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RESEARCH EXCHANGE**

Teaching Aboriginal
Literature Through the
Lenses of Contemporary
Literacy Theory

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DEDICATION

To 'K' and 'S' who opened their classrooms and their persons so that this research could happen. My most sincere thanks for your willingness to engage and share.

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Introduction

This study examined the experiences of two Grade 12 English teachers who introduced Aboriginal Literature and contemporary critical theories to their students. The participating teachers were teaching the English A30 class, and each included a variety of literature written by Canadian Aboriginal authors. In tandem with the teaching of this literature, the teachers also introduced their students to literary theory through the metaphor of a lens. Just as various lenses enable the viewer to see the same object in different ways, different literary theories enable the reader to interpret in different ways. The post-colonial and Aboriginal literary theories were the two lenses most pertinent to the study.

Research Goal

The overall goal of this research was to further develop the theory and pedagogy involved in the teaching of Aboriginal literature in the senior secondary classroom in order to advance the notion of a decolonized classroom.

Research Objectives

1. To explore contemporary theories of literary criticism relevant to the study of Aboriginal literature, including an approach through colonial and post-colonial discourse and the growing body of theory and criticism written by North American Aboriginals;
2. To incorporate literary theory and pedagogical knowledge of content into the development of Aboriginal literature units; and
3. To incorporate the new interpretive and pedagogical understandings into the practices of two secondary English teachers using North American Aboriginal literature in their classrooms.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

Up until the latter half of the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of texts for Canadian secondary-school English programs were selected from canonized British and American works. By the end of the twentieth century, Canadian literature had also become part of the course of studies in secondary schools, but there had been increasing concern about disenfranchising students from non-European backgrounds. In the past decade, curriculum writers and teachers have given attention to the role of world literature in the classroom as they attempted to provide students from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to connect with texts that reflected their own cultural heritage. Aboriginal Canadians are one group that has frequently not found voice in the literature studied in classrooms. As well as providing opportunity for students of marginalized and minority cultures to find voice, multicultural literature provides an opportunity for all students to learn about diverse cultures. In classrooms and communities across Canada, members of diverse cultures co-exist and cooperate alongside members of the dominant Euro-Canadian cultures.

The inclusion of multicultural and Aboriginal literature in the school curriculum has challenged traditional notions of canon, specifically the school canon. English literature became a formalized school subject during the nineteenth century, and since its introduction, a body of literature, frequently taught and held in high esteem by educators has emerged. The works most frequently used in the school system are collectively known as the school canon. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, the debate between those who adhere to the canon and those who call for its demise has intensified. Guillory (1993) ties the school canon to cultural capital and illustrates how the selected works of literature have been used to maintain the status quo and the class structure:

The literary syllabus is the institutional form by means of which this knowledge [reading and writing] is disseminated, and it constitutes capital in two senses: First, it is *linguistic* capital, the means by which one attains to a socially credentialed and therefore valued speech, otherwise known as “Standard English.” And second, it is *symbolic* capital, a kind of knowledge-capital whose possession can be displayed upon request and which thereby entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person. (Guillory, 1993, p. ix)

Access to this cultural capital has frequently been denied to members of minority groups or attained at the cost of sacrificing their own cultural capital. This study sought to move toward at least a small change in the notions of cultural capital.

The 1999 Saskatchewan Secondary English Language Arts Curriculum reflected this changing view of what literature should be taught in classrooms. The compulsory grade twelve course, English Language Arts 30A, focuses on Canadian literature and society, identifying Aboriginal voices as a possible sub-theme. Other jurisdictions have also recognized the need to change the course of studies to reflect the demographics of the classroom and choose literature accordingly. In the last twenty years marked increases in the number of published authors of varying Aboriginal ancestries have occurred, and the poetry, plays, and prose of these writers deserve to be studied. Although studying texts by Aboriginal authors provides a way of connecting Aboriginal students to the English Language Arts

curriculum, such study also provides a way to expose other students to the works of Aboriginal authors, an important way of enhancing non-Aboriginal Canadians' knowledge of Aboriginal people. Teachers have long recognized that literature can enable readers to imaginatively enter the lives of others and develop an understanding of shared human experience. Cone (2000) emphasizes the many ways reading benefits high school students:

The habit of reading not only opens a world of vicarious adventure to students; it also encourages them to weigh ideas, take informed stands, and think deeply. Reading offers them insights into themselves and their worlds – private, national, global – insights that allow them to speak intelligently, vote wisely, rear kind children, counsel, lead. (p. 207)

Studying Aboriginal literature enables students and teachers to make one more connection as they gain the insights that will inform their decision-making. The current and projected demographics in Saskatchewan lend urgency to these changes. Projected demographics predict the following changes to Saskatchewan's population:

- In 2001 Aboriginal children constituted 33% of the school-aged population, and
- By 2016, Aboriginal children will constitute 46.4% of the school-aged population.
- In 2001 75% of the population in northern areas was Aboriginal, and
- 90-98% of the student population in northern schools was Aboriginal.
- The number of individuals choosing to live off-reserve continues to increase steadily, shifting the demographics of urban schools. (Tymchak, 2001, pp. 8-9)

Research Methodologies

LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP

Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of this work, this study used several methodological approaches. In order to explore contemporary literary critical theory, I used an approach used by literary scholars. For this section of the study, I examined and analyzed texts written by theorists in the areas of contemporary theories of literary criticism, including approaches through colonial and post-colonial discourse and the growing body of theory and criticism written by North American Aboriginals, to determine what interpretive strategies were currently used to make meaning of texts. Because this study took place in secondary English classrooms, it was important that I also consider how theory as an analytical tool was used in secondary classrooms. To that end, I expanded my reading to include not only theorists but also individuals who applied theory to their practice. I then summarized and synthesized my understandings of the theories and the ways in which theory had been used in secondary classrooms into a background document which was given to the participating teachers.

ACTION RESEARCH

Because I wanted the teachers to have direct involvement in the design and implementation, I felt that this study fell within the paradigm of action research. Action research was an appropriate methodological approach for several reasons. Reason (1988) describes action research as a “research with and for rather than on a people [and] all those involved contribute both to the creative thinking and also contribute to the action” (p.1). Because my research involved the implementation of new pedagogical approaches and the introduction of new content, the contributions of the teacher-participants were important. In addition, the goal of this research was to introduce teachers to culturally sensitive methods of reading Aboriginal literature and to provide students with additional tools for unpacking texts. The teachers involved in this research were participants, not subjects. The teachers were in control of their classrooms, the selections of literature studied, and the involvement of the students. Because they were the enactors of the models, ownership of the process needed to be shared.

Carr and Kemmis (1983) describe action research as a “self reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting” (p.152). Like Reason (1988), Carr and Kemmis recognize the emancipatory nature of action research:

Action research should be seen as an embodiment of democratic principles in research, allowing participants to influence, if not determine, the conditions of their own lives and work, and collaboratively to develop critiques of social conditions which sustain dependence, inequality or exploitation in any research enterprise in particular, or in social life in general. (p.153)

The marginalizing of Aboriginals is a social condition that supports inequality, an inequality that the Saskatchewan teachers are mandated to address. By providing teachers with additional approaches to literature through critical lenses, I hoped to enable them to aid their students in understanding the roots of marginalization

and the way in which practices of marginalization are unquestioningly supported and repeated through our social structures.

Carr and Kemmis (1983) contend that the central aims of action research are to improve and involve (p.154). They focus on three areas of improvement. First, action research is concerned with the improvement of practice; this research study concerned itself with the improvement of the practice of teaching English. Second, action researchers hope to improve the understanding of the practice by its practitioners; the participating teachers improved their personal understandings of their classroom practices. Third, action researchers aim to improve the situation in which the practice takes place; the teaching situation improved as the participating teachers were validated in their approaches and gained confidence.

Carr and Kemmis (1983) also assert that participants are to be involved in all cycles of the research project, planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The participating teachers were involved in planning the teaching units and their implementation. The teachers introduced the critical lenses to the class and reflected on their experiences and the experiences of their students. These reflections were shared with me through conversational interviews.

Action research, in its purest form, is a never-ending series of cycles. Following the reflective phase, planning again takes place in preparation for the next action phase. Ideally, action research takes place over an extended period of time and undergoes multiple revisions based on the experiences of the participants. My initial plan for this study allowed for the recursive process normally associated with action research, and I had hoped to run two cycles over the course of the semester. As is often the case when researcher plans are actualized, the plan did not fit the reality of classroom life. However, the process did not end with the conclusion of the formal research. Both participants have contacted me since the conclusion of the research study, and they continue to reflect on their experiences and modify their practices based on those reflections.

LIFE HISTORY

Although I used the structure of participatory action research, I modified this form for several reasons such as the short time frame and the complexities of the participants' personal lives. Action research traditionally grows out of needs that a community identifies, and a research team is set in place to examine the problem and develop and test potential solutions. In this research study, I identified the problem and recruited the participants. For this reason, I considered additional research methodologies and narrowed my considerations to life history and the conversational interview.

Because my study focused on the experiences of the two teacher participants, life history (Goodson, 1991, 1992; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Meason & Sikes, 1992) influenced the methodological framework. The goal of life history is to ensure that "the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly and articulately" (Goodson, 1991, p.36). To achieve this end, the relationships between individuals involved in the research must be built on trust and progress over the course of the research with the hope "that by the latter stages of the research, one may not be asking [structured] questions at all," but be engaged in the free exchange of ideas and observations (Meason & Sikes, 1992, p.214). Life history methodology seeks to ensure that teachers' voices are made audible by leveling the playing field and

ending “a culture of expertise and privilege for the researcher, alongside a culture of silencing, appropriation, and academic colonization for the researched” (Goodson, 2001, p.72). These beliefs provided a strong supporting framework for the research. The building of trust was essential to the success of the conversational interviews and the emerging relationships among the three participants. The conversational interview format allowed each of us to share our stories and the influences that shaped our teaching philosophies. The presentation of the data ensures that the voices of the participants are clearly heard and that their contributions are both obvious and valued. In collaborating with these teachers on this research project, I interpreted and re-presented the lived experiences of a specific group of individuals in a specific context.

Participants

The two teacher participants were experienced secondary language arts teachers interested in using Aboriginal literature in their classrooms and in changing their pedagogical approaches. Each teacher conducted the research in a grade twelve English classroom in urban schools in Saskatchewan. The demographics of the two schools differed, with one school having a large percentage of Aboriginal students and the other school being more reflective of suburban Saskatchewan. One teacher was of Aboriginal ancestry and the other was Euro-Canadian. The principal researcher was a PhD candidate at the University of Saskatchewan with extensive experience as a classroom teacher in Aboriginal communities.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this study I found that conversation was of paramount importance. Conversational interviews (Patton, 1980) with the participating teachers were my primary method of data collection. Feldman (1999) regards conversation as a key element in participatory action research, going so far as to suggest that the conversations are a research methodology in and of themselves. Feldman sees these interviews as part of the hermeneutic circle:

As participants engage in conversation they come to new understandings that shape their responses and the direction of the conversation, which leads to different understandings of the conversation itself and the subject(s) of the conversation.... Conversation can lead to action, follow action, or be part of action. Through the intermingling of conversation and action, praxis comes about with its growth of knowledge, understanding, and theory through action. (pp. 132-133)

Conversations and classroom visits took place over the course of the 2004 winter semester. Contact with the teachers was frequent. Conversations explored the teachers' emerging understandings and frustrations with the critical lens approach to teaching literature. Classroom observations focused on teacher interactions and student responses to the literature. The conversations were digitally recorded and transcribed by the principal researcher. The participating teachers read and edited the transcripts. One teacher participant also provided me with copies of student work.

Permission

During January 2004, permission procedures were carried out. Since the principal researcher is a PhD candidate at the University of Saskatchewan, the requirements of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioral Sciences Research needed to be met. The researcher was granted approval by the University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioral Sciences Research, BSC#03-1285. The terms of the ethics approval indicate that the two teacher participants must remain anonymous, so they and their schools are not named in the report.

Theoretical Frameworks

This research is built on several philosophical foundations. The first and most important are notions of decolonization. The critical theories that support a rethinking of canon and new interpretations of literature are another important foundational stone. The ways in which critical lenses are introduced into classrooms, pedagogical approaches to teaching literary interpretation, comprises the final foundational element. The theoretical and interpretive approaches all work toward a decolonized classroom.

FINDING A DECOLONIZED CANADIAN SENSE OF PLACE

Colonizing narratives have become the dominant historical narrative of Canadians, and other stories, stories of the original inhabitants, as well as stories of immigrants, have remained untold. Within settler colonies historic notions of place were disrupted when ancestral homes were left behind and new homes were established. Concurrently, the indigenous people's narratives of place were also disrupted as new governing bodies with different conceptions of land use and ownership arrived and encouraged settler colonists.

Educators, working within this context, need to consider their narratives of place and determine whether or not these narratives enable students to feel at home in the world and whether those narratives continue the colonization story or contribute to decolonization. Indigenous Canadians involved in the decolonization process deal with specific political concepts. Colonial institutions such as schools are a necessary part of contemporary society, and rethinking educational structures based on Indigenous models designed to fit current needs is problematic. The colonial infrastructure exists and radical changes do not fit within that infrastructure. Also, the monetary costs of changing the infrastructure are high.

Part of this process is dealing with the sense of loss that accompanies the societal changes brought about by colonialism. This sense of loss affects both the displaced Indigene and the settler colonists as each group inhabits a place of exile. Said (1990) describes exile as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted....The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (p. 357). Indigenous Canadians occupy a place of exile because colonialism created a rift between their geographic and spiritual senses of place; settler colonists occupy a place of exile because of their spatial separation from place. Contemporary Canadians need to reshape their identities by creating or renewing connections to this geographic place so the focus becomes the present and the future rather than the past. In order to reshape the Canadian identity, the national narrative also needs to change.

The current national narrative justifies a colonial history and, in the process, silences the narratives of the Other, which includes Aboriginals, refugees, and immigrants from countries other than the two founding nations. The version of truth created by this narrative perpetuates colonialism, and in order to create a decolonizing narrative, "we must simultaneously negotiate the crude classifications which are imposed upon us and create our own identities out of the twisted skeins of our backgrounds, families and environments" (Ferguson, 1990, p.13).

One way that resistance can forge a relationship with place is through the Indigenous humanities:

The Indigenous humanities operate locally and distinctively but confirm universals that characterize all human beings, including that which sustains our ability to communicate through language and art, to mark our place and progress across time and space, and to locate ourselves reflectively and spiritually in relation to each other, to the world we all share, and to the forces that lie beyond our understanding or control. The indigenous humanities function as both critique and creativity, resistance and celebration. (Battiste & McConaghy (2005), p. 5)

The Indigenous humanities, as a site of critique and creativity, resistance and celebration, mirror hooks' notion of the margin as a site of creativity and power, resistance and healing. The Indigenous humanities, however, claim that "every conception of humanity and education begins from a human body in territory and a consciousness in which a specific place takes prominence" (Battiste, et. al., p. 8). The colonial narratives have imposed a consciousness conceived in a foreign place onto the educational and governmental structures of Canada. The result of this imposition has been the exclusion of Indigenous narratives from the national narratives and the exclusion of the Indigene from educational institutions. The Indigenous humanities seek to call these exclusionary practices into question, seeking to develop educational institutions that connect the humanities with the ecology of place:

Like ecologies, heritages or cultures should play a key role in education. They honour and nourish a respect for diversity rather than fetishising narrow preferences and needless authoritarian hierarchy. Indigenous concepts of humanity relate to a certain style of being human, of doing important tasks, and overcoming the forces of doubt and inertia. (Battiste, et. al., p. 12)

Acceptance of the Indigenous humanities contributes to the decolonization of the educational system. Battiste, et. al., suggest that educators who recognize the ways in which "Eurocentric ideologies... have shaped the educational curricula and therefore their students" will also "recognise very different and legitimate ways of knowing and doing" (p. 13). These ways of knowing and doing will reflect and honour the specific place that nurtures consciousness. One way of introducing these ways of knowing and doing is through the selection of literature taught in the schools.

COLONIZATION THROUGH CANON

For much of the twentieth century, literature selected for the classroom was chosen from a list of works collectively known as the canon. According to Davis and Schleifer (1998), "the canon is a historical snapshot of what is valued. What constitutes canon depends on who is taking the snapshot and to what end" (p. 8). Our current snapshot, often referred to as the great works of literature, forms the core of accepted works in our educational system.

In considering how the great works emerge over time, we cannot exclude the human labour that enabled these works to survive. Great works are marked not only for the universality of their themes but also for the economic systems that perpetuate their production. In the late twentieth century, the power of the publishing companies in the privileging of voice has intensified. The textbook industry is worth billions of dollars to its shareholders, who would prefer to have it remain uncritiqued. The unexamined curriculum still works as a colonizing force and privileges the voices that already hold power. Minnich (1990) contends that only through the examination of curricula can change be brought about. That change has occurred is evident in the evolution of the school canons over the ages and the ways in which the school canons reflect national identities. The British canon provided the skeleton of both the American and Canadian school canons. Over time, texts written by American authors became part of the American and Canadian school canons and, more recently, Canadian texts have been added to the Canadian canon. Revisions to the school canons have been gradual and are reflective of geographic and political contexts; these revisions are often met with resistance by those who feel that the evolving counter-canons will erode the quality of education.

Within the context of settler colonies such as Canada, those people who have been largely excluded from knowledge and knowledge-making are the immigrant and Indigenous peoples. Although literature written by North American Aboriginal authors is abundant, its place in the classroom is negligible. For singular notions of canon to be dissolved, the colonizing agent it has become needs to be understood. However, the works of literature themselves are not the only agents of colonization at work in the literature classroom. How students are taught to read and interpret these texts has also been a major contributor to the colonizing agency of the literature classroom.

RECOGNIZING THE RESULTS OF READING THROUGH WESTERN EYES

Although the literary canon has been used to colonize the outposts of empire by providing an education that iterated notions of the colonial centre as the ideal, ways of reading these texts prevented the margins from being heard. As English became entrenched as an academic subject, theory developed to guide readers' interpretations of text; the study of literature became synonymous with the search for meaning. These theories of literary criticism were developed by academics living and writing within the European centres of Britain and France, influenced by European philosophers. Eventually the generation of criticism spilled over into the academic institutions of the United States where it was still highly influenced by the writings from the European centre: "the production of *criticism* has become the central activity of the culture industries of the imperial centers, especially those in institutions of higher education" (Mitchell 1995, p.476). Although literary criticism provided keys to reading texts, and many recent forms of criticism, such as those oriented by Marxism and feminism, considered those who were traditionally voiceless, literature from the margins still had little place within the classrooms of high schools and universities. One theoretical approach, formalism, was used almost exclusively in the teaching of high school English until the introduction of reader-response theory in the 1980s, denying students the opportunity to read with other than western eyes. The critical theories used reinforced western ideologies, continuing the process of colonization.

As long as literary criticism is generated in the imperial centres, it remains suspect in its attempt to privilege marginalized texts. For critical theory to provide a methodology that invites outsiders to challenge the notions of universalism and to privilege the voices of the Other, that theory must come from those marginalized voices of the Third and Fourth Worlds. Postcolonialism is a critical theory that has in part come from some of those voices.

LEARNING TO READ WITH OTHER EYES

Since the 1980s, postcolonialism has emerged, along with women's studies, cultural studies, and gay/lesbian studies, as one of the 'new humanities'. Postcolonial criticism invites us to consider those texts authored outside the imperial centres, works written, usually in English, by the Indigenous and settler citizens of former colonies. Deleuze and Guattari (1990) define these as minor literatures, literatures written by a minority in a major language. They describe these literatures as having three major characteristics: "the language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization"; "everything in them is political"; and "everything takes on a collective value" (pp. 59-60).

These narratives evolved over time. Initially the narratives were written for the colonizers as the colonized sought inclusion in the dominant society, and only when they continued to be marginalized did the narratives become those of separation. These later narratives of resistance detailed the experiences of the colonized at the hands of the colonizers. However, in far too many instances, the emerging groups and their narrations were rejected by the dominant groups and the literature of resistance shifted from a quest for inclusion to a quest for a distinct cultural and autonomous political identity. Too frequently, the literatures of Indigenous peoples have been excluded from the curricula of high schools and universities. The literature of settler-colonists entered the halls of academe, first as peripheral courses, such as Canadian or Australian literature, before being moved from the margins to the canon. The literature of the Third World has likewise been marginalized in the classes devoted to the Commonwealth or the postcolonial with few incursions into the centre. Only now, at the beginning of the 21st century, are courses in Aboriginal literature beginning to appear in Canadian universities, and, like their marginalized predecessors, they too are relegated to the periphery, waiting approval and acceptance from the centre.

Just as postcolonial critical theory challenged the notion of the colonized as 'Other, deviant or rebel', new critical theory must emerge that privileges the voice of Indigenous peoples. Just as postcolonial literary theory did not come from the centre but grew out of the lived experiences and literature of the postcolonial world, so too must Indigenous literary theory emerge from Indigenous literature. Increasingly, this process has begun in North America.

LEARNING TO READ THROUGH INDIGENOUS EYES

King (1990) challenges the appropriateness of postcolonial theory as an interpretive lens for Aboriginal literature. He feels that postcolonialism remains centred in nationalism and ignores the literary traditions that preceded colonialism. He asserts "we need to find descriptors which do not invoke the cant of progress and which are not joined at the hip with nationalism" (p. 12). King advocates for the development of new terms and suggests "tribal, interfusional, polemical, and

associational to describe the range of Native writing” (p. 12). King iterates the need for an interpretive lens that understands and values the orality and traditions of Native cultures, and places those traditions, rather than colonial traditions, at the centre.

Acknowledging the need for an Aboriginal theory of literary criticism is a first step in the decolonization of Aboriginal literature; developing that theory is a second step. Academic Craig Womack (1999), a member of the Creek nation, in calling for American literary self-determination, begins to consider where this theory will find its roots. Womack begins with the specific: “one viable approach is to examine Creek authors to understand Creek texts” and from there the move can be made to examine “Native authors to understand Native textual production” (p.4). Initially, Native voices must learn to speak for Native peoples because too frequently “Native people have been excluded from the discourse concerning their own cultures” (p.5). For Womack, “this development of a Native literary criticism is rooted in resistance and decolonization” (p.15).

Aboriginal theorists have entered uncharted waters as they attempt to build a bridge between the academic study of literature and the rich cultural traditions of Aboriginal North Americans. Although Aboriginal writers have been creating literature, current critical theories have too frequently led to further marginalization of an already marginalized group. Providing ways of reading to honour the traditions that underpin the text begins a process of decolonization. Just as postcolonial theory has provided new possible readings for postcolonial and Amer-European texts, Aboriginal criticism will provide new possibilities and readings for Indigenous and other texts.

DECOLONIZING THE HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Understanding the colonizing effect of the literary canon and Amer-European forms of literary criticism should act as a catalyst for exploring ways that the teaching of English can be reformed and can begin to act as a decolonizing agent. A first step in this decolonization begins with the selection of literature. When choosing texts for study, teachers must consider whether or not mainstream notions of power and privilege are exemplified by the texts and further supported by readings of the texts. In addition, teachers must consider the demographics of their student population to ensure that no marginalized group is further marginalized by the texts. However, providing students with a variety of approaches or critical lenses through which to read literature can counterbalance the effect of reading texts that have had a colonizing influence in the traditional literature classroom.

In many instances, because of budgetary constraints or curricular restrictions, teachers do not have a great deal of choice in the literature they teach; they must select literature that is currently in the storeroom or on the approved reading list. How then can these texts be approached in a way that diminishes their colonizing potential? How can these texts be made relevant to students who are disenfranchised by the text?

Students can be given the tools to become critical and reflective readers of literature if they are exposed to the theories of literary criticism and shown how they can use these theories to understand literature beyond the surface story. Schade’s

(1996) and Hines and Appleman's (2000) case studies demonstrate the possibility of using literary theory as a critical lens in the secondary classroom. If teachers add postcolonial theory and introduce students to Aboriginal critical theory, the students will have two additional tools to use in the construction of meaning. A diversity of critical approaches will enable students to approach a diversity of literature and critically consider who tells the story and how it is told. In this way, minority students can experience privilege and students from the dominant culture can begin to understand how canonical texts reinforce Amer-European values.

Empowering students to make meaning using a diversity of lenses enables them to see the same text from several locations. Helen Hoy (2001) describes the process of critical reading as "a series of switchbacks on a mountain trail, from which it is possible to view the same tree, the same outcropping, not only first from below and then from above, but also from opposing directions" (p.25).

The decolonization of the high school English classroom can begin with a critical examination of canon. Opening the canon to margins or creating counter-canon, however, is not enough. Students must be given critical skills to determine which works of literature belong in their personal canon and understand how readings of the same work can empower or dis-empower the reader. Exposing students to postcolonial and Aboriginal critical theories privileges students from non-Amer-European cultures and enables students from Amer-European cultures to understand how one world view has achieved dominance. We can begin to decolonize the study of English by renaming it the study of literature and orature, a course of study that opens the canon by welcoming works created by authors from every part of the globe and engages with those authors using critical theory that emerges from the literatures.

The Study

This study took place in the classrooms of two teacher participants who were interested in teaching Aboriginal literature in their classrooms and wished to find approaches that would enable students to read and interpret this literature in ways that honoured the Aboriginal cultures. Both teachers were aware of systemic racism in their communities and sought to teach with a social justice agenda. One participant was of Métis ancestry and taught in a school with a significant Aboriginal population. The other teacher taught in a school which was a typical suburban Saskatchewan high school. Both participants were familiar with Aboriginal literature, were using it in their classrooms and had an understanding of literary theory.

In keeping with the tenets of action research, both teacher participants were encouraged to choose literature and develop units of study that fit with their classroom practice. The approach in each of the classrooms was quite different while the end results were similar. One teacher participant was very deliberate in her introduction of the literary theories and vocabulary to her students; the other embedded the theoretical approaches in her teaching and did not introduce the students to the vocabulary. Both teachers introduced poetry, short stories, and personal narratives by Aboriginal authors; one classroom also participated in literature circles using full-length texts.

CLASSROOM A: A MÉTIS TEACHER IN A SCHOOL WITH A SIGNIFICANT ABORIGINAL POPULATION

STUDENT RESPONSES

This teacher recognized the need to continually challenge the mainstream students and introducing Aboriginal literature was one way to do this. However, she was not fully prepared for the student responses to the issues that surfaced in discussions of the literature. Although she had been aware of the imbedded prejudices in the non-Aboriginal community, she was unprepared for the students' staunch adherence to these misconceptions. This adherence to previous ways of seeing the world had surfaced in several classes and became obvious in the contradictory responses students presented in the grade twelve English class. Although they were able to discuss the literary works with some degree of empathy and understanding, they reverted to their former assumptions when asked to make connections to personal experience.

Several interesting things surfaced during the students' study. One of the literature circles was made up of four young men and one young woman. Most of the students in the group were average academic achievers, and all appeared to be of European descent. One day, the young woman brought an artifact, a beaded necklace in a style frequently associated with Aboriginal cultures. This necklace led to an interesting exchange. When asked where she got the necklace, she responded by saying it was her brother's and he had made it in the Native

Teacher Education Program. Her peers seemed quite surprised and said, “But you’re not Métis or anything!” When she indicated that her family was indeed Métis, the group was surprised and did not know how to respond.

However, this kind of disclosure was repeated in the literature circle reading *In Search of April Raintree*. Here, the students were comparing the two sisters in the novel, April and Cheryl, one of whom was more visibly Aboriginal than the other. Like the other group, all members of this group appeared to be of European ancestry. As in the other group, all was not as it appeared on the surface. During this discussion, one young woman spoke of her father who was treaty and another young woman disclosed her Métis heritage. These young women were not visibly Aboriginal and they described themselves as “invisible members of a visible minority.” In their estimation, this invisibility had social advantage in their school and community.

As invisible members of a visible minority, they were able to function in mainstream society without being labelled. Their invisibility enabled them to be the same as, not different from, their mainstream peers and gave them access to opportunities and social circles that their visibly Aboriginal peers did not enjoy. They moved through the school and community as members of the mainstream. At this point in their lives, they seemed to be thankful for that anonymity. Second, within the group studying *April Raintree*, they were able to speak with some authority. They had an understanding of the circumstances experienced by Cheryl and April that their peers did not share. Both of these young women had made conscious choices about the disclosure of their heritage, and those choices may have been supported or initiated by their families. Within this literature circle, their knowledge and understandings were valued by the other members of the group. This did not happen in the other group where the young woman later attempted to retract her disclosure by saying, “Like I’m Métis, but not really.” It would seem as if she saw her disclosure as a mistake, and she was now fearful that she would be perceived as one of “them.”

At the conclusion of the literature circles, all groups gave presentations on their reading and their understandings. When asked if studying the novel had opened their views, one group indicated that they had developed a better understanding of Aboriginal issues. They did not see the events in the novel restricted to the past and felt that the treatment of Aboriginals had not necessarily changed. The events in the novel connected with their lived experiences. Another group was not able to make these same connections. Rather than seeing the issues underlying the events in Campbell’s life as mitigating factors in the choices she made, they saw her choices as reinforcing their perceptions of Aboriginals. They were also proponents of the “that was then, this is now” philosophy, and saw most Aboriginals as victims of their personal and collective choices rather than as victims of colonization.

After the students completed their presentations, we felt quite positive about the perceptions and interpretations of the students. They had said many of the things we hoped to hear, and we were optimistic that these might represent changes in attitudes. The students were then asked to do some reflective writing based on a piece by Wuttunee (2003) entitled “We are More than Our Problems.” Most of the responses indicated that the “newspaper reality” was the truth and reflected the reality of most Aboriginals, illustrated by the following responses:

A combination of factors from a variety of sources are responsible for these statistics, however the primary responsibility for them rests with the people who they reflect upon. The life that a person chooses to live is a choice and is minimally a result of circumstance.

A second example of what is to blame for these newspaper realities is the Aboriginal people themselves. Aboriginals portray themselves as having the white people take everything away from them. They speak about equality throughout mankind, but they still expect to have more rights than others. Aboriginals are fighting for land that was theirs thousands of years ago and when they lose, it is considered racism. When something goes wrong, a lot of Aboriginals do not try and help themselves, but instead they do turn to alcohol or drugs.

They talk as if they don't get a fair shot but there are a lot of aboriginal people who have taken advantage of the treaties. Alcohol and drug addictions are what set most of them back. If they sober up and use what they were given they would be a lot more successful.

Natives want to be equals in Canada. Well, unfortunately, they aren't. Not because of who and what they are, but because they want treaties, live on welfare, and stuff like that. Until Natives stop quibbling about land issues, get off welfare, give up their treaties, and start actually working and contributing to society, they won't be equal.

Comments such as these illustrated the ingrained prejudices in this community. Although it seemed, during the discussion of the literary works, that the students had reached an intellectual understanding of some of the issues confronting Aboriginal Canadians, their written comments contradicted that perception. Although we were hopeful that new ways of interpreting Aboriginal literature would change attitudes, one semester was obviously not sufficient to make long-term changes. What was unfortunate was the way in which these students had normalized racism: they did not see the inappropriateness of their remarks.

However, not all students reiterated the status quo. In the following excerpts, three students indicated their belief that Native people were not solely to blame for their problems. These students did blame the victim but also recognized the agency of others. However, each student implied that individual choice was the most important factor in determining whether or not an Aboriginal person became part of the "newspaper reality:"

I think that most of the blame should be directed toward the government. On the other hand, the Aboriginal people are also to blame. They get drunk because they drink the alcohol. No one forced them to do it.

Stereotypes about Aboriginals are a very big concern that is definitely bringing their culture down. For example, my whole life I believed that Aboriginals were the only ones allowed to be on welfare, which is far from true. Prejudice and Racism are also huge factors that effect Aboriginals. A lot of people judge them because they are Native. People have to realize that not all Aboriginals are

the same. Some of them just want to be treated normal and they try to make a living like most people do.

Problems could have been solved or not even started a long time ago. I don't think you can point fingers at who is to blame for things that just simply evolved over long periods of time. The pro's and con's for white people and Aboriginal people in who did what are equal. The white people took the land and made the Aboriginals have to start over. In response, the Aboriginals don't have to drink and live on welfare now a days.

The comments of these three students indicated that they were beginning to see multiple sides to the issues. Whether this questioning existed prior to the introduction to the lenses and the literature circles cannot be known, but, with continued exposure to the issues, these students may well continue to develop their questioning of the existing stereotypes.

Two students were able to see beyond the "newspaper reality" and identified ways that stereotypes and prejudices were reinforced:

I think the media is responsible for the "newspaper reality." Most of the articles they publish are about alcohol and substance abuse, violence and suicide. Because this is all that the media publishes, it causes other Canadians to think of Aboriginal people in this way.

It appears that human nature chooses to expose the negative occurrences in a culture and life while ignoring the positive attributes a minority group has with them. The media is an extremely influential medium aimed to attract attention. We as a society tend to believe the easiest truth displayed (usually negative) and fail to analyze all aspects of the situation. As we all know, when you see something often enough, you will believe it, and in this case the Aboriginal's identity becomes closer and closer to the identity developed by the media. Therefore we are all to blame for the negative stereotypical image of the Aboriginals, with different groups responsible for different times in the past.

Both students had moved beyond unquestioning acceptance of the commonly held beliefs of their peers. They criticized the media's portrayal of reality and assumed that Canadians believed what they hear and read and do not ask the necessary questions. They had also identified ways in which this stereotyping helped to create a "newspaper reality" as Aboriginal people acted in the way they were expected to behave. The students' comments illustrated their difficulties understanding the big picture. Their responses seemed contradictory as the students attempted to separate the individual from the collective. They did identify hope as resting in the ability of an individual to change and suggested that the "newspaper reality" obscured their understandings. At this point, however, the students seemed incapable of seeing the big picture. They were able to see how self-image limits the individual and affects many things, including academic performance. Some students agreed that the characters in their books acted in the way society expected them to act and that these same forces were likely at work in their own community. Again, we had a level of intellectual understanding, but would this lead to action?

TEACHER PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDINGS

The teacher was still concerned about the perceptions of her non-Aboriginal students, wanting them to broaden their perspectives rather than becoming more entrenched in their thinking. She feared that disclosing her heritage would silence students, preventing important conversations from ever happening. Her past experiences had shown her that mainstream students were reluctant to express their opinions when they discovered that she was Aboriginal. She was convinced that unexpressed opinions could not be countered and would lead to further entrenchment of racist thinking.

She was determined to bring in Aboriginal stories and storytellers, to keep talking about the issues, and to continue questioning her role and her responsibility. She knew that not all her colleagues would receive her ideas enthusiastically but recognized the need for a paradigm shift. She was not yet sure how she was going to bring this about and whether or not she would have the courage to identify herself as a Métis. She did know that she would continue looking for ways to support Aboriginal students in the mainstream classroom and challenge mainstream students to question their attitudes and perceptions. The students in her classroom had uninformed opinions about various population groups, including recent immigrants from Asia and Africa. However, because these population groups were small and worked hard to achieve financial independence and success, they were not viewed with the same derision as members of the Aboriginal community. She saw her English classroom as one locale for fighting this battle against racism. Although she was sometimes reluctant to disclose her ancestry, she was also beginning to feel that it was important to be known as an Aboriginal educator. She was uncomfortable dealing with the questions concerning Aboriginal access to free education and the assumption that the only reason she would teach Aboriginal literature was her personal connection to the topic. However, she was beginning to see herself as an activist and role model, convinced that she had a responsibility to speak out and initiate change.

CLASSROOM B: A EURO-CANADIAN TEACHER IN A SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENT RESPONSES

The teacher's experiences with Aboriginal literature during the research project had given her more confidence to challenge the students' perceptions. She spoke of the ways that we have built our society on the concept of equality and how students perceived equality as sameness. Those students identified differentiated treatment of specific groups as a violation of equality:

They want to think we're all the same and if things are going well, then everybody's equal. And I think some of the students who are upset, are upset because they have this perception that the government just writes blank cheques to Native people, and they're [students] upset about that. If they [Aboriginals] had the character and the discipline, they would get these things on their own. They [students] perceive difference as being unfair, so they don't get that negotiating quality of equity, you know, the contextualizing on an

individual basis. I wonder if that's something that takes a little bit of time to get.

She was beginning to understand her students' reluctance to change their perceptions and prejudices knowing that they viewed Canada as a level playing field. The students believed that Canada was a land of equal opportunity, and they were able to use stories of immigrant successes to validate that belief. As a result, their sweeping generalizations prevented them from making an intellectual or emotional connection to issues of racism. Because they believed everyone was the same, they didn't see their attitudes as prejudicial but saw the "Other" as refusing to fit in to the societal grand narrative.

Her students struggled with the literature they had been given and the ways in which they had been asked to rethink their assumptions. An email speculates on some of the reasons for this struggle:

They tend to view writers as individuals, rather than as members of minorities. They also tend to blame the "isms" (sexism, racism, etc.) on ignorant individuals, rather than on social structures. This makes it hard for them to appreciate writers who call attention to the artifice of these structures; they can be contested and changed.

The students were introduced to poetry that manipulated the English language. They viewed language manipulation by a Euro-Canadian poet as artistry and mastery of language while the manipulation of language by an Aboriginal poet was viewed from a deficit position. We found it ironic that they were able to identify word and language play and manipulation in one context and not in another. We found it worrisome because their inability to recognize the manipulation of language seemed to be race based. It seemed that their prejudices concerning Aboriginal peoples influenced their abilities to interpret this literature respectfully.

The students' conceptualization of English literature did not allow them to see artistry in language that was manipulated to reflect cultural language patterns. They saw Bissett as having mastered English and therefore able to play with its structures while they saw Halfe and Campbell as having a language deficit and doing the best they could with the levels of facility they had. By introducing them to these concepts, the students were being asked to question the world as they saw it.

TEACHER PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDINGS

The shift in curricular expectations had unsettled teachers and students. This young, energetic teacher, enthusiastic about changing the face of English classrooms, felt unsettled when the pace of change became faster than she was prepared for. Her experience in the research project enabled her to recognize that discomfort and realize that her peers had experienced the same thing at a different level when the new curriculum unsettled their comfort zones.

As she recognized how her comfort zone had been unsettled, she became more aware of how she was unsettling her students' comfort zones. She wanted her students to become unsettled; she wanted them to question their world views and see the racism and inequity that existed in their school, their neighbourhood, and their community. However, she did not want to leave her students feeling helpless but wanted them to see how they could make positive changes by examining the underlying suppositions of the community and by taking action to make changes

in their own lives. She wanted her students to recognize that only by making personal change would community change come about.

She worried that students were able to articulate what was perceived as politically correct while their actions told another story. They had not internalized their socially progressive iterations in ways that affected their actions. What she discovered during these discussions was that the students did not understand their role in the perpetuation of systemic racism. She needed to show students the ways in which their stereotypes and prejudices surfaced. By systematically drawing attention to their preconceptions, she hoped to move them toward change but she was becoming increasingly aware that making change came slowly and only with intensive experiences.

More exposure to diverse Canadian and world voices is one way to expand the students' literary experiences. In this participant's opinion, the curriculum's potential was not being maximized by teachers. In her experience, teachers have difficulty developing the Canadian literature semester because they do not have the expertise and support necessary to feel successful:

And there's a wonderful teacher who said, "Oh I can't stand the A30 course. What do you teach?" And I love Canadian lit, and I feel that if I read nothing but Canadian lit I'd never get to read it all. But there's this need of in-servicing around the 30A course to get teachers excited about what they can do. Because I think they're kind of bemoaning the fact that they're giving up texts that they loved and taught for a long time and not sure how to move into what's new.

For this portion of the curriculum to be successfully implemented, teachers need a greater knowledge of Canadian literature. They are unaware of much recent literature and rely on the texts they were taught in high school and university. Depending on when they completed their education, they may not have read much contemporary Canadian literature or texts authored by Canadians of non-European ancestry. They need to become familiar with texts, and they also need to know how to interpret these texts.

Teachers also need to make students aware of the fact that texts are being interpreted and that a range of possible meanings exist. We assumed that the students were cognizant of the fact that they were interpreting a text and discovered that that was not necessarily so. They seem quite steeped in the notion that good literature is "universal" and that particularities of time, place, gender, linguistic competence, etc. are mere details left behind when the essence of the story is appreciated.

The students' difficulties with interpretation led the teacher participant to question the cognitive abilities of grade 12 students. Were we asking too much of them? Perhaps they were unable to extend their thinking this far. Or did they seem cognitively unable because this was the first time they had been asked to think in these ways? Students lacked experience in examining language as a tool. To this point, they had seen language as transparent and had paid little attention to the way it could be manipulated:

They're getting on this edge because for the first time they're talking about language. But then to take it to Maria Campbell and have them appreciate what she's doing there, it's slightly beyond them. I think the story itself, they really get, but the form is too much.

Implications for Classrooms

Curricula are political documents, reflecting the values and world views of a given jurisdiction. Egan (2000) in his brief critique of curriculum development describes the curriculum as “an agent of the state in preparing citizens for their future lives” (p. 76). Curriculum developers in the province of Saskatchewan, considering changing demographics and shifting sensibilities, advocated the inclusion of Aboriginal literature in the most recent English Language Arts curriculum documents (1999). Although the developers of the document are to be commended for their forward thinking, the work was not complete with the publication and distribution of the curriculum. For the goals to be realized, more attention needs to be given to providing teachers with in-service training and classrooms with resources.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The two participants, well-educated and widely read in terms of literature and critical theory, felt unprepared to teach Aboriginal literature. Their university English classes had not included Aboriginal literature, and their education classes had not included methodological approaches to Aboriginal texts. However, because they believed in the power of the English classroom to introduce new ideas and plant seeds of change, they introduced Aboriginal literature to their students. Their experiences in the cross-cultural and anti-racist courses during their undergraduate education programs convinced them to introduce literature that initiated these important conversations about prejudices and racism with their students. They also realized that many of their colleagues were not prepared to teach the literature or moderate the conversations.

In order to moderate these conversations, teachers need to understand that teaching is a political activity. Those teachers prepared to teach in a decolonized classroom must understand the politics of colonialism and the ways in which educational structures have reinforced the colonial agenda. In the process, they must also examine their own politics. Giroux (2005) suggests that teachers who take up the discourses of postcolonialism need “to deepen their own understanding of the discourse of various others in order to effect a more dialectical self-critical understanding of the limits, partiality, and particularity of their own politics, values, and pedagogy” (p. 26). Giroux further contends that this approach “emphasizes the primacy of a politics in which teachers assert rather than retreat from the pedagogies they utilize in dealing with the various differences represented by the students who come into their classes” (p. 27).

The border pedagogy advocated by Giroux forefronts difference and encourages decolonizing strategies such as those mandated by the current Saskatchewan English Language Arts curriculum. The teacher participants' experiences with their

colleagues revealed high levels of resistance to the implementation of the new curricular philosophy. Whatever the reason for the resistance, even though the new curriculum had been distributed to all teachers and introductory in-services had been held, many teachers continued basing their teaching on the old document. One participant wondered if we needed to be more prescriptive:

I mean it's lovely to say we want a balance, but if it's still in the end up to the teacher, they can very well not teach that stuff. If we could say, "All right, general expectation that you're going to teach *Hamlet* in B30 and a general expectation that you're also going to teach [an Aboriginal text]." I don't know, maybe we need to say here's a text. If they're not going to grow, maybe we need to say that.

She acknowledged the autonomy of the individual teacher, but she was also concerned with teachers who used that autonomy to circumvent the intentions of the curriculum. Both participants felt strongly that teachers needed to be encouraged, and perhaps mandated, to introduce Aboriginal literature. They also advocated additional in-service training to help build confidence in their colleagues.

The teachers found their participation in the research study had given them new understandings and confidence. They felt strongly that opportunities such as this needed to be made available to all teachers and initiated at the school and board levels. Although their participation had been supported by their administrations, it had not been celebrated. Administrators could have provided opportunities for them to share their experiences and build on their understandings by encouraging them to facilitate workshops, a logical outcome of this research process.

RESOURCES

Providing in-service training to practising teachers is one important element to ensure that Aboriginal literature is taught in Saskatchewan classrooms; having access to resources is also crucial. Neither teacher had access to well-developed collections of Aboriginal literature. One participant had managed to acquire class sets of several works, but the collection needs to be reconsidered as newer and possibly more suitable works become available. Most of the full length texts were what King (1990) would categorize as polemical literature, concerned with the clash of values and the championing of Native values. Access to associational literature may have enabled the students to develop different perspectives and come to new understandings about their perceptions and prejudices. The other participant had individual copies of various works that could be used for independent reading studies. All poetry and short stories used in both classrooms were photocopies. Purchasing Aboriginal literature needed to be part of budgetary planning so that a diversity of literature could be acquired and then taught in all classrooms.

Although texts were one resource sorely lacking in the schools, more than the acquisition of literature was needed to ensure the implementation of the curriculum. The teacher participants identified the need for sample units:

It would be really neat to design a sample unit, similar in structure to other sample units in the English 30A curriculum. Design sample

units and maybe even have them on CDROM because new teachers need that. If they're assigned a class for the first time, they go to the sample units. Give them a unit they can work with; that would probably be one of the best ways of inducting people.

The sample unit could include a variety of strategies for approaching the literature including an introduction to theoretical lenses. It was felt that many teachers lacked confidence in their understandings of critical theory and needed additional support to expand their knowledge. In considering ways to introduce critical lenses to other English teachers, it was suggested that interpretive differences could be illustrated by selecting one piece of literature and demonstrating how different theoretical approaches led to different interpretations.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

Although in-service training and resources would help those teachers currently in the system, pre-service teacher educators need to prepare teacher candidates to fulfill the mandate of the current curriculum. All teacher candidates, regardless of teaching specialties, need continued stimulus to benefit from anti-racist and cross-cultural education, including the tools needed to examine their accidental apprenticeships in education. Those teacher candidates who are planning on teaching literature need courses in postcolonial and Aboriginal literatures and critical theory.

ANTI-RACIST AND CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION

Anti-racist and cross-cultural education has been a required course for Saskatchewan teachers for more than a decade. As St. Denis and Schick (2003) have explained, students are often reluctant to acknowledge their role in the power structures that perpetuate systemic racism and have difficulty connecting the concepts introduced in those courses to their other education courses. Anti-racist education needs to be a central tenet of all education classes so students can begin to see the ways in which their chosen disciplines support Eurocentrism. McCarthy (1993) believes that a new approach to multicultural education “must begin with a more systematic critique of the construction of school knowledge and the privileging of Eurocentrism and Westernness” (p. 294). For teachers of English, this systematic critique includes an examination of the school canons and the literary voices privileged by inclusion. Students need to consider whose voices are Canadian and what makes them so. The danger of leaving this privilege unexamined is the unknowing and uncritical participation in the hegemonic process rather than participation that “promises the possibility of human liberation and global decolonization” (McGee, 1993, p. 287). Teacher candidates need to see themselves as agents of liberation and decolonization invested in empowering their students, of all ages, to also become agents of change. Teacher education must continue to educate students in anti-racist methodologies since teachers “cannot empower students to embrace diversities of experience, standpoint, behavior, or style if our training has disempowered us, socialized us to cope effectively only with a single mode of interaction based on middle-class values” (hooks, 1994, p. 187).

SELECTION OF TEACHER CANDIDATES

The teachers most likely to introduce Aboriginal literature and anti-racist thought to their classrooms were teachers with a predisposition toward social justice issues. These teachers would be able to understand the concepts of white unearned advantage introduced in anti-racist education classes. In all likelihood, these teachers would also be able to interrogate their accidental apprenticeships and critique and reshape their identities. Engaging in these activities requires a high level of self-reflection, often seen as an attribute of effective teachers. Perhaps self-reflection and a predisposition toward social justice issues are traits that need to be considered in teacher candidate recruitment. Although self-reflective practitioners with a passion for social justice issues represent one group of teacher candidates, both teachers also acknowledged the need for more Aboriginal educators throughout the school system and not only in elementary schools and classrooms with significant Aboriginal student populations.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CRITICAL THEORY

Although important attributes in any teacher include understanding the systemic racism that supports the power structures of our society and being able to reflect on personal identity narratives, an English Language Arts teacher also needs a solid grounding in diverse English literatures and language. Increasing student exposure to postcolonial and Aboriginal texts and the accompanying interpretive strategies will better prepare them for introducing these literatures in their secondary classrooms. Exposure to a diversity of literature and Englishes would also help in understanding how literature grows out of place and authors use language as resistance and liberation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from the experience of all three participant researchers engaged in the study documented in this dissertation:

- Curricular implementation and delivery
 - Develop and deliver workshops designed to familiarize secondary English Language Arts teachers with Aboriginal literature.
 - Develop and deliver workshops designed to familiarize secondary English Language Arts teachers with critical theory.
 - Develop and distribute bibliographies of Aboriginal literature suitable for secondary English studies.
 - Include the purchase of Aboriginal literature in budgetary planning.
 - Develop and distribute sample units that focus on Aboriginal literature.
- Pre-service teacher education
 - Increase teacher candidates' exposure to cross-cultural and anti-racist experiences and methodologies.
 - Recruit teacher candidates with a predisposition to social justice issues.
 - Mandate courses in literary theory and postcolonial and Aboriginal literature as admission requirements for the secondary English Language Arts teaching area.
 - Increase the number of Aboriginal teacher candidates at all grade levels.

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