

Towards a Decolonised and Anti-Racist British Columbia Classroom Curriculum

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to address the need to recognize and understand that the British Columbia Food Studies provincial and classroom curricula has been strongly connected to colonialism and racism in order to make changes. When the provincial curriculum has moved away from prescribed student learning outcomes to the current “Content (Know)-Curricular Competencies (Do)-Big Ideas (Understand) model” (British Columbia, n.d.a), the provincial curricula allow some colonial and racist issues to be addressed in the Curricular Competencies. With this change, there are more opportunities for the classroom teacher to design, create, implement decolonized and anti-racist lessons and learning resources. To do so, the classroom teacher will need to be aware of the challenges that are involved with creating decolonized and anti-racist lessons and learning resources. I have also included my journeys in creating decolonized and anti-racist lessons and materials, which I will refer to as the classroom curriculum, with my students.

KEYWORDS: HOME ECONOMICS, CURRICULUM, DECOLONIZATION, ANTI-RACISM, FOOD STUDIES

Introduction

I was born and raised in Vancouver, the land of the Coast Salish peoples, *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), *Stó:lō* and *Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh* (Tsleil-Waututh) and *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam) Nations. My parents are Chinese immigrants who had met and married in Vancouver. During this time, assimilating into Canadian culture was expected and this was evident in school. Queen Elizabeth II’s picture hung in the hallway by the main office in my elementary school and we were expected to only speak English. There was the lack of representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) in the learning materials and one can be subjected to “Lunchbox racism” (Long, 2020, para. 2) a term that referred to children from immigrant families who were taunted for bringing in their home-cooked meals. The common reactions were:

“Eww...what’s that?”

“Eww...that looks gross!”

“What is that smell?”

that would be accompanied with a look of disgust.

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According to Dei (2014), “colonialism and racism are intricately linked and they both feed on each other” (p. 241). Therefore, it was not a surprise for children whose lunches were different to be discriminated against. Aside from the lunchboxes that we do see, there are also lunchboxes that we do not have the opportunity to witness on a frequent basis. For example, a common Inuit dish is whale skin and fat that is “commonly eaten raw and frozen, though it’s also eaten...as fried, pickled or fermented” (Liu, 2020, para. 2). I assume, such dish would also be subjected to lunchbox racism if seen in a cafeteria outside of the north.

It was these childhood memories, in addition to my personal and professional experiences that has encouraged me work towards a decolonized and anti-racist Food Studies classroom curriculum. In this paper I will explore possibilities for the need to decolonize Home Economics through an initial review of Home Economics education in Canada and is followed by a brief discussion of racism within context of Canada. Within this description of context, I will also explore both the practices and learnings that have informed my work as I actively move towards a decolonized classroom.

Literature Review

Decolonising Home Economics

Smith (2020) defines decolonialism as “the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies that normalize the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches” (p. 113). To decolonize Home Economics, it is important to first recognize, examine and understand how British Columbia’s education system and Home Economics are both deeply rooted in imperial and colonial principles. Thereafter, we can begin to decolonize our classroom curriculum. In doing so, Sleeter (2010) explained “is to critically examine that knowledge and its relationship to power” (p. 194) because Smith (as cited in Sleeter) explained, “while the language of imperialism and colonialism has changed, the sites of struggle remain” (p. 200). To do so, teachers need to be aware of “their own personal biases to avoid conveying their own biases to their students” (Lyons & Farrell, 1994, p. 9). As teachers, we need to remain open-minded to identify areas in the curriculum that continues to maintain a colonial perspective. Teachers need to be mindful of the content in learning materials. Do the learning materials contain stereotypes? Do the learning materials reflect the voices of the intended students? Roe (as cited by Lyons & Farrell) point out that it important that the curriculum is “inclusive...to emphasize the common elements that are shared by many groups” (p. 11).

Early British Columbia School System

On July 20, 1871, British Columbia became the sixth province to join the confederation with the Queen as the head of state since becoming a British Empire colony in 1858 (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, n.d.) The foundation of British Columbia’s education system has been based upon Eurocentric values since its establishment. Amin explains Eurocentrism or Eurocentric as “the superiority of Europeans and their descendants over non-Europeans, founded on a false polarity between ‘civilized’ and ‘savage,’ and ‘center’ and ‘marginalized’ peoples” (as cited in Battiste, 1998, p. 22). Therefore, “the largest population produced as ‘Other’ are First Nations peoples” (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, p. 297).

According to Titley, when British Columbia public schools began in 1872, a large number of “Aboriginal children attended nationally-funded, church administered schools, although small numbers were scattered throughout some...newly created public schools” (as cited in Raptis, 2008, p. 119). Miller also pointed out that the Dominion government preferred “residential schools for eight- to fourteen-year-olds and industrial schools for students aged fourteen to eighteen...[and] boarding schools where the child could be disassociated from the prejudicial influence...on the reserve of his band” (as cited in Raptis, p. 120). The Canadian government’s

intentions have always been concerned with “assimilation of Aboriginal peoples to British ways” (Battiste, 1998, p. 16). The House of Commons Debates outline Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, validating the government’s residential school policy during the House of Commons in 1883:

When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of [W]hite men. (Miller, 2015, p. 2)

As a result, Aboriginal languages and knowledge has been excluded from the provincial curricula as an indication that “Aboriginal languages and knowledge do not belong in the education systems” (Battiste, p. 17). Furthermore, “Aboriginal children were subjected to persistent violence, powerlessness, exploitation, and cultural imperialism, only to become impoverished and devastated in the cognitive and physical aftermath of schooling” (Battiste, p. 19). In the 1900-1901 the Annual Report noted that “the school had not only a role to play in shaping the young, but also a responsibility to produce ‘practical men and women, who would make themselves useful to society and their country’” (as cited in Riley, 1984, p. 161). It is important to note that Canada and the Canadian society are a “culture of legally dominant Euro-Christian” (Miller, p. v).

Early Home Economics

One of the first documentation of formal homemaking instructions in Canada was “credited to the Sisters of the Roman Catholic Church...[and] was limited at first to the teaching of Indian girls in a few isolated convents” (Simpson, 1966, p. 3). Simpson (1966) noted an article, “The Beginning of Education in Agriculture and Home Economics in North America”, from the *Journal of Home Economics* that was published in February 1910, describing how

... secular teaching was along the lines of manual training and what is now grouped under the head of Home Economics, it may be said that formal education in North America at the Convents in Quebec about the middle of the seventeenth century...Ursulines ...taught all that a girl ought to know...the training which the girls received must have been very largely in the house-hold tasks. (p. 3)

According to Wilcox (2009, para. 5), “Abenaki, Algonquin, Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Montagnais and Nipissing girls (among others) [who were] generally between 6 and 16 years of age” were boarded at Ursuline convents. In addition, it is noted that “Marie de l’Incarnation even learned several Algonquian and Iroquoian languages to help facilitate instruction and expedite Indigenous girls’ assimilation into French religion and culture” (Wilcox, 2009, para. 5).

With homemaking being first taught in Quebec convents, eventually there was a demand for formal teaching of homemaking skills for girls attending school. Adelaide Hoodless was one of a number of Home Economics pioneers of European descent, who advocated for and implemented “manual training for girls” (Simpson, p. 4) in the Canadian education system.

In British Columbia, the first few years included Needlework, which girls may choose to enrol in Victoria schools in 1895 (Irvine, 1975; Riley, 1984). Girls were expected to attend school to learn to “make a refined and cultured home [and] Home...is for three purposes, to minister to the moral, intellectual and physical requirements of the family” (Maddock, 1900, p. 14). From

1903 to 1916, the objective of Domestic Science in public schools as “to teach practical skills in order to improve living standards” (de Zwart, 1991, p. 32). In 1903, The Victoria Board of School Trustees agreed with the Victoria Local Council of Women to include cookery in addition to Needlework (Irvine, 1975). Thereafter in 1905, the Vancouver Local Council of Women was also successful in establishing a foods laboratory for Vancouver girls enrolling in Domestic Science (Irvine, 1975). When Vancouver outfitted two new sewing laboratories in secondary schools, treadle sewing machines were documented for the 1909-1910 school year (Irvine, 1975). The course outline for the 1912 school year included “needlework textiles and hygienic clothing. In 1914 the outline included needlework, housewifery, cookery, laundry and home nursing” (Irvine, 1975, p. 10). Student resources included a recipe book that was published by the Department of Education and three textbooks that were authorized for the high school level (Irvine, 1975).

Racism

The Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (British Columbia, n.d.-b, para 1) defines *racism* as

... the belief that one group, as defined by the colour of their skin or their perceived common ancestry, is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in jokes, slurs or hate speech, or can be more hidden in unconscious biases. Racism is deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these beliefs have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual and systemic.

According to Stanley (2000), it “is particularly common in English Canada where the myth that there is no racism endures” (p. 81). This is regardless of “whether in public controversies, surrounding specific allegations of racist actions in private conversations, or in academic studies, many speak either of racism as existing elsewhere...or of racist incidents in Canada as unfortunate exceptions to otherwise civilized and tolerant norms” (p. 81). Lund and Carr (2010) further this perspective noting that “Whiteness is shrouded with denials that give White people yet another form of privilege; the ability to avoid discussion of how oppression continues to benefit White people” (p. 231). This can be witnessed by the lack of or the absence of documentation on the marginalisation of BIPOC in Canada.

Absent from our class content and classroom resources is information about Canada’s role in committing cultural genocide with the Indigenous Peoples, which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada defined as

... the destruction of those structures and practices that all the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. (Miller, 2016, p. 1)

The cultural genocide has created trauma within the Indigenous community, which is still present today. In a CBC interview in 2018, Chef Francis a member of the Six Nations (Ontario, Canada) commented that he is “prohibited from using narwhal, moose, beluga, and sea lion—all of which are traditional Indigenous country food” due to provincial regulations pertaining to wild game. Indigenous peoples continue to be restricted with accessing Indigenous foods.

Also not present is the history of Black Canadian slavery “in both French and English Canada...from 1628 to 1833...[where] slaves were the property of a variety of individuals and corporations” (Kihika, 2013, p. 37). Neither is the Chinese Head Tax that was implemented by the Canadian Government from 1885 to 1923 to prevent the Chinese from entering Canada after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Winter, 2008, p. 119) mentioned nor the Punjabi passengers who were aboard the Komagata Maru and were denied entry to during the summer of 1914 and had to return to India (Johnston, 2013, p. 9) nor the Japanese internment camps during World War II when the Japanese were viewed as “enemy aliens” (Day, 2010, p. 107) just to name a few historical events.

In 1971, the Liberal government introduced a multiculturalism policy to address the “demands of French-language speakers, an increasing culturally diverse citizenry, and Aboriginal People” (St. Denis, 2011, p. 307) that later became the Multicultural Act in 1988 to respond to what Wood and Gilbert noted as “the concerns of multiple ethnic groups, such as Ukrainians, who wanted recognition of their presence and contributions to Canada” (Wood & Gilbert, 2005, as cited in St. Denis, 2011, p. 307). Fleras and Elliot also pointed out that multiculturalism was to “acknowledge the need for increased understanding between ethnic groups, and the need to address racial discrimination” (Fleras & Elliot, 1992, as cited in St. Denis, 2011, p. 307). However, multiculturalism is a means

... to defend public schools against the need to respond to Aboriginal education. ... [and] makes it possible for non-Aboriginal teachers and schools to trivialize Aboriginal content and perspectives, and at the same time believe that they are becoming more inclusive and respectful. (St. Denis, 2011, p. 312-313)

In recent years, racialized communities and Indigenous Peoples continue to face racism in Canada. This can be recognized with the following terms being used: anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia to describe the hostility directed towards these groups (Canadian Heritage, 2019). This was brought to the Canadian government’s attention, with the Ministry of Canadian Heritage producing an anti-racism report. Minister of Canadian Heritage & Multiculturalism Pablo Rodriguez begins his foreword to the Building A Foundation for Change: Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2022 with “diversity and inclusion are cornerstones of Canadian identity, a source of social and economic strength, and something of which all Canadians can be proud” (Canadian Heritage, 2019, n.p.). Minister Rodriguez also adds:

Building a Foundation for Change requires us to first acknowledge that there is a problem we need to address. We know that throughout our history, and even today, there are people and communities who face systemic racism and discrimination in our country. (Canadian Heritage, 2019, n.p.)

Methodology

To design, create and implement a decolonized and anti-racist classroom curriculum, the subject teacher needs to recognize and understand the deep connections that the British Columbia education system and Home Economics has with colonialism and racism. In decolonising Home Economics, decolonialism is defined. Early British Columbia school system and early Home Economics were examined to identify historical issues and practices that warrant the need for decolonisation. Racism experienced by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in British Columbia and Canada is also noted to understand the similarities and differences between immigrant and colonisation experiences.

Further analysis of Home Economics as a colonial tool is included to illustrate the role Home Economics manuals played in the provincial and classroom curriculum and how recipes such as White Sauce, Chinese Chews and Monkey Bread relate to colonialism and are controversies

themselves. Issues with selecting recipes without appropriating are outlined with Cultural Food Studies. Following the analysis of Home Economics, a brief evaluation of the current British Columbia Food Studies Curricula.

A review of anti-racist education by Dei (1993) and Mansfield and Kehoe (1994) is presented to provide direction in implementing methods to practice anti-racist curricular implementation and the criticism for anti-racist education. Subsequently, implications for additional research, for educators, researchers, policy makers, to examine gaps in theory and practice and the Canadian content will be documented. Following will be my journey in working towards decolonising my Food Studies classroom curriculum and implementing anti-racist lessons and recipes.

Home Economics as a Colonial Tool

Home Economics Manuals

In 1926, Jessie L. McLenaghan was appointed as the Director of Home Economics (Irvine, p. 10), which led to “a new impetus to the development of the subject, and steps were taken to bring methods up-to-date” (McLenaghan, 1941, p. 78). The Department of Education published Foods Manual that was to be used as a textbook to avoid copying recipes, which was a practice that was widely frowned upon (McLenaghan). The first manual used in British Columbia was the “1927 edition of *Recipes for Home Economics Classes: Circular No. 1* [that] was accompanied by a new fourteen-page curriculum” (de Zwart, 2003, p. 103). Students purchased the recipe book for 25 cents (Irvine, 1975).

In 1930, the manual underwent a revision and was renamed *Foods, Nutrition and Home Management Manual, Circular One (Revised)* (de Zwart, 1991). The manuals were an important resource for British Columbia Home Economics teachers from 1929 to 1975. McLenaghan’s foreword, in *Foods, Nutrition and Home Management Manual*, noted that the food selection and preparation have been cautiously selected due to the connection with health (British Columbia, 1930). The manual was divided into five units, which included: Home Management, Nutrition, Meal-Planning and Table Service, Food Preparation, and Sources of Food Products. Within the Food Preparation Unit, questions regarding health, nutrition, cooking methods and techniques were included along with recipes.

Problematic Home Economics Food-Related Practices

White Sauce

White sauce is also known as the Béchamel Sauce, which is one of the five Mother Sauces. It is also a recipe in *Foods, Nutrition and Home Management Manual* (British Columbia, 1930) under the Soup section. de Zwart (2003) used white sauce as a metaphor to describe Home Economics because white sauce “is bland and textureless; it covers up many sins, culinary and otherwise” (p. 2). de Zwart (2003) further explains the word *white* in white sauce, “closely aligned itself with conveying white culture” (p. 2). This is not to “imply that the knowledge, mission, or aims of home economics education are in any way inferior or substandard” (p. 2). Instead, according to Stage and Vincenti, “this alignment demonstrates a form of unreflective enculturation that has been detrimental to the profession and school subject, and that needs to be redressed” (as cited in de Zwart, p. 2).

Chinese Chews

The recipe for Chinese Chews appeared in *Foods, Nutrition and Home Management Manual* (British Columbia, 1930). This recipe stood out because de Zwart (2003) pointed out that it is “a sweet bar-type cookie made of white sugar, flour, dates, walnuts and eggs...[and] was one

of two concessions to ‘ethnicity’ other than white British in the entire manual” (p. 157). Were the dates in the ingredient list perceived as being foreign? Dates do not originate from China. However, according to de Zwart (2003) recipes for Chinese Chews also appeared in the “*Purity Cookbook in 1945... A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Baking ... No Bake Chinese Chews in a newspaper advice column*” (pp. 160-162). In 2002, “Chinese Chews were included in a Chinese New Year website” (p. 161). Thus, de Zwart (2003) asked, “How did Chinese Chews become Chinese?” Was labelling the date bars as “Chinese” an indication “of the need of [W]hite people to have an Other from which to gain their own identity?” (de Zwart, p. 162). Narayan describes the use of the term “Chinese” for the recipe as “food parochialisms or culinary imperialism” (as cited in de Zwart, p. 162).

Monkey Bread

The second laboratory session to the start off our new semester was Cinnamon Buns and the students were excited to make the sticky buns. I had given my students the option to make Monkey Bread.

My students: How do you make Monkey Bread?

I responded: You’ll need to roll the dough into spheres, dip into melted butter, roll in the cinnamon sugar mixture and layer coated spheres in a loaf pan because we are making a smaller serving size.

My students: But why is it called Monkey Bread?

What a great inquiry question after we had finished making our dough. My students knew the routine because we have always looked into the origin of various recipes since Grade 8. My students proceeded to take out their devices to look for possible answers online while waiting to be dismissed from class. The students’ answers ranged from a recipe originated from Hungary to how one would eat the bread by pulling it apart and into smaller pieces for eating. According to Avey (2022), the recipe has an unclear origin and is also known as bubble bread, bubble loaf, jumble bread, pull-apart bread, pinch-me cake, pluck-it cake, and monkey puzzle bread. My students also noticed that some websites had reference to “Southern-style” recipes and it had occurred to them that there could be hidden innuendos with the name of the recipe. The sudden realisation did not sit well with my students.

My students were quick to come to the idea that there was a racial connotation behind Monkey Bread since we had started the unit with a series of articles. The idea of the name with its (potential) racial connotation continued to perturb me. I continued to conduct an online search to see if there were any racial implications. According to Richie182’s (2010) contribution to Urban Dictionary, Monkey Bread referred to a Southern term that was both sexist and racist in its reference to adolescent girls. In a forum, Levity_Kitty (2007) mentioned in a thread that a clerk made reference to it in racist terms. Layne (2019, para. 2) introduces first lady Nancy Reagan’s favourite holiday recipe with “Whatever the hell ‘monkey bread’ might be—something racist, we assume...”. Drawing from such information it is relatively easy to see the racial connotations associated with the product and thus it is necessary for teachers to pay attention to what it is actually being taught within their classrooms. This was important because “those of us who conduct research, teach and write, need to take responsibility for that which is stated and unstated and the ways in which we describe, subscribe, and relegate groups and individuals to categories” (Davis, 2009, p. 123).

Within my own work I needed to look from a historical perspective too. According to Avey (2022, para. 3), the term may have originated from “someone combined a 1940s Southern slang for snack food, ‘monkey food’, with a traditional jumble bread”. I could not find another source that would explain the entirety of “monkey food”, but something continued to not sit well with me. My search on jumble loaf resulted in images and pictures of cinnamon and raisin jumble loaves and cinnamon and chocolate jumble loaves. Collister (n.d.) describes jumble loaf as

“sweet raisin dough is rolled up with brown sugar and cinnamon, then cut up and put into a loaf tin in a jumble” (n.p.). With this description and what I knew about the recipe I was using it was possible to draw similarities between the two and therefore how I could utilise a new name.

One of my Black students had walked up behind me while I was conducting my research and questioned me as to what I was doing. I asked her opinion on what she saw as the inference in Monkey Bread and my student continued to explain to me that referring to individual who is Black as a monkey is deliberately used as a derogatory term. I apologized to my student for not having thought it through. I subsequently remembered H&M’s sweatshirt advertisement controversy (Byrne, n.d.) that presented a young person of colour wearing a hoodie with a monkey referenced slogan.

Following this conversation with the student I proceeded to connect with a teaching colleague to express my concern about my inability to find what I felt was sufficient information about racial inferences behind Monkey Bread. Her response was for me impactful,

If your research shows that there probably isn’t a racist origin to the name of the recipe, then I assume that there isn’t. But, if the name makes you feel uncomfortable, and wonder if there is a racist implication, then maybe it’s a sign not to use it. If it makes you feel this way, imagine how your Black students would feel. (Anonymous, personal communication, Feb 17, 2022)

I had shared this response with my student and I proceeded to ask if we should abandon the recipe. Instead, my student suggested that we rename the recipe. I also found that to be tricky as I felt that whatever we decided to use to rename would the racist implications continue to be represented. As Smith (2017, p. 181) noted, “changing the name doesn’t guarantee anything especially if there is no change in professional practice”. The students would need to know why the name Monkey Bread is controversial “language defines” (Smith, 2017). Davis (2009, p. 123) further explains, “Language that we...create and use in our studies of society, its institutions, its populations, economics and social behaviours, become codified and used to categorize, stigmatize, denigrate and separate its citizens over time”. For me I became concerned that the name Monkey Bread represented the racism that community members continued to face.

On the second day of our laboratory some of my students had asked me if they were able to continue to make traditional cinnamon buns. I asked my students to give me their reasons for the naming they used as I wanted to know. What they conveyed clearly was that they felt uncomfortable making Monkey Bread.

I supported their request while the remainder of the class used the Monkey Bread recipe because they were curious about what it was supposed to be. When my students completed their class, we had a class discussion that shared the information that we were able to find and offered ideas that needed further investigation. As a result of this discussion, I asked my students to provide an alternative name. One suggested, CinnaBubbles! and sounded more interesting than Cinnamon Sugar Pull-Apart Bread.

Cultural Food Studies

Many Food Studies teachers would select recipes to incorporate into junior Food Studies class to illustrate diversity and teach an International Foods theme in senior Food Studies. As previously mentioned, many recipes that have been used in Home Economics have strong European connections and without a list prescribed recipes for Food Studies, there is more desire to select diverse recipes for our students. There is also an appeal to select recipes that our students can relate to, which will enable them to see themselves being reflected and increase their engagement. When selecting recipes, a conscious effort must be made to select

authentic recipes rather than appropriating recipes. In doing so will result in miseducating our students. If modifications are to be made to the recipe, then the modifications will need to be acknowledged. Long's (n.d.) article explains,

What everyone should always consider is that food is a part of people's identities and should be treated with respect. You don't have to love a dish, but you also don't need to disrespect it along with the culture it belongs to. You can and should add your own twist to a dish, but recognize its differences from the traditional version. You can definitely recreate other people's cultural recipes, but don't claim it as your own for money. Don't appropriate food, appreciate it (para. 12)

It is also important to note that when implementing the recipes in the course that the *tourist approach* is avoided. The tourist approach is when teachers incorporate "different cultures through celebrations, entertainment, and artifacts of the culture such as food and clothing across the globe" (Lin & Bates, 2014, p. 30). This approach is enjoyable, but does not allow students to question or examine the issues that are present and can further reinforce negative stereotypes.

BC Foods Curricula Review

In 2017, the British Columbia Ministry of Education (n.d.-a) revised the provincial curricula for all subject areas and Home Economics became a part of Applied Design, Skills and Technology. The goal is to provide a provincial curriculum that "enables and supports increasingly personalized learning, through quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards" (British Columbia, n.d.-a). The provincial curricula model is based upon the "three elements, the Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand) all work together to support deeper learning" (n.d.-a, para 13).

In ADST, the Curricular Competencies expects students to be able to apply the Design Cycle, Skills and Technologies while learning the Curricular Content. An examination of the Food Studies 11 Course Content details the following that students are expected to know: meal and recipe design opportunities, components of recipe development and modification, issues involved with food security, factors involved in the creation of international and regional food guides, First Peoples food guides, ethics of cultural appropriation, food labelling roles and responsibilities of Canadian government agencies and food companies, and food promotion and marketing strategies and their impact on specific groups of people (British Columbia, n.d.). The current provincial curriculum aims to address the concerns that we have in regards to colonialism and racism and supports teachers to create and implement decolonized and anti-racist lessons with the students.

Anti-Racist Education

Moving Towards Anti-Racist Work

Dei (2014) defines anti-racism education as "an action-oriented educational practice to address racism and the interstices of difference (such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability language, and religion) in the educational system" (p. 240). Because "education can help young learners to develop interrogative voices to speak about social oppressions and relations of dominations" (Dei, p. 240), it is teachers in Canadian schools who can begin to "problematize Eurocentric, [W]hite male privilege and supremacy, and the consequent social inequities in our pluralistic society" (Dei, 1993, p. 37) in the classroom. As a result, anti-racist education "is a discourse about the social inequality experienced by all non-white people of various class backgrounds and sexual orientations" (p. 37). These factors intersect and different individuals will have different experiences. It will be important for teachers and staff to understand that our students have their own personal experiences.

Dei (1993) also explains,

... anti-racist education must be presented as political education in order to raise the level of individual and group consciousness, to develop critical political thinking and links and to encourage activism among all teachers, staff, and students for meaningful change in society. (p. 38)

In order for anti-racist work to be effective in schools, it “will depend on a clear historical understanding of the institutional structures, factors and issues that have contributed to discriminatory and ethnocentric education within the school system” (p. 38).

To achieve educational equity in the schools, Dei (1993) says

... our institutions of learning more accessible to the disadvantaged in society, as well as placing qualified racial and ethnic minorities, non-heterosexuals, women, and people with physical challenges in positions of power and decision-making in the schools and their administrative structures. (p. 40)

When freedom of speech and individual freedom is a challenge to address, Dei (1993) points out that “many educators, while upholding the principles of intellectual freedom, would also support the promotion of non-discriminatory teaching materials and non-racist and non-sexist discourse” (p. 41).

Anti-racist education must expose the underlying conflict of the universalistic values of the equality of all Canadians, as espoused in theory by the state and the discriminatory practices that are the norms in the everyday contacts between Euro-Canadians and people of colour. (p. 41)

Both the teacher and students will need to collaborate for change to occur.

The anti-racist educator’s pedagogy is “to discuss the issues of race, class, gender, sexuality and other forms of power relations simultaneously and in a manner that does not attempt to hierarchize the varied oppressions in society” (p. 42). Dei (1993) furthers that the “classroom pedagogy should focus on the examination of the ways in which race, ethnicity class and gender have differentially shaped the experience of being Canadian for different groups at different points in time” (p. 42). Students will need to learn to understand that these issues that lead to oppression are interconnected.

Challenges to anti-racist education are the need to establish a safe place to discuss all forms of discrimination, that the teacher needs to be aware that they are in a position of power, and all can be unlearned and lost.

Summary of Mansfield and Kehoe

Mansfield and Kehoe (1994) explain that “as a politicized curriculum, anti-racist education teaches the structural, economic, and social roots of inequality... It focuses critical attention on unequal social and power relations that capitalism maintains and gives the appearance of rationality” (p. 420). Students need to be aware and understand the inequalities that are present. According to Mansfield and Kehoe (1994), anti-racism is reductive in that it reduces the race to one stereotype and another is “reductive tendency of anti-racism is to privilege ‘institutional racism’ as the exclusive explanatory variable in accounting for discrepancies between educational and material attainments” (p. 422).

A criticism of anti-racist education is “predominantly theorized [to] have the unintended effect of exacerbating rather than ameliorating the very problems it identifies ... [w]ith its almost exclusive emphasis on ‘race’” (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994, p. 423). The second criticism is that anti-racism and anti-racist education is that “virtually exclusive association of racism with colour distracts attention from other ... equally damaging forms of discrimination” (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994, p. 423). Mansfield and Kehoe (1994) advance this point by arguing that “without an understanding of racism, what generates it, and how it is manifested, teachers who would implement anti-racist initiatives are in the awkward position of being well-intentioned but poorly informed arbiters of racism” (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994, p. 424). Lastly, it “is suggested by several research findings that implementation of anti-racist initiatives may produce negligible results or ... unintended counterproductive outcomes in the classroom” (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994, p. 425). Mansfield and Kehoe (1994) cautions that anti-racism can create racism.

Implications

With support for and criticisms against anti-racism education and pedagogy, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of a decolonized and anti-racist Canadian Food Studies classroom curriculum. Both Dei (1993) and Mansfield and Kehoe (1993) pointed out the importance of having both the teacher and the students understand the significance of the inequities that intersect, which creates oppression. Without that basic knowledge, an anti-racist education and pedagogy will become ineffective. In addition, it would also be beneficial for policy makers, researchers and provincial curriculum committees to have the same understanding in order to create policies, procedures, and documents that will support decolonisation and anti-racism.

Teachers who are unaware of the history of Home Economics and are uninformed of its purpose, then teachers are at a disadvantage and will not be able to effectively decolonize the Food Studies classroom curriculum. Teacher in-service is suggested to have teachers knowledgeable and comfortable in creating a decolonized and anti-racist Food Studies classroom curriculum. With the provincial curricula open for teachers to select their teaching and students’ learning resources, teachers who continue to select Eurocentric recipes and/or lessons will continue to perpetuate colonial values. On the other hand, if the teacher selects appropriated recipes without knowledge, the teacher would be miseducating the students. There will be the danger of reinforcing negative stereotypes too. This can also be reinforced with the Tourist approach for introducing cultural foods into the Food Studies classroom curriculum. A suggestion is for teachers to collaborate with colleagues and a second suggestion would be for teachers to collaborate with their students and involve their families, if possible, to build relationships.

Colonial values and racism continue to be present in Canada and needs to be addressed with our students. Our students also need to be made aware of the inequities that are present across our country. As teachers, we need to inform our students of the inequities present in our society and within our learning resources. When selecting learning resources, it is best to ensure that our students are reflected in the learning resources.

Cultural Journey: Food Studies Experiences

Food Studies 10

My journey to design a decolonized and anti-racist curriculum started with examining my Food Studies 10 curriculum critically when I started my master’s program. Food Studies 10 was based upon the theme, multicultural foods and the objective was to introduce my students to foods from around the world. My curriculum had been setup according to a list of countries and recipes that accompanied their respective country of origin. I would be progressing from one country to the next with my students. The theoretical component to each unit was learning about each country’s cuisine, culinary techniques, culinary ingredients, and special occasions

associated with their foods. This led me to question: Who decided which countries to focus on? How were the selected countries and its recipes chosen? Why did we start with Canada? Who did this Bannock recipe belong to that I am using? How authentic are these recipes then? Why am I using the tourist approach, but most importantly, how do I avoid the tourist approach or othering.

I had to change the focus from highlighting each individual country to emphasising a common food product or culinary technique. For example, the Flatbread or Unleavened Bread Unit recipes now included a selection of crêpes, roti, pita, tortilla, chapati, paratha, roti canai and scallion pancake. Students were quick to point out that a roti is very similar to the tortilla. My students were quick to inform me how a flour tortilla reminded them of a roti and share with me how they have interchanged a roti in place of flour tortilla at home. I have also requested students to share their family recipe with me so that I can share with the class. One of my students shared with me, Mama Guerra's Pandesal. I have also invited a parent to demonstrate her authentic Persian Loobia Polo recipe.

Six years later, I had found myself teaching Food Studies 10 again. It was time for a revision because I have deemed it to be outdated and the provincial curriculum had been updated. I had also changed the objectives for each course too. In Food Studies 10, my curriculum would explore recipes in its most traditional form so that students appreciate all that encompasses the recipes. In Food Studies 11, my students would learn to understand why traditional recipes are modified when introduced to a new or different audience with a Canadian focus. In Food Studies 12, students are encouraged to create recipes by applying their personal experiences, knowledge, skills, and techniques.

I had the opportunity to collaborate with my students. Our theme was street food. The recipes that my students wanted to try were Chow Mein, Kathi Roll, Tibetan Momos and Sepen, Sticky Rice in Lotus Leaf, Chicken Wings and Homemade Boba, Greek Feast, Paneer Pakora and Mango Lassi, and Shaved Ice. The recipes provided a range of culinary techniques and flavours but was limited to just one version of the recipe due to the length of the course.

What were momos? I learned that momos are Tibetan dumplings with yak meat filling, which is similar to the Chinese potstickers or the Japanese gyoza. I pointed out to my students that due to inaccessibility, we cannot use yak meat and due to their diet restrictions and food preferences, we were only using ground chicken or vegetables. If we had more time, we would have travelled around the world to sample a variety of tasty dumplings (Buckley, 2021).

My students love to recreate South Asian recipes that they have at home in class and yet, I do not feel that I am the right person to teach them. My discussions with the parents around this topic have always been with the parents wanting their children to learn what they cannot learn at home. However, my students are always excited to tell their parents that they had made pakoras or samosas at school. When I asked my students what their parents' responses were when they know I am not South Asian, my students would always respond with, "At least she tried" Accessing my students' family recipes have been difficult because my students are hesitant to write out the recipes that we are not accustomed to in class. The response would be, "Ms. Wong, we don't use measuring spoons and cups at home like we do at school."

Food Studies 11

After a year, I returned to teach Food Studies 11 to the collaborative group of students I taught during first semester. I had asked my students to define Canadian cuisine. My students responded with Canadian grown foods and names of dishes. I gave my students an assignment with Jaelin (n.d.) recounting former Prime Minister Joe Clark's definition of Canadian cuisine,

as a "smorgasbord," a type of Scandinavian meal originating from Sweden, which describes a buffet table with many dishes on it, hot and cold. What I think makes Canadian cuisine unique is the multicultural foods that make our buffet table so

diverse. Canadian food is influenced by Indigenous, English, French, Italian, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Iranian, Jamaican, Indian, Sri Lankan and so many other different cultures.

A second assignment that my students had completed was The Great Canadian Food Tour. My students were to travel in our imaginary school bus to each province and territory and select either a food ingredient that was native to or a recipe that came out of each respective province or territory. As for recipes, we made Canadian Semiaquatic Rodent Posterior Doughnuts (Van Rosendaal, 2016), Nanaimo Bars using the recipe from the City of Nanaimo (2021) and Sushi Pizza. Sushi is traditionally Japanese, which my students were familiar with. I decided to search if there was a Canadian version of the sushi and I found Sushi Pizza (Wan, 2020, para. 5) which was “invented by a Japanese-born, French-trained chef named Kaoru Ohsada in the early 1990s” in Toronto’s financial district. For this reason, Wan (2020, para. 4) justified the validity of the Sushi Pizza by explaining that it

... is not that of an intimidating foreign dish bastardized by a white chef or personal gain, nor a sensational item launched at a hipster food market to lure in crowds for a summer. It started, as many Canadian food traditions do, with an immigrant adapting the food they knew to the tastes and customs of the cultures around them and making it their own.

I work with a predominately South Asian community and during the fall, we celebrated Diwali as a school. When I had asked my students how they would like to celebrate Diwali, my students responded with Paneer Pakora. When I asked my students how Paneer Pakora is Canadian, my students responded by telling me how they can find all the ingredients at their local supermarket and can be found sold in sweet shops around the city. My students had also brought up about how South Asians faced racism when they first arrived in Canada on the Komagata Maru and were sent back to India. I acknowledged that it was a terrible experience for the passengers. I allow my students to raise concerns that they have because “when a teacher gives voice and space to multicentric perspectives and other legitimate interpretations of human experiences, all students gain from knowing the more complete account of events that have shaped human history” (Dei, 1993, p. 43). I also did not want my students to be miseducated, which is

... education that misprepares students for the actual social conditions that they are likely to encounter; that misrepresents knowledge, that narrows or cuts off opportunities and growth; that lies to students about who they are or what their society is like. (Thompson, 1997, p. 15)

Food Studies 12

Surprisingly, both of my classes came up with a similar list: Macaroni and Cheese, Fried Chicken, Cinnamon Buns, Cajun Chicken Burger, and the Supreme Crunch Wrap. I was hesitant about preparing Macaroni and Cheese at first because it was a recipe that was used in Food Studies 9. I would be introducing Macaroni and Cheese as a Soul Food in Food Studies 12 instead of a food item for dinner and learning how to make a proper white sauce. Then I made a connection almost a decade later with de Zwart’s (2005) White Sauce metaphor, which referred to preserving colonial ideals in early Home Economics Education that can still be seen in today’s curriculum.

My students’ next lesson was on why Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben deserved to retire (Twitty, 2020) in order to gain a better understanding on how African Americans arrived in the United States and what their lifestyle and living conditions were like. This was an important lesson to me because I remembered asking my students before to identify Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben. My students were excited to tell me that Aunt Jemima owned pancake mix and syrup while

Uncle Ben owns a rice company. The students thought they were rich. If that were only true. I had to tell my class that Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben were not a power couple. That is why my students must uncover the truth behind Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben. We needed to understand that “racism is a system of privilege and oppression, a network of traditions, legitimating standards, material and institutional arrangements, and ideological apparatuses that, together, serve to perpetuate hierarchical social relations based on race” (Thompson, 1997, p. 9). Thus,

...through critical anti-racism education, we are able to clarify the functions of [W]hite power/privilege, and how it masquerades as normal, universal, reasonable, and natural to the extent that those punished by such power may even develop fantasies, desires, and aspirations of [W]hiteness. (Dei, 2014, p. 240)

My students were taken aback when they discovered that Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben and Rastus preserved the White community’s idea of Blacks enjoyed being subservient. My students appreciated the eye-opening lesson and were deeply saddened at the same time. With a better understanding of the African American’s terrible past, we then explored what constituted as Soul Food. Miller (2015, p. 1) described Soul Food as

... a coined term that brilliantly captures the humanity and heroic effort of African-Americans to overcome centuries of oppression and create a cuisine that deliciously melds the foods and cooking techniques of West Africa, West Europe, and the Americas.

My students also learned that all Soul Food is Southern-style food, but the majority of Southern-style food is not Soul Food (Peartree & Lalomia, 2022). We decided to make Snoop Dogg’s Mack and Cheese and a Southern-style buttermilk fried chicken that were both categorized as Soul Food.

Conclusion

My students’ cinnamon buns and CinnaBubbles turned out great, but most importantly we have learned to question the validity of our learning resources. My students know that we are to learn from one another and together. According to Dei (2014), “racism and anti-racism education is a major task and responsibility for the contemporary educator and learner” (p. 239). I have just started my journey towards a decolonized and anti-racist Food Studies classroom curriculum and my work will need to continue to allow my students to be seen and their voices to be heard in the curriculum with meaningful intent. This was just the beginning to decolonising my classroom curriculum.

Biography

Madeline Wong

Madeline Wong was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia. She is currently a high school Home Economics teacher with the Surrey School District. Madeline has found collaborating with her students has become much easier after having taught at the same school for 14 years. Madeline is also an executive member with the Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association and the Surrey Home Economics Teachers Association. She has been a long-time member of her professional learning community because of the many friendships that have been formed and the sharing of ideas and resources.

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