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Towards a Decolonizing Framework for Pre-Departure Education

Vers un cadre de travail décolonisant pour la formation pré-départ

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Abstract

In light of the increasing mobility of people for study and employment purposes and the fact that Indigenous groups continue to be marginalized across the globe, this article introduces a tentative framework for adult educators or facilitators to decolonize their pre-departure orientations for workers or learners who plan to live in a different country. Drawing on Indigenous education principles, the framework consists of three guiding principles that intersect with one another: (1) Indigenizing teaching practice, (2) deconstructing ruling relations, and (3) promoting reflexivity, mutual respect, and understanding. Challenges to implementing this framework include organizational requirements to maintain a Western dominance in their pre-departure programs.

Résumé

À la lumière de la mobilité croissante des personnes à des fins d'emploi ou d'études et du fait que les groupes indigènes continuent à être marginalisés dans certains pays, cet article présente un cadre temporaire destiné aux éducateurs ou aux facilitateurs adultes pour qu'ils décolonisent les orientations qu'ils offrent aux travailleurs ou aux apprenants qui prévoient de vivre dans un autre pays avant leur départ. En se basant sur les principes d'éducation indigènes le cadre se compose de trois lignes directrices qui se recoupent : (1) indigénéiser les pratiques d'enseignement, (2) déconstruire les relations dominantes et (3) promouvoir la réflexivité, le respect mutuel et la compréhension. Les défis rencontrés dans la mise en œuvre de ce cadre de travail comprennent les exigences organisationnelles de maintenir une dominance occidentale dans les programmes pré-départ.

Keywords: transnational education; decolonizing education; mobility; preparedness

Mots clés : enseignement transnational; décoloniser l'enseignement; mobilité; préparation

There has been steady and unprecedented growth in transnational mobility for both work and learning opportunities across the globe. Transnational mobility means people crossing borders and establishing a different life in another country for a period of time. For this paper, working across borders is defined as employment in various sectors where unpaid or paid workers (e.g., as international teachers) depart their home countries to work in another. Learning across borders is defined as studying particular courses or participating in an internship at a foreign institution (e.g., as international students). When people cross borders for work and learning opportunities (known hereafter as *sojourners*), they are often exposing themselves to new languages, cultures, behaviours, politics, laws, and histories, which can be unfamiliar and complex to understand as an outsider. One stark realization is that Indigenous communities in the new country context are struggling for sovereignty and to maintain their culture and language due to colonialism (Loomba, 2005). By Indigenous, I mean peoples maintaining longer-standing traditions in more remote and peripheralized social and territorial locations, as often they have been pushed off their lands at different moments in history. Colonialism consists of a White, European heteropatriarchy that subjugates peoples who are not part of that dominant group. Loomba described Western nations as having colonized nations for the purposes of “development” dating as far back as the 15th century. Loomba added that these “development” practices resulted in Western nations marginalizing, occupying, and destroying cultures as an exercise of superiority, control, and

dominant power. Colonialism introduced complex systems that seek to oppress people into docile bodies and maintain knowledge systems, order, and civility as defined by the colonizer. Significantly, there have been ongoing, pervasive patterns of systemic and social exclusion aimed towards Indigenous peoples over time, and these patterns have had harmful effects on their communities and their ways of being and ways of knowing. For sojourners, learning of Indigenous struggles for equal rights and equal power prior to departure for the new country may be helpful in navigating racialized tensions towards Indigenous peoples, minimizing or avoiding exclusionary practices towards Indigenous peoples, and engaging in respectful actions and relationships for social change. At the forefront is learning appropriate language and words used in various Indigenous and local communities. Specific knowledge about various social identities and inequities in general can help in the acculturation process and minimize mistakes and missteps in the foreign situation.

The purposes of this conceptual paper are to (1) deconstruct pre-departure orientations (PDOs) through a decolonizing lens and (2) reconceptualize a bridging framework for educators who implement PDOs or pre-departure education more generally. Pre-departure education is significant because inductions tend to “set the tone” of professional values in the workplace (Fechter & Hindman, 2011) and represent an introduction to the “official knowledge” that organizational leaders prioritize in the new setting. On the one hand, establishing an organizational culture that supports learning, mutual respect, and dialogue at the preparation stage may strengthen relationships with various communities and maximize chances for sojourner adjustment and success (Joslin, 2002). On the other hand, ineffective pre-departure preparation can result in long-lasting negative effects (poor institutional image, increased recruitment costs) for the organization (Stirzaker, 2004) and reify power imbalances, harmful behaviours, and marginalizing practices towards certain identities and groups (Oberhauser, 2019). As explained below, since there is some agreement in the literature that PDOs are useful educational exercises, this article reconceptualizes PDOs from being technical, information-heavy exercises to becoming a “bridging orientation” that hybridizes Western and Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies as part of the pedagogy.

While mobility is indeed a complex and multidirectional phenomenon, I examine the experiences of travelling to a country that has an Indigenous population and a history with colonialism. Countries with experiences of colonialism exist across the globe, including Canada, New Zealand, Finland, Peru, Japan, and Kenya. There can be a general assumption that colonizing countries and the former colonies are monolithic and mutually exclusive, and so this paper aims to move beyond this assumption and focus more on the complexity of decolonization and situating oneself self-reflexively in relation to the work and the new context. Pointedly, Illeris (2011) wrote,

If, for instance, we are travelling to a country we have not visited before, we often try to acquire some information on that country before going there. We form some pictures and opinions. Once we arrive we find that our impressions are expanded, nuances added and, perhaps, pictures and opinions altered. At the same time, the new impressions are influenced by the perceptions we had beforehand. Furthermore, our preconceptions may contribute to determining what we notice and how we perceive it. (pp. 14–15)

Given the history of Western dominance over Indigenous communities, the preconceptions that Illeris suggested may construct Indigenous peoples as “victims,” “backwards,” or “rebels,” ignoring their voice, agency, and subjectivity. If we do not make overt efforts to counter a hierarchical social order, then we might be supporting and sustaining dominance much to the detriment of marginalized identities (Gorski, 2008). Robert and Yu (2018) further explained that naming inequality does not adequately address oppression within a postcolonial context, and that

“it is necessary to look within schools at talk, at curriculum, at practices to deconstruct and transform toward the new/alternative education model” (p. 106). For example, while being “respectful of other cultures” can be clearly stated in curricula, the notion of respect needs to be unpacked and deconstructed so that it is culturally relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

This paper aims to acknowledge such difficult histories and complexities, but also advocates for greater inclusion of Indigenous peoples and perspectives in pre-departure education so that we may learn from their experiences at the start of the transnational experience. This paper adds to extant research on decolonization and PDOs by contextualizing Indigenous perspectives as fundamental to transnational mobility and sojourner development. The significance of this paper is to provide practitioners and researchers involved with pre-departure education some conceptual and practical direction in how to sensitize relations with, and build awareness about, Indigenous peoples.

In alignment with the relevant Indigenous-themed literature that seeks to decolonize aspects of society, it is important to position myself in this paper. I am a White, queer, cisgender, male settler born in Canada to immigrant parents. One parent is from a country that had a clear imperialistic agenda (United Kingdom) and the other parent originates from an Indigenous community within a colonized country (Malta). My mixed colonizer/colonized and privileged/marginalized background generates discussions around power, identity, access, and status in my professional and personal life. My diverse background allows me to navigate different communities and value having multiple perspectives underpin a learning experience.

What follows in this paper is a more comprehensive discussion about PDOs and their various forms and purposes based on the literature. Afterwards, I discuss decolonization and decolonizing educational and social contexts in order to understand the inherent tensions and complexities. It is not my intention through this work to universalize Indigeneity across the globe, but, rather, engage various literary bodies and Indigenous voices across a spectrum to illustrate similar modes of domination, but also differences within these modes and their effects. I then propose a tentative framework to decolonize pre-departure education, drawing on principles of Indigenous education. I use literature from various social science sub-fields in order to provide a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary view of the topic. I conclude with a summary of key points, challenges, and suggestions for future work.

Pre-Departure Orientations

Generally speaking, an orientation aims to support smooth and positive adjustment for new employees or learners to their place of employment or school (Stirzaker, 2004). A facilitator—usually someone associated with human resource development or adult education in the organization—leads formal and informal learning sessions on how to succeed in the new context. PDOs are unique types of orientations for sojourners preparing to live and work in a different country than their own. PDOs are often initiated by international organizations to ensure quality in job adjustment and performance in the foreign setting (Rodriguez & Schwenken, 2013). This quality means developing skills, attitudes, and ethical approaches required by employers so that the sojourner can adequately adjust to the new context. The goal among sojourners in the PDO is to learn competencies and knowledge to better negotiate encounters overseas and to strengthen motivation, morale, retention, and productivity (Brindley et al., 2009; Hoare, 2013).

The literature on transnational mobility in various employment sectors, such as international development (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985), business (Wurtz, 2014), tourism

(Hammersley, 2014), the military (Birch & Miller, 2005), and international education (Stirzaker, 2004), suggests that international placement orientations positively affect job productivity. PDOs enable workers to better understand differences in work situations and relations, country contexts, administrative climates, and job practices. Unlike domestic work orientations, PDOs form unique learning opportunities, since many sojourners do not visit their destinations prior to their arrival (Hayden & Thompson, 2011). This means that PDOs represent their first opportunity to learn of the new work and social context even if it is initially at a distance.

PDOs are usually very short and intense sessions over several days covering a range of topics, but they can also last as long as a month (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Cross-cultural training on such topics as cultural sensitivity, ethics, and security has been widely recognized as one way to assist the acculturation process among sojourners (MacKay, 2003; Pouligny et al., 2007). Additional topics in the pre-departure curriculum can be technical information (visas, housing, salaries, health care, banking, risk assessment, etc.), work information (organizational culture, procedures, rules, uniforms or standard dress, etc.), and sociocultural information (culture shock, norms, values, behaviours, politics, etc.) (Mizzi & O'Brien-Klewchuk, 2016). These topics often are facilitated through formal workshops and involve people with personal experiences in the destination. While all aspects of the above information can be helpful to sojourners, my focus in this paper is on how to embed notions of culture, identity, and power that support Indigenous communities within all aspects of the PDO rather than as stand-alone modules or tangential, superficial conversations.

Similar to Hammersley et al. (2018), I view the PDO as an educational and social exercise that can provide a rare opportunity for critical reflection, engagement in diverse understandings, and creation of sensitive community relations. As noted elsewhere (Mizzi & O'Brien-Klewchuk, 2016), cultural and human diversity may be adjunct topics in PDO curricula, there is a heavier focus on technical and organizational information, and the goal is to prepare sojourners for quick adjustment and productive experiences as determined by the employer. Marginal attention to human diversity may cause sojourners to disconnect from Indigenous communities because the sojourner is ill-equipped to approach and include social issues and human experiences (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Wehbi, 2009). For example, Tiessen and Kumar, in their critique of focusing mainly on risk assessment in PDOs, argued for understanding the complexity of violence faced by local people in different contexts. Pre-departure education can foster learning about culture, the history of the new country, the strategies of colonization and oppression, and current struggles for sovereignty, equal rights, and related sociopolitical issues. PDOs can introduce differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures, and through this introduction, facilitators can encourage sojourners to view human diversity as an insightful source of knowledge and an opportunity for critical reflection (Mizzi & O'Brien-Klewchuk, 2016). PDOs can be helpful in discouraging sojourners to (1) adopt practices that could be socially restrictive, offensive, or presumptuous to local or Indigenous populations or (2) draw on knowledge that has little relevance to the new context (Morris et al., 2014).

Western ways of working and learning often dominate the PDO curriculum and pedagogy (Hammersley et al., 2018; Jorgenson, 2016). In addition to an explicit curriculum that validates certain knowledge systems, Eisner (2002) wrote that excluded content functions as an implicit curriculum that is also being taught to learners. An implicit curriculum teaches learners that excluded topics are insignificant to their development and social experience. Pre-departure education that ignores Indigenous, cultural, or local perspectives may reinforce a social hierarchy

that devalues certain knowledge systems, further cements the practice of creating us/them binaries to structure relationships, and marginalize voice and agency.

A critical perspective on PDOs has started to emerge in the recent literature, although this view is applied to very few studies (e.g., Mizzi, 2014; Oberhauser, 2019). Martin and Griffiths (2014) argued that providing space for critical reflection can produce better understandings of culture and identity. Further, Morris et al. (2014) suggested that sojourners can learn how to use their knowledge very carefully in the local culture. This means that cultural knowledge becomes a “metacognitive activity,” such as reflecting on assumptions and working towards minimizing errors. For example, Bessette and Camden (2017) identified risks in their scoping review of the literature on PDOs for physiotherapy students participating in an international practicum, which include community needs being secondary to student learning and a lack of knowledge of the local culture. They recommended that cultural competency (i.e., an ability to understand and appreciate behaviours rooted in cultural traditions) become more prominent in PDOs, and suggested that “students should therefore be exposed to various ethical dilemmas that they may encounter and be given an ethical framework for solving problems” (Bessette & Camden, 2017, p. 345). Based on this literature, it can be helpful to consider the broader notion of decolonization and its guiding principles for pre-departure education.

Decolonization and Decolonizing

Abdi (2012) explained that colonialism was foremost educational in nature and has psychological, informational, cultural, technological, economic, and political aspects that continue to permeate former colonies or colonized spaces. Former colonies are bounded to a system of global governance, largely due to advanced globalization and neoliberalism. These colonies are not seeking an absolute disengagement, but are focusing more on survival and autonomy and to being a part of and leading decision making in matters that relate to them (Abdi, 2012; Loomba, 2005). Decolonizing systems and practices are undoubtedly a complex experience and function as a struggle for both equal power and sovereignty.

There are different, yet connecting, views on decolonization in the literature. First, given the inseparable connection between decolonization and colonizers, Habashi (2005) wrote that decolonization is an impossibility due to new social and economic structures that strengthen and perpetuate colonialism, such as global capitalism. These structures operate to “normalize” and “humanize” from a “subhuman state,” and force Indigenous identities to assimilate into colonizing culture(s) or risk being viewed as “backwards.” Oppressed people endure consequences of domination and subjugation, yet also continue the cycle of marginalization and exclusion towards their own people. Habashi suggested that decolonization binds, rather than affirms, Indigenous identities as “non-Western,” which maintains the West’s dominance. Second, Abdi (2012) argued that decolonization provides a “critical space for re-evaluating the continuities of colonialism in contexts and themes that are more stealth, and therefore, even occasionally more dangerous than what has happened previously” (p. 2). This point implies that a more in-depth understanding of colonialization is necessary for decolonization to have any kind of impact. Third, Shahjahan et al. (2009) suggested that decolonization, within a higher education context, means to “critically analyze the impact of Eurocentric educational institutions which contribute to the indoctrination of students into a Western system of thought, as this is primarily what is valued in academia” (p. 64). This point calls for an interrogation into how and why colonizing structures continue to be highly valued in formal educational systems. Fourth, Patel (cited in Hammersley et al., 2018) recognized that decolonization and diversity is about attending to power relations, and these

elements are often missing in field trips overseas. This point reinforces the notion that transnational mobility experiences are power-ridden and that decolonization may help reduce continuing harm against Indigenous communities. Above all, as Tuck and Yang (2019) wrote, decolonization demands return of Indigenous lands and the end of all forms of slavery of Indigenous peoples.

Common threads across these definitions are that decolonization is complex, has multiple perspectives, and raises awareness to long-standing power differentials between the colonized and the colonizer and that Indigenous knowledges need recognition and infusion with Western logic systems. A decolonizing approach deconstructs Western hegemony in social systems, relations, and roots of social injustice, advances a platform for inquiry and co-construction of knowledge into this dominance, and disrupts an imbalanced relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge systems. There is an acknowledgement that foreign knowledge “is not objective and universal” (Akena, 2012, p. 615), which means that it cannot adapt so easily to Indigenous contexts and should not be the dominant or expert source of knowledge. This view implies that knowledge shared during PDOs must be diverse and comprehensive and include different views in the curriculum (i.e., that sojourners and PDO facilitators consult with multiple stakeholders, model inclusion, and engage Indigenous peoples). Pointedly, decolonization, as Akena (2012) wrote, “invites those engaged in the decolonization processes to participate in knowledge production that empowers indigenous intellectual resources for the continued existence of their society with their indigenous ways of knowing at the forefront” (p. 605).

Decolonizing the PDO represents one way of promoting Indigeneity for facilitators while, concomitantly, deconstructing colonial tendencies that underpin pre-departure education and transnational opportunity in general. This work is tentative, contextual, and unfinished given that colonization looks very different across the globe and people have been impacted by or have contributed to colonization on various levels. Rodriguez and Schwenken (2013) argued that sojourner identity is constructed before sojourners leave their home countries. Therefore, creating PDOs along the basis of decolonization principles becomes even more paramount, since some sojourners have their own experiences with colonization in their home countries that may need to be deconstructed prior to leaving for another colonized context.

Decolonizing the Pre-Departure Orientation

Indigenous education offers a useful starting point to decolonizing pre-departure education. Within a Canadian context, Ahenakew (2017) suggested that Western knowledge is restricted in producing “healthy relations and ecosystems” (p. 80) and that Indigenous ways of knowing cannot be subsumed into a Western framework, but rather form the foundation for the educational endeavour. Ahenakew further explained that educational spaces need to “interrupt modernity’s loudness and create the necessary silence where our minds can rest, our senses can be numbed, and our hearts can be re-paced to the rhythm, the drumbeats, and the voices of the land” (p. 81). Haig-Brown (2018) also called for disruptions to modernity, and observed that Indigenous education has centred on resistance to colonialism and a refusal to erase culture, language, rights, responsibilities, roles, and so forth. Further, Smith et al. (2019) called for reconstructing school structures by examining the relationship between change and institutions and repositioning Indigenous ways of being and ways of knowing as central in education. Fleuri and Jurkevycz Fleuri (2017) echoed similar thoughts in a Brazilian context, and argued that marginalized people are invested in unpacking and analyzing the multiple layers of oppression in order to avoid further harm. They suggested that educational agendas should consider *all* peoples and in these agendas to include

discussions about the various forms of intercultural relations that have led to genocide and domination.

A more nuanced view of decolonization prompts a philosophical shift of the PDO away from being a narrowly conceived technical training apparatus to being a critical transnational space to discuss matters relating to power, colonialism, equality, and inclusion. There are several examples that illustrate this point. First, in India, Rodriguez and Schwenken (2013) described how colonizers constructed “ideal migrants” on the basis of productivity and development. This construction resulted in pre-departure training being focused on improving employability and adjustment, and only sending representatives of “good workers” overseas (see also Guevarra [2009] for similar arguments in a Filipino context). Second, in Ghana, Jorgenson (2016) explained that Canadian outbound students exercised discourses of Orientalism through making assumptions about Ghanaian people, and that these assumptions were formed at pre-departure orientations in Canada. Third, within the context of visiting professors, Mizzi (2017) suggested a “pedagogy of preparedness” that involves, in part, a decolonization of educational spaces. Instead of preparation taking place in formal education settings, this alternative pedagogy involves exploring the local community and neighbourhoods as a means to understand the effects of colonization, which supports sojourners to adopt a listening position, allows for sharing stories, and co-constructs a curriculum. Fourth, Hammersley (2014) argued in the context of volunteer tourism in Vanuatu, that “good intentions are often embedded in processes that lead to uneven distributions of power” (p. 858). Sojourners understand and produce certain knowledge about marginalized peoples, which causes them to sunder themselves from the social problems that they encounter. This division results in equity issues to be viewed as simplistic, and produces a failure of understanding how such perceptions influence practice. Hammersley suggested that sojourners adopt a learning orientation throughout their transnational experience and that pre-departure support should include debrief sessions, encourage critical reflection, and question assumptions. Overall, this body of literature suggested how an imbalanced relationship in pre-departure education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can create a new opportunity for reconsidering other forms of inequity and develop a culturally responsive pedagogy that includes multiple ways of knowing and ways of being.

Decolonizing pre-departure education aims to disorient us/them, visitor/host, and expert/non-expert social hierarchies that underpin the exercise, which, according to Tiessen and Kumar (2013), are pervasive dichotomies that structure human relations and maintain an othering practice. A decolonizing PDO offers learning opportunities to deconstruct our epistemic ontologies, the perceptions of social realities, and our position in relation to these realities. A decolonizing PDO brings awareness to how privilege has led to, as Ahenakew (2017) wrote, “securitized borders of stolen lands, exploitative, and exclusionary social mobility, and double standards of morality” (p. 81). The shifted emphasis means to “develop a pedagogy that will allow students the broadest academic possibilities for understanding the multiple histories and ways of knowing that continue to propel humanity toward a higher level of social and cultural development” (Akena, 2012, p. 616). Pointedly, a decolonizing PDO realizes the difficulties that challenge different lives and livelihoods and explores various knowledges, stories, and perspectives on living and working in the new country. This could mean, for instance, a realization that there are various borders within a nation-state and not just one border to cross. The point here is to create a new educational model that shifts the pre-departure orientation to being a “bridging orientation” of multiple worlds. To facilitate this shift, I propose a tentative framework for PDOs that draws on three interconnecting principles that work towards decolonization: (1) indigenizing

teaching practice, (2) deconstructing ruling relations, and (3) promoting reflexivity, mutual respect, and understanding. I explain each in turn and offer practical examples based on these principles.

Indigenizing Teaching Practice

Ahenahew (2017) expressed concern that Indigenous knowledges in Indigenous education can be tokenized or occupy the periphery of teaching practice, which limits the positive and productive effects that could potentially occur. It is important for PDO facilitators to place indigeneity at the core of teaching practices and discuss capitalism, race, power, colonialism, English language dominance, intercultural relations, and other colonial tropes. Pete et al. (2013) wrote:

Indigenizing my teaching is about asserting the significance and application of Indigenous knowledge within the subjects I teach. Furthermore, indigenizing is also about decolonizing myself, the classroom, the content I teach and the discipline I operate within by decentering western ways of knowing through the curricula I use. (p. 103)

In other words, including Indigenous and non-Western examples in the curriculum and Indigenous approaches to pedagogy demonstrates to learners the respectful ways of engaging Indigenous communities. Given that land is both sacred and pedagogical to Indigenous peoples, and that it is often under threat (e.g., land can be unceded, stolen, in conflict, or militarized), there is added value to placing the land as a pedagogy in PDOs. This means going outside of the classroom walls and analyzing how people live in circumstances that might be similar or different to the destination (Mizzi, 2017), or learning the history and significance of the land in the sojourner's current context and the legal and social efforts to reclaim land. Facilitators can explore the historical, geospatial, and political specificity as it relates to the effects of colonialism across various global spaces. As Ahenakew (2017) wrote, "land is life, because without land there is no life (human or otherwise)" (p. 81).

PDOs can contain practical examples and discussions that stimulate cross-cultural understandings and ethical responsibilities towards communities and organizations (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Pete et al. (2013) shared, "I discuss stereotypes, systemic discrimination and representation within organizational and business-related contexts. Furthermore, I attempt to provide more avenues of self-reflection for my students when exploring different subject matters" (p. 109). One way to engage in this form of discussion is through film and images, which shed light on how these can be misrepresentative, and then what follows is a dialogue about what is missing, whose story needs further exploration, what sojourners would add to the film, and the overall power dynamics in the scenario (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Through indigenizing teaching practice, the classroom becomes a "gathering place" where people share their experiences and insights through open dialogue and listen to each other (Shahjahan et al., 2009). Some practical suggestions that may indigenize teaching practice in a PDO are as follows:

- Include sharing circles to honour Indigenous histories, stories, and worldviews and how these ways of life can shape the forthcoming transition (Raven Speaks, n.d.; Walker, 2017). Haig-Brown (2018) suggested three questions as starting points: "(1) Whose traditional Lands are you on at this moment? (2) What do you know of the people who have lived and continue to live here? (3) Whose interests are served when you can or cannot answer these questions?" (p. 319).
- Explain offensive and acceptable terminologies and behaviours towards Indigenous peoples, including historical and contemporary perspectives that draw on differences in legal and social contexts.

- Include pluralism within Indigenous communities, such as explorations of multiple genders, sexualities, languages, histories, territories, and so forth.
- Include instruction on how Indigenous communities perceive outsiders, and the history of and reasons for this perception.
- Describe differences in political, cultural, and social climates, illustrating differences and commonalities among global Indigenous communities (Larsen, 2016).
- Invite sojourners to visit diasporic and rural communities, discuss relevant films and photographs, and read literature created by Indigenous peoples situated in the destination.
- Question links to colonialism and capitalism in relation to social development, and then envision a social transformation that disrupts power relations (Fleuri & Jurkevicz Fleuri, 2017) (e.g., how the production and marketization of goods originated on stolen lands or the exploitation of Indigenous labour).
- Explore spatial and curricular areas where both Western and Indigenous meet and complement one another (Campbell & Christie, 2016).
- Affirm sojourners with Indigenous identities and their self-worth (Ahenakew, 2017).

In short, through this guiding principle, the goal is for sojourners to learn of Western dominance, privilege, and patriarchies and explore different forms of Indigenous knowledges and practices.

Deconstructing Ruling Relations

Knowledge that is Western-centric and accepted as universal shapes the relationship between Western and Indigenous societies (Akena, 2012), and any kind of decolonizing effort needs to bring awareness to this relationship. Indigenous content and pedagogy might be unsettling as they reveal crimes and mistreatments that governments and organizations have committed against Indigenous peoples over a long period of time. What might have been previously taught about Indigenous peoples could be intentionally non-existent, incomplete, reductionistic, false, and racist. Decolonizing a PDO needs to begin a journey of unlearning misinformation, inquire into the absence or liminality of Indigenous perspectives in previous education, and shift the discourse to centralize Indigenous perspectives (Pete et al., 2013).

Becoming critically aware of the sociopolitical context and developing the skills to navigate ruling relations can benefit sojourner adjustment to the new context. Navigating ruling relations means interrogating how current governing structures are still embedded in colonizer practices and how such structures shape relationships with Indigenous communities. Akena (2012) wrote that “the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge over indigenous ways of knowing undoubtedly creates inequality, which results in conflict and failure of the education system, since any questioning of the dominant ways of knowing is seen as primitive and uncivilized” (p. 615). Facilitators can teach sojourners about conflict resolution, community building and collaboration, learning spaces that foster personal and professional growth, and multiple ways of knowing and leading (Shahjahan et al., 2009). For example, as an expatriate educator living in Kosovo, I experienced the Albanian-led revolt against the international community in 2003. I witnessed violence in the streets and a frustrated community towards international imperialism. If during my PDO I had learned of the effects of living with imposed regimes, or strengthened skills in participatory engagement, perhaps I could have better understood what may (not) be happening in this situation and that I should not use my Western knowledge to structure interactions with the

local population. Learning of my housing situation or what my “average” day-to-day activities was useful to some degree, but there is much more that can be taught when it comes to working in challenging environments. As Akena (2012) wrote, “Indigenous knowledge is a complex accumulation of local context-relevant knowledge that embraces the essence of ancestral knowing as well as the legacies of diverse histories and cultures” (p. 601). A PDO can infuse Indigenous knowledges with non-Indigenous knowledges for a stronger exchange of ideas and approaches. Activities that can critically analyze governance and ruling relations include the following forms of Indigenous education:

- Provide a historical and social overview of hegemonic national and regional politics, and engage in a critical discussion of hot-topic issues through various Indigenous perspectives (e.g., see Breidlid, 2017).
- Encourage sojourners to respond to issues in the spirit of collaboration and learning, rather than as an effort to save, tokenize, or rescue Indigenous peoples (Straubhaar, 2015).
- Provide an overview of the different forms of governance, capitalisms, and racializations in the destination, probing where decision making and power centres lie and how discourses intersect.
- Explain the various minority groups. Have sojourners discuss what constitutes “diversity” and “inclusion” in the new country context, including how these discourses can be experienced differently by Indigenous and local communities, and cause erasure and homogenization of Indigenous peoples and cultures.
- Provide opportunities for sojourners to openly share and lead discussions that connect the curriculum and life.
- Include conflict resolution and peace education as part of pre-departure education, which contain how resolving conflict and building peaceful communities look different across sociocultural contexts.

In sum, deconstructing ruling relations means providing opportunities to learn of how Indigenous peoples have been treated over time, and working towards reconciliation.

Promoting Reflexivity, Mutual Respect, and Understanding

Ahenakew (2017) argued that adding indigeneity to a plethora of curricula topics does little to transform oppressive systems. What needs to happen is for systems, such as the construction and implementation of pre-departure education, to be reconstituted on the basis of anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and anti-capitalism principles. A part of this reconstitution includes an emphasis that sojourners be respectful and reflexive, and involve Indigenous peoples as collaborative and equal partners in all aspects of life. Gorski (2008) wrote:

First, any framework for intercultural education that does not have as its central and overriding premise commitment to the establishment and maintenance of an equitable and just world can be seen as a tool, however well-intentioned, of an educational colonization in which inequity and injustice are reproduced under the guise of interculturalism. Second, transcending a colonizing intercultural education requires in educators deep shifts in consciousness rather than the simple pragmatic or programmatic shifts that too often are described as intercultural education. (p. 517)

These “deep shifts in consciousness” that Gorski described may mean that sojourners learn how to locate themselves in the new situation, which include analyzing perceptions of their identity, role, and background, even if there is seemingly little personal connection to the destination. Reconnecting to learners’ knowledge and social centres, who they are, what brought them to this

transnational experience, and what their practices are can be helpful in promoting reflexivity (Shahjahan et al., 2009).

Being reflexive is not entirely unproblematic. Sometimes reflexivity means learners stand apart from what and who they engage with as a way of maintaining professional distance as an outsider to the group. This is done mainly to promote a degree of objectivity and to minimize bias. However, the subjectivity of the sojourner cannot be so easily absolved in the new setting. In the context of qualitative research, Patton (2002) wrote that

reflexivity calls for self-reflection, indeed, critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and a willingness to consider how who one is affects what one is able to observe, hear, and understand in the field and as an observer and analyst. The observer, therefore, during field work, must *observe self* as well as others, and *interactions of self with others* [emphasis added]. (p. 299)

Observing self and relationships with others means to grasp differences of power in various contexts and foster a deeper sense of how past practices or learned assumptions might be shaping current behaviours. Analyzing gender roles is one way to promote reflexivity. Postcolonial scholars raised awareness of the colonizer's mission to legitimize heterosexuality and strict gender roles according to behavioural norms deemed acceptable to the West (Chari, 2001; Wekker, 2006). Through validating hypermasculine and hyperfeminine identities by way of strict heteronormative rules and a gender binary, Western dominance over Indigenous communities becomes secured (Chari, 2001). Being reflexive of gender roles allows for understanding of how everything is gendered, and gender is constructed differently across contexts, much to the detriment of those who fall outside of gender norms. The point here is that facilitators can lead this heightened sense of reflexivity by asking learners to disrupt assumptions made in their everyday lives or question their behaviours or decisions.

Relationship building and mutual learning are important attributes when engaging critical reflexivity, as there is awareness of the impulse to reinforce “us” and “them” colonialisms and inequalities, and that these compulsions are rooted in imperialistic Western logic systems (Hammersley, 2014; Straubhaar, 2015). When engaged in reflexive, respectful, and dialogic approaches, there can be explorations of how sojourners are perceived differently in the new country.

Mutual respect in an educational situation means “co-creating curriculum with community partners [that] presents new ways of generating reciprocal learning and engagement opportunities” (Hammersley et al., 2018, p. 202). Indigenous peoples can be involved in the creation and implementation of pre-departure education in order to infuse their perspectives and stories, but also raise awareness to contextual specificity. In one PDO that I experienced as a sojourner, the notion of cultural diversity was only briefly explained through an iceberg image that illustrated visible and invisible layers of cultural diversity, yet the facilitator did very little to explore why certain diversity is silenced in society and how perceptions of diversity shift in the new culture. This experience strengthened a Western pattern of assigning identity categories, where people are systematically racialized, gendered, classed, and so forth, and countered Gorski's (2008) recommendation to avoid cultural awareness activities that essentialize minority groups and sustain power imbalances. This patterning practice functions as a soft form of colonialism whereby the sojourner assigns identity-categories based on Western logic systems to Indigenous peoples.

Promoting reflexivity, mutual respect, and understanding in PDOs invite

- sojourners to write journals reflecting on their assumptions and strategize how to navigate the host culture;

- sojourners to become critically aware of how power is deployed differently across contexts;
- Indigenous guest speakers to represent a broader array of community viewpoints, and that these speakers are appropriately compensated for sharing their knowledge;
- a broader discussion on the mobility of peoples, the history of mobility, and the related implications, trends, and consequences of mobility;
- sojourner identity to be deconstructed, including attitudes towards race, sexuality, gender, class, age, and ability differences;
- sojourners to explore case situations that challenge their ethics, values, and assumptions (e.g., systemic and social violence towards Indigenous peoples);
- spouses and other family members of sojourners to learn alongside;
- a “critical intercultural dialogue” in collaboration with Indigenous peoples that can help deconstruct power relations and re-establish lines of collaboration and mutual respect (Fleuri & Jurkevicz Fleuri, 2017; see also Straubhaar, 2015); and
- an open-endedness so that sojourners can continually reflect on their learning and socialization past the pre-departure stage and form a resource network.

What is paramount is for sojourners to acquire the necessary skills, tools, and strategies to be collaborative and address oppression towards Indigenous peoples. This guiding principle requires a conscious cognitive shift to analyzing oneself in the new situation and how to form equitable and just relationships.

In sum, decolonizing pre-departure education means (1) questioning White, European, heteropatriarchal supremacy within the transnational work and learning experience as well as in the broader society as a whole; (2) ensuring participation by Indigenous peoples about their life experiences, and that of their relations, and fostering their participation in decisions and other practices; (3) restoring Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships based on principles of equality, which also means building awareness to Indigenous resistances, struggles, critiques, and emancipations; (4) recovering histories and restoring justice and right to sovereignty; (5) preparing the sojourner for exchanging knowledge with Indigenous peoples as a dialogical form of education; (6) educating about countries that colonized other countries and the effects of this colonialism; and (7) involving literature, texts, and traditions by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge systems are made central to the PDO, and this includes narrative and storytelling and elements of perspective taking and openness to learn as pedagogical and social entry points.

Concluding Thoughts

This article suggests a philosophical and fundamental shift from a Western-centred, technocratic pre-departure orientation and proposes a decolonizing approach to underpin the educational exercise. This is not easy work. Facilitators need to be prepared to bridge a complex, power-filled reality involving how structures and societies in/validate ways of knowing. This preparation includes facilitators feeling capable of navigating possible resistance to learning difficult material. Regardless of the intentions that motivate people to cross borders, sojourners can provoke experiences with ignorance, privilege, or prejudice in the new country, and therefore sojourners will need skills and understandings to deconstruct and address experiences with oppression. Reflection on one’s own experiences becomes a useful step towards decolonizing the self.

Potential challenges in adopting this approach include running up against organizational requirements to share only certain information with brief time periods, or relying on facilitators without a background in Indigenous education or decolonizing processes. Further research that

analyzes the complex issues of (de)colonization, capitalism, self-reflexivity, context, and mobility with attention to nuance and context discernment are important next steps in this work. Perhaps these challenges can also function as a way for learners to conceptualize new ways of meeting organizational *and* community expectations of being adequately prepared for the international experience. Because of the historical and cultural distinctiveness of European colonization, in relation to more recent globalizing forms of imperialism (capitalism, Western hegemony, neoliberalism), a decolonizing approach helps reconceptualize the pre-departure orientation to becoming a “bridging orientation” where sojourners learn of identities, challenges, epistemologies, and ontologies of various natures.

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