

My Journey to Reconciliation

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All through my life, my experiences have been vastly different than those who are indigenous and this is because of my privilege as a white person. Life is never easy for anyone but because of actions taken by the government and Canada itself, they made it way worse for indigenous people. Me being white, I have never had the experience of being looked down upon for my skin color, my culture, or what I believe in nor have I had an issue with racism. Because we are white; we can move where we want/when we want with no trouble of finding housing, my skin color won't work against me when at banks or when dealing with money (McIntosh 1989). The skin color of a white person is an asset and makes them confident in themselves yet it when it is not white it can be seen as a burden as well as uncomfortable with themselves (McIntosh 1989). Much of this is unseen instead of the individual acts of hate many have been taught to act against (McIntosh 1989). Being a future educator, I need to not pity/pity help indigenous people but fully help and be another voice, as well as understand that I have a privilege over others because of my skin tone and that needs to be destroyed as white privilege plays a role in classrooms despite it being 2022 now (racist practices, bringing a student down because of their skin color, etc.). this also informs me as an educator that the change can come from my students and they are a part of the change that needs to come.

Every student is different in their own ways and each child has their own differences. When I was in middle school/high school I always felt extremely different than classmates and now I know it was for a majority of reasons, a few of them being; my sexuality, my body, and the way I think/process. Learners come in all different shapes/sizes metaphorically speaking because not

all students have the same life experiences and this is something I wish I had been taught when I was younger because despite not being of a different race/culture I am someone who is of the LGBTQ+ so now as I am learning about the different learners we could have, it gives me a bit of relatability, however, not enough to relate fully. My understanding of learners has not changed a whole lot as I learn more because of the opportunities I had to be able to work with kids with differences but I also know that as I learn the more, I will be able to support my students better. Despite my understanding not changing, I am learning more about what my students could be going through, and what this means for me is that I will be able to understand them better and why they act/behave a certain way. This is a way that my journey to reconciliation has already begun as I have the prior knowledge of working with a diverse classroom/group and have that forethought into diverse teaching. It also helped my journey to reconciliation with the understanding of how there can be different learners; and indigenous students being part of that with many of them needing extra help or extra compassion (thinking equity versus equality because that is a part of reconciliation) I know/will learn more about the steps I will take to help students who have differences.

My journey to reconciliation also includes both global and local politics surrounding indigenous people. Locally from where I am from (small town Saskatchewan) it was okay to be racist/against people who are indigenous because that's is what people think is socially acceptable there. Our worldviews are a huge part of our teaching as well as the mindsets we hold as teachers which affects how we interact with them (Pirbhai-Illich, Martin 2019). There are two ways to think; relational which connects everything/everyone and tends to be the southern and indigenous way of knowing whilst object-based being about putting everything into categories as well as being the western way of thinking (Pirbhai-Illich, Martin 2019). This helps shape my

journey/way of teaching because this gives me more options for my mindset instead of just being object-based. I was taught to be an object-based learner which is the colonial/colonization way of thinking and the application of relational ways of thinking into my teaching/classroom can give students a way to relate as well as be able to find peers that they can connect with. Being object-based for many years it will be challenging to switch that mindset, yet it is important to do so to continue the journey to reconciliation and I think that relational mindsets should be more common throughout Canadian schools, and is something I will be implementing into my future classrooms. Now looking into global perspective, I was very lucky to grow up when social media became a hit in the world which gave me outside perspectives aside from the locals in town; because of that I was able to grow up with a wider mindset and a better awareness of the problems indigenous people face. Obviously, I will never truly understand what indigenous students/communities have gone through but through the global use of social media/politics I was able to see more of the culture and how they live their day to day lives which gave me a better awareness than some people. It also gave me opportunity to learn about indigenous people and be given the proper information as I didn't originally have (white teachers teaching about indigenous culture and not understanding it themselves).

Indigenization and decolonizing the classrooms are part of my journey to reconciliation through me being a future educator and needing to bring those values into the classroom. Education and classrooms are vital areas for decolonization as well as empowering the students, and is a process that needs to be continually worked on (UVic n.d). In the context of education, it is about confronting colonial practices that are still implemented into classrooms; such as the curriculums, power relations, and the structures within the school (UVic n.d). We as teachers need to be allies to both students and other staff to indigenize the classrooms/education instead

(UVic n.d) instead of relying on the teachers of different culture to do it all themselves. There needs to be a continual reflection, and always working on what fits the students best concerning the relations they have (who is in power over their knowledge, or what their role is) (UVic n.d). Part of this too is reestablishing links in the community and giving the students a vital support system (which is something many don't have) (UVic n.d). Indigenization is a huge part of my journey with us educators needing to bring these aspects into our classrooms and needing to be a part of our students support systems. It is also a part of my journey because I want to be part of the change that is coming in our education system and to be someone who helps decolonize the classrooms so that my students feel empowered, safe, welcome, and helping them form identities of their own.

References

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