Indigenization

-by Kathleen Cruz

Background

The back ground of this element derives from the mistreatment of Canada's Indigenous people since before confederation. A significant example is: The abduction of Indigenous children to force them to attend residential schools to – by way of assimilation- perpetrate cultural genocide of the First Nations people.

> "The Government will in time reach the end of its responsibility as the Indians progress into civilization and finally disappear as a separate and distinct people, not by race extinction but by gradual assimilation with their fellow-citizens." **Duncan Campbell Scott**, as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 1931

Photo: https://www.anglican.ca/tr/histories/st-philips-ftgeorge/

To reconcile this wrong (among many other *wrongs*) the language and culture of the Indigenous people of Canada is now being given a place of honor in our educational system. Indigenous languages are being rescued from extinction. Indigenous ways of learning are being taught, not only to Indigenous children, but to all Canadian children.

Photo: Kathy's personal archives of a button blanket that I made

BC's new curriculum has been developed with threads of Indigenization throughout all grades and subject areas. The positive impacts can be seen in the graduation rates of Aboriginal students in the Kamloops / Thompson region of 78.5%, approaching parity with non-aboriginal students which was 85%, *Kamloops This Week*, January 27, 2018.

Reflections & Critical Insights

I have found my learning curve about Indigenous culture a steep one, over the past 2 years of Bachelor of Education at TRU. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the Aboriginal Educators while on practicum at Arthur Hatton Elementary, Summit Elementary, and David Thompson Elementary. Each Ab. Ed. Worker I have meet has been open, friendly and willing to share resources. One "Aha" moment for me, was that *people* are the best resource I could ever hope to find. The sharing and collaboration between professionals was the key to my success while on practicum. Those connections and relationships with the aboriginal education staff, and all colleagues is what is so powerful about a positive learning environment. It can truly be *transformational*.

Photo: Kathy's personal archives, taken at the Henry Grube Center

I have discovered that the Indigenous ways of knowing, and the First Peoples principles of learning are very intuitive. They make sense and are easy to implement because they are effective and time tested – In short: They work! These principles are not only good for Indigenous children, but for *all* children.

In our group presentation we demo-ed the Green Screen app by Do Ink. In my opinion this app – and other like it- are great ways to indigenize the curriculum. They lend themselves naturally to storytelling. These apps allow students to explore First nations culture in a creative and collaborative way using digital technology. There are countless audio files and podcasts of oral stories told by Elders that are available online to all peoples, like on the First Voices website. As Hegarty states in his article, Open Pedagogy helps level that uneven playing field:

> "Open pedagogy benefits learners and teachers alike, and precipitate creative and inclusive communities in an OEPosphere." (Hegarty, 2015).

However, as educators we must use caution to teach fluency with technology not just specific skill sets, because "skills become obsolete with new technologies", (Lin, 2000).

A dismal fact that I learned while listening to the podcast with Denise Williams, a Coast Salish woman, was that the *connectivity* is still the biggest issue facing First nations

people in regards to technology in BC. Most First Nations homes have slow internet access, if they have any internet access at all. This lack of infrastructure is an issue of equity and affordability. Which is why Aboriginal people are under represented in the tech industry. Education to improve skill set would raise Indigenous representation within the technology sector, but without equal access and the connectivity to gain that access, none of those skills would matter. You have the put the horse before the apple cart if you want a ride on the information highway!

Photo: Kathy's personal archives, taken at the Henry Grube Center

What more…

I would love to learn more about the local Indigenous languages and perhaps pursue research into a language comparison study of the Indigenous people of the Ecuadorian Andes region, the Quechua people. This where my husband is from. As part of my Masters' thesis, I would like to explore this line of research more. I would like to integrate technology into this research somehow. Perhaps a weekly Skype classroom collaboration, where the students of one language in Ecuador, teach the Canadian students their language and vice versa. This aligns neatly with Hegarty's eight specific attributes within an open pedagogy; specifically, attributes: 4-Sharing ideas and resources. 5-Connected community. 6-Learner generated. (Hegarty, 2015).

Photos: http://twomeytravel.com/2014/04/manam-papi-quechua-women/

https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/429741989422423027/

Another area of interest is in investigating the *symbols* used to represent a culture, Indigenous or otherwise, and the reasons *why* they are chosen. The way spaces are organized, who is promoted, the way budgets are allocated are all symbols of culture that are very telling (CultureUniversity.com). Thank you.

References:

http://www.cultureuniversity.com/transform-culture-three-powerful-drivers/

Hegarty, B. (2015). Attributes of Open Pedagogy: A Model for Using Open Educational Resources. Educational Technology, 4.

Lin, H. (2000). Fluency with information technology. Government Information Quarterly, 17(1), 69-76.

https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/10-quotes-john-a.-macdonald-made-about-first-nations

Bridging the digital divide podcast https://soundcloud.com/indigenous-innovators/ep-4-bridging-the-digital-divide

Pathways to technology map http://www.pathwaystotechnology.ca/interactive-map

https://www.firstvoices.com

Photos: https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum

https://www.anglican.ca/tr/histories/st-philips-ftgeorge/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_administrative_division

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and Kathy's personal archives.