



Decolonizing the Classroom through Indigenous Education

What is this Research About?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) determined that education is an important component of reconciliation. To be a part of a decolonizing process, this education should shift from teaching about Indigenous Peoples and knowledge to teaching with Indigenous Peoples and within Indigenous worldviews. This article outlines the colonial history of education in Canada and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action related to education. The study provided examples of how grades K-12 teachers can implement a shift in teaching about Indigenous Peoples and knowledge to teaching with them.

What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers reviewed two lessons focused on specific learning standards within the BC Ministry of Education elementary social studies and secondary science programs. One lesson was about Indigenous education. The other lesson was focused on a topic that usually does not include reference to Indigenous Peoples (i.e., antibiotics). The researchers applied the nine First People's Principles of Learning (FPPL) (established by the First Nations Education Steering Committee of British Columbia) to these lessons and developed revised lesson plans accordingly. These concrete examples of lesson plans were included in the article to provide examples to teachers to consider when beginning to decolonize their teaching.

What did the Researchers Find?

The researchers suggested several ways in which teachers could implement the recommendations in the FPPL. For example, teachers can guide students to connect to the geographical place around them and locate themselves. Another suggestion is for teachers to incorporate oral storytelling based on proper local protocols and with care and permission. Also, teachers could provide opportunities for the students to make personal connections to the learning and to interact with the environment. Lastly, teachers can include a focus on "quality time with less content" (p. 99) as opposed to moving quickly through a lot of content.

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➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

By providing specific examples of the same learning approached through Western lessons and through a lesson focused on decolonization, the researchers provided strategies for how teachers can review their lessons and implement decolonization. In addition, they specified that teachers need to begin working on personal decolonization to "challenge Eurocentric paradigms and mindsets" (p. 102). This practice involves developing personal relationships with local First Nations communities and Elders, listening to difficult truths about the history and present-day context of colonization, and actively engaging in learning about Indigenous education. It also involves asking oneself difficult questions about one's teaching practice and how to engage in decolonization. Although the authors focused on decolonizing K-12 education, these principles can also be applied in post-secondary education in Canada.

➔ Citation

MacMath, S., & Hall, W. (2018). Indigenous education: Using the science of storywork to teach with instead of about Indigenous Peoples. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 57(2). 86-106.

➔ Keywords

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