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SHORT ESSAY ON CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY OF RECONCILIATION IN COLLEGE

During the past year, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) reminded us of higher education institutions' responsibility in the ongoing reconciliation process in Canada, stating in its principles their essential role in the "support for cultural development, the inclusion of autochthonous epistemology, oral history, laws, protocols and links to the territories" (2015, p. 4). The presentation of the Commission's work is then part of the continuity of a historical trend, claiming for more than forty years Aboriginal rights in the management of education. Thus, the current context, in which a desire for mutual recognition appears to be emerging, also requires to be on the lookout for a predominant emphasis on solidarity, at the expense of autochthonous institutions' recognition and autochthonous decisions pertaining to education (Lévesque, 2015).

This tension between the principles of reciprocity and governance is present in the calls to action 45, 46 and 47 of the TRC, dealing specifically on reconciliation. It stresses the need to "establish relationships that are related to treaties that are based on the principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect and of shared responsibility so that they are sustainable, or [to] renew relationships of this type that are already established." Provincial, territorial and municipal governments are also asked "to reject the concepts used to justify European sovereignty on peoples and autochthonous territories, as the Doctrine of Discovery and the terra nullius, and to reform laws, government policies and instance strategies that continue to rely on

such concepts" (2015, p. 6). We address this tension further in another publication (Butler, Ng-A-Fook, Vaudrin-Charette and McFaden, 2015).

For now, I consider the elements linking citizenship education and inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in college education from the perspective of interculturalism. As emphasized by Gauthier, Santerre, Blackburn, Joncas and Gobeille (2015), the "indisputable movement of intercultural encounter" and the views of the actors involved remain poorly documented. Thus, we try to respond to calls for action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, involving social responsibility of all Canadians for Reconciliation (TRC, 2015). In that sense, the college seems a breeding ground to study relational ethics around the emergence of a pedagogy of reconciliation.

OBJECTIVES

From my experience as an educational consultant, I examine various representations of interculturalism (Hall, 1999 Saul, 2015) at work about reconciliation in my working environment, a college-level institution. Hence, I mention here four possible representations of Reconciliation from a non-Aboriginal perspective, namely idealization, empathy, denial, and commitment (Saul, 2015). Since this is my preliminary observations for my doctoral research project, I cast an eye over these representations with respect to Aboriginalization of higher

ANALYSIS

In this first idealized representation of the territory, several elements take us into the Tundra. The teacher and his students explore the exotic, autochthony as distant “other”, but fascinating. Are Aboriginal literary works presented in the context of Quebec literature course? Are they presented as a major or marginal works? What is the place of the First Nations, Métis² and Inuit authors in Quebec literature courses?

This second representation leads students in another territory: that of taking account of their own cultural constructs compared to others. The constructed image of autochthony as exoticism conciliates, remaining, moreover, just as constructed. These factors of reconciliation, but also of separation, are considered by director Carole Poliquin in the film *l’Empreinte* (2013). It presents a view of the possible links between Quebec identity quests and cultural representations in respect of autochthony, including the perspectives of anthropologists Nicole O’Bomsawin and Serge Bouchard and those of poets, psychologists, etc. The film addresses in particular what Quebec cultures owe to the cultural heritage of the First Peoples and what has been lost in the breaking of relations. Here, the notion of empathy prevails as the engine of reconciliation.

The third representation, about resilience proves a third educational lead, not only in the context of French courses, but in the program elements of citizenship, history, philosophy, sociology, politics, etc. This time, students are encouraged to better know History, allowing the implementation of recommendations such as making the history of residential schools known. Moreover, this moment could help address the epistemological questions about languages, including tensions between Quebec identity representations and those of First Peoples in relation to them. In the film *l’Empreinte*, actor Roy Dupuis asks Josephine Bacon: “If I spoke Innu, what kind of question would I ask you?” She replies laughing: “Maybe if you spoke my language, you would not have so many questions for me because you would see a part of the world as I see it.”

In this last pedagogical object around Joséphine Bacon’s poetry, the teacher, the educator and the

institution examine mechanisms for intercultural ethics of co-construction of a pedagogy of reconciliation in Quebec.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

How can the absence of translations be avoided?
How to co-construct the pedagogy of reconciliation?

Each performance mentioned here can influence the quality of the implementation of the calls to action of the TRC in college. For learners, the development of intercultural and citizen skills related to the development of a relational ethic indicates a relational dynamic. For teachers and educators, the development of interdisciplinary projects, taking account of multilingual contexts in language teaching and the development of collective skills in an educational institution are not to be overlooked.

However, following Lévesque’s initial caution, education to citizenship reveals a promising anchoring: education is undoubtedly a privileged way in this regard, both across countries and within Aboriginal world. There are other equally fundamental ways: equitable participation in the economy, renewal of policies for Aboriginal peoples, promotion of community involvement, determination to end violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and children. Here are some pillars of decolonization and citizen encounters that are currently at work and on which rests the challenge of living together (2015, p. 239).

Here, anchoring in a specific place allows students and teachers to leave the framework of competence, of a course or of an institution to engage with nations ancestrally present in the territory. As with educators and researchers who have worked on these issues (Chambers, Blood, Donald, Ng-A-Fook, Gauthier), we see in this anchoring a way to explore the full potential of the renewal of our relations.

CONCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In short, as repeatedly demonstrated across Canada, a paradigm shift in international relations, especially regarding the perspectives and knowledge

