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Envisioning a Contemporary Indigenous Curriculum in Ontario:

Exploring Ways in which to Achieve Decolonization within the Restraints of Educational Public Policy

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Interactions with aboriginal communities and individuals, academic and extra-curricular, helped to inspire not only this article but the future research she will pursue.

This article considers the prospective for emancipatory curricula regarding aboriginal youth in the province of Ontario. As such, the study is conducted with the use of two cases studies: one case study within the provincial education system, and the other study within the federal education system. The First Nations School of Toronto (FNST) provides an example of alternative educational practices within the Ontario provincial education system. The Anishinabek Nation's Education Act provides an example of alternative educational practices within the federal system. Analysis focuses on foundational aspects needed to achieve truly emancipatory education for aboriginal youth within both education systems and the cases' abilities to nurture these ideals.

Colonization is not merely a political process affecting resource allocation and control over lands and people (Battiste 2005). It is also a social process tied to notions of power and knowledge (Weenie 2008), which results in physical, mental, and spiritual strains on nations and their people (Laenui 2001). This social process is one of the legacies of European settlement in Canada. As such, education has historically been used as a tool for the colonization of aboriginal populations in Canada and throughout the world. While explicit forms of educational colonial initiatives may no longer constitute the norm in Canada, colonialism is still present throughout Canadian educational structures and policy.

Colonialism informs Canadian educational structures through the acceptance of Eurocentrism, the placing of Western ideology, epistemology, and methodology at the top of a unilaterally determined hierarchy (Battiste 2008). Through the dominance of Eurocentrism within educational organization, aboriginal youths are faced with curriculum content and structure that does not inform or re-enforce their identity. Such youths are placed within a system in which their "aboriginality is naturalized as failure" (Gulson and Parks 2009). Initiatives by both Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and

the province of Ontario in the last few decades have not accomplished enough to truly mitigate the dominance of Western ideologies and methodologies in curriculum, nor the effects of past colonial programs. This is because such educational initiatives have merely been added to established and maintained colonialist structures (Cherubini 2008 and Battiste 1998). It is instead necessary to question foundational structures and methods, which inform current realities, in order to consider how to implement meaningful aboriginal holistic epistemologies and methodologies. It is only when these structures are questioned and shifted that education for Ontario's aboriginal youth can become meaningfully transformed.

While education and colonialism affect all aboriginal youth throughout the nation, Ontario has been chosen as the focus of this study. This is because Ontario boasts both large urban and northern populations and, therefore, offers a broad diversity of cases for both federal and provincial education systems. Since aboriginal youth are affected by both provincial and federal systems, it is important to explore both systems when assessing the current status of education. According to a 2009 study, four out of every five self-identifying aboriginal youth attend provincially funded schools (Canada Policy Research Networks 2009). This is a result of both growing urban aboriginal populations, and a lack of on-reserve secondary schools (Tsuji 2000; Shawana 2011). While these are separately structured systems, affecting differently situated populations, there are lines of connection and dependence between them.

With the enactment of the British North America Act, 1867 Crown powers were divided between the federal and provincial governments. Under s.93 of this Act (Parliament of the United Kingdom 1867), education fell under the jurisdiction of the provinces. Under s.91 (24) of this Act (UK 1867), the federal government claimed jurisdiction over aboriginal nations and their lands, through this, claiming jurisdiction over on-reserve education. This led to the creation of two education systems, one administered by individual provinces and the other administered by the federal government. The federal government has never established significant legislation dealing with federal education outside of the bounds of Indian Act provisions, currently ss.114-122 (Parliament of Canada 1985). This

has meant that INAC is dependent upon provincial legislation in regard to standards for curricula, educational attainment, administrative training, and qualifications to inform on-reserve education (Agbo 2005). It is therefore necessary to look at both systems as being separate but complimentarily synonymous in order to provide a full picture of education in Ontario.

This research focuses on the potential to achieve emancipatory curricula through renewed educational ideals and alternative models within both federal and provincial systems. This is facilitated through largely qualitative research on two cases: the First Nations School of Toronto (FNST) and the Anishinabek Nations' Education Agreement The FNST represents an alternative method by which to approach education and curriculum for a diverse aboriginal student body within a provincial structure. On the other hand, the Anishinabek Nations' Education Agreement represents an alternative structure to approaching education and curriculum for a culturally specific audience in place of the current federal structure. There is a difference in scale between these case studies; as such, it should be recognized that the intention is not to provide a comparison between systems. Rather, the intention is to provide a full articulation and exploration of education in Ontario as it affects all aboriginal youth. The study of alternatives within both systems is then necessary in order to understand where the current state of education is within Ontario and where it is, or should be, leading.

Current State of Education

In the 1970s the Northern Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) released a report entitled Indian Control of Indian Education. The report advocated for localized and parentally responsible control over on-reserve education (Abele, Dittburner, and Graham 2000) in response to what had become an alienating, and federally determined and maintained education structure. The release of the report led to the federal devolution initiative. Through this initiative local control was interpreted by the federal government to mean a transfer of select administrative aspects over education to local education authorities. The initiative was not meant to recognize local authorities' inherent rights over education. The policy was also rashly implemented and poorly

planned, leading to jurisdictional confusion within reserves, between reserves and with the federal government (Agbo 2002). As a result, devolution in many cases has resulted in poorly funded and administered education under the provisions 114-122 of the Indian Act (Parliament of Canada 1985), where it appears devolution is mainly symbolic (Young 2001). Many reserve-based schools still exist under this structure. While arguably some autonomy was gained, where it has been implemented, this structure is poorly funded (Shawana 2011), poorly upheld by legislation and secondary level resources (Young 2011), and sustains Western structures through the provincial standards employed.

Next, the Ontario Ministry of Education is laden with legislation. Historically, the numerous standards set through the ministry did not take into consideration aboriginal worldviews, methodologies, languages, or content (Godlewska, Moore, and Bednasek 2010). Furthermore, the very methodology of establishing rigidly conceptualized standards is contrary to holistic epistemologies, which are largely shared by aboriginal populations within Ontario. Standards set by the ministry therefore provide an implicit, and perhaps unrecognized, form of colonization that affects youths in both provincial and federal systems.

In the last twelve years, the ministry has made a concerted effort to provide more aboriginal-friendly education. In 1999, the ministry established a Native Studies course elective at the secondary school level available to all students, which introduced four optional native-subject courses (Ontario Ministry of Education 1999). Unlike the limited and mandatory elementary school credits, in which the most student engagement with aboriginal history is construed, in a highly historic nature portrayed through the lens of interaction in relation to European history (Godlewska, Moore, and Bednasek 2010), these credits are optional and aboriginal-focused. While the ministry has cited enrolment in these courses in the 2007-08 year at 2,000 students (Ontario Ministry of Education 2009), the 2007-2008 secondary school student enrolment for all of Ontario was capped at nearly 71, 6103 (Ontario Ministry of Education 2008). These optional credits are, therefore, only reaching roughly 0.3 per cent of the Ontario secondary student body. Consequentially, it appears these courses are optional and not wide reaching, which

raises concern as to how effective the policy has been.

In 2007 the ministry released its newest policy framework, Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, recognizing the need to support a disengaged aboriginal student body. The goals of the policy have been to facilitate a higher level of aboriginal student achievement, reduce gaps in student achievement, and achieve higher levels of public confidence by 2016 (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007). The policy provides strategies and performance measures for school boards and schools to support these goals. Strategies include building capacity for appropriate teaching and assessment practices, supporting improved literacy and numeracy skills, building supports for identity construction, and fostering the support of families and communities (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007). The most promising of these strategies contributing to a renewed emancipatory curricula is the building support for identity construction strategy. An application of holistic epistemologies in future curricula and teaching methods can be read into this strategy. Whether such an application of this strategy will occur remains to be seen.

While certain measures suggest positive methods of measuring performance, others are troublesome. One of the most troublesome methods of performance measuring suggested is a significant increase in the percentage of aboriginal students meeting provincial standards through provincial assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007). This means the ministry believes that higher levels of aboriginal student achievement on standardized tests are indicative of progress. It has been argued, however, that standardized testing is not indicative of true progress as these standards are established by sources outside of the classroom (Adamowycz 2008). Furthermore, these standards uphold Western conceptions of intelligence and learning as the epitome of intellectual and personal success. In addition, the policy mandates school boards establish policies for voluntary and confidential aboriginal student self-identification on these tests (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007). While this mandate is established to provide a means of measuring the success of aboriginal students on these tests (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007), such a mandate segregates students racially.

If one considers the questionable credibility standardized test have in determining student progress, this mandate holds not only the potential to be damaging but is also potentially moot. There are much less harmful and accurate methods of tracking student progress. Ultimately, the methodology behind setting such standards does not reflect holistic educational values nor the reality of multiple aptitudes among all youths independent of their culture.

Current policy initiatives in place by both the federal and provincial governments are then failing aboriginal student populations. The structures and methods established by these policies have sustained the foundations of Eurocentric educational organization and ideals. These educational foundations threaten to alienate aboriginal youth because the structures and methods employed do not meaningfully seek to support or re-enforce aboriginal identities. In order to avoid further alienation and colonization, these foundations must be questioned and aboriginal voices and vision must inform educational methods and structures for Ontario's aboriginal youth populations.

Decolonization: New Educational Ideals

The current educational system bases education in such concepts as the compartmentalization of subjects, standardization, and commodification of knowledge (Battiste 2004; Corson 1998; Weenie 2008). This in turn establishes an assimilative educational environment. In reconceptualising the current education system, new ideals must be sought. The term "ideals" is to be used flexibly in this analysis as it is important to recognize the diversity in aboriginal cultures, worldviews, and languages throughout Ontario. The goal is not to identify pan-aboriginal ideals of education. To do so would merely perpetuate colonial relations. Instead, it is important to establish flexible ideals that support curricula development for both diverse urban aboriginal populations and culture specific populations found on reserve in Ontario. In an attempt to avoid the promotion of pan-aboriginal ideals a shift in discourse to holistic epistemologies and methodologies is used since holistic worldviews pervade many aboriginal cultures throughout Ontario. Holistic discourse then allows the ability to discuss educational ideals while hopefully circumventing the concept of pan-aboriginality. This does not mean

that such discourse will not carry the risk of promoting such a conception. Curricula framers must be careful regardless of their approach to such reform.

Through research conducted three main flexible ideals, which are widely referenced through literature on aboriginal education, should be considered in the formation of emancipatory curricula development. These include the use of holistic knowledges and methodologies; the facilitation of a dual or multi system of knowledges and cultures (namely holistic and Western); and the reconceptualising of progress and achievement. Additionally, it is essential to mention the importance of community involvement and the inclusion of native languages when formulating curricula.

Holistic worldviews acknowledge the interrelation of all things, internal reflection, and the oral tradition (Smith 2001). Holistic education then incorporates interconnection of family, community, and the world both “animate” and “inanimate.” It also acknowledges the importance of developing the interrelated mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of the self (Canadian Council on Learning 2007). Such education does not compartmentalize information into subjects. In recognizing the interconnection of all things, compartmentalization would be contrary to fundamental holistic beliefs. Holistic education is therefore not subject-based but learner-centered. Learner-centered methodology means education is subjective and is shaped by personal experiential engagement. A 2007 report by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) proposes flexible, holistic models for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit lifelong learning along these guidelines (Canadian Council 2007). Models such as those proposed by the CCL (Alaska Native Educators 1998) provide curricula framers with holistic guidelines for the development of emancipatory curricula for either diverse or culture-specific populations.

The models and holistic ideals the CCL proposed were established through community negotiations where participants recognized the importance of facilitating both Western and holistic ways of knowing (Canadian Council 2007). One of the suggestions from the CCL for a dual system of knowledge, acknowledges the importance of aboriginal youth being afforded greater resources to explore and affirm their identities. Additionally,

the proposal allows youths to engage with the Western world, ideally once youth have previously affirmed their identity largely independent of Western knowledges. Within this proposal, there must be room for instruction in native and English languages. Fostering such a "dual education" necessitates an appropriate mode of facilitation.

One possible method for facilitating space and dialogue for multiple views, languages, and articulations is the transsystemic method[1]. This method is currently employed by McGill's law school (Jukier 2005). Transsystemia will also be the teaching approach taken in the University of Victoria's Bachelor of Indigenous Law in September 2013 (Borrows 2011). The University of Victoria's employment of transsystemia shows that a transsystemic structure is a feasible method for teaching Western and aboriginal ideas, methods, and worldviews in tandem. The Victoria program combines a traditional Western law degree, a Juris Doctorate, with an Indigenous law degree, a Juris Indigenarum Doctorate. While transsystemia is to be employed within a legal context, aspects of its employment can easily facilitate its use within a broader context to aboriginal youth. Through teaching Western and Indigenous thought in parallel, comparing them, using one language to illuminate the other, and through exploring points of similarity and connection (Borrows 2011), teachers can facilitate a meaningful education. Teachers can then provide an education which allows youth to explore their identity while still being provided with the tools to meaningfully engage within the larger Canadian system.

The meaningful incorporation of holistic worldviews and a dual system of knowledge delivery necessitates reviewing how communities wish to evaluate and measure student success. Current processes, as seen through standardized testing and grading hierarchies, encourage competition (Anderson 2002) and individualism at the sake of mutual guidance and understanding. Such processes are antithetical to holistic worldviews. From an holistic framework, communities might consider re-evaluating the teacher-student relationship to acknowledge the mutual guidance of both parties

1 While no concrete definition of "transsystemic" exists, at its most basic level this system can be explained as the interwoven study of two sets of knowledge bases.

(Anderson 2002), as well as longitudinal assessments that measure individual student progress over time (Adamowycz 2008) and training teachers to not only better facilitate learning environments for multiple aptitudes but also providing teachers with better foundations in holistic and aboriginal-Canadian epistemologies.

Overall, meaningful curricula for aboriginal youth can be facilitated through flexible holistic learning models that allow for learning both aboriginal knowledges and Western knowledges. The potential directions outlined above are not meant to provide final discussion on the matter of re-conceptualized educational ideals. Rather, these possible directions are provided as a basis to explore the following case studies and to act as points of further discussion regarding how communities might improve the education of aboriginal youth in Ontario.

Case Studies: Methodology

The following studies were facilitated through qualitative research methods. A number of interviews were conducted with key informants from the First Nations School of Toronto, the Anishinabek Nation, and the Ontario Ministry of Education. Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone. Observational study was also conducted at FNST. The qualitative research methods employed were chosen because they provided the best means possible of exploring the on-the-ground realities of the current educational systems, and the impacts of alternative educational initiatives within these systems.

First Nations School of Toronto

First Nations School of Toronto was originally established as an alternative school in 1977 and was named Wandering Spirit Survival School (Toronto District School Board 2010). In 1983 the school was symbolically recognized by the Toronto Board of Education (now the Toronto District School Board, TDSB) as a cultural survival school instead of an alternative school. In 1989 the junior kindergarten to grade eight school was renamed FNST. The current enrolment at FNST is approximately 80 students (TDSB 2010). FNST currently represents an Indigenous-specific alternative within the larger provincial system. As such, the ability of the school to thrive under provincial standards guides this case

study.

Historically, FNST has not received favourable publicity due to high suspension rates and low standardized test scores (Rowan and Alimi 2008). This led to FNST's mention in a 2008 report on school safety released by the TDSB Associate Direcor Dave Rowan and Superintendent of Education Andrea Alimi (Rowan and Alimi 2008). Within this report, recommendations were made concerning both FNST and the Toronto-wide system for the improvement of aboriginal education (Rowan and Alimi 2008). Few, if any, of these suggestions have come to fruition, specifically those that mention that FNST should be housed within its own building, and should be supplied a vice principal (Rowan 2008). While interviews with employees of FNST confirm the report's findings of past high rates of suspension, there was a hesitancy to put much weight into the report's findings regarding poor academic achievement on standardized tests (Evans 2011). This hesitancy was due to the belief expressed that these tests are not accurate indications of academic success (Evans 2011). Regardless, since 2008 suspensions have gone down substantially in number, grades have risen (Evans 2011). Moreover, cultural content within the school has become more fluid. Where cultural content was once compartmentalized into a single class, it now flows more freely through classes, school-wide art projects, teachings available to teachers, and extra-curricular programs (Gaudet 2011). Whether lower suspension rates and higher grades are related to greater access to cultural content is uncertain.

In any case, greater cultural content is an important progression for FNST. Examples of greater cultural fluidity are seen through Friday afternoon drumming circles and school-wide art projects. Every Friday afternoon all students and teachers convene in the main hallway of FNST. Older boys and male teachers sit around the big drum, the younger boys, girls, and women sit around the outside in circle. There are songs, presentations by classes, announcements, and teachings by teachers and Elders, as well as a space for students to voice opinions and their own announcements. These circles facilitate community, culture, and voice among FNST students. However, the very formation of the drumming circle presents a cultural teaching that does not necessarily translate into all

aboriginal cultures found within Ontario. This, in and of itself, risks the promotion of pan-aboriginality, something which FNST teachers must always be aware of when dealing with a diverse aboriginal student audience.

While the current art project, which involves schools beyond FNST, has in some ways been successful, it too can be seen as problematic. The project has allowed FNST students the ability to interact with the oral tradition, and has enabled students at participating schools to self identify (Gaudet 2011). FNST students were given cultural teachings and songs about water to support the student-based creation of an interactive mural on the theme of water (Gaudet 2011). While such traditional teachings are important, it remains questionable just how much meaningful cultural support students received. Cultural support cannot be easy with a diverse student body; teachers must either choose the promotion of a single culture or multiple cultures - and the dominance of the Western tradition throughout curriculum is palpable. Regardless of the direction taken, if not implemented correctly cultural content can confuse impressionable youth minds, promote pan-aboriginal identity conceptions and even colonial models of holistic methodologies.

Ultimately, the school is stunted in just how far it can reach for emancipatory curricula. This is based in many different realities facing the school. One that has been explored is the challenge of providing cultural content and holistic education to a diverse urban aboriginal student population. Other areas include lack of appropriate resources and standards, funding and support, and the reach of the school itself.

Teachers are required, as a school receiving funding under the TDSB, to implement the full TDSB curriculum in their classrooms (which is informed by provincial standards). Teachers tinker with this curriculum as best they can; it is, however, difficult to find sufficient resources to do this. The grade 7-8 split teacher at FNST provided an example of teaching the war of 1812. Where the war is typically taught from a colonial perspective, the teacher tries to teach it from a mix of Anishinabek and Haudenosaune points of view. This is difficult because the teacher has to scavenge for most of the resources to

facilitate these points of view (Evans 2011). Although the province offers a teacher's toolkit for aboriginal inclusion in curricula, the only strategy it offers for grade seven and eight history has to do with aboriginal people in relation to the fur trade and the Red River Rebellion (Ontario Ministry of Education 2008). These are strategies previously incorporated into the curriculum. The toolkit may suggest a more nuanced exploration as to the role of aboriginal people in these events. It does not, however, provide an overall more inclusive resource base for incorporating aboriginal perspectives within courses. First Nations School of Toronto feels the brunt of this lacking resource base.

The FNST represents a step in the right direction. The school is, however, merely an elementary school within a much broader system. FNST is faced with insufficient funding which makes it difficult to provide resource material, extracurricular activities, and even basic classroom necessities (Evans 2011). In order for the school to be able to move beyond the confines it currently struggles with, there must be broad system change and greater resource support. This change must be more meaningful than what the Ontario Ministry of Education currently offers through its framework policies and toolkits.
Within the school community there is also a desire to expand the school to enable it to offer classes up until grade twelve (Evans 2011). Currently, the school has established a bridging program, which includes having a counselor to help fill out applications, and take students on local high school tours. Once students leave, however, the school can no longer support or track their success (Evans 2011). Students are unleashed into the wider system to float or sink, a system where current standards and curricula risk aboriginal student disengagement. There is much to be done to enable emancipatory curricula through the provincial system for aboriginal youth. Since more substantive support structures are not yet in place, the First Nations School of Toronto is limited in how much it can offer a diverse and urban aboriginal student body.

Anishinabek Nation's Education Agreement

The Anishinabek Nation is composed of 39 Anishinabek First Nations within Ontario, representing approximately 55,000 Anishinabe people. There are currently 19 schools throughout these reserves, 3 high schools, and 8 adult alternative learning programs

with approximately 2,500 students attending on-reserve schools, and 2,600 attending school off reserve (Shawana 2011). Since 1942, the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) serves as the political advocacy group for the Anishinabek Nation (Shawana 2011). In 2002, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the UOI and the Crown for self-government, an Agreement in Principle (AIP) was signed between parties regarding the exercise of jurisdiction over education for First Nations, under the UOI, wishing to participate (Shawana 2011).

The signing of the AIP signified the intent of the parties to negotiate a Final Agreement. Negotiations for the final Education Agreement began in 2003 and completed September 23, 2010 (Shawana 2011). Prior to finalization, extensive negotiation through working groups with the communities, were conducted. These working groups began in 2002 regarding the final draft of the Education Final Agreement (Shawana 2011). The work groups allowed for the inclusion of community in negotiations toward the development of the Anishinabek Education System. The Ontario Ministry of Education has also participated in negotiations, as a consultant, since it is necessary that the Ontario government recognize the agreement as valid (Shawana 2011). This recognition by the Ontario government will facilitate the transfer of students between systems. This recognition also means that curricula and standards established under the agreement must coincide with provincial standards. The Ontario government was also needed in negotiations to fill in gaps of educational expertise for the federal government (Shawana 2011) regarding curricula standards, funding, and employment.

Negotiations for the final agreement are now complete; the only outstanding issues to be negotiated are funding and ratification. The issue of funding is being negotiated through the Fiscal Transfer Agreement (FTA). It is believed the new education system will be implemented by 2012 (Shawana 2011a). The agreement covers primary, elementary, and secondary education (Anishinabek 2010). The agreement requires participating Anishinabek First Nations to individually enact their own education laws within 120 days of the act taking effect. The federal government requires that each participating First Nation have a constitution ratified before, or at the time, the Education Final

Agreement is ratified (Anishinabek 2010). Successful ratification of the agreement will mean that sections 114-122 of the Indian Act will no longer apply regarding jurisdiction over education for participating First Nations (Anishinabek 2010). Jurisdiction, then, will ultimately rest within the individual First Nations. Currently, jurisdiction rests largely with INAC under the provisions of the Indian Act. This agreement is meant to acknowledge, not to transfer, First Nations' inherent right to and jurisdiction over education. Education laws established by the First Nations will be paramount however; with the exception of laws outlined within the agreement, federal and provincial laws will still apply to First Nations.

The agreement will establish the Kinomaadswin Education Body (KEB), five Regional Education Councils (RECs) and a Local Education Authority (LEAs) for each participating nation. This structure will replace the previous arrangement outlined in the Indian Act, a structure of separate and isolated schools under federal regulation. The three bodies, under this new form of governance, will become legal entities under the control of participating First Nations. The KEB will function as a central body and will hold the responsibility of developing standards, curriculum, assessment, and evaluation. The KEB will also transfer funds to participating First Nations from the federal government through internal funding arrangements (Shawana 2011a). While individual First Nations are to establish their own educational laws, the KEB is perhaps the most significant body regarding curriculum development. The KEB will be divided into four main departments: finance, curriculum, language and culture, and assessment in order to carry out its functions as a central body.

The authority over the system ultimately resides with participating First Nations, a grassroots authority that rises up from participating First Nations, to Local Education Authorities (LEAs), Regional Education Councils (RECs) and ultimately the Kinomaadswin Education Body (KEB). Where RECs act as a secondary service resource for LEAs and where the KEB functions as a final venue for discussion (Anishinabek Nation 2011). Positions in RECs are filled by appointment from LEAs and positions in the KEB are filled by appointment from RECs (Anishinabek Nation 2011). Reporting will

largely be provided on a “top-down” basis. Ultimately, the responsibility of reporting, one residing with the KEB, will flow down through the system to the participating First Nations (Shawana 2011a).

The Final Agreement for the Anishinabek Education System was drafted mindful of and established through community negotiations (Shawana 2011a). It considers the ability to establish curricula that promotes self-esteem and positive identity formation for its Anishinabek youth (Shawana 2011a). The ability to formulate new curricula while being mindful of the need to facilitate transfers between systems (Shawana 2011a) requires critical reflection of what the provincial government currently believes should be taught. The need to facilitate transfers (Shawana 2011a) also requires that curricula framers consider methods by which to attain parity with provincial standards. It is uncertain whether tenacious efforts to meet these standards will hinder the attainment of true emancipatory curricula formation, though. One priority concerns the holistic understanding of the Anishinabek and Anishinabe world (Shawana 2011a), which speaks specifically to the formation of curricula. Curricula formation has yet to be substantively addressed through the agreement, instead it will be an action reserved for the KEB and participating First Nations.

Although the KEB will formulate curricula, this does not mean that curricula will be unilaterally determined. The authority and discussion originates with participating First Nations. The KEB, as an aggregate representation of participating First Nations, provides a venue of final discussion and decision-making as it pertains not only to curricula but assessment methods and the role of language and culture. There is space for elders and parents via discussion through the LEAs (Shawana 2011). This speaks to a larger inclusion of community within education processes, allowing for accountability not only within the LEAs but communities more generally.

Current curricula goals include incorporating Anishinabe teachings and spirituality into provincial standards and setting independent teacher standards to enable hiring outside of provincial guidelines (Shawana 2011). Framers must be careful here: the goal should

not be to incorporate Anishinabe teachings into provincial standards – this implies an add-on approach. The primary concern should be basing curricula in Anishinabe worldviews and content before considering the still important provincial standards. On the other hand, independent standards of professional development would allow elders into the system; elders who are endowed with Anishinabe teachings and languages but who are not necessarily provincially certified teachers (Shawana 2011). Such standards would therefore allow more meaningful incorporation of elders' wisdom into the learning process.

The tools and perspectives to establish truly emancipatory and meaningful curricula are at the fingertips of the participating Anishinabek Nations. The structure of the agreement to be put in place further facilitates freedom to establish and employ such curricula. The one remaining factor is funding. Funding is currently being negotiated through a separate agreement between the UOI and the federal government. Currently the Fiscal Transfer Agreement (FTA) is being negotiated. The FTA will determine the fiscal transfer from Canada to participating First Nations for the delivery of school programs and services, and the establishment of operations for the entire school system. The Education Final Agreement sets out terms and conditions relating to members' exercise of jurisdiction in regard to education. The FTA will outline the cost to operate the system and the cost of implementing the agreement (Anishinabek Nation 2011). The FTA, therefore, has a huge impact on the resources available for establishing curricula, assessments, and standards for teacher training and development. It will determine how well the system can accommodate secondary level services. The terms of the FTA will be re-negotiated every five years (Anishinabek Nation 2011). This allows room for the re-evaluation and negotiation of terms that will have a huge impact on the quantity and quality of educational delivery.

Analysis

Ultimately, both the federal and provincial systems have the ability to foster holistic, emancipatory ideals through curricula development. Through the exploration of these case studies it appears the mobilized nations under the federal system are in a better

position to facilitate such curricula. This is due to a chronic lack of substantive legislation and culturally specific populations at the federal level. These two realities provide greater freedom to culturally specific, education alternatives. Schools under the provincial system will have a much tougher time achieving this without large-scale reforms and ideological shifts throughout the Ministry. Still, provincially run schools are faced with the realities of providing education to diverse aboriginal student populations. Even in cases where communities are in a position to affect greater reform, curricula framers must tread respectfully and carefully to avoid colonizing their own ways of knowing and to avoid the promotion of pan-aboriginality. Truly emancipatory reform will include community participation, native languages, and holistic epistemologies, methodologies and worldviews.

Within both systems, a restrictive aspect is their dependency on external funding. First Nations School of Toronto currently faces inadequate funding, and on-reserve education is currently underfunded by INAC; the Anishinabek Nation is presently in negotiation regarding a new funding arrangement for its educational structure. Funding, in turn, qualifies the bounds in which each system functions. The continued success of these systems relies on funding from both federal and provincial governments. This fact composes part of the colonial monopoly over education. This tension, in and of itself, is an outcome of colonization. The funding strain is a current reality, and one that can change. Change, however, will take time, greater autonomy, education, and decolonization. Education then represents a step toward self-governance, autonomy, and decolonization. Ironically, truly emancipatory curriculum and education systems require a degree of autonomy to be established in the first place.

Conclusion

The preceding models and methods as seen through the cases explored will not be ultimate solutions. They provide us with methods of tackling tensions and issues today, and will need to be reformed and altered in the future. They provide a current means to give youth greater confidence, knowledge, identity, and sense of future. While both systems have the ability to support holistic epistemologies and methodologies, they must

be careful in balancing aboriginal/holistic and Western knowledges. In providing dual systems of knowledges, curricula framers must avoid colonizing holistic knowledges, as seen with the Anishinabek Nation and their struggle to maintain parity with provincial standards. Only when alternative models can facilitate an uncompromised system of multiple knowledges and aptitudes, can framers begin to re-conceptualize progress and achievement in holistic-friendly terms. This will be achieved through greater awareness, autonomy and economic means.

Likewise, the educational alternatives, models, and systems we engage with now will determine outcomes and systems of the future. We need to demand broader system change, greater funding structures, and increased funding for aboriginal communities throughout Ontario. At the same time, truly emancipatory change must be based in community as a grassroots initiative; it can not be imposed from a top-down approach. This requires, in and of itself, educational achievement throughout communities to help mobilize initiatives. It is only when this is accomplished that true emancipation within the province can occur. In this sense the educational models and alternatives we engage with today will help pave the path to greater change and the establishment of more autonomous educational models in the future. This research has focused on Ontario but the current educational environment throughout Canada needs to be explored for aboriginal and non-aboriginal students alike. Canada needs large scale transformation on all levels if we ever want a decolonized and healthy society. This research marks a step in this direction but there is much more to be done.

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