

BOOK REVIEW / COMPTE-RENDU

POITRAS PRATT, Y., & BODNARESKO, S. (Eds.). *Truth and reconciliation through education: Stories of decolonizing practices*. Brush Education. (2023). 264 pp. \$39.95 (Paperback). (ISBN 978-1-55059-933-6).

T*truth and reconciliation through education: Stories of decolonizing practices* contributes to educators' journeys by helping them 'unpack' colonialism from their practice. Its co-editors, Yvonne Poitras Pratt (Métis) and Sulyn Bodnaresko (Settler), gathered narratives from Indigenous and settler participants in the University of Calgary's master's certificate program entitled "Indigenous Education: A Call to Action" (CTA). Program participants complete a two-week summer residency, followed by critical service-learning courses and an individual reconciliatory project. Reconciliatory is defined as honoring Indigenous truths, experiences, and voices to improve conditions for future generations. Each chapter shares powerful narratives from program alumni regarding how their residency mobilized their reconciliatory intentions via dialogue, theories, story sharing, and building community. The book's co-editors are faculty in the CTA program and thus well-situated to speak to the purpose and impacts of the program.

The book delivers on its promise to provide stories of decolonizing practices, and does so in an exceedingly captivating, personal way. The colloquial prose immerses the reader in each participant's lived experiences, providing meaningful connection to the content. The co-editors begin with an overview of both the CTA program and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's 94 Calls to Action. Settlers, like me, possessing little knowledge of the TRC will be grateful for this background information. However, they will likely soon realize that they are not alone in their ignorance. In fact, the CTA program was created to counteract the biased curricula in Canada that have erased the full truth of colonialism's influence on today's society. Indeed, co-authors frequently mention how unaware most Canadians are of their shared settler/Indigenous history and the enduring impacts of colonization.

The bulk of the book shares instances of Indigenous reclamation, reconciliatory education in K-12, and ethical allyship. In chapter nine, Nian Matoush (Eeyou-Eenou) explains how she collaborated with a non-Indigenous school board to examine the legacy of residential schools in curriculum. Later, in chapter 18, Amy Thompson (Settler) recounts how she helped to renew Indigenous exhibitions at a science museum by developing ongoing and ethical relationships with Indigenous communities. Most chapters start with positionality statements explaining the participant's identity and how they situate themselves in relation to Canadian decolonization work. Ashley Ruben (Inuk), for instance, describes her father's time at an Indian residential school in relation to her need to decolonize her life and find her history. These positionality statements greatly contribute to the reader's comprehension of each participant's experience and motivation for joining the program, while making the narratives much more impactful.

Several themes arose from the participants' stories. Firstly, participants specified that the task of decolonization necessitates challenging emotional work. As participant Michael Glenney (Settler) explains, the work should "shift and shake our cores and compel us to become different people and different teachers" (p. 128). Secondly, participants remind us that decolonization requires slow, thoughtful movements: "You cannot rush or force actions; real and lasting societal change requires us to have patience and wait for the right opportunities to arise" (Amanda Nielsen, Settler, p. 234). The final theme relates to Canada's colonial gaze "through which the unimaginable oppression inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples is shrouded by the often-celebrated image of peaceful, polite and tolerant Canada" (p. 229). Many participants shared their shock when learning about atrocities, such as residential schools, as well as the difficulties in reframing their understanding of Canadian history and society.

I do notice certain pitfalls within the book. There are instances when specific examples, such as reconciliatory conversation starters or lesson plans, could have been included to offer readers actionable next steps. Unfortunately, the book only included one racialized participant's experience with being a settler. Careful consideration of the intersectional identities that racialized settlers hold would have provided valuable insight for a large portion of the Canadians who identify similarly. This is an opportunity that the editors could have addressed more fully. Nonetheless, participants shared several theories and theorists that they found impactful during the CTA program. These include transformational education theory and service-learning theory, as well as decolonizing pedagogues like Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq Nation) and Frye Jean Graveline (Métis).

In the final chapter, Patricia Danyluk (Settler) describes a sentiment that applies to most of the settler participants: "I am constantly asking myself what

my role is in this work, and how to do it well. This includes questioning whether I am taking up space that should belong to Indigenous Peoples” (p. 247). Yet, an overarching theme of this book is that settlers do belong. It is just that they must arrive having clear intentions, an interest in tackling systems of oppression and, most significantly, not act out of guilt. By focusing on their own guilt and shame, settlers turn the story back on themselves, but as Andra Coutler (Settler) eloquently states: “Reconciliation [is] not about me” (p. 241). To move towards reconciliation, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people must collaboratively navigate their own roles in this work.

Truth and reconciliation through education: Stories of decolonizing practices will be important for practitioners, scholars, or anyone looking to understand their biases and begin the slow but steady work of reconciliation. The book expertly addressed the needs and concerns of both Indigenous Peoples and settlers without diminishing either group’s experiences. The editors accomplished their aim to encourage readers to come together by providing compelling narratives of the participants’ CTA experiences. The chapters provide examples that encourage self-reflection, patience, and community engagement, and offer practical next steps for those starting decolonization work. The book concludes with the following quote from the co-editors: “In the spirit of reciprocity for all gifts of knowledge and relationships we have received...we write this chapter with the hope it encourages other aspiring allies to take action” (p. 255). Echoing the same sentiment, I call on any educator (and especially fellow settlers) hoping to become more engaged in decolonial work to read this book as soon as possible. It is an engrossing read which welcomes settlers into the work of learning and reflecting upon how to appropriately engage in reconciliation and decolonization.

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