



Where Are We? Finding a Canadian Curriculum

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Abstract:

This issue defines a Canadian curriculum amid political pressures and colonial legacies, emphasizing ongoing relational and experiential processes that foreground equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization. Rather than treating curriculum as static content, contributors emphasize curriculum-as-encounter—approaching curriculum in ways that value ethical relationships, sustained engagement with colonial histories and the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing. Authors in this issue advocate for the unsettling of normalized settler colonial structures, and they invite new ways of living together in Canada. By upholding ethical responsibility, place and people, this issue advances a complex vision for Canadian curriculum rooted in reconciliation and authentic engagement.

Keywords: Canadian curriculum; equity; diversity; inclusion; decolonization; reconciliation; ethical relationships

Où sommes-nous ? À la recherche d'un curriculum canadien

Résumé :

Ce numéro définit un curriculum canadien au milieu des pressions politiques et des héritages coloniaux, en mettant l'accent sur des processus relationnels et expérientiels continus qui mettent en valeur l'équité, la diversité, l'inclusion et la décolonisation. Plutôt que de considérer le curriculum comme un contenu statique, les auteurs mettent l'accent sur le curriculum en tant que rencontre, en l'abordant d'une manière qui valorise les relations éthiques, l'engagement soutenu avec les histoires coloniales et l'intégration des modes de connaissance indigènes. Les auteurs de ce numéro préconisent la remise en cause des structures coloniales normalisées et invitent à de nouvelles façons de vivre ensemble au Canada. En affirmant la responsabilité éthique, le lieu et les personnes, ce numéro propose une vision complexe du curriculum canadien, ancrée dans la réconciliation et l'engagement authentique.

Mots clés : Curriculum canadien; équité; diversité; inclusion; décolonisation; réconciliation; relations éthiques

Since his election, Donald Trump has threatened Canada with economic measures, imposing high tariffs on Canadian goods and pressuring Canada on trade, border security and other bilateral agreements. He has also proposed that Canada be annexed as a state, forcing Canadians to deeply consider where we are, who we are and what matters in Canada.

The title of the editorial, “Where Are We? Finding a Canadian Curriculum”, echoes Cynthia Chambers’ paper from 2008 in Volume 6, Number 2, in this journal—“Where Are We? Finding Common Ground in a Curriculum of Place”. In her narrative enactments, Chambers teaches four dimensions of a *curriculum of place*: firstly, recognizing a need for a different sense of time; secondly, developing skilled practices; thirdly, paying attention; and fourthly, wayfinding. Rereading Chambers’ paper is heartwarming, as her processes are echoed in the work of the scholars in this issue, who, almost two decades later, advance curriculum while establishing a unique Canadian curriculum of place. Canadian curriculum distinguishes itself by way of the value given to place and people, grounded in ongoing attempts to keep equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization actions in the fore.

As we prepared for this publication, we acknowledged the unmistakably Canadian outlook of this issue. Each of the papers in this issue actively reimagines Canadian education in the context of Truth and Reconciliation, decolonization, and/or ethical relationality. They critique superficial approaches and press for reconsidered practices, calling for fundamental shifts in how knowledge is constructed, and thus, how history and relationships are understood and enacted within curriculum and teacher education. A theme across the papers looks at the relationships among those involved and the concept of curriculum-as-encounter as processes that are always ongoing, experiential and relational.

Of particular interest, you will note, is an unapologetic discussion of how settler colonialism perpetuates the normalization of settler culture and that this needs to be addressed. Here, the authors recognize that reconciliation is not easy and promote sustained engagement with the complexities of colonial histories. They observe ongoing instances of injustice toward Indigenous Peoples in Canada and point out ways to address these issues. They note how Indigenous ways of knowing have historically been, and still are, undervalued and how these spaces might be navigated differently. While not prescriptive, these papers draw attention to transformative practices that emphasize process, relationship and ethical responsibility.

Claire Ahn, Nathan Rickey, Alexandra Minuk, Jane Chin and Rebecca Luce-Kapler examine, by analyzing relevant literature and surveying English educators, why just 41% of applied English learners passed the 2019 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Carolyn Clarke, Steven Van Zoost and Jo Anne Broders highlight how COVID-19 prompted greater student involvement and agency in summative assessments. Gemma Porter examines the discourse of land and place in Saskatchewan Grade 9–12 social studies and history curricula. Patrick Phillips addresses his physical re/connection with the land through a reluctant pilgrim approach. And, rounding out the issue, Jennifer Tupper challenges the truth of settler versions of history as depicted in a prominent public artwork at the university where she teaches.

Collectively, this issue advocates for deeper, relational engagements that unsettle existing colonial structures and open possibilities for genuine new learning about how to live together in this place as Canadian educators.

We close by thanking the Northwest Territories Archive Depository for supplying the cover photo of Dr. Cynthia Chambers at the front table on the left, beside her mother-in-law, Florence Erasmus. She is explaining the Tłı̄ch̄q (Dogrib) dictionary at the Tree of Peace Annual General Assembly at Latham Island Community Centre in Yellowknife in 1973. The photo is a wonderful artifact of Dr. Chamber's relational work within communities. The CACS Graduate Award is named after Dr. Cynthia Chambers. (Credit: ©NWT Archives/Native Communications Society - Native Press photo/N-2018-010: 01394.)

