

A Review of Anna-Leah King, Kathleen O'Reilly, and Patrick J. Lewis' (Eds.) (2024)

Unsettling Education: Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Land

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Unsettling Education: Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Land, written by various authors and edited by King et al. (2024), explores decolonization, Indigenization and reconciliation for educators and students through addressing colonialism within the education system, including higher education. The authors each bring forth an abundance of knowledge and experience in the field of Indigenous education through sharing the stories and words of Indigenous community leaders, Elders, and knowledge keepers. Further, the authors provide an abundance of examples/teachings for current and future K–12 teachers and higher academia instructors to implement in the classroom alongside Indigenous perspectives and theories. This book also serves as a guide for non-Indigenous readers to reflect on their own positionality and privilege, while engaging with truth and reconciliation strategies, drawing on the stories and experiences of Indigenous scholars and educators. The book comprises eighteen chapters, grouped into three sections and written by twenty-nine authors (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

The first section of the book, which includes Chapters One to Four, is titled 'Unsettling.' This section highlights the significance of Indigenous pedagogy, which demands a space for examining positionality, awareness of space, and intentions for working with, for, and beside Indigenous peoples. As mentioned in Chapter One by King (2024), positionality involves the unpacking of identities and preconceptions and raises questions in relation to power and privilege. Awareness of space is "where parties come together to acknowledge the space between them while taking on the ethical space of engagement" (Ermine, 2007, p. 15). This space provides an opportunity for individuals to bring different views to the table to "see how others see, interpret, and interact with the world" (p. 15). Finally, working with, for, and beside Indigenous peoples is rooted in decolonization as it fosters space for "acknowledging different epistemologies, histories, and knowledge of the world in a respectful way" (p. 15).

In Chapter One, written by King (2014), who cites Tuck and Yang (2012), who mention that decolonization begins with "disrupting settler narratives in a manner that may be unsettling but signifies the utilization of Indigenous ways of being/knowing beyond the decolonization metaphor" (p. 10). Decolonization aims to move beyond an idea to an action through giving space and opportunities for marginalized and silenced voices to be heard within academia. In a similar vein, Sium et al. (2012) describe, "decolonization [as] a messy, dynamic, and a contradictory process" and suggest that "Indigenous Knowledge [and] decolonization... are so much a part of communities and individuals—so deeply embedded and part of their everyday life—that they cannot be codified or defined" (p. i). That is, decolonization is an ongoing living experience that cannot be presented as being confined to the classroom. Additionally, the first section of the book provides insights and opportunities for readers to learn without focusing on individual guilt but rather on self-reflexivity in relation to collective responsibility, as after all, "hard truths are absolutely necessary for reconciliation" (p. 11). As the book accurately implies, acts of reconciliation begin with an acceptance by all that to Indigenize is to enable Indigenous peoples to live, work, and play in the manner that they choose – namely, acts of reconciliation acknowledge and honour their cultures, traditions, and worldviews.

A common thread across the chapters in the first section of the book is that compiling the necessary tools for reconciliation and transformation is imperative to dismantling systems and

fostering conversations about Indigenous inclusion. As mentioned by King in Chapter One, the most important tool is the ability to engage in self-reflexivity regarding one's positionality, power, and privilege within colonial systems of education. Therefore, according to MacKinnon (2024, p. 28), Canadian students must actively engage with Indigenous and settler histories for reconciliation to occur. This means that it is up to Canadian educators to provide information and knowledge regarding Indigenous and settler colonial education history alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. Consequently, MacKinnon (2024) provides four recommendations (steps) for moving from empathy to action for educators in the classroom. These include: 1) a mandatory Canadian Indigenous and settler colonial history course for high-school students, 2) a mandatory Canadian Indigenous and settler colonial history course for all education and teacher training programs, 3) a mandatory workshop-style learning session for current educators in Canada, and 4) practicing reciprocity (i.e., ensuring equitable access to educational resources amongst various communities).

The second section of this book includes Chapters Five to Twelve and is titled 'Indigenization,' which begins with the history of the Anishinaabe peoples and their relationality that extends beyond the cosmos and their place within Mtigwaaning, Gahnoowaaniing, and the Starworld. Anishinaabe Gikendaaswin is a word that encompasses and embodies all aspects of Indigenous ways of knowing, knowledges, and relationships. Likewise, the Niizhwaaswi e bi ziaakshkaak bemaadiziiwin is an Anishinaabe phrase that provides foundational cultural teaching which are comparable to Wall's (2024) four hills of life. The circle, which represents the cycle of life, is divided into eight sections: purity, the good life, the fast life, wonder and wondering, doing it, wisdom, Elder purity, and the eighth section, shaded black to represent the unknown and G'ichi Zhemnidoo, the great, kind, and forgiving spirit. The circle signifies the importance of ceremony through all stages of life as well as the connection to Gete Anishinaabeg, which is the past and the future. Ceremony allows Indigenous peoples to see themselves in the knowledge they hold, as well as in teachings and in relationships with the land.

According to Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), Indigenization has three meanings: Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation Indigenization, and decolonial Indigenization. As mentioned in Chapter Six, author Belanger (2024), who cites Christian (2017), suggests that some ways to interweave Indigenous Knowledge are through Embodied Story Practice (ESP), which focuses on acknowledging the importance of knowing place, learning to engage with the environment, and acknowledging the land that is inhabited. According to Chapter Six, author Belanger, Christian (2017) explains ESP as a common practice deeply rooted in Syilx Okanagan culture, focusing on healing and personal growth through land-based performance and gestures. Belanger notes Christian's (2017) reference to interweaving ESP as an ontology (theories of reality) for students to understand and know themselves while recognizing and connecting to their communities. Following the protocols of Elders is, according to Christian (2017), a step towards reconciliation. Further, ESP is different from traditional storytelling as it includes elemental embodiment training, which is the incorporation of gestures, movement, and dancing while storytelling (Belanger, 2024). Practicing ESP in the education system can present itself in various ways, some of which include learning creative ways of coping with mental health, walking the land and picking up garbage, and engaging in reflectivity on the land. Further, as mentioned by Beatty and Clyne (2024) in Chapter Ten, reconciliation may also look like interweaving Indigenous education in mathematics, as in the teachings of loom beading, circular medallions, Métis finger weaving, and discussions of participant outcomes.

In Chapter Two of the second section of the book, Battiste (2013), a Mi'kmaw educator from the Potlotek First Nation, urges Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to join hands as allies in struggles for decolonization and reconciliation. King et al. (2014) seem to heed Battiste's call, especially in the third section of this book (Chapters Thirteen–Eighteen), which is titled, 'Decolonization.' The third section opens with Chapter Thirteen, written by Brice and colleagues (2024), and begins with an Indigenous methodological approach known as storytelling, specifically practiced through remembering and memory. Through narrative stories and traditional sacred stories, Indigenous scholar Amy Farrell and Métis teachers (Dylan and Lorna) from Saskatchewan share their work in Chapter Fifteen of 'Reconnecting with their Roots, Decolonization Practices, and Reconciliation Efforts in Academia' (Oloo, 2024, p. 321). Their stories speak to the significance and necessity of change in the education system within Canada. Specifically, as mentioned in Chapter Fifteen by Oloo, change is achievable through policy reform and decision-making toward a stronger appreciation and awareness of Indigenous peoples becoming teachers. Furthermore, Oloo offers that decolonization begins through dismembering colonialism (i.e., deconstructing colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches), rooted within the education system and experiences of Indigenous students from the time of residential schools (p. 324). Colonialism is manifested through the teachings and education of Indigenized Knowledge for teachers, administrators, and students, as well as for systems, structures, and procedures. Addressing colonialism in education through Indigenizing educational practices is how decolonization begins, toward the creation of a humanizing system and structure.

As previously noted, interweaving Indigenous education through teacher education programs can work toward the necessary foundation for decolonization. In Chapter Sixteen, authors Yee and colleagues (2024) provide opportunities for the incorporation of activities/lessons such as land pedagogy, metaphorical thinking, and language journey. Yee et al. offer that Indigenous education can acknowledge, recognize, honour, and guide teacher candidates to no longer be "perfect strangers" (p. 346) to the land. These authors highlight a connection between how low-income and racialized students, who see themselves in their learning, the curriculum, and the representation of staff members, are more likely to achieve academic success. Further, the authors provide information regarding the importance of story walks, which build and renew relationships with nature and the people of their communities. Through paying attention to the surroundings, asking guiding questions, sharing new and old information, and sharing stories of leadership, a fundamental step can be taken toward decolonization. Lastly, through the words of Anishinaabe writer Richard Wagaemese (2024) in Chapter Eighteen, who claims "we are all a story" (p. 389), it is only through the continuous work of Indigenous peoples' storytelling and non-Indigenous peoples' self-reflexivity that decolonization, unsettling, and reconciliation can occur.

Self-reflexivity on positionality, power, and privilege is fundamental for the success of decolonization, unsettling, and reconciliation. *Unsettling Education Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Land* is an exceptional book that offers thought-provoking and comprehensive strategies, tools, and practices for current and future teachers and teacher educators to use in their classrooms alongside those in leadership positions. The book describes the importance of Indigenization as including Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation Indigenization, and decolonial Indigenization. Further, the book provides space for questioning colonialist education while working towards breaking down structures and systems of Western education that Indigenous peoples face within a colonial education system. Overall, this book is a must-read for anyone

currently positioned within a teacher education program, as a practicing educator, or in a leadership position.

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