Addressing structural violence and systemic inequities in education: A qualitative study on Indigenous youth schooling experiences in Canada

Amanda C Wager
Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, BC, Canada

Jeffrey P Ansloos
Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada

Rachel Thorburn
Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada

Abstract
In this qualitative study we demonstrate the critical ways that Indigenous youth experience structural violence and systemic inequities in the context of education. In particular, this youth-engaged study explores three key themes regarding (1) the social ecologies of education, (2) curriculum, and (3) pedagogy. Considerations of how these issues factor substantially in Indigenous young peoples’ experiences of education in Canada are explained. The implications of our study point towards concrete changes needing to be addressed in the field of education to ensure that every student is reflected in the educational curriculum and supported to meet the needs of succeeding in a colonized world while still upholding Indigenous rights, traditions, identities and values.

Keywords
Indigenous youth, education, structural violence, systemic inequities, school environments, curriculum, learning, pedagogy, colonization

Corresponding author:
Amanda Claudia Wager, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University, 900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo, British Columbia, V9R 5S5, Canada.
Email: Amanda.Wager@viu.ca
Introduction

Now if they [teachers] were going to teach me about, you know, how to live within society and how to behave in society and how to be responsible in society, very much so. But they didn’t teach that. And so for me I found that somewhere else and so for me my education was, you know, was definitely, you know, being in foster care, moving around, being homeless, going through drugs, and having this shit happen to me, to me that was my learning. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

This study is based on interviews conducted with a group of Indigenous youth, including Todd above, who reflect on their experiences of education in Canada. As an individual who has experienced unhousing and learned from Indigenous Elders within his foster care home, Todd explains that learning needs to be reflective of his reality, his “reading of the world” (Freire, 1985; Freire and Macedo, 1987). All of the youth in the study were not engaged with, nor graduated from, formal programming in secondary education, and this led to a desire to better understand their formal educational experiences. Given the historical exclusion of Indigenous young people’s experiences from the field of education, we are interested in advancing Indigenous young people’s voices to the forefront of educational theory and practice in order to create actionable change for the future of education.

Throughout this article, we discuss Indigenous youth educational pathways in Canada, which are the youths’ trajectories moving through formal schooling institutions, both public and private. We also unpack ecological factors in relation to Indigenous youth educational inequity, including the history of Indigenous youth education in Canada. Drawing on decolonizing (Battiste, 2013), culturally sustaining (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris and Alim, 2017) and abolitionist (Love, 2019; Gebhard et al., 2022) scholars, we consider the importance of reconceptualizing Indigenous youth educational “dropout” (Fine, 1991; Tuck, 2008) through an ecological lens and reframing their experiences as resulting from structural violence and systemic inequities. Structural violence is the result of systematic ways that individuals or groups are blocked from equal access to basic needs by a social structure or institution (Galtung, 1969). This critical ecological framing of Indigenous youth education serves as a context for the present study, which draws on a contextualist approach to thematic analysis of qualitative interviews with a group of Indigenous youth. Within the interviews, we asked Indigenous young people to share stories of their experiences of systems and structures within education. We listened and analyzed the youth interviews for key themes that related to experiences of structural and systemic violence in education and the effects these experiences have had on their wellbeing and educational pathways.

The study yielded important findings regarding Indigenous young people’s experiences with structural violence and systemic inequities, which we organized around three key themes: (1) social ecologies of education (2) curriculum, and (3) pedagogy. Our discussion of these themes elucidates the present state of Indigenous education, including young peoples’ experiences of structural violence in education, and points us towards opportunities to strengthen Indigenous education. We hope that educational researchers in educational leadership, curriculum studies, teacher education, and Indigenous education reflect on the specific stories, experiences and research that stems from the lens of these three young Indigenous people—who did not have a typical K-12 trajectory—and share the findings with educators in the field to ensure that every student is reflected in the educational curriculum and supported to meet the needs of succeeding in a colonized world while still upholding Indigenous rights, traditions, identities and values.
Literature Review

Contexts of Indigenous Youth and Educational Pathways in Canada

Indigenous youth in Canada experience a number of social inequities and disparities in comparison to non-Indigenous students, and this is particularly true in the context of education. While these differences have been noted for some time in educational research (Smith et al., 2018), rarely are the social, environmental, political, and cultural dimensions of Indigenous young people’s educational pathways given serious consideration. In this section, we describe the current context of Indigenous youth educational pathways in Canada, drawing attention to what is known about inequities and the ecological factors shaping these inequities.

The evidence base for educational inequity in Canada for Indigenous youth tells the story of many young people being marginalized and oppressed by the Canadian education system. The Council of Ministers of Education Canada (2016) reported that 40% of 20- to 24-year-old Indigenous youth and 33% of Indigenous people ages 25–54 had not completed secondary school. In contrast, the rest of the Canadian population had an 89% graduation rate. The generational impact of this results in less Indigenous youth entering and completing postsecondary school. This has profound implications for further structural and social inequities, as low educational attainment has been linked to decreased opportunities for jobs and entry into the Canadian workforce (Statistics Canada, 2007). Lack of employment for Indigenous young people often translates into economic insecurity (Hossain and Lamb, 2019). Poverty is a primary structural driver for social inequality, including educational attainment (Nolan and Ive, 2011).

This trend of inequity reflects a large difference between secondary school completion between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, suggesting that the current western-based educational system discredits, ignores and overlooks Indigenous communities by not incorporating the traditions, perspectives and identities of the students and communities they come from. However, there is a positive view forward that graduation numbers may increase as educational curriculum begins to interweave and include culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Paris and Alim, 2017), such as the province of British Columbia’s First Peoples Principles of Learning that educators are incorporating into their curriculum (https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/instructional-samples/first-peoples-principles-learning).

Research is needed to better understand Indigenous educational pathways to deconstruct and analyze the systemic issues of educational inequalities and the ecological factors shaping these inequities. Specifically, research from the lens of young Indigenous people with lived experience in the educational system may create possibilities for Indigenous rights-based approaches to education.

Ecological Factors in Indigenous Youth Educational Inequity in Canada

The social inequities within Canada for Indigenous young people, especially relating to educational attainment and success, include a variety of ecological factors such as age, gender, and geographic location. Place is particularly relevant in consideration of Indigenous youth educational attainment (Ciceri and Scott, 2006; Hull, 2005; Kapsalis, 2006; Mendelson, 2004, 2006; Senécal, 2007; Richards, 2008, 2011) with variation by geographic region (the west, the north, the maritimes), by jurisdiction (i.e., the provinces and territories), by local population density, and by location. Youth in rural, northern, remote, and urban environments experience particular ecological challenges, and there are further complications associated with movement from rural, northern and remote...
communities to the urban environment (Phillips, 2008). A large population of Indigenous youth move to and live in urban areas due to more job opportunities, post-secondary education opportunities and access to more services. For other youth, relocation is a product of emerging housing and economic precarity in rural contexts.

For young people moving to the urban environment, issues of housing transitions frequently cause disruptions to school experiences (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008; Phillips, 2008); as well as other social, relational and psychological challenges (Fulford, 2006). In consequence, urban Indigenous youth are more likely than their non-Indigenous peers to exit high school, and less likely to engage in postsecondary education (Battiste, 2002, 2005). Given that ecological factors such as place have such powerful effects on Indigenous educational pathways, it is important that we develop a more nuanced understanding of their functioning through youth voices of their experiences. This results in a need for descriptive research that considers how ecological factors such as age, gender, and place function, especially intersecting with power structures of education.

Histories of Indigenous Youth Education in Canada

Historically situating the structure of the public school system in Canada demonstrates how educational practices for Indigenous young people have always been rooted within colonial epistemes and enact various forms of structural violence. The effects of Indian residential schools, and their institutional successors in the public education system, have been central to the historical and ongoing cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples. Understanding the relationship between well documented historical structures and technologies of colonial oppression, and that of the contemporary public schooling system, is central in both interpreting the negative effects of colonialism, as well as understanding the resilience and resistance that Indigenous young people have participated in towards their own freedom and liberation.

Educational systems in the history of Canada have a long colonial history in relationship to Indigenous peoples. In the 1600s, even prior to the formation of Canada as an independent nation-state, missionaries began establishing schools with the aim to convert and assimilate Indigenous peoples into Christianity and colonial societies. These religious run schools were in operation well before Canadian confederation in 1867. With the formation of Canada’s racial apartheid legislation, first in the Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian in 1869, and later in the Indian Act of 1876, the federal government established legislative power in order to mandate attendance of Indigenous children to Indian Residential Schools. These schools were largely run through religious denominations, as well as through the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, well into the late 1990s (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

In total, over 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children attended residential schools, which from their early days were structured in a manner to achieve cultural assimilation of Indigenous nations into the body politic of the emerging settler-colonial society through the separation of children from their families and immersion within colonial culture (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), as well as genocide of Indigenous peoples as seen from the thousands of unmarked graves at residential school sites across the nation (MacDonald, 2021). In 1847, the then Canadian superintendent for Education was Egerton Ryerson, often lauded for the creation of the contemporary public school education system in Canada. He suggested that Indian Residential Schools would be an effective form of education for Indigenous peoples with a focus on religious instruction and agricultural training (Semple, 2007). At that point, public education was not seen as a context that would or could include Indigenous peoples and advance Indigenous
people’s welfare, while at the same time it was being largely advanced to increase the wider literacy and social welfare of settler descendent Canadians.

In the subsequent progression of educational policy in Canada, there has been a deep intermingling of the racial ideologies that promoted the Indian Residential Schools and the vision of public education in Canada. When Indigenous young people eventually became included in Canadian education, the assimilationist policies of the Indian Residential School system were reconstituted within contemporary educational systems through the centering of the English and French language, European curriculum, and the prominence of European culture (Cote-Meek, 2014).

In more recent educational paradigms informed by liberal multiculturalism educational ideas, where racism and ethnocentrism are repudiated, there is an emphasis on anthropological definitions of Indigenous culture, obscuring the political complexities of Indigenous people’s rights in Canada (McGregor, 2017). Research is urgently needed that centers Indigenous rights-based approaches to education and nuances our understanding of how culturally sustaining approaches to education at the level of teaching and learning might meaningfully be implemented. Furthermore, research is needed that stems from Indigenous youth voices, which have been frequently marginalized and oppressed within Canadian educational history.

Reconceptualizing Indigenous youth “dropout”

In documenting young people’s educational pathways, mainstream educational research often describes young people’s pre-graduation exits from formal education as youth “dropping-out of school” or “lacking educational attainment” (e.g., Balkis, 2018; Bowers and Sprott, 2012; Hickman et al., 2008; Jimerson et al., 2000; Ramsdal et al., 2015). This language comes with a complex history, as it is loaded with connotations that are negative, especially in the context of Indigenous education (Fine, 1991; Tuck, 2008). Reframing their experiences as resulting from structural violence and systemic inequities oppression is an alternate way of framing these pre-graduation exits. The emphasis here is not placed on the individual failings of students, but rather the structural oppression and violence created by and through generations of government policy, and more broadly, societal power relations framed by colonial history, that together create a forceful exclusion of Indigenous students from the education system. This concept has been explored by scholars using a variety of terminologies to describe educational inequities faced by Black and Indigenous students (Bazylak, 2002; Dei et al., 1997, 2000; Fine, 1991; Friedel, 2010; Runnels, 2007; Tuck, 2008; Wishart, 2009). Most notably, Dei (1997) characterized this process as “push-out.” In this section, we describe and synthesize issues and experiences of Indigenous youth in Canada in a way that reframes these pathways in larger structural terms of oppression in education in contemporary times.

Focusing on current educational curriculum and pedagogy across Canada, Indigenous ways of knowing—that is Indigenous epistemologies—are being integrated into some provinces’ curriculum (Campbell, 2004). Although this reflects progress in moving towards more diverse ways of learning that include culturally relevant, affirming, and sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris and Alim, 2017), as well as anti-racist (Dei, 2006), decolonizing (Battiste, 2013), and abolitionist education (Love, 2019), it also comes with many challenges. First, all schools do not follow this mandate and when they do it often looks more like cultural appropriation, the adoption of one culture’s traditions to the dominant culture, than a pedagogical tool. When there are attempts to interweave Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, Elders and Knowledge Keepers are sought out, or should be, to affirm that the protocols are being respected and taught in a sound manner. This puts overwhelming pressure on the few Elders and Knowledge Keepers who
can be funded, albeit very little funding, to share and collaborate with urban public school districts. Many times teachers, the majority white, are left with nobody to get feedback from and may misrepresent the knowledges.

For example, in British Columbia there is a BC First Nations Studies Teachers Guide that is being incorporated into Bachelor of Education Programs (Campbell, 2004), yet many teachers have little knowledge or training on how to incorporate this knowledge and traditions into their curriculum. There is a continuous need for Indigenous teachers and Elders to support non-Indigenous teachers in communities, putting pressure on specific Indigenous community members to share their knowledge, which is often sacred. At the same time, there continues to be resistance to the inclusion of Indigenous traditions in schools. For example, a white parent recently sued a school district, alleging that smudging was against her family’s Christian religious values (Troian, 2016). In provinces such as Quebec, there has been a push to change the curriculum, yet it is a slow and challenging process (Advisory Board on English Education, 2017).

The oppression and violence of Indigenous youth in education is much greater than this, as the structural systems that support the funding for education in Canada is what feeds into and impacts student dropout. Intergenerational structural oppressions and violence have occurred since the Indian Residential Schools were initiated. Currently this is reflected with the hiring of administration and teaching staff who are primarily and sometimes only white people who do not reflect the young people’s identities or communities and have no knowledge of their culture. In addition, a lack of funding for education has negatively impacted the size of the classroom, which impacts all students but especially those attending economically disadvantaged schools. Many classrooms are now overpopulated and underfunded, and there is not enough one-to-one support for students. Fine (1991) describes this deception as “equal opportunities mask unequal outcomes” (p. 24) because the facade created by those in power is that every young person has access to an education, yet what that education actually looks like in action does not serve all students equally.

There has been too much emphasis on the failings of individual young people in the school system, rather than the structural oppression and violence created by and through generations of government policy, and more broadly, societal power relations framed by colonial history. Research is needed beginning from an ecological analysis that explicitly considers structural drivers of educational inequity and that reckons the ways structural relations shape Indigenous young people’s experiences within systems of education.

**Methodology**

This youth-engaged, contextually informed, structurally reflective, and experientially descriptive case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) is based on a series of qualitative interviews conducted with three Indigenous youth about their educational experiences in Canadian schools. The interviews were embedded within a broader program of research, investigating multimodal literacies within alternative educational spaces among Indigenous youth living in Vancouver, Canada (Ansloos et al., 2022; Ansloos and Wager, 2021; Wager, 2014; Wager and Ansloos, 2020), originally funded by Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition, the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Partnering in Community Health Research, the UBC Division of Inner City Medicine, The Vancouver Foundation and Aboriginal People’s Health. This secondary study, *Arts-based social inquiry with street-involved youth*, was approved for ethics by the University of Toronto and was done in compliance with ethical standards set forth by the Tri-council Policy Statement 2 (2018), in particular with regards to research involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada.
Recruitment and Participants

The youth, or young people, in this study were recruited through a partnership with a youth-led grassroots advocacy group, Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition, and the University of British Columbia’s Partnership in Community Health Research. While eight young people were involved in the broader program of research and participated in qualitative interviews, four youth participated in additional in-depth qualitative interviews regarding their educational experiences. Of these four young people, three are Indigenous—Todd, Danielle, and Natasha—and their interviews are the basis of this particular study. All of these young people have lived experience in child welfare services, foster care, and living in precarious housing, and were between the ages of 18–28 years old at the time of interview. Todd is a Two-Spirit Indigenous man, Danielle is an Indigenous, White, and South Asian woman, and Natasha is an Indigenous woman. Todd grew up in foster care in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and lived on the streets of Vancouver at times. He spoke a lot during the interviews, as is reflected in his longer quotes in the results section. Danielle grew up in Alberta with her mother and then in foster care prior to hitchhiking to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia at 12 years old where she also lived on the street and in emergency underaged safe houses. Natasha, quiet and more reluctant to speak during the interviews, grew up in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in her parents’ home and then on the streets of Vancouver from 12 years onward. They all met in an underage safe house in Vancouver and were youth research assistants in the broader study.

The analysis of the broader program of research included co-analysis with youth participants, however, in this present study the analysis has been limited to the principal investigators (PI) with graduate student researchers. The research group consisted of the two PI’s (the first two authors), along with a team of five graduate student researchers, including the third author. The first author of this study is a Jewish Dutch-American immigrant settler in K’omoks First Nation territory. The second author of this study is a registered member of Fisher River Cree Nation and is of mixed Cree and English descent. The graduate student researchers who worked on this project come from diverse backgrounds with intersectional identities including Indigenous, Black, other communities of color and LGBTQ2S+.

Methods of Analysis

In order to better understand Indigenous young peoples’ experiences and critiques of schooling in Canada, in particular how they experience systems and structures of violence within education and the effects of these experiences on their wellbeing and educational trajectory, we focus on identifying key educational themes emerging across the participant interviews. We engaged in a thematic analysis of interview transcriptions of the three youth. The questions that were asked all surrounded their experiences in education. Thematic analysis was selected to conduct an inductive approach to the data, and to support the generation of knowledge regarding Indigenous young peoples’ experiences with educational systems. Drawing on a contextualist approach (Braun and Clark, 2006), we attended to both the subjective lived experiences of Todd, Danielle and Natasha, as reflected in their interviews, as well as the broader social dynamics in which their educational experience occurred. As such, we are attending to subjective meaning making, as well as the broader ecologies, bridging phenomenological and constructionist concerns.
Data Analysis Procedure

This study began with an initial stage of analysis that followed Braun and Clark’s (2006) method of repeated reading. During this initial stage, our research team reviewed transcriptions multiple times to become familiar with the interviews, to reflect on reactions to the content, and to take note of any initial formulations or structures. Next, the research team engaged in the second stage of analysis of a line-by-line coding process for each interview that highlighted intriguing ideas, critical comments, and information relevant to our general research questions. The third stage of the analysis organized the codes developed in the second stage into broader categories, or themes. This third stage included consensus-based decision-making and member-checking to coding. In the fourth stage, the research team considered how the themes, and their various coded data, spoke to both individual lived experience and broader social and educational ecologies of Indigenous youth, and the overall ways that the themes articulated knowledge regarding the key research questions. Descriptions of themes were then developed, and a selection of relevant examples from the transcription were selected to elucidate the content of the analysis.

Results

This study was guided by the research question: What are Indigenous young people’s experiences of the systems and structures of education in Canada? Our analysis produced three key themes including (1) social ecologies of education, (2) curriculum, and (3) pedagogy. Social ecologies of education refer to the socio-cultural milieu of exclusion in schooling contexts, such as lower expectations, lack of care, and absence of support. Curriculum refers to the skills, resources, and assessments that the school uses to reach the student learning goals. And pedagogy consists of both the theory and practice of teaching that can vary greatly depending on different social, cultural and political contexts. The following results provide greater detail of each of these three themes, highlighting the three Indigenous youth voices.

Social Ecologies of Education

In the context of school environments, youth in the study spoke of the various manifestations of inequities within their schooling experiences, as well as a general socio-cultural milieu of exclusion and marginalization for Indigenous students. In particular, the young people in this study identified social inequities that streamed from lower expectations, a lack of care, and absence of support from teachers and administrators, as well as broader social factors such as transportation between foster cares and schools.

For example, students sensed a general lower expectation of them by faculty, on the basis of class and/or disability status, as well as perceived a lack of support for the complexity of being a young person negotiating systems of care, as expressed by Danielle (2012, personal communication):

then I went to alternative school for grade 9 but I didn’t finish grade 9. Well I did but I didn’t. I was only there for six months and they were like it’s fine, you can just pass cause they didn’t want me at the school. And then they wanted me to go to a different school and then I just didn’t go to school.

The youth participants also described their relationships with most teachers as having little depth or connection. They were often pushed along through the system, from grade-level to grade-level, without being supported in meeting expectations, as Natasha describes
Interviewer: Like when you think of school, what do you remember?

Natasha: They always put me in easier classes. (Natasha, 2012, personal communication)

The young people were often bullied by peers and the school staff’s lack of engagement in the youth’s success, also seen as caring for the youth, was reflected in their failure to address issues of bullying.

But you know I think it was just the fact that, you know, being teased for who I was didn’t help anything. And then in high school just the fact of you know there’s a lot of racism going on in our school … But I think, I think also teachers could do something about it and I think a lot of times teachers look the other way and I think that doesn’t make it a safe place. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

They also experienced the impact of institutional inequalities, such as repercussions due to detentions and suspensions:

You had to like fight a lot, like I’d get into like fights and get expelled, not expelled but suspended like in-school suspensions. (Danielle, 2012, personal communication).

One unexpected finding of the research was the significant lack of care students experienced in the school environment related to learning disabilities. One youth’s educational disengagement in formal education was often connected to a lack of support for his learning disability and therefore low expectations from teachers. Todd explains below how as a student with a learning disability, he was assumed to be unable to proceed to higher education and was frequently passed through courses despite not achieving the learning goals of the course as opposed to being provided proper accommodations:

...then my brain just shuts down, it just doesn’t want to concentrate on the work in hand and like I remember in grade 8 math I did the work, I showed the work, it was never right, but I think because I showed the work, I passed but it’s weird how I passed because my final percentage was 18.6%. … but you know in a sense I think for me I would have rather repeated Math 8 and actually kept doing it until I actually passed it. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

Further, all youth indicated that their self-perception and sense of capacity, confidence, and potential was shaped negatively by the perceived absence of support throughout their teens. However, as adults they referenced the important protective role of having peers and other social relationships with individuals who could model other possibilities, be a mentor and lead them down the road of being mentors for other youth in care and living on the street, which two of them were at the time of the interviews. Natasha expresses this here:

to help [other youth on the streets], because they’re almost ready to make that transition from foster care to adulthood, and so making sure that that transition into adulthood, it runs smoothly, and that they have the right skills and the life skills that, uh, in place so that when they do turn 19, they’re not gonna land flat on their face, and that, you know, welfare is not an option, that they have a good paying job to support them and that they’re able to, you know, to go get a paycheck of about 800 bucks and actually learn how to spend that wisely. (Natasha, 2012, personal communication)
Overall, a key dynamic was the issue of safety in schools. Young people identified experiences of victimization and exposure to bullying and violence. As well, students identified schools as behaviorally punitive, in relation to issues of detention, suspension, and expulsion. The impact of the school environments led to disengagement, push-out and exiting from formal school systems.

**Curriculum**

The young people in the study described a desire for the school curriculum to have more connection to their everyday lives, which included life skills and connection to their cultural roots. They explained that they often did not find a connection to what they were learning in the classroom to what they were experiencing out of school, either during that time or in thinking about the skills that they would need for their futures.

Todd shares below how he felt he was not being taught skills to help him survive:

> I think that if you surrounded [the curriculum] around, um, what is relevant, what is important, um, especially with what a lot of youth face today and what a lot of youth are seeing in society, um, you know, like for example learning about the history of homelessness, you know, or learning about the history of addiction, you know, um, you know I think something that people see, you know, the history say of poverty, you know. I think if it’s something relevant and something that actually we’re still seeing in society, um, I think it’s gonna make a huge difference in say someone like me who’s going to school. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

Natasha said she preferred probation school to her traditional educational experiences because it was more relevant to life skills she felt she needed:

> They actually went out to do stuff, activities, not like for school but for activities...where you get paid to work for cutting grass and stuff (Natasha, 2012, personal communication).

Participants in the study also commented on the ways that school curriculum is entangled within the broader structural dynamics of colonial power and epistemologies which center whiteness, Christianity and settler Canadian nationalist identity. Danielle, who was the one participant that was sent to a private school, explained,

> There was another private school I went to that was like an all Christian private school for elementary for awhile. I didn’t like that one either because they were like, they were extremists. I was living with this family that was just like the mom was kind of like a psycho, not really but she was just an extremist Christian and she just didn’t like me and she was like ‘you’re a bad influence on my kids’ and I wasn’t really doing anything, I was just kind of just me. (Danielle, 2012, personal communication)

She also commented on the ritualized practices of school systems, such as the national anthem.

> When I was younger, we used to like have to stand up by our desks and sing a Canadian anthem. (Danielle, 2012, personal communication)

The participants highlighted the implicit assimilationist nature of their experiences, often being confronted with and expected to internalize familiar colonial, racial, and national tropes, with the exclusion of their lived experiences and histories as Indigenous peoples. This is reflected as a further
push to assimilate to the dominant white cultural values of settler society. As such, these young people highlight a type of normativity within the educational curriculum which precludes not only their own lives, and histories, but that of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada. The nature of settler nationalism and the Catholic/Christian religion has undertowed schools historically, as within the Indian Residential Schools, and, as evidenced by these youth, still does today.

Although participants commented that there were improvements to the educational system since they were in public schools (for e.g., Todd explained that Elders are now being invited into elementary and secondary schools), they discussed that there was still room for improvement especially in consideration of culturally sustaining practices:

And for me I’d rather learn growing up and growing, and I guess later on in life living with my last foster mom as I did, that I was able to learn from my grandma, I was able to learn from my foster mom and her family and the Elders in her family, um, that I find that it’s easier to learn from actual people who have heard it from their parents and from their grandparents as opposed to a textbook and to me I think textbooks don’t really tell the whole story and the whole picture. And I don’t really think that teachers are really that educated in adapting what happened in the history as opposed to talking to an Elder where you’re gonna get more of the story of, and the whole picture. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

As noted in the previous theme, the role of evaluation within formal education, such as testing and assessment to move on to other grade levels was not emphasized for these youth by most teachers, as they wanted to get the youth through their classrooms quickly. The youth in response were often disengaged with the curriculum due to the lack of personalized learning, where teaching occurs dependent on each learners needs. In the interviews they emphasized the importance of experiential learning, especially looking to the future, which ties with and is demonstrated in the following “pedagogy” theme.

**Pedagogy**

Young people in this study consistently raised the issue of pedagogy, or the praxis of teaching, as a key factor in their experiences of educational systems. Specifically, they highlighted that the overreliance on more traditional and standard approaches often felt formulaic, and at times uninteresting and disengaged from the day-to-day concerns facing them as young people. They spoke about the ways a lack of experiential learning diminished their educational experience. For example, Danielle shared that she believed education should be more hands-on:

It needs to be enhanced differently a lot at school because there’s a lot of different leaders and most of the time it’s lecture or like, or like there is hands-on but there’s like hands-on where you’re doing science or hands-on when you’re doing like social studies or something. When you’re like making models and stuff like that so there is some hands-on but I think most of it’s, school can become pretty like, I don’t know, it was never something I liked. (Danielle, 2012, personal communication)

Natasha mentions the importance of incorporating movement, often used in arts-based learning, throughout daily teaching:

[Movement would] probably be better because they’re not sitting around all day...it might help them keep them focused maybe a little bit more....It’s not one where you have to sit there and sit there and look
at a book all day. Cause I’m not one to sit there and read all day. (Natasha, 2012, personal communication).

Danielle also highlighted that outdoor classes and discussion-based practices would have been beneficial for her:

Yeah, I think that it would be really cool if we could have classes outside sometimes....I would try to like have classes outside, stuff like that, especially for just going over things that are in a book. Like you know what I mean? Then like yeah it could be more discussion based and stuff like that. (Danielle, 2012, personal communication).

Natasha shared that she believed probation school was a better fit for her because it was tailored to students who did not thrive in a formal learning environment:

Cause I think it was probation school that helped where it had more people [to talk with], a lot of kids that didn’t have a long attention span in school (Natasha, 2012, personal communication).

The young people in the study infer that a one-size-fits-all approach undercuts diversity of student needs and experience. There was a general sense that pedagogical approaches within education attend to certain forms of skill and capacity mastery but failed to attend to the contextual needs of each student. Those teachers that honored each student, the necessity for a student-teacher relationship, and made efforts to connect with the youth, demonstrated higher expectations in what they were learning and for the young people to take on responsibilities.

And I know for me, I had teachers who respected me for who I was and respected the fact that I’m not smart and that there’s no need to, you know, pick on the person who isn’t educationally smart. But you know I thank God for the fact that throughout high school that I had a class every day that I could go to where I had that support or where I had that help. And I think that was probably the best part of going to school. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

They purposefully used a pedagogy that surrounded the interests of their students, focused on teacher-family relations, and held students to high standards. The teachers that put the effort into relationship-building and evaluation were the ones that the youth remembered as their mentors.

There was the special learning assistance class. Um, and the teacher who led that program is like by far the awesome-ist, awesome-ist person that you can ever possibly find and he just really cared about the students and cared for their success and I think for me to be in that class I think really helped me to get through high school ... (Todd, 2012, personal communication)

Overall, young people spoke to the need for a more highly student-centered and contextually reflexive and relevant approach to teaching.

I think that was the best part of going to school was him [the teacher] and you know there was times where, you know, we would leave and you know during our seven-minute break we would go and you know smoke a joint and we’d come back and he’d be like, like he would know exactly what we did and there was no lying to him but you know if we came to school with no lunch he would buy us lunch. (Todd, 2012, personal communication)
While at times venturing beyond the scope of assumed teacher activities, these young people highlighted the importance of educators extending themselves to show up for the material needs of students, not being preoccupied with behavioral surveillance, and instead focusing on authentic presence, and making students feel cared for and safe.

Discussion

While environmental factors of risk for educational precarity for Indigenous youth are well documented (Ciceri and Scott, 2006; Hull, 2005; Kapsalis, 2006; Mendelson, 2004, 2006; Phillips, 2008; Richards, 2008, 2011; Senècal, 2007), the study findings makes clear a dynamic tension exists for Indigenous youth in their lived experiences of education that reflects upon the broader colonial dynamics of Indigenous life in Canada. In order to reduce harm to themselves and their families, and survive within colonial power matrices—the political, social, economic, and environmental reality of day-to-day life—Indigenous peoples are forced to navigate structures and systems of education which are culturally disenfranchising. As Ermine (2007) has suggested, this disenfranchisement is systemic and “fracture[s] Indigenous ways of knowing” (p. 196).

Affective Relationships: The Social Ecologies of Education

Our study reveals that the affective relationship to these systems and structures of formal education are complex. There exists a pervasive negative relationship between Indigenous youth and formal educational structures and systems for reasons that are often rooted in concerns about racism, ethnocentrism, coloniality, and the irrelevance of these structures to Indigenous communities. For instance, white educators are estimated to make up between 71 and 96% of teachers across Canada (Ryan et al., 2009) and 85% of the teaching force in the United States (Howard, 2016). For decades, research has demonstrated that white educators are not always well-equipped to teach students from different racial backgrounds (Dei, 1994; Delpit, 2006; Evans-Williams and Hines, 2020; Howard, 2016; Wager and Schroeter, 2021) because Black, Indigenous, and other students of color dropout and are pushed-out of schools that fail to meet their needs in alarming numbers (Codjo, 2001; Fine, 1991). These findings demonstrate what others have identified among Indigenous post-secondary students, that there are real affective challenges to Indigenous pathways to education that can result from unsupportive and colonial educational experiences (Hop Wo et al., 2019). At the same time, our study highlights how positive experiences in these systems and structures are almost always linked to positive relational experiences with staff in schools who show care for the young people.

Relationally, young people make clear the importance of educator-student relations being characterized by a mutual respect, care, and support. These findings are consistent with the work of Pidgeon et al. (2014), which emphasizes the importance of mentoring and supportive relationships between educators and learners being a key indicator for Indigenous educational success. Specifically, young people in our study cited the importance of meeting practical and material needs, as well as seeing educators as an integral support to their life at and beyond school, be that in the midst of co-curricular, extra-curricular, or community-based activities. Further, educational systems afford the opportunity to generate structures and environments that can provide a degree of consistency, predictability, and security for students in the midst of otherwise complex circumstances, which Indigenous youth in this study view positively towards their pathways in education.
Expertise to Succeed in a Colonized World: The Missing Curriculum

A tension in our findings also surfaced that while Indigenous youth critiqued, questioned and argued for resisting participation in formal educational systems, they also recognized participation as pragmatic and materially advantageous for survival and thriving. However, that survival and thriving was always in light of Indigenous life under capitalist and colonial regimes. For example, there was a recognition that education transitions from primary through secondary through post-secondary education led towards some social and economic security, and that being marginalized within these systems, or excluded from them, led to precarity and disadvantage. Although the skills incorporated into formal education led to necessary expertise to succeed in a colonized world, Indigenous knowledges and traditions were almost missing from education.

The young people in this study reflected on how their educational histories were not reflective of their realities, and were entangled within the broader structural dynamics of colonial power, where epistemologies centered around whiteness, Christianity and a settler Canadian nationalist identity. They highlighted how their lived experiences as Indigenous peoples were excluded from the curriculum, their everyday learning and the general pedagogy of education. A one-size-fits-all approach, oftentimes surrounding traditional and standardized curriculum and learning (British Columbia Curriculum 2020; Manitoba Education 2020), failed to reflect their educational needs and further their engagement in schooling. At worst, it made them feel unsafe in the school environment.

Multiple Forms of Knowledge: Pedagogy

This study also reflected how youth have many responsibilities in their lives beyond schooling. In today’s society, young people can find themselves overextended with commitments to family, work, education, civic engagement, and extra-curricular activities. With all these outside commitments and due to differences in race, age, class, gender, and culture, it can be difficult for them to find a comfortable space to connect to what is being taught to their lives and to understand the need to learn what is not directly relevant. Young people’s education is shaped by the spaces in which they live, such as by home, work, school, peers, communities and their raced, aged, classed, and gendered lives. This shaping of education knowledge and the reciprocal process of learning brings learners “funds of knowledge” to the learning environment, these being the different skills and expertise that they each individually bring to the learning spaces (González et al., 2011; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Mahiri, 2004; Moll, 1992). These multiple forms of knowledge are an example of how the curriculum should be collaboratively written with students, a process in-the-making, as each learner comes with different gifts.

Our study makes the strong case that quality education for Indigenous young people, and indeed all young people, will include an abundance of experiential learning where the learning is student-centered. A strong trustworthy teacher-student relationship is the first building block for any further learning to happen. These strong relationships are what the young people reflected on remembering most and those teachers are who they considered their life mentors, opening up pathways to successful education. A teacher as a mentor is someone who can support a student through diverse experiences and can teach life skills to young people while still holding high expectations. A focus in teacher education on this need for mentorship, as well as teaching teacher candidates culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012) serves students of all backgrounds while supporting and reflecting the needs of the community.

In contrast to the colonial educational paradigm, first enacted in residential schools, and extended into the contemporary policies and practices of public education in Canada, Indigenous peoples
have always had, and continue to generate effective and culturally sustaining approaches to education, which include cultural ways of knowing and arts-based approaches to education such as weaving, wood-carving, dancing, drumming, and singing. These approaches to education are not static, and have contextually evolved, but have been conceptually described by various Indigenous scholars, in terms of praxis, that is, an integration of Indigenous educational epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies. This is the educational pathway that Indigenous youth are seeking—one which nourishes their cultural connection and wellbeing.

Conclusion

In this study, we have demonstrated the critical ways that Indigenous youth experience structural violence and systemic inequities in the context of education. We conclude through reflection of these three Indigenous youth voices that there has been too much emphasis on the individual and the schools, rather than the structural oppression and violence created by and through government policies, and broader, societal power relations framed by and throughout colonial history. More research is needed which begins from an ecological analysis that explicitly considers structural drivers of educational inequity, and that questions the ways structural relations shape Indigenous young people’s experiences within systems of education. The implications of our study are important in that they point towards concrete changes that need to be addressed in the field of education echoed through these Indigenous young people. These changes center the importance of the learner-teacher relationship and uphold Indigenous rights, traditions, identities and values so that every student is reflected in the educational curriculum and supported to meet the needs of succeeding in a colonized world.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to extend their gratitude to the youth leaders and youth participants who engaged in this study and advocated for structural change for the next generation of youth.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iDs

Amanda C Wager https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8693-3025
Jeffrey P Ansloos https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8732-9092

Notes

1. There is no one official definition of Indigenous peoples worldwide (World Health Organization, 2007). For the purposes of this study, “Indigenous” is used to refer to peoples with roots in ancestral lands predating colonial invasion and the resulting nation-state boundaries. In Canada, Indigenous peoples are defined by the constitution as First Nations, Métis peoples, and Inuit (Government of Canada, 1982).
2. The current education system in Canada encompasses publicly funded schools, privately funded schools and federally funded First Nations schools. Education is a provincial responsibility, not a federal one, so there are some differences in the education systems of each province. Typically, there is an optional kindergarten program for children ages four to five, and all children begin Grade 1 at age six. Secondary schools go up to Grade 11 or 12, and from there students have the option to attend post-secondary studies (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2016; Friesen and Krauth, 2012). None of the youth in this study attended First Nations schools because they lived in urban areas off-reserve. All of them attended provincially publicly funded schools, and one, Danielle, attended a private Christian elementary school.

3. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the youth.

References

Advisory Board on English Education (2017) Indigenous Education: Walking on Both Sides of the River. In: Report for the Minister of Education and Higher Education Government of Quebec. Canada, March.

Ansloos JP and Wager AC (2021) Surviving in the cracks: A qualitative study with Indigenous youth on homelessness and applied community theatre. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 33(1): 50–65.

Ansloos J P, Wager AC and Dunn NS (2021) Preventing Indigenous youth homelessness in Canada: A qualitative study on structural challenges and upstream prevention in education. *Journal of Community Psychology*. 50(4), 1918–1934. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22691

Balkis M (2018) Academic amotivation and intention to school dropout: the mediation role of academic achievement and absenteeism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 38(2): 50–65.

Battiste M (2005) State of Aboriginal Learning: Background Paper for the National Dialogue on Aboriginal Learning, 13–14 November 2005. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning.

Battiste M (2013) *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. Purich Publishing.

Battiste M, Bell L and Findlay LM (2002) Decolonizing education in Canadian universities: An interdisciplinary, international, Indigenous research project. *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 26(2): 82–201.

Bazylak D (2002) Journeys to success: Perceptions of five female Aboriginal high school graduates. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*.

Bowers A and Sprott R (2012) Examining the Multiple Trajectories Associated with Dropping Out of High School: A Growth Mixture Model Analysis. *The Journal of Educational Research* 105(3): 176–195.

Braun V and Clark V (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77–101.

British Columbia Curriculum (2020) BC’s New Curriculum. Available at: https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/ (accessed on 3 November 2020).

Campbell K (2004) *B.C First Nations Studies Teacher’s Guide*. Vancouver, B.C: Pacific Educational Press, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia.

Canadian Council on Learning (2008) *Students on the Move: Ways to Address the Impact of Mobility Among Aboriginal Students*. Ottawa, ON: Author. http://en.copian.ca/library/research/ccl/students_on_the_move/students_on_the_move.pdf

Ciceri C and Scott K (2006) The determinants of employment among Aboriginal peoples. In: White JP, Wingert S and Maxim P (eds), *Aboriginal Policy Research: Moving Forward, Making a Difference*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 3, pp. 3–34.

Codjoe HM (2001) Fighting a ‘Public Enemy’ of Black academic achievement—the persistence of racism and the schooling experiences of Black students in Canada. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 4(4): 343–375.

Cote-Meek S (2014) *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma and Resistance in Post Secondary Education*. Canada, Fernwood Publishing: Critical Books for Critical Thinkers.
Council of Ministers of Education Canada (2016) *Canada’s Education Systems*. Retrieved February 26, 2021 from https://www.cicic.ca/docs/PTeducation/Canada-s-Education-Systems-PDF.pdf

Dei GJS (1994) Afrocentricity: A cornerstone of pedagogy. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 25: 3–28.

Dei GJS (2006) We cannot be color-blind”: Race, antiracism, and the subversion of dominant thinking. In: Ross EW (ed), *Racism and Antiracism in Education*. Praeger, pp. 25–42.

Dei G, Mazzuca J, McIsaack E, et al. (1997) *Reconstructing ‘Dropout’: A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students’ Disengagement from School*. University of Toronto Press. Retrieved February 25, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/9781442679078

Dei GJS, Hall BL and Rosenberg DG (2000) *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Published in association.

Delpit L (2006) *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. The New Press.

Ermine W (2007) The Ethical Space of Engagement. *Indigenous Law Journal* 6(1): 193–203.

Evans-Winters VE and Hines DE (2020) Unmasking white fragility: How whiteness and white student resistance impacts anti-racist education. *Whiteness and Education* 5(1): 1–16.

Fine M (1991) *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Freire P (1985) Reading the world and reading the word: An interview with Paulo Freire. *Language Arts* 62(1): 15–21.

Freire P and Macedo D (1987) *Reading the Word and the World*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey.

Friedel T (2010) *The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Challenge of Identity for Native Students in Canada*. Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry.

Friesen J and Krauth B (2012) *Key Policy Issues in Aboriginal Education: An Evidence-Based Approach*. In: *Report: Council of Ministers of Education*. Canada.

Fulford G (2006) Sharing our success: More case studies in Aboriginal schooling. In: *Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education*.

Galtung J (1969) Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*. 6(3): 167–191.

Gebhard A, McLean S and St. Denis V (2022) White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in the Helping Professions. Fernwood Press.

Gonzalez N, Wyman L and O’Connor B (2011) The past, present, and future of funds of knowledge. In: Levinson BAU and Pollock M (eds), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Education*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 481–494.

Government of Canada (1982) Constitution act.

Gutierrez KD, Baquedano-Lopez P, Alvarez H, et al. (1999) Building a culture of collaboration through hybrid language practices. *Theory Into Practice* 38: 87–93.

Hickman G, Bartholomew M, Mathwig J, et al. (2008) Differential Developmental Pathways of High School Dropouts and Graduates. *The Journal of Educational Research* 102(1): 3–14.

Hop Wo NK, Anderson KK, Wylie L, et al. (2019) The prevalence of distress, depression, anxiety, and substance use issues among Indigenous post-secondary students in Canada. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 57(2): 263–274.

Hossain B and Lamb L (2019) Economic Insecurity and Psychological Distress Among Indigenous Canadians. *The Journal of Developing Areas* 53: 1–125. DOI: 10.1353/jda.2019.0007

Howard GR (2016) *We Can’t Teach what We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. Teachers College Press.

Hull J (2005) *Post-secondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes Canada, 2001*. Winnipeg: Prologica Research Inc.

Jimerson S, Egeland B, Sroufe LA, et al. (2000) A Prospective Longitudinal Study of High School Dropouts Examining Multiple Predictors Across Development. *Journal of School Psychology* 38(6): 525–546.
Kapsalis C (2006) *Occupational and Skills Parity of Aboriginal Canadians*. Hull: Aboriginal Affairs Directorate, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Ladson-Billings G (2014) Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review* 84(1): 74–84.

Love BL (2019) *We Want to Do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Beacon Press.

Macdonald B (2021) ‘Canada’s Responsibility’: Trudeau Responds to Report of Unmarked Graves at Residential School Site. CBC. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-responds-marieval-residential-school-discovery-1.6078601

Mahiri J (2004) *What They Don’t Learn in School: Literacy in the Lives of Urban Youth*. Peter Lang.

Manitoba Education (2020) Curriculum Kindergarten to Grade 12. Available at: https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ (accessed on 3 November 2020).

Mendelson M (2004) *Aboriginal People in Canada’s Labour Market: Work and Unemployment, Today and Tomorrow*. Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

Mendelson M (2006) *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*. Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

Moll LC (1992) Literacy research in community and classrooms: A sociocultural approach. In: Beach R, Green JL, Kamil ML, et al. (eds), *Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Literacy Research*. National Conference on Research in English & National Council of Teachers of English Urbana, IL, pp. 211–244.

Nolan B and Ive M (2011) Economic Inequality, Poverty, and Social Exclusion. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Inequality*. Oxford University Press.

Paris D (2012) Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher* 41(3): 93–97.

Paris D and Alim HS (2017) *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*. Teachers College Press.

Phillips S (2008) Forging partnerships, opening doors: Community school case studies from Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Kelowna, BC: SAEE.

Pidgeon M, Archibald J and Hawkey C (2014) Relationships matter: Supporting Aboriginal graduate students in British Columbia, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 44(1): 21.

Ramsdal G, Bergvik S and Wynn R (2015) Parent–child attachment, academic performance and the process of high-school dropout: a narrative review. *Attachment & Human Development* 17(5): 522–545.

Richards J (2008) *Closing the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal Education Gaps*. Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute. (No. 116).

Richards J (2011) *Aboriginal Education in Quebec: A Benchmarking Exercise*. Toronto: CD Howe Institute. (No. 382).

Runnels S (2007) *I’m Still Learning: The Lived Experience of Disengagement from School of Five Young Aboriginal Women*. Masters thesis. Canada: Queens University.

Ryan J, Pollock K and Antonelli F (2009) Teacher diversity in Canada: Leaky pipelines, bottlenecks, and glass ceilings. *Canadian Journal of Education* 32(3): 591–617.

Semple N (2007) Egerton Ryerson In: *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Available at https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/egerton-ryerson (accessed on 3 November 2020).

Senécal S (2007) Employment, Industry and Occupations of Inuit in Canada, 1981–2001. Ottawa: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Research and Analysis Directorate, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Smith LT, Tuck E and Yang KW (eds), *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View* (2018). Routledge.
Stake R (1995) *The Art of Case Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Statistics Canada (2007) Employment Rates, by Educational Attainment. Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/2008001/section07-education-eng.htm (accessed on 28 October 2020).

Troian M (2016) Smudging in public schools: Reconciliation or religious act? *CBC News* 28(October): 2020.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada. In: *Report: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*.

Tuck E (2008) *Gate-ways and Get-Aways: Urban Youth, School Push-Out, and the GED*. Doctoral Dissertation. NY, U.S.A: The City University of.

Wager AC (2014) Applied Drama as Engaging Pedagogy: Critical Multimodal Literacies with Street Youth. Canada: Doctoral Dissertation, University of British Columbia.

Wager AC and Ansloos JP (2021) Street Wisdom: A Critical Study on Youth Homelessness and Decolonizing Arts-Based Research. Routledge.

Wager AC and Schroeter S (2021) Critical inquiry through the arts: Ethical limitations of teaching process drama to educators. *ArtPraxis*, 8(1), 115–135.

Wishart D (2009) Dynamics of Education Policy and Practice for Urban Aboriginal Early School Leavers. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 55(4): 468–481.

World Health Organization (2007) *Fact Sheet: The Health of Indigenous Peoples*. Retrieved Feb 26 from: https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/factsheet-indigenous-health-nov2007-eng.pdf?ua=1

Yin R (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.