

Centering Two Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx Peoples in Education:
Teachers and Students Learning from our Indigenous and Decolonial Community Leaders

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Abstract

Drawing from the critical perspectives of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx educators and community leaders, this paper calls for educators and students in K-12, higher education, and our greater learning communities to center the individual and collective issues Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples encounter. We urge teachers and students to join intersectional decolonial movements which seek to decolonize our K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and overall society.

As Morgensen (2010) *unsettles normative frameworks of settler sexuality* and as Driskill (2010) envisions Queer Studies and Indigenous Studies to *doubleweave* and join together, we highlight the critical need for educators and students to uncover the ways in which racism, classism, cis-hetero-sexism, and ableism are intertwined and rooted in colonial histories and legacies which continue to dictate who is inferiorized and murdered today. Since Tuck & Yang (2012) argue *decolonization is not a metaphor* and Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen (2011) forefront the marginalized stories of Queer Indigenous peoples, we illustrate the concrete steps educators and students can take to decolonize classrooms, schools, and overall societal learning spaces.

Drawing from decolonizing research methodologies (Smith, 2012), our chapter amplifies the voices of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples as we urge educators and students to honor Indigenous and decolonial histories, cultures, and movements. Due to the growing amount of violence Indigenous peoples, communities of color, and LGBTQ communities with intersectional race, class, gender, sexuality, disability identities encounter, we urge teachers and students to be a critical part of this intersectional decolonial movement. This

paper provides recommendations for teachers and students to implement within K-12, higher education, and community settings.

Introduction

Following Indigenous protocol, we introduce ourselves, our ancestors, and the places we come from. Paulina Abustan's maternal family, the Pamintuan and Bañas clan, is from Pampanga and Cavite, Luzon, Philippines while their father's family, the Abanilla and Abustan clan, is from Pagsanjan, Laguna and Lucban, Quezon, Philippines. Tillie Keyonnie Torpey's maternal family descends from Ganado, Arizona on the diné, Navajo reservation. Her maternal grandmother's clan comes from the kinyaánii, the towering house clan. Her maternal grandfather comes from the tsinajinii, black streak on the hill clan. Torpey's paternal family comes from northern Idaho with the schitsu'umsh, Coeur d'Alene and also from Rocky Boy, Montana with her Cree nations.

We decided to facilitate this research and co-write this paper together because we were called by our ancestors, elders, and community members to center Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx stories and perspectives to be found not only within K-12 and higher education learning spaces, but throughout all spaces and places of learning. We seek to amplify the stories, perspectives, and visions of our ancestors who remind us to honor who we are and where we come from. Through open ended interviews, we gathered ancestral knowledge when learning from the voices of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples with the deepest intention of generating connections and bridges between our interconnected communities.

Literature Review

According to Aizura, Cotton, Bazar, LaGata, Ocoa, & Vidal-Ortiz (2014), education continues to “exclude people who are non-gender normative...exclude people of color...and those for whom decolonial work is a primary concern...” (p. 316). Queer of Color scholars and Queer Indigenous scholars continue to expose how Indigenous and decolonial peoples and our stories remain within the periphery of academic spaces. Alexander (2005) urges “queer studies and queer movements to take up questions of colonialism, racial formation, and political economy simultaneously...” (p. 12).

As Queer Indigenous scholar-activist-educators, we seek to center Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Indigenous peoples within the field of education through the centering movements for decolonization in education and society. We aim to honor our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx ancestors, families, and places we come from as Kovach (2009) claims “...our culture, family, kin, clan, and community wait for us” (p. 10).

As the 7th fire, we continue to survive and resist the erasure of our history and existence as Queer Indigenous peoples. According to Justice, Rifkin, and Schneider (2010), survival is about “place and presence rather than futures and pasts” (p. 21). Through our interviews with Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples, we center the places we come from and our presence which acknowledges the history and the people of the current places we live in. As Kauanui (2008) focuses on genealogical connections, ancestry, and land (p. 41), we articulate the ways in which our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples are connected together through shared histories and experiences of resisting the past, present, and future colonization of our bodyminds and communities.

Theoretical Framework

We utilize Indigenous theoretical frameworks to analyze the open ended qualitative interviews we facilitated. Simpson (2011) names Indigenous and decolonial frameworks as a “resurgence” and “presence” since elders “never imagined it to be okay to be Indian” (p. 12). Simpson (2011) envisions Indigenous decolonial work to center “positive identity, good life, and ancestors” (p. 13). Our research with Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples seeks to center unique stories rarely found within education. Uncovering these stories, perspectives, and voices allow us to follow Indigenous scholars and activists who seek to not only decolonize education, but decolonize overall society. Decolonization involves bringing us back to honoring and centering our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx ancestors along with our past, present, future connections to multiple issue movements found within our intersectional Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities seeking to be in coalitional solidarity to dismantle multiple forms of systemic oppression.

Methodology

We practice Indigenous methodologies. According to Kovach (2009), Indigenous methodology highlights the “responsibility on the part of the researcher who seeks to work with Indigenous peoples who hold their cultural knowledges as sacred” (p. 143). We acknowledge ourselves as culture bearers and healers since the stories and knowledges we gather and carry are sacred. What we learn is connected and from the knowledges of our ancestors and the places we come from.

Following Kovach (2009), we accept the ways in which “Indigenous knowledges can never be standardized, for they are in relation to place and person” (p. 56). Although we note the stories we gather are from Two Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples, we are aware these stories are connected, yet unique, as they come from different tribes,

clans, families, peoples, and places. Overall, we practice Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies as we highlight the importance of interconnections and relationships. Patel (2016) emphasizes the ways in which “our relationships to the land, to each other, and to knowledge and learning, are deeply shaped by this settler colonial structure” (p. 31). Following Queer Indigenous scholars and activists, we acknowledge the ways in which settler colonialism produces and reproduces white settler supremacy, classism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, ableism, neoliberalism, imperialism, and multiple forms of systemic oppression.

“Indigenous research, flowing from tribal paradigms, shows general agreement on the following broad ethical considerations: (a) that the research methodology be in line with Indigenous values; (b) that there is some form of community accountability; (c) that the research gives back to and benefits the community in some manner; and (d) that the researcher is an ally and will not do harm” (Kovach, 2009, p. 48).

We commit to Indigenous values of interconnection and reciprocity as we seek to remain accountable to the Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples we interviewed and communities we are part of. We give back to our communities through our mutual involvement and presence. Our research seeks to support the decolonial activism our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx participants engage in. We hope those who engage with our paper continue to engage in intersectional decolonial movements led by Indigenous and non-centered communities.

As Kovach (2009) emphasizes the ways in which interviews do not capture the full stories of participants (p. 52), we acknowledge the ways in which our interviews do not grasp the complete stories and perspectives of our participants. The stories and perspectives are continuous, ongoing, and fluid. We cannot learn or completely understand the life experiences and perspectives of those around us since there is always more to be known hidden underneath the surface. Although what we learn is limited, we realize knowledge shared with us is sacred. It

is critical for educators and students to recognize the importance of these stories shared with us as stories rooted in sacred ancestral knowledge.

As Kovach (2009) describes Indigenous epistemology to be grounded in “respect, reciprocity, relation, protocol, holistic knowing, relevancy, story, interpretive meaning, and the experiential nested in place and kinship systems- all which ought to be in a research process that encompasses this way of knowing” (p. 67), we humble ourselves when we declare this chapter is the product of the communities and places we come from. Our participants, families, clans, loved ones, and communities contributed to the knowledge found within this chapter.

Positionality

As Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx scholar-activist-educators, we acknowledge the ways in which we are privileged in terms of having the power to decide the direction of our research and power to influence the outcomes through our interpretations and communication of stories shared with us. Kovach (2009) claims: “Research is imbued with a power hierarchy, with the researcher having final control over the research design, data collection, and interpretation” (Kovach, 2009, p. 125). We are “Insider-Outsider” researchers since Tillie is part of the Turtle Island community and Paulina is part of the Pilipinx community while at the same time we are distanced from our communities as scholar-activist-educators since many people from our communities are not found within higher education.

Participants

We interviewed 3 Turtle Island culture bearers and 4 Pilipinx culture bearers with the intentions of gathering sacred and ancestral knowledge regarding Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Indigenous ways of decolonizing education and society. The decolonizing stories and perspectives of our participants can greatly contribute to our K-12 and higher education fields.

The following are the ways in which our participants described themselves and their unique, yet interconnected, identities, backgrounds, and decolonization visions and practices:

Participant 1: Two-Spirit

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Ancestry: Niimiipuu

Decolonization as Practice: “Two Spirit, just that terminology to me sounds so tied to my heritage being Native American, but also being Nez Perce and so I think I feel blessed to have that term, Two Spirit, and to be able to identify it because I know non-Natives don’t have that the same. To me I look at it as a blessing. So I just think of it as something Creator bestowed upon me to kind of carry this message of being different and to teach others to love unconditionally... and so now it’s more or less just trying to find all those different cultural things that can bring my awareness more to an authentic Nez Perce. So really researching who my ancestors were because I want to be aware of who we were as a tribal people before colonization so that I can maybe continue those different cultural practices that really brought a voice to Two Spirit people and so I can help my future generations... One thing that I think that’s not that prevalent for a reservation is stick game. Like if you go up to their tribe, everyone plays stick game. If you go to the coast, they call it bone game, but here hardly anyone plays stick game and stick game taught you those valuable things like sportsmanship, how to be honest and then also it really reinforced that family setting. Early on they might have, but there really is no gender roles; it was just a family thing and so I think that is one thing we can use for decolonization... One of the biggest strengths early on when I began researching ‘Two Spirit’ came from this man in Minnesota and he spoke about a woman that was going to have a baby. So she was about to deliver and this medicine woman that was with her on her bedside that was going to help her could also see into the spirit world. So up in the spirit world she sees this male spirit and this female spirit, they’re kind of corralling with each other in who is going to embody this child and they don’t really decide. When this woman delivers, the medicine woman gives the woman the baby and she tells her that ‘that’s going to be a gifted child and that when they grow up they’re going to be powerful and basically that you need to look at that child as powerful; that you need to treat that child with respect and love. That the child has both spirits; the female and male spirit. I saw the spirits embody this child and so you need to uphold that child as a healer.’ Because I heard this so early on, I found solace in this story; I felt so much relief that I didn’t have to feel like I’m a sinner and that I’m going to go to hell. At that moment I felt everything was going to be okay...The dine’ story I heard, I believe it’s one of their creation stories; it was about how the women and men were corralling and so Creator divided them with a big river between them. And so all the men and the women went, but the men told the women that they were going to bring the (nah-n-clay), the Two Spirit. And so they started to live a part for a while and they were corralling. The women were missing the men because they needed help doing all the manly stuff whereas the men were missing the women because you know they were looking for that intimacy and the stuff they provided. And so it was the ‘nah-n-clay’ that brought them together and

basically saved the human race... Two Spirit is someone who has clarity, to have spirituality, to have forgiveness, to have patience and someone who is perseverant..."

Participant 2: Gay

Pronouns: He/Him/His

Ancestry: Niimiipuu

Decolonization as Practice: "My favorite story would have to be... I don't know... we are related to a lot of...like my dad...we have a lot of warrior blood in our family. So we could tell warrior stories for days about all the old battles that went on. We are pretty much blood related to all the warriors from the Niimiipuu, Nez Perce wars that had happened. We are a direct blood line of that... I'm the warrior gay guy of the Nez Perce...I only fight when I needed to. When I felt like I have been disrespected by stupid guys in high school, I punked out a lot of guys in high school because they thought they could disrespect me because I was gay. I was like 'alright, well let's take it outside then,' but then it became a whole other story you know? Then I became known for that. Everybody knows me in this town if you were to ask them. Don't talk crap to, [name]. He will mess you up and that's the truth...I would never want to be one of the people that ran away, I would want to stand up and fight. Not so much with my fists anymore, but somehow I'm not going to let that affect me in a negative way because it already has. My family has friends that are people who are hiding still in the closet or things like that. I don't want to just bring people out, but I just want to make sure everything is okay and turn it into a positive thing. Have the stories told about us be positive, not tacky or anything you know. I don't want us to be made fun of or have to deal with that stuff anymore and I just want to change that... I went through life hitting people, it gets tiring and I shouldn't have to do that all the time, but that's how I was brought up. I don't know anything better and I wouldn't want to change that about me. I would never want to be somebody that settled or was scared or ran or hid because I was like that or because of what people made me feel like..."

Participant 3: Gay

Pronouns: He/Him/His

Ancestry: Niimiipuu

Decolonization as Practice: "Being niimiipuu means being able to be ourselves by keeping our long house traditions, keeping our wah-les-uh-t, seven drums traditions alive. It means to be able to hunt and gather in our traditional territories defined in our treaties that were forced upon us, which is a big deal because we can hunt and fish anytime that we want without an impost whether it's hunting or gathering season. So we can hunt, gather and fish as needed if we need subsidence. That's what it means for me as a Niimiipuu to be Indigenous and to protect that. Cuz it's getting harder and harder to maintain as the times go on. It's protecting our identity as we see it and our culture and language, which we are working on revitalizing our language, but we still have a lot of work to do... our tribe as a whole has to come to terms to accept that we have been colonized in the first place because we have different parts and segments within ourselves that won't accept or admit that we are colonized because we have the different religious factors that

were introduced here... in education I would like for my grandkids to learn how to think globally and locally like how to preserve our streams and tributaries... our vegetation to support or fish runs. Protect our roots and berries. Things that sustain our livelihood. Our traditional roots and medicine out there because some people out there don't even know what they are. There are some people who do and we need to expand on those things because we need to try and retain what little we have left. And to revitalize and speak more language until we get to the point that we are fluent again.”

Participant 4: Queer, Non-Binary

Pronouns: Male

Ancestry: Pilipinx, Bataan and Manila, Tagalog

Decolonization in Practice: “Food is really important. That for me is a big deal for how I decolonize myself and how I get in touch with my roots...Our food has been colonized. If we were to eat what we were eating before the Spanish and the Americans got to the Islands, we would be eating fish and vegetables and fruit... And to me, that is part of decolonization. I think that food is individual health and community health cuz we eat together. When Filipino meals are prepared, you don't usually make a single serving. You make a huge pot for everybody and everybody eats together so when you are trying to treat someone with diabetes, you can't usually just change their diet and then have it be easy and tell them to stick to that. It's like you need to invest in how the whole family operates.”

Participant 5: Queer, Gay, Femme

Pronouns: Feminine

Ancestry: Filipino-American, Child of Immigrants, Ilongapo and Belair

Decolonization in Practice: “...celebrating ourselves and trying to take up as much space as possible without being apologetic about it. Um, I feel like, again, my identities of being Queer, Pilipina, and being an artist is like, all of that influences how I act, especially in public spaces where I wanna be seen. So, again, for example, like, if I'm in a predominantly white space, like an art exhibit, or a museum, um, I wanna be with other Brown people and be super loud and obnoxious because I want you to know I'm here. (Laughs). Um, and I think you can take for granted all those little ways we show up for ourselves cuz being Filipino isn't necessarily eating Filipino food, wearing Filipino clothes, going to Filipino events, it's just being around, you know? It's getting up in the morning when you feel really depressed. It's making art about your experiences when there isn't art that already represents how you feel. Um, and I think in education and society it's going to be a big thing. I talk about it all the time. Again, representation matters. You wanna see yourself in the mainstream eye. You want people to accept your story and learn more about you... I think it means reclaiming your history and rejecting preconceived notions of who you are supposed to be in favor of trying to re-work

yourself. Like re-working the definition of who you are. And rejecting things like white supremacy, patriarchy, and things like that.”

Participant 6: Queer, Trans, Transcending the Gender Binary

Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs

Ancestry: Illocano

Decolonization in Practice: “Decolonization is really a remembering, a resurgence, and revival. I don’t wanna say revival because it sounds like something died. There is a resurgence and a remembering of the knowledge that our ancestors passed on to us that is ready to be unleashed and shared again. I think we are living in a time where a lot of that is happening across the world... it’s time to bring back our ways, our old ways that were never old but are still here, they are coming back to us in dreams or practice with the community that is here in the diaspora, the others that are here, the books that are being published, the knowledge being shared. Decolonization...it’s not binary, it’s not Black and white, it’s not only intellectual or academic. I think decolonization is going to your mom’s house or your auntie’s house and the elder in your life and making food with them, learning how to make that meal, having conversations with them. It’s not only about going on the streets and trying to mobilize only systemic change, but also interpersonal. And I think it looks like a lot of different ways. All of it matters. All of it is valid. Decolonization too is building with Native folks here. If we only build relationships and only learn and practice traditions only in like a Filipino context, I don’t think we’re gonna move forward. We need to work together. Through cultural exchange, and being aware what appropriation is, right? To me appropriation tied with colonization and decolonization, appropriation really is not knowing where something came from, practicing without being invited, making money, making money in a way you are misinforming people cuz I understand that there are people in the diaspora, for example, they make art that might have symbols that are considered Indigenous, but if you are doing it out of respect and you know where it comes from, you are obviously not making it for the masses, just to survive, there is complexity there. If you’re misinforming people, telling them it’s this and that, taking advantage and making a shit load of money, then that’s a different story. So decolonization really is coming full circle, finding the roots to your roots, and connecting outside of the community with other People of Color. We have to work together and not let white supremacy divide us which can happen. Evil will divide us too, you know. I would say with education, teaching what you know and sharing what you know, not hoarding the knowledge.”

Participant 7: Bakla, Trans, Two-Spirit

Pronouns: He/Him/His

Ancestry: Brown, Pinoy, Mexicano

Decolonization in Practice: “I feel like ---. I don't like the word decolonization because it, I mean I have a hard time with it because I feel like it's almost like it's accepting colonization has happened and well I do recognize the legacies of that I feel like it surrendering on some level that this thing has happened but we always been here, we've just been underground or we've had to, maybe that's what colonization looks like, to me it's supporting that colonization is like this end all and now that we have to un-do. I like to call it re-ceremonialization because I feel like

decolonization equals taking us apart from our ceremonies. I feel like it's...because ceremonies are so intrinsic to everything we did to how we eat, how we greet, to harvest, to all the big things and small things, there was always a ritual about things and that's what I've noticed in a lot of Native practice and when you get broken away from that, nothing is alive anymore. The earth is not alive. The sun is not alive. We're not alive and that's how colonization takes root in our bones. So if we bring back our ceremony, we are re-connecting our bones and ourselves with these things and everything becomes alive again. Colonization can't take root if you are actually alive. It depends on us being in a zombie state, you know? I never resonated with double negatives, you know? Like de and colonization. I don't like either of those. But re-ceremony. Sure. I wanna do that again. What that can look like in communities and education...I feel like it's realizing the practice of how we do anything. How we welcome each other. How we begin an interview. How you close it out. Like all of this you are doing is healing work you are doing. Having us talk to you about these things. Hard shit to talk about. It's a bit therapeutic in some levels and a bit cathartic, right? So how are you taking care of the person you are interviewing and yourself as you open and close? Right? And in communities, that's a bigger one. Not believing in the individual so much. White and western society depends on an individual. An individual making it, right? Leaving the home and what is it to actually stay in connection and be dependent? And to be interdependent and to be okay with that? It's okay to survive together and really depend on others for your survival, um, we know this because we were forced to. We have no choice but to survive in community. For people who have access, they can individualize more and that's celebrated. And it's actually the more we can de-bunk that, that's important. In education, I definitely feel like in the classroom there is so much shit I would change about that. But one of my favorite professors...she definitely works from the body on how she teaches and how she asks us to enter our scholarship and she always reminds us that our scholarship lies in our bodies. Our feelings are data. Like our emotions are part of the research. It's all speaking back to teaching you a lot. Um, and even just the way she conducts the class, it is very, it always blows my mind. You cannot check out in those classes, you know what I mean? And that to me is re-ceremonializing a space, you know? There's definitely a lot more ways you can do education, but she is a big example to me of how you can shift that and um, she makes us pass a ball of yarn around so we see a whole web forming across the table and you have a really visible, tangible representation on how you are connected to each other. You can tug on it, you can play with it, and just really knowing that in your body while you're talking and feeling held as you share ideas and ask questions you know. So small things like that."

Lessons

After interviewing our 7 participants, we found the following decolonizing themes that align with decolonial scholars Simpson (2011), De Jesus (2013), and Kovach (2009) among our interviews: storytelling, dreams, ceremony, presence, creativity, self and community love, and dismantling colonial curriculums.

Storytelling

“Storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning, and creating a just reality where Nishnaabeg live as both Nishnaabeg and peoples. Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice” (Simpson, 2011, p. 33).

All participants shared the ways in which storytelling is key for decolonizing education and society. Participants highlight how learning directly from family and community members is critical for decolonizing. Sharing stories which carry our ancestors’ histories, recipes, artistic visions, sacred tattoo, and ceremonial practices is an important way to decolonize. Learning from the stories and perspectives of our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Indigenous ancestors will allow educators and students to center multiple anti-oppression and decolonial movements in which Indigenous peoples seek to recognize, honor, and re-center sacred practices passed along through story. K-12 and higher education learning spaces and overall society can decolonize itself through the centering of Indigenous storytelling in which these stories carry sacred meaning which seek to heal us and the worlds we share.

Dreams

“Dreams as visions propel resurgence because they provide Nishnaabeg with both the knowledge from the spiritual world and processes for realizing those visions. Dreams and visions provide glimpses of decolonized spaces and transformed realities that we have collectively yet to imagine” (Simpson, 2011, p. 34).

Our participants discuss how dreams are a form of decolonization since dreams allow us to connect with our ancestors and envision steps we can take to improve education and society. Participants dream of worlds in which families do not live with disease due to non-Indigenous diets, imagine worlds in which Brown people are centered, envision building relationships of solidarity with Native and communities of color, and strive for worlds which honor our bodies and sacred interactions with each other. K-12 and higher education can benefit from the dreams and visions of our participants who propel towards worlds without white settler supremacy,

classism, cis-hetero-sexism, ableism, neoliberalism, and imperialism. Imagining alternative realities for Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples and our communities is a form of decolonization educators and students can practice.

Ceremony

“We can access this body of knowledge through our cultures by singing, dancing, fasting, dreaming, visioning, participating in ceremony, apprenticing with Elders, practicing our lifeways and living our knowledge, by watching and listening in a good way. Ultimately, we can access this knowledge through the quality of our relationships, and the personalized contexts we collectively create” (Simpson, 2011, p. 42).

Participants emphasize how ceremony is critical to decolonization. Ceremony through dance, stick game, hunting, gathering, and cooking with community members is one of the many ways in which Indigenous peoples and our cultures continue to survive. Sacred rituals and ceremonies which honor our mother earth, ancestors, and our communities allow us to connect with each other and strive for worlds that do not hate us, erase us, ignore us, or marginalize us. Educators and students can benefit from learning about and centering the ceremonies of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples because these ceremonies are life giving when allowing our cultures and practices to continue to be cherished and honored.

Presence and Creativity

“Creating aligns us with our Ancestors because when we engage in artistic or creative processes, we disconnect ever so slightly from the dominant economic system and connect a way of being based on doing, rather than blind consumption” (Simpson, 2011, p. 42).

Whether through art, tattoo, community building, food, and/or song, our participants demonstrated the ways in which they decolonize education and society through their presence and creativity. Participants emphasize the ways in which simply breathing and living is a form of decolonization since our ancestors fought for us to be alive today. Being creative is a way to break barriers and stereotypes which are often placed on Indigenous peoples, People of Color,

Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer peoples. Honoring the creativity of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples will greatly contribute to K-12 and higher education spaces which are in need of not only diverse perspectives, but critical perspectives which seek to dismantle multiple forms of systemic oppression.

Self and Community Love

“Most important, peminism is about loving ourselves and other Pinays, loving our families and communities. Indeed, peminism is an extricable part of our decolonization as a people: far from being a slighting of Filipino American men or Filipino American culture in general, attention to Pinay voices and perspectives demonstrates our commitment to the liberation of all Filipinos” (De Jesus, 2013, p. 5).

As decolonial, transgender, queer, feminist, and disability critical race scholars stress the importance of self and community love, we found our participants viewed self and community love as a form of decolonization and survival. Over 500 years of colonization taught us as Indigenous peoples and People of Color that we were not worthy, not good enough, and not meant to survive. Living and loving ourselves is our greatest form of resistance and survival. Educators and students can learn from these perspectives of self and community love because this love not only includes love for our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer identities, but also love for our Turtle Island and Pilipinx communities who continue to resist multiple forms of oppression, violence, and erasure.

Dismantling Colonial Curriculums

As Kovach (2009) challenges educators to “move beyond the colonial curriculum” (p. 118), we learned our participants seek to dismantle colonial curriculums which include curriculums found within our current K-12 and higher education systems. White washed and neoliberal curriculums can no longer erase histories of colonial violence and current forms of systemic oppression which detrimentally impact Indigenous peoples and communities of color.

Curriculums can decolonize through the centering the Indigenous sovereignty and land reparation movements of Indigenous peoples, communities of color, and perspectives which seek to heal historical trauma and current wounds our Indigenous communities and people of color still carry today.

Recommendations

Being with our Two-Spirit, Transgender, Queer Indigenous Ancestors

“Through the lens of colonial thought and cognitive imperialism, we are often unable to see our Ancestors. We are unable to see their philosophies and their strategies of mobilization and the complexities of their plan for resurgence” (Simpson, 2011, p. 16).

We urge educators and students to “be” with our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer ancestors and community members. Learning from and centering the stories and perspectives of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples will assist educators and students in moving towards critical and transformative practices which seek to be in solidarity with our interconnected communities. Centering Indigenous peoples, cultures, and practices will allow K-12 and higher education systems to divest from its complicity with settler colonialism, classism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, ableism, neoliberalism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression. The perspectives of Turtle Island and Pilipinx people are greatly needed to decolonize educational spaces to include the honoring of Indigenous and counter-narrative storytelling, dreams, ceremony, presence and creativity, self and community love, and ways in which Indigenous peoples and communities seek to disrupt colonial education systems.

Conclusion

“Now, nearly two hundred years after surviving an attempted political and cultural genocide, it is the responsibility of my generation to plant and nurture those seeds and to make our Ancestors proud” (Simpson, 2011, p. 15).

As the 7th generation, we seek to “see” and “be” with our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx ancestors and community members. As scholar-activist-

educators, we seek to bring back Indigenous ways of healing and decolonizing which include honoring Indigenous storytelling, dreams, ceremony, presence and creativity, self and community love, and the dismantling of settler colonialism and multiple forms of oppression inside and outside of the classroom through supporting Indigenous led movements for Indigenous sovereignty and land reparations. We seek to continue learning from Indigenous, decolonial, and critical race scholars of color who disrupt racist, classist, cis-hetero-sexist, and ableist systems found within education and society. We urge educators and students to examine themselves and their complicity in allowing settler colonialism and intersectional systemic oppressions to flourish within our education and societal spaces. Our academic disciplines and learning spaces should not tolerate any form of erasure and violence which includes ignoring, silencing, and marginalizing Indigenous stories and perspectives. We call for educators and students to center the histories, lives, and the past, current, and future cultural views and practices of Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Turtle Island and Pilipinx peoples so we can honor our Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer Indigenous ancestors who continue to love and protect us.

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