



Learning Journeys:

English Language Teachers and the Calls to Action

Simone Hengen

Head, English Language Programs (on sabbatical)

University of Regina

Simone.Hengen@uregina.ca

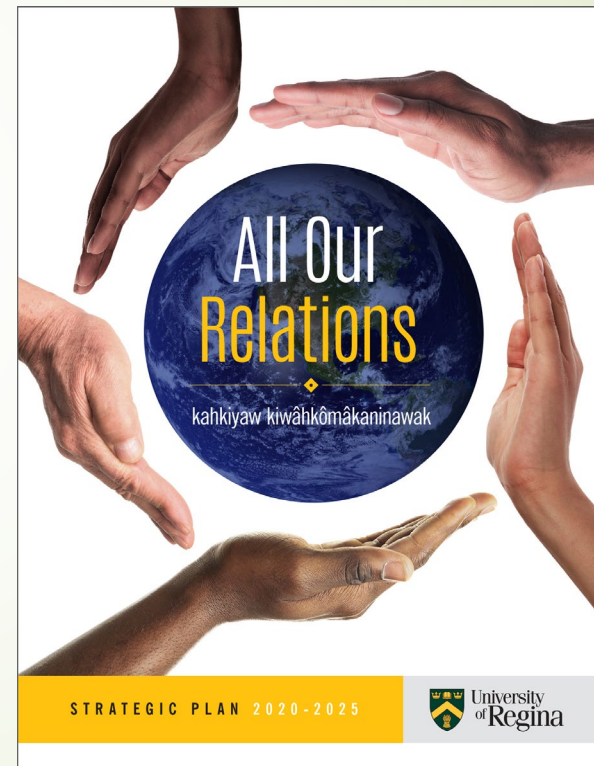
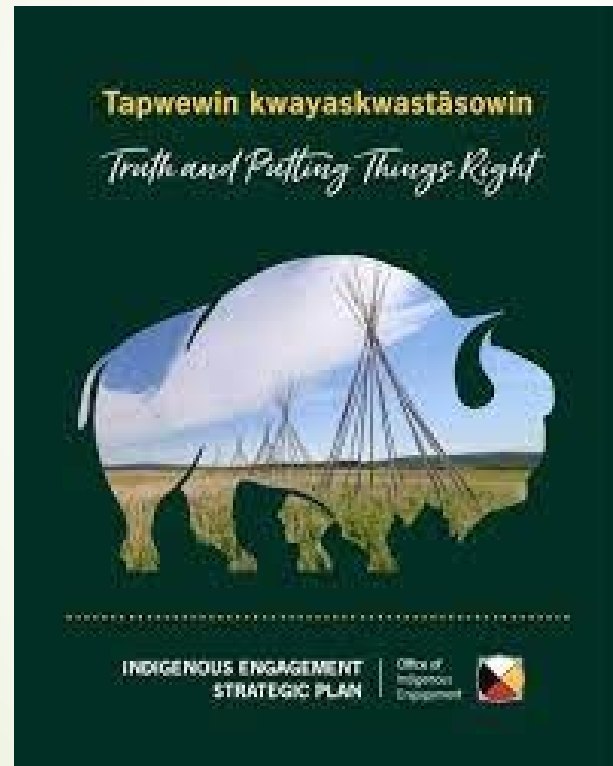
Definitions


- ▶ “Decolonizing education places more emphasis on the power relationships within education and serves to deconstruct past colonial systems of education and recreate new ones, usually based on equity and Indigenous principles” (Goulet, K., and Goulet, L. p. 11).
- ▶ “On the other hand, *indigenizing education* usually refers to the integration of Indigenous content, understandings, and process into the formal education system” (Goulet, K., and Goulet, L. p. 11).

This study explores EAP instructors' experiences decolonizing and indigenizing their teaching.



FIRST NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
OF CANADA






Exploring the responses of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action with Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- The study investigates EAP instructors' experiences related to the Calls to Action, including their knowledge of Treaties and residential schools, their approach to teaching about Treaties and residential schools in their EAP classes, and the impact that a learning intervention about Indigenous perspectives and histories might have on their teaching.



Three projected outcomes:



- 1) to discover how some EAP instructors are responding to the Calls to Action in their teaching and teaching identities
 - 2) to explore the impact of a PAR learning event on EAP instructor pedagogy
 - 3) to strengthen participants' commitment and capacity to respond to the Calls to Action in our classrooms and/or post-secondary institution's decolonization, indigenization and reconciliation initiatives.
- 



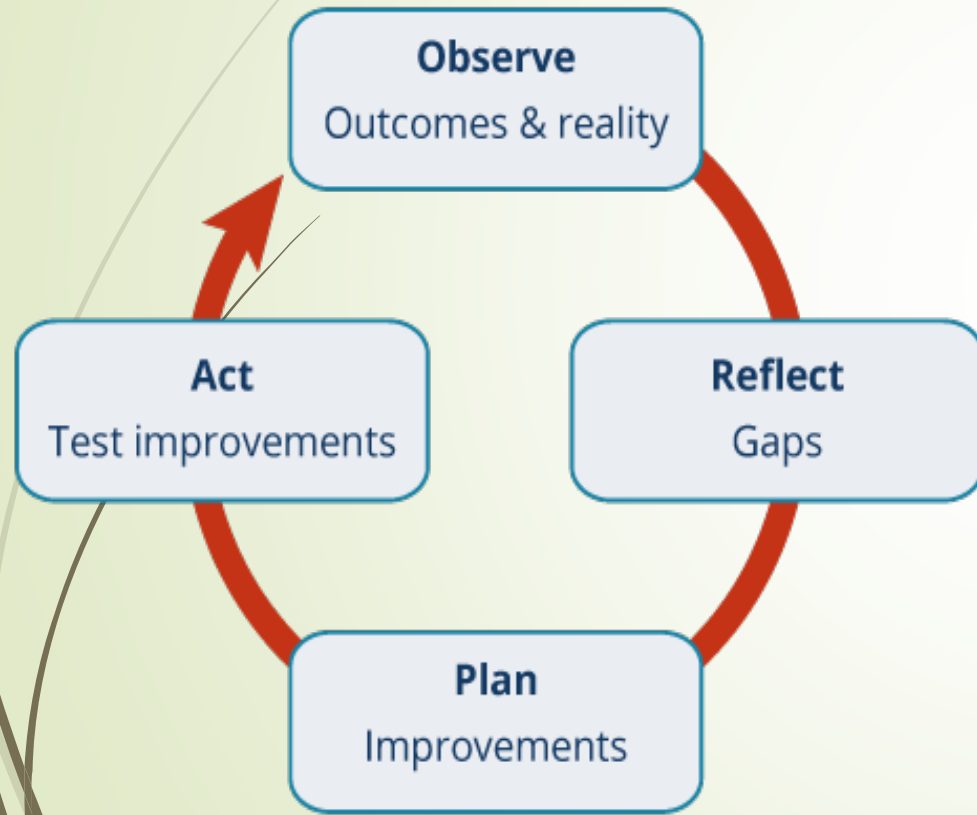
This study is situated within a growing field of research in EAP

- Marr and Martin, (2023) and Walsh Marr (2019) describe pedagogies of grammar that address relationships of power inherent in the structure and use of English.
- Sterzuk and Hengen (2019) use Call 93 to advocate for materials that disrupt settler dispositions in EAP students.
- Cole (2019), Kinzie (2023) and Thieme and Marr (2023) advocate for pedagogies of reconciliation and indigenization in ESL and EAP classrooms.
- Shin (2022) analyzes how current English language education is situated in a global network of inequities stemming from colonialism, and moving towards recognizing and dismantling those structures. (Shin, H., 2022)

- 
- 
- ▶ Today's presentation focuses on the data that addresses participants' approach to the Calls to Action - teaching about treaties and residential schools - and the impact of their learning event.

- 
- 
- 1) Describe the presentation and situate the study
 - 2) Describe the data collection and analysis methodologies
 - 3) Share initial findings

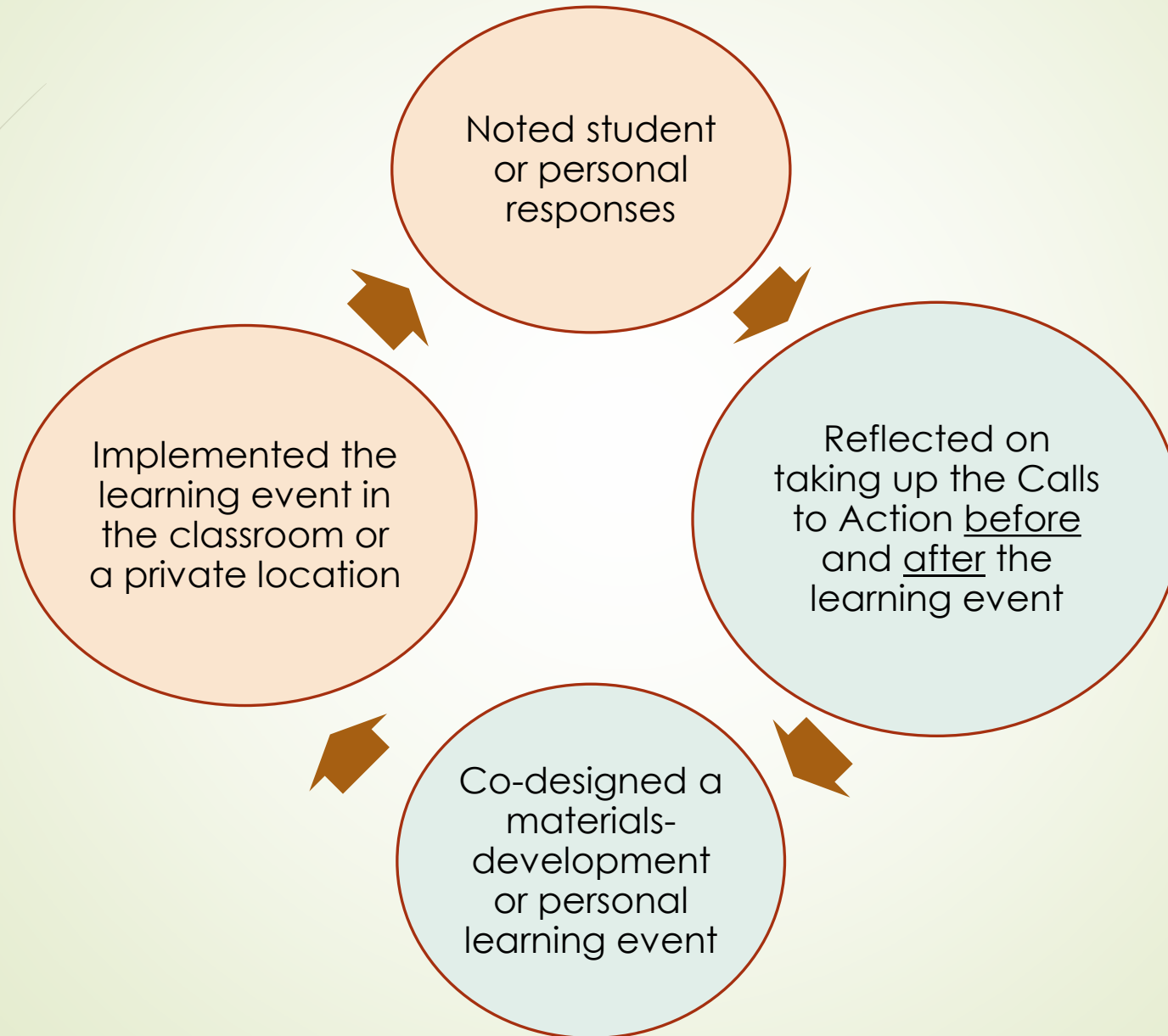
Data collection methodology: Participatory Action Research (PAR)



- PAR "is built on the premise that the community is knowledgeable about their social realities and are capable of articulating their own knowledge" (Canlas and Karpudewan, 2020).

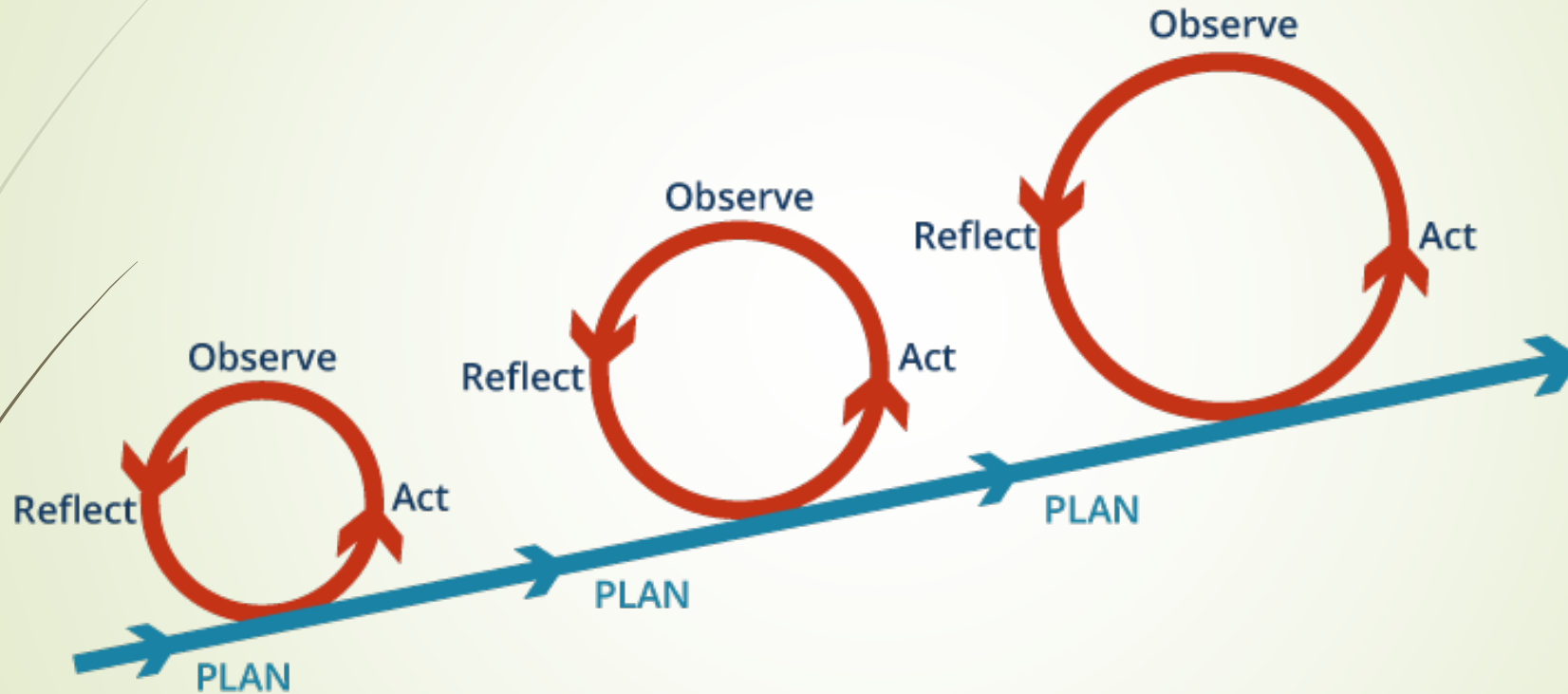
From: The Australian Institute of Family Studies; after Kemmis, et al, 2014)

Research steps



Setting a learning journey in motion

From <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/participatory-action-research> quoting Crane & Richardson, 2000, as cited by DHHS, 2012, p.10.





Critical elements in this methodology

- “practice-changing practice” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 3).
- *praxis* as described by Pennycook (2022):
Central to the version of criticality argued by Kubota and Miller (2017), following Freire (1970), is *praxis*, transforming the world through reflection and action, a refusal to deal with theory and practice as separate (p. 16).




Initial research design

Two sets of participants:

- Set 1: a cohort of 5-8 participants from across Canada sharing one learning event,
- Set 2: individuals who designed and implemented unique learning events.


Actual research

- Initial recruitment focused on the cohort, but there were no respondents. It became obvious that a cross-Canada cohort was impossible for this study.
- Ultimately I amended the recruitment strategy and welcomed only individual participants.

- 
- ▶ 10 participants
 - ▶ **Alissa, Kevin, Rachel, Vanessa, Elena, and Wei (pseudonyms)**
 - ▶ **Clayton, Farbod, Marie, Rebecca**

 - ▶ From
 - ▶ **Dish with One Spoon Territory**, This territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region (York University)
 - ▶ **Treaty 1**, traditional territories of Anishinaabe, Cree, Ojibwe-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis (University of Manitoba)
 - ▶ **Treaty 4**, traditional territories of the nêhiyāwak, Anihšīnābēk, Dakota, Lakota and Nakoda and homeland of *Métis/Michif nations* (University of Regina)
 - ▶ **Treaty 7**, traditional territories of members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the *Tsuu'tina* First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda, the *Métis* Nation of Alberta. (University of Calgary)

- 
- ▶ 21 interviews via Zoom over 6 months between March and August 2023
 - ▶ An initial interview with Alissa and Wei
 - ▶ One PAR cycle (two interviews) with Rachel, Vanessa, Wei, Clayton and Marie
 - ▶ Two PAR cycles (three interviews) with Farbod, Kevin, Rebecca, and Yuliya




Grounded Theory data analysis: Initial coding

- ▶ This data received initial coding following Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory methods (2014) in which the researcher remains "open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by reading the data" while beginning to make sense of the data (p. 114).



Initial coding: 4 themes

- ▶ Knowledge of the Calls to Action varied widely among participants.
- ▶ Support for decolonizing and indigenizing work was consistent among participants with varied response to teaching EAP students about treaties and residential schools
- ▶ Usefulness of PAR to enhance knowledge of treaties and residential schools, capacity to approach decolonizing and indigenizing pedagogies, capacity to advocate for further EAP-specific PD about the Calls to Action



Data that addresses participants' approach to teaching about treaties and residential schools and the impact of their learning event.

- ▶ In their initial interviews, three participants stated that they felt responsible for introducing the Calls to Action in their classrooms to enhance students' inclusion in their campus and social communities.



Marie articulated her opinion and situatedness clearly:

- ▶ “I'm called to action. My action is to bring my students to an understanding of where we are, help them to interpret what they hear in the news, what they see outside their homes. what they see on their way to class in the morning, and call them to to be a part of this reconciliation as international students. “
- ▶ “I am not a knowledge keeper. I'm not an elder. I am not teaching indigenous knowledge. I'm teaching **about** indigenous knowledge, ...I may not understand it completely. So we're journeying on this together.”




Alissa expressed a strong opinion that EAP students should learn about treaties and residential schools

➤ “I think it [teaching about treaties and residential schools] is an important responsibility and one that I have taken on myself in in some ways.”

“In order for [EAP students] to truly understand Canadian society, and some of the very important Calls to Action these days, the history of residential schools and the oppression of the First Nations people – it’s **very** important for them to understand.”

Rachel experienced many uncomfortable racializing responses from students when implementing the Calls to Action in her classroom, and is considering alternate ways to bring this content to her classroom.



Other participants expressed more hesitation to take up the Calls to Action in their EAP classrooms



In the initial interview, **Vanessa** expressed a disconnection and lack of understanding with the Calls to Action.

- ▶ But it's not in any of our textbooks, and we have certain obligations as teachers to meet the, like, the points in the textbook, so that we can deliver the product that we promised the university that we would certify people to... And so then what's my responsibility to teach about the treaties? It doesn't fit into the curriculum. How do I do it?


In the post-learning event interview they stated that they were still at odds “with the wording” of Call 93, but acknowledged that their learning event “connects to the Calls to Action.”

- ▶ I feel more confident. Like I, I was very uncertain. I remember when I ... the first time I talked to you I was just very uncertain about if there was a place for this, and if I could do this. And I felt like there wasn't institutional support. And I'm wrong. There's heaps of institutional support for this.



Clayton expressed hesitancy because of competing priorities in the course curriculum and the Calls to Action

- ▶ “Whatever the course is, whatever the learning outcomes are, ...that is my priority. That that's what I feel I owe to the students is to teach to those.”
- ▶ “On the other hand, I do think that language classrooms are a good place for exploring learning about indigenous people and histories. and I, I do feel that like, if yeah, I I do think ... even if we don't have explicit responsibility currently to teach that type of content or include that type of content..... I think we're beginning to realize that we do have a responsibility to include it.”
- ▶ “But I think we're getting to that point where we are just about ready or able to acknowledge that we have a responsibility in this area.”



Some participants learned about the Calls to Action through the research

- ▶ In the first interview, **Kevin** wondered what the Calls to Action are.
- ▶ After our initial interview, Kevin wrote : “Although I already had knowledge about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the specific details outlined in the Calls to Action were particularly enlightening.”

“I now would like to read more, learn more, and find useful information for my students and include it in the curriculum, yeah.”




Rebecca expressed concern for her students' emotional wellbeing while learning about treaties and residential schools:

- ▶ I wouldn't want any student in my class to feel so uncomfortable or so overwhelmed by something. I don't know my students well enough, or their histories or their context. I wouldn't want to really upset anybody. But I do think there's room for the awareness.

In a post-learning event interview, she stated that she was not ready to teach about treaties and residential schools:

- ▶ It's really about learning for myself right now. Like I don't, I don't feel like I'm, I'm any kind of expert or any kind of authority on bringing in-depth things into the classroom with students. And, and I think sometimes it's not always appropriate.



Other participants expressed a need to the messiness of decolonizing learning

Rachel questioned teaching about treaties and residential schools in her first interview:

➤ “I have ideas of how we could, but I’m not sure if we should.”

Rachel in the post- learning event interview stated that she was not ready to develop materials teaching about treaties and residential schools:

➤ “All those things [thoughts and feelings activated by her learning event] are sort of swirling. Swirling in my mind in terms of how I might, you know, answer some of the calls to action by incorporating this knowledge”



Five participants advocated for more learning opportunities with administrators and faculty

Farbod:


- “So this project. you know, has been very important because it has reignited the whole flame in me.

Elena:

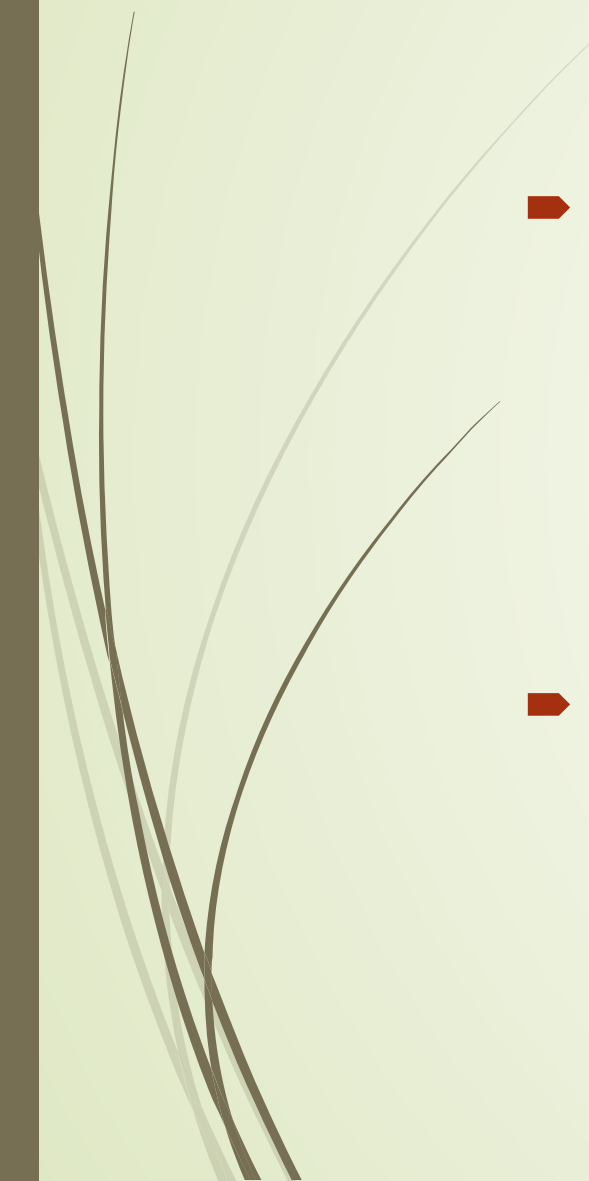
- “I feel more confident now, because well, I explored this a little bit with you, and so you kinda prompted me to look into different things, and encouraged me to look into different things, and related to raising awareness about the indigenous population and issues and decolonization, and all of that as an instructor.”

Kevin:

- “It could be a good idea to arrange a committee for curriculum development specifically on the topics that we require – think we need to to add to the curriculum.”




Considerations: EAP Instructors responding to the Calls to Action

- ▶ The juxtaposition between the significance of the Calls to Action in post-secondary strategic/indigenizing plans and the uneven knowledge about and hesitancy to take up the Calls to Action expressed in the data raises important questions about EAP instructors' capacity to engage in reconciliation work.
 - ▶ EAP instructors need more experiences with the TRC and the Calls to Action to belong to this significant post-secondary initiative and consider how the Calls to Action might inform their teaching identities and their classrooms, and to.
- 



Considerations: PAR methodology

- ▶ PAR is a useful framework to initiate conversations and learning events to decolonize and indigenize EAP classrooms.
 - ▶ Participants stated that through the PAR research, they increased their capacity to advocate for decolonizing and indigenizing learning opportunities.
- 



Recommendations for responding to the Calls to Action

For Educators

- Seek out meaningful learning events for your own reflection
- Embrace “the swirling” that comes from a decolonizing journey
- Advocate for more PD; refer to your institution’s strategic and indigenization plans
- Create learning experiences in your classroom that work with your capacity

For Administrators

- Bring PD about the TRC and the Calls to Action to your faculty and staff
- Encourage the learning journeys of your faculty and staff




If you have questions and/or further comments,
please do not hesitate to contact me at

Simone.Hengen@uregina.ca

Bibliography

- Cole, C. (2019). Towards a pedagogy for reconciliation-Indigenization: What it is and why it belongs in the ESL classroom. *Contact Magazine, August 2019*, 30–45.
- Goulet, K., & Goulet, L. (2015). *Teaching each other: Nehinuw concepts and Indigenous pedagogies*. UBC.
- Jefford, B. M. (2021). Possibilities in decolonizing English language learning. *CONTACT Magazine, August*, 48–60.
- Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research. *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*, 1–200. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2>
- Kinzie, S. (2023). Acknowledge the Past, Face the Present, Change the Future: Implementing Call to Action 93 in TESL Classrooms. *Critical Education, 14*(1), 72–97. <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186680>
- Land Acknowledgement*. (n.d.). N/D. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.yorku.ca/laps/land-acknowledgement/>
- MacDonald, J. (2017). The Margins as Third Space: EAP Teacher Professionalism in Canadian Universities. *TESL Canada Journal, 34*(1), 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v34i1.1258>
- Marr, J. W., & Martin, J. L. (2021). Pomp and Circumstances: From Research, in Practice, for Students. *Ikala, 26*(1), 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v26n01a03>
- Martin, J. L., & Marr, J. W. (2023). Framing the looking glass: Reflecting constellations of listening for inclusion. *Demystifying Critical Reflection: Improving Pedagogy and Practice with Legitimation Code Theory, October*, 189–206. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003177210-13>
- Miller, J. R. (1996). *Shingwauk's vision: A history of native residential schools*. University of Toronto Press.
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986*. University of Manitoba Press.



Mortenson, L. (2021). White TESOL instructors' engagement with social justice content in an EAP program: Teacher neutrality as a tool of white supremacy. *BC TEAL Journal*, 6(1), 106–131. <https://doi.org/10.14288/bctj.v6i1.422>

Office of Indigenous Engagement. (2023). *Truth and Putting Things Right: Indigenous Plan, Strategic*. https://www.uregina.ca/indigenous-engagement/assets/documents/digital_oie_strategic_plan.pdf

Shin, H. (2022). Decolonizing indigenous-newcomer relations in the teaching of English in education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 116(November), 102091. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.102091>

Territory Acknowledgement. (n.d.). Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://umanitoba.ca/current-students/first-year/um-commons/territory-acknowledgement>

Thieme, K., & Marr, J. W. (2023). First-Year International Students and the Language of Indigenous Studies. *College Composition and Communication*, 74(3), 522–550. <https://doi.org/10.58680/cc202332365>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015a). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action*. Retrieved May 3, 2017, from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015b). *Final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Vol. 1: Summary*. Lorimer.

University of Calgary. (2023). *Becoming Relatives: 2023 Update: Indigenous Strategy*. <https://www.ucalgary.ca/live-uc-ucalgary-site/sites/default/files/teams/136/23-OPV-366100-ii' taa' poh'to'p journey update-FINAL-web.pdf>

University of Regina. (2020). *All Our Relations: kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak: Strategic Plan 2020-2025*. <https://www.uregina.ca/strategic-plan/assets/docs/pdf/uofr-2020-2025-strategic-plan.pdf>

Walsh Marr, J. (2019). An English Language Teacher's Pedagogical Response to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2019(157), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20332>

Walsh Marr, J. (2021). The Promise and Precarity of Critical Pedagogy in English for Academic Purposes. *BC TEAL Journal*, 6(1), 132–141. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1328289&site=ehost-live%0Ahttps://doi.org/10.14288/bctj.v6i1.449>