"Fuzzy Feet and The Skunk": Connecting Western and Indigenous Theories of Development and Learning Through Story

Nikki Yee, University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford Campus
Alicia D. Hiebert, Independent Scholar

Abstract:
This article looks at how Indigenous and Western perspectives on learning and development are interwoven and come into dialogue with one another to create supportive and inclusive classrooms for Indigenous (and all) students. We use a storytelling methodology to address this focus and offer a holistic approach to our analysis. Specifically, we provide a fictional story followed by an in-depth analysis to tease out how Indigenous students continue to experience racism and colonialism in schools and what theories of learning and development may offer in addressing these challenges. This article offers insight about how both practising teachers and teacher educators can build upon the wisdom of Indigenous ways of learning and Western educational practices to re-imagine inclusive classrooms that can support Indigenous (and all) learners.

Keywords: Indigenous education; educational psychology; inclusive education; storytelling methodology

« Pieds Flous et la moufette » : les théories d'apprentissage occidentales et autochtones racontées

Résumé :
Cet article réfléchit à la manière dont les perspectives autochtones et occidentales concernant le développement peuvent s'entremêler et entrer en dialogue pour créer des classes solidaires et inclusives pour les élèves autochtones (et tous). Nous utilisons une méthodologie narrative pour répondre à cet objectif et proposer une approche holistique à notre analyse. Plus précisément, nous partageons une histoire fictive suivie d'une analyse approfondie pour découvrir comment les élèves autochtones continuent d'être confrontés au racisme et au colonialisme dans les écoles, puis nous examinons ce que les théories de l'apprentissage et du développement peuvent offrir pour relever ces défis. Cet article offre un aperçu de la manière dont les enseignants et les formateurs d'enseignants peuvent s'appuyer sur la sagesse des méthodes d'apprentissage autochtones et des pratiques éducatives occidentales pour réinventer des classes inclusives qui peuvent soutenir les apprenants autochtones (et tous).

Mots clés : éducation autochtone; psychologie de l'éducation; éducation inclusive; méthodologie narrative

Diverse cultural perspectives can offer unique insights into learning. Despite a rich literature about development and learning from diverse Indigenous (Archibald, 2008; Cajete, 2011; Davidson & Davidson, 2018) and Western perspectives (Woolfolk et al., 2020), work is still needed to bring these ideas into dialogue with one another (Battiste, 2013; King et al., 2018). Importantly, this kind of dialogue may support an interrogation and re-imagination of colonial structures that continue to impact the educational experience of Indigenous learners (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Parent et al., 2021). This article uses story, following the methodological practice of several Indigenous scholars (Archibald, 2008; Kimmerer, 2013), to explore connections between learning theories from Indigenous epistemology and Western educational psychology. It is both about our own learning as scholars and educators, and about how learning might be understood in a way that opens generative possibilities for Indigenous (and all) students in inclusive classrooms. At the heart of this exploration lies a question: How might Indigenous and Western perspectives on learning and development work in concert to create supportive and inclusive educational contexts for all children?

In this article, we use the word "Indigenous" as a collective term referring to the culturally and linguistically diverse Nations of First Peoples in the place now known as Canada (Younging, 2018). As a result of Canada's colonial worldview, Indigenous perspectives have often been set in opposition to Western understandings (Donald, 2009). Our goal is to work beyond colonial boundaries and bring different perspectives into dialogue with one another. To recognize the rich diversity of cultures and nations that existed prior to settler colonialism, we refer to specific nations or cultural groups where possible.

We value the learning that can occur when diverse perspectives are brought together, perhaps as a result of our own lived experiences of diversity. At the time of writing, Alicia Hiebert, who is from a Red River Métis and settler French background, was a fourth-year university student, focusing her studies on Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and history, and working towards a career in education. Although Alicia's family is rooted in their Red River Métis culture, she has lived on the traditional and unceded territory of the Katzie (qʼicʼəy̓) First Nation all her life and has grown up listening to local Sto:lo stories. Nikki Yee is a settler scholar of Mennonite and Chinese descent whose work examines how teachers might best support Indigenous (and all) students in inclusive classrooms. She becomes increasingly committed to opening decolonizing possibilities the more she understands the complex operations of colonialism in Canadian society. In the fall of 2020, Alicia enrolled in Nikki's Introduction to Educational Psychology course at the University of the Fraser Valley, located on the unceded and traditional territory of the Stó:lō First Nations. In this course, Nikki wove together elements of Western educational psychology (such as Piaget, 1964; Erickson, 1980; and Kohlberg, 1981, as cited in the course textbook, Woolfolk et al., 2020) with diverse Indigenous perspectives on learning and development (such as those presented by Cajete, 2005; Canadian Council on Learning [CCL], 2007; and the Nunavut Department of Education, 2007). For Alicia, this approach shed new light on what it means to learn and teach. The diversity that plays so heavily into our lived experiences has led us to explore how to build from this strength in our investigation of teaching and learning.

In response to an assignment in this course, Alicia wrote a short story that brought this diversity of thought to life. The fictional story explores how learning through story can honour history and bring valuable knowledge into the classroom, as it follows an Indigenous student, Annie, in her struggles to transition from a rural to an urban educational setting. In this article, we share the story and provide a discussion of some of its main themes. We discuss challenges Indigenous students face in the educational system, as well as areas where Indigenous and Western theories of learning converge or diverge, and we make recommendations for creating inclusive classrooms. In this way, we hope to highlight the experiences of Indigenous learners, while extending both theoretical and practical knowledge on how to best support the learning and development of Indigenous (and all) students.

Alicia's Story

Context

My learning journey began like many others, learning from my parents and grandparents. I recall the stories read to me at bedtime and the stories my family told me, which ranged from Disney princesses to how our People came to the land and why we live by the river. Each story is embedded in my being with subtle whispers of deeper meaning. "Hansel and Gretel" played through my thoughts when walking alone in places unknown and fairy godmothers whispered in my ear when my teenage-self stayed out past midnight. Tricksters Coyote and Raven laughed at my mistakes, but stories of their strength led me to use my mind.[1] Stories of Lhilehqey guided me home, calling to me without words.[2] Stories of right and wrong, good and evil, were commandeered by the characters who faced similar struggles and who remained shadows in my mind, which flickered with hope, strength and guidance when I needed them to.

I was drawn to the energy that glistened in my grandmother's eyes when she told me of her past and I was intrigued by the playful and vibrant emotions that flowed from my dad's lips as he carefully fantasized legends of his own during walks through an old town or as we trudged through old-growth forests. As many Indigenous (Archibald, 2008; Johnson, 2022) and non-Indigenous (Bruner, 2002; Gottschall, 2012) authors explain, stories hold meaning, guidance, emotion and power. With this fascination for Indigenous oral tradition and holistic education, I crafted the following story, which I hope will guide others in their journey into a nuanced and inclusive understanding of learning and development that can be woven into the fabric of Canada's classrooms and teaching pedagogies.

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[1] Coyote and Raven are traditional Trickster characters in many Indigenous moral stories. References to Trickster meanings and uses in oral tradition can be found in Archibald (2008). In my childhood, I was raised being read Western fairy tales such as "Hansel and Gretel", but I also heard traditional Indigenous stories from Métis relatives and Stó:lō Elders in my community. Both types of stories helped to shape and foster my imagination as a child. Local transformer stories such as the legend of Lhilehqey and Mount Baker were grounding and connected me to the land where I live.

[2] Lhilheqey is the traditional place name for Mount Cheam, as told by Mrs. Amy Cooper to ethnographer Oliver Wells (and cited by the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, 2016). The place may be accessed from the territory of the Sq'éwlets People, a Stó:lō-Coast Salish community where the Harrison and Fraser Rivers meet.

Fuzzy Feet and the Skunk

Annie slumped off the rusty yellow school bus and made her way down the long gravel driveway to her home. After a long day at her new school in the big city, she walked home with her tail between her legs. The rocks beneath her bare feet were piercing and made her toes curl. Noticing the crows cawing louder than usual and the sky churning out spits of rain, she felt that even the universe was laughing at her.

The door even seemed to creak louder than usual as she pushed her way inside. It slammed behind her. After being taunted all day, she pulled her new moose hide moccasins out of her backpack and threw them straight into the back of the closet. She set out her old Converse high tops near the door for school the next day.

Papa,[3] noticing her actions, asked, "How was school today my dear Annie?"—which evoked red cheeks and a gush of tears.

"The other girls at my school made fun of the new moccasins that Gran made me. They laughed and called me 'Fuzzy Feet'," Annie replied. "Papa, they hate me, and I hate them too!"

He paused for a moment, reflecting on his own experience in school, then said, "My sweet Annie, they do not hate you, they just don't understand you. Do you remember the story of why we wear our moccasins?"

She replied with a sigh, "Because they leave good footsteps. You've told me a million times."

Papa continued, "Well the girls in your new school, their footprints will fade in the snow. But yours will leave deep impressions, creating a path for others to follow. Like the footprints our ancestors left for us, your moccasins connect us to our culture." He left her with one final thought, "Don't worry about the shoes on your feet, but the path you are leaving."

Later that week in class, the teacher asked students to divide themselves into groups to create a project for the upcoming science fair. Annie stayed silent in the back of the class and did not raise her hand to join a group. Her teacher asked, "Annie, why didn't you join a group? We need to get started on our projects." Ashamed she did not know what a science fair was, Annie stayed silent. The teacher questioned: "Do you understand what you are supposed to be doing?" Annie shook her head no. The teacher decided to place her in a group, and unknowingly placed her with the same girls who had mocked her just the week before.

Seeing Annie slumping in the door after school once again, Papa realized that something was wrong. He asked, "Annie, what's on your mind? Is it your new school?"

With a deep exhale she replied, "I feel like I don't belong there. . . I don't understand what we are supposed to be learning. All we do is read big books and write notes about science. That isn't learning anything!"

[3] Papa is the name of this character, and thus is capitalized as such. However, the precise relationship between Papa and Annie is kept deliberately ambiguous so that readers can make their own interpretations and connections.

Realizing that she was facing challenges at her school in the city, Papa remembered his own father telling him stories in hard times. He knew that the time had come for him to share a story. "Come here, Annie. I think you are ready for the story of the skunk." Annie slouched down on the couch as Papa began telling the story.

"When I was young, I was sent to a school in the city just like you, but I was taken far away from my family and community. There was this pesky skunk who followed me all the way to the city, into the school and into my classrooms. I hated that skunk because the other students did not understand why he always followed me, and they laughed at me. But I found that there were other kids like me who had a skunk following them too. The teachers tried to take them away from us, but we found ways to hide them under the beds when they came . . . although they were stinky, they were the only thing that reminded us of home.

"In the winter we had a bad problem with mice running through the halls at the school. Me and some other boys from up country knew that skunks eat mice, so we used our skunks to help catch the mice. Although the teachers and other students laughed at us for our skunks and made us feel small, we knew it was the right thing to do. Us students with skunks were able to help the big city teachers catch the mice, and then our skunks didn't seem so bad, and neither did we. They saw us as more than just the kids with the skunk, but that we had opinions and knowledge too."

After telling this story, Papa gave Annie a kiss on the forehead and went back to making dinner, leaving her to search for meaning in his words.

Back at school, Annie wasn't contributing to the discussion with her group. For the science fair, the other girls wanted to experiment with planting beans with different types of soil and controlled water and sunlight intake, hypothesizing which conditions would produce the tallest beanstalk.

Annie occasionally helped tend to her community's garden and shared many afternoons with the Elders in the garden, who passed on knowledge about how the planting and harvesting seasons are related to the different phases of the moon and the stars, and how all living beings are related and live together in harmony. Annie thought back to teachings of reciprocity and respect for all living beings. She couldn't understand why the other girls would disrespect the beans, depriving them of what they needed to grow and flourish in order to provide for us. Knowing that the beans would not do well planted away from their sisters, she kept to herself.

But then Annie remembered the story Papa had told her about the skunks, and the one about the moccasins. Just like the story of the skunk, maybe she could help the other girls by sharing her knowledge, rather than hiding it.

Papa was right. Annie decided that rather than staying silent, like the sisters that grow together, intertwining their stems and sharing nutrients, she could share her knowledge with her classmates, and perhaps they too could learn to grow together. Annie could leave some footprints of her own.

Discussion

In this paper, we explore Indigenous and Western perspectives on learning and development using a storytelling methodology. This approach can be used, particularly by practising teachers and teacher education programs, to understand and create supportive and inclusive learning opportunities for Indigenous (and all) children. As reflected in the "Fuzzy Feet and the Skunk" story, Annie is faced with a number of challenges that Indigenous students in Canada encounter on a regular basis. The story surfaces the colonial educational context for Indigenous students and highlights the racism, discrimination and disenfranchisement that Indigenous students typically need to overcome to access education. The story allows us to bring Indigenous and Western theories of learning and development into dialogue with one another to gain insight into how colonialism may be addressed within the educational system. In this section, we use some of the key learnings that emerged from this process to create recommendations for re-imagining more inclusive classrooms.

Colonialism and Racism

The learning context for Indigenous students includes historical and contemporary experiences of colonialism and racism, both in society and in schools (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group [DEPRG], 2016; Parent et al., 2021). Colonialism can be understood as culturally embedded and ongoing physical and psychological violence towards Indigenous Peoples to facilitate settler acquisition of Indigenous lands (Cote-Meek, 2014; Pidgeon, 2009). Racism is one of many colonial narratives meant to maintain differences, justify disparities in social privilege, and marginalize Indigenous Peoples and their ways of knowing (Loppie et al., 2014). In schools, racism appears in many different forms, such as verbal or physical attacks, social isolation, low expectations, systemic racism, denial of racism and cultural appropriation (DEPRG, 2016; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). We use the story, "Fuzzy Feet and the Skunk", to explore ways colonialism and racism are typically experienced by Indigenous students and families in relation to education.

The colonial context continues to significantly impact Indigenous communities, individuals, cultures and languages (Archibald, 2008; Tremblay, 2013; Smith, 2012). For example, the ongoing lack of support for development and education in reserve communities influences the quality of life and educational opportunities available for Indigenous students (Loppie et al., 2014; Talaga, 2014). In the story, both Annie and Papa were removed from their home communities to attend school in unfamiliar settings. This disruption created a significant challenge to their emotional well-being and capacity to learn. They were both a part of a system that removed them from familiar community supports and did not recognize the strengths they brought to the classroom as Indigenous students. These experiences are consistent with historical and ongoing governmental efforts to displace and undermine Indigenous communities and knowledges (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015; Smith, 2012). In many cases, Indigenous communities lost connection with intergenerational wisdom, traditions, culture and language—knowledge essential for cultural survival (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009).

The history of schooling has been based on a hierarchy where Indigenous Peoples and their knowledges are discredited, as part of the colonial agenda (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009; Deloria, 1969). In colonial narratives, Indigenous histories, often encoded as metaphorical stories, have been reduced to legend or myth, changed into "expressions of existing value structures and worldviews of dominant groups in a society" (Donald, 2009, p. 3). In effect, colonial narratives have attempted to erase the deep cultural foundation of Indigenous Nations and replace them with trivial surface-level narratives. The bullies in the story enacted this colonial strategy as they overlooked the deeper cultural significance of moccasins and created taunts based on superficial attributes. Although Annie's teacher did not reinforce these narratives, she did not present a counter-narrative, nor expand understandings about local Indigenous cultural symbols. When a society is shaped around misinterpretations of Indigenous history and cultural traditions, systems may ultimately reflect a more superficial or erroneous understanding of Indigenous Peoples and paradigms (Donald, 2022; Johnson, 2022).

As part of this narrative, educational institutions favour Western knowledge systems and behavioural standards, erasing cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous Peoples and thus failing to recognize Indigenous contributions (DEPRG, 2016; Donald, 2022). In the story, Annie had never experienced a science fair before and is unfamiliar with the learning expectations. Annie is motivated and has the capacity to complete the assignment, but she was unclear of the expectations of a "science fair" and what that entailed. Such miscommunications contribute to "a mismatch between what the learner wants to do, and is able to do" (Kohl, 1991, p. 6). Annie's teacher clarified the assignment for her, but some teachers may have attributed a student's lack of participation to laziness or a lack of motivation or capability. Such situations can cause Indigenous students to fall behind, leading to remedial placements that often do more harm than good (Bailey & Betts, 2009). Although Annie had traditional ecological knowledge acquired by working with Elders in the community garden, she was expected to make a special effort to work beyond cultural differences to enact a Western model of scientific learning.

In the story, Annie's teacher assumed that students would understand what it meant to engage in a science fair that centred and affirmed Western definitions of scientific inquiry. This may include the kind of questions students are encouraged to address or the method used to answer questions. For example, in Western science it is acceptable to experiment with plants, even when poor outcomes have already been established in particular conditions. However, this kind of inquiry may be seen as disrespectful in Indigenous cultures that value interconnectedness among living beings (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009). Likewise, Annie had cultural knowledge that had been shared in her community about the reciprocity of the garden, and how the Three Sisters—corn, beans and squash—work together, sharing nutrients and sunlight and relying on the other stalks and leaves for support (Kimmerer, 2013). This understanding made the proposed project seem irrelevant or disrespectful to her, so at first, she refused to participate. In Annie's class, Indigenous models of learning and development, rooted in place and contextually tied to traditional knowledge of the land (Kimmerer, 2013), were not prioritized. As such, colonial narratives continue to attach a deficit-stigma to Indigenous learners, who may encounter an ethical dilemma with classroom learning activities

(Bailey & Betts, 2009). Annie's experiences demonstrate how different environmental factors come together to cause high levels of frustration and disengagement from learning and social opportunities in school.

As a result of colonialism, systemic racism and discriminatory practices, Indigenous learners may struggle with their cultural identity (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). For example, Annie faces the kind of stereotyping, indifference and exclusion that can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of intrinsic motivation (DEPRG, 2016; Tremblay, 2013). As a result of taunting, she throws her moccasins into the back of the closet, in favour of a more popular brand of shoes. Furthermore, she experiences a disconnect between her own cultural ways of knowing and Western educational practices when her teacher asks her to learn from the textbook, rather than through more familiar experiential methods. In these ways, Annie may come to question the validity of her own cultural symbols, her community and her identity within that.

In the story, both Annie and her Papa are faced with multiple forms of racism, perpetuated by their peers and teachers, either through mockery, or through educational practices or policies that fail to address the learning and development of Indigenous learners. Consistent with Annie's experience, recent research confirms that Indigenous students continue to experience systemic and individual racism across Canadian educational jurisdictions (DEPRG, 2016; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Parent et al., 2021). As Gloria Snively and John Corsiglia (2016) explain, variance in cultural diversity and traditional ecological knowledge are not contrasting, but can be used in parallel with each other to offer a holistic understanding of the natural world. Pedagogical approaches and curriculum need to be reconsidered, in order to open decolonizing possibilities and support the kind of innovative understanding that flows from interactions with different cultures and knowledge systems (Donald, 2022).

Theories of Learning and Development

Indigenous and Western theories of learning and development can help frame these colonial experiences so that educators can understand the challenges Indigenous students face and implement practices to support all learners. According to the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007), the racialized and colonial context may have profound impacts on what and how students are able to learn. The model suggests that social forms of knowledge are critical for balanced individual learning and development; a view echoed by numerous Western theorists (Volet et al., 2009; Vygotsky, 1997, as cited in Woolfolk et al., 2020). Annie's experiences of racism in the story demonstrate how social learning opportunities may be limited for Indigenous students due to the racist and colonial lens of the teacher and/or their peers. To counter colonial narratives, teachers might draw on Indigenous pedagogy that suggests "the most important thing each of us can know is our unique gift and how to use it in the world" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 134). In the story, Annie was able to access social forms of knowledge from her home and community environment; however, this kind of support should also be a part of the school context. In the classroom teachers may try to find ways for Indigenous students to utilize social and cultural forms of knowledge.

Furthermore, Western teacher-led educational approaches may limit how Indigenous students are able to build from their strengths. For example, diverse Indigenous knowledge systems are often described as holistic, deeply rooted in Indigenous worldviews, and intimately tied to ways of being, knowing and doing (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; First Nations Education Steering Committee [FNESC], 2020; Kimmerer, 2013). The knowledge and experience shared with Annie by the Indigenous Elders when she worked with them in the community garden ultimately helped her work through her frustration to engage in classroom activities.

Furthermore, Brayboy and Maughan (2009) consider the quotation from Inupiat scholar Leona Okakok (as cited on p. 11), that "education is more than book learning, it is also value learning", showing how traditional Indigenous knowledge can help contextualize and extend other ways of knowing. For example, Algonquin Anishinaabe author Lynn Gehl (2017) describes the Anishinaabe concept of "Debwewin" or "heart knowledge" as a sophisticated form of Indigenous knowledge that begins with the body and is held in the heart, not within the conscious mind, as Western knowledge is understood to originate. Gehl (2017) explains that the heart holds knowledge like the mind; for example, the heart can condense and store the experiences of intergenerational knowledge and trauma, whereas the mind provides frameworks for understanding these experiences. So "heart knowledge" and "mind knowledge" must work together to have a complete and holistic understanding of truth.

Western paradigms similarly acknowledge the importance of values and moral development for students (Kohlberg, 1981, as cited in Woolfolk et al., 2020). Approaches to learning and development that build from these kinds of strengths might more effectively support Indigenous (and all) students' engagement and learning.

Although academic goals and motivation among diverse students may be similar (King et al., 2018), autonomy and self-determination may be particularly important to historically marginalized students. Self-determination theory suggests that students require autonomy, belonging and competence as a foundation for learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Annie's experiences demonstrate how Indigenous students in a colonial context may feel they have little autonomy in learning and a diminished sense of belonging in schools. They may not feel competent when given learning activities inconsistent with Indigenous epistemologies. Like Annie, Indigenous students who do not have these basic psychological needs met may lose motivation and may use ineffective learning strategies, or opt-out of the learning process more often than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Kohl, 1991; Snively & Corsiglia, 2016). This may eventually lead to disengagement or early school leaving (Parent et al., 2021; Tagala, 2007).

Although Indigenous students may need to develop additional sets of skills to navigate and thrive in a mix of cultures during development, curricula that value different ways of knowing can be beneficial to all students in developing cultural understandings (Tremblay, 2013). Educators who respect the value of Indigenous epistemologies integrate perspectives across the curriculum rather than offer stand-alone or optional content (DEPRG, 2016). In the story, Annie's teacher might have brought experiential learning tied to relevant cultural knowledge into the science fair assignment.

Using Indigenous and Western perspectives on teaching and learning to understand the colonial experiences of Indigenous students may empower learning through respect and compassion.

Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Incorporating educational strategies from both Indigenous and Western perspectives could help to create inclusive classrooms and decolonize learning spaces. The "Fuzzy Feet and the Skunk" story surfaces some of the pedagogical practices that may already be popular among teachers and teacher education programs. In the story, Annie's teacher uses group work and individual check-ins to support students' learning through an inquiry-oriented project for the science fair. This kind of group project can support learning from Indigenous perspectives that emphasize the importance of relationships and the collective good in opening authentic and relevant learning opportunities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Kimmerer, 2013). Although choice is not widely recognized as an Indigenous pedagogical practice, this project meant that students could choose to study intergenerational topics relating to the land, or other scientific principles. Similarly, from Western perspectives, group work is understood as offering opportunities to co-construct knowledge and learning strategies (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, as cited in Woolfolk et al., 2020; Volet, et al., 2009). Inquiry projects that provide choice and opportunities for complex thinking can furthermore promote deep engagement and self-regulated learning based on metacognition, motivation and strategic action (Butler et al., 2017). Annie's teacher attempts to build on this social potential by checking in with Annie, opening the possibility for a closer relationship between them. However, as the story progresses, the teacher shows how out of tune she is with Annie's challenges, as she passes up an opportunity to support Annie's task understanding and social interactions with her classmates. As such, the teacher in this story has some key starting points that can be built upon to open learning possibilities for Indigenous (and all) students.

Educators and teacher education programs could use practices like these as a springboard to provide further support for Indigenous (and all) students by incorporating teaching approaches that draw more heavily on Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies. In the story, Papa teaches Annie through story and metaphor, pedagogical approaches that are consistent across diverse Indigenous cultures (Archibald, 2008; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Johnson, 2022). In the classroom, teachers can build on this approach by focusing on the interpretative message stories carry or by building on Indigenous understandings about how stories are expected to be used and interpreted (Johnson, 2022). For example, Stó:lō scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (2008), who is also known as Q'um Q'um Xiiem, describes how storytellers typically refrain from telling an audience how they should be interpreting the story or what lesson they should be learning from it. Listeners are expected to make their own meaning from the story as it applies to their specific context. As such, it becomes important for people to listen to stories again and again, since the lesson may change as their context and what they need from the story changes (Archibald, 2008). Using storytelling approaches in the classroom supports relationality and collective responsibility, encourages the development of aural literacy and honours the oral traditions of Indigenous cultures (Archibald, 2008; Cajete, 2005; Donald, 2009). Classrooms may become more inclusive of Indigenous students if teachers developed proficiency in

these kinds of teaching approaches, either through their own professional development or through teacher education programs.

Educators can build on storytelling approaches, not only by incorporating more stories into their daily lessons, but also by encouraging the kind of metaphorical thinking that is required in the interpretation of stories. Students can be asked to read and listen to stories that use metaphors and/or other Indigenous storytelling structures and conventions (Archibald, 2008). Students may demonstrate understanding of a particular concept by finding a metaphor or a teacher may use metaphors to explain complex ideas or processes. In her university class (a prerequisite for teacher education programs), Nikki regularly incorporates metaphor into classroom activities and into major assignments like the summative assessment for which this story was written. These kinds of approaches may make the curriculum more accessible for Indigenous (and all) students, as they may provide them with possibilities of working from potentially familiar intellectual structures, and they may open opportunities for all students to build on diverse cultural strategies for thinking and learning.

Furthermore, the stories that Papa told Annie were tied to a specific context in the natural world. As such, his stories not only contained important life lessons, but cultivated connections and imparted knowledge about the natural world, like the Indigenous pedagogy described by Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (2005) and Cree author Harold R. Johnson (2022). Specifically, Papa's story about the skunk urged listeners to consider how this animal, sometimes considered a nuisance in urban areas, might be a valuable partner for humans because of its taste for mice. In this case, Papa's story held important lessons about inclusivity, about the ability of skunks to control mice populations, and about how humans are connected to the natural world. This kind of story structure can heighten interest by embedding practical life lessons in authentic and relevant contexts that extend learning opportunities for listeners.

Storytelling approaches not only support Indigenous holistic perspectives of development and learning, but also connect with frameworks from Western perspectives. Stories may offer ways for listeners to think about their own intellectual learning and may also help them work through emotional and social challenges, as in Annie's case. This holistic perspective ties together both Indigenous and Western social-emotional perspectives of development and learning (CCL, 2007; Schonert-Reichl, 2019; Tremblay, et al., 2013).

In storytelling approaches, listeners are asked to actively interpret stories and apply the lessons to their lives (Archibald, 2008). This process is sometimes described as "transformative listening" (Raibmon, 2014, p. 4). For example, Papa tells Annie his story of the skunk because he thinks she is ready, but he leaves her to make her own meaning of the story, according to her own experiences. Using this process, listeners can self-regulate their learning, building from metacognition and motivation, which extends the possibilities for strategic action (Butler et al., 2017). Listeners metacognitively think about their own needs and autonomously decide on what aspect of a story can support them at a given time of their lives. As such, stories support a feeling of control and competence over learning and self-efficacy, or belief in one's own ability for working through

personal challenges (Bandura, 2006). Stories like the skunk story told by Papa also provide listeners with strategies they might use to shape their actions in the future. As such, pedagogical practices based on Indigenous storytelling traditions can not only provide strong ties to Indigenous culture and connections to community and nature, but can also cultivate personal and individualized development, encourage deep learning, and support possibilities for future learning. Incorporating these practices into teacher education programs or professional development offerings could provide a powerful tool to push back against colonial narratives and uplift Indigenous (and all) learners.

Future Directions and Considerations

This research demonstrates how diverse perspectives might inform educational theory and pedagogical practice. It highlights the degree of resilience Indigenous students are often unfairly called upon to cultivate in response to the incidents of racism that many may face on daily basis in schools. By describing specific situations experienced by students and educators, the "Fuzzy Feet and the Skunk" story, though fictional, may help teachers reflect more deeply on their own contexts and understand how specific incidents may be seen as reinforcing colonial or racial narratives.

In the same vein, this study surfaces pedagogical practices that can build from connections between Indigenous and Western educational theories. Some of these practices are already being used by many teachers. Group work and open-ended inquiry are some specific teaching approaches that could be used to create generative learning opportunities for Indigenous (and all) students. Educators can use principles from Indigenous storytelling approaches to continue building up important cultural, community and natural connections, and to engage Indigenous (and all) students in deep learning. These practices can provide a springboard to greater inclusion in educational contexts and can be a powerful addition to teacher education programs and professional learning opportunities. This article itself is an example of what may be possible when Indigenous and Western epistemologies are brought together in teacher education courses. The kind of thinking supported through this exercise critically informs how prospective teacher candidates who strive to enter the teaching profession can work with Indigenous (and all) students.

In this article, we have used storytelling to explore connections between Indigenous and Western theories of development and learning. However, we believe that we have just scratched the surface of what may be possible. Future directions in this area might explore different Indigenous pedagogical practices, such as talking circles, to more fully understand key aspects that might be critical to incorporate in schools. Further research might examine how teacher education could build from Indigenous-informed epistemologies to expand the capacity of teacher candidates or new teachers. Storying techniques, such as the one Alicia has used here, could also offer critical insights into how students experience these kinds of pedagogical approaches and may help us to further imagine the possibilities for expanding the capacity of schools for the benefit of all learners.

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