

A Review of Sheila Cote-Meek's and Taima Moeke-Pickering's (Eds.), *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada*

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In the book *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada*, Sheila Cote-Meek and Taima Moeke-Pickering, along with the contributors, set out to “share their experiences and provide diverse perspectives on what it means to decolonize and indigenize the academy” (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020, p. ix). By gathering together the writings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, the editors have successfully brought forward diverse voices to explore the nuances and complexities of the decolonization and indigenization of post-secondary colonial institutions in what is now Canada.

While reading the book, I found that it was not lost on the Indigenous and ally author scholars that “we were all contaminated with colonial European education that is built on racist assumptions that targeted Aboriginal people as inferior” (Battiste, 2013, p. 188). In the same fashion, I have always wondered if it is possible to decolonize educational institutions in Canada because they were created within the colonial project. If it is possible, then what would it look like? Or as Sheila Cote-Meek poses in the Introduction, “What do we aspire post-secondary institutions to do? What needs to be changed? How do we imagine that change can occur?” (p. xvii). The contributors to the various chapters illuminate the opportunities and challenges of such an enterprise.

The strength of *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada* lies in the diversity of perspectives of what decolonizing and indigenizing means in education. Through the lens of relationality, the Indigenous and ally scholars critically and creatively share how post-secondary institutions need to make space for Indigenous Knowledges. This builds on the work of Dr. Marie Battiste’s (2013), *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, in which she discusses the importance of an Indigenous renaissance and displacing cognitive imperialism. This Indigenous renaissance requires Indigenous educators and scholars to continue along the path of reclaiming and renewing their worldviews, environments, and languages (Battiste, 2013, p. 68). As an illustration, the Anishinaabeg, Kanaka Hawai’I, Kanien’kehá:ka, Métis, Michif and nehiyawak scholars foreground their lived experiences and stories from the land as part of the Indigenous renaissance. Displacing cognitive imperialism requires the re-centering of these Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and experiences. The contributors in this book move the reader to interrogate the continued production of Eurocentric knowledge within Western educational institutions and how it continues to marginalize Indigenous knowledges (Galla & Holmes, Chp. 4) and voices.

It is astonishing to think about how long Indigenous scholars have insisted there be change within the educational system (see Laroque, 1975). The most profound appeal to change was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (2015) *Calls to Action*, which various authors use to frame the work that needs to be done, as well as to problematize current institutional policies. What the authors of this book do is advocate for the disruption of the colonial project through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, histories, languages, and knowledges (Cote-Meek, Intro.). As educators, we see the need to rebalance curriculum and pedagogical practices to better represent the diversity that exists within our educational institutions to benefit all

students. For example, Métis content has been woefully underrepresented in the K–12 and post-secondary curriculum, which not only harms Métis students, but also it leaves all Canadians without a fulsome picture of Indigenous history, cultures, and contributions (Scott, Chp. 3). It brings to mind how Dr. Battiste (2013) writes about how “there is no magic bullet, but multiple ways to solve many issues” (p. 70-71). The contributors to this book provide multiple ways to address decolonization and indigenization through the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing (Weenie, Chp. 1; McGuire, Chp. 2; Galla & Holmes, Chp. 4; Steinhauer et al., Chp. 5), use of social media for Indigenous activism (Moeke-Pickering, Chp. 15), and mandatory Indigenous education courses (Fiola & MacKinnon, Chp. 9; Lavallee, Chp. 7; Purtonet al., Chp. 10; Pardy & Pardy, Chp. 13). The text did well in balancing the strategies with the challenges of indigenizing the academy. In particular by identifying that Indigenous scholars are often left shouldering the burden of teaching mandatory Indigenous education courses or sitting on institutional committees (Fiola & MacKinnon, Chp. 9; Grafton & Melacon, Chp. 8; Purtonet al., Chp. 10), as well as leaving Indigenous scholars to wrestle with colonial violence (Pedri-Spade, Chp. 6) when faced with faculty, staff and students who are resistant to change (Cheechoo, Chp. 14; Donnan et al., Chp. 11; Pardy & Pardy, Chp. 13). Hopefully this book can be a catalyst for further research by Indigenous scholars on their own experiences of Indigenizing the academy, and for non-Indigenous scholars to interrogate issues around decolonization. There is more work that needs to be done for post-secondary institutions to see how Indigenous knowledges “can be sources of inspiration, creativity and opportunity, and can make contributions to humanity, equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect” (Battiste, 2013, p. 72).

The book is logically organized according to two themes: Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing post-secondary institutions. These themes provide for Indigenous voices to reflect upon their own experiences of Indigenizing the academy, and for non-Indigenous scholars to interrogate issues around decolonization. I also found that the chapters fell along a continuum of discussing the delegitimization and exclusion of Indigenous Knowledge to outlining the challenges and successes of working towards decolonization through the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and anti-oppressive pedagogies. The glossary at the end of each chapter will help those embarking on learning about Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies navigate the dynamics of indigenizing the academy, especially considering the multiple discourses in defining decolonization and indigenization.

Undergraduate and graduate students will find this book useful in developing and extending their understanding of Indigenous epistemologies. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter will lead the reader to consider their own biases and consider how they can engage in rebalancing educational spaces through the inclusion of diverse ways of knowing and the redistribution of power. The inclusion of further readings with each chapter not only supports enhancing the knowledge of post-secondary students, but they are also useful resources to scholars who are ready to move beyond the symbolic and performative actions of reconciliation (Coupal, Chp. 12).

This book will benefit Indigenous scholars in considering our role in Indigenizing education to ensure that we remain connected to the land and our communities and not succumb to being “palatable Indians” who will not disrupt the existing power structures of the academic elite (Lavallee, p. 125). Coupled with questioning our own complicity, as Sandra Styres so aptly described, is the need to “embrace the messy fluidity of an insider/outsider perspective” as we are both “privileged and complicit in so many ways, yet also simultaneously marginalized and

erased” (p. 177). For non-Indigenous scholars, this book will benefit them in illuminating their responsibilities for decolonization, which can occur alongside Indigenization by the re-centring of Indigenous knowledges and experiences (Grafton & Melacon, Chp. 8).

In *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada*, Cote-Meek and Moeke-Pickering, and their valued group of contributors bring together years of experience and personal, theoretical, and practical knowledge in the field of education. They invite readers to reflect, interrogate, and transform.

References

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