

## *First Peoples, Indigeneity, and Teaching Indigenous Writing in Canada*

*Margery Fee and Deanna Reder*

*When I looked at education from an Indigenous perspective, I saw everything was a problem. . . . I could not escape the discursive Eurocentric lens that measured everything against itself, and therefore, Indigenous peoples were always found lacking and ultimately to be acted upon by some government initiative.*

Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (35)

*Within the colonizing university also exists a decolonizing education.*

K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonial Desires" (60)

*Must all Native writing be reduced to a singular narrative of colonization and resistance?*

Helen Hoy, *How Should I Read These?* (164)

### **Standing on Stolen Land: Where Is Here (Now)?**

We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples: the  $x^w m \theta k^w \dot{a} y \dot{a} m$  (Musqueam),  $S k w x w \acute{u} m e s h$  (Squamish),  $s \dot{a} l i l \acute{w} \acute{e} t a \acute{?} \acute{?}$  (Tsleil-Waututh),  $\acute{q} \acute{i} \acute{c} \acute{a} \acute{y}$  (Katzie),  $k^w i k^w \acute{e} \lambda \acute{a} m$  (Kwikwetlem),  $q i q \acute{e} y t$  (Qayqayt),  $q^w a : n \acute{\lambda} ' \acute{e} n$  (Kwantlen),  $S \acute{a} m y \acute{a} m \acute{a}$  (Semiahmoo),  $s \acute{c} \acute{w} a \theta \acute{e} n$  (Tsawwassen), and Stó:lō Nations.<sup>1</sup> It's not enough, clearly, just to say these words. These territories were never legally ceded to the Crown, although the Crown pretends to own them (see Erin Hanson, "Aboriginal Title"). And the Crown is the basis of Canadian law, which until recently did not acknowledge other laws and sovereignties. Land acknowledgments aim to inspire speakers to discover the history of the land on which they are standing and to inculcate a sense of responsibility to the place and its peoples. However, in Enlightenment thinking, land and all of nature are represented as material objects outside

of us to be exploited, used, transformed, and known through observation, analysis, and experiment.

In Enlightenment thinking, Nature is opposed to Culture; people can only come to know nature by separating themselves from it.

In contrast, Indigenous epistememes give land an ontological and epistemological importance that is absent in Western culture. Nature is an animate teacher intertwined with culture; animals precede humans and have more power than we do; humans are entangled in a web of relationships that entail reciprocal responsibilities if everyone is to keep on living. And these epistememes have not vanished despite 500 years of colonization.

Even in the anthropological record, Indigenous critique of Western worldviews can be found. For example, in a 1976 article, anthropologist Madronna Holden analyzed some early satirical portraits of the White man popular with the Coast Salish peoples on whose territories Deanna and Margery live. She includes a story written down at the end of the nineteenth century by Boas-trained Livingston Farrand, later the president of Cornell University. Some of the stories Holden examines feature a character called “Jesus Christ,” whose mission, “making all the crooked ways straight,” comes from the Bible: “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight” (Isaiah 45:2):

The man who first made the people came from the North and went south. In those days people were upside down and on all fours and crooked and they heard there was a man coming from the North who would make people straight and the man came to Neah Bay . . . the people were walking on their hands upside down and he straightened them up and made them straight . . . he went to Quillayute and they were crooked in the same way and he straightened them up . . . then he reached Hoh and turned and called them to come out . . . He went to the Quinalt and called them and said “I am the one who is straightening everybody out.” (273–74)<sup>2</sup>

This busy Straightener keeps going until Farrand’s notes “trail off in mid-sentence” (274). In this story, the White missionary takes on a familiar role, that of Transformer or Changer, but the repetition signals the satire. The storyteller uses few of the usual ways of engaging the listener. Except for the humor. Everyone is changed to be the same, over and over. And over.

This storyteller mocks the obsessive and repetitive work of straightening. One target of mockery could be the perspective that sees a fixed and essentialized object, category, canon, definition, interpretation, story, or self as the goal of analysis. (Plato’s Idea, for example, which went so well with Christianity.) Raven, Coyote, and the other beings like them, however, are continually traveling, meddling, eating, seducing, thieving,

destroying. and restoring. (Did Raven steal the light for all earth-beings, or because it was the brightest of bright shiny objects? Who can say?)<sup>3</sup> By relying on West Coast epistememes, the storyteller points out that more than one thought-world exists.

Our colleague Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan/Syilx) explains her people's relationship to land in the interior of British Columbia:

All my Elders say that it is land that holds all knowledge of life and death and is a constant teacher. It is said in Okanagan that the land constantly speaks. . . . Not to learn its language is to die. We have survived and thrived by listening intently to its teachings – to its language – and then inventing human words to retell its stories to our succeeding generations. (“Land Speaking” 178)

What would it mean for us as scholars of literary studies to read and teach literature as if our central social ethic, our most important value, was that there was no separation between people and nature? What if we felt responsibility for all earth-beings as kin, including a “sentient land”? (Cruikshank 142). The rapid adoption of land acknowledgments has not noticeably reduced the contested “development” of Indigenous lands; it seems fair to say that “until actual land is returned, and the terms of some treaties renegotiated or abrogated entirely,” we have not fulfilled the responsibilities of good guests (Wilkes, Duong, Kesler, and Ramos 19). The coauthors of the 2014 publication “Learning from the Land” write: “We begin with the premise that if colonization is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that arise from the land” (Wilkes, Duong, Kesler, and Ramos, abstract). Those of us who teach literature in the standard low-context classroom, which could be anywhere, need to rethink the idea of “setting.” How to do this will come from those who know the land intimately and can draw on its deep history. For example, Naxaxalhts’i Albert “Sonny” McHalsie provides tours of Stó:lō territory that show visitors that they are standing in a valley that is a library of stories (see Carlson). But we must not “reify back-to-the-land schools” either, if that risks overlooking or discounting the work of the Indigenous faculty, staff, and students in the urban university (Chambers 40).

In Canadian law, the Indigenous right to land is a unique legal right, *sui generis* Aboriginal title based on collective ownership prior to contact (Erin Hanson, “Aboriginal Title”). In Canadian practice, things are not so clear. As Thomas King notes in *The Inconvenient Indian*, “the issue has always

been land” (228), but what land means remains quite different for settlers and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous literature provides a way to bring these different meanings into classrooms for generative conversations. Where you are in what is now called Canada makes a great difference not only to whose land you are on, but when settlement began, whether and how treaties were made and kept, how Indigenous oral narratives were written down and who wrote them, how Indigenous people became literate in their own languages or in English, what they chose to write and how it was preserved.<sup>4</sup> Thus, how we teach Indigenous literatures depends on where we are. Even the Straightener could not float over an abstract landscape, but traveled to real villages, their names providing the only variety in an otherwise repetitive story.

### **Who Are We (Now)? Introducing Ourselves**

On the territories where we live, local protocols instruct us to introduce ourselves by name, family, and nation. This emphasizes that people have different standpoints and these are to be respected. Margery’s British settler ancestors all took up land in Ontario. She spent childhood summers on Little Lake Panache, which bordered on the Whitefish Indian Reserve (Anishinaabe). Her decolonial education began while picking blueberries, when her aunt said, “No, we can’t go further, because the berries that way belong to the Indians.” When she arrived at UBC, a course on Indigenous literatures in the calendar had never been taught. After consulting Jo-ann Archibald, then the Director of the First Nations House of Learning, and others, she began to teach it in 1997.

While Deanna’s dad was born in Canada, his German-speaking parents left Poland after World War I and ended up in Manitoba; her mom was born in Northern Saskatchewan, into a family of English- and Cree-speaking Cree and Métis people. Raised on or near Canadian military bases, she learned about her relatives through her mother’s stories and summer visits. Despite her interest, the universities she attended offered no courses in Indigenous literatures. She took her first formal course with Margery in 2000, just before she applied to the PhD program.

While there are many purposes for the position statements embedded in Indigenous protocols and land acknowledgments, they highlight the variety of vantage points from which each of us speak and emphasize that an unbiased and neutral position is neither possible nor desirable. This aligns with Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge and feminist standpoint theory, developed to undermine the notion of one universal and objective

truth, a truth regarded as self-evident rather than constructed by (powerful) men (Harding; Moreton-Robinson). What we know, what we can know, comes first from where we stand, not alone, but with those who have raised and taught us. To position oneself encourages reflection on one's roles, gifts, limitations, and responsibilities.

### **The Limitations of Our Discipline**

Applied linguist Suresh Canagarajah summarizes Euro-Western monomania: "The graphocentric tradition is a monolingual (one language per text), monosemiotic (alphabets preferred over other sign systems such as icons, symbols, or images), and monomodal (visual preferred over oral, aural, and other multimodal channels). European modernity developed the idea that words were the most accurate and objective representation of ideas" (44). And in British settler colonies, these words are usually English words. English professor Siraj Ahmed examines how British orientalist philology appropriated prior oral and written narrative: "Colonialism involved the conquest of an epistemic space, by means of which the physical experience of language was turned . . . into 'abstract legality.' The human sciences have rewritten this act of conquest as the gift of historical sensibility" (324).

Our discipline's very name privileges the printed text. Critics who question the unqualified use of English terms for Indigenous oral genres propose alternatives, among them orature, oraliture, verbal art, and storywork.<sup>5</sup> They avoid folding oral narratives into written ones, which obscures how oral narratives proliferate in multiple versions within collectives, are performed for various audiences, pass knowledge ranging from the practical to the esoteric down the generations, and nurture both people and land. Because the study of spoken narrative has been taken up by other disciplines (anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, performance studies, rhetoric), our ability to teach literatures rooted in a living oral matrix is constrained. More interdisciplinarity and lines of communication with knowledge keepers outside the university would help. But however we tackle this limitation, we need to teach the colonial work done by the fetishization of the English written word.

### **"School Way" and Academic Rhetoric**

As anthropologists Charles L. Briggs and Richard Bauman note, "Ways of speaking and writing make social classes, genders, races, and nations seem real and enable them to elicit feelings and justify relations of

power, making subalterns seem to speak in ways that necessitate their subordination” (17). Since you are reading this, you are, as Mabel Mackay told Greg Sarris, “school way” (quoted in Sarris 48) and like fish in water, swim in print and academic rhetoric, barely able to recognize other good ways of keeping knowledge alive. We fish need to have – and teach – humility in the face of the difference between what is taken in dominant culture as fact or truth – and what dominant culture classifies as (implicitly unbelievable) “beliefs.” Our field deals with products of the human imagination classified as untrue, leaving truth to science. What might happen if we saw Indigenous worldviews as true, rather than discounting them as primitive, superstitious, unsophisticated, unscientific? Many Indigenous scholars put their worldviews into dialogue with the dominant one, using metaphors like weaving, braiding, or “two-eyed seeing.”<sup>6</sup> As articles, books, and dissertations by Indigenous scholars mount up, these worldviews challenge the status quo. For example, Métis scholar Warren Cariou, in his 2021 article, “On Critical Humility,” insists that Indigenous literary analysis ought to be “like visiting a friend or relation, [which] would mean showing up without an agenda, without a preconceived notion of what we want to gain from this encounter”; it would be uninterested in establishing mastery and “more responsible to the Indigenous communities and people it is discussing” (11). Key to Cariou’s ideas is that the responsibilities embedded in relationships should come first.

Following Cariou’s advice leads us to rethink the relationship of the critic to language and languages: “Documentary practices focus on language as a code that needs to be preserved. This renders language as a science object that can be taken out of context and dismembered into its constituent parts: phonemes, morphemes, syntactic structures, and semantic analyses. This strategy also ignores the collateral extinctions that accompany language extinction, such as ‘education, religion, knowledge, everyday social interactions, and identity’” (Baldwin, Noodin, and Perley 217). As Maya Odehamik Chacaby points out, “language resources are important, but often the translations without the high-context relationships with Anishinaabe worldview result in a shelf full of language resources and no reason to use them” (7). As she points out, these languages contain concept-words central to Indigenous philosophy.<sup>7</sup> The myth of the “vanishing Indian” supported “salvage” of the culture in the assumption that the people and their lived relationships were vanishing. We continue such extinction discourses by promoting the “definitive,” the “canonical,” and the “authoritative.”

One strategy used by Indigenous authors to avoid always being drawn into the concerns of the canon is to “imagine otherwise,” as championed by Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice; to work within the speculative genres of science fiction, fantasy, and alternate history gives literary scholars the opportunity to “teach otherwise.” Perhaps our familiarity with the “what if?” will help us appreciate the gift that we have already received. Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen writes: “Without waiting to be invited, Indigenous epistemes are already ‘in’ the academy. The problem is not how to bring Indigenous knowledge to the university, since it is already there. The problem is the epistemic ignorance that prevails because the gift of Indigenous epistemes remains impossible in the academy” (108). Traditional oral narratives should not be used without appropriate permission,<sup>8</sup> but the one about the Straightener was clearly intended for Farrand, and thus, for most of us. Bringing Indigenous ways of knowing, ways of teaching, and ways of writing into the academy, however, must be an ongoing Indigenous-led collective endeavor. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes that:

We cannot carry out the kind of decolonization our Ancestors set in motion if we don't create a generation of land-based, community-based intellectuals and cultural producers who are accountable to our nations and whose life work is concerned with the regeneration of these systems rather than meeting the overwhelming needs of the Western academic industrial complex or attempting to “Indigenize the academy” by bringing Indigenous Knowledge into the academy on the terms of the academy itself. (159)

Despite Kuokkanen's and Simpson's justified wariness about indigenizing the academy, they are writing – helpfully – for those who are “school way.” Many others have done the same: we need to engage with their work. To decolonize, we must explicitly teach how the discipline of English literature was developed to justify empire and how its teaching masked the conquest of Indigenous land and sovereignty (Viswanathan). We also need to teach how “epistemic ignorance” is continually reinforced by mainstream discourses. For example, every announcement of Indigenous students' drop-out rates shifts the responsibility for educational success onto individual students rather than onto a system designed for “students who are white, cismale, heterosexual, middle-to-upper class, lacking dis/abilities, and without children. If a student deviates from these categories, they are more likely to experience oppressive obstructions in the completion of their degree” (Gaudry and Lorenz 167). And they are likely to blame themselves for failing, too.

### Literary Studies in English Canada

The Straightener certainly came to North American universities, producing a literary curriculum with a backbone formed by historical British literature. Indigenous peoples, defined as without writing, without history, and without literature, could not be nations. In Canada, in 1864, Edward Hartley Dewar published *Selections from the Canadian Poets* as evidence of “the subtle but powerful cement of a national literature” (ix). Nonetheless, W. J. Alexander’s 1889 professorship at the University of Toronto instituted a British period-based curriculum as the national model; his anthologies promoted the British canon (Casteel; Hubert; Murray). Canadian literature courses became common only in the 1970s, a nationalist move crystallized by Northrop Frye’s *The Bush Garden* (1971) and Margaret Atwood’s *Survival* (1972). In the context of Canada’s centennial, the anti-Americanism inspired by the Vietnam War, and the rise of Quebec sovereignist movements, Frye and Atwood regarded literature as the powerful cement needed to bond diverse and multilingual citizens. Frye writes: “to feel Canadian was to feel part of a no-man’s land with huge rivers, lakes, and islands that few Canadians had ever seen” (222). His expression, “no-man’s land,” resonates with a powerful narrative: the legal concept of *terra nullius*, which underpins the doctrine of discovery (see Lindberg). In *Survival*, Atwood writes “Literature is . . . a map, a geography of the mind. . . . We need such a map desperately because we need to know about here because here is where we live” (18–19). This “we” excludes Indigenous peoples. Frye and Atwood imagine an empty territory, not the one that had, in fact, been emptied by disease, violence, and British law. Slowly, the publication of Indigenous memoirs, novels, plays, and poetry began to rework this hallucinated Great White North. Writers and critics, many of them racialized and classified as multicultural “immigrants” rather than proper (White, settler) Canadians, began to chip the façade off the sepulchre. Revisionist literary histories appeared. Daniel Coleman’s *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* discusses the “construction of White, English Canadian privilege” in popular literature between 1850 and 1950, a narrative that hid the “undead” history of slavery, racist immigration policies, and Indigenous oppression under the scrim of Canadian civility (3).

Indigenous literature courses first appeared in the 1990s, marked by the publication of the first teaching anthology, *An Anthology of Native Canadian Literature in English* (1992), edited by postcolonial scholar Terry Goldie and Delaware poet Daniel David Moses.<sup>9</sup> The shift to

Indigenous-content courses has accelerated since the publication of the final report of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz survey Indigenous instructors' diverse responses to making such courses mandatory, a thrust that might "displac[e] a more ambitious goal of decolonizing education that aspires to more fundamentally transform relations of power beyond the academy" (162). Like the "New" World, Indigenous and ethnic minority literatures are often seen as new, although they are rooted in long-standing traditions. Courses in Indigenous literatures, comprised of genres recognizable as "literature," have often simply been bolted on to the existing British period-based curriculum, reinforcing an aesthetic and generic hierarchy, a center-periphery model of space and a linear model of "progressive" time. In response, Indigenous intellectuals, nations, and political organizations founded Indigenous-controlled literary-critical institutions and resources. To name only a few, they established writing schools (the En'owkin International School of Writing), presses (Theytus, Kegeedonce), book series, journals (*Gatherings*; *Kivioq*; *Nesika*), anthologies (Hodgson; King; Armstrong and Grauer; McCall, Reder, Gaertner, and L'Hirondelle Hill), and collections of literary criticism (Armstrong, *Looking at the Words of our People*; Ruffo; McLeod, *Indigenous Poetics*; McFarlane and Ruffo; Reder and Morra). Overviews of nation-specific thought and writing appeared (e.g., Armstrong, *Constructing Indigeneity*; McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*; Monture). Additional resource material included overviews (Justice) and bibliographical databases (*Books to Build On: Indigenous Literatures for Learning*; *The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America to 1992*) and even an editor's style guide (Younging). These initiatives can be used to challenge the dominant approach to knowledge and pedagogy.

### **Start Local: Rethinking the University from Here**

How could a literature class become a field school? Given that all universities sit on what once were actual fields, forests, or even waterways, getting into the field is simple. But how is our field connected to theirs? Individual instructors cannot get to know or teach all of the diverse cultural output of the many peoples crammed into categories such as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Our primary responsibility is to those on whose territories we live and work, especially if we are uninvited guests. Eber Hampton, the Chickasaw educator who presided over the transition of the Saskatchewan

Indian Federated College, founded in 1976, into the First Nations University in 2003, pointed out that “local control is a defining characteristic of Indian education, not just a philosophical or political good. There can be no true Indian education without Indian control. Anything else is white education applied to Indians” (quoted in Taner 307). And the local includes both the original landholders and the many Indigenous people who have moved to cities as a result of colonization.<sup>10</sup> Thus, literary scholars should look to the local, where it is more likely that they can connect with writers, Elders, and knowledge keepers, and where they may find, after appropriate consultation, that they or their students might be able to learn from and contribute to community.

Our discipline, founded as it was on the study of dead White male British writers, has to broaden its horizons to include methods we ourselves never learned.<sup>11</sup> We now deal not only with a diverse group of living writers, but also with their people’s narrative belongings, both oral and written. The three major Canadian academic research agencies have instituted guidelines for research “developed with the participation and consent of Indigenous scholars and Elders in Canada,” which includes this statement: “Indigenous knowledge belongs to specific peoples rather than to the public domain, creating specific laws about who can use, teach, know, and continue to use certain parts of that knowledge” (Canada, Tricouncil). The University of Manitoba Press series, *First Voices*, *First Texts*, for example, publishes first or new editions of works by Indigenous writers: “The editors strive to indigenize the editing process by involving communities, by respecting traditional protocols, and by providing critical introductions that give readers new insights into the cultural contexts of these unjustly neglected classics.” One outcome can be the refusal of families to agree to publication, even if the work is in the “public” domain. How can we put notions of academic freedom into conversation with Indigenous “refusal as an analytic practice that addresses forms of inquiry as invasion”? (Tuck and Yang, abstract).

### **Reading on the Edges, Reading from Here**

Everywhere in North America with a college or university is also the site of Indigenous narrative production. Our universities have campuses on Coast Salish and Interior Salish territories. We can quickly name Indigenous writers of mainstream genres with strong connections to these lands. Although poet and performer E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913) was Mohawk, she retired to Vancouver. She was befriended by Joe (Sapluuk)

and Mary Agnes (Lixwelut) Capilano, (Skwxwú7mesh), who told her stories, most collected as *Legends of Vancouver* (1911).<sup>12</sup> As an Okanagan woman, Mourning Dove (Christine Quintasket), author of *Cogewea, The Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range* (1927), belonged to one of several cross-border nations and moved back and forth across that constructed divide. Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan/Syilx) and Lee Maracle (Stó:lō) have mothered creativity, mentoring Indigenous writers and bolstering the publication and teaching of Indigenous literatures, as well as writing their own multigenre works.

To restrict curricula to those Indigenous writers whose ancestors lived here for thousands of years risks a straightening purism – Vancouver is now home to many Indigenous people from far and wide. Some of them write out of that dislocation, from seeing themselves or being seen as “not authentic.” As a result, lived experience as an Indigenous person can be discounted and lost. Shirley Sterling attended the notorious Kamloops Indian Residential School, writing about the experience in her award-winning autobiographical children’s novel, *My Name Is Seepeetza* (1992). She wrote, “I have never thought of myself as a particularly traditional or spiritual Nlaka’pamux person. In fact, I delayed writing in the First Nations voice for many years, because I thought I was not raised traditionally enough.” Her experiences as a graduate student and instructor led her to call the academy an “adversarial arena” (“Seepeetza Revisited” n. pag.) Writing for many in the next generation, Jordan Abel’s multi-genre *NISHGA* (2020), explains how the trauma from those schools has reverberated, leading many Indigenous peoples living in cities to struggle to create identifications that represent their experiences away from home territory and original family and community.

### Indigenous Interpretation and Pedagogy

Indigenous peoples preserve stories by telling and retelling them, not through authorized interpretation or canonization. Storytellers do not explain stories” (Brundige 291). Margery was both shocked and intrigued when she read Maracle’s “You Become the Trickster” in 1990, when she had just begun teaching Indigenous students. Explaining Indigenous stories, Maracle writes:

The difference is that the reader is as much a part of the story as the teller. Most of our stories don’t have orthodox “conclusions”; that is

left to the listeners, who we trust will draw useful lessons from the story – not necessarily the lessons we wish them to draw, but all conclusions are considered valid. The listeners are drawn into the dilemmas and are expected at some point to work themselves out of it. . . . When our orators get up to tell a story, there is no explanation, no set-up to guide the listener – just the poetic terseness of the dilemma is presented. (11–12)

So, Indigenous peoples did not have literary critics? Indeed, Maracle “wonder[s] about the necessity for the door-closing practice currently known as literary criticism” (*Memory Serves* 197–98). Why would storytellers allow such interpretative autonomy? Keith Basso, an anthropologist who worked with the Western Apache, explains: “persons who speak too much insult the imaginative capabilities of other people, ‘blocking their thinking,’ as one of my consultants said in English, and ‘holding down their minds’” (85). Neal McLeod (Cree) remembers that his father “never said what the points of his stories were; he forced the listeners to discover this for themselves” (*Cree Narrative Memory* 13). Keavy Martin writes about taking her students to the Arctic: “Younger Inuit also taught us the appropriate ways of learning from elders and this did not involve peppering them with enthusiastic questions” (54). Direct instruction is seen as disrespectful; a story is an acceptable way to warn, advise, instruct, reprove, or support someone else. This isn’t to say that listeners are free to interpret by disregarding the stories, the storytellers, and the culture. Instead, interpretation needs to be based on respect and on the quality of relationships with the stories and their tellers.

An early staple of Indigenous literature curricula was Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), which taught a huge swath of Indigenous knowledge by being funny enough and puzzling enough that readers spent a lot of time trying (in a pre-internet era) to understand the gnomic statements of the wise characters. The novel’s way of working is exemplified by the chapter headings in Cherokee syllabics. Students were thinking and investigating for themselves, rather than waiting for the prof to explain – but of course, explain one of us did (see Fee and Flick). Although we cherish our own academic freedom, we don’t always support the curiosity and cognitive autonomy of our students. Navajo scholar Gregory Cajete insists that “Indigenous teachings view each student as unique, each with a unique path of learning to travel during his or her lifetime. . . . each person is, fundamentally, his or her own teacher and that learning is connected to the individual’s life process” (xv). Nonetheless, our discipline does foster such autonomy. English professor Ruth Felski notes,

“while students nowadays are likely to be informed about critical debates and literary theories, they are still expected to find their own way into a literary work, not to parrot the interpretations of others” (11). This pedagogy is common in our interactions with graduate students when we begin to make knowledge together, rather than asking for or doling out information.

Indigenous young people are expected to observe how their Elders conduct themselves and how they carry out tasks, “watch-then-do” pedagogy (Donaldson). Youth sometimes visit an Elder and carry out chores for them or give them gifts of tobacco or sweetgrass in order to be apprenticed to a specific skill (see Wheeler on Cree). A course designed by Lorna Williams (Lil’wat) led a participant to express her first reactions to Indigenous pedagogy: “I grew frustrated and discouraged when I was not handed the answer on a platter. . . . I chastised myself for not being able to wait, slow down, and just listen. All I was after was a quick fix, and that fact upset me” (Williams, Tanaka, Leik, and Riecken 245–47). Historian Katrina Srigley describes the drive for quick solutions to systemic inequities consolidated over centuries. She writes of her interactions with knowledge keepers and Elders, “Each time I hoped for a ten-point plan, a how-to guide; I never received one. Instead, I was given stories about reciprocity, developing ideas in partnership, ownership of knowledge, status, belonging, and identity” (20). Indigenous teachers focus on values rather than content.<sup>13</sup> Dwayne Donald calls the difference between mainstream and Indigenous teaching methods as the difference between “fort pedagogy” and “ethical relationality” (45).

We need to slow down, listen, and do our homework. Fortunately, Indigenous historians, writers, and critics are actively producing a decolonizing and heterogeneous narrative studies attentive to interconnected nation-specific, urban, diasporic, national, and global intellectual currents.

Aubrey Hanson (Métis) hails non-Indigenous Canadians to begin working to understand and dismantle the social systems that produced the residential schools so as “to make way for Indigenous resurgence,” which is “people in their own communities nourishing their own traditions, languages, worldviews, stories, knowledges and ways of being” (“Reading for Reconciliation?” 75). At this juncture, given the gap between worldviews, conversations over tea are more likely to change things for the better than any checklist or ten-point plan.

## Notes

We thank Aubrey Hanson for helpful comments on a draft of this paper.

1. Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes three “Aboriginal” peoples – Indians, Métis, and Inuit (see Erin Hanson, “Constitution Act”). “First Nations,” after the founding of the Assembly of First Nations in 1982, usually means “Status Indians,” those registered with the federal government. The shift to “Indigenous” as an umbrella term derives from the importance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Indigenous activists. “Native” was commonly used up to the passage of the Act. “First Peoples” includes those who were refused or involuntarily deprived of status. For Canada-wide land acknowledgments, see Canadian Association of University Teachers; see Wilkes, Duong, Kesler, and Ramos for an overview.
2. This story is set on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, just south of Vancouver Island. It is a stripped-down version of an origin story. In the official version of the Hoh Indian Tribe (Quileute), the change helps the people catch fish better, and thus, Changer feeds the people (Hoh Indian Tribe).
3. Boas found this story most common in the north with the Tlingit, and extending south as far as the nations that compose the Coast Salish (637).
4. For overviews, see Edwards, *Paper Talk*; Maud.
5. “Orature” (Gingell and Roy 6–8); “oraliture” (Armstrong); “verbal art” (Clement); “storywork” (Archibald 3–4).
6. See, for example, Powell; Dion; Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, and Bartlett.
7. See Williams, Tanaka, Leik, and Riecken for Lil’wat words relating to pedagogy (239–40); see Reder for the Cree word wâhkôhtowin and “the moral responsibility to remember” (179); for the nsiylxcân word en’owkin, see Armstrong, “Literature of the Land.”
8. On permission, see Archibald; Canada, Tricouncil. On appropriation, see Keeshig-Tobias; Fee, “The Trickster Moment”; McCall 17–42. Ironically, the Hoh (Quileute) people of the opening story had their traditions plundered for the *Twilight* series of books and films (Dartt-Newton and Endo).
9. Anishinaabe poet and scholar Armand Garnet Ruffo joined the coeditors for the 4th edition, 2013; then Ruffo and Métis author Katherena Vermette coedited the 5th edition, 2020; the title is now *An Anthology of Indigenous Literatures in English: Voices from Canada*.
10. See Peters and Andersen. Over half of the Indigenous people in Canada now live in cities (Census Canada, 2016).
11. Tuihawai Smith’s path-breaking *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) inspired many nation-specific models for research.
12. Settler scholar Alix Shield has worked with family members of Joe and Mary Capilano from Skwxwú7mesh Nation to reissue *Legends of Vancouver* with additional stories and other material as *Legends of the Capilano*.
13. The UBC First Nations House of Learning propagates a mantra: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility (Kirkness and Barnhardt).

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