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Sara Karn, Kristina R. Llewellyn et Penney Clark

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Résumé de l'article

Cette étude explore comment les programmes d'histoire de la maternelle à la terminale, à travers le Canada, répondent aux impératifs de décolonisation, et comment ils pourraient mieux les aborder à l'avenir. Après avoir examiné les limites et les forces des programmes à cet égard, l'article propose cinq recommandations pour (re)concevoir les programmes d'histoire et d'études sociales en tenant compte des objectifs de décolonisation : (1) remettre en question les récits hégémoniques ; (2) valoriser les façons autochtones de savoir et d'être ; (3) réfléchir aux notions de privilèges et de position ; (4) s'engager dans la dimension éthique ; et (5) se concentrer sur l'avenir. Chaque recommandation s'appuie sur une étude empirique des programmes et s'inscrit dans le cadre de discussions scientifiques sur la responsabilité de l'enseignement de l'histoire qui vise à répondre aux appels à la décolonisation.

Decolonizing History Curricula Across Canada: Recommendations for (Re)design

Sara Karn
McMaster University

Kristina R. Llewellyn
McMaster University

Penney Clark
The University of British Columbia

Abstract

This study explores how K–12 history curricula across Canada currently address—and may better address in future—decolonizing imperatives. Following a consideration of the limitations and strengths of curricula in this regard, the article identifies five recommendations for (re)designing history and social studies curricula with decolonizing goals in mind: (1) challenge hegemonic narratives, (2) value Indigenous ways of knowing and being, (3) reflect on privilege and positionality, (4) engage in the ethical dimension, and (5) focus on the future. Each recommendation is informed by the empirical study of curricula, and positioned in relation to scholarly conversations about the responsibility of history education that seeks to respond to calls for decolonization.
Keywords: decolonizing, curriculum analysis, history education, social studies education, K–12 education

Résumé

Cette étude explore comment les programmes d'histoire de la maternelle à la terminale, à travers le Canada, répondent aux impératifs de décolonisation, et comment ils pourraient mieux les aborder à l'avenir. Après avoir examiné les limites et les forces des programmes à cet égard, l'article propose cinq recommandations pour (re)concevoir les programmes d'histoire et d'études sociales en tenant compte des objectifs de décolonisation : (1) remettre en question les récits hégémoniques ; (2) valoriser les façons autochtones de savoir et d'être ; (3) réfléchir aux notions de privilèges et de position ; (4) s'engager dans la dimension éthique ; et (5) se concentrer sur l'avenir. Chaque recommandation s'appuie sur une étude empirique des programmes et s'inscrit dans le cadre de discussions scientifiques sur la responsabilité de l'enseignement de l'histoire qui vise à répondre aux appels à la décolonisation.

Mots clés : décolonisation, analyse de programmes d'enseignement, histoire, sciences sociales, éducation de la maternelle à la terminale

Introduction

In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) (2015a), there have been increasing calls for decolonizing education, including history education. We (the authors) acknowledge from the outset that "decolonization has multiple meanings, and the desires and investments that animate it are diverse, contested, and at times, at odds with one another" (Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 22). Decolonization can be viewed as a process of confronting colonial practices (Battiste, 2010, 2013), repatriating Indigenous land (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and nurturing ethical relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and with the lands on which we are all situated (Donald, 2012). History is deeply implicated within this process. As Dwayne Donald (2012), a Papaschase Cree scholar, writes:

> The process of decolonizing in Canada, on a broad scale and especially in educational contexts, can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across deeply learned divides, revisit and deconstruct their shared past, and engage carefully with the realization that their present and future is similarly tied together. (p. 102)

Decolonizing education therefore involves a shared process of learning and unlearning in ways that draw together the past in relationship with the present and future.

Educators have taken steps to decolonize education, particularly in responding to the TRC's Calls to Action to make "age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students" (TRC, 2015b, p. 7). Many jurisdictions across Canada have revised curriculum to address the Calls to Action (e.g., British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016, 2018; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2019; Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2020; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b). These revisions have largely centred on the history and social studies curricula incorporating more content involving historical and contemporary Indigenous cultures, perspectives, and experiences. However, the simple addition of Indigenous content can become an educational metaphor that makes "possible a set of evasions, or 'settler moves to innocence,' that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 2).[1] As Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) urges, decolonizing education requires more than a change of topics in the curriculum; the very nature of knowledge within Eurocentric models of education must be critically examined, with a repositioning and valuing of Indigenous ways of knowing. This involves:

> Raising the collective voice of Indigenous peoples, exposing the injustices in our colonial history, deconstructing the past by critically examining the social, political, economic and emotional reasons for silencing Aboriginal voices in Canadian history, legitimating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, recognizing it as a dynamic context of knowledge and knowing, and communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will generate. (Battiste, 2013, p. 167)

1 We drew upon the work of Smith et al. (2019) to define our use of the term "settler" as people, and descendants of those people, who made the decision to settle on the stolen land of Indigenous peoples that we know of as Canada (i.e., usually White Europeans). This definition does not include people who are part of a diaspora that may still consider themselves guests on Indigenous lands.

With these considerations in mind, we ask: How are history curricula supporting teachers in decolonizing efforts? To answer this question, we embarked on a study with the aim of understanding how K–12 history (and social studies)[2] curricula across Canada currently address—and may better address in future—decolonizing imperatives. This involved an analysis of curricula for each province and territory, at both the elementary/middle school and secondary school levels. Following an examination of our findings, which detail the limitations and strengths of history curricula for decolonizing, we present a series of recommendations with the aim of shaping the future (re)design of curricula. These suggestions include: (1) challenge hegemonic narratives, (2) value Indigenous ways of knowing and being, (3) reflect on privilege and positionality, (4) engage in the ethical dimension, and (5) focus on the future. These recommendations, based on our empirical study of curricula, are explained in more detail by drawing upon scholarship on decolonizing history education—from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars—who have commented on the responsibility of history education to respond to calls for reconciliation and decolonization.

We come to this research as scholars and educators of European ancestry who are committed to listening to and learning from Indigenous partners in education. Together, we share a commitment to reimagining history curriculum in ways that are attentive to how power and privilege shape education and that reflect diverse ways of knowing and thinking about the past. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility as White settler scholars to further the work of decolonization in Canada. We also recognize the limits of our knowledge and experiences as White settlers who work within colonial systems of education.[3] As such, we provide recommendations for decolonizing history curricula that draw upon Indigenous perspectives on decolonizing education, alongside related research in history education.

2 In most provinces and territories, history is taught as part of social studies (which involves an interdisciplinary approach to various disciplines such as history, geography, civics, law, economics, and sociology). Our analysis of social studies curricula was focused on the history component specifically.

3 Sara and Kristina are located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the "Dish with One Spoon" wampum agreement. Penney works on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

Literature Review

Within conversations about decolonizing history education in Canada, debates among scholars about reconciling Indigenous and Western worldviews of history have been ongoing and vigorous. Though we recognize that there are many strands to conversations about decolonizing history education, a central question has concerned whether disciplinary approaches to teaching history, such as the historical thinking framework conceptualized by Peter Seixas (Seixas, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013), are compatible with Indigenous perspectives (Cutrara, 2018; Gibson & Case, 2019; Marker, 2011; McGregor, 2017; Miles, 2018; Seixas, 2012; Taylor, 2018; Wallace-Casey, 2022) or adequate for supporting social reconstruction (den Heyer, 2011). This is a critical question worthy of consideration given that this disciplinary-based framework is at the centre of most provincial and territorial curricula in Canada (Clark, 2011, 2018, 2019) and is widely accepted internationally (Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Wilke et al., 2022). If we accept the premise that the transformation of current curricular expectations is possible, then we need to engage with literature in the field to examine what scholars have called for in working toward decolonization.

We begin by listening to Indigenous scholars who have called for "curricular engagements that help us reread and reframe…Aboriginal-Canadian relations in more ethical ways" (Donald, 2009, p. 4). Within the context of history education, this involves learning from Indigenous understandings of the past. Arapaho scholar Michael Marker (2011) conceptualizes Indigenous historical consciousness as "four winding paths up the mountain": (1) emphasizing the circular nature of time, rather than Western conceptions of linear time that contribute to problematic progress narratives; (2) featuring the ways that understandings of the past come from relationships with landscape and non-humans, beyond considerations of plants and animals as natural resources for human exploitation; (3) situating the past in ways that include local meanings of time and place, rather than exclusively national or global events; and (4) centring Indigenous narratives and perspectives to disrupt problematic assumptions and stereotypes. Marker acknowledges that "these [I]ndigenous ways of understanding the past…are difficult to integrate into the conventions of Western historiographies" (2011, p. 98), but he is strong in his conviction that these are paths toward making history education more meaningful for Indigenous students.

Peter Seixas (2012) also contributed to this conversation by directly responding to Marker's suggestions for history education, pointing to the challenges of reconciling two

different worldviews and understandings about what constitutes knowledge. For instance, the historical thinking framework is often rooted in written historical texts as evidence, whereas Indigenous knowledges are based on oral tradition. Seixas asked if these worldviews are so far apart that the distance is not traversable. Ultimately, he was hopeful and suggested "ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal scholars" (2012, p. 132) as an approach to working toward some common ground. Other scholars have pointed to similar possibilities. James Miles (2018) notes that "By opening up history to be understood as a human constructed narrative, not a set list of facts, historical thinking provides an essential starting place for challenging existing narratives that may exclude, erase, or silence Indigenous voices" (p. 306).

Heather McGregor (2017) offers pragmatic suggestions for including both Indigenous knowledges and historical thinking approaches within history. Like Marker, she suggests that teachers might help students to learn the history of the land where they are situated and view Indigenous experience as exceeding the political borders and boundaries created through colonization. She also proposes "a think-tank and network…focused on the alignment between history and Indigeneity" (McGregor, 2017, p. 14). McGregor draws attention to questions that communities of practice might address, such as the role of identity in constructing and responding to history, the value of memory and oral history, and representations of responsibility and agency within historical accounts.

Furthering this conversation, Lindsay Gibson and Roland Case (2019) provide suggestions for decolonizing history education, which include Indigenous perspectives while not radically restructuring the Western-centric discipline of history. The first recommendation is to strengthen historical thinking approaches by, for example, framing inclusive narratives and showcasing Indigenous sources of historical evidence. The second recommendation is to employ a historical thinking approach rather than teach history as an established body of conclusions. Gibson and Case point out that "interpreting historical evidence, challenging problematic assumptions, and identifying the perspectives inherent in the historical narratives they encounter [are] especially important for overcoming the discriminatory views about Indigenous Peoples that students have encountered in school, society, and the media" (2019, p. 254). The third recommendation is to include a course on Indigenous ways of knowing in the curriculum.

Beyond these conversations around historical thinking, we are informed by other scholarship with complementary aims for decolonizing history education. For instance,

Treaty education can "disrupt the commonsense" (Tupper & Cappello, 2008, p. 559) by integrating historical and contemporary stories of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, in support of truth and reconciliation (Hiller, 2016; Tupper, 2011, 2012, 2014; Tupper & Cappello, 2008). Oral history also offers possibilities for facilitating redress and reconciliation, through education, when it prioritizes Indigenous storywork, ethical listening, and a justice-centred response (Archibald, 2008; Brant, 2022; Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2019). With the aim of nurturing understanding, relationality, and solidarity among diverse communities, Sara Karn (2023) conceptualizes historical empathy as a relational process of coming to better understand others and ourselves. This framing of historical empathy has been taken up in research examining the issue of ecological precarity among Inuit (Karn et al., in press), and is related to broader efforts to reimagine history education in pursuit of ecocentrism and decolonizing (McGregor et al., 2021; McGregor et al., 2024). Whether through a focus on Treaty education, redress and reconciliation, or climate crisis and ecological precarity, these areas of scholarship highlight ways that learning about the past may inform understandings of the present, and preferable futures (den Heyer, 2011, 2017), as we move toward decolonizing history education.

While the work on decolonization is vast and complex, prominent voices that we have noted here regarding history education reveal important patterns for what is needed for curricular reform. Across the literature, scholars in this field most often call for: critically assessing who and what is included and excluded in curricula; challenging existing narratives; representing agency within historical accounts; incorporating Indigenous notions of time; including local understandings of place, and Treaty histories; emphasizing stories for and about non-humans and the environment; valuing oral histories and storytelling; attending to ethical considerations of colonialism and redress; reflecting on identity and how it shapes the histories we tell; and supporting ongoing dialogue with Indigenous knowledge keepers and educators. It is these most prominent themes that framed our analysis to understand the current state of history curricula, as described in the section that follows.

Methodology

Over a span of almost two years (2021 to 2023), the Curriculum and Resources Cluster of the SSHRC Partnership Grant *Thinking Historically for Canada's Future* (THFCF) conducted a study of history curricula in Canada. History curriculum documents are

critical for understanding the teaching and learning of history in schools because, as Godlewska et al. (2017) assert, "curricular documents set the ground rules and what sets ground rules is worthy of attention" (p. 447). Although there have been curriculum-based studies of history and social studies conducted within Canada in recent years (e.g., Broom, 2015; Brunet & Gani, 2020; Butler & Milley, 2020; Éthier & Lefrançois, 2012; Godlewska et al., 2017; Lambert, 2018; Miles, 2021; Pashby et al., 2014; Rogers, 2011; Seguin, 2019; Tarasiuk, 2023; Thompson, 2004), these have often been limited in scope, focusing on one region or a single document/grade. Our study involved an analysis of curricula for at least two grades for each of Canada's 13 provinces and territories (29 documents total), allowing for comparison among different contexts. Given that education is a provincial/territorial responsibility, the curriculum documents were developed within each jurisdiction and reflect the local priorities and approaches in that region. We selected curriculum documents that directly relate to Canadian history from both the elementary/middle school and secondary school levels for each jurisdiction. Such a broad review of history education curricula in Canada is, to our knowledge, the first of its kind.

Our original study of curricula set out to understand THFCF project themes related to historical thinking (e.g., concepts related to historical significance, continuity and change, cause and consequence) (Seixas, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013) and civic engagement (e.g., concepts related to civic identities, action, and systems) (Davies et al., 2023). To better understand these broad themes in history curricula, we employed a content and critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology (Fairclough, 1995; Lazar, 2007). Our content analysis included a quantitative accounting of the number of pages or passages on a subject and a qualitative evaluation of how a particular subject matter was represented, in order to assess the relative emphasis of our selected themes (Foster & Burgess, 2013). Our critical discourse analysis sought to assess "language in use" (Gee & Handford, 2012, p. 1) and make visible the opaque ideological and regulatory elements of history curricula language that construct expectations for learning (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). Teams of research assistants examined the full curriculum document to answer thematic content questions and conduct a search of keywords to analyze the frequency and contextual usage of keywords. To assess the validity and completeness of each analysis, the teams conducted an inter-rater reliability check by having another analyst review, comment on, and add to the findings. Once all documents were analyzed and reviewed, the data were coded using NVivo to group concepts and questions across all curriculum documents.

While the findings of the initial analysis provided a breadth of information about historical thinking and civic engagement within history curricula across Canada, what also emerged was a picture of historical knowledge and skills that reinforced Eurocentrism. The data revealed that most history curricula focused on colonial progress narratives and were inattentive to critical understandings of White settler power and to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Given this emerging summary of findings from the initial study, we returned to the dataset for a secondary analysis to understand the extent to which curricula in Canada address decolonizing goals within history education. We conducted an inductive thematic analysis of the data using NVivo to see what categories emerged that related more explicitly to themes of (de)colonization (Guest et al., 2013). The themes that emerged included, but were not limited to, narrative formation, orientation of time, interpretive power/privilege, ethics of redress, and historical evidence.

With these inductive codes in mind, we reviewed literature in the field of history education and decolonization in Canada to identify what scholars, including Indigenous scholars and educators, may well consider limitations and strengths of curricular expectations in history. We used the work of these scholars, as noted in the previous section, to further categorize the codes into limitations and strengths. For example, to what extent are local Indigenous knowledges represented in the curricula, or how are students asked to interrogate colonial harms? Based on the categories of limitations and strengths, we then asked: What recommendations might support continued movement toward decolonizing history curricula? This article offers a picture of how history education remains embedded in Eurocentric ways of thinking but offers possibilities for engaging in decolonial curricular reform.

Findings: Curriculum Limitations and Strengths for Decolonizing

Limitations

Our analysis of history curricula across Canada uncovered significant limitations for addressing decolonizing goals. One of the primary findings from our analysis of narrative formation is that curricular expectations often reinforce hegemonic narratives about Canada's history (especially surrounding colonialism), rather than challenging these

assumptions or incorporating marginalized viewpoints. In fact, a few documents use the term "the history" to denote a singular history of Canada, rather than giving space to multiple interpretations (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006; Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2020). In the case of the Grade 5 curriculum in the Northwest Territories, many of the essential questions that guide the document are written from a European perspective, while ignoring examples of Indigenous resistance and agency (Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 2011).

Relatedly, history curricula often reinforce problematic assumptions about Indigenous peoples and their histories. In some cases, Indigenous peoples are referred to exclusively in the past tense, rather than acknowledging their presence today and discussing current issues and relationships. For example, in Quebec's troisième et quatrième secondaire curricula, Indigenous perspectives and experiences are primarily discussed in relation to the past without substantial consideration for present day implications (Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017). In British Columbia's Grade 4 curricula there are lengthy discussions of colonization, yet there is no mention of decolonization or the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism for Indigenous peoples today (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016).

The failure of these curricula to situate Indigenous peoples within the present is unsurprising, given the tendency of curricula to stay firmly rooted within the past. While some documents did include brief discussions of the present, there was exceedingly little mention of the future. Even when the curriculum documents discuss drawing connections between the past, present, and future within the frontmatter or introduction (notably, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2019; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2011, 2012; Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 2011, 2015; Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010; Yukon Department of Education, 2020), the future dimension of specific content and competencies is often left out. For example, in Nova Scotia's Grade 11 curriculum, a general learning outcome states that students should "demonstrate an understanding of the past and how it affects the present and future" (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2015, p. 92). Although the curriculum follows through in addressing the impacts of historical events and circumstances in the present—for example, "analyze the effects

of contact and subsequent colonization" (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2015, p. 93)—the specific curriculum outcomes do not engage a future orientation.

There are other missed opportunities within history curricula when it comes to critical discussions of privilege and positionality. In some cases, general outcomes surrounding students developing a sense of self are stated, but then not followed through in the specific expectations. For instance, a goal of Saskatchewan's Grade 5 curriculum is "self-concept development" in which "students gain a richer understanding of themselves" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3). Later in the document, one of the outlined "teaching and learning principles" is for students to "develop and clarify their own views and values" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 10). However, moving from the introduction into the history program–specific learning outcomes, opportunities are missed for connecting back to concepts of positionality. This is particularly evident in learning outcome PA5.3: "develop an understanding of the nature of the treaty relationship between First Nations and Canada's federal government" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 22). Students are expected to explain what Treaties are and "affirm that all Saskatchewan residents are treaty people" (p. 22), but there is no explicit mention of students considering how their own backgrounds, identities, values, and experiences shape their understandings of Treaties. Furthermore, there is a missed opportunity to facilitate discussions of how privilege shapes understandings of and experiences with Treaty relationships—an opportunity that is also missed in other curricula that consider Treaty rights and responsibilities (e.g., British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018b).

Alongside the failure to take up critical discussions of privilege and positionality, there was a lack of consistent engagement with ethical considerations surrounding colonialism and redress. While some curricula promote the development of "ethical judgement" in history (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016, 2018; New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2019; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2011, 2012; Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 2015), many simply imply ethical judgements or avoid them altogether (Alberta Education, 2007a, 2007b; Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017; Nouveau Brunswick Ministère de l'Éducation, 2003, 2006; Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development,

2020; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b; Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2006, 2010; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010). We also noted that some curricula are more cautious about being critical toward certain historical harms and injustices in Canadian history, whereas those same documents are willing to strongly condemn historical harms and injustices in other areas of the world, such as the Holocaust. This suggests an intentional avoidance of acknowledging any historical wrongdoing within Canadian history to promote positive, nation-building narratives. For instance, Saskatchewan's Grade 5 curriculum does not promote the critical analysis of injustices and atrocities in Canada's history, such as cultural genocide (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010). In other cases, students are encouraged to make value judgements in ways that can be problematic. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador's Grade 5 curriculum, students are asked to consider the question, "Was the migration and settlement of Europeans into the Atlantic region a positive event? Why?" (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 2012, p. 94). Considering the treatment and genocide of Indigenous peoples, including the Beothuk, this is a potentially harmful discussion for students in the present as it invites debate about whether colonialism was positive, rather than consideration of the ethical aspects of its consequences.

Perhaps most detrimental to decolonizing imperatives, history curricula across the provinces generally ignore Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Rather, these documents are all rooted within Western, settler colonial epistemologies and educational values. Perhaps the closest some documents come to acknowledging Indigenous ways of knowing the past is the mention of oral histories as a source of historical evidence (e.g., Alberta Education, 2007a; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006; Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). However, these discussions are often brief, conceptualize oral histories from Western perspectives, and focus on the challenges and limitations of engaging these sources. For example, Prince Edward Island's Grade 12 curriculum references oral histories, yet when inviting students to "conduct a document study using primary and secondary sources to analyze changes in selected Aboriginal societies (Mi'kmaq, Iroquois, Cree, Innu, Tlingit) as a result of contact and colonization" (Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010, p. 60), the curriculum misses a significant opportunity to explicitly discuss engaging with oral histories to be inclusive of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews.

Strengths

Despite the limitations of history curricula for addressing decolonizing goals, our analysis also identified some strengths that may provide a foundation on which to build more substantial steps toward decolonizing history curricula. Our analysis revealed that most curricula across Canada now include content expectations related to Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and experiences. Generally speaking, curricula developed or revised more recently (especially post-TRC) tended to engage more meaningfully with calls to decolonize curricula by moving beyond the simple inclusion of Indigenous histories to also promoting the critical assessment of historical narratives and exploring Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary agency. Notably, curricula in the territories are deeply informed by decolonizing approaches, as they are locally developed in close consultation with Elders and other Indigenous community members.

More specifically, we found significant potential in curricula that represent history through divergent and competing narratives. For instance, in British Columbia's Grade 10 curriculum, content expectations about the perspectives and experiences of First Peoples are juxtaposed with those of European settlers, and "contested histories" are emphasized throughout (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). Within the curricular competencies, history is presented as something for students to interrogate, interpret, and analyze rather than passively accepting a prescribed set of facts. Therefore, students are encouraged by the curriculum to construct history themselves. One of the "Big Ideas"—or core concepts guiding learning throughout the course of study—states that "Historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative and identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 1). Thus, this document offers one example of how curriculum can support alternative viewpoints and avoid privileging hegemonic, Eurocentric narratives within Canadian history.

In other documents, we found an emphasis on human agency, and the role of individuals and groups in promoting and resisting change in the past and present. Manitoba's Grade 11 curriculum acknowledges the importance of stories of resistance and survival:

> The history of exclusion and domination of the First Peoples, their resistance and struggle for survival, and their efforts to build a better future for all their children and families is an important aspect of our collective history and of our ongoing challenge to build a just and fair society. (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2014, section I, p. 17)

Some topics included later in the curriculum support this commitment (e.g., Métis resistance against westward expansion). Though this document could do more to highlight other stories of Indigenous resistance, agency, and survival, it offers one example of a history curriculum that expands and challenges hegemonic historical narratives.

The curricula of the northern territories offer examples of what it means to centre Indigenous ways of knowing and being. One of the approaches these documents take is to highlight the voices and perspectives of Northerners, with a particular focus on Indigenous peoples. For instance, in the Northwest Territories Dene, Inuvialuit and Innuinait, and Métis perspectives and knowledges are prominent throughout (Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 1996, 2015). Similarly, the Nunavut curriculum highlights Inuit perspectives before Western ones and embeds the voices of Elders (Nunavut Department of Education, 2014, 2021). Students are encouraged to learn from and beside Elders and local community members while engaging in cultural practices. Furthermore, these curricula extend invitations to learn from the land and community. For instance, in Yukon's Grade 12 curriculum, authentic learning activities include land-based experiences guided by an Elder, such as a tour of sites of Indigenous displacement and resistance (Yukon Department of Education, 2020). The curriculum explains that teachers should build meaningful, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with Yukon First Nations community members and the traditional territory. In Nunavut's Grade 5 curriculum documents (Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment,1996[4]; Nunavut Department of Education, 2021), the importance of local knowledge tied to the land is also highlighted throughout, with learning expectations related to survival skills and ecological knowledge. We offer these examples from the northern territories not as blueprints to be translated to other curricula, as the approaches are appropriate for the local contexts in which they are situated, but rather to highlight some of the ways that Indigenous knowledges may guide curriculum documents instead of being framed as simply an "add on."

4 This curriculum document was developed in 1996, prior to the creation of Nunavut on April 1, 1999. While it is attributed here to the Northwest Territories, it is still used as part of the Grade 5 curriculum in Nunavut.

Discussion: Five Recommendations for Decolonizing History Curricula

Collectively, the strengths and limitations identified by our study demonstrate that much remains to be done in the way of decolonizing history curricula. Based on these findings and what scholars have called for in decolonizing education generally and history education specifically, we offer five recommendations for decolonizing history curricula in Canada. In offering these recommendations, we aim to shape the future (re)design of history curricula in ways that are attentive to challenging hegemonic narratives, valuing Indigenous ways of knowing and being, reflecting on privilege and positionality, engaging the ethical dimension, and focusing on the future.

1. Challenge Hegemonic Narratives

In light of our findings that history curricula overwhelmingly support hegemonic narratives and further problematic assumptions about Indigenous peoples, we suggest that history curricula in Canada should be challenged and changed to account for counternarratives that focus on disrupting White supremacy and supporting Indigenous sovereignty. Students need to engage in challenging hegemonic, nation-building narratives about the past; in other words, rewriting the narratives that constitute Canadian history (Ng-A-Fook & Milne, 2014). There is an urgent need to move beyond a mere additive approach (Banks, 1989), such as Ontario's sprinkling in mentions of "First Nations, Métis, and Inuit" in different sections throughout the curriculum document. Similar to our findings for curricula across Canada, Anne Godlewska et al. (2017) found in their analysis of the Newfoundland and Labrador curriculum that Indigenous content was often "used as a light flavouring applied here and there" (p. 457). As Haudenosaunee scholar Kiera Brant-Birioukov and her colleagues (2019) note, such an approach makes use of Indigenous content as an addendum to history without re-storying dominant colonial narratives, interrogating settler-colonial identity, or moving beyond settler guilt toward reconciliatory actions (Corntassel et al., 2009; Dion, 2009; Hattam & Matthews, 2012; Tupper, 2012).

More meaningful approaches to reimagining historical narratives might involve "asking non-Aboriginal Canadians where we fit into Aboriginal history, not just where Aboriginal history fits into the history of Canada" (Simon, 2013, p. 136). This may

include, but is not limited to, more robust discussion of Indigenous sovereignty within history curricula and a greater focus on the legacy of historical injustices. The latter is a strength in the British Columbia curriculum. It offers representation of divergent and competing narratives, with a focus on historical and contemporary injustices to challenge dominant narratives. In his analysis of the British Columbia curriculum, Miles (2021) argued that "This move to identify historical wrongs as an overarching theme that challenges Canadian identity and dominant historical narratives might be considered one of the more significant reforms to the goals of social studies education in Canada in recent memory" (p. 55).

An important aspect of challenging hegemonic narratives involves featuring Indigenous counter-storytelling, or stories of resistance, survival, resilience, and agency (Madden, 2019). Counter-storytelling centres "telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society)" while "exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Revising history curricula in ways that increase content related to stories of marginalized groups and individuals—and how they have fought against systems of oppression, survived abuse and injustice, and enacted agency in various forms—would aid in the construction of more diverse historical narratives in the classroom. Additionally, curricula should guide teachers and students to seek out evidence (and embed examples and links to such evidence) that may support counter-storytelling, such as oral histories, artwork, or artefacts—including those sources created by and about marginalized groups. The use of diverse historical evidence supports Stephanie Anderson's (2017) "counter national narrative" approach to challenging nation-building stories centred on Western epistemologies within history education. It is critical that educators reimagine the stories told about the past when rewriting history curriculum in ways that are attentive to decolonizing. Of course, educators and curriculum developers should not assume that the inclusion of counternarratives will necessarily lead to the replacement of hegemonic nation-building narratives. Counternarratives can be used, however, to disrupt dominant historical narratives of nation and support Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

2. Value Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being

Across all the provincial curriculum documents analyzed in our study, there is little evidence of Two-Eyed Seeing approaches—that is, drawing together the strengths of

Indigenous and Western knowledges and worldviews (Bartlett et al., 2012). The lack of attention to Indigenous knowledges within the provincial curriculum documents raises concerns about the ability of history curriculum in most places across Canada to meaningfully address reconciliation. Battiste (2013) suggests that decolonizing education requires "a regeneration of new relationships among and between knowledge systems" (p. 103). In bringing together the strengths of Indigenous and Western ways of knowing in history education, as other scholars have proposed (Gibson & Case, 2019; Marker, 2011; McGregor, 2017; Miles, 2018), pedagogies must value Indigenous ways of knowing and being. As McGregor (2017) has put it, "Extending epistemic recognition to Indigenous knowledges and peoples…is a crucial part of curricular reform" (p. 13).

Across all regions of Canada this should include, but is not limited to, incorporating more land-based and experiential learning, as well as oral histories and local stories. The inclusion of local histories, people, and places in curricula can also contribute toward highlighting Indigenous knowledges, and, in so doing, help students gain a deeper appreciation for their communities and the local environment. As Marker (2011) explains, "For [I]ndigenous people, the local history that frames the community's relationship to the traditional territory is the most important knowledge to be passed on to the youth" (p. 105). Part of localization requires a history education that situates the past in relation to place through what Tuck and her colleagues (2014) refer to as land education (McGregor et al., 2024). According to Inuk author and activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2015), "As Inuit we appreciate the wisdom of the land. The land teaches us what we need to survive" (p. 175). A history curriculum that includes local histories, people, and places offers students relational learning opportunities that connect them more closely to the land, other people, and their communities, in ways that bridge the past and present.

3. Reflect on Privilege and Positionality

As revealed by our study, history curricula across Canada rarely feature discussions of privilege or positionality. While the ideas underpinning these concepts may be alluded to in the overall introduction to some documents, these commitments are usually quickly forgotten when outlining specific expectations regarding the knowledge and skills students should acquire. As a result, there are missed opportunities within curricula for engaging critical discussions of privilege or positionality, particularly related to Treaty

responsibilities and relationships. Yet, within history education, reflecting on one's positionality is essential because our contemporary experiences, values, knowledge, and assumptions are impossible to bracket out (VanSledright, 2001). Furthermore, as Rosemary Nagy (2013) explains, "The unsettling of privilege ties further into the decolonization of identity" (p. 60).

Research within history education in Canada has called for increased attention to considering one's positionality and reflecting on individual and collective identities when studying the past (Cutrara, 2018; McGregor, 2017; Miles, 2018; Taylor, 2018). McGregor (2017) poses a question for consideration among educators and learners:

> What is the role of identity in the production of, and responses to, histories? (of the historian/person sharing the story, and their right to share it at the correct time, of the people in the story in question, of the listener-learner). (p. 14)

These discussions are particularly important when dealing with difficult or sensitive topics, as they can engage students in considering the legacies of colonialism within Canada and how their identities are implicated within the colonial project. As Miles (2018) explains, "For non-Indigenous Canadians, this is not to promote a sense of guilt, but to help them understand the ways in which they benefit from colonialism" (p. 303). Therefore, we join other history education scholars in Canada (Karn, 2023; McGregor, 2017; Moisan & Brunet, 2023) in suggesting that a key learning outcome of history should involve students—as well as teachers—becoming more aware of their own positionality and how it is brought to bear on their learning, "to reframe their ethical orientation to past, present and future" (Miles, 2018, p. 94).

4. Engage in the Ethical Dimension

Our analysis found that, across most curricula in Canada, the ethical dimension of history is ignored or simply implied. This is unsurprising, as other studies have found that the ethical dimension of historical thinking is less frequently taught in history classes or studied by researchers, in comparison to other historical thinking concepts (Gibson, 2014; Milligan et al., 2018). Considering this, we recommend that curriculum developers in every province and territory embrace ethical judgements in ways that are explicit. Now

more than ever students need to engage the ethical dimension of history, which involves making informed judgements about the values, decisions, or actions of historical actors to draw meaning for the present (Seixas & Morton, 2013). In its final report, the TRC (2015a) emphasized the importance of ethical judgements to reconciliation:

> Students must be able to make ethical judgments about the actions of their ancestors while recognizing that the moral sensibilities of the past may be quite different from their own in present times. They must be able to make informed decisions about what responsibility today's society has to address historical injustices. (p. 241)

Thus, engaging the ethical dimension of history is not simply an intellectual exercise involving a critical examination of evidence to reach an informed judgement about the issue under study; ethical questions raised about the past are essential for informing our values, decisions, and actions in the present.

Other studies have also concluded that curricula can do more to address social issues, such as racism, by engaging students in examining evidence about the consequences of decisions and actions "while siding with struggles against oppression" (Lambert, 2018, p. 101). Such an approach may support Gibson and Case's (2019) call to engage students in discussions of commemoration controversies involving Indigenous histories and "deepening their understanding of present obligations arising from past events" (p. 271). In doing so, students' understandings of injustice and reconciliation may move from being situated exclusively in the past to considering implications for the present (Miles, 2018).

At the same time as we encourage explicit engagement with the ethical dimension in history curricula, we also call for increased attention to pedagogical support for teachers in this area. Studies have shown that teachers are often reluctant to bring controversial or difficult topics into their classrooms for many reasons, including concerns about backlash against their teaching approaches (Barton & Ho, 2022; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012; Zembylas, 2017). In relation to Indigenous histories, settler teachers often position themselves as the "perfect stranger" to Indigenous peoples, distant from colonial responsibility and discomfort (Dion, 2004, 2009). For this reason, if the ethical dimension of history is included within the curriculum, as we suggest, it is essential that teachers are also provided with guidance for grappling with these discussions.

5. Focus on the Future

In keeping with our call for more sustained attention to the ethical dimension of history, we call for greater future-oriented thinking to help address some of the biggest issues of our time—taking up history in ways that inform future decision making and actions. Our findings show that most curricula do not engage the future. Contrary to the belief that history should remain firmly rooted in the past, connecting the past to present and future dimensions allows students to consider "how the past they encounter in and out of schools informs present social choices and future preferable destinations" (den Heyer, 2017, p. 6). For instance, as McGregor and colleagues (2021) suggest, when dealing with uncertainties about the future in light of the climate crisis, we may look to the past for examples of what has been possible in order to imagine what *could be* possible. From an Indigenous perspective, the Haudenosaunee seven-generation principle considers the generations to come, as well as those that came before, accounting for responsibilities to both ancestors and future generations (Bell, 2020). In these ways, thinking about the future when studying the past supports ways of knowing and being that are mindful of relationships with other people, species, and the Earth.

As students are guided to orient themselves in time and understand their responsibilities in the present and future, curriculum development teams might also be more aware of Indigenous conceptions of time. According to Marker (2011), "Indigenous historiographies that emphasize the circular patterns of time are essential components of a decolonizing curriculum for Aboriginal students and schools" (p. 101). While territorial curricula often include circular conceptions of time, the current focus of curricula in Canada's provinces on linear conceptions of the past, present, and future promotes problematic notions of progress, and are inadequate for decolonizing history curriculum. To support decolonizing goals, Indigenous conceptions of time should help guide history curricula that are concerned with bringing the past to bear on values and actions in the present and future.

Conclusions

Despite some examples of curricula that support decolonizing, our study found that overwhelmingly history curricula are not well positioned to disrupt colonialism. Curricula across the country are generally defined by Eurocentric narratives and ways of knowing that are not attentive to power and positionality for change-making. We have suggested

that by challenging hegemonic narratives, valuing Indigenous ways of knowing and being, reflecting on privilege and positionality, engaging in the ethical dimension, and focusing on the future, history curricula may be better placed to address ongoing calls for decolonizing education. We hope these five recommendations will be useful for teams of educators, researchers, community knowledge holders, and other experts who come together to develop and revise history curricula across Canada.

With that said, we recognize that "Decolonising the curriculum presents a challenging task for all stakeholders [*sic*] involved in education policy and practice" (Race et al., 2022, p. 5). The extent to which these suggestions are useful will be dependent on the provincial or territorial context. This list is certainly not exhaustive; there are other recommendations not captured here, including who develops curricula, that should be taken into consideration. When doing so, we encourage curriculum development teams across Canada's provinces to include more Indigenous voices in meaningful ways within this process, which would also serve to disrupt power and privilege within history education.

Of course, teaching and learning history involves a great deal more than written curriculum documents. Decolonizing curriculum is merely one aspect of our collective responsibility to rethink history education in response to calls for truth and reconciliation. The findings presented here may be considered alongside other inquiries into history education resources and pedagogies aimed at decolonizing and reconciliation. Finally, we recognize research in Canada that has found that formal education is not necessarily an ethical or decolonizing space, reminding us that important student learning happens outside the classroom, within communities and on social media (Pillay et al., 2022). We hope these recommendations spark continued conversations about decolonizing history education, which involves listening to and learning from Elders and Indigenous educators to ensure their voices are reflected in how we teach and learn about the past.

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