Make Space for Indigeneity: Decolonizing Education

Tiffany Smith

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Abstract

This paper seeks to gather information about decolonizing education within the context of Saskatchewan schools. The need for decolonizing education in Canada due to the extreme colonizing effects of residential schooling is briefly introduced. The paper notes that decolonizing needs to begin within the mind and spirit of educators so that they can seek to accept that there are worldviews that exist other than the dominant Western perspective and acknowledge that current Canadian systems of education exist within a Eurocentric framework. The impacts of deficit thinking on the education of Indigenous students will be examined. This paper discusses the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Te Kōtahitanga project, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's Following their Voices project, both of which use Indigenous voice as a catalyst for educational change. The final section of the paper outlines culturally responsive educational strategies, and concludes with final thoughts and implications.

Throughout history the Indigenous peoples of Canada have suffered greatly due to colonization. Prior to contact Indigenous peoples had self-governing and education systems in place (Battiste, 2013). With the decline of the buffalo Indigenous peoples saw education as a way toward building a new future; however the education they received has been the cause of multigenerational trauma and forced assimilation (Battiste, 2013). These types of education systems as Battiste (2013) stated, "taught them to distrust their Indigenous knowledge systems, their elders' wisdom, and their own inner learning spirit" (p. 24). St. Denis (2007) highlighted that the most debilitating effects of residential schooling on Aboriginal people was the alienation of family members and the forced removal of Aboriginal languages. Residential schooling and forced assimilation continue to impact generations and education must work towards decolonizing the current system for Indigenous students and strive for restitution.

The current Canadian educational systems, which favor ethnocentric thinking and are positioned in a Eurocentric model, are not supporting our Indigenous students as well as their non-Indigenous counter parts. During the colonization of Canada many Indigenous children became assimilated through residential schools. The education of Canada's Indigenous people has been detrimental throughout history, and as a result in Saskatchewan the graduation rates for our First Nation's students are significantly lower than that of our non-Indigenous students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Provincial data shows three year graduation rates were 40.1% for First Nations and Métis students compared to 83.8% for their non-indigenous peers (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). This data shows that the current model of education for Indigenous students requires change in order to decrease the disparity. Decolonization of the current model is imperative.

Educational leadership is essential for change. Educational leaders must be agentic in their thinking towards Indigenous peoples and model this thinking for other teachers (Berryman, Carr-Stewart, Kovach & Steeves, 2015). Society must believe that Indigenous knowledge is of the same value as mainstream knowledge, and the education systems must be a place that fosters such ideologies. The education

of Indigenous peoples should attempt to center itself within Indigenous ways of knowing; Smith (2003) suggested using an alternative story which is from the perspective of the colonized. This alternative story is one that educational leaders must use to facilitate change. Future generations of Indigenous peoples in Canada require an education system that is culturally responsive, ready for all learners, and strives for equity.

Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize key resources pertaining to decolonizing education specifically within the context of Canada and Saskatchewan. It outlines resources and synthesizes information with the purpose of making it accessible for leaders in education to inform agentic thinking and culturally responsive practices. Knowing better is the foundation of doing better and synthesizing better culturally responsive practices and decolonizing practices calls for transformation of the current system of education. This literature review will work to answer how educators and educational leaders can successfully work toward decolonizing education.

Context

The context of this literature review is to gather current research pertaining to decolonizing education systems in general; however there will be significant emphasis on the Saskatchewan education system. I am currently in an education leadership role in Saskatchewan, and want to synthesize information regarding decolonization in education so that I can apply my findings, and ensure my practices are culturally responsive. I also want to model culturally responsive practices that work toward decolonizing education. As an Indigenous person, I have a personal connection to the research in that I see education as a way toward restitution for the past, and as a way toward shifting the intergenerational trauma that Indigenous peoples in Canada have suffered.

Research Questions

This literature review aims to answer the research questions that follow. The main body of this paper is divided into four sections as a result of the posed questions.

1. Challenging Perspectives: Decolonizing the Mind and Spirit: where does decolonization begin?

2. Student Readiness or School Readiness: how can schools be ready for Indigenous students?

3. Listening Forward: how can Indigenous voice be used to drive transformation?

4. Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies: what are culturally responsive strategies?

Challenging Perspectives: Decolonizing the Mind and Spirit

At the center of change is the mind and spirit. In order for decolonization to happen educational leaders and educators must adopt an agentic mindset when viewing Indigenous students (Berryman, et al., 2015). This process requires flexibility in thinking and challenges the thinker to accept multiples ways of knowing and strive to understand from another's perspective. Battiste (2013) identified the need for collaborative conscientization which requires the unlearning of notions of meritocracy and superiority. Little Bear (2000) stated, "no matter how dominant a worldview is, there are always other ways of interpreting the world" (p. 77). This notion that allows educators who are non-Indigenous the flexibility to decolonize through education. Kanu (2006) noted that we must decolonize the space of education, but in order for us to do this we must decolonize the mind. Non- Indigenous educators and educational leaders must work to acknowledge that there are other ways of knowing that exist, and value such ways. They must break free of the notion that knowledge is solely linear, and examine that knowledge may be connected to more. For instance the idea of inanimate and animate does not align with Indigenous

ways of knowing. This notion is particularly apparent within Aboriginal language structures (Little Bear, 2000). Although the Western perspective believes this to be true such is not true with Indigenous knowledge systems. Challenging current ethnocentric beliefs and attempting to see the story from an Indigenous perspective may allow for holistic learning to take place. Holistic learning is not rooted in traditional linear models of education, but strives for a paradigm that honors Indigenous systems of knowledge. The challenge for leaders is to question worldview and allow for the possibility of differing worldviews to exist.

Decolonization cannot happen when educators or educational leaders think about Indigenous students from a deficits perspective. Agentic thinking is critical and must be at the forefront of the minds and spirits of educators (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 2005). There is a need to move beyond deficit thinking within school systems and begin to look at the strengths and build from them. Brendtro et al. (2005) discussed the importance of positive psychology and developing strengths and the need to provide opportunities to do so. Often in education teachers look at students through deficits or what they lack, rather than what they are doing well and building upon such strengths. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (2007) emphasized the importance of anti-deficit thinking and the need for agentic positioning within the education systems. Deficit thinking is happening in Saskatchewan; the Teacher Voices section of the document *Seeking their Voices* (2014) stated in regards to a school that "teacher voices maintained a strong deficit tone and were focused on the problems of dysfunctional students and families who they held responsible for continuing student failure" (p. 106). Within the document it also noted that deficit thinking does not work with Indigenous students, in contrast it has the opposite effect. Rather, in working towards anti-deficit thinking, Brendtro et al. (2005) presented a positive psychology approach which focuses on building and working to complete individuals' circles by ensuring developmental needs of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity are met.

In order to decolonize education teachers must have high expectation for Indigenous students (Riley & Ungerleider, 2012). Teachers who have low expectation for Indigenous students further perpetuate the ethnocentric education system and create negative self-fulfilling prophecies. "[T]he self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton, 1948, p. 95). Research has shown that stereotyping Indigenous youth is an issue; Riley and Ungerleider's (2012) study discussed a self-fulfilling prophecy in which Indigenous students were expected to perform lower due to having challenging external circumstances, and some of the teachers noted being surprised when Indigenous students performed well. In order to decolonize education, educators must shift this thinking so that Indigenous students have equitable chances for success as their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous students must be free from stereotypical colonial thought processes, so that they can be encouraged and challenged to fulfill their capabilities rather than expected to fail.

Decolonizing education so that it is appropriate for Indigenous students requires viewing the student in relation to their Indigenous paradigms. Regarding a student in relation to ethnocentric beliefs does not produce an equitable perspective and often times contradicts spiritual beliefs and traditions (Brendtro et al., 2005). Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2005) suggested a different approach which exists within a holistic model. The *Circle of Courage* model which values belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, allows for educators to view the child as a whole being in relation to all. If students are not whole at school as an educator we must work to provide opportunities that will balance and harmonize. Battiste (2000) stated "the purpose of Indigenous education is to help the individual become a complete man or women. The goal is completeness" (p. 184). Thus education should aim to benefit the entire child and in doing so will allow them to flourish, not only economically but more importantly holistically. Achieving so is for the betterment of the tribe or in this case society.

Racism exists within schools today and Indigenous students are faced with negative stereotyping. Aa space that accepts and does not actively try to dispel ignorance resists decolonization. St. Denis (2007) proposed anti-racist education. She stated that many Aboriginal people and youth are impacted daily by racism to the extent that some Aboriginal people who can, would rather choose to hide as non-

Aboriginal in order to escape the implication of racism. St. Denis and Schick (2003), who both teach anti-racist education courses to teacher candidates, found much resistance to anti-racist education because it makes the non-Indigenous people uncomfortable in that they may have to face some of their own denied racism. It is not enough in education to teach about accepting other cultures. If necessary, people must be made uncomfortable in order to see how they have normalized racist thinking. Schick and St. Denis (2005) stated "that addressing racism means more than examining the experiences of those who experience racism" (p. 299). In order to decolonize education we must also look at the effect that racism has on the perpertrators, so that we can work to change the perpertrators of rasism and allow them to see another way. If we do not acknowledge that the normative education favors a European paragidm then we cannot change it (St. Denis & Schick, 2003).

Student Readiness or School Readiness

Research has found that education systems or people lack the cultural knowledge that is necessary to have high standards for Indigenous students. Further, placing them in a Eurocentric paradigm in which others expect them to struggle, has detrimental effects (Kanu, 2011; Riley & Ungerleider, 2012). An environment in which students are expected to perform at a low level and where the blame is then put on Indigenous people for their children underperforming further perpetuates colonialism, as Merton (1948) alluded to as the self-fulfilling prophecy. Education systems that allow for such deficit thinking and lack of cultural knowledge are not conducive for Indigenous students to have a good learning experience; however if educators shift their mindset to one that is agentic and honors Indigenous students and their experiences, decolonization is possible.

Professional development is a critical aspect of decolonizing education. In order for schools to be ready to support Indigenous students, staff must have an understanding of what they can do in their day to day practice. Building strong knowledgeable professionals is critical and using an action-based professional learning approach is a way to work toward it. Burridge, Whalan, and Vaughan (2012) described action based professional learning processes whereby "processes focus on the teacher as a learner within schools displaying the characteristics of professional learning communities. Teachers are valued as both sources of knowledge and users of this knowledge to generate new knowledge, new ideas and new practices" (p. 29). Action learning professional development focuses on the development needed to provide solutions in a team approach and on problem solving and growth. The *Quality Teaching Indigenous* project, described by Burridge et al., used the action learning approach in 20 schools to provide teachers with professional development on the effectiveness of learning about cultural knowledge and appropriate culturally sound practices in the classroom. Throughout the project each school had teams that engaged in an inquiry cycle that focused on teacher professional development. The outcomes were an overall increase in teacher inclusiveness of Aboriginal content, and increased engagement with Aboriginal communities in education; it also resulted in raised expectations for Aboriginal students (Burridge et al., 2012). Engaging in professional development which engages teacher in taking actions and focuses on a solution based team approach as a way towards increasing outcomes for Indigenous students, has had positive outcomes and such an approach can be used as a guide to transforming schools for Indigenous students.

Building capacity of Indigenous educators and educational leaders is of utmost importance in the quest for decolonization of education. Indigenous educators must become agents of change because transformation must come from the people themselves in order for decolonization to happen (Smith, 2003). Smith (2003) also discussed a shift that occurred as the catalyst for the change in New Zealand for Maori people. This shift suggests that rather than people changing for you, the change happens for yourself. Battiste (1998) stated "it is becoming clear to Aboriginal educators that any attempt to decolonize ourselves and actively resist colonial paradigms is a complex and daunting task" (p. 9). Aboriginal educators need to be a part of decolonization, however a whole school approach as was taken in the Maori educator system can ensure that the task is not so daunting as to become discouraging. In adopting this approach, Aboriginal educators can work in collaboration with allies in the task of decolonization. Education systems must work to provide opportunity and build capacity for Indigenous educators. Education should make space for partnerships with Indigenous people in the process of decolonizing

education, and Indigenous educators' voices should be sought out and part of, if not leading, the process (Smith, 2003).

Listening Forward

Rather than use ethnocentric paternalistic ideas as a catalyst for change, which has been seen in Canada's history to be detrimental rather than helpful, educators should look to Indigenous peoples and tribal knowledges as a catalyst for decolonizing the current system (Kovach, 2009). Decolonizing education using tribal knowledges and Indigenous ways is essential because if Indigenous ways are not used as a way forward further colonization will result. Indigenous knowledges have been marginalized and there is a need within education to make space for Indigenous knowledges (Kovach, 2009; Smith 2003),. Kovach (2009) defined tribal knowledge as "pragmatic and ceremonial, physical and meta-physical. Indigenous cultures have sophisticated and complex cultural practices to access that comes from both the ordinary and extraordinary" (p. 56). In order for education to access this knowledge it must seek out the elders and Indigenous community as a way toward a decolonized system that honors such tribal knowledges, for example, including ceremony in education. Despite attempts by the government to use education as a tool to rob Indigenous people of tribal knowledges they continue to exist; however the schools should be a place that offers restitution in that they seek to repair damage which has been done through residential schools and colonization. Using tribal knowledges at the center of decolonizing education is imperative to resist further colonization (Kovach, 2009).

Listening to the voices of Indigenous people is critical in the process of decolonizing education. Indigenous voice must drive the work forward; in order for Indigenous people to free themselves from the colonizers their voice must be at the root of change (Bishop et al., 2009). Antone (2000) discussed that when traditional knowledge and values are honored in the education system it gives the opportunity for Aboriginal voice to be lifted and that students then begin to see themselves in a positive way. Antone noted that in her past experience schools where this did not happen, students were silenced. Ethnocentric views or notions that the colonial authorities are the ones who must help the "savage" creates unhealthy power relationships based on paternalism. The New Zealand education system kept student voice at the center of the transformation of their current education system. New Zealand Ministry of Education's *Te Kōtahitanga* project, which sought to improve Indigenous education of Maori students, talked to Maori student about their education (Bishop, et al., 2009). In listening to and seeking out Indigenous voice they discovered that relationships and interactions between teachers and students were critical to student improvement (Bishop, et al., 2009). The first phase was to examine, the second phase sought to take on an entire school wide approach to change, the third developed culturally responsive practices, and the final phase was replicating and sustaining. At the center of change was listening to Indigenous voice.

The Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan has taken a similar approach as the New Zealand education system with the Following their Voices project (Berryman et al., 2014). The answers are within Indigenous communities and Indigenous people have the capacity to know what they require for success. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2015) stated, "Following Their Voices is an initiative that is designed to improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit student outcomes by engaging and supporting students through changes in student-teacher relationships and interactions, teacher instructional practices and the learning environment" (Strengthen relationships section, para. 1). The initial phase of the project *Seeking Their Voices* mirrors phase 1 of the *Te Kōtahitanga* project in that the core of the data is qualitative and is from the perspectives of Indigenous people and also included what non-indigenous educator beliefs were in regard to Indigenous students. The project uses the voice of Indigenous students to drive the change.

Building relationships that are rooted in reciprocity is essential for creating decolonized systems of education. There is a need to eliminate power relationships with Indigenous people that assume the educators or educational leaders are the experts of the children and that they know what is best rather than the parents (Bishop, et al., 2009). Maori people have a holistic way of introduction similar to First Nations people; they introduce themselves in relation to all, like family and place and it reminds people that we are connected (Kovach, 2009). Bishop (2005) stated in regards to Maori introduction:

we are from the same pregnancies (hapu), and are of the same subtribe (hapu). We are of the same family (whanau), the family into which we were born (whanau). We were nurtured by the same land (whenua), by the same placenta (whenua). (p. 205-206)

The school should try to establish itself as part of the extended family, and develop relationships that are mutual and honor each other. Indigenous peoples are relational and in order for Indigenous students to engage in education that honors Indigenous knowledge they must engage in learning that comes from parents, community, and elders (Battiste & Henderson, 2009). In order for educators to engage students in such learning they must develop relationships based on reciprocity that view all sources of learning as valuable to the development of the child.

Whole school reform is needed so that the entire culture of a school changes, and teacher professional learning should be aimed at transforming the school so that it becomes a place where Indigenous students have success and a sense of belonging (Whalan & Wood, 2012). When you use a whole school approach it challenges the entire staff to take responsibility for all students. It takes a team approach which works toward the common goal of bettering education for Indigenous students. Within a whole school approach there is accountability and increased sustainability. It aligns with an Indigenous approach to child rearing whereby it is the responsibility of the entire community, including the Mushum and Kokum, to educate the child (Berryman, Carr-Stewart, Kovach, & Steeves, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies

Building relationships with Indigenous students is essential in working toward decolonization. Indigenous students voiced the need for teacher-student relationships in the *Seeking Their Voices* document (Berryman et al., 2014). Teachers must make an effort to build relationships with Indigenous students in order to better understand who they are and to be able to educate them in a holistic way. Indigenous education is about learning relationships, not just with the child, but relationships in context (Battiste, 2000). Education must look at the whole child and build relationships with the Indigenous community in order to support the child. One critical determinant of student success is that they have adult relationships and people who care about them (Berryman, et al., 2015). The school should also try to build relationships with community and elders, so that the whole child is supported (Bishop, et al., 2007; Kanu, 2011). Relationality is an important aspect of Indigenous ways of being and education should encourage and foster relationships with all, so that education can become holistic.

Creating Indigenous language programs that are sustainable and help to give back what was lost by so many during the residential school era is integral towards decolonizing education. Battiste (1998) described the importance of Aboriginal language to understanding Aboriginal life: "Aboriginal knowledges provide a direct and powerful means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledges. They provide the deep and lasting cognitive bonds that affect the aspects of aboriginal life" (p. 3). Within language are cultural understandings that cannot be otherwise understood without the context of language. There is a need to sustain and reclaim Indigenous languages and this requires that all stake holders are involved from government, family, educational leaders, and educators. Jacob (2015) noted: "Indigenous language preservation is best achieved through support from families and where possible, the formal education system" (p. 131). Educational leaders must advocate for Indigenous language programs within schools, and the government must be willing to fund such programs. In order for restitution to happen in education, language must be available and accessible for Indigenous students to learn their mother tongue. Indigenous educators must be self-determined in order for change to happen; however there needs to be space for this to happen within the current framework and support for Indigenous people in this process.

Inclusion of Indigenous knowledge within the curriculum is important so that education is relevant for Indigenous students. There are three key components of Indigenous knowledge as identified by Maurial (1999): local, holistic, and agrapha (not written down). Educators must resist the false dichotomy of Western and Indigenous knowledge; They do not counter act one another they are distinct and unique. Indigenous knowledges exist within family and community. Knowledge is not linear but generational and interconnected, therefore, education for Indigenous children must be holistic and inclusive. Including elders, family, and community in the education of Indigenous children is essential for the authentic

inclusion of Indigenous knowledges (Berryman et al., 2014). Story and oral histories must be included in the transmission of Indigenous knowledges. Thomas (2005) highlighted the importance of story for Indigenous people: "storytelling also taught us about resistance to colonialism our people have resisted even when legislation attempted to assimilate our children" (p. 241). It is within the oral stories that we get the alternate story of our history, the one that is from an Indigenous perspective, and it is just as important if not more so for students to hear them. The stories counterbalance ethnocentric systems, and educators and educational leaders must seek out people who can tell those stories. In order for Indigenous students to feel a sense of belonging they must hear and see themselves within the curriculum (Battiste, 1998; Kanu 2011). In order to do this, curriculum must be relevant and potent for Indigenous students, and knowledge should come from a variety of sources. The teacher is not the only holder of knowledge and that is a positive thing. It is important to note however, that inclusion of Indigenous perspective within the curriculum is only a small part of the work education systems must do.

Using story as a way to teach Indigenous students is a culturally responsive practice as it engages the senses of children and it is relevant to their context. Storytelling and oral traditions are a long standing teaching tool rooted in tribal knowledges which can be accessed even today. The case for using storytelling is a valid one in that "storytelling fits with Aboriginal epistemology—the nature of their knowledge, its foundations, scope, and validity. Moreover storytelling is a traditional Aboriginal teaching tool and, as such, is familiar and culturally relevant to the children" (McKeough et al., 2008). Storytelling can link the student's experience to the curriculum to create new learning. Linking learning to students' prior knowledge creates relevancy in the new learning. Creating relevancy is an important aspect of ensuring learning is appropriate for Indigenous students (Brendtro, et al., 2005). Inviting elders and knowledge keepers in to share oral stories and histories should be as common place in the education systems as accessing textbooks. The stories which are held by knowledge keepers give the other side, which is the side of the colonized, and empowers students to learn of their history from the perspective of their own people. It allows for non-Indigenous people to gain access to another perspective which has been muted throughout history.

Using culturally responsive pedagogy like co-constructed learning helps to decolonize. Co-construction is powerful because it places the student at the center of the learning and makes the learning relevant to the them. Bishop (1998) noted that co-construction is in "contrast to the traditional classroom where the culture of the teacher is given central focus and has the power to define what constitutes appropriate and acceptable knowledge, approaches to learning, understandings and sense-making processes" (p. 741). When you remove the teacher from the center and place the student at the center of their learning it becomes culturally appropriate for each student and removes the traditional power relationship between the educator and the student. Using inquiry based learning in which the student guides the learning and co-constructs the criteria so that the student has choices, can ensure that the learning is relevant and engaging while still allowing for curricular outcomes to be met.

Decolonizing education requires a shift from linear forms of teacher student interactions in which the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge, to one in which the teacher uses formative feedback and uses the student's prior knowledge to build learning relationships. Discursive teaching methods should be used as a way to equalize traditional power based liner forms of interactions within classrooms (Berryman et al., 2014). Shifting to a discursive teaching methodology better aligns with the types of conversational based non-threatening interactions that Indigenous students prefer (Bishop et al., 2009). There are four main positions on the continuum of discursive interactions, the first position being traditional interaction that are linear teacher transmission of knowledge and based on low level rote thinking. The second position is where the teacher facilitates learning allowing for more interaction and it is process orientated. The third position is displayed when a learning relationship is made between the teacher and student; formative assessment is used to determine the student's prior knowledge and the teacher helps to extend learning. The fourth position is where the teacher opens up the learning so that the student's background knowledge becomes the foundation for their new learning and learning is co-constructed (Bishop et al., 2009). Educators should strive to reach the fourth position; however if they are not yet there they should

acknowledge where they currently are on the continuum and work to further develop so they can provide the optimal learning experience for Indigenous students.

Using assessment to meet the needs of the student rather than focusing on the student deficits is essential in decolonizing the education system. Traditional forms of assessment focus on rote memorization rather than the student's internalization of the knowledge. Assessment that is culturally responsive is formative and drives learning. It focuses on what the student requires to be successful rather than what the student is unable to do. Mahuika, Berryman, and Bishop (2011) noted that culturally responsive assessment is formative rather than summative and provides students with feedback. Formative assessment assumes that students are able to achieve outcomes and feedback can be seen as feed-forward in that it should aim to move the student closer to the learning outcome. Students should be given the opportunity to use the feedback to improve. The Canadian Council of Ministers of Education (2005) stated in regards to formative assessment practices in Saskatchewan: "the concept of continuous progress is intrinsic to formative assessment. It underlines the need to adapt all approved curricula to meet individual needs through the Adaptive Dimension that applies to all regular, modified, and alternative education programs" (p. 54). One curriculum is not fitted to all and formative assessment allows for teacher to know when corrective action is needed, so that the curriculum that is delivered to students is one that is relevent. When curriculum is relevant to the learner they are able to fully enage in their learning and work toward improvement. In order for assessment to be culturally responsive it must be used as a tool to drive student learning forward in a way that enages the learner.

Implications

This literature review has offered insights into decolonizing education. There is a need to ensure that teachers who work with students everyday are agentic in their thinking towards Indigenous students and accept that there are ways of knowing other than mainstream education. Research indicates that there is a need to transform the current system of education in Saskatchewan for Indigenous students as the graduation rates are lower for them than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Learning from what has worked for the Indigenous students of New Zealand and creating a project as Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education is doing with the *Following their Voices* project is hopeful (Saskatchewan Government, 2015). The research has indicated that there is a strong need for authentic Indigenous involvement for decolonization to happen, and that the foundation for educational change needs to come from the voices of Indigenous peoples. The research has noted that there is a need for education to include space for Indigenous way of knowing and tribal knowledges. Partnerships between education systems and Indigenous communities are essential to move forward or else risk futher colonization.

Future research is needed within the context of Saskatchewan schools to determine if using an approach similar to the education reform that was used in New Zealand will procduce similar results for the Indigenous people of Saskatchewan. This research would indicate if the changes the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education is making to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous people is effective. A follow up qualiative research project that includes the voices of students, teacher, families, and administrators who participated in the *Following their Voices* project to see their thoughts on the effectivness of the project would be of interest. Also quantative data will need to be examined to see the impact the project has on graducation rates for the Indigenous students of Saskatchewan.

Change has to occur in the minds and agentic positioning must be at the foundation of change and blaming those who have been colonized only futher marginalizes Indigenous students. As presented in the *Seeking their Voice* document (Berryman et al., 2014), there where teachers who viewed Indigenous students from a deficit model which as Mertons (1948) discussed, can become a self-fullfilling prophecy. Decolonizing the mind and acknowledging other worldviews should be at the center of change. Brendtro et al. (2005) offered a positve approach to working with Indigenous students that focuses on strength-building and creating balance within an individual. St. Denis and Schick (2003) discussed a need for anti-racist education, and there is a need to examine racism and acknowledge the preference

that education has for white society. Post-secondary educational institutions should make such courses mandatory as part of the curriculum.

Saskatchewan should continue with its work on the *Following their Voices* project and monitor its effects on graduation rates and the educational experience of Indigenous students. Relationship should continue to be a central focus as it was in the *Te Kotahitanga* project. For decolonization to happen we must resist enthnocentric thinking and educators and educational leaders must seek reciprocity. A whole school approach to reform as was used in the Maori education system is essential to build sustainable change that focuses on action based professional development, and creates cultural awareness. Building capacity so that eductors can become agents of change is vital and resistance to colonial paradigms is essential (Battiste, 1998; Smith, 2003). Systematic change is needed and taking an approach that focuses on the entire school is necessary for sustainability.

Conclusion

There is a need to take a whole system approach which uses Indigenous voice and keeps the student at the center of learning. We need to ensure that Indigenous students can bring their true selves and their own culture to school. This paper has indicated that there are ways to decolonize, but there is a need for teacher education and professional development to expose educators to Indigenous teaching methodology and anti-racist education. Although it is clear that decolonization of the mind is essential my wonder is who will engage in this process with non-Indigenous educators and will they accept or resist it? My hope is that most will accept such a mind set. Educational leaders must model agentic thinking and work to resist deficit thinking. As an Indigenous person I have to belive that decolonization is possible within education; however it is a daunting task and this paper has given me insights into things I can change within my own practice such as: using culturally responsive teaching strategies, building relationships, and putting the student at the center of learning. I hope that other educational leaders and educators see the importance of decolonizing education so that Indigenous students feel they belong at school rather than feel the need to leave who they are at the door to be successful.

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