with the identities of their students. It is imperative to have a deep appreciation for the knowledge that Indigenous students bring to the classroom, and for the potential harms and benefits to those students that might come from them sharing their knowledge. We need more conversations in child and youth care about the ethical complexities of engaging with our students across lines saturated with power, privilege, identity, and affect.

It is the responsibility of settler students and educators to understand the similarities and differences between the histories of the Indigenous peoples of this land and their own people’s colonial histories and struggles for independence. Making these colonial similarities and differences visible, and working through them, is one way for settlers to initiate anticolonial Indigenous–settler relationships and work towards solidarity. More importantly, however,

addressing colonialism in our educational practices would also entail increasing the quantity of literature from Indigenous writers across the program, as well as engaging more Indigenous professors, administrators, speakers, instructors, and media across all postsecondary institutions, rather than concentrating Indigenous material in specific courses or through token hiring practices. The politics and ethics of engagement with Indigenous people and knowledges must be deeply considered to prevent tokenism, appropriation, and further harm. It behooves us to ask how we, as settlers, listen to Indigenous voices. How do we orient ourselves to Indigenous refusals of and objections to our practices, our attempts at recognition of historical injustices, and our very presence? How do we engage with and represent Indigenous knowledges in our classrooms?

### *Appropriation and Citational Practice*

As settler people, our engagements with alternative forms of knowledge are laden with ethical dilemmas regarding respectful engagement, appropriation, and issues of identity. In fact, the very consciousness-raising that makes oppression visible to us often comes at the expense of others: Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and symbols are increasingly being fetishized and commodified. As settler people, we require new forms of listening, taking action, and relating to Indigenous peoples and cultures that can bring about material change. Celia Haig-Brown (2010), for example, contrasted deep learning with appropriation, arguing that the former takes years of immersive education in Indigenous contexts. Such deep learning is in line with cultural protocols, acquired through lasting relationships, and connected to the places where the knowledge was generated and lives. Appropriation, by contrast, is mediated by power imbalances, takes without permission, and shows no recognition for context, intellectual and cultural property, or continuity.

We settler academics are not only produced within a history that systematically disenfranchises Indigenous knowledges, but our continued presence and self-elevation as central producers of knowledge structurally relies on and reiterates settler colonialism. Under such conditions, settlers can either work at a distance from Indigenous contexts and people, which perpetuates the denial of our constitutive relations with colonialism, or engage with Indigenous knowledges, which risks replicating an abhorrent past. Kathy Snow (2018) emphasized the need for settlers to have clear intention, motivation, processes, and roles when engaging with Indigenous peoples or knowledges. Snow also emphasized the importance of being able to sit with discomfort yet continue to commit the time, energy, and resources needed to sustain allyship in the face of resistance. While deep self-reflection is invaluable to personal transformation, it is the messy and complicated work of embodied allyship that produces webs of living relationships capable of resistance and change. In order to practice allyship, settlers, as knowledge producers, must constantly consider how they engage with Indigenous knowledges and peoples, the inequitable distribution of risk and benefit that characterizes such relationships, and the material changes that ensue from them.

Sara Ahmed (2013), and Eve Tuck and colleagues (2015), offer us the concept of “citational practice” to analyze whose work gets cited in our writing, whose voices are erased, and whom we might need to stop citing. Ahmed explained that citational practices structure disciplines and



reproduce power and discourse. As settler learners and educators, we must constantly question whose work we read, cite, reiterate, build upon, and centre. To subvert the dominance of White voices in critical theory and take up a decolonizing citational practice (Ahmed, 2013), Indigenous voices and the settler people who are currently engaging with their work must be prioritized. This practice, however, is fraught with challenges. For one, much of the content of our teaching and learning relies on academic publications, which leaves out the knowledge of Indigenous peoples who are outside the academic structure. When we do have the honour and privilege of sitting with Elders and knowledge holders, we need to consider how we carry the teachings, gifts, and medicines they generously share; we need to question whether we have the right to bring Indigenous voices into the academy or practice settings.

Another problem is that settlers can now advance their academic and practice careers by knowing and speaking about Indigenous issues. With their privileges of access to higher education and safer spaces for critical debate, White settlers can quickly advance their academic knowledge of Indigenous issues and learn to deploy the language of decolonization. With the power and privilege of access to publishing in academic journals, settlers often have greater opportunity to speak about Indigenous issues than is available to Indigenous people themselves. The reiteration of colonialism is nearly impossible to prevent, particularly in hypercolonized spaces of privilege like research universities and professional practice settings. We need to be constantly mindful and recognize that colonialism and capitalism will appropriate even our efforts to contest them.

Settler ethics, therefore, is about the knowledges, cosmologies, epistemologies, and ontologies we draw on (St. Pierre, 2018), how we draw on them (Watts, 2013), and how we cite them (Ahmed, 2013). Settler researchers have a responsibility to engage with critical literatures outside their mainstream canon and are accountable for whose voices they engage with in research and writing. Ahmed (2013) warned, however, that the term “critical” can become an ideal to which White researchers cling. Noting her experience that “the most defensive reactions to such points [have come] from White male academics who think of themselves as ‘critical’ ” (para. 17), she wrote:

When criticality becomes an ego ideal, it can participate in not seeing complicity. Perhaps criticality as an ego ideal offers a fantasy of being seeing. Critical whiteness might operate as a way of not seeing in the fantasy of being seeing: critical white subjects by seeing their whiteness, might *not* see themselves as participating in whiteness in the same way. (para. 17)

This challenge to recognize how we, as White settler subjects, attempt to see ourselves in a different way echoes Tuck and Yang’s (2012) analysis of “settler moves to innocence” (p. 9), in which they argued that settlers attempt to absolve themselves of the responsibilities of decolonization — land return and Indigenous sovereignty — while appropriating the discourse of decolonization. Tuck and Yang see these moves as a series of actions that on their face seem grounded in morality, solidarity, helping, or allyship, but that allow settlers to feel absolved of their guilt, shame, and, most importantly, responsibility.



### *Allyship, Solidarity, and Social Justice in Settler Colonial Contexts*

Settler ethics, which involves deeply self-reflective, collective reflection and community action while working towards undoing settler comforts and privilege, has much to learn from ally, activist, and solidarity literature and practice. Smith et al. (2016) explained that allies have two main characteristics. First, they desire to support social justice and eliminate inequalities through promoting the rights of nondominant groups. Second, they offer support through meaningful relationships with those who welcome their support, and they show accountability to those people. Allyship is aspirational and “ally” is a designation that is given rather than claimed. Smith and colleagues (2016) warned that settlers must avoid appropriation, taking leadership, interfering, seeking emotional support, or having expectations. By focusing on our own undoing of and intervening in the reiteration of colonial subjectivity, we begin to stop interfering in the spaces and processes of Indigenous decolonization.

Drawing on social justice and activist work, and writing from the position of a settler, Vikki Reynolds (2010a, 2016) explained that solidarity and allyship are promoted by communities of shared values, feelings, interests, and responsibilities. Solidarity, for Reynolds, is about interconnection and belonging, about seeing how multiple forms of oppression are interconnected and how the liberation of any one person is entwined with the liberation of all. Informed by intersectional feminism, Reynolds kept various forms of oppression conceptually distinct while seeking connections among them. She proposed six guiding principles in what she called an ethical stance of justice-doing: centring ethics, connecting forms of justice, naming power, fostering sustainability, critically engaging with language, and structuring safety (2010a). The guiding principles she has proposed support many forms of social justice; however, as John Winslade (2015) explained, the various forms and discourses of social justice do not always align. Tuck and Yang (2012) went further, arguing that many forms of social justice, particularly those aligned with democracy and land protection, are incommensurable with decolonization.

In a survey of educators, Winslade (2015) found that some of the main veins of social justice are diversity and inclusion, equity and equality, consciousness-raising and challenging internalized assumptions, neutrality versus positionality, emancipation, and attending to historical and contemporary injustice, inequality, and harms. Social justice work, therefore, must challenge social adaptation where it leads to injustice and must strive to make amends and participate in an ongoing process of seeking justice for all. Social justice is here figured as a horizon. Rather than something reachable, it is an ongoing practice of analysis, action, and striving. Such a process-oriented approach to social justice must constantly ask about the social worlds in which practice takes place, the identities and positionality of all who are involved, and the horizons of hope and possibility for rendering freedom, justice, and equality.

Reynolds and Hammoud-Beckett (2018) asserted that social justice is principally about taking overt positions in relation to violence, oppression, power, privilege, and social control. They propose that resisting neutrality, competition, and the replication of social norms is necessary for

justice-doing. Following Paulette Regan (2010), they called for settlers to name and respond to White supremacy and colonization, and questioned what it would mean “for the settler majority to shoulder the collective burden of the history and legacy of residential schools” (Reynolds & Hammoud-Beckett, 2018, p. 6). Drawing on Paul Kivel (2007), they also asked to what degree our practices help people adapt to lives of individual suffering and to what degree our work challenges or disrupts structures of oppression.

A social justice orientation considers how sense and meaning are made from injustice and how people come to internalize discourses that normalize oppression, discrimination, and injustice (Winslade, 2018). Winslade challenged millenarian visions of social justice that promote grand narratives and images of a fully equitable future. Instead, he suggested that emancipations often lead to further exclusions: we must stay on guard against this and instead enact an ethics of hospitality that incorporates generosity and inclusion of the other. This position centres the ongoing nature of social justice work, where completion is always deferred, and sees the social justice activist as an agent of generosity and hospitality. Settler people working for social justice must specifically deal with the settler’s position as the one who has taken land and excluded Indigenous peoples from all forms of participation. In order to make social justice work a labour of inclusion and generosity, one must deal with the colonial power that underlies one’s ability to include and be generous and hospitable. Tuck and Yang (2012) thus called for an ethics of incommensurability that can name the impossibility of reconciling the histories of genocide, land theft, and exclusion that now substantiate settler people as possible agents of social justice work. While the ongoing work of social justice must be enlivened, as Tuck and Yang (2016) suggested, “with the spirit of resistance to the constant re/production of injustice” (p. 3), it must do so through an analysis of its own failures. Rather than try to bolster ourselves as agents of social justice, settlers today are faced with the challenge of owning our failures and attending to the tensions that beset our ethics.

### **Conclusion: Towards a Settler Ethics in Teaching and Learning**

As educators and students in a practice field, it is up to us to name what makes congruence difficult in our pedagogy, our praxis, and our lives outside of school and work. Indeed, as Karlee Fellner and colleagues (2016) have noted with regard to counselling, “A key difference in ethical professional practice between non-Indigenous and Indigenous counsellors is that the latter observe the same traditional ethics both inside and outside the office” (p. 138). Living an ethical life within colonialism may be impossible for settlers, but such an impossibility can be no excuse for paralysis or cynicism. Settlers have a responsibility to engage with one another in working through ethical dilemmas and working against the very power that supports our lives. On this topic, Reynolds (2010b) talked of building networks of solidarity to keep us in congruence, while also noting that there will always be mistakes when allies attempt to remain congruent with their ethics. She argued that it is up to allies to work with other people in power and prevent the continual usurpation and misuse of power and space, thereby making greater space for those who are oppressed to speak

and seek justice. Leanne Simpson (2011), Nishnaabeg writer and academic, suggested that interrogations of violence be directed to the perpetrators rather than the victims of harm. As settlers, we must take up this work and analyze the ways in which we have perpetuated, and continue to perpetuate, colonial violence through our institutions, policies, and practices. We must make the workings of our settler subjectivities, states, and institutions visible and take action to change the conditions of everyday life for Indigenous and racialized peoples.

Drawing again on Tuck and Yang (2012), we must constantly return to the definition of decolonization as reestablishment of Indigenous governance over lands and life. Settlers' support of decolonization, however, will always be troubled because our practices, to some degree, recentre us, our work, our knowledge, and our lives. Decolonization, as the end to settler subjectivity and claims to land, is therefore an impossible task for settlers unless they become something radically different from what they are. This impossibility requires settlers to engage with the dialectic between recentring White settler problematics and critiquing the settler's appetite for all things Indigenous — including decolonization. First and foremost, settlers need to support Indigenous people's projects. For me, this means preparing students for ethical work in Indigenous communities and with Indigenous people. It means supporting Indigenous initiatives, helping Indigenous people navigate institutional bureaucracy, promoting Indigenous leadership, and advocating for Indigenous children and families.

Particularly in academic contexts, Indigenous people's labour in educating settlers is underappreciated and at times resented. Settler people must begin to be accountable for the emotional, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual labour that is offered to us, which is offered even when it costs Indigenous people dearly. In concert with centring Indigenous presence, we also, as settlers, need to turn towards ourselves and radically revise how we do teaching and learning. Following Robin DiAngelo (2011), I argue that we can challenge the dominance of the Western subject by changing its visibility as a norm into a visibility as object of critique. The critique of the settler subject, however, is fraught with affective turbulence. We need to take up this work ourselves to slow the backlash, scapegoating, and violence that Indigenous people experience when settler privilege is challenged. A settler ethics in teaching and learning would take the tensions produced through histories of colonialism as a starting point in refiguring ourselves as people who are accountable for our power, location, citational practices, and practices of justice-seeking. Beginning with small acts of interrogating the insidious presence of colonialism in well-intentioned practices of acknowledgement, self-location, and consciousness-raising, it is imperative that we build towards a practice of teaching and learning that can contribute to material change for Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities.

Our teaching and learning in child and youth care is specifically connected to the contexts and people we will come to work with. Connecting our educational work with young people who directly resist settler colonialism and globalized capitalism is burdened by contradictions but is nevertheless important work. Many young people today have begun to see the global contexts of neocolonial capitalism as oppressive and a threat to themselves, their future, and life on the planet

(Giroux, 2013; Mueller & Tippins, 2015). Young people, in this discursive milieu, explore solidarity, allyship, and social justice as avenues for liberation. This shift to activism often comes through personal experience, moral conscience, or education, and it raises questions about how we engage with them in political, affective, and ethical ways. Walking the minefield of appropriation, identification, assimilation, and curiosity, socially minded settler children and youth seek forms of activism and relationality with little guidance, often putting the burden of their education on those most oppressed. Furthermore, there is still a great deal of analysis and ethical deliberation to be done when considering the application of a political agenda to child and youth care education and practice. It is up to us as settler learners and educators to develop a new discourse and relationality for child and youth care that might transparently elucidate our agendas and more closely align our work with the critical projects of young people. Given that positioning ourselves as knowing better or using young people to further our own political agendas is problematic (Gharabaghi, 2018), it behooves us to find ways of relating to young people that help challenge the status quo of reproducing settler colonialism. Young people, students, and communities who have been marginalized are leading the ethical and political revolutions of today and we must, as teachers, practitioners, and graduates, develop a humility and relationality that can attend to these demands in our learning and teaching.

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### **Biography**

**Scott Kouri** PhD is an instructor in Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. He is the author of *Empire and Identity: The Ethics of Becoming Other than What We Are* and of *Critical CYC Counselling in Settler Colonial Contexts*. He is a co-author of *Catastrophe: A Transversal Mapping of Colonialism and Settler Subjectivity* with Hans Skott-Myhre, and of *Street Analysis: How We Come Together and Apart in Localized Youth Work Peer Supervision* with Jeff Smith. He practises as a clinical counsellor in private practice, wilderness, post-secondary, and First Nations contexts.