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ABSTRACT

Utilizing the Following Their Voices (FTV) education initiative, a framework designed to raise the educational achievement of Saskatchewan's First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FMNI) students by enhancing relationships between students and teachers, this study examines settler-teacher FTV participants' abilities to explore positionality, bias, privilege, and critical self-reflection for improving the educational experiences for Indigenous students. Current research lacks insight into how settler-teachers examine and process mindsets deeply ingrained with Eurocentric ideals and colonial identities; to foster change in FNMI students' educational experiences, it is essential to evaluate the FTV initiative through participant insight, as these mindsets significantly impact those experiences. Critical race theory provides the overarching lens while an interpretivist research methodology is used to make meaning of the participants' interpretations. The major findings indicate that implementation, lack of continuity, and not normalizing critical self-reflection proved to hinder progress throughout the program and continues to be a barrier. For authentic, sustained change to occur, consistent critical self-reflection, affective processing, and meaning making are recommended to enhance relationships and learning outcomes for Indigenous students.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous students, critical self-reflection, settler mindset, Following Their Voices, K-12

Terminology

Throughout this study, the researcher uses terms that require context for the reader. The terminology used to address First Nations and Métis peoples has evolved with time. First Nation(s) should not be used as a synonym for Aboriginal peoples and does not include Métis or Inuit. The term Indigenous has gained support recently which has meaning of being native to the area while it can also be used as a proper name or an adjective. This term has recently taken preference by some First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples but does not have unanimous support. It must be noted that preferences should always be given to Indigenous peoples to which term should be used in discourse. Métis describes one of the three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada and is defined as one who self-identifies, has ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation and is distinct from other Indigenous groups (Métis Nation Saskatchewan, n.d.). The term 'settler' is defined as "a critical term that denaturalizes and politicizes the presence of non-Indigenous people on Indigenous lands, but also can disrupt the comfort of non-Indigenous people by bringing ongoing colonial power relations into their consciousness" (Flowers, 2015, p. 33).

Conscious bias stems from one's prejudice, beliefs and opinions where a person will benefit in an unfair way over others while implicit bias occurs unconsciously or unintentionally and will result in disadvantages unbeknownst to the perpetrator (Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016; Staats et al., 2016). Privilege is established by a system of unearned advantages that often benefit white people (Hines III, 2016). Defining your positionality, which involves situating yourself in the field and how it informs your affects and emotions is extremely

relevant because it often intersects with the identity of Indigenous students (Kouri, 2020; Madden, 2019). Lastly, racism is what continues to drive inequities in our society. Aguilar (2020) uses an analogy to explain the concept, one that sets the stage for this study:

...I equate racism with a toxic substance that's not only in the air but has also seeped into the soil in which we plant crops and into the water system from which we drink. It's virtually impossible to avoid ingesting it, and we've been doing so since we were born. Our parents and grandparents breathed in these poisons and drank water and ate food that was putrid with racism. Racism coats our arteries; it is etched into our neural pathways, distorting our thoughts. Our physical, emotional, and social bodies are toxic with the poison of racism. And by "we" I mean all of us—people of color and white people. Some people of color unwittingly internalize notions of white supremacy despite the fact that doing so contributes to our own marginalization. Everyone learns explicit and implicit stereotyped messages in families, schools, and communities. We learn these stereotypes, and we act on them consciously and unconsciously. (p. 86)

Introduction

Settler mindsets are deeply engrained with Eurocentric ideals and colonial identity. This mindset has greatly impacted the Indigenous peoples of this land we now call Canada. Indigenous peoples are seen as needing to assimilate into the world of the settler. When *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (TRC) was released in 2015, there was a shift in the perception of who needed to change so that Indigenous peoples and settlers could begin walking in both worlds, together. While reconciliation initiatives have increased, they do not explicitly move settlers into a place of critical self-reflection on positionality, privilege, bias or identity (Davis et al., 2017; Kouri, 2020; Regan, 2010). Settler mindsets continue to perpetuate the colonial system, which is shifting scholars to focus on critical self-reflection and action. Both are needed for settlers to move away from guilt and shame which continues to hinder progress (Davis et al., 2017). Educational institutions are designed to privilege settler-students knowledge, and ways of being at the expense of the Indigenous students and this reality needs to be at the forefront for every educator (Tompkins, 2002).

Research Question

Settler-teachers in northern Saskatchewan have yet, through professional development, to be coached around equity that is directly related to settler mindset, positionality, bias, and privilege to improve the relationships and educational experiences of Indigenous students. The Following Their Voices (FTV) initiative was designed to raise the educational achievement and participation of Saskatchewan's First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FMNI) students by enhancing relationships between students and teachers (Following Their Voices, n.d.). The participant voices of the Indigenous (Cree/Nehitaw, Dene/Denesųliné and Métis) students have generally stated that they need an adult they can connect with in the school to have a positive educational experience (T. Calaval, personal communication, January 2021). The authenticity of these connections will depend on the teachers' ability to begin understanding each student's background. Therefore, the research question of the study is: what are the challenges settler-teachers encountered that hindered their engagement in critical self-reflection regarding their positionality, bias, and settler privilege in the FTV initiative?

Positionality

Identifying positionality as a settler is an important first step in understanding and forming one's identity in relation to the Indigenous peoples and the community, allowing for more authentic reflection to occur (Kouri, 2020; Regan, 2010). I am a white, cis-gendered, multi-degreed, able bodied, male settler-teacher,

living and working on the traditional territory of the Nehithaw (Woodland Cree). I am a third-generation settler with roots in Hungary, Scotland, Ireland, and England. My parents, both born and raised in southern Ontario, moved west in their early 20's seeking opportunity while living in several Indigenous communities in northern Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories, prior to settling in La Ronge, Saskatchewan. My education began in the public elementary school in La Ronge where I was enrolled in French immersion in years K-9 and English programming in years 10-12. My path eventually brought me back to La Ronge as I enrolled in the Northern Teacher Education Program, where I completed my undergraduate education degree. I am married to a Denesųłin  woman and have Denesųłin  daughters. All these experiences have given me reason to promote social justice while providing the spark to dig into this research which will help guide me to become a better father, husband, and teacher. I continue to be a colonizer-ally and colonizer-perpetrator (Regan, 2010) as I will always benefit from the system designed for white settlers of colonized lands.

Literature Review

Reconciliation through Education Initiatives

Foundation and Historical Context

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) was developed by the Government of Saskatchewan and released in April 2014 with goals to be attained by 2020, and included First Nation and M tis learning outcomes (Education Sector Strategic Plan, n.d.). The ESSP fueled Inspiring Success, a First Nations and M tis preK-12 education policy framework which states that the approach to the TRC Calls to Action number 57 will also include professional development for teachers with a focus on investigating power and privilege, while including Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2018). Settler-educators are essential stakeholders in the implementation of policies and plans; however, plans for critical self-reflection remains to be a factor that has been overlooked.

Bishop, O'Sullivan and Berryman (2010), directed the development of Te Kotahitanga, a New Zealand research and professional development initiative. Teachers and school leaders were shown how implementing a culturally responsive pedagogy, rooted in relationships, could improve the educational achievement of M ori students. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education adapted the Te Kotahitanga initiative and implemented FTV, where it was designed to increase educational achievement for FMNI students by focusing on building relationships between teachers and students, improving learning opportunities and creating a welcoming environment (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2019b).

Critiques of Reconciliation

Regan (2010) suggests for change to occur, settlers will need to accept a pedagogical approach with a foundation on reconciliation and truth-telling. They assert that settlers' responses to the difficult truths of Canadian history will need continuous critical self-reflection. Reconciliation through education initiatives have been criticized by Indigenous scholars and allies who have rejected the term reconciliation because it has simply glamorized the relationships between settler-educators and Indigenous peoples (Davis et al., 2017). The quality of work on curriculum content and teacher training associated with TRC is disputable because it is lacking a plan to reflect on the affects and behavior changes needed for change to occur (Kouri, 2020). The process of simply educating and providing information to settler-teachers is also stated as a surface-level solution to create better relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler society (Davis et al., 2017). However, it must be noted that critical pedagogy allowed Freire (1970) to establish the foundation that education is not simply knowledge transference, it must also include transformative experiential learning that will motivate people to make change. Critical race theory (CRT) in education, is complex and must recognize the legal and ethnical origins moving away from race being rooted in theory and needing to become more practical (Ledesma & Calder n, 2015). Moreover, CRT does not provide ways to oppose the socially constructed identities of settlers, or the desire to eliminate Western biased practices

(Mocombe, 2017). Therefore, recognizing that Canadian public schools are sites that continue to perpetuate settler superiority should influence settler-teachers, who are positioned ethically, socially, and economically, to support Indigenous peoples, is essential to moving forward with the TRC education initiatives (Rice et al., 2020). This must be done in an authentic way where the settler is coming from a place of true reflection without appeasing their own guilt or shame (Morcom & Freeman, 2018).

Decolonizing the Mindset of the Settler Teacher

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Once a teacher begins the transition of decolonizing their mindset, they will be able to embody culturally responsive/relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995), appropriately utilizing Indigenous culture as the motivation for learning. Teachers that employ CRP are able to make sense of the experiences they have from a variety of discourses and from their positioning when relating or interacting with Indigenous students (Bishop et al., 2010). The positioning and sense-making will allow teachers to move toward mutual responsibility between settler-teachers and Indigenous students, recognizing that pedagogy is in their control. This empowerment will allow teachers to shift the focus to what is in their control and away from the influence of the students' family structure, attendance and behavior (Regan, 2010; Sleeter, 2017). Deficit theorizing stems from a teacher's positioning and narrative of outside negative influences on Indigenous students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2020). CRP entails that teachers will interact with Indigenous students with empathy and high expectations, moving from deficit thinking to change agents (Bishop et al., 2010; Morcom & Freeman, 2018).

Professional learning and development (PLD) that includes immersive cultural experiences, outdoor classrooms, service learning in Indigenous contexts, and sharing circles will provide a much more authentic experience for teachers while helping them transform their settler mindset (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2021).

Settler Consciousness and Mindset

The bias within settler consciousness and mindset requires the willingness to reflect. Deconstructing settler consciousness and mindset requires that settlers take responsibility and move towards knowing Indigenous peoples and to stop using ignorance as a strategy to protect themselves (DiAngelo, 2018; Regan, 2010). Teachers who claim ignorance by not incorporating Indigenous perspectives are perpetuating systems of oppression in education (Morcom & Freeman, 2018). This may be due to the lack of training and experience with Indigenous pedagogy. Davis et al. (2017) define transforming settler consciousness as: holding settlers accountable for their responsibility of benefiting from colonization; upsetting the status quo and challenging power dynamics that perpetuate colonialism; building fair relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples; and committing to a lifetime engagement with individuals, families, and communities. Korteweg and Fiddler (2019) note that settler-teachers are often conflicted when challenging their mindsets because responsibilities that are guided by the curriculum and needs of the institution take precedence over what is truly beneficial for Indigenous students. The ever presence of Eurocentrism challenges critical reflection and often leads to settler-teachers moving back to a comfortable teaching pedagogy thus inhibiting progress (Kouri, 2020). This will cause Indigenous students to see schools as the colonized system they were intended to be and reject the system, rendering any form of positive relations to be formed between settler-teachers and Indigenous students (Manning et al., 2020).

Agents of Change

The premise of listening to the needs of students and allowing them to share their experiences will allow teachers to begin walking in their world (Bishop et al., 2010). Making these compelling affective relationships can begin to break the oppressive conditions within a settler-teacher mindset (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013), which will create space to become an agent of change. Morcom and Freeman (2018) caution that once a settler-teacher begins down the path of allyship they must do so in collaboration, moving

forward by invitation, continuously looking to improve their culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers must continue to establish that they also need to have knowledge and understanding, confidence, vulnerability, and the ability to build relationships with families and the community (Morcom & Freeman, 2018). Once settler-teachers are truly on the path to be a change agent, they will purposively reject acts of colonialism while building authentic relationships with Indigenous students, developing pedagogies that are respectful to their cultures (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019). For this to occur and progress, daily reflection on self and pedagogy will need to occur, supported by feedback from leaders or peers.

Critical Self-Reflection and Affective Processing

Transformative action and critical self-reflection are essential for transformative learning (Regan, 2010). Affective processing, which guides behaviour and emotion, will be essential in critical self-reflection, otherwise settler consciousness will continue to be perpetuated. DiAngelo (2011), Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) assert that white people use the discomfort of speaking about race and privilege to protect themselves from race-based stress, in-turn perpetuating the marginalization of people of colour. Moreover, learning is inhibited because people in positions of racial privilege often shut down emotionally (Evans-Winters & Hines, 2020; Morcom & Freeman, 2018). Settler-teachers will face a dilemma in recognizing their place in the oppression of Indigenous peoples (Davis et al., 2017); there will be hesitancy between fear and confidence when confronted with reflecting critically on their settler teaching (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2019b). Settler-leaders that show their vulnerability while sharing their stories of transformation to a path of allyship to create a safe and affective environment will motivate settler-teachers to reflect critically on self (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019; Kouri, 2020; Kowaluk, 2016). Settler-leaders will need to find a way to engage settler-teachers with unsettling emotional attachment to the dominant narratives of Canadian history and their mindset (Rice, Dion, Fowlie, & Breen, 2020). Action will result from understanding that emotions are powerful social forces which inform knowledge production and understanding. This relates to settler-teacher comfort and can be an expression of the unwillingness to change, which promotes the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019; Kouri, 2020; Rice et al., 2020). Critical self-reflection paired with action and feedback will improve relations between settler-teachers and Indigenous students.

FTV schools are encouraged to offer PLD for teachers to examine their positioning and deficit theorizing so they can move towards holding positive regard for all Indigenous students in turn creating a more positive learning environment and meaningful relationships between teachers and students. The quality of the PLD provided by the FTV schools relating to teachers authentically engaging in critical self-reflection on bias, privilege, and positionality, will depend upon the leaders and facilitators comfort engaging in these difficult conversations and challenging their own positioning while creating a safe space for this reflection to occur.

Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) provided the overarching lens and guidance for the researchers' analysis of social justice while looking for answers to the deficiencies and contradictions of the FTV initiative processes. CRT provides a specific system to examine racial injustices and offers a core tenet that racism is endemic in society and our institutions, including education. Understanding that FTV was built upon this tenet requires us to challenge this dominant ideology. This will also require educators to examine their Eurocentric beliefs and reflect on how it is maintained, regardless of the initiatives that are in place (Sleeter, 2017). Color blindness, and meritocracy will identify that these approaches maintain the status quo (McLeod, 2017; Sleeter 2017). The theorists aim to empower the oppressed and engage the voices of the marginalized by using experiential knowledge, which argues that perspective and experiences are essential to understanding the impact of race and racism (McLeod, 2017).

Research Methodology

The experience that the researcher gained through their involvement with the FTV initiative coupled with their path of critical self-reflection on bias, privilege and positionality related to their settler-teacher mindset led them to inquire about others' perceptions with similar backgrounds as their own. An interpretivist research methodology, which focuses on peoples perceptions of a phenomena, guided the researcher to focus on making meaning of the participants' interpretations (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014). The role of the researcher was to use the experiences, knowledge, and critical analysis of the FTV initiative to help guide the inquiry and to clarify the participants understanding and interpretation of the initiative and how it influenced their choices as teachers of Indigenous students (Webb & Welsh, 2019).

Social constructionism is a perspective that focuses on the social world and how social interactions and language construct meaning to phenomena (Slater, 2018). The knowledge that has arisen through the socially constructed reality of the participant experiences and how they make sense of these experiences helped establish patterns (Slater, 2018). This branch of phenomenology complimented this study, as the social interactions that participants experienced throughout the FTV initiative have created most of their meaning of the phenomena.

Reflexivity throughout the design process enabled the researcher to set the stage for the methods, as it also shaped the focus of the study (Creswell, 2018). The understanding of positionality helps create themes and guided how the researcher made sense of the data. Critical self-reflection was used to help guide participants on their interpretation of the FTV initiative processes, which implied the importance of reflexivity in the design of the study.

A northern Saskatchewan publicly funded school was the organization that was subject to this study. Demographically, 24% of school teaching staff self-identify as Indigenous with the remaining 76% identifying as settler, while 80% of students are Indigenous and 20% are settler (K. Merasty, personal communication, September 2020).

Sampling Strategy and Sample

This phenomenological study required that the participants provide the researcher with their historical interpretation and experiences within the context of the FTV initiative. Purposive sampling, which allows the researcher to use their judgement to deliberately target the participants with insight and experience of the phenomena, was used to select the participants representing the population (Etikan et al., 2016; Laurie & Jensen, 2017). The population of settler-teachers in the northern Saskatchewan school who participated in the FTV initiative was abundant. Six participants volunteered to participate, which accounts for 25% of the settler-teacher population of the school. Although relatively small, the sample size provided adequate data (Hennink & Kaiser, 2019) and may not be reflective of all settler-teachers who participated in the FTV initiative.

Data Collection Procedures

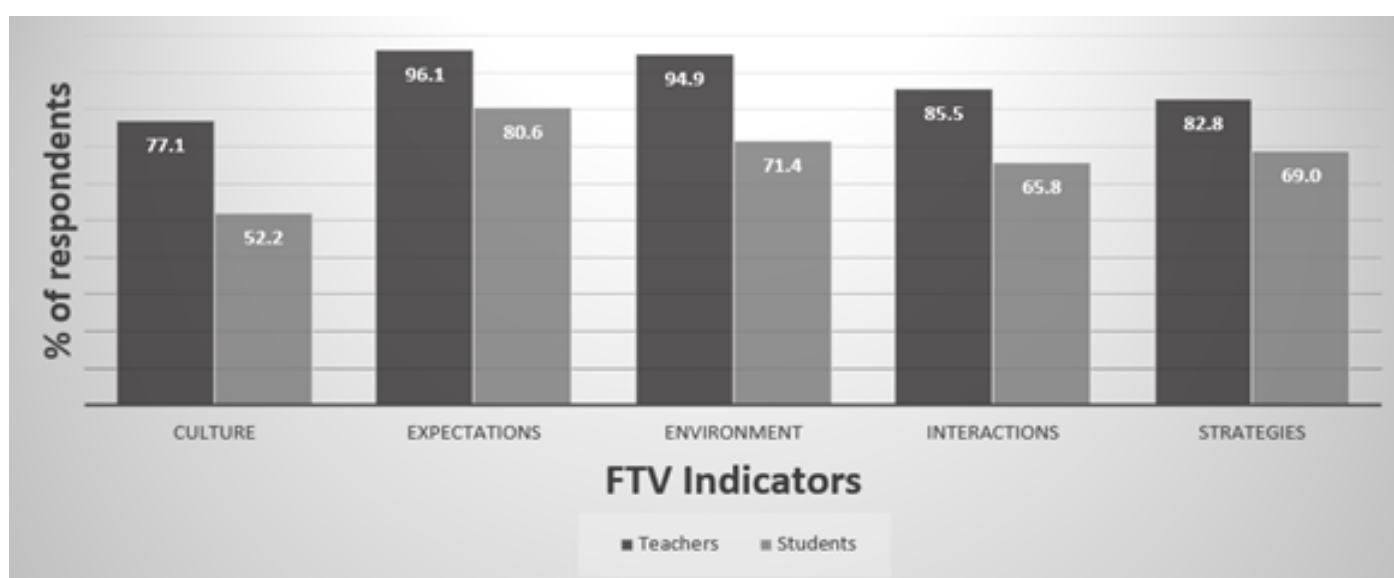
The staff at the school were advised of the research study where an invitation was offered to all non-Indigenous settler-teachers who were involved with FTV to volunteer for the study. The proposed timeframe from the promotion and invitation session to the end of the data collection period was five weeks; the researcher set aside three weeks to allow for the individual interviews to take place. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews (Andrews & Aydin, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Penley, 2018) where the participants were invited to choose the location for the interview.

Participants were led into the interview with ice-breaking questions identifying years of service and their path to the northern Saskatchewan community and school, which helped set the participants at ease (Creswell, 2018). A bank of content questions was developed for the interviews and allowed the participants to reflect and interpret their experiences with the FTV initiative. The open-ended questions required self-reflection on positionality, privilege, and bias and on whether the FTV initiative and leadership provided the time, resources and PLD for this to occur. To set the stage for the participants, prior to the interview, they

viewed Deconstructing White Privilege (DiAngelo, 2018), introducing them to the foundation of recognizing racism, power, and privilege. After viewing the video, they reviewed the four voice quote statements from the *Following Their Voices: Principals' Short Course* document (Sutherland, 2018) and were asked to complete the *Antiracist Checklist* (DiAngelo, n.d.) to be used as a critical self-reflection tool in the context of teaching Indigenous students. For consistency and recall, the researcher asked that the participants use the prompts within two days of their interview. Throughout the course of the FTV initiative, surveys were conducted to gather data from teachers and students in the school. The data that was collected provided details on how teachers and students interpreted achievement by FMNI students under the categories of culture, expectations, environment, interactions, and strategies (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2019a). Figure 1, showing the discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions of achievement, was used as a prompt during the interview and helped the participants find and interpret the rationale for these discrepancies.

Figure 1

Northern Saskatchewan School Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Achievement



Note. This figure shows the results of teachers' and students' responses ('almost always' or 'most of the time') for the FTV survey administered middle of the 2019/20 school year and start of the 2020/21 school year.

Rigour

Member checking allowed the participants the opportunity to review the codes and themes that emerged from the data collection. Meeting with the participants to ensure the data collected is accurate from the participants perspectives, provided credibility (Creswell, 2018; Penley, 2018). Providing a rich description of the emergent themes will provide the readership the ability to reflect and share their own experiences related to bias, privilege and positionality in their context (Creswell, 2018).

Limitations

Purposive sampling may lead to inherent issues. The participants may not have felt inclined to be vulnerable and to share if they felt that their information could discredit the organization (Creswell, 2018). Creswell also implies that there may be an imbalance of power between the researcher and participants because the information that is disclosed could be 'sugar coated' to appease the researcher's point of view. Due to the collegial relationship between the researcher and participants this possibility was noted. Disclosing their interpretation of the FTV initiative had the potential of exposing the role the participant played at the school being studied which may have resulted in inhibiting their true reflection (Creswell, 2018). The

potential of participation being known by colleagues may be unavoidable and was noted but the possibilities of being identified by leaders or the public was maintained through exhaustive confidentiality. The researcher had to ensure that both the participants and the data was not compromised by following the proper ethical procedures of anonymity and safe data handling and storage.

Andrews and Aydin (2020) and Penley (2018) all note that phenomenological research has limitations due to the nature of the small sample size. This is also the case in this study. Due to the small sample size the findings may not necessarily be generalized to the entire population of settler-teachers. Nevertheless, the findings may confirm that the process and implementation of the FTV initiative or other similar programs moving forward should ensure settler mindset, positionality, bias and privilege will need to be challenged at a deep and consistent level for true change to occur for the benefit of Indigenous students (Etikan et al., 2016; Penley, 2018).

Findings

The findings reveal that the implementation, structure, and guidelines of the FTV initiative did not explicitly encourage settler-teachers to critically self-reflect on positionality, bias, and privilege to make and sustain meaningful relationships with Indigenous students. This was found by interpreting the term settler-teacher; identifying the path to teach in northern Saskatchewan; noting both positive and negative aspects of FTV; the value of critical self-reflection; ideas for looking ahead; and the importance of relationships.

Settler-Teacher

The participants shared a variety of perceptions of what a settler and settler-teacher were. Participant C indicated that the only way to become an anti-racist is to engage in continuous, authentic critical self-reflection and that they "...would interpret [the] term to represent non-Indigenous teachers' who have roots in a place other than Canada, the land that is now known as Canada, and who have a worldview that represents something other than an Indigenous worldview." An individual's worldview will greatly influence their positionality and bias and will in-turn affect relationships with the non-dominant culture. The CRT tenet that reflects this point is supported by the challenge to dominant ideology, the idea that racism is endemic in our society and educational institutions (Sleeter, 2017). Another common theme that emerged is the idea that settlers are privileged by colonialism and that settler-teachers will be in a position of increased power in a system that is designed to benefit them and oppress Indigenous students.

Path to Teach in Northern Saskatchewan

The path the participants took on their way to their present teaching assignment provided an opportunity for them to question or affirm their connection to Indigenous people and culture. Many of the participants were attracted to the north as it provided an opportunity to start their careers; they may have identified with the north as a Canadian; or they may have had some familial connection to the area, and this brought familiarity and comfort. The idea that the north attracted those with a savior's complex or as a last resort for a job, is a perception that was inferred by one participant. The challenge to dominant ideology is the CRT tenet that questions the assumptions and motivations of settler-teachers who move to northern Saskatchewan. Examining the beliefs and ideologies would be beneficial for all settler-teachers participating in the FTV initiative.

Positive Aspects of FTV

The frequency of huddles and co-construction meetings was shared as a positive aspect of the FTV initiative, which allowed participants to keep the current issues and discussions at the "forefront of [their] mind[s]." It was said that "without those opportunities for learning, people often don't take them because teachers are so busy, and people are comfortable in their little silos and personal growth is uncomfortable."

Having consistent, timely and frequent meetings with peers discussing students' successes and challenges, and sharing best practices became, as one participant stated, "a game changer for me in relationship building."

When observations become part of the culture of a school, those who are more apprehensive to be observed will often become more comfortable with it over time. In the case of the lead-teacher FTV observation cycles, a participant noted that having a fellow teacher show appreciation for their hard work, willingness to change teaching strategies and the positive impact they were having on the students was a very positive aspect of the initiative.

Negative Aspects of FTV

Most of the negative aspects of the initiative stemmed from a combination of the "implementation and school buy-in." The inconsistencies, turn-over and shared belief of the authenticity of the voices created an apathetic attitude toward the process. The huddles and co-construction meetings were frequently attended by one of the school administrators, as they were advised to have oversight of the program. This felt "evaluative" and "it really inhibited our conversation." The apathy and skepticism resulting from these experiences underline the gap between the initiative's intended goal and the participants' reality, highlighting the important role of experiential knowledge in shaping outcomes. Lastly, knowing that there was an end to the funding and the supports that existed were set to expire, many individuals questioned whether we had invested enough capacity in our school to see the program components continue without the funding and support.

Critical Self-Reflection

The reflection on self, positionality, bias, and privilege was often overlooked during the initiative. Many of the participants shared a common perception towards the lack of reflection citing that the program "wasn't designed in a way to turn the gaze on myself." The willingness to reflect was hindered by fearing the labels that come with being privileged and bias, thus inhibiting true reflection. There was also a feeling that "good intentions and personal growth have to be supported by the school, the admin [and] the division," and this could have been what has led to a school culture that has difficulty encouraging reflective practice. Participant B believed that there must be support from leadership and that "teachers have to have the ability to open up and have the ability to be reflexive, have the ability to reflect on their own practice, [and]... they need to be able to reposition themselves."

Continuous reflection upon bias, privilege and positionality will allow an individual to be more responsive towards racism and how it continues to play a role in the implementation and ideals surrounding education. We need to change the narrative towards racism as participant E noted that "... no one likes to think they are racist, but we're all influenced by racial constructs that... have been passed down through our institutions and the way we think." Perpetuating racist ideals in the system was reflected upon by participant C and the importance of calling out racism, that its "an opportunity for me to speak up, and that's where I need to get better at that." Participant F, referring to lowered expectations, implied that it is an act of systemic racism towards Indigenous students, "... [we] allow them not to gain a proper education...we are saying that they can't meet the standards of attendance...because they are [Indigenous], and we don't even know their home situation at times." Eurocentric mindsets continue to guide teachers, as participant C reflected, "I have been educated in a Eurocentric way of thinking, so I think that informs much of my lens the way through which I perceive the world and perceive education." The challenge of changing the system to better reflect what best practices are for Indigenous student learning often conflicts with systemic racism and Eurocentric ideology. Participant B suggests that "... if it's a minority student or an Indigenous student or a student who isn't from the culture of power... you have to teach that student how to succeed in the culture of power."

Looking Ahead

As the FTV initiative came to an end at the northern Saskatchewan school, it was asked how positive

change will occur related to settler-teacher mindsets, relationships with Indigenous students and reflective practice. It was suggested that collaboration with all staff and administration is essential and that “it has to be led or evaluated or monitored by everyone, but there has to be ... a leadership group... to make sure that everyone’s needs are met.” The leadership group could comprise of teacher-leaders with administrative support where “our admin needs to be listening to staff and we need to make sure that the space and time takes place to forward our learning and have the important conversations that will help us relate to our students better from there.” The purpose of a well-intentioned initiative like FTV is to ensure that best practices are kept and used for years to come, making necessary changes on a need’s basis.

The stream of settler-teachers who arrive to teach in northern Saskatchewan schools every year will benefit greatly from a continuous professional learning community. Participant C suggested that “the only way we can ensure teachers are continuously reflecting on their bias, on their privilege, on... their positionality is if we have this structure in place to make sure we’re all doing it...” They go on to add:

but then as teachers ... if you’re a settler-teacher from somewhere else and you’re coming to a northern community or an Indigenous community or starting your work anywhere... I do believe that there should be a process in place to walk you through that.

Relationships

The way in which relationships are formed with Indigenous students will also be useful in building relationships with all students. These positive relationships are essential for students to feel valued and experience success in school. Common strategies that were shared amongst the participants included taking time to build relationships; respecting and honoring students; listening to students; building trust; ensuring that community members and families are involved in the expectations we have for students’; and listening to get a sense of what the community would like to see for their kids. Challenging the one-size-fits-all approach and color blindness will require a more tailored, context-sensitive approach for true equity and student success.

Discussion

Using the term settler and settler-teacher allowed the conversation to begin in a place, regardless of their own history on the lands they occupy and teach upon, that they need to acknowledge before reflection can begin. It was stated in the findings that students need to be the ones to adapt in the system in which they find themselves in to succeed in the culture of power, confirming that the education system continues to perpetuate racial inequality through biased practices (Sleeter, 2017). This colonized thought pattern is what the system was designed to do. To deny that, simply perpetuates systemically racist ideals. Wentz (2021) identifies the root of where settler-teachers need to begin their journey. They state the importance of moving settler-teachers towards anti-racism because otherwise you will be perpetuating systemic racism either directly or indirectly. The only way to become an anti-racist is to engage in continuous, authentic critical self-reflection.

The limited opportunities for critical self-reflection during the FTV initiative were compounded by the unintended barriers that leadership and the initiative enabled. The huddle discussions often transformed into turning the gaze on the students and their families when students were deemed unsuccessful, rather than engaging in opportunities for critical self-reflection.

Leadership had an important role to play in guiding the teachers and ensuring the outcomes of the FTV initiative were integrated in the school culture. Therefore, once the FTV funding terminates, the momentum will be lost if the leadership team chooses not to prioritize a collaborative culture including reflection, professional development and observations centered around TRC (2015). Khalifa et al. (2019) suggest values of leadership praxis that include making self-knowledge and self-reflection a priority, appreciating community voices and values, and approaching collectivism through inclusive communication practices. Capitalizing on

these values of leadership praxis, the leadership team could create a culture where the FTV best practices are sustained for years to come.

The opportunity for schools to transform into a place that challenges racialized systems will only be successful if a majority of the settler-teachers and leaders critically examine colonization and structures of privilege from the past and present (Morcom & Freeman, 2018). For this to occur in a meaningful authentic way, settler-teachers will need to recognize that expression, affect, and emotion influence their practice and relationships; this means that deep reflection is needed to see the connections in their pedagogy related to their implicit bias and privilege (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Unfortunately, most of the reflection that occurred focused on teacher practice and interactions with students with limited analysis of their knowledge and understanding of FMNI culture.

With the increased emergence of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in education paired with internationalization there will be a continuous need for teachers who have embraced a Eurocentric-teaching mindset to reflect and make meaning of their experience and interactions with differing cultural groups. The prospects of leaders demonstrating commitment to change their perspectives and mindsets will empower all teachers to challenge and shift their perspectives and mindsets to improve learning for students with differing cultures than their own (Korteweg & Fiddler, 2019). Settler-teachers in northern Saskatchewan need to understand and analyze how the education system continues to perpetuate colonial practices that inhibits Indigenous students growth in learning (Kouri, 2020). Looking inward and rejecting cynical excuses, teachers can experience the kind of transformative growth that will enable them to better serve Indigenous students.

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