Focus Questions

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**Teachers, Knowledge, Building Relationships: Invitation and Hospitality**

Over the course of the 12 some years I was in school, I had lots of teachers that all had different styles/beliefs/values and that allowed me to see a multitude of ways of learning (I also went to two different schools growing up so that also helped). I had a principle back in middle years/junior year that strongly believed in going out and doing, not just sitting in a classroom all the time (he always had the best stories to) so you would often find his classes outside when able and him relating things to real life. This way of learning was very different than a lot of teachers I had/still have in university as we are mainly taught the western way (memorization and standardized testing) so this teacher taking us out and around really helped me view learning not just as sitting in a classroom but also going out and having fun. Another teacher I had (this time in high school) let us make a lot of choices in her classroom which myself and many other students appreciated, we were making lots of life decisions at that time and so being able to choose our work and how we did it really helped me see another way of teaching instead of the teacher being the power-holder. That high school teacher also created such a safe place for a lot of students, she really connected with a lot of us and gave us an area that allowed us to share how we were and how our weeks were going. Teachers create safe places by allowing students to be themselves and to give them a learning space that includes things of theirs/other cultures so that they can learn the other cultures. I know growing that despite being a mainly all white school (especially my middle school) that my teachers made sure to educate us on different cultures to their best abilities (especially Indigenous). Teachers make good and safe learning spaces by giving students an area where they can talk about their problems and are able to trust a teacher enough to share what is going on in their life. I luckily had teachers like this growing up but I had a couple that were not great. They're learning spaces did not have the comfort and safeness which tended to make quite a few of us (teacher forced us to pray every morning, and another teacher was very sexist to us girls), and the relationships they built was through favoritism.

**Students & Learning Environment: Focus on places, spaces, and boundaries**

My learning environment mostly consisted of the normal classroom layout with rows of students and the teacher at the front holding the power in the classroom. With this layout there wasn’t many options for moveable learning space options or to have a classroom that allowed for movement while learning like there is now. I grew up with the rigid classrooms going through the higher grades as when you're in kindergarten and younger grades they are filled with toys, class pets, or whatever else we had as young students. Classrooms were usually boring and didn’t have fun things within. Luckily, I had a couple classrooms that made it fun to learn; throughout middle school we had these couches and areas in the hall where we could go instead of staying in the classroom when we had independent work time. I had a teacher who would let us study outside on a nice day. Highschool was usually pretty boring classroom wise but I had quite a few teachers that made an effort to turn the classroom into a place that was filled with trust and that was safe. One of my teachers (English teacher) would walk around and talk with us about whatever was going on with the school or gossip that we had, and she also allowed us to kind of do what we wanted especially if it was just a work day (she allowed us to go home and work on it in our homes which helped a lot of us as we were all so done with school, this was in grade 12 by the way). To make a classroom more relational I believe that there should be places throughout the classroom even in high school that has flex seating as well as having representation within the toys used/books taught. I wish I could've learned more about cultures besides ours and other white Europeans (England, France), as well as more of Indigenous culture not just the residential schools because there's more happening now than just the schools and trauma (want to know more about what is happening in the world not just what happened years ago). I think to make a classroom relational and open that the teachers need to be open to change and work with their students so that they can learn the way they learn, and to make learning fun again not just full of stress.

**Truth & Reconciliation**

What was mostly taught in school of Indigenous people was residential schools and the trauma/hardships they face throughout life in Canada. This was also usually taught by a white teacher who had no experience with Indigenous people, however, in middle school we would have some Indigenous people come and speak to us students almost like an assembly so that we could learn. Throughout older grades we were again just taught about the abuse they went through and the intergenerational trauma that will continue to go on if something isn't done. As an adult with the strong influence of social media, I have learned so much more of their culture and not just residential schools. There is so much more happening on/off reserves that are pushed out of media made by white people that we weren’t able to see but with Instagram and TikTok giving Indigenous creators a platform I can now see what is happening (women being kidnapped/going missing, no good water sources, medical help being almost non-existent or very biased). The booklet that was given to us mainly talks about educating future educators about the trauma that happened and the colonization in the classroom, and how we can reconcile from it and create a learning space that includes everyone not just white people. The message that resonated with me was that their focus is them wanting to educate everyone/anyone and to be spreading the same information around unlike many news storied/the media. This really resonates with me because I know so many people that want to learn and take that next step towards reconciliation but don’t know how to and this booklet is about the educating anyone who is willing to learn and step forward. Something I want to learn more about is how the intergenerational trauma could keep affecting families if we don’t reconcile and take the steps needed to make change within First Nation communities.