

# **MOVING FORWARD IN A GOOD WAY: NURTURING THE SPIRIT OF LEARNING IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE SIXTH VOLUME OF PAPERS ON POSTSECONDARY LEARNING AND TEACHING**

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The sixth volume of Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching (PPLT) is a collection of papers from the 2022 University of Calgary Conference addressing the theme Moving Forward in a Good Way: Nurturing the Spirit of Learning in Postsecondary Education.

Jessie King, one of the authors in this volume, shares her positionality and wants to know who every author is, and we are pleased to introduce ourselves. Cheryl Jeffs, born on Vancouver Island is a second and third generation settler. As an academic, I have the privilege of teaching and learning in higher education in both British Columbia and Alberta. In this 6<sup>th</sup> volume, I share the honour of writing the introduction to PPLT with co-editor Michelle Scott, a Mi'kmaw scholar born and raised in Ontario, and the Director of Indigenous Initiatives in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary, and managing editor, Kristi-Mari Fedorko-Bartos, born in Winnipeg and raised in Calgary as a first generation to immigrant Eastern European parents, an academic and graduate student at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary.

Papers in this volume emphasize the vision of Roberts (2023, p. 49) that “Indigenous knowledges in education holds the key to supporting change in educational spaces” and aligns with the conference theme and threads. The conceptual model presented in the Indigenous Strategy ii’ taa’poh’to’p includes *Ways of Knowing* (Teaching, Learning, and Research) *Ways of Doing* (Policies, Procedures, and Practices), *Ways of Connecting* (Relationships, Partnerships, Connections to Land, and Place), and *Ways of Being* (Campus identity, Inclusivity, Leadership, and Engagement) (University of Calgary, 2017, p. 7). This model provides a framework for this volume with contributions from six scholarly and thought-provoking papers showing the way towards reconciliation and de-colonizing postsecondary education through the lens of Indigenous knowledge and culture.

### **Ways of Knowing, Ways of Doing, Ways of Connecting, Ways of Being**

In light of their literature review, Elaine Atay and Adam Murry (2023) bring to attention the need for mentorship models that are inclusive of Indigenous peoples’ needs. Their paper “Not so “mainstream”: The need for models of Indigenous mentorship” suggests cultural considerations should be made in postsecondary education beyond that of the Western view. Cultural connection and experience through an Indigenous mentorship lens can improve the postsecondary retention and outcomes of Indigenous students. The authors posit that Indigenous

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mentorship models can support both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors in *ways of connecting* by engaging in practices that are culturally appropriate.

The next article weaves the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators both PhD students teaching within a prairie university education faculty. Roberta Campbell-Chudoba and Terrance Pelletier in their paper “Knowing community through story: It’s where we come together” share their pedagogical and curricular approaches. They describe how they open spaces in their respective classrooms to create ethical space (Ermine, 2007), and for Indigenous ways of *knowing, being, and doing* to be centered. Calling on Métis scholar, Rita Bouvier (2013), they assert decolonization is “a process that belongs to everyone” (p. 9). Through sharing their respective voices and practices, they underline the importance of relationships, finding commonality, engaging in critical reflective processes, and make a call for others to “build alliances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people” (p. 15).

Building on an existing partnership between a western university and the Métis Nation of British Columbia, Valeria Cortés, Kelly Loffler, and Tim Brigham (2023) authored “Natoonikew Aansaamb: Searching together for learning and resurgence”. This article brings forward Indigenous *ways of knowing, being, and doing*, and weaves the voices of the Métis learners and community members who participated in a grant funded program: The Professional Project Administrator Program. The program was focused on offering wrap-around support, including providing living allowances, childcare, and cultural support to the learners achieving a 98% success rate in the program. The learnings gained from the reflective process of how they attempted to decolonize their program led them to understand the importance of supporting community learning through the relational approach of culturally informed and supported learning in Indigenous communities.

Patricia Danyluk, Maureen Plante, Samara Wessel (2023) studied Alberta’s teacher education programs and is the focus of their paper “Integrating Indigenous perspectives into teacher education in Alberta”. They start with the belief that “education remains the best way to combat racism towards Indigenous peoples” (p. 33). The authors report that all ten of Alberta’s teacher education programs have implemented Indigenous perspectives of *ways of knowing, doing, and being* in their programs. While promising, they caution that recent political changes, budget constraints, and increased demands on Indigenous educators, scholars, and Elder/Knowledge Keepers continue to challenge the work of de-colonialization in higher education.

“I tried to create a story I wish I had access to before entering academia in order to prepare myself” writes Jessie King (2023, p. 39) in “Indigeneity, positionality, and ethical space: Navigating the in-between of Indigenous and settler academic discourse” This candidly authentic paper provides insight into academia from an Indigenous scholar perspective and offers a rich collection of pragmatic opportunities for individuals and institutions to become truly inclusive. King offers suggestions from a metaphorical toolbox that includes *ways of knowing, doing, and being* to build ethical space, cultural safety, respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity within and beyond the classroom. A final affirming concept is to “take those moments to celebrate joy” in teaching and learning (p. 45).

Carolyn Roberts (2023) shows us *ways of knowing* in the paper “Looking back to find a way forward: Teaching from my ancestors”. We are taken on a journey how “Indigenous knowledges in education holds the key to supporting change in educational spaces” (p. 49) and influence change in colonial classrooms. Roberts encourages us to work together to make this happen. Drawing from Indigenous and settler-scholars, this reflective essay shows the way with

Jeffs et al. (2023)

examples of preparing to teach, building relationships, establishing an environment of care, and being culturally responsive.

### **Conclusion**

The authors in the sixth volume of *Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching* share their experiences, perspectives, and practice and show the way towards reconciliation and decolonizing of programs, courses, and institutions. Through their scholarship, reflections, and stories of Ways of Knowing, Ways of Doing, Ways of Connecting, Ways of Being, these papers provide readers examples of how educators, institutions, and community can work together towards reconciliation and nurture the spirit of learning in postsecondary education.

### **References**

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