

## **A Case of Senator Lynn Beyak and Anti-Indigenous Systemic Racism in Canada**

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Résumé de l'article

Le 7 mars 2017, la sénatrice canadienne Lynn Beyak s'est levée dans la Chambre rouge et a prononcé un long discours dans lequel elle incitait les Canadiens à reconnaître les aspects positifs du système des pensionnats indiens que la Commission de vérité et réconciliation n'avait pas reconnus. Comme enseignants et enseignantes descendants des colons, les auteurs de cette communication examinent comment les déclarations de la sénatrice Beyak mettent en évidence la profondeur du colonialisme de peuplement systémique, des racismes anti-autochtones et des récits troublants des conquérants du Canada. Les auteurs demandent aux enseignants et aux éducateurs d'examiner ces racismes systémiques anti-autochtones en relation avec la façon dont ils peuvent confronter et déconstruire le colonialisme de peuplement et la conscience historique des colons dans les programmes scolaires et de formation des enseignants. En s'appuyant sur des recherches récentes effectuées par des chercheurs des Facultés d'éducation du Canada, les auteurs soutiennent que la bienveillance des colons et les racismes coloniaux systémiques anti-autochtones peuvent non seulement être déconstruits, mais aussi que les antiracismes peuvent aussi être reconstruits par l'entremise des relations éthiques, de la vérité et d'une pratique critique visant la réconciliation.



# A Case of Senator Lynn Beyak and Anti-Indigenous Systemic Racism in Canada

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## **Abstract**

On March 7, 2017, Canadian Senator Lynn Beyak stood up in the Red Chamber and delivered a lengthy speech urging Canadians to recognise the positive aspects of the Indian Residential Schooling system that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had failed to acknowledge. In their positions as settler teacher educators, the authors examine how Senator Beyak's statements expose the depth of systemic settler colonialism, anti-Indigenous racisms, and unsettling beneficiary narratives here in Canada. The authors call on teacher educators to examine these systemic anti-Indigenous racisms in relation to how they can confront and disrupt settler Canadian colonialism and historical settler consciousness within teacher education and school curricula. Drawing on recent research done by educational

researchers at Faculties of Education across Canada, the authors maintain that settler colonial benevolence and colonial systemic anti-Indigenous racisms can be unlearned and learned through ethical relationality, truth, and a critical praxis of reconciliation.

*Keywords:* settler colonialism, Indigenous anti-racisms, ethical relationality, historical consciousness, teacher education, colonial logics, unsettling beneficiaries, citizenship education

## **Résumé**

Le 7 mars 2017, la sénatrice canadienne Lynn Beyak s'est levée dans la Chambre rouge et a prononcé un long discours dans lequel elle incitait les Canadiens à reconnaître les aspects positifs du système des pensionnats indiens que la Commission de vérité et réconciliation n'avait pas reconnus. Comme enseignants et enseignantes descendants des colons, les auteurs de cette communication examinent comment les déclarations de la sénatrice Beyak mettent en évidence la profondeur du colonialisme de peuplement systémique, des racismes anti-autochtones et des récits troublants des conquérants du Canada. Les auteurs demandent aux enseignants et aux éducateurs d'examiner ces racismes systémiques anti-autochtones en relation avec la façon dont ils peuvent confronter et déconstruire le colonialisme de peuplement et la conscience historique des colons dans les programmes scolaires et de formation des enseignants. En s'appuyant sur des recherches récentes effectuées par des chercheurs des Facultés d'éducation du Canada, les auteurs soutiennent que la bienveillance des colons et les racismes coloniaux systémiques anti-autochtones peuvent non seulement être déconstruits, mais aussi que les antiracismes peuvent aussi être reconstruits par l'entremise des relations éthiques, de la vérité et d'une pratique critique visant la réconciliation.

*Mots-clés :* colonialisme de peuplement, racismes anti-autochtones, interrelations éthiques, conscience historique, formation des enseignants, logiques coloniales, déstabilisation des conquérants, éducation à la citoyenneté

## Introduction

The Red Chamber, the name by which the Canadian Senate is known, sits perched at the top of a cliff overlooking the confluence of three rivers: the Kitchissippi, the Rideau, and the Gatineau. At one time, the Anishinaabe people travelled the waters of these rivers freely; living, trapping, and trading on both sides of the watershed. Today, the settler colonial Parliament of Canada occupies the unceded and unsurrendered ancestral territories of the Anishinaabeg Nation.<sup>1</sup> The Kitchissippi River is a political boundary separating the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau. Downstream, a controversial “revitalization” project, *Zibi*, unfolds along the Gatineau side of the river. Faded prayer ties flutter from the posts of the Chaudière bridge as the dust from the construction of multimillion-dollar condominiums continues to rise. In schools and in our daily lived curriculum along the river, and across the country, settler colonialism continues to exclude and make invisible the histories, contemporary issues, and perspectives of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Located in the eastern end of Parliament’s Centre Block, the Senate chamber is adorned in royal red, oak panels, bronze chandeliers, and showcases a marble bust of Queen Victoria. It is in this settler colonial institution that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian Senators meet and debate. It is also where former Conservative Senator Lynn Beyak stood up on behalf of settler colonialism to mount an abhorrent defense of the Indian Residential Schooling system on March 7, 2017.<sup>2</sup> In her lengthy speech, Beyak expressed disappointment that the “good deeds” provided by “well-intentioned” teachers had been overlooked by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), noting that “the remarkable works and historical tales in the residential schools go unacknowledged for the most part” (Senate of Canada [SOC], 2017a). Moreover, Beyak (SOC, 2017a) stated:

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- 1 In this article, the terms “settler” and “settler Canadian” are used to describe peoples who came to Canada with agency and choice, to benefit economically from the land through different past and present colonial policies. Therefore, Black Canadians, as the descendants of enslaved peoples, as well as immigrants and refugees fleeing war, discrimination, injustices, and oppressions are not constituted as settler colonial Canadians. For more discussion on this, see Thomas (2019).
  - 2 Please note that the Indian Residential Schooling System is capitalized and referred to as a schooling system throughout the article to place emphasis on the fact that it was a system, with systemic, intergenerational, and ongoing impacts on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis survivors, families, and communities.

The fathers and sons and family members of the nuns and priests, to this day, have to bear the reputation as well, and nobody meant to hurt anybody. The little smiles in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are real, the clothes are clean, and the meals are good. There were many people who came from residential schools with good training and good language skills. (SOC, 2017a)

Shortly after Senator Beyak's speech, Canadian-born British former newspaper publisher Conrad Black (2017, 2020, 2021a, 2021b) wrote several pieces in the *National Post*. In those, he implored Canadian Senators to "pull themselves together" over the calls for Ms. Beyak to resign from the Senate. Black, who was appointed to the British House of Lords in 2002, is a public intellectual who once controlled part of Hollinger International, one of the largest settler colonial media empires in the world.

In one of his opinion editorials, Black (2017) asserted that most of the children who were forcibly removed from their families and sent to the Indian Residential Schooling system were

plucked from desperate and hopeless squalor and, despite the disdain of the deputy minister of the time the program was established, the authorities generally meant to educate the native people usefully. Sen. Beyak should be commended for not joining in this frenzied self-flagellation induced by native leaders who, in effect, claim that the Europeans had no business coming here, but that the native people are prepared to accept as their due the entire fruit of 400 years of effort in transforming the barbarous and underpopulated territory of Canada into a G7 country. (para. 10)

The national narrative that Canadians are well-intentioned, harmless, and hardworking caregivers of Indigenous people pervades our classrooms, its curriculum, conversations at the dinner table, social media, and, for some, the Canadian Senate. By believing that some of us are "benevolent" settlers who "rescued" children from "squalor" and gave them an education, "clean clothes," "little smiles," and "healthy meals," we continue to uplift and endorse the intergenerational violence of settler colonialism as a charitable cause (SOC, 2017a). Such popularized narratives forget that several citizens, like we two authors, continue to be uninvited guests who are able to capitalize from our daily livelihood on the traditional unceded and unsundered territories of the Algonquin people.

Senator Beyak's belief in such settler colonial worldviews, of systemic violence as benevolence, were present in her defensive rethoric and ensuing Senate speeches. For example, she insisted, she too has "suffered with First Nations peoples who live in the north." Indeed, she appreciates "their suffering more than they'll ever know" (Tasker, 2017, para. 4). In turn, when the Assembly of First Nations and other Indigenous leaders offered to provide Senator Beyak with information about the Indian Residential Schooling system, she declared, "I don't need any more education. I've been involved since we double dated when I was 15 with an Aboriginal fellow and his wife" (Tasker, 2017, para. 13). Beyak's settler denial of being a "racist" is founded on her perceived past distant relations with a sole "fellow" or "friend," rather than her current words, political disposition, and/or actions; for her, Conrad Black, and Canadians who share such worldviews, we remain the intergenerational "JudeoChristian white saviours" of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

As teacher educators and academics working within the field of teacher education, we have witnessed teacher candidates enmeshed in anti-Indigenous racist narratives that are similar to those put forth by the former Senator Beyak and "Lord" Conrad Black. How might we confront and disrupt such settler colonialism, its violence, ongoing denial, and intergenerational harms in teacher education (Carleton, 2021)? In this essay, we seek to disrupt settler colonial worldviews by studying the works of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who are themselves disruptors, both inside and outside of teacher education. We continue to be called to action by the following words of former Senator and Chief Commissioner of the TRC, Murray Sinclair (2014): "It is precisely because education was the primary tool of oppression of Aboriginal people, and miseducation of all Canadians, that...education holds the key to reconciliation" (p. 7). Due to our past lived experiences as students studying a K-12 Ontario curriculum, teacher education, and history and social studies education, we have also been colonized by settler colonial mythologies. We acknowledge that these positionalities and colonizing worldviews implicate us in reproducing the very worldviews and mythologies that we seek to disrupt within the school curricula and teacher education.

## Encountering Our Privileged Positionalities as Settler Canadians

Before we discuss current research in teacher education and the possibilities of truth, and then reconciliation as pedagogical praxis, we first situate ourselves as settlers who live, work, teach, and profit on the unceded and unsundered territories of the Anishinaabe Algonquin First Nations people. We acknowledge that our choice to question our privilege and positionalities as Canadian citizens, settler scholars and educators is a privilege in itself. I, Nicholas, am a first-generation Hakka-Guyanese-Irish-Scottish immigrant from Guyana and Scotland, entitled to the rights of being a dual Canadian and United Kingdom transnational settler citizen. My (Lisa Howell's) family immigrated to Ontario and Saskatchewan from Northern Europe, my paternal great-grandmother being a British homechild. Subsequently, both of us experienced the francophone Catholic (Nicholas) and anglophone public (Lisa) schooling systems that sought to ensure we would become "good" francophone and anglophone settler Canadian citizens (Ng-A-Fook, 2009).

Here, as Sharma (2020) reminds us,

It is thus important to historicize the Whiteness of the White Settler colonies. Far from being there from the start, they became White Settler colonies as workers from Europe were made into White settlers over centuries of imperial rule. The strategic essentialism of racism as a technology of separation formed the basis for turning those colonies with large numbers of workers from Europe into White Settler colonies.... As Whiteness was imagined—and accepted—as a cross-class project, Whitened workers became stalwart supporters of the ongoing imperial (and increasingly national) expropriation of land and the continued unfreedom of workers categorized as the Natives of the United States and the White Dominions, as well as the Natives of Africa, and later of Asia. (p. 58)

In many ways the narratives put forth by Senator Beyak, Conrad Black, and the Ontario school social studies and history curriculum have taught us how to forget the violent intergenerational settler colonial state formation of a "commonwealth" nation called Canada.

Consequently, as part of our professional, civic, and personal commitments to the TRC *94 Calls to Action* and beyond, we recursively continue to question how we are

living our inclusive privileges in relation to the ongoing exclusions of Algonquin people, who have never surrendered their rights to and/or lands to us as settler colonial beneficiaries. What are our responsibilities, as Canadians and as teacher educators, toward co-living a different kind of future? Moreover, how might we engage teachers in the complexities of these relationships toward a place of responsibility and relationality?<sup>3</sup>

## **Beyak, Benevolence, and Fetishized Evil in Canadian Colonial Culture**

By examining the various responses to Senator Lynn Beyak's anti-Indigenous racisms, we are able to describe how "truth," then "reconciliation" could be addressed by teacher educators, teachers, teacher candidates, and their respective students. To do so, in this section, we address the ways some Canadians reacted to Lynn Beyak's speech and subsequent comments in the media. We look to prominent Canadians in the recent historical past to illustrate how the perception of settler colonial benevolence is interwoven within the historical and contemporary stories of who constitutes being, or not being, a teacher or student in Canada. Drawing on van Kessel's (2018) work, we examine how extensive forms of evil are closely associated with settler historical consciousness in relation to teacher education programs.

In *Banal and Fetishized Evil: Implicating Ordinary Folk in Genocide Education*, van Kessel (2018) asks: "How might we teach about genocide with a view toward a less violent future" (p. 160). She draws on the work of Minnich (2014) to outline the differences between extensive and intensive forms of evil. "Ordinary and otherwise decent people partake," as van Kessel reminds us, "in extensive evil" (p. 162). Such participation takes place, according to van Kessel, in our everyday individual and system-wide interactions, such as the Indian Residential Schooling system. Whereas, "intensive evils are perpetuated by a limited number of people," who are "like serial killers—individuals who cause intense harm" (p. 162). As teacher educators, teachers, and citizens, how might we

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3 The use of the word "might" and the rhetorical questions are purposeful with the intention of facilitating conversation and thinking around the concepts and questions we put forth. We also hope that our questions draw attention to our own learning as settler citizens.



unlearn and learn our implicatedness in supporting systems and individuals who continue to perpetuate extensive evil against others beyond defensive unsettling reactions?

In *Terror Management Theory and the Educational Situation*, van Kessel and colleagues (2019), examine how individuals, teacher educators, and teacher candidates draw on different defensive reactions—*assimilation*, *derogation*, *annihilation*, and *accommodation*—when others’ worldviews do not coincide with our own. *Assimilation* for them “involves attempts to convert worldview-opposing others to our own system of belief” (p. 4). *Derogation* seeks to belittle “individuals who espouse a different worldview” (p. 4). *Annihilation* “entails aggressive action aimed at killing or injuring members of the threatening worldview” (p. 5). And finally, *accommodation* is described as a situation where one modifies their “own worldview to incorporate some aspects of the threatening worldview” (p. 5). van Kessel et al. (2019) stress that such defensive reactions promise to protect white settler Canadians in relation to intergenerational “emotions of guilt,” and from others’ worldviews. For these educational researchers, drawing on a Terror Management Theory (TMT) affords teachers and students curricular and pedagogical opportunities to create the necessary classroom environments to unsettle such defensive reactions to deeply embedded settler colonial worldviews. Such difficult pedagogical, anti-colonial, emotional labour, as Carleton (2021) stresses elsewhere, remains unsettling for several of us.

In his article titled, “‘I don’t need any more education’: Senator Lynn Beyak, Residential School Denialism, and Attacks on Truth and Reconciliation in Canada,” Carleton (2021) troubles the presence of such worldviews in the letters shared on Senator Beyak’s website and her subsequent apologetic speech of denialism to the Senate. “Beyak claimed,” he writes, “to have received seven hundred letters that overwhelmingly supported her views” (p. 9). Her ongoing “denialism can thus be understood as part of a conscious or unconscious strategy of selectively remembering the past to protect one’s power and privilege in the present and, most importantly, to perpetuate it into the future” (p. 5). Moreover, as Carleton makes clear, “in an attempt to resolve these unsettled feelings, colonizers devise and deploy different discursive strategies to protect their position of material privilege and to prove to themselves and to others the righteousness of their existence” (p. 6). Carleton’s research and essay remind us all that the Indian Residential Schooling system itself was part of a larger network of government policies created to *assimilate* and *annihilate* Indigenous communities who stood in the way of expropriating

their traditional territories to create what some of us now call Canada. Papaschase scholar Dwayne Donald (2021) refers to such systemic colonial practices of assimilation and annihilation as “divisive and damaging” (p. 55). In *We Need a New Story: Walking and the Wahkohtowin Imagination*, he stresses that Indigenous-Canadian relationships continue to be influenced by “colonialism teachings that emphasize relationship denial” (p. 53). Moreover, Donald urges us, as teachers and teacher educators, to reflect on how we might “facilitate the emergence of a new story that can repair inherited colonial divides” (p. 53). With creating new stories in mind, we analyze and synthesize the timeline of events that occurred after Senator Beyak’s speech and ask how we might approach such unsettling curricular and pedagogical work as teacher educators, teachers, and students.

In July and August, and again in October of 2017, Senator Beyak posted letters on her Senate of Canada website. The letters were those that she received from Canadians in support and solidarity following her March 7 speech in the Red Chamber. On September 15, 2017, Garnet Angeconeb, an Indian Residential Schooling system survivor, and recipient of the Order of Canada for his social justice advocacy, emailed then-Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer’s office about the racist content in the letters. Angeconeb received no reply (APTN National News, 2018). In December, Beyak’s posted letters became part of public mediated consciousness. A year later, Mr. Scheer removed Senator Beyak from the Conservative caucus after she refused to remove the anti-Indigenous racist letters. On January 9, 2018, an Independent group of Senators asked the Senate Ethics Officer to investigate whether the published letters violated the Senate code of conduct (SOC, 2014).

During the investigation, most of these early letters remained on the Senator’s website, despite the call for their removal (Tasker, 2019). An excerpt from one such letter stated:

I’m no anthropologist but it seems every opportunistic culture, subsistence hunter/gatherers seeks to get what they can for no effort. There is always a clash between an industrial/ organized farming culture that values effort as opposed to a culture that will sit and wail until the government gives them stuff. (Tasker, 2018)

More examples of extensive evil and benevolence were also present within the subsequent letters Beyak received from Canadians following her speech in March 2017, such as this excerpt from a letter dated April 5, 2017, written by a supporter name Herbert:

I feel that the First Nations people should be very grateful that there was such a service or system in place for their benefit. There have been many people that have been educated by the Residential School systems, that had it not been for those school they probably would not be the doctors, nurses, teachers politicians that have greatly contributed to our current multicultural society that is enjoyed in Canada and in turn, are able to greatly assist their own people. (Lum, 2018)

Another supporter, in an undated letter, writes:

Where would they be today if it were not for the residential school that were set up to help them? I expect they would still be living out in their isolated villages, un educated, a very high rate of child birth deaths, an very short life expectancy, and living in very damp cold dwellings. (Tasker, 2018)

Senator Beyak refused to remove these racist letters from her website despite pleas to do so from fellow Indigenous and non-Indigenous Senators, politicians, and other Canadians (Jago, 2019). Such harmful anti-Indigenous stereotypes and tropes of the “lazy Indian” who doesn’t pay taxes, the “corrupt chief who misspends federal dollars,” and the “chronic whining of people who can’t get over the past” were expressed in many of the letters. However, Senator Beyak insisted the letters were not racist or anti-First Nations, Inuit, or Métis, but rather were “edgy and opinionated” (Tasker, 2019, para. 8). Such civilly endorsed public narratives of denialism and derogation in turn work to normalize the everydayness of settler colonial anti-Indigenous racisms as a legitimate worldview.

On May 19, 2019, Senator Beyak rose in the Senate and requested that the Senate reject the Ethics Committee report.

My website has been lauded as one of the most positive, comprehensive and informative available on Indigenous issues...Telling the truth is sometimes controversial but never racist. The Senate’s reputation has been enriched by my stand, as clearly stated in thousands of letters from Canadians that I submitted to the Senate ethics officer. (Tasker, 2019, para. 10)

However, the afore-mentioned letters of support posted on her Senate of Canada website, which has since been removed, tell a different story. van Kessel (2018) reminds us that fetishized evil occurs when a dominant group of people take what threatens them

and confine it to a particular group of people who are marginalized. In the letters and her statements, we can read examples of settler *derogation*, *accommodation*, *denialism*, and *benevolence* at work. Senator Beyak claimed that she too “has suffered with them up there...I’ve been involved since we double-dated when I was 15 with an Aboriginal fellow and his wife” (Tasker, 2017). Here, Beyak positions herself as a “friend” to Indigenous peoples, and in turn pleads her case as a benevolent peacekeeper who continues to bestow “upon Indigenous people the generous benefits or gifts of peace, order, good government and western education” (Regan, 2010, p. 83). Beyak draws on her distant promixity to a First Nations friend, in an attempt to immunize herself from being a White anti-Indigenous racist (Eligon, 2019). Yes, my best friend has a friend who is First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis. I am thus an ally, despite my proximity to settler colonial Whiteness and its respective inclusive economic privileges. Such kinds of superficial relational acknowledgements is my colonial defence, and provides an example of what Wark (2021) describes as another settler move toward innocence.

We do not have to look far back into Canadian history to find examples of settler benevolence and individual, extensive, and fetishized forms of evil. In 1906, Duncan Campbell Scott, then the Minister of Indian Affairs, wrote that Métis children who lived on reserves be granted the “privilege” to attend the Indian Residential Schooling system.

It should be remembered...that boarding schools and industrial schools were not established for the purpose of carrying out the terms of the treaty, or complying with any provisions of the law, but they were instituted in the public interest, so that they should not grow up on reserves an uneducated and barbarous class. (TRC, 2015a, p. 16)

Scott, like Beyak, positioned himself as a benevolent government actor. And yet, he too held a worldview that “Indians” were barbarous (Logan, 2015, p. 445). Indeed, such kinds of derogatory mythologies informed the narratives and representations put forth across the school curriculum, and in turn, what Tupper (2019) calls elsewhere a settler Canadian social imagery. Perhaps Beyak and Scott learned from the legacy of Canada’s first prime minister, John A. MacDonald, who, on July 6, 1885, rose in the House of Commons and stated that Indigenous peoples had forgotten “all the kindness that had been bestowed upon them...all the gifts that had been given to them...all that the Government, the white people, and the people of Canada had been doing for them, in trying

to rescue them from barbarity” (Levesque, 2008, p. 125). As teacher educators and settler Canadian citizens, we continue to witness these sentiments in Canadian public parlance to this day (CBC News: The National, 2016).

Two years after her speech, in March of 2019, Senator Beyak was found guilty of violating Senate regulations by publishing the letters on her website. The Senate Ethics officer ordered Beyak to apologize to all Senators, delete the racist letters, and take a course on anti-racism, Indigenous history, and the intergenerational impacts of settler colonialism. On May 9, 2019, Senator Beyak was suspended from the Senate after refusing to unlearn her racist worldviews. Equating her suspension to the nightmare described in George Orwell’s dystopian novel *1984*, Beyak stated that “this type of penalty is totalitarian and alien to the tradition of free nations like Canada” (Tasker, 2019, para. 4). Senator Beyak was reinstated to the Red Chamber when parliament resumed in November 2019 following the federal election, claiming to have satisfied all requirements put forth by the Ethics Officer.

In January of 2020, however, the Senate Ethics committee concluded that the apology she had offered was insufficient. Moreover, she had yet to complete the anti-Indigenous racism training. In fact, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, which facilitated the education program, reported that her “inflexibility and conduct made the learning environment unsafe” (Forester, 2020 p. 2). The facilitators reported that Beyak claimed Métis identity, appeared disconnected from conversations, and was “indifferent to the content of the training, and observably disengaged from discussions on how to work toward reconciliation and building healthy urban Indigenous communities” (Forester, 2020, para. 38). Moreover, Senator Beyak continued to use harmful and racist language, claiming that “history has nothing to do with racism. It’s about what your people are doing to your own people” (Forester, 2020, para. 12). Senator Beyak was asked to leave their premises.

Based on these reports, the Senate Ethics committee recommended that Beyak’s suspension be reinstated, to which she responded:

I would like to unreservedly apologize for my actions. Because of my belief in free speech, my initial instincts were to leave the letters on the website. After long and careful consideration, I now regret not insisting on their removal... They were disrespectful, divisive and unacceptable. Regretfully, my actions were unhelpful

to the national conversation on this issue. While my intent was never to hurt anyone, I see now that my actions did not have their desired effect, which was to promote open and constructive dialogue. (Tasker, 2020, paras. 3, 10-11)

Several fellow Senators were unmoved by her apology. Two days later, on February 27, 2020, Beyak was suspended from the Senate a second time, and told to complete the necessary unlearning and learning to unsettle her settler colonial worldviews.

Senator Beyak resigned from the Senate on January 25, 2021, a week before Senators were expected to bring forward a motion to expel her permanently (CBC Radio: The Current, 2021). Whether or not the former Senator will ever come to an understanding of the individual and extensive evilness of systemic settler colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism is yet to be storied. However, Senator Beyak's worldviews, and those of fellow supporting Canadians, are imperative for all of us to unsettle teacher education and the public schooling curriculum, especially if we are committed to addressing truths, as well as reconciliation with teacher candidates as part of their professional learning and future curricular inquiries with students. To do so, as teacher educators, how might we then create curricular spaces for students, and ourselves, to do the necessary unsettling work of unlearning<sup>4</sup>, in light of the many forms of resistance that have been documented within teacher education research (Dion, 2007, 2009; Donald, 2011; Howell, 2017; Tupper, 2011, 2012, 2019)? Like Beyak, some teacher candidates refuse to unlearn the intergenerational impacts of settler colonialism, anti-Indigenous racism, and colonization of the territories that now make up what some Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens call Canada (Tupper & Cappello, 2008; Tupper, 2012; Smith & Ng-A-Fook, 2017). It is our hope that through studying the works of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars we might create opportunities for university educators and teachers candidates to start questioning, unsettling, and disrupting their curricular, pedagogical, and cultural practices of settler colonialism.

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4 We use the term "unlearning" throughout the article to describe the process of challenging, confronting, and letting go of logics, understandings, and ways of living that we have learned through settler colonialism. We draw on Dunne and Seery's (2016) concepts of unlearning as a way to think about how "we have become used to learning, so used to it in fact that we failed to even question it" (pp. 14–15).

## Disrupting and Unsettling Settler Colonialism in Teacher Education

After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its *94 Calls to Action* in June 2015, Faculties of Education across the country began to make commitments toward addressing truth, and then reconciliation (Cote-Meek, 2018; Madden, 2019; Universities Canada, 2015). Despite the calls for reconcilia(c)tion, its settler colonial conceptions remain contested by several Indigenous scholars, individuals, and communities because of the ongoing daily non-Indigenous institutional, societal, and individual relational acts of anti-Indigenous racisms (Coulthard, 2014; Refugeeresearch, 2017; University of Saskatchewan, 2016; UWinnipeg, 2017; Wakeham, 2019). When Indigenous land and water protectors assert their inherent rights to protect ancestral territories, the phrase “Reconciliation is Dead” is often expressed (see APTN National News, 2020; Ballingall, 2020, para. 6; Naciontalk, 2020).

Indigenous scholar Jan Hare, as well as non-Indigenous scholar Brooke Madden, critiqued current conceptualizations of “reconciliation” in teacher education curriculum, pedagogies, and research. Hare (2020) stresses that reconciliation in teacher education must challenge conceptions of a professional settler consciousness and move teacher candidates toward action and accountability. Otherwise, as she cautions, reconciliation will remain a “trendy topic as it has been cast in social media and scholarly writing” (p. 23). Likewise, Madden (2019) draws our attention to the hashtag “#ReconciliACTION” (p. 285). She reminds us that the TRC’s *Calls to Action* cannot be reduced to pedagogical approaches or “best” teaching practices. Instead, Madden advocates for a “de/colonizing theory of reconciliation” (p. 285), which includes a “consistent examination of colonial logics and productions” (p. 287). This curricular and pedagogical approach to truth, and then reconciliation, in teacher education includes both a deconstructive process that “illuminates and creates openings to address how colonial norms of intelligibility are produced, organized, circulated, and regulated,” as well as relational processes of co-reconstructing that are “rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and community proprieties” (p. 287).

Indeed, recent research illustrates that different teacher educators are creating curricular opportunities for teacher candidates to deconstruct and reconstruct conceptions of a settler historical consciousness in relation to their teacher education inquiries (Aitken

& Radford, 2018; Brant, 2017; Brant-Biriokov et al., 2019; Tupper, 2011, 2012). Such research demonstrates the various ways that a settler colonial worldview contributes toward teacher candidates' resistance to unlearning about historical truth, and then reconciliation in relation to their professional accredited responsibilities as future public servants. How the TRC's *Calls to Action* for curricular and pedagogical transformation are being addressed, or not, within Faculties of Education is therefore a significant ongoing inquiry for us to question, deconstruct, and reconstruct together.

There is much work to do, given how education in Canada did, and often continues to, exclude First Nations, Inuit, and Métis histories, perspectives, and contemporary issues. Although the most deliberate example of harm against Indigenous peoples by settler colonial education is the Indian Residential Schooling system (Siemens, 2017), other dominant narratives that place Indigenous people as the “romanticised, mythical other” continue to persist within curricula and harm Indigenous peoples (Dion, 2009, p. 4). Public discourse around reconciliation has focused on the need to renew relationships between and among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and Canadians. However, such discursive enactments have often been criticized by Indigenous scholars and others as an idealistic endeavour strategically put in place to smooth over Indigenous and settler relationships while leaving the structural and systemic anti-Indigenous racist status quo intact inside and outside of our public schooling systems (Davis et al., 2017). Here, Commissioner Murray Sinclair reminds us that education is both the cause for, and at the heart of, addressing “truth,” and sustaining “reconciliation” across the school curriculum in Canada (TRC, 2015a).

The transformational changes that the TRC has recommended, therefore, go beyond the scope of curricular reforms that include Indigenous content and land acknowledgements. Instead, they call for co-renewing and co-sustaining relationships between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and non-Indigenous Canadian citizens. In order to create the necessary relational changes, educational systems, like teacher education, need to acknowledge historical and ongoing roles in the reproduction of settler colonial worldviews and perpetration of individual, systemic, and societal harms (Battiste, 2013; TRC, 2015b). “Education,” writes Battiste (1998), “has not been benign nor beneficial for Aboriginal peoples” (p. 19). Margaret Kovach (2013) warned us about the “deficit storying levied on Indigenous peoples” in schools (p. 110), whereas Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) describes her experience with formal education as “one of continually being



measured against a set of principles that required surrender to an assimilative colonial agenda in order to fulfill those principles” (p. 6). The prevalence of Eurocentrism as an enlightened and endorsed capitalistic settler colonial worldview across the school curriculum in our educational experiences has excluded, and still excludes, the diverse histories, contemporary issues, perspectives, knowledges, and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Instead, it has enabled the “sedimentation of the commonwealth settler colonial national myths of multiculturalism, peace-keeping, socially-progressive politics, and hard-earned prosperity” (Davis et al., 2017, p. 44). Consequently, narratives of “the benevolent peacekeepers, heroes on a quest to save the Indians” (Regan, 2010, p. 34) remain deeply embedded within a Canadian settler historical consciousness. As settler academics, teacher educators, curriculum scholars, educational researchers, parents, and citizens, we continue to question our complicit participation in the reproduction of such narratives and worldviews both inside and outside the teacher education program at the University of Ottawa.

## **Troubling the Discourses of Decolonization in Teacher Education**

Decolonizing education is not a process “generated only for Indigenous students in the schools they attend...but largely for the federal and provincial systems and the policy choices and inequities coming from them” (Battiste, 2013, pp. 13–14). Furthermore, Battiste insists that the key to meaningful systemic educational reform in Canada begins with “confronting hidden standards of racism, colonialism, and cultural linguistic imperialism in the modern curriculum” (p. 29). Here, Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us that decolonization cannot begin without conceptualizing a return or repatriation of Indigenous lands to sovereign Indigenous peoples.

Tuck and Yang (2012) warn that current conceptions of decolonization continue to be put forth as a metaphor that enable settlers to “equivocate contradictory decolonial desires” by turning “decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards Liberation” (p. 7). In turn, they are emphatic that decolonization, in relation to a settler colonial context, “must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood

and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically” (p. 7). Whereas Barker and Battell Lowman (2016) stress that “instead of pursuing an intellectualised pathway to decolonization...we believe that reconfiguring relationships must be premised on the creation of spaces that encourage pre-cognitive, emotional engagements with personal and collective Settler complicity” (p. 200). In relation to teacher education, Donald (2020) explains:

I really try to help them [teacher candidates] understand that colonialism is an ideology. Of course, most people, if they’ve learned anything about colonialism, in school, it’s taught as though it’s in a historical era, or a series of events. It’s never really taken up as a culture, or cultural practice. And so, what I share with them is that colonialism is an extended process of denying relationships. And so, it’s a way of interacting. It’s a way of understanding knowledge and knowing it’s predicated on relationship denial. (26:50)

In her research, Madden (2019) addresses how these curricular and pedagogical concerns in relation to truth, and then reconciliation, are being taken up (or not) in teacher education programs and research. As we stated before, for Madden, reducing the Calls to Action to “best” teaching practices, as she makes clear, can “lead to a notion of education for reconciliation that is synonymous with pedagogical approaches, and, by extension, with how reconciliation translates to teaching practice” (p. 285). Instead, Madden calls for a de/colonizing theory consisting of the four interrelated dimensions: (1) TRC’s notions of education for reconciliation (2) Indigenous land-based traditions, (3) Indigenous counter-stories, and (4) “critiques of the construction and enactment of reconciliation” (p. 286). The ideas that these scholars bring forth teach us that the work of disrupting, unlearning, and learning settler colonial worldviews as part of our teacher education curriculum is not simply about transforming teaching practices, embracing decolonization strategies, or committing to certain reconcilia(c)tions. Before attempting to translate such unlearning and learning into unit and lesson plans, we must first confront and unlearn the very worldviews that some of us who identify as Canadians have been “schooled” in prior to becoming professional public educators within a settler colonial provincial educational system.

## **Perfecting Strangeness, Denying of Relationships, and Unlearning**

Potawatomi-Lenapé scholar Susan Dion (2009) recounts her conversations with teachers and teacher candidates as the allure and denial “of the perfect stranger” (p. 179). When faced with teaching Indigenous perspectives, some teacher educators and teacher candidates insist that they cannot teach “this content” because: “I know nothing about Indigenous people, I have no friends that are Indigenous, I didn’t grow up near a reserve, I didn’t learn anything when I was in school. I am a perfect stranger to Indigenous people” (p. 179). Dion (2016) stresses that a “perfect stranger” disposition then permits teacher candidates—and, we would add, several teacher educators—to excuse themselves of their civic and professional responsibilities to self-examine their discomforts in relation to learning First Nations, Inuit, and Métis histories, perspectives, and contemporary issues. Furthermore, perfecting such dispositions of strangeness enables teacher candidates to absolve themselves, to deny the implicatedness, while remaining respectful, hardworking, and successful professional characters within the grand narratives of “Canada the Good” (p. 470).

Moreover, by assuming the positionality of the perfect stranger, teacher candidates can avoid confronting and disrupting the very historical accounting of how they have become settler colonial beneficiaries due to past and present colonial systems and their respective privileging inclusions. Here Dwayne Donald reminds us that

If somebody has a Canadian identity, and that’s how they understand themselves, and they look at an Indigenous person, then part of the acknowledgment is that the Indigenous person is from here. They have deep roots in this place.... So with that admitted, then that means that ‘Canadian’ must be foreign to this place. And that’s a very strange contradiction, because how can a Canadian be a foreigner in Canada? This results in a ‘psychosis-like state’ where Indigenous people can’t possibly be seen as in relation to Canadians. (personal communication, February 4, 2019)

Such estranging contradictions within inherited and sustained settler worldviews about what it is to be, and not be, a “Canadian” citizen, challenge settler comfort and privilege. Indeed, existing research conducted in relation to teacher education programs across the country has demonstrated that there continues to be sentiments of entitlement, resistance to change, emotions of anger and denial, and defensive reactions when settler teacher

candidates are confronted by their intergenerational civic entanglements with a settler colonial system and its anti-Indigenous racisms.

In Aitken and Radford's (2018) research with teacher candidates at the University of Ottawa and Bishop's University, proclivities toward defending and protecting the intergenerational benefits accrued due to their Whiteness and settler positionalities were apparent in the ways teacher candidates called for "respect and sensitivity towards their own non-Indigenous students, rather than the victims of colonization" (p. 45) when teaching about the Indian Residential Schooling system. Furthermore, teacher candidates suggest that the "best practices" to address "truth," and then "reconciliation," are through the non-confrontational transmission of information and facts-neutral language, and "making it lighter" (p. 45). Teacher candidates spoke about the importance of "avoiding approaches that would elicit emotion—particularly shame and guilt" (p. 45). Moreover, teacher candidates wanted to know what to do, rather than working toward disrupting their settler relational role perpetuated in the name of trying to enact a reconcilia(c)tion curriculum. In the context of teacher education, "teachers may use their agency to resist change, as well as facilitate change, to promote peacebuilding and to stoke conflict" (Horner et al., 2015, p. 7). By focusing on what to do, rather than confronting one's settler historical consciousness, teacher candidates could remain perfect strangers, denying others' worldviews, and reproducing the psychosis of relational denial.

Several teacher candidates often point to deficits of resources, time, and support to explain their resistance to teaching intergenerational impacts of settler colonialism and Indigenous perspectives, histories, and/or contemporary issues. However, as some of the research literature makes clear, the most crucial barriers to such ongoing relational denials, are *within* the teachers themselves (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Deer 2013; Donald, 2021; Howell, 2017; Smith, 2017). By this we are referring to Donald's (2021) conceptualizations of these barriers or blockages as "colonial psychosis" (p. 56). He explains this psychosis as the "ways in which the institutional and socio-cultural perpetuation of colonial logics has trained Canadians to disregard Indigenous peoples as fellow human beings. This disregard maintains and manifests as cognitive blockages (psychoses) that undermine the possibility for improved relations" (p. 56). How might we then collectively address such blockages (psychoses) across a teacher education curriculum and in terms of our professional and personal worldviews? And, what are some of the existing settler

colonial barriers which call for systemic dismantling? In response, we discuss some of the barriers found in recent research related to teacher education.

In her master's thesis research on foundations of First Nations, Métis, Inuit histories, contemporary issues and perspectives courses within teacher education, Kiera Kaia'tano:ron Brant (2017) identified several barriers among the teacher candidates she interviewed. Two barriers, writes Brant, are "a pedagogy of Whiteness, which manifests itself as a challenge to mandatory Indigenous education, and an active distancing in attempts to absolve oneself of responsibility in relation to Indigenous peoples" (p. 41). Brant argues that these barriers caused not only serious impediments to reconciliatory efforts in teacher education, but risked "impeding further reconciliation in all future educational spaces" (p. 41). Jennifer Tupper's (2012) research with teacher candidates at the University of Regina illustrates how many teacher candidates had a "distressingly limited" knowledge of treaties and the historical and contemporary significance of treaty ethics, citizenship, and relations (p. 49). Moreover, many teacher candidates thought Indigenous people were more likely to be deviant, were the sole beneficiaries of treaties, and that "Aboriginal education is shoved down our throats at every opportunity, but no one is ever clear on how to actually teach it" (p. 47). However, when teacher candidates were exposed to treaty education and different curricular resources, they continued to maintain dispositions as perfect strangers in relation to Indigenous communities, ways of knowing, perspectives, and/or making a mistake when teaching First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis issues, content, and histories. Tupper (2012) refers to this an "epistemology of ignorance, based in white normativity" (p. 50), which in turn works to maintain a settler social imaginary of Canadian citizenship. Acknowledging and deconstructing our complicity with settler colonialism as an ongoing cultural, curricular, and pedagogical practice, one that fuels such worldviews of relational denial and/or respective defensive reactions of assimilation, derogation, annihilation, or accomodation, is vital to the work of unlearning and learning truths. It is part of living a praxis of reconcilia(c)tion as professional educators and Canadian citizens.

Unsettling stories of Canadian benevolence and learning to recognize instances of fetishized evil are necessary for Faculties of Education to address, as are the pedagogies that will guide the process (Regan, 2010; van Kessel, 2018). Donald (2012) asserts that "attentiveness to Aboriginal-Canadian relations is needed because the ways in which the relations are conceptualized has a distinctive bearing on how Indigenous issues are

taken up in educational contexts as curricular and pedagogical considerations” (p. 40). He draws our attention to the tensions of how we might engage in different ways of being together as we navigate colonial unlearning. How might Faculties of Education then, work to co-create, co-support, and co-sustain the necessary curriculum—as planned, as implemented, and as lived—across their programming in ways that seek to disrupt, unsettle, and support such intergenerational relational denial with teacher candidates (Aoki, 1986). Ethical relationality perhaps holds some of the transformative possibilities to confront familiar defensive reactions—*assimilation, derogation, annihilation, accomodation*—when others’ worldviews do not coincide with our own. Such professional ethical relations<sup>5</sup> of care call on us to reimagine and renew our past, present, and future relations with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

### **Disrupting Settler Fragility as an Ethics of Historical Consciousness**

We have suggested that settler colonialism and its psychosis of denial, as a cultural, pedagogical, and curricular practice, poses a serious challenge to the existing historical consciousness and worldviews of teacher candidates. We suggest that the spirit and intentions of the TRC’s *Calls to Action* (2015a) could be enacted within a teacher’s professional standards of practice and ethics of care when Faculties of Education begin to address ethical relationality as part of our professional and personal curricular and pedagogical inquiries. Donald (2009) describes ethical relationality as

an ethic of historical consciousness. The ethic holds that the past occurs simultaneously in the present and influences how we conceptualize the future. It requires that we see ourselves as related to, and implicated in, the lives of those that have gone before us and those yet to come. It is an ethical imperative to recognize the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences are layered and position us in relation to each other, and how our futures are similarly tied together. (p. 7)

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5 To be clear, we are referring to “relations” as defined by Dwayne Donald in his work on Canadian-Indigenous relations, ethical relationality, and kinship relations (see Donald, 2011, 2012, 2020, 2021).

There are many curricular choices that teacher educators can make when attempting to address “truth,” and then “reconciliation,” across their teacher education programs (Brant-Biriokov et al., 2019, 2020; Madden, 2019). As Mitchell and Tupper’s (2017) research illustrates, when teachers experience relational, authentic, and “beyond the classroom” opportunities for learning, they are encouraged to “contextualize colonial events and policies beyond residential school experiences as isolated events” (p. 11). Curriculum inquiries grounded in ethical relationality appear to increase the affective engagements that enable teacher candidates to visualize themselves in relation to people and places, “moving past the assignment of guilt to a consideration of present-day responsibility” (Mitchell & Tupper, 2017, p. 11). In turn, Mitchell and Tupper describe a noticeable increase in meaningful learning when teachers have opportunities to visit former residential school sites, meet with Elders and survivors, hear stories of Indigenous resistance and resilience, and “overtly learn about whiteness and its restructuring forces” (p. 20) in order to make explicit what often remains invisible. Mitchell and Tupper noted that “critical consciousness was fostered through their (the teachers’) engagement with colonialism... in effective, meaningful ways as opposed to traditional practices that had left them believing they had ‘learned this already’” (p. 17).

Likewise, Smith and Ng-A-Fook (2017) remind us that when teacher candidates were able to speak and listen to Elders and Indian Residential School system survivors, they became “historical subjects during the encounters with the past lives of others... learning how to reread, rewrite, and redress a more nuanced storied account” (pp. 81–82). During this oral history project, teacher candidates were called upon by Elders’ restorying to unlearn the different curricular ways in which settler colonialism has framed our historical consciousness and, in turn, the stories we teach ourselves about being “good” Canadian citizens. And yet, listening to the stories of survivors is simply not enough. Indeed, for listening to hold any possibility of a renewed promise of ethical relationality, listeners must make themselves vulnerable to the emotive labour that such work involves. An emotive labour beyond feelings and narrative of guilt in turn moves toward innocence. Brant-Biriokov et al. (2019) suggest that such an ethics of “listening is an act of reckoning with the past lives of others” (p. 118). In turn, it offers curricular and pedagogical opportunities for emotional relations with survivors, a deconstruction and reconstruction of a settler historical consciousness, “toward new understandings of historical ‘truths’ of the injustices of history” (pp. 118–119). Yet, emotional responses to the stories of survivors

and Elders alone do not facilitate change in teacher candidates (or in any of us). To become agents of change, we need to not only *feel* the weight of historical and contemporary injustices, we must also recognize ourselves as *implicated* in the relationships and in terms of the professional and personal responsibilities that such renewed relationships involve (Brant-Biriokov et al., 2019). Therefore, teacher education programs cannot only be concerned with teacher candidates learning about the truths that the TRC's final report revealed, but also in terms of "how they might be prepared to take up the responsibility of reconciliation in their own teaching practices" (Aitken & Radford, 2018, p. 42). Aitken and Radford's research suggests that the opportunities for responsibility and relationality are nurtured when teacher candidates are given

extended periods of time in a course for bearing witness to others' testimonies of loss, studying the historical context of residential schools and cultural genocide, being called on to create learning situations for the greater public, as well as thinking about future students. (p. 47)

Encouraging teachers to engage in ongoing reflective writing, whether it is the use of extensive digital blogging (Aitken & Radford, 2018), letters to survivors after hearing testimonies (Brant-Biriokov et al., 2019; Howell, 2017), or settler life writing (Tupper, 2019), holds possibilities for reckoning, revisiting, unlearning, and learning anew. As settler scholars we recognize that such pedagogical and curricular unlearning represents privileged professional learning for us, or a potential transformation of our settler colonial historical consciousness, but does not necessarily address or change the actual ongoing lived experiences for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. And yet, for several teacher candidates, such calls toward unlearning within teacher education programs might be the first time they have been invited to question their complicity with settler colonial systems and intergenerational violence.

Tupper (2019) describes settler life writing as seeking to "overtly connect my memories and experiences in the past with current colonial realities...to revisit memories in consideration of how the experiences they encapsulate re-inscribe settler identity and frame Indigenous peoples as lives that are not grievable" (p. 94). Settler life writing offers curricular opportunities for teacher candidates to integrate and interrogate their lived experiences as the beneficiaries of a settler colonial system in relation to, and with, Indigenous people and the land some of us call Canada. In doing so, possibilities



for conceptualizations of ourselves in a reconciliatory “reawakening” emerge, the process being not about blame, but rather about relationship building and the understanding that multiple layers of relationships can exist (Brant-Biriokov et al., 2019; MacDonald & Markides, 2018).<sup>6</sup> The case of former Senator Lynn Beyak demonstrates that it is both an urgent and a collective responsibility to unlearn the logic and rhetoric of settler colonialism, and work toward reimagining our past, current, and future relations.

Unlearning occurs through confronting settler colonialism, deconstructing and reconstructing our collective historical consciousness, and positioning ourselves in relation to both. It evolves as settler Canadians, including teacher candidates and educators, pause and look at things anew, realizing that we are implicated. We are implicated in the prayer ties on the bridge and by the dust rising along the Kitchissippi River. Our relational commitments urge us to look up from the river’s edge, the confluence of the three rivers, and see the Parliament of Canada with clear eyes. These commitments invite us to unlearn and learn different stories, and to let go of those settler mythologies that have endured for far too long. We must look beyond the Peace Tower, with its proud bells and waving flag, and past the pomp of the Red Chamber. If we look differently, and listen intently, we may learn to unlearn the logic of settler colonialism.

## Living Reconcilia(c)tion as a Daily Relational Praxis

It has been five years since former Senator Lynn Beyak stood in the Senate of Canada and used her privilege to perpetuate derogatory forms of anti-Indigenous racism. Despite two Senate suspensions, she was reinstated twice, and resigned on her own terms in January 2021 with a full pension (Tasker, 2021). Like all Canadian Senators, Beyak was appointed to the Senate by the Governor General, who, in Canada, represents the Crown. The constitutional relationship between the Crown and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada is recognized and affirmed in the *Constitution Act*, which was signed on a rainy day on Parliament Hill in 1982. The constitution was smudged, and remains marked with

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6 Examples of relationship renewal and reimagining are the collaborations between the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (see Blackstock et al., 2018) as well as the partnership between UBC Okanagan and the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education (see Macintyre Latta, 2019). Both of these projects bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and community members together to unsettle colonialism and strengthen relations.

evidence of the rain that fell that day. What of the evidence of the “special relationship” between the Crown and Indigenous peoples? How we begin to unlearn and renew our past, present, and future relations will be, at a minimum, our educational responsibilities toward the TRC’s *Calls to Action*, as a daily praxis of reconciliation, both inside and outside of teacher education programs.

Since her speech in March of 2017, and her subsequent choices since rising in the Upper House, Senator Beyak’s worldviews expose the depth of settler colonialism in our country. So, too, have the recent and ongoing recoveries of more than 1,000 children who died within the Indian Residential Schooling system and were subsequently buried in unmarked graves (Blackstock & Palmater, 2021). These recoveries sparked an unprecedented reckoning among many Canadians with many observing Canada Day as a day of reflection and action rather than celebration and nationalism (Wherry, 2021). On July 1, 2021, the Canadian Historical Association published their “Canada Day” statement. In part, it reads

While it is crucial to better understand how Indigenous peoples were affected by these genocidal systems, over the course of more than a century, it is also essential to acknowledge that settler Canadians have benefited from these colonial policies. We are all embedded in the structures of Indigenous dispossession in what is now known as Canada and we understand that while these tough conversations need to be had, it will be our actions that define who we are and what kind of communities we want to build and strengthen and what kinds of histories we research. (para. 8)

Many, including Inuk NDP member of parliament Mumilaaq Qaqqaq, have expressed that we are perhaps living through a shift in our collective settler colonial worldviews; and yet, not nearly enough for her to seek re-election. In her resignation speech, Qaqqaq stated that “as long as these halls [of Parliament] echo with empty promises instead of real action, I will not belong here” (The Globe and Mail, 2021, 3:41). Perhaps the strength and presence of Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, the first Inuk Governor General of Canada, will work to turn the echo chamber of settler colonialism from hollow words toward a legacy of action. Perhaps then, different stories will have an opportunity to be shared, taught, and lived, both inside and outside of our teacher education programs, and in our renewed relations.

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## **Conclusions**

In this article, we have examined the various responses to Senator Lynn Beyak's anti-Indigenous racism, bringing forward van Kessel's fetishized evil (2018) and van Kessel et al's (2019) discussion of terror management theory to examine how individuals, teacher educators, and teacher candidates draw on different defensive reactions when confronted with worldviews that are different from their own. Through unlearning and learning from existing teacher education research and the theoretical concepts put forth by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars such as, but not limited to, Suzanne Dion, Dwayne Donald, and Brooke Madden, it is clear that unsettling a settler psychosis of denial and its defensive reactions cannot be reduced merely to matters of pedagogy. Instead, these scholars call on us to reimagine, restory, and renew our past, present, and future relations beyond narratives of settler denial, benevolence, and/or moves toward innocence. To do so, unsettling teacher education's role in reproducing a settler colonial historical consciousness, its privileged inclusions, and racist exclusions, must continue to be a central area of study within our present and future curriculum inquiries.

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