


Exploring Curation as a Path Towards Decolonizing Education

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Abstract

As part of my Doctor of Education program, I was asked to study Dr. Marie Battiste's (2017) book *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. In response to that assignment, I built a WordPress site as a way to experiment with crossing boundaries of physical and digital places, between different Indigenous knowledges and notions of teaching and learning. While building the site, I looked for localized examples of Battiste's concepts and ideas among the Inuvialuit, the Indigenous group with which I am the most familiar, in what became an exploration of the wonderful work being done in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to preserve the culture and decolonize ways of thinking. I knew some of these resources existed but was surprised by the depth and variety of materials available. In this paper, I present that website as an experimental example of digital curation that stitches together the book, a series of digital artefacts found via Internet searches, and my own reflections on those artefacts. While building it, I did not seek out answers but instead explored the possibilities of curation as a path to decolonization education. The resulting site design is both personal and incomplete. Through this process, I hope to open generative cracks that provoke new ways of thinking about digital curation as a means of supporting active engagement in the complicated *and* necessary conversations regarding decolonization.

Keywords: digital curation, decolonizing education, educational technology, digital pedagogy



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Introduction

In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its report about residential schools and their lasting effects within Indigenous communities. The Commission concluded that "reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered" (p. vi). The Commission further released 94 *Calls to Action*. As of 2020, however, only 10 of those Calls had been completed and none out of the seven Calls related to education had been completed (Nítôtemtik, 2020). I suggest that, along with all other Canadians, educational technologists, and digital pedagogues, have a responsibility to engage with and act in alignment with these Calls. In 2017, I was asked to study Dr. Marie Battiste's (2017) book *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. I used that assignment as an opportunity to explore with digital curation as a means of taking up that responsibility.

To that end, I built a WordPress site that stitches together Battiste's book, a series of digital artefacts found via Internet searches and my own reflections on those artefacts (<https://decolonizingeducation.trubox.ca/>). I experimented with crossing the boundaries between physical and digital places and different Indigenous knowledges and notions of teaching and learning. In the process, many questions emerged: Does decolonizing involve moving beyond paper-based assignments and thinking differently about how we construct and share ideas? Do I have a responsibility to share what I have learned both as an educational technologist and as the white mother of Indigenous kids? How do I share my stories without appropriating? How do I amplify Indigenous voices but without speaking for them? What is technology's role in all of this? While building the website, my goal was never to answer these questions but instead to explore possibilities, to take risks and to get it wrong in generative ways. My work presented here might, therefore, be described as an attempt to engage with, and to draw others into, the curriculum of decolonization not as content, but instead as a "complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2015), one that emphasizes the active, experiential process of connecting us to others "not in spite of the particularities of their lives but rather through them" (Silverman, 2009, p. 9). The resulting site, in its design and offerings as well as how it is intended to be read/received, is both personal and incomplete, a place built not to offer answers but in the hopes of creating an ethical space for dialogue.

As feminist scholars have long-argued, research is neither objective nor neutral (Lather, 1991). My experiences as a white distance education student, educational technologist, and researcher shape my work (T. Elias, 2020), as do my experiences as the parent of five Inuvialuit¹ children in both Inuvik, Northwest Territories and British Columbia. Currently, I live, work, and raise my children on the traditional land of the Qayqayt First Nation. These lived experiences have challenged me to think differently about everything, including educational technology (T. Elias, in press). In this paper, therefore, I write from in-between spaces, in ways intended to trouble the teacher-learner, Indigenous-settler and land-digital binaries. In doing so, my goals are both to foreground the important work of Indigenous scholars and digital creators and to explore the ways in which digital curation might be used to trouble Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies.

With these goals in mind, in this paper I first explore the literature of decolonizing education. I then look more closely at the boundaries and gaps between our traditional notions of physical places and digital spaces, different Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and what/who is counted as teaching/teachers. Finally, I present the website that I built in the hopes of illustrating these ideas in practice. Based on this experiment, I suggest that digital curation might be a way to generate spaces in which students can learn *from* rather than *about* Indigenous people.

Decolonization and Education

Linda Tuhaiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and Wayne K. Yang (2018) noted that “Indigenous and decolonizing perspectives on education have long persisted alongside colonial models of education, yet too often have been subsumed under broader domains of multiculturalism, critical race theory and progressive education” (p. viii). They further explained that the best decolonization work attends to two commitments: land sovereignty and Indigenous perspectives. Indigenous feminist scholarship, in particular, has emphasized that decolonization depends on the presence of Indigenous people on Indigenous land and waters (Hunt, 2013; Simpson, 2016). Decolonization, therefore, involves the disruption of colonial patterns of land ownership, patterns established during colonization. The term *colonization* refers to the practice in which small numbers of people from one place go to another place, dominate the local labour force and send resources back to the place from which they originated (Smith et al., 2018). Settler colonialism further denotes a form of colonization in which these outsiders claim this “new” land as their own (Tuck et al., 2014). Decolonizing studies, therefore, are interested in the ways colonialism has shaped and severed relationships between humans and non-humans across land, water, space, and time (Calderon, 2014).

Decolonization studies are informed by Indigenous ontologies and methodologies. As a result, the concept of “relational accountability” is of critical importance (Wilson, 2008), as are the theories accountable to these relations between land, sovereignty, belongingness, time and space, reality and futurity that shape Indigenous research methods (i.e., Goeman, 2013; Byrd, 2011). Building on these concepts and methods, decolonization studies involve developing “a critical consciousness about the realities of oppression and social inequities for minoritized peoples” and trouble the ways in which “purposeful ignorance” has twisted history such that colonialist ideologies have become normalized (Styres, 2018, p. 32). In these ways, they emphasize the ways that colonization and decolonization are time-specific and land-specific (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonization studies, therefore, retain a deep connection to Indigenous studies and their underlying ontologies and methodologies, while pushing back against colonial assumptions about the linearity of history and the future. Instead, decolonization studies argue for renderings of time and place that move beyond coloniality and conquest (Smith et. al, 2018).

Decolonizing Education is Not...

Despite a growing and active community of Indigenous scholars, Smith noted, while writing with colleagues Tuck and Yang, that less helpful approaches to decolonizing education continue to persist:

There are still more scholars working with deficit approaches who are trying to either ‘save’ us from ourselves or fix us up, sort us out, and, in some cases still, convince us that they ‘know best.’ I am reminded quite often that faculties of education are still dominated by academic staff who are ignorant and hostile to Indigenous peoples. I feel a sense of déjà vu that some of my early work still needs to be restated. (Smith et al. 2018, p. 6)

She further stated that decolonizing education does not involve seeking ways to “Indigenize” the academy by simply adding more Indigenous bodies to university campuses, an approach that could “be viewed as about mainstreaming, dispersing, infusing, or shoring up white privilege by keeping it firmly in positions of power... with little attention being given to growing capacity, developing careers, improving relationships, or indeed transforming institutional practices” (Smith et al., 2018, pp. 7–8).

Yang and Tuck (2012) indicated that decolonization is not about reconciliation or a return to settler normalcy. Instead, they argued that “decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (p. 35). As a result, decolonizing education does not involve white settlers extractively waiting for Indigenous scholars “to answer to whiteness and to settler relationships to land in the future” (Tuck, 2018, p. 15). It is “not the endgame, not the final outcome of a long process, but the next now” (Tuck 2018, p. 16). From this perspective, decolonizing education is not a theoretical or philosophical future state, but instead a pragmatic practice of moving forward in ways that iteratively and incrementally challenge colonial histories as well as their ontological and epistemological legacies.

Decolonizing Education Is...

Decolonizing education involves embracing collective, relational, and dialogic processes of learning that involve communities. It employs popular texts and Indigenous cultural productions and attends to politics in ways that enable Indigenous self-determination (Smith, 2012; Grande, 2004; Brayboy, 2005; Abdi, 2011; Coulthard, 2014). Furthermore, decolonizing education often involves methodological approaches that involve grassroots-knowledge production that acknowledge that people come to knowledge through their lived experiences; they value this knowledge that comes through doing (Guishard & Tuck, 2014).

Decolonizing education involves embracing and anticipating change at the individual, community and political levels in *relational* ways. As explained by Smith et al. (2018), “Indigenous educators carry forward Indigenous teachings and carry forward the relations—circling back to the teaching-as-relation and self-as-relation—that is the heart of Indigenous futurity” (p. 10). Styres (2018) further noted that decolonizing education “resists mainstream approaches to teaching and learning as well as challenging taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the hidden curriculum... it discomforts and challenges taken-for-granted biases and assumptions” and evokes emotions, including guilt, shame, denial, and resistance (p. 32). She went on to explain that “educators have an important role in helping students examine their worlds in critically thoughtful ways—to take the time in class and ask and unpack the risky and tough questions” (Styres, 2018, p. 35).

Moreover, decolonizing education involves rectifying a societal lack of understanding between Indigenous peoples and settlers that has emerged from centuries of processes that have favoured Eurocentric narratives over those of Indigenous peoples (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018) and have resulted in curricula full of inaccurate tellings of history (Donald, 2009). Decolonizing education, therefore, involves rectifying the reality that Eurocentric knowledge systems have displaced Indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultures. In the process, they have made distinct Indigenous knowledge systems, that should but do not, enjoy a place of parity with dominant systems, invisible (Battiste, 2008). Decolonizing education privileges Indigenous knowledge as a starting point from which to build educational approaches (Rorick, 2018).

Decolonizing Education by Marie Battiste

It is within the above framing of decolonizing education that *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* is situated. The book’s author, Marie Battiste, is widely recognized as a leader in Indigenous studies whose vision for educational reform has set the standard for scholarship across North America. In this book, Battiste shared her personal

journey and stories of inspirations, resistance, and transformation in which she presented “decolonization as a process that belongs to everyone” (Battiste, 2017, p. 9). Battiste (2017) dedicated the book “to educators seeking to make changes in their work, knowing that the decolonization of education is not just about changing a system for Indigenous peoples, but for everyone. We all benefit by it” (p. 22).

Decolonizing Education is divided into ten chapters. Following the introduction, they are titled, in order, (a) “The Legacy of Forced Assimilative Education for Indigenous peoples,” (b) “Mi’kmaw Education: Roots and Routes,” (c) “Creating the Indigenous Renaissance,” (d) “Animating Ethical Trans-Systemic Systems,” (e) “Confronting and Eliminating Racism,” (f) “Respecting Aboriginal Languages and Educational Systems,” (g) “Displacing Cognitive Imperialism,” (h) “Recommendations for Constitutional Reconciliation of Education,” and (i) “Possibilities of Educational Transformations.” Throughout these chapters, Battiste traced the history of colonial education and imagines futures for the decolonization of educational systems across Canada. As a result, I suggest that it offers a framework for decolonizing education, as defined by an Indigenous scholar. I do not suggest that it is “the” framework or that the approach taken by Battiste is universally accepted among Indigenous scholars. Instead, I suggest that it during my doctoral studies, it served as a starting point for me, as a white settler educational technologist, for engaging with the decolonization of education.

Contemporary Indigenous Digital Curation Practices

At its core, curation is the practice of finding, organizing, and sharing a set of materials in a meaningful way. Because of the widespread access to digital technologies and content, online curation of pictures and videos has become a common social media practice. Christen (2018), however, warned that the curation process is “imagined as a neutral act—one of taking something that is already offered up for consumption.... [but] it is in fact a culturally determined and political act” (p. 405). At the same time, she noted a series of examples of Indigenous approaches to curation that offer different models. She argued that by adding a series of checks at each stage of the process, one could replace a model of “collecting” with one of “digital heritage stewardship.” She further explained that

If we take the general “get it, curate it, share it” model and expand it to include cultural, ethical and historical checks at each step, then we get a workflow that encourages collaboration, relies of historical specificity, and has ethical considerations embedded at every step. Finding or discovery should not be guided by a search paradigm that disregards the colonial histories of collection or upholds notions of access that privilege the public domain. (Christen, 2018, p. 407)

Using this approach, the concept of relationship becomes the central to the practice of curation. Its purpose is no longer to collect novel images or stories, but instead to generate connections that generate opportunities and to imagine new possibilities.

In Canada, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) has adopted a similar approach with respect to both its physical and digital curation. As Milton and Reynaud (2019) explained,

In a museum world still dominated by western-based theory and practice, the NCTR's collection as a whole and the first steps the institution has taken towards curating it reveal and represent a 'fundamental shift in the balance of power regarding who has access, the reasons for access and concepts of ethical and respectful stewardship. (p. 538)

The intention of the NCTR is to seek out Indigenous ways of engaging with the entire collection. In some cases, this has involved using taking the opportunity afforded in digital curation to move away from linear or top-down logic of information and objects in ways that unsettle settler perspectives and present a completer, more complex picture. In other cases, it has meant that objects deemed to be sensitive and/or sacred are not displayed in any format. Moreover, some artifacts have been burned in alignment with cultural practices. As noted by Milton and Reynaud (2019), "accepting the importance of the ephemerality of certain sacred artefacts—that they are relevant precisely through their absence, their temporality—brings us into new spaces that make room for Indigenous ontologies" (p. 542).

Milton and Reynaud (2019) further argued the importance of granting wider access to the public through digital curation as a means of providing access to remote Indigenous communities, in addition to as a means of breaking down barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The authors explained that "if made available in tangible and digital form, the stories and memories held by them might dislodge settlers' reticence to acknowledge the past and would potentially help survivors and communities in talking about this past if they so wish" (p. 544). Describing a joint Inuvialuit-Smithsonian Institute project that included the creation of a website titled Inuvialuit Pitqusiit Inuuniarutait: Inuvialuit Living History, Hennessy et al. (2013) also highlighted the importance of forging relationships:

We have viewed the creation, negotiation, and maintenance of these relationships as central to the realization of our project to date and to its continued activity into the future... This process of relationship-building has played a role in an increasingly visible institutional shift towards greater openness and flexibility that is grounded in growing recognition of the value of curatorial collaboration with originating communities. (p. 62)

At the same time, as suggested by L'Hirondelle Hill and McCall (2015), the purpose of these digital curations ought not be to simply smooth over the issues but instead to "create productive sites of discomfort, disconnection and disruption" that promote dialogue (p. 13). These relational approaches to curation appear to be well aligned with Pinar's (2015) concept of complicated conversations in which he suggested that "coupling facts and lived experience in creative tensionality" can trigger transformation (p. 112). Drawing on these concepts, I suggest that Indigenous digital curation practices, might therefore, support the types of complicated and necessary conversations in order to advance decolonizing efforts.

Decolonizing Education Through Boundary Crossing?

Within *Decolonizing Education*, I read about opportunities to experiment with crossing boundaries. Three of the boundaries that I decided to experiment with were (a) land and digital places/spaces, (b) localization and universalization of different Indigenous knowledges, and (c) curation and personal reflection as sense-making. These experimentations in boundary crossing were intended to generate discomforts and tensions through which new possibilities might emerge. In this section, I explore each of these ideas in more detail as well as the discomforts that came with them.

Applying Land-based Ideas to Digital Places/Spaces

It is with more than a little uncertainty that I have drawn the above land-based concepts of decolonization into digital spaces and places. I worry about equating physical land-based places with the digital realm. At the same time, decolonizing studies do seek to challenge notions of linear histories and futures and “argue for renderings of time and place that exceed coloniality and conquest (Smith et al., 2018, p. viii). Styres (2018) further noted that space is an expanse that is empty and abstract whereas place is grounded in lived experience and is never neutral, and that “by inhabiting spaces—by being present in those spaces, to occupy those spaces, to story those spaces, to (re)member and (re)cognize those spaces—they become placeful” (p. 27). Reading these descriptions, it is difficult for me to ignore the connections between digital and physical spaces and places. Although often displaced by humans, the very materials that make digital space/place possible, the metals and plastics in my motherboard, processors, and display have all come from the land, and carry with them undisclosed stories of human labour and material extraction. Moreover, they caused me to wonder whether it is not the role of educational technologists and digital pedagogues to inhabit and create within digital spaces in ways through which they become placeful. With these ideas in mind, I proceed tentatively, imagining that the decolonization of digital places might co-exist with, but must not displace, the importance of restoring Indigenous peoples to Indigenous waters and lands.

Further influencing my thinking is notions of Indigenous futurisms that claim science fiction as “a valid way to renew, recover, and extend First Nations peoples voices and traditions” (Dillon, 2012, pp. 1–2). Threading together pasts, presents and futures, Indigenous futurisms include not only writing but game-creation, digital art, graphic novels, and other forms of world-making. In the process, these creators “claim categories and territories typically monopolized by colonial desires— such as ‘technology’ or ‘space,’” (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, 2019, p. 89). I, therefore, suggest that educational technology might also be imagined and created as one type of re-claimed space/place.

Connecting Different Indigenous Knowledges

As described above, Indigenous ways of knowing are deeply relational, entangled with specific physical place, and are therefore localized. Battiste (2017) drew from her Mi’kmaw traditions and histories in *Decolonizing Education*. I, however, have no ties or relationships with the Mi’kmaw. Moreover, I have no connection to their land in Atlantic Canada. As a result, I wondered if the ideas presented by Battiste could be applied to a different localized example with which I had stronger ties. I have, therefore, experimented with drawing examples from the Inuvialuit in order to illustrate Battiste’s theory.

I found it easy, perhaps too easy, to find examples of Battiste’s Mi’kmaw-inspired words within Inuvialuit communities despite the geographies that separate them. Tuck and Yang (2012) underscored these commonalities: geographical, relational, and epistemic forms of violence associated with settler colonialism, through which both Mi’kmaw and Inuvialuit ways of knowing and being were “indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage.” (pp. 5–6). I wondered if what, one thing they had in common is a shared colonial history of attempted erasure, one that could harmfully serve to universalize Indigenous knowledge systems (Rowe & Tuck, 2017).

Greyser's (2016) work, for example, attended to Indigenous and settler relationships in ways that account for long and diverse histories of philosophies and practices. At the same time, Battiste (2017) wrote,

What we together learned in the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre with the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) from First Nations, Metis and Inuit leaders, educators and elders was that Aboriginal learning had many unique characteristics:

- Learning is holistic;
- Learning is a lifelong process;
- Learning is experiential in nature;
- Learning is rooted in Aboriginal languages and culture;
- Learning is spiritually oriented;
- Learning is a communal activity, involving family, community, elders; and
- Learning is an integration of Aboriginal and Eurocentric knowledge (p. 181)

Threading these ideas through one another, Battiste and Greyser have pointed me to consider, with due care and respect, the boundaries and connections between different Indigenous ways of knowing. I further suggest that digital spaces/places might offer opportunities to, simultaneously, illuminate shared colonial histories and the existence of other possibilities, while also serving to illustrate difference and the situated nature of knowledge in ways that avoid universalizing tendencies.

Curating Voices Through Personal Reflections

As noted in the introduction, my goals are both to foreground the important work of Indigenous scholars and digital creators and to explore the ways in which digital curation might be used to trouble Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies. As an Unangã scholar, Eve Tuck expressed a weariness with settlers who, "in reading Indigenous work, ask for more work, even if they have done little to fully consider what has already been carefully and attentively offered" (in Smith et al., 2018, p.15). I suggest that it is time for educational technologists, more specifically those of us who are white settlers, to not ask for work on the parts of others, but instead to actively seek to change our own practices.

Kimmerer (2013) noted that "paying attention acknowledges that we have something to learn from intelligences other than our own. Listening, standing witness, creates an openness to the world in which the boundaries between us can dissolve" (p. 300). Similarly, Simpson (2014) said, that "if you want to learn about something, you need to take your body onto the land and do it. Get a practice" (p. 17). I do not know if Simpson would consider digital places to be "land," but I do know that it is in digital places where, as educational technologists and digital pedagogues, we often tend to dwell. Moreover, it is in these digital places that we have the opportunity to listen, bear witness, learn, and enact practice in ways that make space "not only the missing links in academic practices, but also and especially the missing people" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 51).

Decolonizing Education Website as an Experiment in Boundary-Crossing Curation

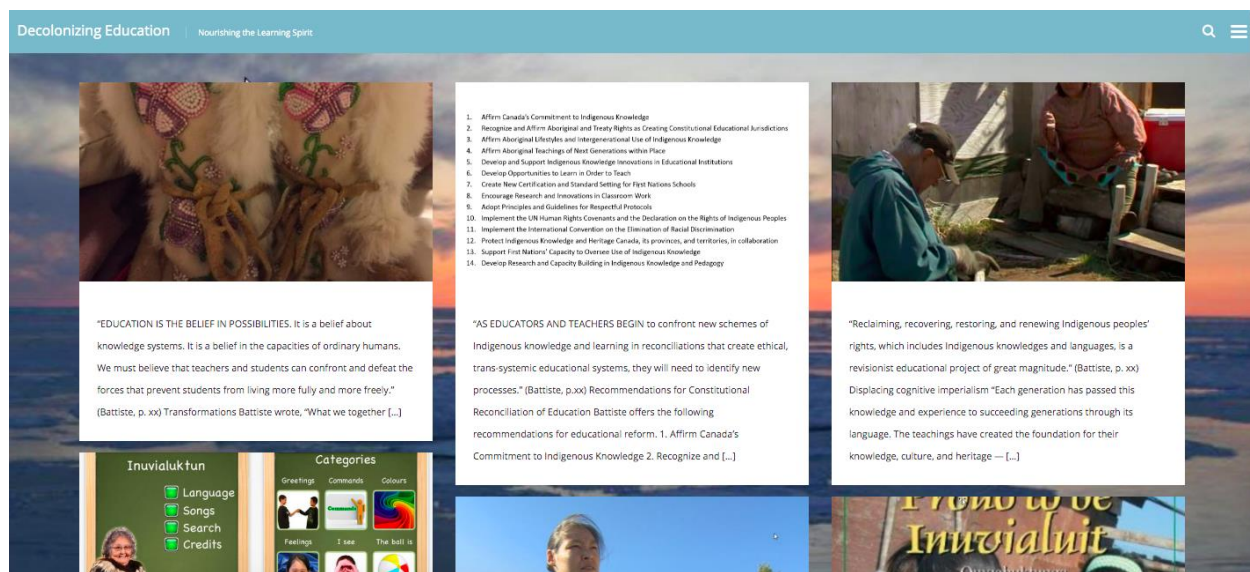
As noted in the introduction, the website created for this project was a WordPress site: decolonizingeducation.trubox.ca/. The project drew on my own previous curation work (T. Elias, 2017) and is situated with the work of other educational technologists and digital pedagogues re-thinking our responsibilities as activists while working in digital spaces. Bali (2016), for example wrote, "in open online spaces, we are not equally fragile. It is everyone's responsibility to listen and care and support marginal voices" (para. 13). With these words, Bali challenged us

to not only actively seek out participation of marginalized groups but to care for their needs. In building the website presented in this paper, I sought to take up this challenge.

Within my site I also sought to work across the boundaries of physical-digital places/spaces, universalized-localized histories and Indigenous-settler ways of knowing. From the outset, it was a practice of experimentation. I structured and organized the site such that each of the ten chapters in *Decolonizing Education* are represented as a separate story. Each starts with an image and a quote from the book, which intends to trouble linear approaches to knowledge. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the site design.

Figure 1

Screen Capture of Landing Page



Note: The screen capture of the author's web page *Decolonizing Education* is copyrighted by Tanya Elias and reprinted with permission.

It is important to note that in the time since I built this site, many of the links have broken and no longer point to the source materials. Although it might be possible to re-link these resources, I have opted not to. Instead, I have decided to treat my digital curation as a gift-giving process, one that emphasizes the acts of giving and receiving. Describing a traditional giveaway ceremony among the Powatatomi called the *minidewak* in which the people being honoured give away gifts, Kimmerer (2013) explained that

Generosity is simultaneously a moral and a material imperative, especially among people who live close to the land and know its waves of plenty and scarcity. Where the well-being of one is linked to the wellbeing of all. (p. 381)

Drawing on this idea of generosity, I suggest that the broken links serve as a reminder that the digital resources linked within the site were gifts created and freely given by Indigenous communities, scholars, and artists. As such, these gifts serve as an invitation to engage in an

ongoing moral and material process of learning from and caring for one another that is always incomplete.

I then sought to connect Battiste's theory to examples from curated Inuvialuit examples by stitching together theory and practice, curated digital artefacts content, and personal reflection. As I explained on the *About This Site* page,

I tried to look for localized examples of Dr. Battiste's concepts and ideas among the Inuvialuit, the indigenous group with which I am the most familiar... It became an exploration of the wonderful work being done in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to preserve the culture and decolonize ways of thinking. I knew some of these resources existed, but was surprised by the depth and variety of materials available... (para. 5). Although the site is localized to the Inuvialuit, I have tried to identify either national resources that will point to other localized resources... or point to the types of places one might look for (and find) resources. (para. 7)

In the following section, I offer a brief description of three of the ten chapter-stories contained in the website. Together, they demonstrate the ways in which I curated resources, stories, and personal reflections in the forms of words, videos, artwork, and songs using *Decolonizing Education* as a framework.

Legacy of Forced Assimilative Education

I began the Legacy of Forced Assimilative Education story-chapter with the following quote: "The interplay between making the familiar strange and the strange familiar is part of the ongoing transformation of knowledge" (Battiste, 2017, p. 31). I then contrasted an "educational resource" produced by the Canadian government called the *Kids Site of Canadian Settlement* with published recordings from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearing in Inuvik. The purpose was contrast to different approaches to presenting Canada's history in ways that challenge what many settlers have "known" to be true in terms of not only historical details, but also what constitutes an appropriate resource for teaching history.

The *Kids Site*, which appears to have been archived in 2005, explained that the Inuit were at "one time considered to be among the healthiest people in the world" (para. 1) but does so without differentiating between the Inuit of the Eastern and Western Arctic. What's more, the site indicated that "this is no longer the case" (para. 1), while remaining silent as to how and why those lifestyles changed, as documented in Figure 2. The goes on to describe the Inuit as people "learning to govern themselves in a modern world" (para. 2) despite the fact that the Inuvialuit Final Agreement was signed in 1984 and the Nunavut Land Claims agreement led to the formation of the territory of Nunavut in 1999.

I shared this example because it is this type of online resource/digital textbook on which many Canadians teaching at all levels rely. I further suggest that, although this one has now been archived, simply replacing the offensive content in these types of digital resources may serve to further re-entrench colonial educational patterns.

Figure 2

Archived Educational Resource Teaching the History of the Settlement of Canada.



Note: This image is taken from [Collections Canada](#).

I contrasted this archived resource, and its silence with respect to the lived experiences and history of the Inuit with a link to online videos of the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings held in Inuvik, NT. In the video clip, Paul Voudrach and other residential school survivors described their experiences and the ways that those experiences have impacted their lives. A screenshot from the video is provided in Figure 3. These first-person accounts represent not only a different history, but a different way of documenting and teaching digital history, one that replaces an objective “view from nowhere” with a telling of history that is contextualized and embodied within a story of personal experience.

Contrasting these approaches to the history of the Canadian North, gaps and silences emerged in ways that, hopefully, make the familiar seem strange. As I curated, I wondered why we tend to distil our histories as taught in schools down to a series of maps and static images; and furthermore, why the strange, or in this case strangers appearing at TRC hearings, are viewed as relatable people. It was my hope that these resources, combined with Battiste’s writing, may encourage website visitors to generate complicated questions and generate dialogue, because as I noted on the *About this Site* page, this website was “built not to offer answers but in the hopes of advancing the creation of an ethical space for dialogue” (para. 11).

I closed out this chapter-story with a song and video created by a Grade 4/5 class that was shared on the TRC’s website. It is a resource that I suggest points to the potential for healing and the power and importance of “non-traditional” digital teaching resources. Moreover, I suggest that it highlights the need for students, even young students, to engage with difficult truths. I share more of my own reflections related to these ideas in other parts of the site including the *Transformations* chapter-story in which I describe my experiences of learning to sew with my mother-in-law, and *Displacing Cognitive Imperialism*, in which I consider my son’s experiences in school. In both, I consider what has been lost and what has been retained. I, however, deliberately did not include my own thoughts and reflections within this chapter-story. Stories of forced assimilative education that have been shared with me directly are not mine to tell; I am neither entitled nor equipped with the words to express their impact.

Figure 3

Website Card Representing Legacy of Forced Assimilative Education Chapter-Story



Respecting Aboriginal Languages

This chapter-story related to respecting Indigenous language. I opened it with the following:

Almost all North American Aboriginal languages fundamentally operate from a view of the world as interrelated and in flux, signifying these relations in highly descriptive prefixes and suffixes with the verbs... Being aware of the differences that verb- and noun-based languages have within world views can help many educators to understand something more about Aboriginal world views, thought, and consciousness, while addressing a major cognitive gap in learning. (Battiste, 2017, p. 141)

As noted by Battiste, Indigenous languages involve not only different combinations of sounds to create words, but instead represent different ways of approaching the world, one that centres on active practice over things. In attempting to engage and reflect on the implications of this difference, I combined a series of excerpts from *Decolonizing Education* with examples of efforts to preserve Inuvialuktun languages and a quote by Buckminster Fuller related to "thinking in verbs."

Figure 4

Website Card for Story-Chapter Respecting Aboriginal Languages



In seeking out resources for my website, it became evident that language was connected to the land through language camps, schools, and using technology, including the *Inuvialuktun One* app shown in Figure 5. These different and combined approaches to language revitalization emphasize connections between language, land, and practice. They also point to the ways in which digital technologies can support this work.

Figure 5

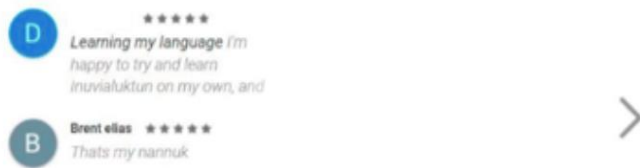
Inuvialuktun One Language App



On a personal note, while working on this project, I looked at the app's two reviews. One was from a student I had worked with when he was in high school. The other one was from my youngest son. Both reviews are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Comments on the Inuvialuktun One App



Note. First comment reads, “Learning my language. I’m happy to try and learn Inuvialuktun on my own” and second comment reads “That’s my nannuk.”

I was surprised to see my son’ comment. I knew that we used the app to learn the language, but perhaps did not fully appreciate the importance of digital connections as it relates to people separated by physical distance from not only family, but also culture. These comments continue to encourage me to consider the ways in which technology can help support language learning and connection to land and culture even when young people are far away from their home communities. Recently, these ideas were reinforced by two tweets from Inuit artists, which I provide in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Tweet Promoting Restoration of Indigenous Languages



These tweets serve as reminders that lost Indigenous languages is not an accident, but part of a federal plan enacted across Canada. Moreover, they point to the need to replace guilt and shame with curiosity, while emphasizing the importance of using any and all opportunities to learn and restore Indigenous languages.

Displacing Cognitive Imperialism

In the final chapter-story that I share here, *Displacing Cognitive Imperialism*, I began with the following excerpt: “Reclaiming, recovering, restoring, and renewing Indigenous peoples’ rights, which includes Indigenous knowledges and languages, is a revisionist educational project of great magnitude” (Battiste, 2017, p. 161). I combined a series of quotes from *Decolonizing Education*, with learning stories of Dennis Allen and my son, Brent, who share the same Inuvialuktun name, Anaktuuq. In several short video clips, Dennis shares what he learned from his dad and teaching his own children on the land (Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8

Screenshot of Links to Allen's video, My Father, My Teacher



Note. Image copyright by Denis Allen. Source: <https://youtu.be/MSmGDuMXKgQ>. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 9

Screenshot of Links to Allen's video



Note. Image copyright by Dennis Allen. Source from National Film Board of Canada: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/crazywater>. Reproduced with permission.

I contrast the stories of learning through practice on the land, captured in video and shared online, with Brent's description of school. In a blog post, he wrote that "school is like a prison. You have no power and have no say in what happens around you. It is a system that is awfully designed because they force everyone to learn the same stuff" (B. Elias in T. Elias, 2017, para. 4). Learning, both on the land and within digital places/spaces offers alternatives and opportunities to give students, both young and old, power back. I suggest that perhaps by connecting the two through curation, there is additional power.

Supporting Complicated *and* Necessary Conversations

Building the website project described here was part reflection, part experimentation. As discussed throughout this paper, I wanted to explore ways that settlers might begin to engage and draw in Indigenous voices and practices without universalizing or requiring more labour from them. It was perhaps not an accident that I built this site while in class with mostly white teachers, struggling with ways in which to teach "about Indigenous" topics while feeling that they did not possess sufficient knowledge to do so. I imagined a class of children working together to find examples of local Indigenous people bringing to life the ideas of Indigenous scholars, engaging in a holistic, experiential, and communal act of drawing in examples and voices,

adding their own reflections and learnings along the way. Because the site followed the framework established in *Decolonizing Education*, all of the curated resources were located using a simple Google search and it was built using freely available, relatively easy-to-use WordPress software, I believe such an activity would be more than possible.

I also thought about my oldest daughter who came home upset after her *Indigenous Issues in Nursing* class. She explained that an Elder had come in, but that all of the questions asked by her fellow students related to the Elder's experiences in residential school. Her classmates continued until the Elder was crying at the front of the class. She said, "Mom, there are lots of hard things about being Indigenous, but there are lots of great things too" (Caitlin Elias, personal communication). In our rush to bring Indigenous voices into educational spaces, I suggest that it is important that we do so in ways that do not cause further harm to individuals. Moreover, we must find ways to simultaneously capture the injustice and hardship *and* the great things. We must avoid our colonial tendencies to universalize and summarize "the facts" in textbooks, whether they be in print or online.

Based on the experimental website presented in this paper, I am increasingly confident that there are diverse Indigenous voices all around us, including in our digital places/spaces. Indigenous educational researchers, like the ones cited throughout this paper, have built frameworks that map the beginnings of a path forward. Indigenous filmmakers, Elders, youth, and artists are busy making content often primarily for Indigenous people. These Indigenous people have already done, and continue to do, the hardest work with respect to decolonization. It is (past) time that the rest of us, including educational technologists, do our own work to engage in and support the complicated *and necessary* conversations regarding decolonization.

Author's Contributions

Tanya Elias completed all research and writing for this article.

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Ethics approval was not applicable.

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The author does not declare any conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

No research data was gathered in the development of this project, except what is available/linked in the project website: <https://decolonizingeducation.trubox.ca/>

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