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Teaching the geographies of Canada: Reflections on pedagogy, curriculum, and the politics of teaching and learning

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Key Messages

- This paper is a collection of commentaries on teaching the geographies of Canada which together challenge traditional regional approaches from a variety of perspectives and politics.
- It examines the politics of active learning, teaching resources, and received curricula while highlighting the embodied nature of the classroom environment.
- It concludes that regional geography courses are an opportunity to challenge received knowledge if we are attentive to positionality and power in our classrooms—not only our own but also that of our students and the texts we engage with.

Presented as a collection of commentaries on teaching the geographies of Canada, this paper grows out of a panel session on the same topic at the Canadian Association of Geographers conference in 2014. In the stories and analyses provided, contributors challenge many assumptions of what a "Geography of Canada" course should look like. We not only challenge traditional regional approaches, we also reimagine the role of active learning, the disciplining process of creating textbooks, the geographies of ignorance related to Aboriginal issues, and the embodied nature of the teaching experience. Our contributions are not purely theoretical; they are based on our experiences in the classroom and our active attempts to change the narratives and environments our students engage with. Collectively, we do not propose the removal of regional geography courses from the undergraduate curriculum. Rather, we see such courses as an opportunity to challenge received knowledge of what a region is, of what "Canada" is. Approaching our

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Keywords: pedagogy, Geography of Canada, regional geography, teaching

L'enseignement de la diversité géographique du Canada : considérations sur la pédagogie, les programmes d'études et les politiques d'enseignement et d'apprentissage

Prenant la forme d'un recueil de commentaires sur l'enseignement de la diversité géographique du Canada, cet article résulte d'un débat d'experts consacré à ce thème qui s'est tenu dans le cadre de l'édition 2014 du congrès annuel de l'Association canadienne des géographes. Les récits et analyses que les participants ont communiqués ébranlent les nombreuses suppositions qui fondent le cours de « géographie du Canada ». Nous avons non seulement mis au défi les approches régionales traditionnelles, mais avons repensé également le mode d'apprentissage actif, le processus didactique de la conception de manuels scolaires, l'ignorance géographique relative aux questions autochtones, et la nature intrinsèque de l'expérience d'enseignement. Notre réflexion ne se limite pas aux aspects théoriques, mais tire parti de nos expériences dans la salle de classe et des efforts soutenus que nous déployons pour faire évoluer les récits et les environnements auxquels sont exposés nos étudiants. Dans l'ensemble, nous n'adhérons pas à l'idée de retirer les cours de géographie régionale du programme d'études de premier cycle. En revanche, nous sommes plutôt d'avis que ce cours présente une possibilité de remettre en question les définitions généralement admises de ce que constitue une région, voire le « Canada ». Une telle démarche d'enseignement est une occasion à saisir afin de présenter aux étudiants des approches pédagogiques, des connaissances et des conceptions novatrices de la géographie.

Mots clés : pédagogie, géographie du Canada, géographie régionale, enseignement

Introduction

In early 2014, we (Nicole Laliberté and John Paul Catungal) organized a panel session for the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) conference focusing on the politics and practices of teaching "Geography of Canada," a course found in most undergraduate Geography programs in Canadian universities. We designed this panel as an extension of our own conversations about our own teaching in which we discussed how our respective histories, positionalities, and embodiments mattered in the classroom as they influenced how we designed our courses, what issues and themes we wanted to emphasize, what material we assigned, how we delivered the course content, and how the course was received by students. We were curious to hear from other instructors of Geography of Canada at other universities about their pedagogical, curricular, and political practices in delivering such a course.

This paper grows out of the aforementioned 2014 CAG panel. Both at the panel and in preparation for this paper, we asked contributors to consider some or all of the following set of seemingly simple guiding questions: What are we trying to accomplish in our courses? Whose geographies are we teaching? Who is in the room and why does it matter? As it turns out, these questions were far from straightforward, and they produced a wealth of diverse and complex responses.

The sections that follow, written by individual contributors to reflect their own teaching experiences and practices, demonstrate a collective desire to move beyond the standard regional approach epitomized by Robert M. Bone's (2014) commonly used textbook *The regional geography of Canada*. The variety of ways in which this is accomplished, however, gives us a sense of the multiplicity of priorities and goals of those teaching Geography of Canada. Each contributor identifies different interventions they seek to enact in their teaching, including actively problematizing master-narratives of Canadian nationalism, re-orienting the passive learning model of course delivery, and producing teaching materials within the discipline that represent marginalized stories and geographies of Canada.

Many of the commentaries engage directly with the issue of *whose* geographies are taught in Geography of Canada courses. They highlight that course curriculum design is a political practice that

can serve to privilege certain geographic imaginaries of Canada while downplaying or erasing others. Collectively, the commentaries force us to ask ourselves what socio-spatial stories of Canada are being perpetuated or challenged through our teaching. What are the geographic imaginaries of the nation we are contributing to? The commentaries that follow are examples of the lines of inquiry that might open up when we make these questions central to our reflexive inquiries about our teaching practice.

By asking *who* is in the classroom (and in other spaces of teaching and learning the geographies of Canada), the contributors also force us to examine the embodied practices of knowledge production in relation to our courses. This work demands a perspective on the Geography of Canada classroom as an assemblage of bodies, discourses, and objects whose interactions are filtered through various axes of difference, a project that extends already existing conversations in this journal on critical pedagogical practices (see *The Canadian Geographer* special issue edited by McCreary et al. 2013). For some contributors, this means activating a different social configuration of the classroom in order to decentre the sage-on-the-stage approach, emphasizing the experiences and knowledges students bring to collaborative learning processes. For other contributors, this means reckoning with questions of privilege and authority as they are associated with embodied experiences of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age—of both the teachers and students—in the Geography of Canada classroom (as in any classroom). As some of our contributors show below, both students and teachers are literally bodies of knowledge who, depending on their positionalities, bring with them sometimes conflicting understandings of—and investments in—the "nation." The Geography of Canada classroom is thus greatly influenced by its own social geographies—the positionalities and embodiments of those in the room.

In the stories and analyses that follow, contributors challenge many assumptions of what a Geography of Canada course should look like. We not only challenge traditional regional approaches (Catungal, Castleden, Momer), we also reimagine the role of active learning (Keeling), the disciplining process of creating textbooks (Nash), the geographies of ignorance related to Aboriginal issues (Castleden), and the embodied nature of the teaching experience (Nash and Catungal). Our contributions are not purely theoretical; they are also based on our experiences in the classroom and our active attempts to broaden the narratives and environments our students engage with. Collectively, we do not propose the removal of regional geography courses from undergraduate curriculum. Rather, following Wei (2006), we see such courses as an opportunity to challenge received knowledge of what a region is, of what "Canada" is. Approaching our teaching in this manner is an opportunity to expose students to alternative geographic pedagogies, knowledges, and imaginaries.

Beyond the "region": Towards the pluralisation of Canadian geographies (Bernard Momer)

While studying its regions provides a logical framework to learn about Canada's human and physical diversity, I would argue that a traditional regional approach does not provide students with a good grasp of the country's contemporary geography. Following the structure of the two most popular textbooks on the subject, both based on regionalism, left my students and I wanting something different (for more on the politics of textbooks, see Nash's contribution below). My discontent with the course content and its structure led me to ponder whether what I was teaching was useful or not. Would my course prepare students to become global citizens as explicitly stated in my university's equity goals (UBC 2012, 6)? Teaching students about social justice, sustainability, promoting an understanding of social diversity, and working with others to promote positive change in a globalizing world (Brigham 2011; Hammell et al. 2015), is perhaps best achieved by contextualizing Canada within this world rather than anchoring the course's structure to a traditional regional approach. My intentions are not to clamour the death of regional geography (Thrift 1994), or to reopen the debate that raged about the nature of the field during the late 1980s and 1990s (Johnston et al. 1990; Thrift 1990; Holmén 1995; Crowley 1999) but simply to reconsider, or perhaps simply tweak this approach.

There are two main issues with following a purely regional approach. Beginning the course with a description of the physiography of the country sounded counterproductive. While the Canadian identity is partly constructed in an imaginary rooted

in the country's stunning natural landscapes, Canadians live in an urbanized country. The land of the great outdoors with its natural resources still plays an important role in the economy. However, it could be argued that it no longer defines us.

A second issue with the traditional regional structure I had followed for many years is that culture is often treated largely as a dependent variable. A region doesn't define a culture; a people's culture defines and creates regions. The Canadian mosaic is the product of consensuses resulting from our differences, of the tensions between east and west, between urban and rural, between indigenous peoples, long-term residents, and new immigrants. Our *Canadianness* is more than just being *not American*. It is the product of a journey, of a constant self-questioning; it is the product of a process more than a destination. Canadian culture is no longer limited to localized constituencies (Holman and Thacker 2013), so why should we continue to teach the geography of Canada as an examination of a discrete collection of parts?

I wanted to teach the Geograph*ies* of Canada. I wanted to explain the continuum that is Canada by placing all its residents at the centre of the curriculum. I also wanted to avoid the uncritical usage of the "core-periphery" approach used in Bone (2014), partly to highlight the negative connotation associated with the terms (e.g., periphery as superficial and core as central or most important), but more importantly, to emphasize the need to re-evaluate the traditional assumptions pertaining to this approach (Stadel 2009). One may argue that this dualism connotes a hierarchical geography which is, perhaps, unCanadian (even perhaps against my institution's equity value?).

To that end, a new approach was sought to teach my Geography of Canada course. Although it remains a work in progress, the following is a summary of my course redesign. The first section of the course situates Canada in a global context; it examines what makes Canada demographically, culturally, economically, and politically different than other nations. The latter is especially critical to deconstructing the geo-political regional boundaries. How can one stray from defining the Atlantic Coast as the Maritime Provinces or the West Coast as British Columbia?

The second section of the course covers Canada's population distribution. An overview of the contemporary Canadian urban system is followed by an examination of its changing configuration since the 1970s. This allows us to question the effectiveness of the heartland-hinterland approach to explain the development of the Canadian urban system (Filion 2010), consider immigration patterns and their impact on the ethnic composition of cities (Murdie 2008; Yoshida 2012), and examine the growth of *megaurban* regions (Simmons and Bourne 2013). Finally, population distribution cannot be discussed without examining how transportation systems and government policies, influenced by national objectives, have shaped and continually reshape Canadian geography (Transportation Association of Canada 2014). Once students understand the Canadian urban system, the needs of its population are considered and the mobilizing, generative, and transformative functions of cities are examined. Students are challenged to think about the role of cities in transforming, using, and distributing our natural resources as well as the tensions, whether cultural or economic, that exist within and between urban and rural areas.

The third section examines the origin of these resources and considers Canada's physical geography within the cultural and economic context that allowed these resources to be extracted since the nation's early days. Students examine resource extraction, from mining to agriculture to fishing followed by the distribution of these resources through the country's industrial landscape and contemporary transportation system. The latter, quite literally, brings us back to cities to wrap up the course.

By structuring my course in this fashion, I wanted to provide a contemporary snapshot of Canada's geographies and move away from a deterministic perspective whereby the challenging physiography and natural resources location seemed like the only factors that shaped its geographies. It is through determination, curiosity, and a desire to discover and exploit the natural resources this land has to offer that a country was forged. My other goal, evidently, was to present my students with interesting material that would foster an understanding of the geographies of Canada and force them to reconsider what they know about Canada by demonstrating that a nation is always in flux, economically, culturally, politically, and socially. Teaching students how many wheat bushels are produced in Saskatchewan or how many ounces of

gold are extracted in Ontario did not accomplish this. So, while regional geography is perhaps forever tied to the identity of geography (Wei 2006), we should not allow uncritical regional analyses to shape how we introduce students to the multiple and complex geographies of Canada.

Producing "Canada" in textbook writing: A commentary (Catherine Nash)

In this commentary, I consider the possibilities and challenges of developing a first year introductory textbook based on the "Canadianization" of an American-based text, *Human geography: People, place, and culture* (2nd Canadian edition). One of the opportunities provided in the reworking of the *Human geography* text was to incorporate material foregrounding how geography as a discipline has made considerable contributions to scholarship that seeks to address current issues including research on climate change, environmental justice, immigration and multiculturalism, Aboriginal issues, and questions related to social identities underpinning social relations—gender, race, age, class, sexual/gender orientation, religion. To ensure these concerns remained visible throughout the text, such ideas were woven throughout each chapter rather than segregated into little text boxes or sidebars on topics such as "women's suffrage" or "Chinese men and the building of the Canadian railway," for example. Contemporary Canadian and global examples serve to illustrate the merits of a geographical perspective—examples as diverse as Tanzanian hip hop music, gender inequalities in international labour, Canadian Aboriginal issues, racialized neighbourhoods in Toronto, or class-related access to social services.

The second edition was completed in March 2015 and as part of the review process, individual chapters were sent out to three reviewers. While most of the reviews were very favourable, providing constructive suggestions for improving the text, several reviewers' comments illustrate an intellectual divide that exists around the nature of geography as a subject and how it should be taught. The remainder of the commentary will explore two related themes surfacing in reviewers' comments that reflect a hostility towards a particular approach to teaching geography—whether geography as a discipline is 'political' or should have a 'political' perspective and whether issues of social justice are appropriate concerns for a first-year text.

One concern expressed by reviewers revealed an anxiety that any mention of feminist and/or radical geographies would be off-putting to students in ways that made the material difficult to teach. One reviewer commented that they "have found students to be very resistant to what they would term 'feminist geography'" and any material on gender needs to be presented in a way that "does not get them defensive." This is in keeping with a substantial body of scholarship demonstrating that there can be serious resistance to feminist-based scholarship both from colleagues and students (McDowell 1992; Oberhauser 2002; Webber 2006). So while most reviewers seemed comfortable with teaching about spatialized inequalities related to gender, race, or sexual orientation, expressly naming feminist or queer scholarship as the foundation for these critiques was seen as problematic and potentially divisive. These comments illustrate how we, as instructors, experience hostility and discomfort in a classroom through even the most innocuous mention of particular conceptual or theoretical frameworks. As I have argued elsewhere, raising certain issues can be extremely stressful and anxiety provoking for some faculty, particularly when class evaluations are so important for early career academics and avoiding certain topics, no matter how important or relevant, may seem the wiser course (Nash 2010; see also Nast 1999; Rocco and Gallagher 2006; Webber 2006).

For one reviewer, making issues related to race, sexuality, gender, and/or class visible through the text was notably disagreeable. The reviewer also suggested that the chapter "[n]eeds to be rewritten from the beginning by someone familiar with Social Geography and without any axes to grind." Given the reviewer knew who the author was and could ascertain the author's research interests, it is reasonable to understand the comment as a personal attack on the author's expertise and professionalism. In commenting on both the social and cultural chapters, the reviewer called the author's efforts "pathetic," arguing there was "far too much whining about unfairness to women and to non-white people. I do not for one moment deny that this unfairness has existed and continues to exist. But this is supposed to be a geography text, not political sociology." This quote highlights continued divisions regarding the political nature of the discipline

of geography in terms of the production of knowledge as well as what we choose to teach and how.

The same reviewer also commented there was "a bit of a tendency to want to slip in feminist/gay/lesbian ideas that are not very appropriate in this context (I am neither male chauvinist nor homophobic, but these topics seem to have become a bit of a King Charles' Head [see David Copperfield] in this book)." The comment appears to reflect the reviewer's discomfort with the visibility of gender as well as lesbian and gay issues throughout the text. As scholarship has noted, often the merest mention (perhaps once) of feminist (or queer) perspectives can be perceived as talking about it "all the time" even though the reference might be modest or innocuous (Khayatt 1992; Overall 1998). While questions of race, class, and gender surfaced in some form or another across a number of chapters, it was the uncomfortable visibility of LGBT references that felt particularly egregious to this reviewer. Arguably, the visibility and contestations around contemporary LGBT issues in the United States as well as in places such as Russia and Uganda make it difficult not to make some reference to these globally circulating (and highly inflammatory) discourses.

Also notable are the reviewer's attempts to deflect accusations that s/he might be perceived as homophobic through claims about being open-minded, and having daughters and a multi-cultural family. Claims for the validity of one's position based on personal attributes raises important questions about visibility and embodiment in the classroom and in the authorship of texts (as well as academic articles). Students and colleagues may make (unfair) assumptions about the "neutrality" or "bias" of an individual based on their embodied presentation and/or research interests while ignoring the privileged assumptions accruing to the normatively gendered, white male. For those instructors who are racialized, gendered, or sexualized in particular ways—where their identities are embodied and understood within a certain system of meaning—it can be very difficult to approach certain topics in the classroom and "strategic passing" might be a required choice to gain professional acceptance (Martin and Brown 2013, 383). The same difficulty appears to have arisen here, where the inclusion of certain topics related to gender and sexuality becomes suspect given my research interests and despite the fact that these topics have a similar visibility in other Canadian texts.

Taken together, these examples illustrate how the production of undergraduate texts is itself contested in ways that reflect particular political and social conflicts. They further reflect one of the overarching themes addressed in this paper about exactly *whose* geographies are taught in Geography of Canada courses. Rendering visible the distinctive socio-spatial experiences of particular groups can challenge dominant or "traditional" understandings of how places and spaces are experienced and this, in turn, can trouble those for whom such approaches are unfamiliar. Finally, it is difficult to assess whether the deep hostility of one reviewer is an anomaly or representative of a wider contingent of scholars who find such approaches unsettling. Nevertheless, collective projects such as this ensure open discussion and debate as well as opportunities for support and encouragement particularly for those in departments where negative views are prevalent or awareness of these teaching difficulties remain unacknowledged.

Reconfiguring regions and the Geography of Canada classroom (Arn Keeling)

As I have written previously (Keeling 2008), I undertook developing and delivering Geography of Canada as a team- and problem-based learning course, with the aims of both revitalizing and reimagining the standard "regional" approach to teaching undergraduate Canadian geography, and experimenting with active learning approaches aimed at stimulating greater student engagement and better learning outcomes. Offered at the third-year level at Memorial University, this class typically enrols about 40–45 students, a mix of majors and minors. My version of the course aims (perhaps paradoxically) to challenge the reification of "regions" in our understanding of Canadian geography by organizing course teams around the conventionally defined regions of Canada. In opting to retain regions as an organizing principle overlain by thematic inquiries undertaken by student teams, the course provides an opportunity for students to think not just about "where things are" but also draws on contemporary reworkings of the notion of region to get students "to think about the *why behind the*

where, or the factors that account for the patterns they see in the world" (Keeling 2008, 4; see also Fournier 2002; Wade 2006). Pedagogically, these process and content goals are interrelated: by engaging students in active, inquiry-based learning processes such as team- and problem-based learning (Livingstone and Lynch 2000; Fournier 2002; Spronken-Smith 2005; Pawson et al. 2006), I hope to promote the acquisition, evaluation, and retention of geographical concepts such as region, place, and environment while promoting general knowledge of Canadian geography.

To this end, I divide the class into between six and eight regions, and students selected to "represent" their region remain in these groups for most of the course. The groups are challenged to take on a series of geographical "problems" from the perspective of their region, to undertake research and reporting around these problems, and to share their results with other groups. The goal is for students to develop regional "expertise" while, through sharing activities, they begin to problematize their own region and understand the shared nature of many of the issues, as well as the multiple scales and geographies within which they are manifested and experienced. Past "problem" modules have focused on Aboriginal issues, environmental challenges, and demographic change, each preceded by general lectures on relevant aspects of the physical, historical, economic, and social geography of Canada. We use the standard Canadian regional geography textbook, Bone's *The regional geography of Canada*, mainly as a primer on the regions for each group, supplemented by other readings that introduce the general research problem.

To foster the benefits of team-based learning, considerable class time is devoted to team activities, including research meetings, feedback sessions, and sharing sessions. This inevitably constrains the amount of content and the number of issues and concepts that could be addressed in the course. Nevertheless, the class time devoted to team activities and classroom engagement enhances the role of the students themselves and directors of their learning, and reduces their reliance on the instructor as the "sage on the stage." It also emphasizes the relationships amongst the students themselves, putting them into teamwork settings that more closely resemble many workplace and other collaborative environments rather than the individually based effort and evaluation of most university instruction.

My initial experiences have been mostly positive: the goals of promoting student engagement and even empowerment in the classroom have been largely met, in spite of initial student reluctance and uncertainly about this model. Students learned to work together (and not just with their friends) and collaborate to produce research-based reports for evaluation and exchange—important skills they need for upper-year courses and life beyond. Some students reported they understood key content and concepts better because of the interactions they had with fellow students, and that their retention of the material was enhanced through the process of generating and analyzing it. The classroom was often a hive of discussion and interaction —often times, I floated around group tables or facilitated class discussions more as a resource person rather than being the focus of student attention.

Nevertheless, there remain challenges in the team/problem-based learning format. The benefits of collaboration noted above are sometimes offset by the well-known challenges of group dynamics, the "free-rider" problem, and pre-existing negative perceptions of "group work." My sense is that many students are deeply conditioned to "transmission" model learning, whether in secondary school or university courses, and may be resistant to the very different demands and dynamics of team/problem-based learning. Contemporary students often find themselves strongly time constrained, juggling classes, paid work, and extra-curricular activities, making collaboration outside of class time (for instance, to prepare reports) difficult. My courses use online learning technologies to facilitate asynchronous group communication and collaboration, but ironically, students have tended to abandon these in favour of Facebook and other social media systems (which do not always overcome the time crunch or communication problems).

From my own perspective, I have grown somewhat less cavalier about discarding content in favour of process. I find many students arrive in class with an alarmingly low level of general knowledge about Canadian geography and current events, which hampers them in developing their advanced regional expertise and discussing geographical problems in class. Most of the students in my classes are Newfoundlanders or other Atlantic Canadians (although this generalization is underlain by many other kinds of diversity). Many do bring personal or

family experience of other parts of Canada, but many basic aspects of Canadian history and geography are not well known. For instance, general knowledge of Aboriginal geographies or environmental issues in other parts of Canada is very slight. While my approach provides students some knowledge of key issues and facts (about their region, especially), I remain uncertain about how much general understanding of *Canadian* geography is fostered through their interchanges. To address these knowledge gaps, I use lectures and readings to both inform and problematize the Canadian nation. In this sense, I have partially returned to my role (responsibility?) in determining relevant or core knowledge, while still hoping that students, through their research, engage in their own discovery of key issues and questions in Canadian geography.

In sum, using the team- and problem-based learning model opens up fruitful avenues for individual and collective reflection on the "who, what, and why" of Canadian regional geography. In my experience, this format meets important goals of promoting student engagement and research skills, while fostering an understanding of "regional formation as a dynamic historical geographical process" (Pudup 1988, 380) and, indeed, questioning basic assumptions about Canada itself. While struggling to some extent with what might be considered deficits in knowledge and understanding, the problem-based approach also aims to build on and enhance students' capacities, as learners and as citizens of their classroom and country.

Decolonizing how we teach the Geography of Canada (Heather Castleden)

While I do not teach a Geography of Canada course per se, I do teach courses about the geographies of Canada. It is through my experiences in these courses that I approach this commentary, particularly my experiences co-teaching a field school on Indigenous Perspectives of Resource and Environmental Management. Wanting to be explicit about my positionality here, I note that I have "taught" this course as a white settler scholar-ally, thus I approached my role as a facilitator, bringing (mainly white) students to Indigenous communities to be with and learn from Indigenous teachers in formal, informal, and non-formal ways. In doing so, I was, quite literally, gob-smacked by the lack of awareness amongst our country's next generation of intellectuals regarding Canadian historical and contemporary Indigenous geographies of space and place. Somehow, throughout their entire secondary and post-secondary education (geographic in focus or otherwise), they had not been introduced to things like Historic Treaties, the Indian Act, forced relocation to Indian Reserves, Indian Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Comprehensive Land Claims (Modern Treaties), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or reclaiming Indigenous Toponymy. I should not have been too surprised, as other geographers have documented this ignorance (e.g., Godlewska et al. 2010). But these events have shaped and are ever-shaping Canadian geography. Thus, my position, so to speak, in any discussion on teaching the Geography of Canada is that it must include teaching "Indigenous Geographies of Canada" from pre-colonial to the (colonial) present.

As I and others (e.g., Godlewska and Smith 1994; Louis 2007; Powell 2008; Painter and Jeffrey 2009; Castleden et al. 2013) have pointed out, geography, as a discipline, is implicated in the colonial policies and practices that make up Canada as we know (read: "mainstream" know) it today. Whether it has been through the remapping of Indigenous geopolitical borders or the renaming of Indigenous places to reflect European ones to the creation of segregated spaces (Indian reserves) and spaces of "you will be stereotyped before treated here" (hospital emergency rooms), geography has played a role. Yet despite the power and influence of settler geographies in Canada, Indigenous geographies have socially, culturally, economically, politically, and physically inscribed this landscape for thousands of years and they continue to do so, albeit at the margins for the past 400+ years, at least until the recent past as we are starting to see a resurgence in this area. For example, in 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada came to a unanimous decision to uphold a First Nation's claim to Aboriginal land title (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*); this is the first time such a decision has been reached by the highest (colonial) court of the land. It is worth mention, however, that while title was recognized by our (colonial) judiciary system, it was only to a portion of the territory claimed in the case and a fraction of their original traditional territory. In any case, by excluding comprehensive coverage from the historic to the modern when it comes to

Indigenous geographies, when we teach and learn about the geography of Canada, whether by intention or design, we are complicit in supporting the (lack of) knowledge all Canadians need about our shared history as well as the (racist, derogatory, and stereotyping) attitudes that get perpetuated through the mainstream media and other forms of public discourse, not to mention the (settler) values that privilege a colonial ontology/epistemology.

So, how does a Geography of Canada course include Indigenous content? An uninspired approach might be to have a one-hour lecture somewhere in the course outline that covers some maps of where Indigenous peoples used to live (a.k.a. their traditional territory) and show (often forced) movement over time (due to famine, disease, economics, politics, policy [Indian Act]) to postage-stamp sized Indian Reserves (obviously this does not apply to Inuit or Metis, but similar forced relocations have taken place with them). From there, one might demonstrate the rural-to-urban migration, perhaps referencing population demographic trends and other "interesting" geographical facts about Indigenous peoples. A more stimulating and critical approach might be to weave Indigenous content and Indigenous perspectives (through guest speakers of Indigenous identity, films produced by Indigenous film-makers about Canada, readings written by Indigenous scholars on Canadian geography) into each and every lecture (and while we are envisioning an innovative approach to teaching this content, why not bring the lecture theatre to Indigenous spaces, specifically, on-the-land experiential education). Precedence has been set for doing so. What we see now, in many Geography Departments' curricula across Canadian postsecondary institutions, is an elective (emphasis on elective, not required) course here and there about Indigenous geographies. We are reaching some Canadians and this is good. But we can do better; we must do better.

In fact, some departments and institutions are doing better. For example, Lakehead University is making it mandatory that "a degree requirement of at least one 0.5 Full Course Equivalent course containing at least 50% (equivalent to 18 hours) of Indigenous knowledge and/or Aboriginal content" is mandatory for all academic units' undergraduate programs (Lakehead University n.d.). The University of Winnipeg has also just approved a requirement that all undergraduate students will be required to complete a course in Indigenous rights, traditions, histories, governance, and cultures (The University of Winnipeg Students Association n.d.). Given the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action with respect to "education for reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015), it can be anticipated that institutionalizing such requirements is not unreasonable.

And what do students taking a Geography of Canada need in terms of resources? They need access to Indigenous scholarship, which can take the form of knowledge generated from Indigenous academics but also—equally legitimate and relevant—knowledge generated from Elders, hereditary Chiefs, story-keepers, resource-users, respected leaders, grassroots activists, and more. The point is, Indigenous Knowledge is a verb not a noun, it is living and dynamic, it is best received in Indigenous spaces (e.g., land-based) under the "right" conditions (e.g., perhaps with an Elder present, Sacred Medicines present, or Ceremony before all else) at the "right" time (e.g., not when the salmon are running or when the berries are ripe or when . . . [you get the picture]) in a way that is not restricted to the classic institutional notion of a 90-minute lecture that ends abruptly when the bell rings (see Newhouse 2008).

Borrowing from Kobayashi and Peake's (2000, 392) comments about Whiteness, racism, and antiracist geography in the United States, the same applies in Canada: "Racialization is part of the normal, and normalized, landscape and needs to be analyzed as such". To their words, I would only add a colonial mentality is equally, if not more so, embedded in settler Canadian populations and our shared landscape; we must do more to overcome our own geography of ignorance. Teaching is one mechanism to do so, and as teachers we all have a responsibility to contribute to the process of decolonizing the academy. While movement-at-a-snail's-pace may be the norm at most academic institutions, it is no excuse for not pressing for innovation in all areas, including Indigenous pedagogy (i.e., content and delivery), to better understand the "geograph*ies* of Canada."

Taking space in the Geography of Canada classroom: Positionalities, pedagogies, politics (John Paul Catungal)

I had the pleasure and privilege of teaching Geography of Canada in Fall 2013, the last semester of my

PhD at the University of Toronto. The course regularly attracts a substantial number of mostly elective students (about 170 students when I was instructor). Despite the fact that the course is taught regularly, it does not have a regularly assigned faculty instructor; like many others before me, I taught the course as a sessional instructor.

My version of the course focused on geographies of nation building, particularly on the role of structural violence in the production of Canada as a nation. My decidedly politicized approach to the course sought to make several interventions, one of which was a move away from the traditional regional approach by organizing my course thematically to emphasize that geography is the study not just of places, but also of the spatiality of social and political processes such as nation-building.

Along with the introductory week "O Canada: the Nation as Idea/l" and the concluding week "Glorious and Free: Canada's Geographical Futures," the four major thematic sections of the course were:

1. "Our Home and Native Land": Canada as a White Settler Nation
2. "We See Thee Rise": Nature, Resource, Territory
3. "From Far and Wide": Geographies of Immigration and Multiculturalism
4. "We Stand on Guard": The Geopolitics of the Border, War and Peacekeeping

Informed by the anti-oppressive pedagogical interventions of scholars such as hooks (1994), Razack (1998), Dei (1993), and Munoz (2005), I centred anti-racist and anti-colonial approaches in designing my course. I emphasized, for example, how geographies of colonialism were foundational to Canadian nation building. In so doing, my course linked territorial expansion and resource extraction to the legal and material production of reserves, residential schools, and other sites of colonial violence—spatial processes that, I argued, were central to the very making of Canada as a nation. The second half of the course focused on racial geographies of migration and geopolitics, discussing, among other things, the role of racialized labour in territorial and economic expansion both historically (e.g., Asian labour migrants in railroad building and forestry) and at present (e.g., temporary migrant workers in caregiving and agriculture); the spatiality of border control; and Canadian international interventions through war and peacekeeping.

In emphasizing these themes, my course sought to trouble what I call the "received curriculum" of Canada as a nation. A curriculum of "exaltation" (Thobani 2007), this dominant and state sanctioned form of national narration contains, among other things, the following lessons: (i) that Canada was built by the English and the French as its two founding nations; (ii) that Canada is a space of multicultural hospitality for immigrants and people of colour, as is encoded in official multiculturalism; and (iii) that Canada is a force of good in the world, either as a peacekeeper or as an (apparently) more recently militarized intervener in world conflict (see also Razack 2002). These lessons circulate through many forms of public pedagogy, including elementary and secondary curricula, citizenship guides for new immigrants to Canada, and the mass media (e.g., televisualized "heritage minutes"). Rather than repeat these already dominant national narratives, my course engaged with their messaging in an attempt to highlight how they produce Canada as a certain kind of nation, emphasizing the erasures and errors that they strategically create in order for them to become legible and legitimate. For example, in one lecture, I used the redesigned Canadian passport—and its iconographies and geographies of colonial conquest, territorial expansion, and military prowess—to highlight the production of Canada as a socio-spatial idea/l, one that elevates particular national narratives, while downplaying or erasing others.

From the very beginning, I was forthcoming about the politics of the course, going as far as to note in the syllabus that "the role of violence in the making of Canada as a nation" was a central course theme. While I was prepared for pushback from administration, this did not materialize. Instead, I encountered some student resistance to how I approached the course—resistance that, I argue, needs to be understood not as individual failure or prejudice, but as a symptom of the broader institutionalization and public circulation of narratives of Canadian exceptionalism (Razack 2002; Thobani 2007).

This received curriculum of Canadian national narration was a heavy haunting presence in the Geography of Canada classroom, and my attempts to trouble this curriculum were met by some students with some degree of hostility and refusal. Some students, for example, noted that I "dwelled on colonialism a bit too much" and that we "spent an inordinate amount of time . . . on Canadian Aboriginal

issues, history, and theory." Another student noted that I "[overlooked] many other aspects of our great country." Such resistance to spotlighting colonial and racial violence suggests that what students bring to the classroom (in this case, patriotism and other political investments) can be a barrier to critical geographic approaches to a course like Geography of Canada.

Another reason for resistance has to do with assumptions that students bring to the course not only about what counts as Geography. While it was clear that some students were receptive to my critical approach, with one commenting that "[t]his is definitely a new way to look at geography, very interesting!," others had relatively inflexible ideas about what counts as Geography. One comment, for example, evinces this limited conception of the discipline: "Although this was a geography course, it certainly did not focus on the geography of the country. The instructor instead decided to talk about issues which he cared about more although I would not have said that they fit the course description." At first glance, this statement calls attention to students' preconceptions of Geography as a barrier to teaching geographies of Canada critically. There is, however, another possible reading, one that links the phrase "issues which he cared about" to my positionality, politics, and embodiment as a racialized instructor occupying classroom space. This reading is possible when comments about what geography ought to be are read against accusations of bias that were common in student evaluations (e.g., "one sided and biased," "one sole perspective"). This mirrors Spafford and colleagues' (2006, 5) finding that racialized faculty members are disproportionately labelled as "pedagogically 'biased'" by both colleagues and students. Given my multiple Geography degrees and the use of multiple academic and non-academic writings in the course (as opposed to one sole-authored textbook), I cannot help but read the dual evaluation of "not geography" and "biased" as a refusal to see anti-racist and anti-colonial approaches as legitimate geographical approaches, particularly when delivered by a racialized scholar-teacher such as myself. As such, what counts as "Geography" in the classroom is also, for geographers of colour, a question of who counts as a geographer.

My experiences in the Geography of Canada classroom suggest that competing positionalities and political investments produce the classroom as a racialized space of teaching and learning. After all, teaching, like research, is an embodied and situated practice. In Geography of Canada classrooms, as in others, content and style of teaching matter as much as who is in the classroom and what they bring to this space. Hence, while teaching spaces remain ripe for critical intervention (see Castleden above), it is equally important to recognize that the positionalities of instructors (and indeed of students) matter for how such critical approaches might be received and assessed.

Conclusion

For us, as geographers and educators, teaching the geographies of Canada—including and especially in formal Geography of Canada courses—is an opportunity, however constrained, to make various interventions in the production and politics of geographic knowledges. Each of the commentaries in this piece has taken up pedagogical, curricular, and/or political challenges related to teaching geographies of Canada, thus extending Ken Foote and Michael Solem's (2009) interventions on geographical education in the US context. Examining our individual experiences and practices allows us not only to collectively face our role in constructing and re/producing the nation in which we live through the decisions we make about course content, but also to reflect on the practices and politics that inform how we organize the spaces and relations of teaching and learning in our work as instructors. Several contributors to this paper emphasize the need for us, as instructors, to face the fact that geography's ties to colonialist, imperialist, and nation-building projects cannot be relegated to the past but are an active part of contemporary geopolitical practice, including in the classroom. Taken as a whole, then, this paper highlights how spaces of teaching and learning (including the classroom, the field school, and the representational spaces of textbooks) are political spaces for the circulation of (certain) geographical knowledges.

Through this article, we examine the ways in which we perform, challenge, and reinscribe geographies of Canada through our individual, disciplinary, and institutional practices. It also makes us question the processes that shape the classroom experience—cultural, economic, and political—and that affect our and our students' ability to engage

with the multiple geographies of Canada. As several contributors suggest, echoing Smith (2009) and MacNell et al. (2015), in the space of teaching and learning, positionality matters because it affects not only what is taught and how, but also how course content and pedagogical approaches might be received. In the classroom or the field school, positionality can affect whether something is considered legitimate course content or mere opinion, whether curriculum is seen as adhering to or contesting mainstream knowledges, or whether a literal body of knowledge can be seen as an expert. Moreover, several contributors suggest that it is crucial to recognize that spaces of teaching and learning are entangled with other spaces of knowledge (e.g., mass media, elementary and high schools, embodied experiences). This suggests that encounters in teaching and learning spaces are conditioned not only by what teachers and learners bring to the classroom (in terms of what they know, what they think they know, or what they don't know, for example), but also by the existence of norms that are enforced through technologies and practices of surveillance and disciplining (e.g., student and peer evaluations, institutional mission statements and teaching cultures, reviews of teaching material). Taken together, the commentaries that comprise this paper suggest that reflecting on teaching practices and experiences is productive not only for our continued development as individual educators, but also for broader collegial and disciplinary conversations about what "geography" is and how—i.e., through what practices—it circulates in and through spaces of teaching.

As post-secondary institutions continue to corporatize and neoliberalize and as the "academic precariat"—particularly job-insecure graduate students and contract faculty—continue to take on an ever increasing portion of undergraduate teaching (Bauder 2005; Dowling 2008), it is paramount more than ever to pay attention to the task of teaching as a crucial, if sometimes underappreciated, form of academic practice and a site for the production and social reproduction of geographical knowledge. Critical reflections such as those on offer in this paper provide important opportunities for us to take stock of the social, economic, political, and intellectual contexts within which we, as Canadian geographic scholars and educators, perform, produce, and provoke "geography" in the spaces of teaching and learning.

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