

*Poetry and Prejudice:
Literature as Anti-Racist Education
in an
All-White School*

Marlene Roseboom
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To Mark Fettes, Instructor
Education 904
Simon Fraser University

Chilliwack, B.C.

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ABSTRACT

This action research study explores the value of literature as a tool in critical race pedagogy, in the setting of an all-White school in British Columbia, Canada. Using the concept of Philosophic understanding from Kieran Egan's theory of Imaginative Education, I taught a six-week unit on ethnocentrism in the context of colonization/ decolonization, using both White and First Nations literature, to a Grade Ten English class. While outcomes varied, mostly qualitative evidence showed that several students displayed significant positive changes in their attitudes and beliefs, both in their written work and in subsequent conversations, while one student showed distinct entrenchment of racism. Strikingly, one of the most powerful learning experiences in the unit was not prompted by the literature, but by the oral storytelling of a residential school survivor. The fact that cultural deficit beliefs appeared to be reinforced in some cases, however, points to the need for further research into both the selection and the mediation of literary content in such a course.

INTRODUCTION

See that man over there?

Yes.

Well, I hate him.

But you don't know him.

That's why I hate him.

(Allport, 1954/1979, p. 458)

That word "hate" leaps off the page as I scan my Grade Ten students' papers that they are handing in as the bell rings. "I absolutely hate Indians," Jordan has written; but, he continues, "I'm not racist." As he walks back to his desk, Jordan loudly and quickly repeats to a classmate what he has just written: "I hate Indians because all they ever do is drink and get drunk and smoke weed out at the skate park," glancing sideways at me to gauge my reaction. I try to maintain a look of indifference and to mask my antipathy to his remarks, and continue to coolly scan the papers. I have promised to be non-judgmental, having just asked my students to "write for 10 minutes on your attitudes towards First Nations people. What are your thoughts and feelings about them? Include personal examples. Be honest about what you think. My disapproval of racist comments will not affect your mark or my opinion of you." Indeed, I am getting honesty and personal feelings, as painful as it may be for me to read (and hear) them! And I am finding judgment hard to avoid.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

Reasons for my Interest in this Study

In my three previous years of teaching high school English at this school, I have heard students express opinions like this at various times (although never quite so starkly and boldly as this.) Such recurring sentiments among my students have made me wonder whether such overt racism stems from ignorance, from “not knowing” the Other¹ – in this case, First Nations people – as none attend our school. It has concerned me greatly, and motivated me to search for effective strategies to reduce this racism by introducing my students *to* the Other, to break down those walls of ignorance, in order to foster greater empathy and understanding. Particularly, for my Grade Ten English students, I have been searching for ways to use our study of First Nations literature to reach that goal, and, ultimately, to attempt to engender a sense of social responsibility towards ameliorating prevailing attitudes and conditions.

At the same time, I have been questioning whether ignorance alone could be the cause of such scathing stereotype. Are there other factors that come in to play? How about the “silo effect” – the fact that my students are socially isolated from Others? Does that create a feeling of superiority, a feeling that *my* subculture is the best, and everyone else’s is inferior? How about the fundamentalist beliefs of the school and supporting churches? Does believing that *my* religion is the only truth cause me to believe that all others should be “just like me”? Does the simple fact of living within a closed social circle itself engender racism? Such were the questions I set out to investigate even as I searched for ways to combat the racism I was observing in my students.

¹I use the term “Other” to refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society i.e., that are *other than* the norm, such as students of colour. (Kumashiro, 2000)

Context and Historical Background

I teach English at a private Christian school located a rural area of southwestern British Columbia. The composition of my Grade Ten English class (and school) is uniquely homogeneous; it is comprised of eight White boys and seven White girls who are fifteen or sixteen years old. All students (and their teacher) enjoy a position that includes almost every single dominant identification of a western Canadian context: they are White, middle-class, able-bodied, straight, Christian, and English-speaking (Schick & St. Denis, 2003). This is the third year I have taught this class, so we know each other well and have developed positive relationships and a degree of trust; in fact, I feel a special bond with them, as they were the first class I taught.

All students and their families attend Dutch Reformed churches. Many of their grandparents (or in some instances, great-grandparents) immigrated from The Netherlands in the 1950s and 1960s and brought with them a distinctive religious subculture, one that was defensively conservative, separatist, and insular. These immigrants adapted a “fortress mentality” and sought to deliberately shield their children from the “corrupting influences of the outside world” (Van Drongelen, 1992) – that is, children were to be kept separate from those outside their particular subculture and religion. Because of this, these families, who had enjoyed separate Christian schooling in The Netherlands, soon sought the same in the Fraser Valley (Sikkema, 2010; Van Drongelen, 1992). By 1975, this particular subgroup of Dutch Reformed immigrants had established their own Christian school – one that allowed for the “protection” of the young “and was formed to “integrate students into the social and religious fabric of the community” (Van Drongelen, 1992). Many of the first students of this school (as I was) are the parents of my students. A separatist “fortress” ideology has endured through the generations and

remains in place to this day. In general, my students are discouraged from socializing with those outside the church and school community, especially when it comes to close friendships. The effect of all this has been to create a rather closed community of likeminded Whites, with limited exposure to the Other in general, and to First Nations peoples in particular. These converging conditions (Whiteness, separation from other races, religions, and cultures, and a long history of exclusion of the Other) create unique opportunities for prejudice and bigotry.

Research: Fundamentalism Induces Prejudice

Delving into the literature, I discovered that research broadly and clearly demonstrates that religious fundamentalist groups (especially White ones) tend to be prejudiced against various minorities; possible reasons for this are posited. Altemeyer (2003) asserts that, for the growing child, just such an emphasis on belonging to a family's religion reinforces a predictable "us-them" effect (termed "social categorisation theory.") Individuals tend to favour the group they belong to over the "out-group"; early experience with this "us-them" orientation tends to create a stronger tendency to discriminate (Altemeyer, 2003). Heaven & St. Quintin (2003) discount the social categorisation theory, but do agree with Altemeyer (2003) that the fundamentalist tendency to adhere to both right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) (comprised of conservatism, authoritarian submission and authoritarian aggression) and to a social dominance orientation (SDO) (which enhances or legitimizes social inequality) is a prime cause of

fundamentalist prejudice. Akrami, Ekehammer, Bergh, Dahlstrand, & Malmsten (2009) show that one's social situation (in this case, separation and isolation) exacerbates the personality factors embedded in RWA and SBO. The *contact theory* posited by Allport (1954/1979), Pettigrew et al (2011), Watts Debose (2000) and others² address this isolation: although not directly targeting *religious* groups, they focus on how such social, intergroup separation increases stereotypic perceptions, maintaining that, in order to reduce racial prejudice among Whites, sustained, intimate, informal, friendly, and equal interracial contact must take place³ – the precise opposite of what mostly happens to students at my school.

Hall, Matz, & Wood (2001) and Pate (1981) agree: contact (or lack thereof) is a strong predictor of racial attitudes. They also concur with Altemeyer (2003) that simply identifying with a religious group promotes in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, as do Hunsberger & Jackson (2005), who *also* contend that believing that one's religion teaches absolute truth (as Calvinist fundamentalists do) contributes to such favoritism/derogation. Further, they maintain (along with Hall, Matz, and Wood [2001] and Pettigrew et al [2001]) that these prejudices can be intensified if members perceive that they are in conflict or competition with the other groups for valued resources, or if they experience *negative* contact where “participants feel threatened and did not choose to have the contact” (Pettigrew et al, 2011, p. 277) (for a possible example in the Fraser Valley context, many sport fishers in the Dutch Reformed circles come into sometimes-hostile contact with First Nations people as they fish for salmon on the Fraser River).

²Cook, 1984; Harrington & Miller, 1992; Jackson, 1993; Patchen, 1999.

³Pettigrew et al (2011) is especially emphatic: “From the southern United States, Northern Ireland, and Israel to India and South Africa, intergroup separation guarantees smoldering resentment and eventual conflict” (p. 278).

On top of that, fundamentalism as a predictor of prejudice is linked to, and can be exacerbated by, for *White* Christians, a corresponding deliberate obliviousness to one's White privilege. Todd, McConnell & Suffrin (2014) find that White conservative Christians are considerably less likely to be willing to examine their own White privilege and to be interested in facilitating social justice and equality than are White liberal Christians. According to their study, White conservative Christians tend to manifest resistance to White racial identity, which consists of cognitive (awareness), affective (remorse), and behavioral (willingness to confront White privilege) responses to White privilege. This matters because, as they show, greater awareness of White privilege directly predicts increased racial justice action. Emerson and Smith (2000) go farther to link *specific* religious beliefs, such as the importance of salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to a "strong value placed on individualism, a pull-yourself up by your bootstrap mentality, and a belief that social structures are not important in shaping racial inequality" (Todd, McConnell, & Suffrin, 2014, p. 112). In this way, both blindness to White privilege and religious conservative beliefs tend to translate into intransigent attitudes about racial inequality. Thus, White conservative Christians, such as those at my school, are more likely to blame the victims of oppression and to choose individualistic explanations for racial inequality, and less likely to articulate systemic explanations or solutions for that inequality (Emerson & Smith, 2000). In this way, they help to reproduce the cultural hegemony of Whiteness by deflecting away from the workings of power and instead concentrate on the supposed inadequacies of particular minority groups (Thompson, 1997).

Finally, my students' social situation is a factor in another sense, as well. Russian theorist Lev Vygotsky terms it the child's "social situation of development": all internalizations of cultural understandings are mediated from, first of all, the people of one's immediate social

environments (Mayer, 2008), which means that the developing child will acquire the unique perspectives of that particular (sub)culture – including stereotype and prejudice. Thus, understandings are transferred from one generation to the next. Effectively, the teachings of the church, school, and home converge to tend to instill a singular cultural understanding of the Other in the developing student. Reasons are complex and numerous, but it is to be expected that that the convergence of Whiteness, fundamentalism, and purposeful isolationism will foster stereotype formation and prejudice – as will be evidenced later as we consider my students’ responses to class discussions on ethnocentrism and stereotype. It is in this milieu that I begin my action research.

Personal History

“I am a part of all that I have met.”

-Tennyson, *Ulysses*

Being White, having being raised in this subculture, *and* having attended this school myself from Grades Two through Twelve, I am uniquely situated as a researcher and practitioner who is also a product of this isolationist fundamentalism. My focus as a teacher has become to foster critical thinking in my students, in order to encourage views that see beyond the subculture’s fortress walls – which is precisely part of my governing motivation for this action research.

It is important to return to the story of my own evolution in order to understand both my own situatedness and my students’ unique context. As Vygotsky (Mayer, 2008) suggests, as I matured, I internalized the cultural understandings that were explicitly and implicitly mediated to me by my parents, church leaders, teachers, older siblings, and peers – that White Christians

were superior to others in society. *We* held the truth; *we* were the privileged ones (not “privileged” in the sense of fostering empathy for the less privileged, but in the sense that *we* were special; *we* were the ones on the right path.). Although not openly stated, it was implied that all others should become like us. My friends and playmates were only from my school; my only exposure to others outside of that was in my summer berry-picking jobs (no First Nations people). My one memory of First Nations people from my youth was when they came to our house to sell Fraser River salmon they had caught, where I quickly picked up on my family’s views that they were “dirty”, “stinky”, and “drunk.”

In addition, my education at the school gave me a truncated version of Canadian Aboriginal history, where I was “taught a version of Aboriginal culture and history that ran to little more than teepees, igloos, and the fur trade” (Shields, 2007). I was oblivious to sociohistorical realities – of such things as historical and ongoing colonization, of the decimation of First Nations populations by starvation, warfare, dislocation, and smallpox, measles, influenza, and tuberculosis epidemics, of the infantilization embedded in the Indian Act of 1876, of the appropriation of Aboriginal land with or without the use of treaties, of the broken promises contained in those treaties, of the rupturing of family ties and relations through the horrific devastation wreaked by residential schools (which included psychological, physical, and sexual abuse) and medical experimentation, and of the widespread Sixties’ practice of placing of Aboriginal children in White foster homes, further disrupting family ties (Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999; Lynne, 2005; Paul, 2007; Daschuk, 2013). At the same time, I was unaware of the legal recognition of special Aboriginal rights by the British Crown enshrined in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, rights that have never been rescinded (Hutchings, 1987). Of all of this I

was ignorant; I was convinced only that “Indians were dirty and drunk,” and beneath us. For years, I was at a place very similar to where many of my students are today.

However, when I was in my early thirties, I began my undergraduate studies, and my thinking began to be transformed as I began to more consciously and purposefully identify the “stories that had formed” me (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 114) and my own Whiteness as an “historicized and contextualized construction” (Byrne, 2006, p. 26) than I had ever done in the past. A process of decolonization began as I identified both the “touchstone” stories that had shaped perceptions of myself and the Other, but also as I came face to face with “counter-stories” that challenged my original encounters (or lack thereof!) with First Nations peoples (Strong-Wilson, 2007). With Strong-Wilson (2007), I would argue that all teachers *need* to be autobiographically involved in such a critical re-examination our own stories, to revisit our center using “historical critique” (Spivak, 1990). And, especially, all White teachers need to undergo this process in order to create a White identity based on equity and social responsibility (Bedard, 1999). Only then can we challenge racist knowledge systems as we develop greater self-knowledge *and* agency through this process.

From the start, my courses introduced me to some of the story and ideas that I had missed in my past education. My first-year course in Aboriginal literature introduced me to new ideas: the ethnocentric thinking of Duncan Campbell Scott, his poetry and policies, as well as perspectives of eclectic Aboriginal writers – George Copway, Pauline Johnson, Armand Garnet Ruffo, Harry Robinson, Rita Joe, Thomas King, Jeannette C. Armstrong, Lee Maracle, Marilyn Dumont, and others, through which we examined historical and more contemporary experiences. Although I do remember muttering to some of my friends about what seemed to me at the time

an overemphasis on First Nations issues at the university, gaps in the walls of my ignorance and resistance were beginning to form, and my own individual fortress was beginning to crumble.

I continued to learn: in a Canadian history course, I wrote an award-winning paper largely based on the book *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Van Kirk, 1996), and discovered the powerful role that First Nations women had during the fur trade and in the shaping of the Canadian Metis subculture. The idea of Whites being dependent on First Nations peoples for the two hundred years of the fur trade was a new one for me to digest; seeds of respect instead of disdain were sown. The process of writing that paper evidences shifting understandings: I concluded the paper, “When we study the history of Canada’s indigenous peoples, in the spirit of understanding and tolerance, we can facilitate acceptance and healing of grievances.” Although I wrote that statement without the awareness that my own decolonization was merely beginning, it proved to be prescient. Indeed, as I continued my studies, more and more of my walls of ignorance were being broken down. I continued my examination of the residential school experience in other courses and papers: one study of the education at American non-reservation boarding schools and another, in-depth study of language ban and loss in Canadian residential schools. As I read and listened to the stories of the children who attended these schools, I was at once appalled and outraged, and felt an increasing sense of urgency to create a broader awareness and understanding within my subculture of these historical events even as my own fortress walls continued to disintegrate and as I increasingly recognized my own White privilege.

It was, however, not until I entered the Teacher Education Program in 2010 at the University of the Fraser Valley, which included core courses in social justice and indigenous education, that I became consciously engaged with, and began to feel the responsibility for,

teaching for social justice, even as I became more sensitive to my own White privilege and membership in a dominant group, even as I continue to uncover and deconstruct stereotypes of my own, and even as I continued to understand more fully the structural nature of racism, what McIntyre (1997) defines as “the system and ideology of white dominance that marginalizes and oppresses people of color, ensuring existing privileges for white people” (p. 3). My studies and personal reading that year facilitated my motivation and determination to deliberately incorporate my newly-acquired knowledge and perspectives into my own pedagogy, as I became aware of the need to deconstruct the hegemony embedded within current societal structures. Since then, I have continued to study, reflect, and try to include in my practice teaching for social justice in general, and for anti-racism in particular. This is something of which the process of conducting *this* action research continues to inform me, as well.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY

Anti-Racism Education

The need for this deliberate anti-racism education is clear. Many progressives agree that pedagogy *must* be critical in working towards a more just society (among them: Apple 2001; Bedard, 1999; Chaisson, 2004; Christensen, 2000; Freire, 1970/2012; Johnston, 1999; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Kumashiro, 2000; Milner, 2005; Nussbaum, 2010; Orlowski, 2011; Schick, 2003; Schick & St. Denis, 2010; Thompson, 1997; Wilson, 2013). While the importance of the family and the larger society in the role of nurturing a child's ethical intelligence and moral sensibility certainly plays a large role (Egan, 2002), the school, whether mixed-race or single-race, has a potent and influential force in developing it as well. But it is especially crucial in an all-White, "fortress" school, where students have difficulty (for obvious reasons) developing a critical attitude towards the "we-have-the-truth" and "we-are-superior" subcultural mindset – never mind to deconstruct their associated privilege and prejudices. Chaisson (2004) stresses the necessity of anti-racism education in such all-White contexts:

Without access to those who look different, students are likely to never reflect on race, racial identity, and race privilege during their tenure at the school. This suggests that in white-dominated schools and classrooms [such as mine], instructors must make conscious and deliberate efforts to place race at the center by bringing critical race discourses into the classroom.

(p. 346)

Indeed, if I do nothing to change my students' stereotypes, then I am only contributing to the problem of a racially unjust society; both awareness and action are mandatory.

Multicultural Education Insufficient and Dangerous

I must emphasize the notion of a *critical* pedagogy through an understanding of critical race theory. Critical race theory posits that racism is institutionalized as well as personal, that power structures are based on White privilege and supremacy, and that the notion of meritocracy is merely a vehicle for self-interest, power, and privilege (Chaisson, 2004; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Schick, 2010; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Thompson, 1997). Societal power structures necessary for institutional racism (including White privilege) must be deconstructed; a simple multiculturalist pedagogy, in only studying another culture (the Other) without that deconstruction, is insufficient. It merely promotes hegemony and perpetuates the status quo (Chaisson, 2004; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Thompson, 1997; Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Bedard (1999) notes that the discourse of multiculturalism upholds White racial domination through an “us/them” dichotomy.

Not only that, but as Apple (2001) points out, a “safe”, colour-blind multicultural education that subscribes to tokenism (using parties, festivals, or events to highlight individual parts of students’ cultures) is potentially harmful as it does not “interrupt the power of Whiteness of ‘the human ordinary’” (p. v). As well, blindness to White privilege is endemic and dangerously subtle, even among people of colour: Milner (2005) reminds us of Banks’ (1995) finding that ““both children of color and White children develop a “White bias” *by the time they enter kindergarten*”” (p. 392, emphasis mine). For this reason, it is even more important to bring it to light. If education ignores the analysis of such power dynamics, it can aggravate the situation by feeding into already established stereotypes and solidifying colour-blindness.

Rather, teaching for social justice *must* include specific anti-racist education, which addresses the histories and experiences of minority groups, and allows us to analyze the historical making (also through education) of power relationships, its connection to Whiteness, and other equality issues (Apple, 2001; Bedard, 1999). Anti-racist education provides students with the ability to “recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 36). Teaching critically makes visible the power and privilege of White identity along with the invisibility of this power and privilege, *including* the students’ own complicity in the processes of Othering and normalizing in order to maintain hegemony (Kumashiro, 2000; Orlowski, 2011; Schick, 2010).

The Use of Literature

My action research focusses on the use of literature in order to foster critical understandings. Other researchers have found that studying literature is a most effective way to teach this (Chaisson, 2004; Christensen, 2000; Gill, 2004; Johnston, 1999; Nussbaum, 2010; Wilson, 2013). For instance, White, dominant literature can be studied resistently. It can be used creatively to “teach the conflicts” (Johnston, 1999, p. 13), by dialoging with students about contrasts and contradictions in Eurocentric texts, by deconstructing misrepresentations of Others in these texts, and by contrasting these texts with alternative literature that acknowledges and values subaltern voices.

In the absence of *real* Others around us, literature may also work as a kind of substitute: it can be the most emotionally and cognitively rich experience we can have in lieu of the real thing. While facts or information about the Other alone cannot effect a change in attitude (Pate, 1981), in *literature*, we can access student feelings, which, in turn, can stir their thinking. In literature, we have a natural balance between the emotional and the cognitive. On the one hand,

students need to look at themselves – to deconstruct their previous prejudices of race and to critically look at their beliefs and the ubiquitous images and ideas of White supremacy that exist in Western culture, and literature is a way for them to do so (Hilliard, 2009). On the other, they need to look at the Other: Nussbaum (2010) suggests that studying literature is an invaluable way to begin to understand Others, as it cultivates students’ “inner eyes,” so they can see “issues of ... race, ethnicity, and cross-cultural experience and understanding” (p. 108). We do need to explore the histories and experiences of other cultures who have traditionally been marginalized, but we need to do it through *their* voice (Wilson, 2013). As well, as Christensen (2000), Nussbaum (2010), and Wilson (2013) suggest, students need to see *inside* the lives of the Other to help them to discard their stereotypes, which can be accessed through the lens of literature.

That literature itself is uniquely suited to the examination of ideas, especially those of society, is noted by Egan (2005) in his examination of the historic movement from orality to literacy. Literature slows things down, allowing us to take kernels of ideas one by one, to hold them up to scrutiny, and to contemplate their significance and truth; paradoxically, it gives us distance so that we can scrutinize characters and situations more closely and carefully. It allows us to become emotionally engaged with the lives of the character or speaker while being freed from the distortions of our individual realities and the urgency of being required to perceive, think, and respond all at the same time – that is, to process new information instantaneously as an oral world would require (Egan, 2005; Johnston, 1999). It can help us to understand the ideas and motives that underlie other cultures or other ways of being, and allows for the perception of truths beyond perceived facts (Thompson, 1997). Nussbaum (2010) points out that stories with realistic, real-life characters with complex problems, presented in an engaging way, can help to challenge and counter ill-informed prejudices and stereotypes – those simplistic ideas that we

have about the unfamiliar Other. Through perceiving these voices, *our* emotions can be aroused and *our* thoughts can be stretched, and we can begin to identify with the character or speaker. As these voices become more familiar to us, they can ameliorate the tendency to shrink from the Other in disgust (Nussbaum 2010), or even lead to the embracing of them. However, whether or not the literature we teach contains subaltern voices, we must uncover the complexities and contradictions of power relations embedded within it in order to effect critical understandings (Johnston, 1999). This discussion of the use of literature is something I will return to in later sections of this paper when I discuss my action research's curriculum. In addition to what research has found, what is of interest to me is whether using tenets of Imaginative Education will be an effective way to mediate the understandings embedded in the literature we study. As well, we will consider what *kind* of literature may be the most effective.

Teen Crisis and Resistance

Before turning to the specific action research I did with my class, it will be useful to consider the challenges and advantages of my students' ages. The teen years bring unique challenges for *students* as they can be tricky to navigate with intense social pressures and changing hormones; they can also bring unique challenges for *teachers*, as students often have a hard time seeing past their own needs to see the needs of others, and they often challenge teachers' motives as an educator (Wilson, 2013). Additionally, those teens with a low degree of self-acceptance will tend to hold a high degree of prejudice and are likely to be resistant to change unless their self-acceptance improves (Pate, 1981). However, there are also advantages: teens are often in a unique period in which they have a newly-developed ability and desire to question,

analyze, and challenge what they previously have taken for granted, which accords with the critical pedagogist's desire to foster such a disruption of students' knowledge (Kumashiro, 2000). In Vygotskian theory, this striving to analyze their place in the world and to take on a new role causes development of a new consciousness and self-determination, where they now may take a critical stance towards their (sub)cultural knowledge. Blunden (2008) calls this period a "crisis of rebelliousness." The implications are profound: my students are uniquely situated, developmentally, to be *able* to be critical of the mindset they have acquired. In fact, the act of inviting students to question previous understandings actually can *provoke* crises, which is instrumental in fostering revolution of conceptual and emotional understandings.

However, whether teens *will* take on a critical stance remains uncertain. Just as they can rebel against subcultural knowledge, they can also rebel against a movement toward White racial identity. Schick and St. Denis (2003) observe that most White students instinctively recoil at the suggestion that they are members of a dominant group, that race is socially constructed, and that they are responsible for the oppression of the Other, which can be manifested by a "denial of inequality, selective perceptions of reality, guilt and anger, and at times withdrawal from learning" (p. 3) (cf. Chaisson, 2004). After all, it can be true that "transcending the mindset that race is natural is sometimes like dismantling a house with only a hammer and chisel as tools" (Chaisson, 2004, p. 350); often, resistance is palpable. Not only that, but the decolonizing process itself can be an extremely confusing and painful process and can generate similar "powerful emotional responses such as guilt, shame, anger, and despair" (Bedard, 1999, p. 29), which can also effect students' increasingly-entrenched resistance to the recognition of White privilege and power (Kumashiro, 2000).

Thus, students need to be reassured and helped to move beyond the guilt associated with “being White” to construct a positive White identity so that they can begin developing social agency in order to challenge existing oppression (Bedard, 1999). But even if students *do* come to fully understand power and privilege, this does not mean that they will then begin to see exactly how they can (or that they will want to) work to effect social change, especially beyond the classroom (Kumashiro, 2000; Milner, 2005). This, then, still falls short of the goals of the critical educator, who wants not only to “foster empathy for the Other, but also the ability and the will to resist hegemonic ideologies and to change social structures” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 38). To confound the matter yet further, students’ individual personalities can shape their change in attitude; some are naturally more resistant and antagonistic than others (Akrami et al., 2009; Pate, 1981). All in all, there is no sure guarantee that critical pedagogy will effect the outcomes desired, but it is surely the case that the better prepared a teacher is for all these variations and contingencies, the more effective she is likely to be.

Anti-Racism Education in Practice

In light of all this, I have become increasingly convinced of the need for an anti-racist pedagogy in general, and on the effectiveness of using literature to that end in particular.

In the past few of years, I have taught parts of the unit that is part of my current action research plan. I teach the English 10 B.C. curriculum, which includes Prescribed Learning Outcomes that include a focus on “significant works of Canadian literature” as well as “traditional forms from Aboriginal... cultures” (BC Ministry of Education, 2007). In my first year of teaching English 10 at my school, I decided that using a similar approach to my own undergrad first-year literature course would be a good way to start. Consequently, I incorporated into my poetry unit a study of Duncan Campbell Scott, his background and poetry, and

contrasted that with various First Nations poetry. While we did discuss stereotype in class as we analysed poetry, I did not address the topic in any systematic way. During those discussions, I often would hear racist comments similar to those penned by Jordan; one memorable comment from my first year suffices as an example: “I know I’m racist [against First Nations], and I should be!” I was appalled at these statements; however, I strove to be sensitive in my approach (cognizant that my students were perhaps as ignorant as I was at that age and that their perspective on the world was mostly not their fault) so as not to further alienate my White students. Still, in those first years, I really did not know if the poetry we were studying was making a real impact on my students, helping them to understand the perspective of the Other, or reducing their stereotypes. I merely assumed that students’ views might be changing for the better, but did not in any way measure or assess change.

Imaginative Education

However, when I began to pursue a Master’s degree focussing on Kieran Egan’s Theory of Imaginative Education at Simon Fraser University in 2012, I realized that I needed to be both more deliberate and more thematic in my approach, *and* that I needed to assess whether my students’ views were indeed changing as a result of our study.

Egan’s (1998) model of Imaginative Education is a way of teaching and learning that relies on our imaginations. In this model, imagination works in two ways: first, we imaginatively tap in to students’ imaginations in order to help them grasp new concepts; second, once students *know* certain concepts and skills, their imagination enables them to apply their knowledge to new situations.

Egan theorizes that, at different times in our lives, we develop five "kinds of understanding" that enable us to frame new information so that it makes sense. Each level of understanding represents an increasingly complex use of language. Briefly, each understanding uses mostly one way to make sense of the world: *mythic* understanding builds on *somatic* understanding (using our physical bodies) and refers to the use of oral language; *romantic* understanding occurs once we begin to write our ideas down, and our way of thinking changes because we can now reflect on what we have written; and those who have developed *philosophic* understanding begin to formulate theories about previously seemingly disconnected topics to make sense of the world, but do not yet show *ironic* understanding of the limitations of theories (Egan, 1998).

In each kind of understanding, we develop different thinking or “cognitive” tools to access and frame new knowledge. The two most common cognitive tools are *story* and *emotional connection*. These tools thread through almost every kind of understanding, and imaginative meaning-making relies heavily on them. Without making emotional associations with "facts" and without the framing of them that story can do, we may memorize them, but they have no meaning for our lives, and so they remain inert and useless. However, *with* these tools, *all* knowledge can be made meaningful and brought to life in our hearts and minds. The key, then, is for educators to facilitate students' acquisition of these different cognitive tools at each level in order to develop each kind of understanding, and in order for students to fully internalize new conceptual knowledge. The two kinds of understanding *most* active during school years are *mythic* and *romantic*, with high school students verging into *philosophic* understanding. (See Appendix C for a chart of the levels of understanding with their related cognitive tools.)

CHAPTER THREE: THEORY IN PRACTICE

Convergence: Imaginative Anti-Racism Education as Action Research

Using this theory and an anti-racist framework, last year I created and taught a Grade Ten Canadian Literature unit based primarily on philosophic understanding with an underlying powerful overarching theme of ethnocentrism, in order to teach my students to understand that they see the world (and First Nations) from a unique perspective, as do First Nations people. We studied both Duncan Campbell Scott and his poetry and various First Nations Literature/history through the lens of ethnocentrism with the use of various cognitive tools (especially story and emotional connection), and discussed student stereotype and prejudice.⁴ Post-unit student reflective writing evidenced some amelioration of stereotype. One example demonstrates this: Joe showed significant insight into past wrongs and a subsequent reduction of prejudice after we completed the unit. His *pre-unit* attitude was clear; he wrote: "I think that it is ridiculous the amount of rights Aboriginals get... they should get off the reserves and go find a real job!" But, in his post-unit reflection, he evidenced a distinct change in thought and feeling. He admitted that

before... I didn't know anything about residential schools and how they destroyed Indian culture... [what happened there] makes me feel almost embarrassed for our own Canadian ancestors; this reason alone justifies why the Indians act and live the way they do... My stereotypes definitely are not justified by what we learned but I almost feel guilty for them after what I have learned.

⁴This unit is especially suited to Philosophic Understanding, in its search for authority and truth, understanding of powerful ideas/anomalies, awareness of historical agency, and definition of the self.

This excerpt *did* still evidence residual prejudice – evidenced in the use of the disparaging term "Indian" and in the phrase "act and live the way they do," as if First Nations people all act and live in horrible and destructive ways. At the same time, it did show an acknowledgement of the injustice experienced by First Nations peoples, a stretching of the mind, some freeing from ignorance, and a shifting in thought patterns. More importantly, Joe appeared to be changed emotionally, as he used words like "embarrassed" and "guilty." Most students evidenced a similar positive perspectival shift of some similar kind.

I planned to do the same unit this year, with some revision. First of all, I began to understand that to focus too much on the idea of ethnocentrism could be insufficient in reducing racism. As Thompson (1997) makes clear, stereotyping and prejudice arise not merely from “failing to recognize other standpoints, ‘centers,’ or perspectives (p. 10), but of assuming one’s moral, cultural, and personal superiority. This corresponds to the problems with a multicultural pedagogy: through only focussing on ethnocentrism, we can recognize that the Other has a view of the world without recognizing our own White privilege and presumed superiority. Thus, I became convinced that close study of power relations within colonization was imperative. Accordingly, I deliberately included discussions and connections to the ideas of colonization/ decolonization, hegemony, and White privilege throughout the unit.⁵

Also significant for the study I was undertaking was the difference in the dynamics between last year’s and this year’s classes. Last year’s class was double the size (30 students), much stronger academically (the average score on the English Ten provincial government exam was 86%), and demonstrated much positive peer pressure. Students this year are much lower

⁵See Appendix A for the Imaginative Education framework/cognitive tools used and Appendix B for the specific unit timeline/literature/activities.

academically (I would estimate about 10%, on average), but they are also much more defiant and argumentative. As well, since I began teaching this class in Grade Seven four years ago, there have been ongoing problems with strong *negative* peer pressure and, at times, overt (though still subtle) bullying. I wondered whether the defiance/negative peer pressure would affect outcomes, as it does motivation (Ryan, 2010). All in all, I suspected that I might get a very different result from this year's group than I did last year; I sensed that they would be much less willing to accept anything I would "tell" them. Therefore, I consciously purposed to try to refrain from overtly "trying to convince them" of anything, but merely rather to present the evidence, and then let them "make up their own minds." This ties in, I suppose, to the "big question" of my action research; could the results of the year before be replicated with a different group of students? While these differences in my classes are minute in comparison to what differences there *could* be between classes (considering race, subculture, ethnicity, class, and much more), I suspected that even these minor differences would affect outcomes.

Action Research Methodology

There were various models available to me as I set up my action research. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) postulates two: first, the *process-product* paradigm refers to linearly connecting teacher behaviour to student achievement; it assumes the teacher as cause and student as effect, and the teacher's role as that of a "technician" who implements the ideas and theories of others. This model is primarily reductionist in nature and tends to try to find support for what one already believes (Radford, 2007; Papastephanou, 2006). It can be associated with a positivist framework, in which the researcher gathers and analyses large amounts of data in order to make generalisations (Koshy, 2010). *Quantitative* data, which is represented by numbers (such as those

that are garnered during standardized testing or the administration of Likert-scale questionnaires), tends to be the primary evidence used in this method (Koshy, 2010).

For my action research, I rejected the positivist model of the “technician-teacher” and chose instead the alternative, interpretive model (Cochrane-Smith, 1993; Koshy, 2010): in this model, the teacher is reflective practitioner who understands that teaching is highly context-specific, complex, and collaborative. For such a teacher, “action” is not to be seen as a “construct to be isolated and reproduced, but as a construct for informed, reflective practice leading to human agency” (Showler, 2000, par. 5). Radford (2007) refers to complexity theory in relation to this model, which considers that multiple variables exist in the classroom and the “non-linear and dynamic nature in their interactions” (p. 263); this theory recognizes the limits of the teachers’ control of the actual effect of their pedagogy. This model begins with research and proceeds to new hypotheses and questions. Although my research is deeply informed by theory⁶, it is non-linear and qualitative in that it: 1) is naturalistic, 2) draws upon multiple methods, 3) is emergent and evolving (open to the unexpected), 4) is interpretive, 5) is reflective, 6) is sensitive to my personal biography and how this shapes my study, 7) is constructivist; 8) is aware of context; and 9) relies on complex (both inductive and deductive) reasoning (Creswell, 2009; Koshy2010; Papastephanou, 2006; Showler, 2000). In short, my role as practitioner/researcher is simply to attempt to understand, interpret, describe, explain, and critique what happens in my classroom, and to ponder new areas of inquiry. To do so, I rely almost wholly on *qualitative* data, which “illuminates human feelings and provides rich insights into actions and their consequences” (Koshy, 2010).

⁶Papastephanou (2006) notes that academic research finds in theory its “motivating and activating force” (p. 198)

Ethical Considerations

Before moving on to data collection methods, a note about ethical considerations is warranted. Obtaining informed consent from a research subject takes on greater ethical considerations when the researcher is the teacher and the subject is her/his student. As a relationship of trust already exists, the teacher is especially obligated not to violate it in any way, particularly when the focus of research is the students' beliefs and attitudes. Also, as Koshy (2010) notes, extra effort to share purposes and objectives is necessary when dealing with socially sensitive subjects. Accordingly, I carefully introduced my action research to the students by going over the explanatory letter and consent form (see Appendix D), and thoroughly explained the scope and the content of the study, spending some time discussing why consent forms were needed and what their role was in the research, emphasizing that all participation in my paper was to be completely voluntary. However, I did not divulge my full agenda: rather than baldly telling my students I wanted to rid them of their stereotypes, I mentioned that we would be studying various types of literature to see if that would affect the way that we think about First Nations people. Students asked few questions, and, with the exception of one student (Jordan), returned their consent forms within a week of receiving them. Therefore, all examples of student writings and remarks, whether from class discussions or interviews, are used with their parents' written permission. As well as receiving students' signed consent forms, I fictionalized all revealing biographical data, including names.

Jordan, though, initially resisted getting his consent form signed by his parents. When I asked for it, he said, "What if I don't want you to use my stuff?" I reassured him I would be able to do the action research without his contributions, and that participation was strictly voluntary.

He replied, “I don’t really care if you use my stuff; I just don’t want to bother with getting the consent form signed.” As time went on, Jordan often contributed interesting comments, and I noted them even though I did not have his consent form, hoping to get his parents to sign it during parent-teacher interviews so I could use them in my report – but they never showed up. Then, in the last week of the study, when I was interviewing selected students, I approached him in the hallway as he slouched against a doorway and teasingly asked him, “Can I interview you next hour? Oh... I guess I can’t use it anyway because I don’t have your consent form.” He straightened up and replied eagerly, “You can interview me next hour; you can have my consent. I’ll ask my teacher!” I ended up *not* interviewing him because of time constraints, but he *did* return a signed consent form the next day upon my request. Because Jordan’s written and spoken contributions were frequently worth noting, reflecting upon, and including in my report, I was particularly grateful.

Data Collection Instruments and Validity

I garnered evidence of student thought in several ways: through my field note journaling, student journaling, written questionnaires, audio recordings of class discussions, online forum posts, student interviews, a White privilege awareness scale, and a final summative assignment. Although I was not able to arrange for a kind of triangulation that Koshy (2010) suggests, where a colleague or participant observer also provides their perspective, I do believe that triangulation (and validity of data) was achieved through the wide variety of methods I used to garner evidence; to this end, the interviews and audio recordings were especially helpful.

Field Notes

For the qualitative researcher like me, keeping field notes in a journal is a way to document my role and to triangulate data by entering the journal itself as data. It can also serve to improve my research practice by providing me an opportunity to analyze and rethink my pedagogy (Janesick, 1998). My field note journal tracks my feelings, observations, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations, not just “the facts.” One problem, though, with journal writing is that it is difficult to recreate class conversations after the class has ended. After my first class, I noted that “I forget so quickly what students say!” I found that in order to focus on what the students were saying and to respond in the most spontaneous, authentic way, I had to, in a sense, forget my action research for the moment. Trying to consciously note what students were saying *as* they said them in order to write them down affected that spontaneity and, sometimes, the thoughtfulness of my responses. However, I did manage opportunities to journal during class as students worked independently.

There are other potential weaknesses with personal field notes, as well. Although they are private, they ultimately have an audience who have an effect on what I choose to record. As well, my very human tendency is to portray myself in the best possible light. Keeping this in mind as I jot notes will not completely curtail my subjective biases, but it should help to moderate them. In this report, I will carefully augment *my* perspective of things with my students’ experience, through their journals and other evidence, even though, clearly, I am selective there as well. Straightforwardly acknowledging these inevitable biases is necessary, both for the reader to understand the subjective nature of this project, and for me as a caution when writing this report (Radford, 2007).

Student journaling

Students were asked at different times to respond to prompts designed to identify attitudes and responses⁷, beginning with stereotypes about First Nations peoples and ending with a reflection on those initial stereotypes. Journals were used to check for congruence between students' actual reactions and my perceptions of them. Also included in the auspices of journaling was occasionally asking students to write down with deep-thinking (or "fat") questions that evidenced reflection on the topics being studied, which were then used to facilitate class discussions. Advantages of student journals are that they are efficient in terms of time, allow students to define aspects of their experience they see as important, and allow them to describe their feelings without the influence of an interviewer or interview questions. As well, it is relatively easy to identify themes, as responses are usually fairly short. Journals also give reserved students the opportunity to share thoughts they are hesitant to share in class.

Questionnaires

On the first day of the unit, students responded to a six-question questionnaire (Appendix F), in order to elicit initial student perceptions of White racial identity and their notions about racism in Canada, as well as the extent to which my students interact or have interacted with First Nations people on a regular basis. While I was deliberate in the questions I asked, I was careful not to insert my own bias; this questionnaire was useful in allowing me to collect baseline and background information quickly (Koshy, 2010).

⁷For the full text of all the journal prompts, see Appendix E.

Audio recordings

Other than the 5 post-unit interviews I did, I managed to record two 12-minute sessions of class discussion. The reason there are only two recordings is that often I had difficulty remembering to switch on recording when we began class discussions, and frequently the most interesting conversations arose spontaneously. The audio that I did get helped me to be more accurate in capturing what students said than by just relying on my field notes, but what was especially enlightening for me was how I sounded: the recordings made me focus more on what I said to students than on what students said to me – which was quite the opposite of what happened when I jotted down field notes. Using such recordings is certainly one more way to ensure triangulation and validity, but it also offers me unique insight into how my students may perceive what I say.

Online forum posts

Although it was not in my original plan, I was inspired by a colleague to use our school's Moodle platform to have students participate in an online forum. In the forum, students were required to post one good deep question on a *Toronto Star* article on “Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women” (used for a final assignment) *or* on any question they had about First Nations or White people or issues, and to respond to several others' questions.⁸ As this occurred near the end of the unit, it proved to be useful in gauging how well students had internalized historical understandings. Some students who normally did not speak up in class enthusiastically typed their opinions in the forum. As well, as I will discuss in a later section, it was a way for me to find that many students still were evidencing little change in attitude. Also noteworthy is that,

⁸The rubric for the forum is Appendix H.

although I had planned for students to participate in the forum mostly from the “safety” of their own home (to avoid influence from physical-presence peer pressure in the classroom), students ended up using class time to do so. Although I discouraged it, students still did communicate verbally about what others had posted, which, it seemed to me, influenced subsequent responses. However, although the process was not as free from peer pressure as it could have been, it still did afford students a venue to voice their opinions and me an insight into those opinions.

Student interviews

On the last day of the unit, I decided to invite three girls and two boys (Melinda, John, Janie, Seth, and Esther) to participate in an individual semi-structured interview; all accepted.⁹ I selected the participants based on the variety of responses I had received from them on forum posts and from comments they had made in class. I received permission from their Planning and Choir teachers to conduct interviews during that class time; they were held in our regular English classroom. By turn, students seemed anxious as they came into the classroom, looking self-conscious and fidgety; a few of them expressed their nervousness (Janie said, “This is so scary!”) when I asked for permission to record the interview. However, I found that audio recording our conversation was a good way for me to be able to listen closely to students, and then to ask meaningful follow-up questions, without worrying about transcription. Deciding to take the time to do these interviews proved to be a very good decision, as they provided “unexpected but useful perspectives”! (Koshy, 2010, p. 88). The interviews were an excellent way to triangulate the data students shared on the White privileges awareness questionnaire, the online forum, and the final journal write, and helped me to determine if the students answered them seriously. Most

⁹For the interview questions, see Appendix G.

importantly, it gave me another opportunity to include student voices in the narrative that resulted from the research process.

White privilege awareness questionnaire

While I relied almost wholly on qualitative data, I did use one quantitative instrument; I administered a 4-point Likert-type response scale to the students on the last day of class – a “White Privilege Awareness Questionnaire” (Appendix I). Because understanding one’s own privilege is essential in understanding the lack of privilege for others, I felt it was important to assess my students’ perception of their privilege. I adapted the scale from Pinterits & Poteat’s (2009) White Privilege Attitudes Scale, which measures the multifaceted nature of White privilege attitudes. Although I reduced the scale to 14 from 28 items, I kept a balance between the affective (items 4, 9-11, 13-14), cognitive (items 1-3, 13), and behavioural (items 5-8) dimensions of the scale. Affective responses to White privilege range from fear to guilt to anger; cognitive responses from denial to a critical consciousness; and behavioral responses from “avoidance or unwillingness to discuss its existence to intentions and actions to dismantle White privilege” (Pinterits & Poteat, 2009, p. 418). It contains four subscales: willingness to confront White privilege, anticipated costs of addressing it, awareness, and remorse. The scale was administered just prior students completing their final journal write of the unit.

Limitations of quantitative instruments such as this were evident when I approached two students to discuss what I thought were confusing responses (it seemed to me that their responses did not match written or verbal contributions). In one the first case, Jordan admitted he “did not understand” the scale, and admitted he randomly checked off boxes, while, in another, I misunderstood John’s responses (he had to clarify to me how he could have agreed both with “White people have it easier than people of colour” *and* “plenty of people of colour are more

privileged than Whites.” What he meant, he said, was that *some* people of colour have more privileges than *some* White people.) Misinterpretations like these highlight difficulties in accurately interpreting quantitative data and the limited value it has in naturalistic research. However, the scale *was* a small way for me to get a general sense of my class’s affective, cognitive, and behavioral propensities in regard to White privilege, and to see if their responses related to prejudices towards First Nations peoples. Because of this potential corruption in the scale (both student and teacher misunderstanding), I limited the use of the results in my analysis, assessing only the mean scores of each student, and using those scores only when they appear to shed light on a student’s frame of mind in the context of other, qualitative data.

Final assignment

The final summative assignment was an opportunity for students to show whether they had internalized the understandings about First Nations peoples that I had been trying to mediate, and whether they were able to apply their knowledge in a different context, in an original way. For this assignment (see Appendix J), I selected an article from the *Toronto Star* entitled “Conservatives Reject Inquiry for Missing Aboriginal Woman”, and required students to write two letters to the editor, one arguing *for* the inquiry and another arguing *against* it. My expectation was that students would be able to use their knowledge of First Nations history in Canada, and of ethnocentrism and colonization/decolonization, to convincingly argue their case. Unfortunately, because of two unexpected missed classes in the last two weeks (a field trip and a snow day), we did not have as much time as I would have preferred to discuss both the background of the article and the expected structure of the letters. Also, most students spent the class time allotted for working on the letters for posting to the online forum, and so most ended up having to do the letters as homework. Finally, because I introduced the forum and the

assignment on the same day, some students informed me later during the interviews that they felt a bit overwhelmed by expectations and did not understand the letter assignment well. As a result, letter quality was not what it could have been, and student effort disappointed me; however, the letters are still somewhat useful as sources of evidence, and I will include a few excerpts in the final analysis as they shed light on student thought.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRACTICE

The Research Process: A Journey Together

First Class

I enter class feeling anxious about the start of my action research project. I am a recovering racist myself. Perhaps this is why I feel so strongly about what we are about to discuss; yet, I am already anticipating the disgust I know I will feel at the stereotypes that will be uncovered in this class. The importance of what I am about to attempt weighs on me, pulling my mouth into a frown.

As I log on to the teacher computer and glance at the rain patterning on the window, I think of the Truth and Reconciliation Walk I participated in last September in Vancouver, where I sensed such strong feelings of solidarity with the First Nations people walking with me. The warmth I felt inside contrasted with the cold water running off my neighbour's umbrella onto my exposed skin as I stood there, along with fifty thousand people from all walks of life, listening to Bernice King as she spoke to us of the need for the redressing of historical injustices perpetrated against people of colour, and the urgent need for reconciliation and healing. I can still feel the sting in my eyes and see the glint in my daughter's eyes as we heard a First Nations man exclaim, "Walking with everybody here makes up for all the pain of residential schools!" That exclamation implies a hope for a better future for all of us – the hope we have of living in a more just and empathetic society as we learn about, interact with, and care about each other. That moment to me signifies the hope I feel that my teaching about the Other will make a difference – both to my students and to those whom they influence.

The overhead projector blinks, beeps and turns on, and the trepidation inside me builds as I wait for my Grade Ten English students to rush in the back door. Questions swirl in my mind. What if I fail? What if I make things worse instead of better? What if my students sense my agenda from day one, and because they are teenagers, resolve to resist it from the get-go? What if students ask me questions that I can't answer? What if students can't connect with or just plain dislike the literature? What if? What...?

My students, most of them grown taller than me, bustle in and noisily take their seats as the bell dings a warning, and those pesky questions recede to my subconscious mind. It is the last hour of the day, which means a class more difficult to navigate, as students tend to be more unsettled and less able to concentrate. There are risks, and I'm uptight about it. I can feel my face tighten and my "Voices off, please!" feels more strident than usual. I am apprehensive but determined.

I scan my students' faces as they reluctantly end their animated conversations. Directly in front of me is dark-haired Dan, the most charismatic of the group; he has been the inciting force behind some past bullying in this class, yet his ability to flatter is unparalleled in my teaching experience. He usually demonstrates critical thinking, and is strong academically. Two rows over quietly sits his girlfriend Laura, a somewhat sullen-looking American student, who, though strong academically, has no close girlfriends at school. I often empathize with her as I sense her feeling of being alienated— and yet she has, along with her boyfriend, been implicated in some bullying incidents this year. In front of Laura is John, a perceptive but yet disinterested student; his written output will be minimal, but I will discover during his end-of-unit interview that he certainly has strong, deeply-felt opinions. Beside Laura is Seth, a good-natured student for whom English is definitely not a favourite subject. Seth is wrapping up his conversation with

Janie, who sits kitty-corner to him; her red hair accurately indicates her tendency to enthusiastically voice her opinions during class. Beside her sits another red-headed student, Larry, who is without doubt a reluctant English student and tends to put minimal effort into schoolwork, rarely expressing his opinions out loud to me. In front of Larry sits the slight Jordan, peering at me inquisitively from behind his glasses. It was his comments that began this report; it was he who initially balked at returning the consent form, and who will provide me with thought-provoking (and ultimately surprising) feedback throughout the unit. In the last three years that I have taught this class, Jordan has consistently been the first to volunteer his opinion, to contribute to class discussions when others hold back, and to provide challenging or comments.

Other students blend in a little more. There is Amber, a bright student who is always keen and ready to please. She occasionally adds her voice to class discussions; her comments are mostly thoughtful, but not always critical. Her best friend, Beth, who sits beside her, struggles with analytical thinking, but she, along with Amber, enter and exit every single class with a smile and friendly greeting and farewell, always making me smile in return. I was incredulous earlier this year when I found out that these two were being deliberately spit on by other members of the class.

Also, there are Melinda and Esther, both quiet, pleasant, and conscientious girls. Easygoing Brad and childlike Marie struggle to understand the gist of class conversations and never voluntarily contribute (Marie is on a modified program). Lastly, Chris, another American, and Lance are pleasant, approachable, and occasionally-outspoken boys. As usual, all fifteen students are present. These are the faces of my students – each with a unique personality – that I have come to know and love over the years. And these are the hearts I hope to positively

influence. I breathe out, reminding myself that it has taken me many years to recognize my own prejudice, White privilege, and the nature of structural racism. I must be realistic: I cannot expect my students to make that same journey in only a few short weeks. I can only hope to move them in that direction.

Students finally quiet, and I begin. I introduce the beginning baseline questionnaire and allot 10-15 minutes for students to complete it. Although it takes them longer than I anticipated, soon the completed questionnaires lie in a pile on my desk.

My objective for the rest of this fifty-minute class is to ultimately elicit student stereotypes about First Nations people, and activities are geared to that end. Using PowerPoint, I show students a series of images of people from different walks of life, each with different colour skin. For each slide, I ask students: "Is this person a good citizen, in your view? Why or why not? Is this person trustworthy?" I intended for students to write down their answers, but because I see we have lost valuable time already, I ask students to share their responses orally. Perhaps this is a mistake, as it soon becomes evident that students are being swayed by what other influential students (like Dan and Janie) suggest; also, they seem to be having fun playing off each other and second-guessing me. I expected students to identify positively to White people and negatively to people of colour, and I can feel my unease increase as it turns out to be not that simple.

For students do not pay attention to colour. Rather, they focus more on facial features or on what people wear. Dan asserts that Saskatchewan premier Brad Wall is not to be trusted because he has "squinty eyes", and others agree. Then Janie declares that she does not like the First Nations chief because he has "thin hair" and does not look clean; however, she does like the First Nations teen because she looks clean. Others pick up on this theme. Images of others who "look clean" (including First Nations Shawn Atleo) evoke positive comments from various

students. Clearly, this activity is not having the effect I was hoping for. Also, last-period-of-the-day tendencies are showing: only a few students are responding directly to me. Others are trying to persuade each other of their point of view, talking animatedly amongst themselves, and I'm finding it tricky to guide the discussion.

Later, I will ponder if having students write down their impressions would have created different outcomes, whether the images I chose were not appropriate for the effect I was hoping for, or whether I just did not ask the right questions.

We move on. I introduce the notion of stereotype by having students complete the sentence: "Teenagers always ..." and invite them to complete the sentence from their parents' point of view. Students have fun with this one: they call out, "Teenagers always have messy rooms," "Teenagers never listen," and "Teenagers can't be trusted!" I intended to then group students into "Chinese," "Indo-Canadian" and "White" and have each group elicit stereotype for their group – but, instead, we collectively brainstorm, as I am aware of the ticking clock and, again, I adapt the activity on the fly. Students easily come up with stereotypes for Indo-Canadians – ones I've heard so often, I could have predicted them. I refrain from rolling my eyes and sighing as I hear, "They're slow; they're terrorists; they're rude" and for Chinese people: "They're smart; they walk around with umbrellas; they use cameras too much." It is generally the same students (Dan, Janie, Lance, and Jordan) contributing. Interestingly, no one can think of a stereotype for White people; I hear, "There are no stereotypes about White people," only that "White people are racist." Dan says, half-seriously, "There are none because we're perfect"; then, realizing how that sounds, he revises it to "We're perfectionists." Students have difficulty coming up with reasons why they cannot identify stereotypes about Whites; this will prove to be a good way to introduce the idea of ethnocentrism next class.

Now, the beginning “free write” so I can garner student stereotypes about First Nations people! After I finish stressing how I want students to be as honest as possible, there is a scant eight minutes left. (I realize, though, that subconsciously I do want shocking stereotypes to come out in student writing; it will make my action research report much more interesting to read, especially if students significantly change their minds by the end of the unit. That would make me look like a Very Effective Teacher!)

As my students begin writing, I, too, sit down to note my thoughts on my computer. I do not realize that the overhead projector is still on as I begin typing about my dissatisfaction with the “images” activity; minutes later, I am jolted when Jordan speaks up, “The projector is on.” All my thoughts are being projected onto the big screen! I instinctively click on another page to hide my journaling and try to act calm and collected; inside, my heart is thumping in embarrassment and with trepidation. However, when I look around, I realize that students were not reading what I was writing as they were busy with their own. However, I certainly am feeling exposed and vulnerable! So much for the Very Effective Teacher...

When the end-of-class bell rings, I request that students complete the freewrite for homework, as I see that some students have only written a few lines. Some guys protest, saying “I’m done! That’s all I have to say,” but I insist they take it home and really think about it. I will find out the next day, when students hand in their freewrites, that those who have written only a few lines will not have added anything – but it will turn out not to matter because what they have written is adequate for me to assess their stereotype – a reminder to me that quantity is not quality!

Analysis of Responses

My students' in-class contributions were telling: students readily came up with stereotypes for the Other, but were mostly unable to do so for themselves. This definitely suggests that this shows students' lack of ability to recognize Others' perspectives. As well, I believe it clearly demonstrates a classic example of ethnocentrism –the assumption of their own group's superiority and their blindness to their own ethnocentric tendencies. Both components are classic markers of prejudice (Thompson, 1997).

In regards to their views of First Nations peoples, these stereotypic and ethnocentric tendencies were clearly evident in student responses¹⁰. Although I told students that my disapproval of racist comments would not affect their mark or my opinion of them, I did find that reading some of the students' responses was emotionally upsetting for me; I actually felt physically ill after hearing and reading some of their comments. I realize that their expressed views *do* colour my esteem of these students, no matter what I say.

For ease of analysis, I coded student responses into three groups. 1) This group was the patently racist; they expressed entirely negative feelings about First Nations people; 2) This group was mixed in their views; they evidenced racism but attempted to soften it somewhat; 3) This group of two did *not* express racism; instead, they acknowledged White culpability and showed empathy for First Nations.

Fully eight students' responses fit in to the first category, five students fit in the middle category, and only two students showed some understanding of First Nations. Some of the first-category responses were indeed shocking. Jordan's response in full reads:

¹⁰ For a more exhaustive sampling of questionnaire and freewrite responses, as well as "fat" questions posited by students after watching the film, "The Poet and the Indians", see Appendix K

I absolutely hate Indians. Ever since the boarding schools back then, they came whining to the government even though they don't have to pay taxes. They are lazy people who don't clean their houses. Almost every Indian I see is either drunk or drinking or talking about drinking. Serious. Also they are either high or smoking weed when I see them. I don't consider myself racist. It's just certain people act dumb and bring these racist stereotypes upon themselves because of how they act.

Jordan's complete lack of insight into his own prejudice is striking. In his questionnaire responses, he has stated,

I for one am not racist but I hate people who act in certain ways because of their colour...
I don't belong in a race. I just hate groups of people for what they do, not because of skin pigment. I personally hate Indians for how they act toward us and the government.

His comment about acting in "certain ways because of their colour" shows limited understanding of how racism works and of his own White racial identity. Also, his repetition of the word "hate" is, though shocking, an interesting choice. Does he realize the connotation of that word? If so, why does he feel so strongly? Tellingly, he goes on: "I never speak to First Nations people. I live in a neighbourhood of "white" people. No First Nations live near where I live. I never hang out with Indians." Obviously, *contact theory* applies: lack of contact clearly and directly relates to Jordan's overt prejudice.

Other students, while refraining from such scathing language, were as emphatic in stereotyping First Nations, and as disparaging; their comments showed clear "derogation of the out group" (Altemeyer, 2003). Comments tended to have common threads, ranging from variations on "Indians are useless drunks that don't do much good for the society" (Dan), or "I personally think that all Natives are fat, lazy, and are always drunk" (Chris). With a little softer

tone, Melinda wrote, “[they] are taking advantage of their help from the government... they usually don’t get a very good education and a lot of them don’t bother to go out and get a job”, Esther offered, “I generally think of the girls that are my age as being pregnant and having kids”, and Laura thought that “they’re seen as sloppy and don’t care much for personal hygiene. I’d right away view them as uneducated and don’t know English very well”. Taken together, this group’s view is that First Nations people in general are “fat, lazy, drunk, exploitative, uneducated, dirty, and sloppy people who never pay taxes” – a very harsh picture, indeed. But there is more: another prevalent theme in six student responses was the notion that First Nations people are thieves: they “steal everything and bring it to the reserves where they can’t be caught” (Dan). Indeed, stories of First Nations thievery, real or imagined, run rampant in our community, so it is no wonder students have developed the stereotype.

Several student responses did evidence racism in their writing, but with a level of discomfort. Two students start out attempting to sound reasonable, but then regress into overt stereotyping. Amber states that “they seem like nice people, from what little interaction I have had with them,” but then spends the rest of her entry discussing how they are “robbers who can get away with it” and the fact that she is “almost jealous” because “the government treats the natives way better than us.” John shows some empathy: he states that “I think Natives are people who feel rejected – rejected by the government, modern society, and other races,” but does not carry that understanding through to its logical effect: instead, he goes on to cast blame, “Many Natives seem mad at everybody ... have a stubborn attitude... don’t realize they may be doing something wrong!” Janie takes the opposite tack: she begins by reiterating other students’ views that “people mostly look at Natives as drunks who don’t have work ethic or any goals in life,” but then discusses a First Nations couple who had visited their Socials class the year before who

were “genuine and honest and seemed really nice,” concluding that “they’re not all bad; it’s just that alcohol is very bad for them and brings out the worst in them. I think there are good Natives, ones who are honest and good and want what is best.” Her classmate, Lance, shows some understanding of how stereotype works: “If something goes wrong in society, it gets blamed on Natives. For example, if there is a robbery or break-in, it usually gets blamed on Native people.” Student responses in this second group are certainly more nuanced than the first group, but racism still exists.

Finally, two students exhibit little stereotyping in their responses; rather, they evidence a shared sense of responsibility for the wrongs that were done. Seth wrote, “Personally, I think Aboriginal people are over-judged... Why do they drink? Is it maybe because we, the people judging, have bullied them so harsh that they feel their only option is to drink? We tend to forget that we are the cause of this,” while Marie wrote, “They struggle because they had this land first and then we took it. We sometimes are not fair towards them.” Later, when I mentioned Marie’s response to her parents, they related to me that they are emphatic about supporting First Nations people, and that they have zero tolerance for racist comments in their home. This was significant, because Marie revealed in her questionnaire that she has no contact with First Nations people at all; using contact theory, one then could surmise that she would indeed be *quite* prejudiced. However, her lack of evident stereotype and expressed empathy suggest perhaps that her social situation of development is a stronger influence in her life than her lack of contact with the Other. This reminds me that prejudice formation (and its potential deconstruction) is unquestionably complex.

But it also clear to me that those students who had actual personal contact with other First Nations youth showed that that contact had made a positive impact on their view of First Nations

people. Seth wrote that he grew up playing soccer with “Aboriginals in Agassiz,” noting that he “learned how nice these kids actually were,” and that we “tend to forget how similar these people are to us.” Beth noted that there are “both good and bad” Natives, but that she “was in swimming lessons and there was a Native girl in my class. Her and her family were very nice and normal. They were clean and friendly and very normal people.” (The use of the “normal” and its association with cleanliness is notable). These two instances seem to be clear examples of contact theory; when sustained, intimate, informal and equal interracial contact did occur, student stereotypes were lessened.

The converse is also true. Responses on the questionnaire showed that most of my students have virtually no contact with First Nations people, which is, I would argue, along with Akramiet al (2009), Allport (1954/1979), Bedard (1999), Hall, Matz, & Wood (2001) Watts Debose (2000), and others, one clear reason why my students hold these stereotypes. Twelve students (including Jordan) wrote that they didn’t speak to *any* First Nations people during a typical week, and thirteen students reported that *zero* First Nations people lived in their neighbourhood. This clear correlation between isolationism and prejudice supports what the literature posits; as long as the fortress remains intact, stereotypes will remain strong. One way or another, cracks must be made in the walls.

Reviewing student opinions on racism in Canada reveals significant ignorance of prejudice. Eight students stated that Canada was *not* racist because, for example, “We allow any race from anywhere in the world to live here (Beth)” or, as John put it, “We accept many other cultures and beliefs... In fact sometimes I believe we are too accepting.” Esther separates attitude from action: “Everyone is welcome... we might have stereotypes about people but you can have a stereotype and not be racist as long as you don’t treat people differently than others

because of their race.” While she does recognize the difference between belief and action, she fails to see that belief often turns *into* action. Laura’s response is somewhat illogical: “No, [Canada is not a racist country] because _____ has a lot of East Indians and they don’t get treated badly because there is a lot of them where they live.” She denies racism: “I think people here in Canada and most places aren’t racist anymore; it was more in the olden days.” It might be that, given her American context, she connects 1970s-era Civil Rights Movement with racism, and mistakenly assumes that it existed therefore only “in the olden days.” Dan’s response shows obliviousness to racism, strong in-group favoritism, and sense of superiority: “I don’t see Canada as a racist country because we love our neighbours and are the friendliest people you will ever meet no matter what colour your skin is, white or black all the same.”

Seth and Larry are more astute, though. Seth wrote that he did not think Canada “as a whole” was racist, but that communities are: “_____, for example, is probably one of the most challenging places for a Native to live in. When their [sic] not getting accused for stealing, they are probably getting thought to be getting drunk.” Larry observed, perceptively: “Our school has quite a few racist people because we are not really exposed to the real world, and are mainly one race.” The irony of this is that though Larry recognizes this, he himself will be quick to refer to First Nations people as “whiners” throughout his journal writing, evidencing his own racist attitudes.

Moving On

We discussed these beliefs the next day in class, as we briefly reviewed student responses. I suggested to students that, although we “let a lot of different kinds of people into [Canada], we *do* have attitudes about them,” and referred to our discussion of stereotype. Several students had difficulty with my next contention – that race is a social construct and not a

biological difference. Janie protested: “They have different strong genes – we’re not the same.... Isn’t it is our genes what race we are? How can we *not* be biologically different?” I took pains to explain, that, although there are no genetic differences, we definitely *do* have race in our society and we *treat* people as part of races, and that race *does* matter for this reason. I detected skepticism among students, and, upon reflection, I understand that students likely needed to take time to adjust to this new idea.

This discussion occurs during our Wednesday first hour class, which generally flows more smoothly than those after lunch. Today students are much more respectful both to me and each other, and less antagonistic. As I prepare to start drawing a mind-map on the board, Jordan raises his hand. “Yes, Jordan,” I say, pausing in my sketching. He asks, “Why is it not okay to call First Nations ‘Indians’ but it’s okay to call East Indians ‘Indians’”? I explain, “First Nations people prefer to be called ‘First Nations’ because ‘Indian’ has been used in a derogatory way so many times for them, they feel like it’s a slur... South Asians, or ‘East Indians,’ as you call them, are from India – that’s why we call them ‘Indian.’” Janie turns to Jordan and informs him: “Columbus thought America was India when he got here; that’s why they were called ‘Indians.’” It’s a decent question, and it shows that Jordan is engaged.

I continue drawing the mind-map on the board, with students copying in their own notebooks. I instruct them, “Put ‘you’ at the center, and then draw bubbles around the outside. In the bubbles, write down people from whom you get your ideas. Who shapes your thinking?” AL asks, “Does it have to be people?” I clarify, “It can be people or a group of people... including media.” After a few moments of brainstorming, Esther asks, “Can it be like from the First Nations themselves, like what they do and stuff?” I don’t know what exactly she is thinking, but I assume she is referring back to a stereotype she has identified: seeing “girls her age

pregnant.” I respond, “No, right now I want you to think about the culture that you live in and the people who shape your ideas.” I hope that Esther will eventually come to understand that it is her interpretation of what she sees is shaped by interactions within her subculture. Students begin to volunteer their contributions: “society” (I redirect: “be more specific”); “friends,” “classmates,” “family,” “people at work,” “what we see”. The last one is Jordan’s [is he thinking of the skatepark again?]- and I remind him, “I said we are going to leave that one for later.” John offers “history”. I ask for clarification, “History textbooks?” “I guess,” he responds. “We have to be clear,” I said, “because history doesn’t talk to us. History textbooks is a good one. Who writes history textbooks?” I answer my own question, “It has usually been a White person who offers his or her interpretation of historical events.”

I use John’s suggestion of “history” as a springboard to introduce the PowerPoint lecture/discussion on the powerful underlying ideas of the unit: ethnocentrism, colonization, decolonization, and hegemony. As we discuss the concept of ethnocentrism, I remember to remind students of their inability to identify stereotypes about Whites; I suggest, “Perhaps you couldn’t identify stereotypes about your own race because you can’t see yourself from where you stand.” I also teach a brief overview of First Nations/European colonial history.¹¹ It is the first mention of residential schools – an issue that will come to play a large part of our classroom discussions and in the development of students’ thinking.

As other students busily scribble notes, Jordan’s hand is waving again. “Why do we have to still pay for people who went to residential schools?” I suggest that he keeps his excellent question until after we have our visit from Bruce Bruce, the residential school survivor. I

¹¹For a PowerPoint of this lesson plus the images from the previous one, see <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8ANI94UU5ZZmx4UTQ/edit?usp=sharing>

promise to come back to it, and quickly jot down a note to do so. I feel that to tackle that (huge question) now, without students's deeper awareness of real historical context, would be outside of students' ability to understand, and might only serve to entrench negativity.

Using the idea of "story" as a powerful cognitive tool, I read to the students a fable I have written that depicts colonization from a White, European perspective.¹² Students identify and note historical characters and events, the locus of power, and the ethnocentrism within the story as I read it with as much expression and cadence as I can muster. We discuss historical parallels, and students' comments evidence a burgeoning understanding of ethnocentrism. Next, I introduce Duncan Campbell Scott, his White, European perspective, his poetry, and his contribution to the signing of Treaty No. 9 in 1905-6,¹³ focussing on the true (White) goals of assimilation in the context of hegemony and Scott's infamous saying that he wanted to "kill the Indian in the child."

The following day, after watching "The Poet and the Indians" (on Scott's life), and correctly identifying examples from the video of assimilation and de/colonization, students wrote down some "fat" questions they had. I hope the questions will be helpful for me to know what my students are thinking, and what I need to pay special attention to in planning my next lessons. A few (those from groups 2 and 3 in the freewrite) are quite insightful in noting the paradox within Duncan Campbell Scott, that he was able to write such moving poetry about the Canadian wilderness and First Nations people, and yet that he was able to enact such draconian laws harming them at the same time. Lance asks "Why did Scott not realize that what he was doing is

¹²For "The Story of Catland: Part 1" see

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8AVIFCdDVtMjgxNTQ/edit?usp=sharing>

¹³ Scott was deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs for years, and responsible in some of the worst atrocities in residential schools. For PowerPoint, see

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8AenJwRjF3X21Xc1E/edit?usp=sharing>

wrong if he wrote so many good poems about Indians?”, and Seth wonders, “Could the Indians have tried harder to fight for what was actually there?” I do not respond directly to Seth, but merely suggest that he “think about power: who had it and who didn’t?”

In retrospect, thinking about this question, I think I may have missed an opportunity, in responding to Seth’s question more specifically, to use some cognitive tools from Romantic Understanding, spending time exploring with the class instances of Native *resistance* and *heroism*, to understand both weaknesses and strengths of First Nations peoples. I do believe that a danger exists in merely trying to “feed” students answers, but that they need to attain their own insights. However, I am reminded that true insights cannot be attained in the absence of knowledge. As Egan observes, “We can only imagine from what we know” (1988).

Other “fat” questions, though, are disappointing to me, and show that several students (from group 1) are still fixated have made little movement since the beginning. Several questions are similar: Jordan asks, “Why don’t the Natives just get a job and forget the past?”, Dan wonders, “Why don’t Natives just give it up and realize that they past is the past and in order to survive in society they need to try?”, while Larry ponders, “Why don’t the Natives accept what happened instead of still fighting it, and go and get a good education for a good job?”

These questions are revealing: Emerson & Smith (2000) observe that people such as my students are *more* likely to blame the victims of oppression and *less* likely to articulate systemic explanations for inequality, and these questions seem like perfect examples of that. What interests me, though, is that the two earlier, more insightful questions refers to “Indians” while these refer to “Natives” – a less derogatory term. I wonder if it because the first are responding directly to the video, which uses the term “Indian” ubiquitously, while the others are not considering the video at all while formulating their questions – and if that signifies that the first

set of students are more open to new ideas and the second set are more intransigent. The question, though, of whether Natives should “just forget the past” is one we spend considerable time with later on in the unit.

The complexity of learning, though, is being underscored for me today. I sense some resistance in class, and I’m not sure where it’s coming from. Then, I think I know. Lance tells me that, before class today, Jordan has been telling classmates that I had told Grade Seven that Grade Ten students were “so racist” and that I had been sharing what students had written in their freewrite. (Jordan has a brother in Grade Seven, where I have been teaching a novel which also lends itself to a discussion on prejudice; as we also brainstormed stereotypes there[about First Nations peoples too],I remarked that, in general, theirs were very similar to Grade Ten’s.) I defend myself to the class, “Well, that’s just not true! I wouldn’t do that because what you say here is completely confidential.” I’m not sure if they really believe me; in fact, I’m unsure if they’re really offended, or if they are just having fun trying to get mileage out of what Jordan has said. Dan looks at me with a twinkle in his eyes. “I’ve lost my faith in you,” he says.

I also respond to the resistance I feel by taking time to explain that I’m not here to force my students to believe anything: “All I can do is present evidence to you; whether it changes the way you think is not up to me.” I’m unsure how they accept that; it seems like some students are disengaged, looking out the window, at their binders, at each other, at anything else instead of at me.

The last “fat” question we deal with is Janie’s long one: “Why are the Natives always asking for money and land because we were bad to them generations ago, but the Asians come, and were treated like animals and their wives and families weren’t allowed to come but they don’t always ask for things or money back from the government?” I ask her classmates to

respond, and I'm encouraged when Jordan turns and says to her, "They were here for thousands of years before the Whites came and decided they wanted the land, and then they just took it. That's different than the Chinese." I cheer silently: this is the first time that Jordan has shown some movement and historical understanding! But, again, the complexity of things is evident. Esther protests: "Japanese Canadians received an apology and money for their internment during World War II and their land was taken away, and they don't keep on about it!" Needless to say, I have to always be on my toes and tread lightly. I decide to let this one go, too, as I don't want to seem to be "forcing" anything, especially considering the tensions today. I want students to keep learning about First Nations and to eventually be able to answer that question for themselves. In a general response to student "fat" questions, I remind students that I used to have the very same questions myself, and that there are no easy answers; if there were, the problem would be solved already. I relate a little of my own journey as a recovering racist, and then wrap up suggesting we keep some deep questions until the end of the unit, when we have more context under our belt.

Later, I wonder if I should not have addressed Esther's claim more directly. Perhaps even a simple t-chart on the board listing the similarities and differences between the Japanese-Canadian experience and the First Nations one would have helped students to understand more clearly the vast differences between the two. Knowing when to intervene and when to let students think for themselves is a bit of an art!

It is interesting to me, as I review my field notes, that I make little mention of our investigations of the Scott poems, and how, as time passes, they change to reflect his evolving views of First Nations. Examination of his poetry in the context of his life makes clear that, the more he was in contact with First Nations people, the more he admired and respected them, and

the less he saw them as “savage.” I emphasized this to students, and in general, they evidenced on assignments and a test an understanding of how his views changed based on that contact. I wonder if I made little note of this because it did not constitute the “emotional” content of class discussions, either for my students or for me.

I am pleased when, at the beginning of the next class, Lance does not even wait for the bell to signal the start of class, but begins, “So I was talking about stereotype with some Asian people last night, and I’ve got some good ones that they have about Whites.” He asks for permission to pull out his phone where he has recorded them. I happily scrawl them on the board as he shares: “we can’t dance, we make the most money, we’re snobby, we’re bad parents, and we don’t try at school.” We spend the first part of the class unpacking some of them. Students admit that there is some truth to the stereotypes, and discussion evolves into an excellent opportunity to discuss ethnocentrism, Social Darwinism, and White privilege. Students do not think it is a privilege to be White. Seth volunteers, “I wouldn’t mind being Black,” and Dan scoffs, “All Blacks are either in gangs or in the NBA!” I merely look at him, with a half-smile on my face; he responds with his own grin, “I know, I know – stereotype, right?” In response, I refer to a book I have just read (Black Like Me), describing the hardship that comes from being - and living as - a person of colour, and the associated internalization of inferiority that often occurs.

This discussion of perspective leads nicely into a change of lens, from the European perspective of colonization to a First Nations one. I read the second fable I have prepared for this purpose.¹⁴ After discussing how power works in the story/ history, I ask students to take turns

¹⁴ “The Story of Catland: part 2
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMO8Ac3N4OVFya3RndWM/edit?usp=sharing>

reading out loud excerpts from First Nations perspectives -- You are Asked to Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History (Carlson, 1997), Clearing the Plains (Daschuk, 2013), and We Were not the Savages (Paul, 2007) - and to connect them to the different parts of the fable, paying special attention to First Nations deaths across the country, sustained because of European colonization. As I show students the covers of the books, Dan raises his hand, looking at this:



He says, “If he’s trying to say they were not the savages, why did he put a picture like that on the cover?” I ask what he thinks it shows, and he responds, “He looks like a savage... because of the war paint and the feathers”. “Define ‘savage’,” I say. Dan replies, “Someone who kills another for no good reason.” “Ah!” I replied. “But who killed others for no good reason?” A brief discussion about scalping, who paid bounties for scalps (British and French), and who was ultimately responsible for scalping follows. In general, the students seem engaged and to consider and understand White culpability – in other words, to show some burgeoning understanding of First Nations perspectives.

This discussion was an especially rewarding one. It began because of an impromptu question, a stereotypical interpretation of the cover photo, but then evolved into a deconstruction of that stereotype, enabling students to see through its opacity to the alternate truth (White savagery) that Daniel Paul points out. Are students becoming more skilled at not taking things at “face” value?

Next, we focus on the impact of residential schools, mainly through a compare/contrast study of Marilyn Dumont’s poem “The Devil’s Language” and Rita Joe’s poem “I Lost My Talk” and through the storytelling of Bruce Bruce, a residential schools survivor. I try to get students to feel an emotional connection to those who attended the schools. “Close your eyes and imagine yourself as a 5-year-old,” I say to my students. “Imagine everything that is near and dear to you.” Starting with a blank sheet of paper, students sketch that image; I instruct them to add parents, siblings, favorite places, sayings, foods, activities. Then I ask students to rip off everything except for the 5-year-old child (including any long hair), to crumple it up, and throw it across the room. Students first look at me in disbelief when I give them permission to throw paper, but then soon are gleefully enjoying their paper fight.

Once students have settled in their seats, I tell them to find each tiny piece of paper they threw away and to piece their sketch back together. Janie exclaims, “But that’s impossible!” and I use that comment to start debriefing. Dan observes that the purpose of the activity was “to show that they couldn’t put life back together the way it was.” We discuss reasons why it would be so difficult for survivors to go back to their homes. Amber suggests, “You wouldn’t have normal memories of a child – like family memories”, while Janie observes that “what they were taught about life at the reserves was immoral and wrong.” I have to take a little more time with why it would be difficult to integrate into White society there. Beth says, “They wouldn’t really

be accepted the same” and Amber offers, “In school, they weren’t seen as smart and they only had school in the morning.” I elaborate on her response: “They were only taught to be servants; they didn’t get a good education.”

We watch an excerpt of an interview of CBC’s George Strombolopolous with Wab Kinew, First Nations hip-hop artist/advocate, and director of the CBC show 8th Fire. Kinew talks about how his father was horribly abused at residential schools, and how he feels it is important to use the word “survivor” rather than “student,” suggesting that the CBC may be guilty of tokenism, of “putting Brown people on the air but everybody just has to act white.” I ask, “Why does Wab Kinew make such a big deal about the difference between the word ‘survivor’ and ‘student’? Who cares?” Chris responds immediately, “Because then you’re basically telling people who went to residential schools that it wasn’t that bad,” and Dan adds, “You’re trying to justify what was done to say that they had been taught, but it denies all the bad stuff that happened.”

It takes students a little longer to answer my next question, and I have to guide them a little more to get the point. “What does he mean by saying that ‘the CBC is a place that is diverse by putting Brown people on their air but expects everyone to act white’?” John tries, “It means adopting White views in different situations.” I dig a little deeper: “Particularly as it pertains to him and his father’s experience in residential school, what would he have to deny in order to ‘act white’?” Silence. Students seem stumped. So I become even more obvious: “What would he have to pretend never happened to him or his family?” Then the lightbulb finally goes on – Jordan gets the point, and it’s a big one. He looks at me, “It means to forget about the past—that it didn’t really happen.” I applaud inwardly; it seems we are getting movement! This question students have been asking: “Why don’t they just get over it?” and I hope that this is the beginning of authentic insight. I enthusiastically reinforce his statement: “Yes! To ‘act White’

means that what happened in the past doesn't matter, but what matters is what we do now. And he's saying that's not good enough. We need to acknowledge what has happened in the past because it forms who we are today."

I take the opportunity to reinforce this idea through the metaphor a flower, which I sketch on the whiteboard. "Pretend we're all kinds of flowers, and we all have roots that go down. Think about all the different kinds of roots that we have. They form our identity; without them we die. Our identity is wrapped up in things like where our parents came from." Wanting student input, I ask, "What else is wrapped up in our identity?" Amber responds, "Family," which I write in. Then Silence. "All right, then," I say, conscious of time, "I'll just fill it in: religion, language, games, parties (birthday parties), get-togethers, communities – these are all part of a healthy self-identity. These are my roots and I know who I am. Where sometimes we get psychological damage is where these roots get broken off." I sever each root as I speak. "This is what happened to a lot of FN people; the roots were broken off. Partially, perhaps, in some instances, but they were broken off in a lot of ways. So if you think about it in the context of decolonization, it is First Nations efforts to try to re-attach those roots to their original identity – and that doesn't happen overnight." I begin reconnecting the roots to the flower. "But that's what they're attempting to do - to re-establish their sense of identity. So when you hear of powwows or drumming or other cultural things or celebrations, it's a really important part of re-establishing their identity; they're asking and answering questions like, 'Who am I as a person?' 'Who are we as people?' 'Who do I belong to?'" Students are quiet and attentive as they listen to my explanation.

Student Journal Review

A review of student journals that evening showed that they had absorbed the meaning behind the metaphors. The assigned journal write was a response to Question 3 (Appendix E)¹⁵, a leading question with the purpose of getting students to see things through the lens of the First Nations experience. Although this was not really a critical exercise, I do believe it was beneficial, as sometimes just getting students to put something in their own words can help them to internalize content.

Across the board, students responded that they would not be able to “function normally in society,” positing various reasons. A few students made direct reference to the flower metaphor: John said that “we would be still grasping to our old roots but on the other trying to be successful in our new society,” I believe they should be given a chance by White society to be respected, while Laura stated, “All our family roots would be broken.” Both Jordan and Melinda draw the direct connection between the question and the Native experience: “There is no way we could function normally because our religion, childhood, and culture have been stripped away from us; we would be like the Natives” (Jordan); “I think that now in these days, we might try to fight back for a little while but I think we would give up a lot sooner than the Natives did” (Melinda). Both responses indicate a movement away from prejudice towards understanding, with Melinda indicating admiration for First Nations people. On the whole, I feel a sense of positive changes in attitude in most students.

What is especially interesting to note is the emotional content of many student responses: “After years of cruel treatment and being looked down on we would have a sense of hate towards

¹⁵Summarized here: “What do you think would happen to us if another country’s peoples, like, say, the Chinese came here and tricked us and treated us like the White Europeans tricked and treated First Nations people?”

the Chinese,” states Dan; Beth thinks that “it would take quite a few generations before we could get the pain and hurt out of our past and feelings”; Larry exclaims: “We would be full of hate!”; and Janie predicts that “we would hold a grudge for years and years after.” What was remarkable about this recognition of ensuing hatred and bitterness in a hypothetical situation was that it did not translate into a real empathy and understanding for First Nations people’s anger and bitterness in the First Nations poems we studied, which I will discuss momentarily.

First Nations Poetry

Before a study of First Nations poetry, we watched a Wab Kinew “Soapbox” video clip, where he deconstructs common stereotypes about First Nations,¹⁶ and we listened to, read the lyrics, and discussed Charlie Angus’ song “Four Horses.”¹⁷ Then, as it seemed as though students were beginning to grasp the connotations of colonization/ decolonization, we were ready, I felt to examine First Nations perspectives through their literature (in line with Wilson’s [2013] premise that we need to hear about the Other’s experience through *their* voices.) We read the poems “I Lost My Talk” by Rita Joe and “The Devil’s Language” by Marilyn Dumont; both express the poets’ feelings about their residential school experience. Students grouped together to analyze the poems, and, after class discussion, used their notes to write an in-class compare-contrast essay.¹⁸

¹⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlkuRCXdu5A>

¹⁷See <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/charlie-angus/2013/12/charlie-anguss-four-horses-tells-dark-chapter-canadian-history>

¹⁸For poems and questions:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8Ac25aNzh0N0hYTXM/edit?usp=sharing>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8AX2dvTFQwZlNGUUE/edit?usp=sharing>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8AUWEydUJOX3gwTkE/edit?usp=sharing>

Two things stood out in the study of these poems: first, we observed the contrast in Dumont's poem between her description of the European world and its "lily white words / its picket fence sentences/ and manicured paragraphs" with her Cree world and "the clearing in the bush / in the tall black spruce." I noted that Dumont rejects and critiques "White" artificial standards and instead takes us back to the natural clearing in the bush. This raised a telling conversation: I asked, "Who decided that keeping our yards 'neat and tidy' was the standard we should all adhere to?", trying to get students to see that the concept of "neat yards" was a social construct. Students looked puzzled, and declared that it was only "normal" to mow lawns and keep yards weed-free. It seems they are not able to see outside the perimeters of their own ethnocentric lens. I tried providing an alternative that would appeal to them: "God created everything beautiful and 'perfect' and what we're doing is trying to say it's not good enough, but that we need to 'improve' it by cutting our grass, putting up perfectly straight fences, and pulling 'weeds.'" It was clear to me, though, that they were not buying it. This was not a lens they were ready to look through, by any means.

What also struck me was how my students reacted to the tone of each poet. We discussed how, in Joe's poem, we are left with an image of the speaker holding out her hand so the reader can take it; she requests, "*Let me find my talk,*" still giving power to the White reader. Her tone is gentle, even though she has been deeply hurt. In "The Devil's Language," by contrast, the speaker defiantly turns her back on the reader as she returns to that "clearing in the bush." Her tone is much more accusing, caustic, and bitter about stereotypes. In class discussion and in their essays, the majority of students voiced their appreciation for Joe's stance over Dumont's. I pointed out that, in Joe's case, it was still the White person who held the power, and the First Nations person who was still subservient. Students acknowledged this, but as will be evident in

their forum posts and final reflections, still felt strongly that *her* stance was much more acceptable.

Residential School Survivor Visit

Studying these two poems was a good segue to the visit from Bob Bruce, a 60-something residential school survivor and Pentecostal pastor. I had listened to his powerful testimony at a Christian teachers' convention last Fall, and I was moved to tears by it; I reflected at that time that hearing someone speak in person about their experience is much more effective than just reading a story or even watching a video. Pastor Bruce, a wonderfully warm person, has a real knack for storytelling, and, despite snow and icy conditions, he happily travelled from Vancouver to grant us a one-hour glimpse into his life.

Briefly, Bob Bruce grew up in Haida Gwaii (off the North coast of British Columbia) and was forcibly removed by the RCMP when he was six to go to residential school on Vancouver Island. He eloquently but judiciously related to us his years of suffering, including hunger (he tells a colourful story of finding a jar of green, moldy peanut butter, hiding it in the woods, and eating it, one delicious fingerful per day), sexual abuse, and tuberculosis, which brought him to a TB hospital. His family then removed to Alaska to prevent his being returned to the school. When they returned to Haida Gwaii several years later, it was not long until he was again forcibly sent to another residential school, where he again suffered horribly and, subsequently, began to behave delinquently as a result of his life experiences. Pastor Bruce told a stirring story in an inviting manner, and student and staff response to his visit was entirely positive. In addition, I received this e-mail from Janie's mother the same afternoon:

Just a quick THANK YOU for opening some eyes and creating a new perspective today amongst your students with your guest speaker. Very nice as a parent to hear your

daughter walk in the door and report her take on residential schools and how cute it was as he described his wife etc. and to relay the family situation as a result of his experience as a residential school victim. Thanks for your part in developing these kids! Appreciate it...

While the note was a reminder to me of the power of positive words, it remained to be seen whether students showed positive development in their writing as a result of the visit.

In our next class, I had students jot down any “fat” questions they would have liked to ask Pastor Bruce, if they could have (there was no time for questions, unfortunately). Many questions did evidence considerable depth of thought. Samples include: *What are your feelings towards what was done to compensate for what happened at residential schools? Was there any good that came out of residential schools? How can we end the alcoholism within the Native tribes? Will showing the care with an apology help this, or is this just a problem that can no longer be fixed? Do you feel the white people are still trying to assimilate the First Nations?* Student questions clearly evidence critical thinking and sensitivity about the deeper issues associated with First Nations people. Upon reflection, having a longer assembly with time for questions would be a definite benefit, as I expect that giving Pastor Bruce the opportunity to answer them would have been very helpful to the students.

In their journals, all students except one noted how their opinions and feelings towards First Nations had changed after listening to Bruce’s testimony. What came through especially clearly was an understanding that historical trauma has led to the contemporary situation. Seth said that they “suffered more than I expected”; that he used to think, “Why are they still holding it against us today? [But] Pastor Bruce made me realize this cannot and should not be forgotten!” Melinda exclaimed: “To think that we just look past that and tell them to hurry up and get on

their feet again!"; Jordan expressed the same sentiment: "I used to think that natives should just move on with life but now I see that they can't because they had their childhood ripped away from them and they were sent to school for up to 10 years. Now I can see why they can't just forget and move on." Amber, too, evidenced increased empathy: "I used to complain about the Natives being tax-free and getting money from the government, and now I can see that all that doesn't even begin to make up for what happened in the residential schools." Interestingly, Lance referenced the word "savage," making me wonder if he had Daniel Paul's book in mind when he said, "We think about the Natives as being savage, but it is actually *us* because we did so many bad things to them in residential schools." All in all, it seemed like Pastor Bruce had made a powerful impact on my students.

However, not all students were as enthusiastic. Esther and Dan showed more ambivalence, even though they both reported learning new things. "His talk helped me realize how bad it was," said Esther, but "I still think that Natives could do better at overcoming it. I'm not saying that they should just get over it, but I think that they could try harder at making their lives better." Dan writes a similar, ambivalent response, stating, "From Mr. Bruce, I realize that the Native people are a loving people. The Indians might have a rough exterior but we made them that way. Although their whining is rather annoying it is understandable." This is the first time that Dan used the word "whining," and it made me wonder where it was coming from.

John's response, too, was very similar to Esther's; he *has* no stereotypes, he says, and still thinks that the Natives are good people... but there are a high percentage of drunks, drug users, and criminals in Native bands which Pastor Bruce supported in his talk... I believe they should be given a chance by White society to be respected. But I also think that the Natives need to try a little harder to do so."

This response shows that he was conflicted, although he tried, I believe, to show nuance; I wondered whether this was evidence of crisis in his thinking. Reflection on his final reflection and interview will perhaps shed light on this.

In retrospect, I think this repeated notion of First Nations people needing to “try harder” should have raised a red flag for me; was I not providing enough instances of First Nations people trying very hard? Was I not making it clear enough how societal structures and prejudice often worked against them? Should I have spent more time on success stories of decolonization and less time on the damages done by colonization?

The Natural World

We continued our study of First Nations literature,¹⁹ focussing on the importance of the natural world, the deep emotional and spiritual connectedness they feel with the elements of the earth, and, also, how their land has been taken and polluted and destroyed through the effects of colonization. We studied “The History Lesson” by Jeannette Armstrong, “My Heart Soars” by Chief Dan George, and “In the Cold October Water” by David Groulx, and students were required to write an essay to compare and contrast the beauty and joy connected to nature embodied in George’s poem with the anguish in “The History Lesson” because of its destruction at hands of White colonizers. Lastly, to briefly broaden our selection of literature beyond poetry, students read and we briefly discussed an essay, “Two Different Ways of Life,” by George Blondin (who expresses how hard for him to live “White” because he was used to sharing everything), and a speech, “Lament for Confederation,” by Chief Dan George, which argues the importance of

¹⁹For all poems and assignments for this section, see:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4ydeeiGMo8AN2ZXcHNvT3pucGc/edit?usp=sharing>

involvement of First Nations in the Canadian political and social world in order to facilitate their healing.

Final week

The final week of the unit (three short 50 minute classes!) was a very busy one. I introduced the final assignment: students had to write two letters to the editor in response to the *Star* article. As mentioned earlier, I felt that I did not give this discussion/exploration enough class time, and, upon reflection, I realized there were some remaining misunderstandings. I also introduced forum assignment on the same day, and, the next day, which was to be a work time on the letters, students worked mostly on their forum entries. Students posted a question that they had about First Nations and then replied to each other's questions. The field notes I write that night are revealing:

I am tired from a short four-hour night's sleep and I am fighting a head cold. And then I review the forum responses right after class; somewhat predictably, the frustrations I quickly jotted in my journal show an overreaction: "I am quite dismayed about how little we seem to have progressed from the beginning of the unit! It seems students are still not understanding what I'd hoped they would. Many of their questions and responses still show overt racism. We've been discussing how so many Aboriginal women have gone missing or murdered and were being ignored in the media - and the federal government's refusal to call an inquiry. It seems to me that responses, as well as showing limited understanding of the subject, show an intransigence of sorts."

The question posted by Jordan is a good one, and again reflects a possible shift in his thinking:

Why do we as law abiding citizens not take part in recognizing, helping out and following up on aboriginal murders and missing cases, but we are all over the internet and news when a white person is missing or murdered? What would we do if we were the family of the missing or murdered aboriginal?

However, responses are disappointing:

I think there would be no difference if the women were white or native. We don't react any different because we don't know the murder victims. Unless the murder is close to home it usually doesn't affect us as much no matter what the nationality. (Dan)

I think we don't even hear of white people being stolen or murdered, I haven't heard of a murder in a long long time, so I don't think it'd make a difference if the victim was white or native. I personally don't think that whites do get so much more media coverage than natives. (Janie)

I had noted: "Clearly, in light of the articles we read, and the discussions we had in class, Janie and Dan have not changed their positions; this shows a likely entrenchment of prejudice."

Upon further reflection, though, I suspected that an incomplete understanding of the situation of the missing women was partly to blame for their seeming intransigence – and this was reflected in the Letters to the Editor that students wrote, as I later discovered.

Janie also responds to Amber's question, "Would it be a good idea to divide up native reserves into separate lots so that each native family could live on, and just get rid of the whole reserve system?":

I think that'd be ok to to get rid of the reserve system, because alot of them aren't even close or cultural anymore, they just live on their reserves. We have a 'Dutch'

community, but we don't all live together just so we can walk around in our klompen and eat croquettes and stroopwafles every day.

I write: "This feels like the unkindest cut of all. I feel like Janie is showing of profound lack of understanding of both the past and present situation, and a callousness/disregard towards First Nations peoples, which is quite unlike anything she has said previously in the class. Is she becoming more racist, instead of less?"

Janie's deep question repeats her focus on "priviledges":

Why do Natives get 10% or 20% of alcohol in our country? They say it's because they should get their taxes off, but we don't want them to drink, and they shouldn't drink, because they have low alcohol tolerance. If it affects them more than us so shouldn't we be the ones getting the 10% or 20% off?

Some responses to this are disheartening. Larry says: "The natives are bigger whiners than us and demand compensation for what happened to them in residential schools so the government lets them have everything cheaper!" and John concurs: "Totally true I agree with Larry. They do not see our side of the story that we are sorry for what we did and we are trying to accept natives but they do not accept us." Even Marie, who showed no stereotyping in her initial freewrite, got in on the act: "The natives are whining for more things so the government are giving them what they want!" If I was to base movement of stereotype on these questions and responses alone, I would surely conclude that my students' prejudice has been made worse, and that my initial hypothesis has been proven false, for the most part.

Later, Janie responds to another post: "If equality is what they're fighting for, how come they get some more priviledges than us in some areas? We should all be equal no?" Again, I feel like she has understood very little of what we have been studying and discussing. What bothers

me especially about her responses is that it was her mother who had sent me that encouraging email about what an impact our residential school survivor speaker had on Janie. I respond to Janie's questions and posts in writing, and my tone is scolding:

I am somewhat disappointed that you would still think that they are more privileged than we are; it shows a possible lack of insight in our own blessings in comparison. Do you really think, comparing the 'Dutch' experience with that of First Nations, that they are the privileged ones? There is also some factual inaccuracy in this question. What do you mean by 10% or 20% off alcohol? On reserves, alcohol is GST exempt (7%), because First Nations have taxing authority within their reserves.

After I interviewed Janie on the last day, I handed back her feedback and softened it with more gentle explanations. She listened and nodded, but did not respond. However, a week later, she sent me an email:

Mrs. Roseboom...you said I had factual inaccuracy in my question when I said First Nations get 10-20% of alcohol. The reason I posted this question and not another was because I saw, a few days before the forum was due, a sign hanging off the window of a liquor store right next to a reserve, saying '20% off alcohol for Status.' This means my facts were accurate, and white alcoholics do pay more for their liquor. I don't know if this will affect my mark, but I did think about it critically and that's why I posted the question. If it was just 7% of alcohol I would have understood why they had gotten tax exempt, but 20% is a lot, and that's more than tax. That's also why I said they have more privileges in some areas than us. I didn't say they are more privileged, just that in some areas they are... I thought it showed some insight.

It seems as if I judged Janie's responses too harshly, and she was trying to make sense of things she observed around her. I also realize that there may have been a confounding factor, as students spent all of class time posting on the forum instead of working on their Letters, often talking and laughing as they did so. This was not the best scenario: I suspect that some students were trying to attract attention just by having the most shocking things to say.

One question still evidences a sense of White superiority. Esther posits, "If Natives care so much about how they are treated, why don't they do more to gain our respect so we will treat them better"? Again, it is Jordan who shows continued shifting views, as he says, "They do try to gain our respect but they shouldn't have to; we are all equals," but, in response, Dan argues that "the Natives are not the only race that is treated unfair. The natives just are the only ones that make a big fuss about it and are trying to take their power back!" He seems to understand decolonization, but his lack of empathy of startling.

One question arises which helps me to again realize that I have placed insufficient focus on First Nations successes. Melinda asks, "If First Nations are trying to decolonize (get their power back) why don't they try to get into government so they have some power and choices to make for their people?" Because of this and other student comments, I squeeze in a few moments on the last day discussing Aboriginal political success in Canada, but I suspect it is too little, too late.

CHAPTER FIVE: CHANGING ATTITUDES

Final Student Perspectives: Shifting Thinking and Feeling... and Behaviours?

I will assess final student perspectives through the lens of the data I gathered the last day in the form of a final journal write, five student interviews, some excerpts from the Letters to the Editor assignment, and, minimally, the White privilege Likert scale scores, focussing mostly on four of the five students I interviewed (Melinda, Seth, Janie, and John), plus Jordan, who I did not get to interview, as previously mentioned.²⁰ While I also will briefly examine whole-group response, I believe these five students represent well the range of the different kinds of changes that occurred – although, of course, changes are as variable as each student and individual context is.

I will begin with Jordan, who evidenced the most startling changes of all the students. My field notes reflect my astonishment: “I’m chuckling in disbelief.” At the beginning of this unit, Jordan stated vociferously and repeatedly that he “hated Indians.” In his final reflection, he wrote:

My views have changed greatly because I see that people like me and even me cause this great sorrow and distress on them. Instead of hating them for whining I feel it deep in my heart that I should go out and stretch my helping hand towards these hurt, innocent people. We caused their problems so we should fix them. We actually made them do the things which brought stereotypes on them. Please forgive us and let us help you Natives. You deserve every last bit of our money

²⁰ I also interviewed Esther, but her responses proved to be less interesting and noteworthy.

for what we have done to you so let us make it up to you and help rebuild your language and culture.

I continued in my journal: “When I read this the first time, I laughed because I was *sure* he was being sarcastic, hyperbolic, satirical. I wondered, what’s really going on? So I phoned him, read it back to him, and asked him whether he was really sincere in what he said, and he said he was!” We also discussed his responses on the White privileges Likert scale, as his score (38) was at the top end of the class – which would indicate a *lack* of consciousness of White privilege – which did not accord with his final reflections or other evidence, including his forum contributions and other journal responses. He confessed that he really had not understood the Likert scale, and that he had “just randomly checked off boxes.” This certainly helped me to make better sense of his views, but I was still left shaking my head in disbelief at what seemed like a sea change in prejudice –from “I hate Indians because all they do is drink and whine” to “I feel it deep in my heart that I should go out and stretch my helping hand towards these hurt, innocent people; you deserve every last bit of our money.” The beauty of that statement is that I had never directly answered Jordan’s beginning-of-unit question (“Why do we have to still pay for people who went to residential school?”), but he had come to insights about that on his own. The clues were there that Jordan’s views were changing considerably, but I was somewhat oblivious to them. Perhaps, somewhat ironically, I had taken the harshness of his initial views to frame a lens through which I continued to see him.

Jordan’s Letter to the Editor in favour of the missing women inquiry reiterated themes in his journal: “Natives were treated unfairly and they are going to the government because they haven’t gotten the promises promised in our treaties to them over a hundred years later! Come on, government of Canada, if you want no more problem with the Natives, fix them!” However,

Jordan's changing views do evidence a "saviour" attitude towards First Nation. A sense of superiority still shows through, even though he seems to be authentically moved to agency. He fully acknowledges White culpability and understanding of historical context, but, implying that it is up to Whites to "fix" them (as if First Nations people were something to be "fixed") smacks of paternalism. Yet, considering Jordan's views at the beginning of the unit, he has certainly come a long way on the road to personal decolonization, and there were definite chinks in *his* "fortress walls."

Melinda also demonstrated significant changes. In her initial journal write, she said she thought that "Aboriginal people are kind of lazy and are taking advantage of their help from the government" and that "they really don't care because you often see them on the streets drinking." However, in her final reflection, she changes her mind:

I realize why they don't just go out and get jobs just like that, but it's not that easy. These people are scared and insecure.... They also don't generally get a lot of education and we can't really blame them. Maybe they see schools as a bad thing since the Residential schools. The reason that some of them don't live a good lifestyle is because they were not brought up the way we are. Now I do not blame them for trying to decolonize, and I kind of want to help them. I hate it when people are racist, but I hate it even more when they're racist towards our First Nations people.

I will return to this quote, but first I would point out her indignation at her fellow students for their racist forum contributions; in her interview with me, she exclaimed, "With that forum and people were saying that kind of stuff, I was like 'Come on! Like, I don't know how you could say that now after we know all that stuff and what happened in the past!'" In her Letter in

support of the inquiry, she emphasizes, “There are over 580 previous Aboriginal lives lost, and nobody really cares? How heartless could our country be? If we can pay millions of dollars for just the Winter Olympics that everyone gets so caught up in, why not spare a few dollars to help these people!?” These comments appear to evidence both critical thinking and an authentic *affective* change, as well as a *cognitive* change for Melinda. And it seems to connect with a desire for *behavioural* change: when I ask her if she considers herself an ally of First Nations, she replies, “I’m neutral but closer to an ally. I *want* to help, but I don’t know how.” This accords with Kumashiro (2000) and Milner (2005), who posit that even if students *do* come to understand ongoing injustice, this does not mean that they will then begin to see exactly how they can work to effect social change. Whether Melinda, then, has “the ability... to resist hegemonic ideologies and to change social structures” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 38), as is the ultimate hope of a critical educator, is beyond the scope of this action research.

The striking thing that Melinda’s remarks show, though, is an entrenchment of a cultural deficit discourse (Orlowski 2011). She reiterates her initial belief that First Nations people are lazy and uneducated, but, in addition, she believes that they are *not really able* to effect change. There are hints that she sees a structural deficit, as well; she expressed to me that she felt like they should have more rights because “people should treat them differently because they really *are* different”; in this, she uses a more sophisticated race cognizance discourse than a colour-blind discourse (Orlowski 2011), and recognizes First Nations’ special status in Canada (although she does not show a full understanding that First Nations people are not really “different,” but that a history of colonization has put them into a different *place* in terms social status). However, she still does stress a cultural deficit in her other remarks, even though she certainly seems empathetic to their situation.

Seth, who uses a little of this cultural deficit discourse, also shows some perspective changes. In his initial freewrite, he indicated a significant depth of understanding of First Nations history and contemporary context; he said, “Personally, I think Aboriginal people are over-judged. People always look at them like, ‘Whoa, all you guys do is drink!’ Maybe there is truth to that, but that’s still not getting to the root of the problem.” His interview comments at the end of the unit were quite similar: “I think my stereotypes are the same - but there's a reason behind that all now. We fed them beer so they got addicted. The average person might say, if they see a drunk guy, ‘Oh he's drinking,’ but obviously there's a story behind each person.” His low (27) Likert scale score corresponds with this level of insight. Seth repeats this in final journal write, but with additions:

I still do believe they drink and steal, but now I have seen there is a reason for all this. Maybe the First Nations cannot gain jobs because of the ongoing racist problem.... I now think society needs to change as a whole in order for this problem to disappear. The Aboriginals have gotten over what we have done, but now just want reconciliation. ... If anyone can say anything degrading about the character of a First Nations person, we got to have a chat!

Although generalizing and reiterating that “they drink and steal,” Seth does evidence quite an insight into the structure of racism in Canada and how that can affect societal life for a First Nations person. It was interesting, then, for me to hear him *say* that he did not really feel like he was an ally of First Nations; he equivocates, saying, “That's like hard - if someone was mobbed, I don't know if I'd help. But I do respect them; I don't think they're whiners.” While his use of the term “respect” is a telling one (as it would not be used in a cultural deficit discourse), what is really significant is that he tends to emphasize agency, both in the interview: “We still gotta

encourage them and get more jobs for them,” and in his Letter supporting the inquiry: “The mending of a torn culture starts here!” While he may not consciously identify as an ally, his words suggest that he is well on his way to being one. On the other hand, he may not be: as Pate (1981) suggests, “The cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of prejudice are not necessarily related” (p. 289). Again, one cannot assume true agency unless it is observed.

It was challenging to track changes in perspective for Seth’s girlfriend, Janie; there was certainly no clear progression in her views. Her Likert scale score was 25, which would indicate a strong consciousness of White privilege, but this flies directly in the face of her forum posts insensitively equating the “Dutch” subculture to First Nations reserves, which point to an unawareness of that privilege. Other evidence is just as confusing: initially, she wrote that “there are good Natives. Ones who are honest and good and want what is best; it’s just that their culture is so different and we can’t judge them for it,” which would also indicate a lower level of prejudice – certainly lower than others in the class. However, her opening deep question did evidence significant prejudice: “Why are the Natives always asking for money and land because we were bad to them generations ago, but the Asians come, and were treated like animals... but they don’t always ask for things or money back from the government?” In her final reflection, she wrote with some ambivalence: “I agree with my thoughts at the beginning of the unit because I still think Natives have alcohol problems and some have no work ethic. ... I didn't really have a lot of stereotypes, but they were mostly that the Natives have drinking problems and they haven't changed.” But she goes on to say that:

my views have changed in the way I now understand how natives become one with nature... Scott taught me that we can judge the natives but often when we do it's because we don't know them well enough. They are hardworking and

persevering in real life, and they sacrifice and accept things and they're in general good people.

The first part of that entry certainly suggests a pejorative view, but the second part again switches and talks about Aboriginal strengths with connotations of respect. When I asked her if her views had changed, she said, “Yeah - now I know why they have the problems that they have; we see why they're doing what they're doing; if we don't know why, we can't really help them,” which shows historical understanding. When I ask her if she sees herself as an ally, she hesitates,

Not an enemy, kind of an ally - they deserve to be happy and have their rights and not to feel like they're second class citizens and to be viewed just like us, but in some ways - in the ways that they ask for it, I don't agree with. They're like always like asking for things – money and land...”

Again, her remarks are paradoxical – she considers herself an ally and yet dislikes it when they “ask for things.”

All in all, evidence suggests a change in understanding that is still being undercut by deeply-held prejudice. It points to a conflict within Janie: she *believes* she has no prejudice and sees a lot of good in Aboriginals, but, on the other, she shows little understanding of reasons for “asking for things” and she made obtuse remarks on the forum, *after* we studied the historical context, such as, “I think that'd be ok to get rid of the reserve system, because a lot of them aren't even close or cultural anymore; they just live on their reserves.” Also, she first writes that she had few stereotypes and her views have not changed, but then she notes and tells me ways that they *did*.

One clue to this puzzle came during my interview with her. I asked whether she discussed any of the issues with people outside the class. She replied,

Mostly just at home -whenever my sister would come home with something that she'd learned,²¹ my brother would go, like – ‘no, Natives are just dumb.’ Or there's something in the news that we talk about - how they find new burial grounds and can't build stuff there – it seems like it always happens. It's mostly negative, but there is some positive stuff like it's not their fault - kind of...

So, it appears that even though she might *like* to become more sensitive and less prejudiced, and would like to *see* herself as an ally, there are strong influences in her social situation of development that preclude that. Paradoxically, although it was her mother who expressed her appreciation for the survivor assembly, it is her social situation at *home* that seems to be affecting Janie's inability to significantly move away from prejudice and stereotype.

In contrast with the rest of the class, John's "fortress walls" seemed to be only made stronger. He straightforwardly indicated that his stereotypes became *more* entrenched during our study. His Likert scale score was 33, suggesting a moderate awareness of White privilege; however, his stated views did not align with that score. In our interview, when I asked, "Have your stereotypes been changed at all during this unit?", he replied, "Maybe enforced a little bit, actually.... I always thought they were a little like whiners but then all the videos we watched or whatever [made it worse]." Still, he equivocates; "Also, I actually find them really interesting; that helped, like watching all the videos and reading the poems, like when we first came over I think they were better people than they are now... socially, like, to interact with people, like I think they knew what to do better." His final reflection mirrors his interview response:

²¹ I taught Janie's sister last year when we did a similar unit.

I think my stereotypes were justified because we talked about how the Natives complain too much now. The Natives were great people back when we came over. It shows in the poems that we read that they were strong, brave, and compassionate and many still are now, but also many are whiners and don't try enough.

This idea is new to me: first of all, *why* would he think they were “better people” and “better at social interactions” in the past? Is it because he perceives that their more recent activism and efforts at decolonization (what he calls “whining”) is a regression of sorts – which his final assignment Letter appears to indicate? In that, he is considerably more passionate *against* the inquiry than for it, arguing that First Nations people calling for the inquiry were “whining again because hundreds of years ago white men took away their lands” – and that “women should not have even been on these roads and dingy areas... making themselves vulnerable” – a classic example of a “blame-the-victim” discourse. Rather than showing indignation at the oppressive colonizers, he saves it for the oppressed colonized, especially as they try to regain power and achieve justice. His Letter *for* the inquiry was extremely vague and made no reference at all to historical events. This makes me wonder: has he not been able to make the connection between historical events and the current situation – the damage that has been done to them as a people and culture? These questions I wished I would have had the perceptiveness to ask him at the time. Instead, I merely asked what had entrenched his stereotypes. He replied:

There's that one poem "The Devil's Language," and she's just kind of like, she's a modern poet, and it's not just gonna help to whine. I think that you kinda gotta accept it and then bring it through in a more gentle way. Like if you're just in your face no one 's gonna pay attention to it as much.

John's resistance to Dumont's force is similar to others' in the class; again, it shows his resistance to First Nations' assertion of power.

One more clue, I think, to John's state of mind is his insightful engagement in class discussions (particularly earlier in the unit) and his disengagement with assignments (particularly toward the end of the unit), where effort was minimal. At the beginning, John shows some empathy, stating, that "I think Natives are people who feel rejected – rejected by the government, modern society, and other races." In class, he is quick to understand what Wab Kinew is referring to with "acting White" ("It means adopting White views in different situations"), and has said that "I believe they should be given a chance by White society to be respected." However, on his final reflection assignment, I commented, "Very shallow depth of thought and poor effort," as he responded to questions asking for extended paragraphs with cursory answers, making virtually no reference to course content, as was required. Also, his Letters assignment was late and very short; I eventually ended up sending an email to his mother asking her to remind him to send it to me – which he then did – but each Letter was just 6 lines long.

I believe this evidence likely shows that, as with Janie, John was experiencing a crisis, but that he was resisting a decolonizing process (rather than trying to resolve it, as Janie seemed to be trying to do). As Bedard (1999) notes, it is a confusing and painful process that can generate powerful emotional responses; I wonder if emotional responses effected John's increasingly-entrenched resistance to the recognition of White privilege and hegemony (Kumashiro, 2000). It would fit, too with Schick and St. Denis (2003)'s assertion that most White students instinctively recoil at the thought that they are responsible for the oppression of the Other, manifested by a "denial of inequality, selective perceptions of reality..., and *at times withdrawal from learning*" (p. 3, emphasis mine).

Yet, this picture of John is not complete. What made the difference for him – that he was the singular student among fifteen who retreated entirely in the face of crisis? Again, as with Janie, evidence points to his social situation of development – at home. His response in the interview was quite revealing. I asked him whether he discussed course content with others outside of class, and from there, the conversation led him to sharing that

my mom's a teacher, and we live by a reserve, and there's always a *lot* of things going on, and it seems like nothing's happening..... They have a school there, and we have ____ Christian School and they always have to come in there with these funny ideas or whatever and my mom just thinks they're wasting money because they just come in with all these cultural groups and these funny Native ideas and they always have to put in their religious beliefs even though it's a Christian school.

It is clear from this that John's views are significantly shaped by attitudes expressed at home; the potent phrases “funny ideas,” “wasting money,” and “put in their religious beliefs” strongly suggest parental xenophobia and resistance to seeing through other lenses and accepting responsibility for White privilege and power. The solidifying prejudice of John's family fits with what Hunsberger & Jackson (2005), Hall, Matz, and Wood (2001), and Pettigrew et al (2001) posit – that prejudices can be intensified if members perceive that they are in competition with, or feel threatened by, the Other, or if they experience negative contact where they did not choose to have the contact. In this case, it is clear that John's mother did *not* wish to have that contact *and* that she felt threatened by what she perceived as an alternative spirituality. For the family, the “fortress” walls have been fortified in response to perceived threats, and these views John seems to have wholly internalized. Although I mostly disagree with Egan's (2002) assertion

that “unless the school has enormous power and authority over children... the dominant values and behavioral norms will be those the children bring to the school and against which any competing values and norms of the teachers will be largely helpless,” it would appear that in this instance he is entirely correct.

However, John is one of fifteen; according to students’ final journal writes, he was the only student to strengthen his fortress walls through entrenched resistance to course themes. For all others, it seems there was at least some movement away from prejudice and some crumbling of walls. I coded student responses into four categories: 1) stereotypes have been strengthened (1 student); 2) stereotypes have not changed, but now students show some understanding *why* they hold stereotypes (6 students); 3) stereotypes have been ameliorated minimally (5 students); 4) stereotypes have been ameliorated significantly (3 students). Although it is challenging to summarize results like this, as the examples of the five students I have examined show a deep complexity within attitude change, perhaps the thing that stood out the most among responses was a burgeoning understanding of colonial historical meanings. The most repeated comment students made was that they now, as Beth states, “understand why so many of them are the way they are” – in other words, that students still hold stereotypes about First Nations people, but now understand the historical context that “made them that way.” This also, though, seems to point to a strong movement toward a cultural deficit discourse, which I will refer to in the “Future Considerations” section.

What is also worth noting is *why* students said they changed. Was it the use of literature that effected that change, as I proposed, or were there other significant factors? To get a sense of this, I again turned to student responses in final journal writes and to the interviews. In final journal entries, students were required to refer to literature (although some did not), but in the

interviews, I left open the question of what was the greatest influence on them. While in the journal write, more than half the class referred to Joe's "I Lost My Talk," and several referred to Armstrong's "The History Lesson" and other poems, there were as many references to both Bob Bruce's visit and to Wab Kinew's video clips. In the interviews, when students were asked what was the one most significant thing that affected their views, and where they had more latitude, they were even more emphatic that Bruce's visit and/or Kinew's videos, more than the literature, helped changed their minds. This raises interesting questions about *both* intergroup contact theory and the effectiveness of the use of literature as a tool for effecting social justice.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

While my study's evidence supports intergroup contact theory – both in John's family (as a negative-contact example) and in my students generally (as no-contact or little-contact examples), the fact that Bob Bruce and Wab Kinew, who so charmingly represented First Nations peoples, made such an impact on my students' thinking suggests perhaps the effects of social, intergroup separation can be ameliorated by periodic positive connections, either in the form of a real live person – or even in the form of a video, if the speaker is especially charismatic and compelling. Perhaps a lack of *quantity* of positive contact can be combatted by deliberately facilitating extremely favorable *quality* “contacts”, even if they are infrequent. This would be an important avenue of further study, I believe, along with an investigation into the long-term effects of these presentations on student prejudice.

Also, the impact of these two First Nations representatives is an unexpected outcome of my study; I set out to study literature using the theory of Imaginative Education to facilitate understandings. While their presentations certainly connected to the literature we were studying, and while Bruce's talk (and Kinew's excerpts, to a lesser extent) certainly included elements of such tools as emotional connection, humanization of meaning, story, extremes and limits, and heroic qualities, *human interaction* itself is not a tool, as defined by Egan (2002), which leads me to consider its precise role in the effect that it had. In class, we had examined specific examples of First Nations experience (through literature and activities) in an effort to humanize meaning, we had listened to stories and looked at examples of extremes and limits and heroic qualities, and I had tried to facilitate emotional connection both through the literature and through activities, but it was not until we had a “real, live human” speaking to us of this that the content really began to emotionally resonate with most students. This brings me to conclude that “human

interaction” or having a “charismatic expert presenter” is a most effective way to augment and potentially exponentially increase the power of the tools of Imaginative Education.

That the speakers’ presentations seemed to be much more powerful than the literature itself led me to think about the type of literature that I used, and how that ties in to Nussbaum’s (2010) premise. For our unit, I predominantly used lyric poetry along with two personal essays; however, Nussbaum (2010) refers to “realistic, real-life characters with complex problems” in *stories* as a way to effect change, and it is through perceiving *their* increasingly-familiar voices, she argues, that our emotions can be aroused and prejudice reduced. Although lyric poetry certainly includes the speakers’ voices, it does not present them as *characters*, as novels or short stories, or even narrative poetry would. Entering into the life of a fully-formed character in a story likely more easily facilitates empathy. For future units, then, including literature with strong characters (such as, for instance, Richard Wagamese’s (2006) *Keeper ’n Me* or novels about residential school experiences) would be important in order to evoke necessary emotional connections with those characters.

Another reason for re-assessing the type of literature I teach in this unit is one troubling outcome of my study: an apparent entrenching of a cultural deficit discourse. Several students repeated similar comments to “I still have my stereotypes, but now I understand *why* they are what they are”; in other words, students generally still evidence pejorative attitudes towards First Nations peoples. While it was certainly my intention to foster empathy (which seems to have been rather successful), it was certainly *not* my intention to further cement in my students’ thinking that First Nations peoples are essentially flawed! At the same time, it was not my intention for my students to assume a continued colonial mindset, a “missionary mentality” (that

it is up to us to “save” them [Bedard, 1999]), such as that exhibited by Jordan, who suggested that we need to “fix them”!

This led me to think that I had concentrated too much what had happened during colonization to bring harm, instead of putting an equal focus on how First Nations peoples have been successful at *decolonization*, on focussing on *positive* examples of how they have resisted hegemony, and the great gains that they peoples have made in spite of attempted genocide. For example, instead of a critique, perhaps a transformative final assignment could be some type of artistic rendition of colonization/decolonization (a balance of both positive and negative events and aspects) from a First Nations perspective, or by having students interview a First Nations person who has successfully decolonized in order to get that personal contact and perspective. Also, it helped me to realize that I needed to emphasize more strongly the continued racist structure of society – so that my students realize the ongoing barriers that First Nations peoples face – such as, for instance, nepotism in hiring practices within our own Dutch subculture. It made me see, too, that my own decolonizing process is not yet complete. In my subtopics, literature, and activities, I chose to focus more on what has been *destroyed* rather than on what has been *regained*. Perhaps this is strong evidence of my own continued belief in a First Nations cultural deficit.

However, a cultural deficit discourse can be used in two ways. On the one hand, my students (and I) can use such a belief to look for ways to see how we can come alongside First Nations people, to collaborate with them as equals to foster a more just society, and to continue to ameliorate the effects of colonization; then, although there are still dangers of White superiority complex and continued stereotype, it can have some redeeming value. On the other

hand, though, if a belief in deficit is used as an excuse to *dismiss* First Nations peoples as somehow inferior or inadequate, and to justify our own sense of superiority and White privilege, then we continue to exacerbate derogation and the process of colonization, and to reject notions of equality and justice. This is true for me personally, as well: although I too may still continue to use a cultural deficit discourse even as I attempt to move away from it in my pedagogy, when I do so in the spirit of coming alongside First Nations people in order to effect social justice, so they can realize increased opportunities and reduced barriers, then its potentially-harmful effects can be offset.

Two realizations, then, emerge for me: first, decolonization is a lifelong journey, not a destination, for those who are willing to make it. While moral re-education was my goal for my students, it also allowed me to explore *my* Whiteness and discover blind spots. Also, while my goal was to reach all my students, I came to realize that this is unrealistic. Planting the seed for growth in even one or a few students is a more reasonable goal. For *some* students, the fortress walls have been breached: they now are beginning to recognize how they unwittingly participate in maintaining a racist system, which is the first but crucial step in their own participation in dismantling that very system.

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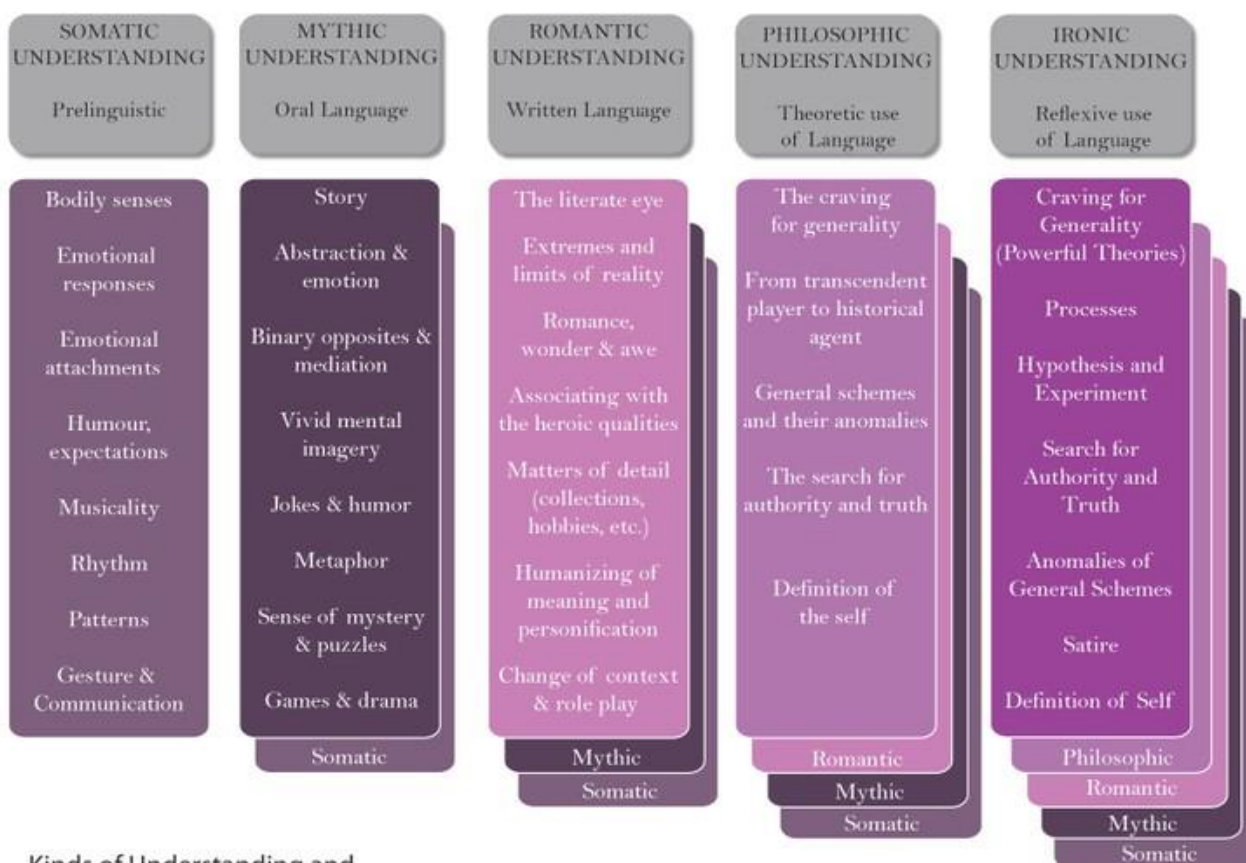
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Appendix A: Imaginative Education: Levels of Understanding and Some Cognitive Tools²²



Kinds of Understanding and
Some Cognitive Tools – Kieran Egan

Design and perspective by Annabella Cant - 2013

²²http://ierg.net/about/Cognitivetoolslayers2013page0.jpg/image_large

Appendix B: Imaginative Curriculum Framework–Canadian Literature Unit

Topic:	Colonization/Decolonization (through the lens of Canadian Literature)
Target Age:	15-16
Planning Framework:	Philosophic
Length:	6 weeks (19 classes)

Description:

This unit on Canadian literature explores the two sides of the experience of the impact of colonization on Canada's Native populations. We begin by examining the notion of ethnocentrism, and how it applies to self and our view of the world, and our stereotypes of, and racism towards, Aboriginals. We discuss the role of ethnocentrism in colonization and decolonization, using an understanding of how hegemony works.

Then we apply our understanding of ethnocentrism to North American Whites – specifically, to Duncan Campbell Scott and his poetry, on his experience and perspective of Native populations and his belief in the need for their assimilation. Subsequently, we turn to Aboriginal authors, and examine the experience through *their* perspective, through their poetry and prose, coming to the understanding that they, too, see things through an ethnocentric lens. We conclude by examining how our own perspective may have shifted or broadened in response to seeing the Other's perspective – in other words, by evaluating if we have been able to transcend, to an extent, our own ethnocentrism, and to see a common humanity and human condition between races, and to more fully understand the Other in order to ameliorate social injustice.

1. Identifying powerful underlying ideas

What underlying ideas or theories seem best able to organize the topic into some coherent whole? What are the most powerful, clear, and relevant theories, ideologies, metaphysical schemes, or meta-narratives?

The most powerful underlying idea or theory in this topic:

Ethnocentrism: judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentrism means an inability to appreciate others whose culture may include a different racial group, ethnic group, religion, morality, language, political system, economic system, etc. *Everyone* is ethnocentric, and there is no way *not* to be ethnocentric... it cannot be avoided, nor can it be willed away by a positive or well-meaning attitude. Ethnocentrism can be defined as: making false assumptions about others' ways based on our own limited experience. The key word is *assumptions*, because we are not even aware that we are being ethnocentric. We don't understand that we don't understand.

It also means an inability to see a **common humanity and human condition** beneath the surface variations in social and cultural traditions. It often leads to racism, the belief that one racial or ethnic group is inferior to another and that unequal treatment is therefore justified.

Ethnocentrism" derives from Greek words meaning "nation" and "center." Ethnocentrism increased with empires; for example, in "our" map of world, England is center (Japan/China is the center for them. For another example, the Japanese word for foreigner ("gaijin") also means "barbarian", and Japanese do not normally use the term to describe themselves when visiting other countries. The Greeks distinguished themselves from non-Greeks, (the Other) or barbarians, whose speech to them sounded like 'barbarbarbar', hence the name. When people say that the British drive on the "wrong" side of the road or Hebrew writing is "backward," where "opposite" or "left-hand side" would be more suitable a description in the first case and "from right to left" would be more acceptable in the second case.

Ethnocentrism can lead to stereotypes, racism, and xenophobia. Historically, some groups have suffered oppression at the hands of more powerful groups due to the latter's internalized beliefs that their ways and identities were necessarily superior. When others seem "wrong" or "backwards," the individuals themselves may be viewed as unintelligent, insignificant, disposable or less than human -- and treated as such.

Ethnocentrism refers to any instance when people's limited experiences and perspectives cause them to regard their own cultures as the central basis for what is expected and acceptable from all others. Because everyone's expectations derive from their necessarily limited experiences, *no one* is immune to ethnocentric thinking -- and usually, people even fail to realize when they make such assumptions. While refraining from ethnocentrism altogether may be impossible, people can aim to counter the tendency's negative effects by recognizing and controlling their own biases, as well as seeking additional knowledge and perspectives when biases do surface.

The idea of ethnocentrism brings with it the idea of a center. What is the "center" of White European reality? With regards to the impact of White settlement on Native populations, for Whites like Duncan Campbell Scott (and others at the time, including those associated with Indian Act), it is fitted into a meta-narrative of "King/God/Empire is the ideal," in which assimilation into that "ideal" is a desired outcome. Everyone would gain: Aboriginal peoples would be gaining culture and civilization while Europeans would be gaining land and the promise of no violence; *they* should fit into *our* world. That assimilation has not worked or happened is a *negative* thing (it is to be regretted) and something that is still desirable; it is what would mitigate many problems Aboriginals face today. Scott's (and others') experiences and perspectives caused him to regard his own culture as the central basis for what could be expected and acceptable for Aboriginals, although he showed a certain awe and appreciation for many aspects of Aboriginal culture.

Our experiences form who we are and what we believe. It would be beneficial for students to examine where they get their knowledge, and what experiences contribute to their ideologies. Students in my school are socially isolated, in that they are all White, and have very little or no contact/interaction with Aboriginal peoples/culture. This social isolation can lead to racism, xenophobia, and the development of stereotypes, which, in turn, can lead to further oppression of Aboriginal populations. At the same time, taking an axe to things students holds as "true" and "good" will be counterproductive, as they will tend to try to hold on to their beliefs as see an overt attack on those beliefs as somewhat of an existential threat. This reminds me to "introduce the anomaly gently."

Alternatives:

Colonization/decolonization and Power:

We examine the literature through the lens of Colonization, decolonization, and power. Where did the nexus of power exist as colonialism was occurring? Did Aboriginal peoples have *any* power? How did their power change over the course of colonialism? Where does the nexus of power sit today? How can we, together, facilitate a balance and ameliorate power imbalances? Do we *want* to? What would be the reasons for a person wanting to do so? How does literature give voice/power to its authors?

2. Shaping the lesson or unit

Like a scholar producing an account of findings, your task is to shape what you are teaching in an imaginative and emotionally engaging way. How can the underlying theory or idea be made vivid? What content best exposes it and shows its power to organize the topic?

2. Tool 1. Finding the meta-narrative:

What meta-narrative provides a clear overall structure to the lesson or unit? What support does your meta-narrative provide for students in their search for authority and truth?

Ethnocentrism:

When white Europeans came to North America, they considered *their* culture, dress, and language to be superior, and felt that Aboriginals were "heathen," and that, in order for them to progress, they had to "take on Whiteness" and everything associated with that. One consequence of ethnocentrism was the desire for Native assimilation.

- Freewriting (free association) on attitudes towards Aboriginals. No connection at this time to ethnocentrism, but merely surfacing (hopefully!) latent thoughts and feelings
- Questionnaire on Canada, racism, and First Nations peoples to elicit beginning understandings

- Introduce notions of "ethnocentrism" and colonization/decolonization
- Storytelling (teacher): TELL Fable #1: the story of European conquest of North America from White perspective, including creation of Indian Act and residential school experience and "necessity" for "civilization" and assimilation. Students to identify historical events in fable.
- White perspective on colonization: watch "Duncan Campbell Scott: the Poet and the Indian" video; Discussion questions. What were the interests of the Whites in the signing of the treaties? Study of Scott poems and his complex conception of Aboriginal peoples : "The Onandaga Madonna" (binaries) "The Forsaken" (binaries; heroism); analysis of poem ; "On the Way to the Mission" to evidence Scott views
- Mind map idea of **ethnocentrism**: begin with personal experience; examine where *you* get your ideas/stereotypes of aboriginal people from *and* where those people get theirs, etc. Consider family's and subculture's history.
- Study of stereotyping based on ethnocentrism

2. Tool 2. Finding the anomalies to the general theory:

What content is anomalous to the general idea or theory you have presented? How can we begin with minor anomalies and gradually and sensitively challenge the students' general theory so that they make the theory increasingly sophisticated?

Ethnocentrism is held in *common*: not only are *whites* ethnocentric, but *Aboriginals* are, as well. Did this cause *them* to have stereotypes about Whites? First impression of White people?

- Tell Fable #2: same events as first one, but this time from First Nations perspective.
- Watch WabKinew – interview with George Strombolopolous (idea of importance of storytelling – mention of perspective – and binary of "survivor"/past student). Discuss connotation of the words "victim" versus "past student" versus "survivor"; what happens when we "change the lens"? How do each terms speak to the white "civil" narrative? Again, discuss what was the "purpose" of the residential schools?
- Residential Schools Lesson:
Drawing Activity: Student: draw self at 5, then add, consecutively, mom and dad; peers/siblings; your safe place; your favorite food (somatic understanding)
 Watch video/Read about residential school experience, including theme of loss of language and home, symbols and identity; discuss Truth and Reconciliation Commission and formal apology; Read excerpt from *No Time to Say Goodbye* or similar novel (*Fatty Legs*)
 Then students to imagine emotional reaction of coming back to reserve after being at school for years and difficulties with that; Journal writing on emotional response
 Read/discuss article on church's repentance for running residential schools.
- Storytelling: residential schools survivor assembly; telling the story of his life, experience at residential school, subsequent effects and healing.
- Mind map Exercise 2: consider where aboriginal people get *their* ideas/stereotypes of white people
- **Literature to be studied:**
 Native perspective:
 - I Lost My Talk (poem) *Rita Joe* (loss of language; which language more powerful?; hope of mediating binaries)
 - The Devil's Language (poem) *Marilyn Dumont* (ethnocentrism of *language*)
 - My Heart Soars *Chief Dan George* (connection to nature/land; theme of Eden)
 - In the Cold October Water *David A. Groulx* (connection to nature/land; theme of Eden)

- The History Lesson (poem) *Jeannette Armstrong* (Native perspective; theme of loss of Eden)
- Lament for Confederation *Chief Dan George* (theme of loss/ hope of mediating binaries)
- Two Different Ways of Life (personal essay) *George Blondin* (theme of change/loss; difficulty of living Other way/living other perspective)
- Competing meta-narratives of White and Native traditions of the impact of white settlement. Trying to understand Aboriginal modes of being on a metaphorical level: compare the objectivist, individualist, and mercantilist gaze of Whites to the relationality and the "tied-to-the-land" way of life of Aboriginal. Perhaps a Venn diagram would be helpful.
- For Aboriginals, White settlement in North American fits into the narrative of displacement and loss: of promises betrayed and broken, and violent displacement and abuse of generations of children. Through White drive for Native "civilization and assimilation," they *lost* their cultural and familial stability, homes, land, ways to make a living, and language.
- Consider effect of "White" ethnocentrism: prolonged stigmatization as "inferior" can lead oppressed individuals to internalize their culture's degradation, believing the stereotypes foisted on them, that their practices and beliefs are inferior or perverse. Does this show up in their literature? Does it show resentment toward themselves, others of their own culture, and their oppressors? Why or why not? Try to see how we get to different truths, metaphors and values when we use different metaphors/lenses.

2. Tool 3. Presenting alternative general theories and meta-narratives:

What alternative general theories or alternative meta-narrative can organize the topic? Which can best be used to help students see something about the nature and limitations of their theories and meta-narratives?

Alternative meta-narratives:

- What were the positive motivations of white colonizers? Of residential schools? They looked at their mission as one of love and mercy and goodness. How can this be true *and* at the same time have had such disastrous effects?
- The Golden Rule as an underlying theme for White colonizing Christians. In regards to Aboriginals, has it been practiced in the past? Do we practice it today? Why/why not?
- Civilization: What is it? Were Aboriginals "civilized" before the Europeans came? Who determines that? Did they have culture, society, economy, spirituality, and morality?
- What does it mean to be Canadian? Different things for different people. Is there room within a Canadian society for multiple modalities of being?

2. Tool 4. Encouraging development of students' sense of agency:

What features of the knowledge will best allow us to encourage the students' developing sense of agency?

By doing the series of mind maps, the idea that we are connected to ethnocentrism and that we *ourselves* are products of historical and social processes; we are the product of ideas around us, including ideas in this class. We can be made *more* or *less* racist by studying aboriginal literature – in whether we accept what aboriginal authors are saying, or whether we reject it. In turn, we can affect other people's thinking – for better or for worse.

Continuation of mind map/web assignment on how we form our ideas. Students are to make a new mind map, indicating how they personally affect those around them? What can "I" do to affect those around me in positive ways? What *do* I sometimes do that affects others in negative ways, and they do the same, in turn, etc.

2. Tool 5. Drawing on tools of previous kinds of understanding:

Since my students are on the cusp of Philosophic Understanding, it's very important that I incorporate tools from earlier Understandings.

Somatic understanding -How might students use some of the toolkit of Somatic Understanding in learning the topic? How might their senses, emotions, humor, musicality, and so on, be deployed?

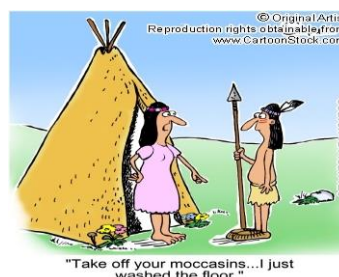
- Using senses: Students will converse without using their language to tie in to initial residential school experience. (Also context change/role play & humanizing of meaning - Romantic)
- Using senses: Drawing activity about residential school experience (also humanizing of meaning - Romantic) (see 2.2)
- Listening to Charlie Angus song “Great Divide”; examine trope of four horses (also reaches forward into other understandings)

Mythic understanding – How might students use some of the toolkit of Mythic Understanding in learning the topic? How might abstract and affective binary oppositions, metaphor, vivid mental imagery, puzzles and sense of mystery, and so on, be deployed?

- **Story:** Story is ubiquitous in this unit. Each "perspective" begins with a fable; it includes an Aboriginal storyteller; and the bulk of unit is on Aboriginal stories.
- **Binaries:** colonization/decolonization; savages/civilized (*who* were the savages?); empty/occupied; gain/loss; mine/yours (I/Other); Bruce/white; wild/civilized; bound/free; oppressed/oppressor; conquest/subjugation; long hair/short hair; messy/neat; oral/literate; nature/civilization; freedom/prison
- **Image:** Map of world: what is at the center? The idea that WE are at the centre of our world, and we define everything from that centre; 3. Myriad images in literature studied.
- **Metaphor:** metaphor of lenses;; many metaphors in the poetry studied; fables are extended metaphors

Romantic understanding – How might students use some of the toolkit of Romantic Understanding in learning the topic? How might heroic qualities, extremes of experience and limits of reality, human hopes, fears, and passions, and so on, be deployed?

- **Graphic Organizers:** Making mind maps/webs; make timeline of events; venn diagram
- **Extremes of experience and limits of reality:** some residential school experiences as extreme; bounties for scalps; starvation; genocide; germ warfare;
- **Jokes and Humor:**



- **The Heroic:** the Native struggle against almost overwhelming forces. Are Aboriginals *victims* or *heroes*?
 - Are they *survivors* or *former students* or *victims* of residential schools? WabKinew (Native hip hop artist): they are survivors: (to 10:30)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbYcuHtvull&feature=related> - also deals with Ethnocentrism:

from whose perspective do we look at the experience of residential schools? From the Native's? From the white's? Who gets to decide? This will relate to the term we use, and will relate to whether we see them as heroes or not.

4. Conclusion

How can we ensure that students' theories or general ideas are not destroyed but are recognized as having a different status from the facts they are based on? How can we ensure that the decay of belief in the Truth of theories or general ideas does not lead to disillusion and alienation?

We can ensure this by doing a meta-cognitive activity in which students examine how their own perspectives have been broadened by being exposed to the "Other's" perspective; how does *adding* someone's perspective to your own give a fuller picture of "truth" – that is, to a newer, broader theory? Think of a crime scene: how does the testimony of multiple witnesses give a *fuller* picture of reality than just one perspective?

5. Evaluation

How can we know whether the content has been learned and understood, whether students have developed a theory or general idea, elaborated it, and attained some sense of its limitations?

How have students understood ethnocentrism and alternative ways of seeing and experiencing the world?

- Assessment of various assignments on literature
- Mind maps
- Forum participation/posts (post one deep questions and respond to others)
- Identification of examples of assimilation/colonization/decolonization from videos
- White privilege awareness Likert scale questionnaire (post-unit)
- Journal Writing:
 - reflection : imagine what would happen to us if a foreign nation conquered us and the conditions were the same as for First Nations people in the past few hundred years?
 - reflections after residential school survivor visit
 - post-unit writing on identification of major tenets of the unit and reflection on changing stereotype
- “Letters to the Editor” cumulative assignment on Toronto Star article on missing aboriginal women

Appendix C: Action Research Unit Plan

Date	Activity	Assessment
Monday, Feb 3	<p>Questionnaire: assess context of students in relation to FN peoples</p> <p><u>Orientation:</u></p> <p><i>Images:</i> students view to a variety of images of First Nations people to evoke student responses for class discussion on stereotype: "Is this person a good citizen, in your view?"</p> <p>Stereotype: Discussion "Teenagers always..." /</p> <p>Activity: Divide class into 3 "racial" groups – Chinese; South Asian; White; brainstorm stereotypes for each; origin of stereotypes? Is White a race? Why so few stereotypes for Whites? What role does stereotype play in hegemony? Questionnaires/Freewrite: "What do I think of First Nations people?" (To keep to compare with end assignment); to assess beginning stereotype)</p>	Questionnaire Freewrite
Tuesday, Feb 4	<p>Mind-map of "where we get our ideas"</p> <p><u>Complication:</u></p> <p>Powerpoint: Ethnocentrism/History of Colonization/Hegemony</p>	
Wednesday, Feb 5	<p>Storytelling Fable #1: (colonization from White perspective)</p> <p>Students to identify historical events and locus of power</p> <p>Introduce Duncan Campbell Scott (powerpoint/notes). Read poems: "The Onandaga Madonna" and "The Forsaken"</p> <p>(discussion/powerpoint/notes/questions on true goals of assimilation [colonization/hegemony] and Scott attitudes re: "kill the Indian in the child")</p>	Student ID of power/ events
Friday, Feb 7	<p>Discussion of 2 cartoons</p> <p>Watch "The Poet and the Indians" video (on Scott and treaties) and discuss; students do "diary entry" from two points of view re: treaty signing after role-playing from each side; students make notes and prepare 2 deep questions</p> <p>Also discuss binaries: orality/written word</p> <p>Mind-map of "where Duncan Campbell Scott gets his ideas"</p>	Diary entry
Tuesday, Feb 11	Discussion of Scott poems; work on questions	Questions on poems
Wednesday, Feb 12	<p>Intro to residential schools:</p> <p>Storytelling Fable #2 (colonization from First Nations perspective);</p> <p>Discuss events/change in perspective; objectivist, individualist and mercantilist gaze of Whites compared to relationality and spiritual link to land of FN</p> <p>Discuss "Idle No More" decolonization: to rewrite the narrative of colonization; who has told the narrative before?</p> <p>Pictures/stories/texts; whose "history" were they being taught? How were they disconnected from their roots in more ways than one?</p> <p><i>Exploration of residential schools:</i></p> <p>Activity: Draw self at 5; write your name above; then add mom and dad; peers/siblings; grandparents; your safe place; your favorite food; doing your favorite activity; write down some stories you were told – including about family; best part of the day; speech bubble; then, rip each thing off (including name and your hair) until all you have is yourself ; crumple up and throw away as far as you can</p>	

	Discuss : what was drawing activity about? Will child ever get "favorite things" back? Discuss why/why not; Now: imagine 10 years later, coming back: you at 15. Try to put crumpled pieces back together: would they fit? What would be problems?	
Friday, Feb 14	<p>Show WabKinew: Getting attention for FN stories: do white people care? It always affects us together.</p> <p>Ethnocentrism: Changing lenses: Storytelling Fable #2 (colonization from First Nations perspective); identify aspects of power (10 minutes) Students each get an excerpt from <i>You are Asked to Witness</i>, <i>Clearing the Plains</i> or <i>We were not the Savages</i>. Must read excerpt and explain connection to Fable.</p> <p>Decolonization: Discuss "Idle No More"/Truth and Reconciliation commission/<u>Walk for Reconciliation</u>: to rewrite the narrative of colonization; who has told the narrative before? Pictures/stories/texts; whose "history" were they being taught? <i>Exploration of residential schools</i>: How were FN disconnected from their roots in more ways than one? <i>Activity</i>: Draw self at 5; write your name above; then add mom and dad; peers/siblings; grandparents; your safe place; your favorite food; doing your favorite activity; write down some stories you were told – including about family; best part of the day; speech bubble; then, rip each thing off (including name and your hair) until all you have is yourself ; crumple up and throw away as far as you can</p>	
Monday, Feb 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonization: scalping Governors \$\$ Indian scalps \$60 or 40 pounds/introduction of smallpox/ignoring Dr Peter Bryce about conditions for TB/ 60s scoop: intention to commit cultural genocide on FN peoples?? Watch WabKinew #1 (full interview): - Strombo clip; discuss binary of "survivor" versus "students" or "victims" from full interview: 8:45–10:30; compare to "survivor" woman in Scott poem Discuss drawing activity from Friday: what was drawing activity about? Will child ever get "favorite things" back? Discuss why/why not; Now: imagine 10 years later, coming back: you at 15. Try to put crumpled pieces back together: would they fit? What would be problems? Brainstorm: Some difficulties of coming back to homes on reserves after being gone for a long time at schools (after it was drilled into them how useless, backwards, and devilish their home life was) ; would they now fit in anywhere? (refer to fable "sidewalks") ; loss of identity; draw picture of flower with many roots; discuss forced assimilation as attempt to cut off all roots; <i>healing</i> comes with reattaching roots; discuss/show picture of Walk for Reconciliation; discuss how drumming = mother's heartbeat <p>– Journal writing (on similar scenario) Watch WabKinew re: stereotypes; students identify stereotypes and his response to each</p>	Journal write
Tuesday, Feb 18	First Nations poems: compare/contrast between Rita Joe's "I Lost My Talk" and Marilyn Dumont's "The Devil's Language" ; partner work, discussions	

Wednesday, Feb 19	<p>Scott quiz</p> <p>Lens of ethnocentrism:</p> <p>Show cartoons: whose history is it? What do we remember? Whose lives are worth more? Aboriginal women in BC inquiry # - talk about <i>bias</i></p> <p>Cleaning teepee : what is 'normal'? what is 'clean'? who decides the standards? Why do we assume our way is better? What's behind that?</p> <p>THEIR lens: what stereotypes do FN have of <i>white</i> people? *Mind-map: where do aboriginal people get <i>their</i> ideas/<i>stereotypes</i> of white people?</p> <p>Tie in to Dumont/Joe poems: <i>their</i> view of us, based on their experiences</p> <p>Prep for essay and for <u>visit of residential school survivor Monday</u></p>	Quiz
Monday, Feb 24	High school assembly – presentation by FN Residential School Survivor	
Tuesday, Feb 25	<p>Debrief; writing of post-visit journal reflection and sharing of deep questions and answers</p> <p>Prep for writing essay next class</p>	
Wednesday, Feb 26	<p>Worktime for essay on Dumont/Joe poems</p> <p>Assessment: compare/contrast essay on the poems: <i>Does student show insight about the poets' perspectives from comparing and contrasting the poems?</i></p>	Compare/contrast essay
Tuesday, March 4	<p>Discuss Chief Dan George bio; discuss “Why is the natural world important? What senses can we use to describe nature?”</p> <p>Read "My Heart Soars " discuss questions and First Nations connection to nature</p> <p>Read "In the Cold October Water". Discuss "sacred song" – connection of spirituality with nature; the human as part of nature (closeness of water and body; connection between smoke and moon; connection between human, earth, and the heavens)</p> <p>Jigsaw poem “The History Lesson” by Jeanette Armstrong; experience of being colonized;</p>	
Wednesday, March 5	<p>Assessment: Compare/contrast of “The History Lesson” with “My Heart Soars”</p> <p>Read: “Lament for Confederation” by Chief Dan George; read Drew Haydn Taylor’s “Apology”; discuss satire</p> <p>Read “Two Different Ways of Life” by George Blondin and discuss</p>	Contrast of poems
Monday, March 10	<p><u>Transformation:</u></p> <p>Introduce forum task (post a deep question on the online forum and respond to 5 others’)</p> <p>Introduce “transformative” assessment:</p> <p>Write 2 letters to the editor, from opposing viewpoints, in response to the <i>Toronto Star</i> article: “Conservatives reject inquiry for murdered, missing Aboriginal women.”</p> <p>Assessment: Are students able to clearly articulate colonization/ decolonization understandings in the context of a contemporary event?</p>	
Tuesday, March 11	Worktime on “letters to the editors”.	Letters to the editor Forum posts
Thursday, March 13	Semi-structured interview of 5 students, to be selected based on variety of responses on the forum	

Friday, March 14	<u>Integration</u> Students complete White privilege awareness Likert Scale Questionnaire Discuss forum responses Students complete in-class “Final Reflection” assignment Assessment: student is able to clearly articulate: understanding of colonization/decolonization of First Nations peoples, using the literature as evidence; metacognition of one’s views towards, and stereotypes of, First Nations peoples and possible evolution of stereotype through the study of the literature	Final Reflection assignment
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Appendix D: Consent Form and Explanatory Letter

Informed Consent for Minors: SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Project: **Learning about First Nations Peoples through a study of First Nations Literature**

Researcher: **Marlene Roseboom**

Course: **Action Research for Imaginative Educators, EDUC 904**

Instructor: **Dr. Mark Fettes**

Contact Information: **Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University**

mtfettes@sfu.ca phone: 778-782-4489

For more information on Imaginative Education please visit the **website** at **www.ierg.net**

Dear parents and students,

This semester, as part of my coursework for my Master's program, I am doing a study which involves all students in English 10. I would like to ask your permission to share information from the classroom with other teachers and researchers. This will help us identify the best ways of working with students and help improve education.

My Master's program studies the Theory of Imaginative Education, which suggests that in order for students to grasp new concepts, their imagination needs to be engaged in a variety of ways (using "cognitive tools"). We will be using various cognitive tools in our study of First Nations literature (including short stories, essays, and poetry), which coincides with Prescribed Learning Outcomes in the BC Curriculum. We will be discovering whether the study of First Nations literature, using these tools, helps us to better respect and empathize with First Nations peoples – which corresponds with the Second Table of God's Law, to "love our neighbour as ourselves."

Any personal data that is collected during the study, in the course of my interaction with students, will be kept confidential and will not be used for any purpose, within the limits of professional ethics. Descriptions of classroom activities will not identify students by name, unless permission is explicitly given by the student and parents.

Simon Fraser University and those conducting this study subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of participants. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection, your child's protection and to ensure your full understanding of the procedures, risks, and benefits of the study.

Questions, concerns or complaints regarding this research may be communicated to Marlene Roseboom, the classroom teacher named above, to Mark Fettes, instructor, named above, or to:

Kris Magnusson, Dean of Education
8888 University Way, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, V5A 1S6
Kris_magnusson@sfu.ca 778-782-3148

CONSENT BY PARENT / GUARDIAN
TO ALLOW PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT
EDUC 904: Fieldwork II
(Action Research for Imaginative Education)
Simon Fraser University

I have received and understood the Study Information Document, and have discussed it with my child, and consent to my child's participation in the activities described.

Please print the following information:

Name of Parent, Guardian or other: _____

who is the (**relationship** to student): _____

of

student's first name: _____

student's last name: _____

This consent applies while my child is a member of the Grade 10 class with Mrs. M. Roseboom.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date (use format MM/DD/YYYY) : ____/____/____

Appendix E: Data Collection 1 - Journal Writing Prompts

These prompts were given at different times during the unit

1. Freewrite: What do I think of First Nations Peoples?
You are required to do a freewrite on your attitudes towards Aboriginal people. What are your thoughts and feelings towards them? You may include what stereotypes you have. Give *personal* examples, if you can, of things that you say. I want you to be honest about what you think; my disapproval of racist comments will *not* affect your mark or my opinion of you.
2. Residential school survivor visit: Post-visit reflection
 - a. Have any of your opinions about First Nations peoples changed as a result of Pastor Bruce's testimony yesterday? Why or why not? Use at least 4-5 specific details from his talk yesterday to support your answer.
 - b. Explain what "You can't break a man's leg one day and then expect him to walk without a limp the next day" means in the context of First Nations history.
3. What do you think would happen to us if, another country's peoples, like, say, the Chinese came here, tricked us into taking our property, destroyed family life by forcing (for one hundred years) our small children to go to only-Chinese-speaking schools with only-Chinese religion (where half of our children and grandchildren would die because of terrible conditions and diseases), denied us the opportunity to make a living in any way that we were used to, and denied us the right to fight for our rights in court? Do you think that, after they had severely damaged us economically, socially, and psychologically, we could be expected to function "normally" in their society? Explain why or why not. Marks will be given for reasonable justification of your answer.
4. Final Reflection:

Look back at your original freewrite on views towards First Nations peoples. Have your views changed in any way since the beginning of the unit? Why or why not? If so, how? Have you recognized any stereotypes that you may hold that you did not recognize before (you didn't know you had them)? If so, what were they? Or do you think your stereotypes are justified? Have your stereotypes changed in any way, if you had any? Explain why and how your views have changed (or if they have not, explain why not, discussing issues we have examined in class). Explain clearly. Refer to the literature we have studied (important!). You MAY include references to other activities or video clips that we have viewed and discussed but you MUST include references to the literature.

Appendix F: Data Collection 2 –Questionnaire

1. Describe, using word pictures, a “typical” Canadian.
2. Do you see Canada as a racist country? Why or why not?
3. What does “race” mean to you? Do *you* belong to a race? Explain.
4. How many First Nations people do you speak to in a typical week? Explain.
5. Describe the neighborhood in which you live, in terms of the type of people who live there, in details. How many First Nations people live on your road/street? Do you ever speak to them/hang out with them?

Appendix G: Data Collection 3 - Interview Questions

1. What piece of literature that we studied, or what activity did we do that may have opened your eyes to FN? What was the most memorable thing that you learned in this unit?
2. Do you view FN different now than you did at the beginning of the unit? In what way?
3. What did you dislike the most about what we studied?
4. What made you angry? Sad?
5. Do you think that FN should have more rights? Less? Why?
6. Would you see yourself as an ally of First Nations? Why or why not?
7. Have your stereotypes been changed at all during this unit? Why or why not?
8. What kinds of conversations have you had outside of the classroom about FN issues?

Appendix H: Data Collection 4 – Deep Question Forum Rubric

	5	3	1	0
Quality of Posting (Starting a thread)	Question is original and full of good critical thoughts.	Question is original but could use more critical thought	Question is not original and has no critical thought	No question posted
Quality of Posting (Responding to a thread)	More than 2 responses to other's questions/postings add more insight	1 response is insightful but more response is necessary	No responses were insightful and all need more insight	No responses were made
Amount of posting	7 or more posts, including question	4 or more posts, including question	2 or more posts, including question	No posts
Respectful	All posts were respectful of others and yourself	Most post were respectful of others and yourself	1 post was respectful of others and yourself	No post were respectful of others or yourself.

Appendix I: Data Collection 5 – Likert Scale – White Privilege Awareness Questionnaire

Instructions: Check the box that you feel is **most true** to what you think and feel. There are no right or wrong answers!

		Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Disagree 3	Strongly Disagree 4
1	White people have it easier than people of color				
2	Our social structure system promotes White privilege				
3	Plenty of people of color are more privileged than Whites.				
4	I am ashamed that the system is stacked in my favor because I am White				
5	I want to begin the process of eliminating White privilege				
6	I look forward to creating a more racially equal society.				
7	I am eager to find out more about letting go of White privilege. .				
8	I don't care to explore how I supposedly have unearned benefits from being White.				
9	I am anxious about stirring up bad feelings by exposing the advantages that Whites have				
10	I worry about what giving up some White privileges might mean for me				
11	I am worried that taking action against White privilege will hurt my relationships with other Whites.				
12	Everyone has equal opportunity, so this so-called White privilege is really White-bashing				
13	I am angry that I keep benefiting from White privilege.				
14	White people should feel guilty about having White privilege.				

- **Scoring:** for items 3 and 8-12, scoring was reversed
- The lower the score, the more likely a student is to be conscious of White privilege
- Student scores ranged from 25 – 38, with a mean of 32 and a median of 32.5. Numbers were almost equally distributed along that range.

Appendix J: Data Collection 6

“Letters to Editor” Assignment – Missing Murdered Aboriginal Women

This assignment is for you to show your deep understanding of *current* issues that First Nations/ Aboriginal people face – based on an understanding of what we have been discussing in this literature unit.

You are to write TWO letters to the editor in response to the newspaper article:

[http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/03/07/conservatives_reject_inquiry_for_murdered_m
issing_aboriginal_women.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/03/07/conservatives_reject_inquiry_for_murdered_missing_aboriginal_women.html)

For the FIRST letter, you must argue AGAINST having a national inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women. You must write from the perspective of someone who believes that Aboriginal people have already received too much “special treatment.” Be as detailed as possible.

For the SECOND letter, you must argue FOR having a national inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women. You must write from the perspective of being an ally of First Nations peoples, showing an understanding of things we have studied these past few weeks about First Nations. Be as detailed as possible.

Write in a passionate manner without conveying a harsh tone. Be specific and provide opinionated statements.

If you like, you can submit your letter to *The Star* newspaper.

Instructions:

- Begin each letter with reference to the article.
[Re: “Conservatives reject inquiry for murdered, missing Aboriginal women.”]
- Aim for about 3 paragraphs filled with *specific* details and *strong* voice that respond *directly* to the article.
- Use knowledge you have learned in this unit.
- Each letter should be between 100 to 200 words – but it’s QUALITY not QUANTITY that matters! Say it in a memorable way.
- End with name and city.

Appendix K: Evidence Exhibit A

Some Responses to beginning questionnaire, freewrite, and “fat” question

Question: You are required to do a freewrite on your attitudes towards Aboriginal people. What are your thoughts and feelings towards them? You may include what stereotypes you have. Give *personal* examples, if you can, of things that you say. I want you to be honest about what you think; my disapproval of racist comments will *not* affect your mark or my opinion of you.

Jordan: I absolutely hate Indians. Ever since the boarding schools back them, they came whining to the government even though they don't have to pay taxes. They are lazy people who don't clean their houses. Almost every Indian I see is either drunk or drinking or talking about drinking. Serious. Also they are either high or smoking weed when I see them. I don't consider myself racist. It's just certain people act dumb and bring these racist stereotypes upon themselves because of how they act.

Jordan fat question: “Why don't the natives just get a job and forget the past?”

Jordan Questionnaire: “I don't see Canada as a racist country as a whole. ... I for one am not racist but I hate people who act in certain ways because of their colour.; Race is a term dividing up people by their skin pigment. I don't belong in a race. I just hate groups of people for what they do, not because of skin pigment. I personally hate Indians for how they act toward us and the government. ; I never speak to FN; I live in a neighbourhood of “white” people; no FN live near where I live. I never hang out with Indians.

Dan: In my opinion, Indians are useless drunks that don't do much good for the society. All I hear about is the drunks from the reserves or the thieves from the reserves that steal everything and bring it to the reserves where they can't be caught. Natives don't know how to move on with their lives like the rest of the world. They try to stick to their traditional beliefs instead of becoming a useful educated part of society like most other people try to.

Dan fat question: “Why don't Natives just give it up and realize that the past is the past and in order to survive in society they need to try?”

Dan Questionnaire: No, I don't see Canada as a racist country because we love our neighbours and are the friendliest people you will ever meet no matter what colour your skin is. White or black- all the same; “I am part of a race. I am Canadian and I am proud of it”; Typically I don't talk to any First Nations, mainly because I don't come into contact with any in my daily life; the neighbourhood I live in is a quiet country neighborhood with neighbours that aren't too stuck-up to say hi when I walk by and are always friendly welcoming people. There are no Natives.

Chris: I personally think that all Natives are fat, lazy, and are always drunk. Whenever I see one, they always seem to be fat, sloppy and have no manners. They never seem to care about anything that is not theirs. They think that because they can buy anything they want with the governments' money. They always have beer or drugs, laying [sic] around the house and every night they through [sic] parties. They also steal stuff because the police know they can't get it.

Questionnaire: “Race means to me nothing really yes I do belong to a race. The human one.; I don't speak to any FN at all because I never see them; I live out in the country and there is only one guy around us but he is never here; none and no I don't because they're not there.

Larry: I think that Natives are lazy and they just go and get drunk. I personally also think they are this way because of the government trying to make up for the residential schools just hands the Natives everything, so they don't have to try for anything. This is nice until they want to become properly

educated, and suddenly they have to try, and they feel completely lost so they don't bother with education and just begin to feel useless. They begin to drink to cover the feeling of uselessness, and everyone judges them as lazy and drunks.

Larry Fat question: "Why don't the Natives accept what happened instead of sill fighting it, and go and get a good education for a good job?"

Larry Questionnaire: "Our school has quite a few racist people because we are not really exposed to the real world and are mainly one race"; zero, there is none in our school, and I never have to speak to them in town or anything. ; my neighborhood is only white people. No Natives live on my road. There is [sic] none to talk to.

Brad: The thought I have about First Nations is that they are lazy from all the jokes I have heard over the years. They are slobby whenever I see a house on the reserve. There is always junk everywhere. [They are] thieves because I have heard many stories of people saying that they know where there stuff is but they can't get it cause it is on the reserve and that they can do whatever they want fishing wise and they are getting lots of money from the government.

Brad Questionnaire: I speak to maybe one FN, if not at all every two months maybe more; there are East Indians on our road but we don't ever talk to them, not really close enough to call them our neighbours.

Amber: My attitude towards Aboriginal people is somewhat varied. They seem like nice people, from what little interaction I have had with them. But form what I have read in the news, I have begun to think of the Natives as robbers who can get away with it. Sometimes I feel it's unfair because of all the benefits that they get form the government. For example, recently a new Walmart and a bunch of the stores were built on an Indian reserve close to my house. Because the stores were built on Indian land, the Natives don't have to pay taxes on anything that they buy in those stores. But when I go there, I have to pay a lot of money in taxes because I'm not Native. So I guess I feel like the government treats the natives way better than us. I guess I am almost jealous of the FN people in a way.

Melinda: I think Aboriginal people are kind of lazy and are taking advantage of their help from the government. I think they really don't care because you often see them on the streets drinking, not dressed very nicely, or driving junky cars. I also don't think this is all their fault. The new generations live this way because that's how they're brought up. Also, there's a lot of very young people often with little kids and most often they're not really ready. They usually don't get a very good education and a lot of them don't bother to go out and get a job. A lot of them tend to get into trouble. Lots of things from our community have been stolen by the Aboriginal people. My attitude towards First Nations peoples isn't that great, I'll admit, but it's kind of hard to see the good in them. I don't honestly think it's fair to paint them all with the same brush either but you see so many the same. For example, many times when you drive past one of their churches downtown, you see a bunch of older Aboriginal people sitting there with their junky old bikes and they're all drinking and yelling and wobbling all over and you don't understand what they're saying. It's like "clean up and do something useful!" But overall most of my thoughts to these people are negative.

Melinda Questionnaire: "2. I think that a lot of people are racist without even meaning to be sometimes."; 3. I think generally there's a "white people" race and we tend to think we are the most normal race as opposed to Chinese, Japanese, etc.; 5. In a typical week< I talk to 0-1 First Nations people. Maybe if they are working at a store or something (I'd speak to them). My neighbour is First Nations but I rarely talk to her.; 6. My neighborhood has a whole lot of Dutch people living in it, but also

just other Canadians. From what I know of, there's only one First Nations lady living on my road, but about the only thing I've said was "hi" or a wave.'

Esther: When I think of Native people, I generally think of the girls that are my age as being pregnant and having kids and that Native people are drunk a lot of the time. I know that a lot of the Native girls are pregnant at a young age because they come into Timmies where I work and often have kids or a stroller with them. They are often on the chubby side and are dressed sloppy. I also have heard that Natives steal a lot. A Native came down my road once and stole one of my neighbor kid's bikes. It was way too small for him but he still took it. My neighbour ran after him and got it back.

Esther Questionnaire: I don't see Canada as a racist country because everyone is welcome here; we might have stereotypes about people but you can have a stereotype and not be racist as long as you don't treat people differently than others because of their race; [I speak to] only a few (FN) at work; No FN people live on y road. I live on a private road with 11 other houses on it. It has mostly quiet friendly people in it, except for a few ppl who are mean and grouchy.

Laura: I visualize a First Nations person as someone who has dark skin, scraggly black hair and usually doesn't dress very nice because they're usually pretty poor and don't have enough money for better clothes. I think they're seen as sloppy and don't care much much for personal hygiene. I'd right away view them as uneducated and don't know English very well. They try to get a lot out of the government and the government is way too nice to them; they should be treated like normal people. I see them as people who live on reserves and sell fireworks for cheap. I think the Aboriginals are like this because they don't know how to adapt to change. They are sort of still stuck in their old ways (partially the government's fault). I think we see them as more dumb but they have just as good a chance at school if they'd try.

Laura Questionnaire: "I think people here in Canada and most places aren't racist anymore; it was more in the olden days"; I don't usually see any FN people where I live; in my neighborhood it's all Caucasian people and no FN.

John: I think Natives are people who feel rejected -- rejected by the government, modern society, and other races. Many of them seem to have hardened themselves towards the attitudes of European culture. Many Natives seem mad at everybody and look to others as if they dare someone to do anything they want. Many natives have a stubborn attitude and I don't they think they realize they might be doing something wrong! For example a Native Canadian I know refuses to sing the National Anthem because she doesn't like the government.

John Questionnaire: Race does not have a very specified meaning in my mind. I do technically belong to a race, but I don't see myself as a person from that race. I like to see all humans as one big race; I speak to at least one FN in a typical week, because I know quite a few Natives and there are many around Agassiz and Hope; I live in a quiet subdivision on the end of town. Much of the neighborhood is elderly people or young families. No Natives live on my road as far as I know. I do sometimes hang out with them."

Lance: Native people are looked upon as alcohol addicts. They don't work and don't take good care of themselves and their properties. If something goes wrong in society, it gets blamed on Natives. For example, if there is a robbery or break-in, it usually gets blamed on Native people. When we see a homeless person, we automatically assume that it's a native person.

Lance Fat question: Why did Duncan Campbell Scott not realize that what he was doing was wrong if he wrote so many good poems about Indians?

Lance Questionnaire: 2. I don't see Canada as a racist country to foreigners but Canada can be racist against First Nations people.; 3. A race is all the people that look the same or have the same characteristics; I belong to a Western European race. 5. I don't speak with any First Nations people during the week; I don't know any of my neighbours besides the peoples across the road who are from German descent; we get along good with them. There a lot of First Nations people living on Yale Road, but I don't know them.

Janie: People mostly look at Natives as drunks who don't have worth ethic or any goals in life. Last year, Mr. B had a man come in who was a Native, and he told us some things about Natives and was genuine and honest and seemed really nice, and his wife who was also a Native was a police officer which shows that they're not all bad; it's just that alcohol is very bad for them and brings out the worst in them. I think there are good Natives. Ones who are honest and good and want what is best; it's just that their culture is so different and we can't judge them for it.

Janie Fat question: "Why are the Natives always asking for money and land because we were bad to them generations ago, but the Asians come, and were treated like animals and their wives and families weren't allowed to come, but they don't always ask for things or money back from the government?"

Janie Questionnaire: [talked to?] usually none, but there's a new person at work who's Native; I haven't really talked to her ever though; [neighborhood]: everyone is white. All have steady jobs such as marriage counsellor, truck driver, greenhouse owner or owner of glass/door company. All are prosperous. No Natives. So no hanging out with them.

Beth: I think that First Nations people are both good and bad just like any other race. No matter what race you are, there will be bad people in the same race as you. Lots of Natives are homeless or very dirty and slob. But there also are some who dress good and have good upright jobs. They first thing I think of Native people is that they take advantage of their rights. They feel like they don't need jobs because the government will give them free things anyways. We often see drunk Natives when we drive through town. It is a very common thing to see. I think this is why we stereotype them. I was in swimming lessons and there was a Native girl in my class. Her and her family were very nice and normal. They were clean and friendly and very normal people. This is why I think Natives are both good and bad citizens.

Beth Questionnaire: "No we are not a racist country because we allow any race from anywhere in the world to live here; I usually don't talk to any Natives. I don't normally talk to them because none go to my school or to my church; My neighbourhood is mainly famers. As far as I know, no FN people live on our road."

Seth: Personally, I think the Aboriginal people are over-judged. People always look at them like "whoa, all you guys do is drink!" Maybe there is truth to that, but that's still not getting to the root of the problem. Why do they drink? Is it maybe because we, the people judging, have bullied them so harsh that they feel their only option is to drink? Or maybe was it because we were actually the ones who gave it to them in the first place? A personal experience I had with a First Nations person was while I played soccer with Aboriginals in Agassiz soccer. While I grew up, I learned how nice these kids actually were. We tend to forget how similar these people are too us. We would be livid if any race came in and stole our land, killed out only source food, stole our hard-earned money (in that case, furs), and gave us things that were useless and causes more problems than help. In my opinion, it all comes down to us. We tend to

forget are the cause of this. Would you react any different? After all, the Natives have lived here for hundreds of years without disturbance. Until... we arrived.

Seth Fat question: "Could the Indians have tried harder to fight for what was actually there?"

Seth Questionnaire: Canada as a whole I personally don't think so, but when it comes down to communities, I'm sure it happens. _____, for example, is probably one of the most challenging places for a Native to live in. When they're not getting accused for stealing, they are probably getting thought to be drunk; not many, maybe one; No FN live on my road, but I do play soccer against Natives. Their character can actually be really nice, but I think people just tend to judge them quicker.

Marie: My thoughts and feelings about them is that they may have a hard time getting education. Many people think of them as some thing – not a person. They ask questions about them. I think that they do their best for whatever they are doing. I think that they are trying their best. They struggle because they had this land first and then we took it. We sometimes are not fair towards them. (!)

Marie Questionnaire: "I probably belong to a race from Holland. 5. I don't really speak to First Nations