

# Editorial

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## **Challenges and possibilities in Canadian education systems: Past, present, and future**

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For much of our last two years as the Canadian Journal of Education's Anglophone co-editors, we have focused on the important goals of decolonization and Indigenization in schooling and working collaboratively to improve educational experiences. The current issue delves into the ongoing challenges and possibilities of centering these goals in Canadian education systems and how the education community, including educators, students, parents, policymakers, and Elders, can work collaboratively to create more caring and anti-colonial futures together. As 2024 draws to an end, we hope this issue offers timely and critical research relevant to the education community and encourages reflection on the challenges and possibilities of schooling in Canada in the past, present, and future.

In the article, "Disrupting colonial narratives of place: The q̄ícəȳ Slough yesterday, today, and tomorrow project," Cher Hill, Rick Bailey, and Carman McKay demonstrate how educational opportunities can be created to centre wholistic and complex pedagogy based in Indigenous and post-humanist philosophies. Building on the vision of Elder Rick Bailey from the q̄ícəȳ First Nation, the authors created a collaborative, arts-based educational project that brought students aged from five to 12 years to a land-based

learning opportunity and vision-building activity. The students learned about how the *q̓íc̓əy̓* Slough turned from a significant source of life to a degraded wasteland while also providing opportunities for students to relate differently in support of the Slough's future. The authors provide detailed examples of how settler-colonial practices in agriculture and commercialization have degraded the waterway, which is intricately connected to the *q̓íc̓əy̓* First Nation's ways of living. By educating children about colonial legacies and *q̓íc̓əy̓* ways of responsibility and reciprocity to the land and more than human kin, this project teaches relational renewal between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as well as with the land and kin. The authors' engagement with the students' artwork in community-based settings for broader educational purposes prompts us to rethink co-existence, respectful engagement, and living well together. In doing so, the authors suggest we may be able to (re)connect with land so that all beings can thrive.

Centering Indigenous worldviews and philosophies in Canadian education systems is also central to the article, "Decolonizing history curricula across Canada: Recommendations for (re)design," by historians Sara Karn, Kristina R. Llewellyn, and Penney Clark. These authors share their nationwide project that interrogates history curricula in Canadian schools. In particular, the project focuses on the extent to which history curriculum across provinces and territories includes and integrates the local knowledges and histories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Their project was motivated by the call to initiate and sustain decolonial curricular reform. They conducted a critical and systemic review of contemporary history curricula across Canada and provided ample evidence of how history education, including the teaching of existing knowledge and skills (to think and research), predominantly reinforces Eurocentrism and settler values, including the narratives of colonialism as "progress." Further, the authors note that students in history education across the country are encouraged to learn to take critical stances towards historical injustices such as the Holocaust, while curriculum overlooks and underrepresents the "cultural genocide" of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the related resistances and agency undertaken by Indigenous peoples in response (p. 1101). The authors acknowledge that more recent curricula in a post-TRC context are engaging more critically with colonialism; as such, they recommend paying greater attention to socially constructed and racially contested narratives of histories. The authors argue for increased engagement with Indigenous oral histories, knowledges, and worldviews through land-based and Elder-guided learning offering important guidance to educators.

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The final article, “Canadian teachers’ emotional experiences during COVID-19: A narrative inquiry,” by Kendra Wells and Lia M. Daniels, takes us back to the time of the Covid pandemic shutdowns and drastically altered teaching expectations to address a gap in the literature concerning teachers’ firsthand accounts of their emotions in that time. The authors engage with the significance of emotions in relation to teachers’ experience through multiple theoretical lenses on emotions to centre the significance of emotions to cognition, motivation and teachers’ practice. Engaging narrative inquiry to create three restoried nuanced narratives revealing the teaching lives of three teachers in Alberta, the authors capture a spectrum of emotions the teachers experienced and the impact on their personal and professional lives. The study provides greater insight into the complexities of teachers’ lived realities in a time of crisis. The authors highlight that emotions are significantly related to context and that understanding major events, such as the altered teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, requires a careful look at the different contexts that teachers were experiencing. The study serves to highlight that teachers’ emotions need to be more carefully considered in relation to their context in order to better inform educational policy and school-based leadership. Wells and Daniels also make an important and detailed contribution to narrative inquiry and engage in great detail regarding their methods of restorying, which provides an important contribution to that form of research methodology. This article highlights the ways narrative inquiry can be engaged powerfully in times of unfolding educational uncertainties to provide more nuanced understanding and analysis. For researchers who would question how working with three participants using narrative inquiry might be able to inform educational policy, this article provides a detailed picture of significance.

Each of the articles in this issue indicates that education does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it always occurs within a particular place and time. As such, educators have important roles in mediating what is being taught and how it is taught in specific moments in history and geography, as well as the emotions that guide the felt experience of learning and teaching. We hope this issue offers an opportune space for teachers and researchers to reflect on their practices and philosophies in considering different ways of understanding educational contexts and practices in the coming year.

We hope the CJE readership has a time of restfulness and renewal over the winter break.