



# The Narratives of an Indigenous Cree, a Brazilian, and a Canadian about Vulnerability, Privilege, and Responsibility in Anti-Racist Teacher Education

## *Narrativas de uma indígena Cree, uma brasileira e uma canadense sobre vulnerabilidade, privilégio e responsabilidade na formação antirracista de professores*

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article, the authors aim at presenting a lived experience and the meaning-making constructed by them as they participate in a simulation of the history of contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the country now named Canada and inquire into their stories within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Considering relational ethics, the teacher educators and researchers lived, told, retold, and relived the stories of their own experiences, co-composing stories of anti-racist teacher education, playfulness, inclusion, privilege, and responsibility, through the eyes of an Indigenous Cree, a Brazilian, and a Canadian woman, towards increasing understanding of decolonizing education.

**KEYWORDS:** anti-racist teacher education; Indigenous peoples; narrative inquiry; vulnerability; reconciliation.

**RESUMO:** Neste artigo, as autoras têm o objetivo de expor uma experiência vivida e a composição de sentidos construída por elas, ao participarem de uma simulação da história do contato entre europeus e povos indígenas no país hoje chamado de Canadá e investigarem suas histórias dentro do espaço tridimensional da pesquisa narrativa. Considerando a ética relacional, as formadoras de professores e pesquisadoras viveram, contaram, recontaram e reviveram as histórias de suas próprias experiências, co-compondo histórias de formação antirracista de professores, ludicidade, inclusão, privilégio e responsabilidade, a partir de seus olhares de indígena Cree, de brasileira e de canadense, rumo a uma compreensão mais profunda sobre a descolonização da educação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** formação antirracista de professores; povos indígenas; pesquisa narrativa; vulnerabilidade; reconciliação.

## 1 Introduction

In this paper, we draw on our narratives – Edie, Viviane, and Janet, three female teacher educators – to give a sense of our lives that brought us to the moment of participation in the Blanket Exercise<sup>1</sup> (KAIROS, 2017) and to inquire into our experiences during that simulation. During the first semester of 2017, we told the lived stories of our teaching careers and lives in Canada and in Brazil. The stories we share here express our personal practical knowledge (CLANDININ; CONNELLY, 1995) and help us to narratively understand how our teachers’ knowledge is interwoven with our teachers’ lives. “A teacher’s identity is understood as a unique embodiment of his/her stories to live by – stories shaped by the landscapes past and present in which s/he lives and works” (CLANDININ *et al.*, 2006, p. 112).

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<sup>1</sup> According to the KAIROS website, the Blanket Exercise is “a teaching tool to share the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada” (KAIROS, 2017). It is a simulation demonstrating the history of relationships between European settlers and Indigenous peoples in the country now known as Canada. The simulation begins with blankets spread out on the ground; these blankets represent Turtle Island. There are Indigenous artifacts on the blankets. Simulation participants represent / play the role of Indigenous peoples. They remove their shoes to walk around on the blankets, shaking hands with one another, and trading the artifacts. There are two people who play two other roles – the narrator, who guides the simulation, and the European, who folds up and removes blankets as soon as a blanket has no one standing on it, and often delivers bad news such as taking children to residential schools. While the participants are walking about and trading artifacts, the narrator hands out colored cards to some participants and gives many of them pieces of paper (scrolls) with text on them. As the simulation unfolds, the scrolls are read in order (as called on by the narrator), and the color of cards affects the fate of the participants.

The narrative inquiry term “stories to live by” (CONNELLY; CLANDININ, 1999) refers to a narrative, experiential conceptualization of identity. As mentioned by Clandinin (2013), thinking with stories is primarily a relational way of thinking of the stories that we and co-participants (or co-authors) are always in the midst of. It is in the meaning-making through negotiated meaning that we can narratively understand who we are and who we are becoming.

The Blanket Exercise is a historical simulation of colonialism and attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada. It was designed by a Canadian ecumenical organization, KAIROS, to teach white settler Canadians of historical atrocities against and the resilience of Indigenous peoples. A portion of the script is included as an appendix. The script is copyrighted to KAIROS and is also available on the KAIROS website, which also includes videos, photographs, and other material for whomever is interested in it. The three participants are Edie, an Indigenous Cree; Viviane, a Brazilian (a visitor to Canada but from a colonized country); and Janet, a white settler in Canada, all post-secondary teachers. As we three worked together and participated in the Blanket Exercise, the effects of the Blanket Exercise on our understandings of our identities became a wonder to be explored.

It is important to consider the relational aspect of narrative inquiry, the ontological commitment between researchers and participants, and the study of Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 44), who explain that narrative inquiry

begins with an ontology of experience. From this conception of reality as relational, temporal, and continuous, it arrives at a conception of how that reality can be known. This ontology is fundamentally different from that of a critical realist. The critical realist can admit the existence of an infinite variety of private impressions, personal significances, and personal meanings. However, she reserves the term reality for something beyond our immediate experience that structures everyone’s experience similarly. Following Dewey, the narrative inquirer takes the sphere of immediate human experience as the first and most fundamental reality we have. Building on Dewey, the narrative inquirer focuses on the way the relational, temporal, and continuous features of a pragmatic ontology of experience can manifest in narrative form, not just in retrospective representations of human experience but also in the lived immediacy of that experience.

Because of that narrative understanding, we co-composed our narratives and our lives. Our relationship was based on mutual interests as teacher educators and researchers, and what brought us together was our willingness to learn about how each of our experiences shaped our stories of the Blanket Exercise as we lived it in January 2017, and what stories we lived and told, after living this experience, in the professional knowledge landscapes of the institutions where we work, stories which shape who we are and are becoming.

Relationship is the heart of narrative inquiry, and we will therefore highlight the relational aspect of this study, choosing carefully what and how to tell the stories lived by us. Edie is an Indigenous Cree woman and was teaching the Cree language and anti-racist education at the University of Saskatchewan. Viviane is a Brazilian woman and is a language teacher educator at the Federal University of Catalão. Janet is a white Canadian, who teaches anti-racist education at the University of Saskatchewan.

After we carried out the Blanket Exercise together, we realized that each of us brought a unique perspective to the experience, leading us to conversations to understand more about our stories to live by as teachers. Our research puzzle<sup>2</sup> was shaped and reshaped as we tried to narratively understand the spaces for learning about colonization and education, and to understand the stories of who we are and who we are becoming in our relationship, since initially meeting to perform the Blanket Exercise.

To help us to develop this narrative inquiry, we composed field texts (data) derived from: narrative accounts from each of us, field notes, researcher journals, photographs, the scrolls and script of the Blanket Exercise, the material available on the KAIROS website, and e-mail conversations co-composed over two years. To move from the field texts that we have composed for this final research text, we composed interim research texts, drawing our attention to moments and places of tensions and moments when the stories were being shifted.

We wrote interim research texts by using different tools, such as word images or poems, to capture the characters in our stories in an essential

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<sup>2</sup> “Framing a research puzzle is part of the process of thinking narratively as well as something that is central to the research design process”, said Clandinin (2013, p. 42). Narrative inquirers compose a research study around a particular wonder and frame a research puzzle rather than research questions, with “a sense of a search, a ‘re-search’, a searching again” (CLANDININ, CONNELLY, 2000, p. 124).

manner – Edie, Viviane, and Janet – since we see word images like a photograph of the words. As Pinnegar (2006, p. 178) explains, “the word images capture layers of text and chapters and cases in a way that retain the complexity and nuance but make these characters easily and immediately accessible for analysis and understanding.” Representing multiple voices and signatures in interim and in this final research text is complex, once co-composition became central. With Mello (2007, p. 219), we understand that “multiple aesthetic perspectives provided by arts-based/informed narrative inquiries can promote space for empowerment, construction of knowledge, and inclusion”, and we see the word images and the poems we wrote as those multiple aesthetic perspectives. The author also says that “by considering the existence of different discourses, it opens up doors through which we realize that there are other contexts to be studied or at least other ways of looking at the world”. Clandinin (2013, p. 206) observes that

as narrative inquirers coauthor final research texts [...], the intensity and difficulties of honoring and respecting participants’ and researchers’ experiences become more intense. The research texts of narrative inquiries are always filled with detail, rich, temporally unfolding, narrative accounts as they represent the lived and told experiences of participants and researchers as they engaged together during the inquiry. In order to find ways to honor the storied lives of both researchers and participants, we are challenged to find forms that allow to do this.

Following Mello *et al.* (2016, p. 567), we understand that “tensions draw our attention to the inquiry edges where we can learn most by staying awake to the bumping places, to places where we feel the dissonance, the uncertainty, the sense that something is not quite right, the places that call us to ask ourselves, what is happening here?” Thus, we retold the stories, attending to how our stories were interrupted or shifted, discussing, reflecting, wondering, and writing with hope and imagination constantly considering our research puzzle and audience. It is important to highlight that we have based our work on findings from Ely *et al.* (2005) as regards the exploration of writing and meaning-making, while reflecting on our puzzle.

Stories to live by are the stories people live and tell. “Stories to live by are threaded by plotlines shaped by teachers’ personal practical knowledge and the landscapes on which they live. Teacher’s stories to live by offer possibilities for change through retelling and reliving stories”

(CLANDININ *et al.*, 2006, p. 9). When teachers relive their stories, they imagine themselves in new ways and begin to change their practices, change the way they live in the world. However, not all teachers relive their stories, and some do not consider how their stories shape them in the world. By taking up narrative inquiry, teachers are provoked to consider their stories as they affect and are affected by identity. Thus, through reliving the stories, they can change their practices.

Considering the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (CLANDININ; CONNELLY, 2000), and the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality, and place – which specify dimensions of narrative inquiry spaces (to be explained), we could identify some narrative threads which interwove the stories we live and tell about the professional knowledge landscapes in which we live and work in order to co-compose a relational research text.

Attentive to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of sociality, temporality, and place, we wrote narrative accounts so as to represent who we are and are becoming as teacher educators, with a focus on the simulation (the Blanket Exercise) we lived in Canada. Those narrative accounts allowed us to give a representation of the unfolding of our lives, “as they became visible in those times and places where our stories intersected and were shared” (CLANDININ, 2013, p. 132). We then looked across the three individual narrative accounts, interested in what we saw as resonances that reverberated across accounts. We discerned three resonant threads across the narrative accounts: the Blanket Exercise as a space of Lugone’s (1987) concept of playfulness; inclusion and belonging in teaching education; and privilege and responsibility.

In this paper, we first present the theoretical framework of narrative inquiry, showing how this way of living research supported our development as anti-racist post-secondary teachers; we next present each of our stories – how they shaped and were shaped by the experiences in the Blanket Exercise and through the narrative inquiry. Lastly, in the discussion (when we unpack the narratives of our lived experiences and retell the stories), we explore more deeply how playfulness, inclusion and belonging, and privilege and responsibility, shaped our stories to live by as post-secondary teachers and helped us to understand who we are and are becoming within the landscapes in which we live and work.

## 2 Theoretical Frameworks: Experience and Identity in Narrative Inquiry

Our research is a narrative inquiry into our stories to live by regarding the Blanket Exercise simulation – a Cree, a Brazilian, and a Canadian Settler’s perspectives for Education, all of which is grounded on a narrative view of experience. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) observe, narrative inquiry is a way to study experience as both phenomenon under study and methodology. Those authors base their work on Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience, developing a narrative view of experience, considering that people live storied lives on storied landscapes, so experience is conceptualized as a storied phenomenon.

It is important to differentiate narrative analysis from analysis of narratives (POLKINGHORNE, 1995). According to Polkinghorne, narrative inquiry is a kind of qualitative research design in which stories are used to describe the experiences humans live. Based on the two types of knowledge Bruner (1986) presents, the paradigmatic and the narrative, Polkinghorne (1995) speaks of two different kinds of narrative inquiry (sometimes called narrative research): one, the paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry, “gathers stories for its data and uses paradigmatic analytic procedures to produce taxonomies and categories out of the common elements across the database” (p. 5) and is based on analysis of narratives. The other, which we follow here, is the narrative-type narrative inquiry, which “gathers events and happenings as its data and uses narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories” (p. 5). This one works through narrative analysis. Pinnegar (2006, p. 176) further clarified the difference regarding paradigmatic and narrative inquiries:

[some] look at it as a metaphor of human action and interaction that can be used to organize research findings, understand institutions, or as strategy for psychotherapy. Others look to narrative as data that can be mined, numbered, and charted to reveal and account for pathways and processes of human development about which researchers can assert certainty (paradigmatic). Still others name it as a kind of qualitative methodology for exploring human lives and interactions (narrative).

When we use narrative as both method and phenomenon, we align with the narrative type of cognition and go beyond the elements of narrative, such as the plot, characters, and context, to relate other conceptualizations

proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), such as secret, sacred, and cover stories; teacher knowledge landscapes; three-dimensional inquiry space; bumping stories; voice and signature, among others.

Clandinin and Murphy (2009) noted, “[t]hree features of a Deweyan ontology of experience are well suited for framing narrative research: emphasis on the social dimension of inquiry, temporality of knowledge generation, and continuity that is not merely perceptual but ontological” (p. 599). As narrative inquirers, our work is based on a Deweyan ontology, which is potentially constructed or transformed by the narratives of lived experiences. Thus, we were drawn to the ontological (as well as epistemological) commitments of narrative inquiry that attend to the relational, ethical, contextual, and temporal unfolding of lives.

When we think narratively, we consider the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space which was conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 50) – “with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along the third”, through looking inward and outward (sociality), backward and forward (temporality) while also attending to place or a sequence of places. Clandinin and Rosiek write that

the narrative view of experience within narrative inquiry is not only on individuals’ experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. Narrative inquirers study the individual’s experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing and interpreting texts. (2007, p. 42-43).

To understand the teacher educators’ stories to live by working with languages and anti-racism education, and the spaces to learn about colonization and post-colonial perspectives, we considered Lugones’ (1987) concept of “playfulness”, which is explained in the following way: “Playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight” (1987, p. 17). Lugones (1987, p. 4) noted that one can world-travel with loving or with arrogant perception, of which the latter is “the failure to identify with persons that one views arrogantly or has come to see



as products of arrogant perception.” We understand that we can only reflect about difference if we world-travel with loving perception.

Rosiek (2018, p. 352) wrote of the way religious community and the Western academy function “to erase and invalidate other traditions of knowledge”. Rosiek also observed that when we are “open to profound unresolvable mysteries of existence”, we are able to listen “to difference and be open to radically new possibilities.” The philosophical mysteries that persisted across generations were not problems to be solved, but gifts that, when pondered, prevented us from closing our minds entirely around this or that conception of who we are and could be (ROSIEK, 2018, p. 352, 353).

In the following sections, we share the narratives of our lived experiences. After telling the stories, we retell them, co-composing meaning from the lived experiences, considering our research puzzle, which is to narratively understand who we are becoming in relation to each other when our lives were interwoven from a meeting during the Blanket Exercise in 2017, considering our stories of teacher education in Canada and Brazil.

### **3 Edie’s Story: Embarking on an Often Difficult and Painful Healing Journey**

*Nibithaw iskwim ōma nitha. I am a Woodland Cree Indigenous woman, born and raised in Northern Saskatchewan, Canada. I left the reserve when I was a young mother because there was too much hardship and shame associated with reserve life and being Indigenous in one’s home town. The settlers that moved to my Northern community dominated and owned everything, including restaurants, hotels, banks, stores, gas stations, governments, etc. Although the Indigenous population was much larger than the settler population, white settlers owned everything. Indigenous people who had lived on the land since time immemorial were poverty-stricken and underprivileged in their homeland. Alcohol abuse and lateral violence were common occurrences on the reserve and in the town. Many young people got caught up in alcoholism at an early age and young girls ended up pregnant or being in abusive relationships. I enjoyed most of my childhood living on the land when my father trapped furs, but coming back to live on the reserve where alcohol started to take over the lives of many Indigenous people was difficult. In a few short years this beautiful place where Indigenous peoples had once enjoyed living and shared what they had with each other had become hostile to the original inhabitants, especially the women. Many white settlers came to Northern Saskatchewan to profit from mining and from extracting rich resources from the land. While White*

*settlers were getting rich from the land, the Indigenous people lived in poverty and run-down shacks, hence my poem, “iskonikan”. In Cree, iskonikan means left-over land, land nobody wants. “iskonikanibk” is the locative form of “iskonikan”:*

*iskonikan*

*iskonikan land nobody wanted, left-over land  
iskonikanibk where I was raised, where I had fun  
iskonikanibk what I miss when I am away  
iskonikan what city folks see when they see me.  
iskonikanibk what I sometimes miss,  
washboard roads, children playing, run-down shacks,  
rez folks walking, smiling shyly strolling by.*

*iskonikan land nobody wanted, left-over land  
iskonikanibk where my parents lived, where I felt at home  
iskonikanibk where my heart belongs  
iskonikan what people see when they see me.  
iskonikanibk is family and friends,  
big potholes, flying dust, speaking Cree,  
dogs roaming freely, children laughing as they play.*

*iskonikan land set aside for use of Indians  
iskonikanibk on land I will never own  
iskonikanibk my rural ghetto and retreat  
iskonikan governed by the Indian Act.  
iskonikanibk is oppression and colonization,  
unemployment, water advisory, black mold,*

*devastation of land, old and young passing away.  
iskonikanibk where I was raised, where I had fun  
iskonikanibk what I miss when I am away  
iskonikan what city folks see when they see me.*

(Interim research text – Edie’s poem, June, 2017).

Edie told us that being an Indigenous female in Saskatchewan is difficult and dangerous for many reasons. Indigenous people are targets for violence, racism, abduction, murder, rape, exploitation, and so on. When Edie was a young girl, a young woman from her First Nation went missing and was never found or heard from again. The Native Women’s Association of Canada (2017) reported that in Saskatchewan 59% of females who are missing or murdered are of Aboriginal ancestry. Indigenous men are victims

of violence and often face death at an early age. The injustices against Indigenous people have escalated and continue to this very day.

At school, Edie often felt out of place and inferior to non-Indigenous students and teachers even though they outnumbered them. School was where her voice was ignored and stifled, and Edie became invisible. She used to think that if her skin color were whiter, she might have been more accepted and liked by her teachers. The Indigenous kids with fair skin and good looks were treated better, at least in Edie's eyes. English was her second language so oftentimes she would not understand what was asked of her, which made her look stupid. All the teachers and staff were non-Indigenous and did not know or acknowledge the children's Cree language. *None of us ever learned about Indigenous people or our history in schools* – Edie remembers. The history and stories of Indigenous people were left out and the negative stereotypes were what most people learned about Indigenous peoples. It was also what Indigenous people learned about themselves, and lateral violence was the result.

Although Edie is older now, she is embarking on an often difficult and painful healing journey. It has taken a long time to finally acknowledge and understand what happened to her people and why she always felt “less than”. Even though she never attended residential school,<sup>3</sup> the painful legacy of residential school has long-term effects that continue to this day. Edie's mother did not acquire nurturing skills in residential school. She was an angry woman who took her pain and frustration out on her children and grandchildren. Her mother's low self-esteem, anger, pain, and shame were constant reminders that their children were inferior somehow. Part of Edie's healing journey has been to acknowledge and accept her upbringing and forgive her mother for her anger. Edie now realizes that the anger was not her mother's fault. It was caused by the trauma she experienced at residential school. The plan to assimilate and civilize Indigenous peoples had long-lasting impacts on family dynamics. Another part of Edie's healing is to write about it, feel the pain, and to let it go through prayer, tears, and forgiveness.

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<sup>3</sup> Children were kidnapped from their families, forcefully removed, and taken to residential schools, where they stayed for ten months of the year, isolated from their families, beaten for speaking their language, not allowed to practice their spirituality, and many were sexually as well as physically abused. They lived in crowded dorms, were brutally punished, given poor quality food, and thus many children died. As well, some died trying to escape. The number of deaths is unknown.

Eddie's late parents married shortly after her mother finished grade 8 at residential school. Her parents both completed grade 8 at the All Saints Residential School, it was only as far as the Indigenous people were allowed to go. It has taken her a long time to read about the residential school era but when she did, she felt the pain that her parents and relatives must have gone through. Eddie cannot imagine her children being taken away from her for months at a time.

When Eddie first participated in the Blanket Exercise, she did not know the other participants and they were mostly non-Indigenous international students. She was not engaged in the activity and distanced herself from the other participants, and she felt singled out because there were only two Indigenous people.

The second time she participated in the exercise was different, mainly because the other participants were her students and they were all Indigenous to Treaty 6 Cree territory. Janet, a colleague, introduced Eddie to Viviane, a Ph.D. student from Brazil. Eddie asked Janet and Viviane if they could do the Blanket Exercise with her group of ITEP<sup>4</sup> students and on March 6, 2017, they facilitated the Blanket Exercise. Eddie says that she was a bit nervous at first because she was unsure how the students would react. She played the part of the narrator, which was nerve-racking because she did not want the students to know that reading the script earlier had brought tears to her eyes. Eddie was determined not to show her real emotions while reading the script. If she was to show her real emotions, she would cry, and if she did cry, she might not be able to stop. Residential school, land, illness, injustice, and missing people are triggers that cause strong emotions to surface.

The deeper they got into the script, the more powerful it became. At first the students were laughing and fooling around, and then the students started to get quiet as the reality of the shrinking land and shrinking population started to sink in. As everyone read parts of their script, and saw the blankets get smaller and start to disappear, history became more real. *Being a narrator in this activity was empowering and humbling at the same time* – said Eddie. She became more aware of what really happened on Turtle Island.<sup>5</sup> It was a history lesson that was not told when she went to school. Eddie felt

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<sup>4</sup> Indigenous Teacher Education Program is a program at the University of Saskatchewan that was designed to meet the needs of Indigenous people who wished to become teachers.

<sup>5</sup> Turtle Island is the name given to North America by many Indigenous groups.

her ancestors' pain and anguish when her parents, uncles, aunts, sister, and brother were taken to residential school. The historical trauma experienced by the Indigenous folks on Turtle Island became more real and she felt her mother's pain when she was taken to residential school at a young age. Edie felt pain for her people. She felt pain for her students. *I feel pain now as I write about the experience* – Edie unburdens.

*I am thankful that we did the Blanket Exercise because even though it was painful, it was also a chance to grow and heal. I am reminded of the Cheyenne teaching that says "Don't keep carrying something that is of no use to anyone." I plan to continue learning and writing about this experience but I also want to stop carrying the pain and instead work to help my people heal. Ninanāskomon. I am thankful.*

(Field text – Edie's narrative account, June, 2017).

Edie found, in her graduate studies, that there were many racist administrators in her graduate classes, but they denied it when confronted and were argumentative and did not recognize their privilege or racist belief system. It was frustrating to work with many of the graduate students because they did not understand systemic racism. The College of Education can do more by making it mandatory for all undergraduate and graduate students from every discipline to take an anti-racist education course. Besides that, a similar mandatory or recommended course should be made available to faculty and staff.

We understand that Edie's story can heal many, including the settlers. Her narrative can help them to learn why they have the benefits they do, and how to reconcile with the people who were robbed of life, history, respect, and land.

#### **4 Viviane's Narrative: Feeling Ashamed**

*I was fine, walking through the museum, staring at the beautiful paintings. Suddenly, I stopped in front of one: Apple Factory. A woman who was guiding us during the exposition started to explain about the residential schools in Canada, why some Indigenous people in Canada called Alex "an apple" and also she explained who was "the faceless girl", who appeared on many Alex Janvier paintings. I couldn't believe that girl had suffered so much. I couldn't believe her parents were waiting for her dead body inside a*

*cardboard box, at a train station, while she was sent to a different station,  
by a mistake...*

(Interim research text based on photographs, June, 2017).

Viviane's opening interim research text from the exhibition at the National Gallery in Ottawa demonstrated that it was shocking for her to learn about residential schools and the story of "the faceless girl", who was often painted by Alex Janvier, an Indigenous artist in Canada. The gallery in Ottawa was staging an exhibition of Janvier's work. At that time, Viviane was a Brazilian Ph.D. student in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. As part of the ELAP<sup>6</sup> scholarship, she spent one week in Ottawa, on a study tour, and there encountered the work of the artist Alex Janvier.

Upon returning to Saskatoon after the study tour, she was invited to facilitate a simulation about Indigenous rights and colonization in Canada – the Blanket Exercise. She participated twice. The first time, she played the role of the European settler. Before the simulation, Viviane rehearsed with Janet, who would be the narrator. She understood the script and felt confident, strong, and well prepared to do it the next day. However, in the beginning of the simulation, there was a difficult moment for her, a moment of tension. She heard the narrator's voice saying "before too long, there were more Europeans than Indigenous peoples. One reason for this was the diseases the Europeans brought with them: diseases such as smallpox, measles, and tuberculosis" (KAIROS, 2017). As Viviane listened to the narrator's voice, she felt the horror that Indigenous peoples must have felt as the diseases spread, making them helpless, killing so many. That was the first time she read something related to the spread of disease on purpose and the starvation of human life. Another important reference here is James Daschuk's (2013) book, *Clearing the Plains*, which documents Canadian government complicity in the tragedy, providing "a rich account of the political, ecological, and economic systems that have led to disparities between non-Indigenous Canadians and the Indigenous people" (BOATENG, 2016).

Viviane felt dizzy and nauseous when she heard that millions of Indigenous people had died, and that in some communities, nine out of ten

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<sup>6</sup> From November 2016 to March 2017, Viviane developed part of her Ph.D. research at the University of Saskatchewan, with a scholarship of the Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program (ELAP).

people had died. But she completely fell apart when she had to walk up to a girl who did not have a yellow or blue card (following the script), and had to hand her the folded blanket, reading aloud:

Blankets infected with the deadly smallpox virus were given or traded to the Indigenous people by military leaders such as Lord Jeffrey Amherst. You represent the many Indigenous people who died from small pox after having come into contact with such blankets. Please step off the blanket. (KAIROS, 2017).

After saying this and giving her the “infected” blanket, Viviane could not stop crying and for a moment she thought she would not be able to go on. But after many moments of tension, she could finally finish the simulation. Afterwards, all the participants sat in a circle and had a debriefing session, where they could share their reactions. Viviane was grateful for that opportunity, especially because she could learn about something that she had never been taught before. That experience was overwhelming. She reflected about Brazil and realized she knew not one Indigenous person! She felt ashamed but with hope to live a different life upon returning to Brazil.

To help us understand the negotiation Viviane was involved in, we explore some of those questions she asked herself. During the period she developed research in Canada, she kept journals about her life in Brazil and her life in Canada. All of these field texts were used to create the following word image, which can be used, in a narrative inquiry, “to evoke a more vivid rendering of the moment” (CLANDININ *et al.*, 2006, p. 99).

*When I was a teenager, I thought the “Bandeirantes” were heroes*

*I didn't know which fruits are typical from my country, I didn't recycle appropriately, I didn't consume local, I was not engaged in politics  
I don't know who my ancestors were, I struggle with my own identity, I hear stories of black, Indigenous, and European ancestors in my family  
I have no Indigenous classmate. No Indigenous teacher. No Indigenous student.  
And never realized it.*

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<sup>7</sup> The Bandeirantes (Portuguese pronunciation: [bãdej' rêt(j)is]) were 17th-century Portuguese settlers in Brazil and fortune hunters. This group mostly hailed from the São Paulo region. They led expeditions called bandeiras which penetrated the interior of Brazil. They aimed to capture and force Indigenous Americans into slavery, and to find gold, silver, and diamond mines.

*I'm ashamed*

*I'm a language teacher educator, I'm a mother, I'm a feminist, and I'm an  
LGBT ally*

*I'm an Indigenous ally, too*

*I want to read the world through other eyes*

*I have hope and I want to understand deeply about guilt and responsibility*

*The Meewasin Valley is my favorite place in Saskatoon*

*Apple factory*

*Father and son*

*Not my girl*

*The Temptations of Big Bear*

*I want to be a different person*

(Interim research text – Word image by Viviane, March, 2017).

As we read this word image based on Viviane's story of who she was and who she was becoming, which she told us during her studies in Saskatoon, we come to know that, for Viviane, it was important to acknowledge that she supported equal civil rights, gender equality, LGBT social movements, environmental concerns, engagement in politics and anti-racism education, even though she was not aware of it until she lived in Saskatchewan. It was in the relationship with Janet and Edie that she began to imagine possibilities of performing the Blanket Exercise, connected with her work of Teaching Education in Brazil, which followed approaches that consider difference, diversity and inclusion. We understand that the Blanket Exercise could be a space created so people could practice English, where "intelligibility and accommodation strategies were considered more important to proficiency than grammatical accuracy" (JORDÃO, 2016), seeing the world through the eyes of Indigenous peoples.

The Canadian version of the Blanket Exercise, with the scripts in English, could be the start point to build a Brazilian version, collaboratively. Viviane went back to Brazil and performed the Canadian version in two universities, once in English, for students of English, and three times in Portuguese. A quilombola<sup>8</sup> student, after participating in the simulation,

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<sup>8</sup> A quilombola (Portuguese pronunciation: [kilõ'bolɐ]) is a resident of a quilombo in Brazil. They are the descendants of African/Brazilian slaves who escaped from slave plantations that existed in Brazil until abolition in 1888.



asked to facilitate the Blanket Exercise in the quilombo<sup>9</sup> where she came from, which was located 600 km away from the university where Viviane worked. All those opportunities to relive the experience of the Blanket Exercise were spaces of learning about who Viviane was and who she was becoming on those different educational landscapes. She was living and telling stories of collaborative work, language learning, sharing emotions and talking about the past. At the schools where she worked, it was not easy to find spaces to talk and discuss about colonization. Furthermore, language teaching and learning is often conceived without critical approaches. As Jordão (2016, p. 194) noted,

When you ignore that these views on languages have been constructed by linguistics based on abstractions and overgeneralizations [...], you can easily fall on the trap of colonization by not being able to see languages also as open spaces for the construction of meanings, spaces that are simultaneously bound to and by distinct ideologies and liberating from these same ideologies.

Considering English teaching in Brazil, although there are many courses conceived following a critical perspective, Viviane encountered resistance when designing courses based in Freire's (2013) perspectives. The Blanket Exercise is thus a tool which teachers could add to the curriculum (as part of classes, events, teaching, extension, or research projects) so that teachers, administrators, parents, and students could find a space to learn, discuss and reflect on stories of colonization, truth, and reconciliation. Living that experience in Saskatchewan with two anti-racist educators is seen by Viviane as a chance to imagine new and different actions<sup>10</sup> to be taken with language teacher candidates.

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<sup>9</sup> A quilombo – Portuguese pronunciation: [ki'løbu] (from the Kimbundu word kilombo, which means campsite, slave hut) is a Brazilian hinterland settlement founded by people of African origin including the quilombolas. Most of the inhabitants of quilombos (called quilombolas) were escaped slaves.

<sup>10</sup> Actions like creating projects to welcome and include Indigenous students, teaching Portuguese as a second language, inquiring into the experiences of Indigenous researchers, performing the Blanket Exercise in public schools in Brazil, creating a reading club of Indigenous personalities, and inviting Indigenous writers to give presentations, for example.

## 5 Janet's Narrative: Unsettling the White Settler

*I am a white settler. I have been unsettled by that for most of my life. My ancestors came to Canada from Europe, and this, the country where I was born, is the only place where I feel at home. I cannot return to the mix of different countries that my ancestors came from because there are many, and because they did not want us then and likely still don't want us. This is my home.*

(Field text – Janet's narrative account, June, 2017).

To deal with the fact that she felt unsettled, Janet decided to teach towards anti-oppression, to attempt to rectify the ills that her ancestors imposed upon the people who lived in Canada – the Indigenous peoples there had lived with one another in relative peace and in humility with the environment. They had learned ways to act, to be, that sustained the living systems, and to value the land from which their gifts for life came. They did not practice extraction policies; they did not take more than they needed; they offered thanks when they took food or materials, for their own sustenance, from the land. European settlers changed all that.

As a teacher in Canada's formal education system, Janet wanted to address Indigenous issues. However, she had heard several Indigenous speakers who noted that white people were not entitled to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples. Thus, when she wanted to address what it meant to have an Indigenous world view, or when she felt that her students needed to know more of the history of oppression that white settlers had written into laws and practices, Janet would call on a First Nation or Métis<sup>11</sup> friend to teach this material. One day, she says, she was given one of those gentle intellectual slaps that she feels fortunate to get from Indigenous friends and colleagues. This colleague asked her why she was always asking her to do this work? Surely Janet had learned, by then, how to do this herself? Oppressed people should not be oppressed AND expected to teach white people about the oppression. Janet should teach this material herself.

Janet told us that her family came to Canada from Europe as latecomers, in the 1700's – late in the history of humans in North America.

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<sup>11</sup> Métis are considered Indigenous peoples in Canada. They are a people who emerged as a group after white traders intermarried with Indigenous peoples. They have a rich culture and a distinct language.

Her ancestors settled in Ontario, then called Upper Canada, on stolen land. They married, but only with other white people. It was her parents who moved West, to participate in an extraction/mining industry, digging potash out of the ground. And there, in Saskatchewan, she learned to teach, and learned about the people who lived on/with the land prior to white settlement. *I am a white settler, who is unsettled* – Janet says. She often forgets herself and makes a claim as if she knows something. But she has good friends, who feel no compunction about giving her gentle intellectual slaps, knocking sense into her thinking.

When Janet first learned about the Blanket Exercise, she wondered if she should carry it out with her class, which was comprised almost entirely of white settler students. First, she distrusted packaged materials, which are often too simplified from what actually happens. Second, she had to pose the identity question: *Who was she to teach this history?* But her ancestors lived this story, and Janet personally, now, benefits from the theft of land and the lives revealed in the Blanket Exercise. A friend of hers, a Métis woman, who was the first person to tell her about this simulation, was using it to teach her Métis students about colonization. The Métis friend graciously agreed to lead the exercise for Janet's white students; in this, Janet's first time through, she was a participant with her students. Despite Janet's misgivings about packaged materials, her students, in the debrief, revealed that they had been profoundly affected. They connected the exercise to readings from their course. They noted how powerful it was to see the visual of the land (symbolized by the blankets) before and after the exercise. It was a good way for them all to see, viscerally, how Indigenous people were given diseases, starved, had their children stolen from them, their language, religion, culture, and health stolen from them, and their movements and actions on the land seriously limited. Janet's Métis friend struggled through the part where children are kidnapped from their families, to be taken to residential schools, as she imagined losing her own children.

Janet's second experience was with that same friend. Janet volunteered to play the part of the European as she taught her friend's Métis students the Blanket Exercise. Thus, Janet played the role of the nasty person. She experienced much more emotion with this role than she had as a mere participant. She had to use a bombastic voice, to make announcements. She had to own her ancestors' role in the creation of Canada. During the debriefing, she commented that she had struggled with that role, feeling

horrible to be doing those things. One of the Métis students said that he forgave Janet, being a bit flippant because he did not connect her with her ancestors. One of the others said she didn't forgive. It was one of those gentle intellectual slaps, this time directed at the young man who had too quickly forgiven Janet. We cannot just forgive and "get on with it", which is tantamount to suggesting that the oppressions of the past have not resonated into the present. Indigenous people are still discriminated against, based on deeply held prejudices. Even if there were not still oppression, there are generations of actions that contaminate every Canadian, and there is trans-generational trauma, such as Edie described, which continue to affect Indigenous peoples. It will take generations of hard relational work to recover from Canada's history of oppression against Indigenous peoples.

At the end of the Blanket Exercise, participants are asked to consider the surface area covered by blankets and the number of people still standing at the end of the exercise, versus at the beginning. The change is shocking, resulting in many students talking about the effect of this visual on their learning.

The visual is powerful. As with Edie and Viviane, Janet also had moments of tears, with the most difficult role to play for her being the role of the European. As a participant in the first go-through, she laughed at the beginning, shaking hands with her fellow participants, engaging in trade. These were good times, prior to the arrival of Europeans – relationships had been negotiated, humans lived in humility within their ecosystems. Generations of wisdom had led to practices that meant people would survive and thrive. At the end, there is no joy, and many students express their horror at the loss of land and people.

With current issues in the media Janet follows, there is little reason for joy. Indigenous peoples still have very little land, and little control over their land. In Canada, the Idle No More movement was created in reaction to the parliamentary destruction of Canada's Navigable Waters Act, which had provided environmental protection for rivers (THE KINO-NDA-NIIMI COLLECTIVE, 2014). Several water systems have been put at risk through demand for electrical energy and oil, and Canada's Supreme Court (TASKER, 2018) has just determined that Canadian governments do not have an obligation to consult Indigenous peoples regarding laws that affect their constitutional rights.

Janet was asked one day about what keeps her going in her work to support a future which could have greater social equity and a cleaner environment. Her response was rage. This interim text, word image, encapsulates how the Blanket Exercise progresses.

*Innocence*

*Joy Trust*

*Surprise*

*Betrayal Fear Loss*

*Rage*

(Interim research text – Word image by Janet, July, 2017)

## **6 Retelling Edie, Viviane and Janet’s stories**

In the sections that follow, we co-compose meaning from the told stories in the previous sections, coming to discuss conceptions of being an ally, of a pedagogy of dis/ease and vulnerability for healing and inclusion, and intergenerational stories of healing, truth, and reconciliation.

### **6.1 Understanding the Notion of Ally**

Edie referred to Janet as an ally when she introduced her to the students; Viviane referred to herself, in the word image, as an LGBTQ ally. Janet and Viviane were there to support and lead the Blanket Exercise. And yet, Edie’s introduction of Janet as an ally startled Janet. Calling Janet an ally was startling for Edie as well because this is a term she rarely uses unless it is for introducing someone she knows and trusts very well. Edie feels that Janet is an understanding and caring individual. Janet seems to be someone Edie can trust and feels that she can fit the role of an ally, if not now, then later. Janet sees herself as an unsettled white settler, someone who is attempting to increase understanding of what it is to be Indigenous in this country, but she had not thought that she had moved to such a high status of being named an ally. Viviane was not sure about what it meant to be an Indigenous ally... Edie’s comment caused us to wonder what it means to be an ally. For Edie, an ally tries to help and understand Indigenous issues. Being an Indigenous ally means to at least be willing to learn and understand “the other” and not dominate them or act superior. In Edie’s experience, many non-Indigenous

people have an air of superiority that makes Edie uncomfortable. Janet is friendly and trustworthy, which makes her an ally in Edie's eyes.

However, is this an identity one can claim for oneself? We three, through this inquiry and reflecting about the notion of ally, have become uncomfortable claiming this name for ourselves, since we have so much to learn about our roles as we all work towards a healthier society.

For us to support forward movement, we cannot help the "other". They are capable, and they can and will make their own decisions about the supports they need. An ally's role is to watch and listen, carefully. What is being asked for that allies can do? In what ways can allies remove the barriers that white society has put in place, barriers that were put in place to ensure that whites remain supreme? Edie has moved herself forward in this racist society, and is in a position to advocate for her students; her students also move themselves forward. This is due to their strength. But Janet and Viviane can "support" this by reducing or removing the barriers that have been put in place, so that the flow towards a just society will be less hazardous.

Janet's sense of privilege, unrecognized by her at the moment she spoke, was interrupted when she challenged Viviane's claim about the dangers of women walking alone in her home city in Brazil. Janet noted that she has heard such stories of her own city of Saskatoon, but so far, she and her daughters move fairly freely and safely in most areas of the city, even areas considered unsafe. Edie gave Janet one of those gentle intellectual slaps. For Edie and her daughters, the city of Saskatoon is not safe. Because they are Indigenous, they are targets while moving through the same parts of the city where Janet's white privilege protects her.

Janet has been teaching anti-oppressive education to (mostly) settler students. (By most, this means that there are sometimes Indigenous students in the class, and many of the students have some degree of Indigeneity in their ancestry.) However, what has caused the destruction of Indigenous peoples, what has driven the theft of children, the killings, the deliberate spread of disease, the theft of land, is the belief in the supremacy of whiteness. It is indeed white supremacy, the belief that only people of a particular ethnic extraction are humans capable of feelings, which has driven the oppression. The students Janet and Viviane teach are almost all white settlers, and there is always a small group who remain as white supremacists. How can post-secondary teachers identify this to them in

a way that will change them? In what ways will the Blanket Exercise, the readings teachers propose for the students, and the facilitation of discussions support these reluctant learners in facing themselves? They do not believe they are racist, but they are. But then again, so are Janet and Viviane; white teachers and students are able to live, for the most part, without considering the oppression.

As an example of being unable, at times, to see oppression, in a recent class, Janet again conducted the Blanket Exercise. In this class, two of the students identified as First Nations, and one identified as Métis; the other thirty-five teacher candidates were white settlers. In their debriefing, the two First Nations students sobbed, as they talked about their experiences, mostly how residential schools had so damaged their parents and grandparents, resulting in alcoholism, abusive parenting, and lateral damage. One of the white students talked about his feeling of guilt because of all the benefits he has received from his white privilege and from the theft of land and lives.

The next time they all met, Janet noted to the students that the Blanket Exercise can be very uncomfortable, and she mentioned the white student who felt guilty. Janet noted that guilt was an important emotion to learn from. But she did not acknowledge the overpowering pain of the Indigenous students. Once again, Janet was confronted by her privilege – seeing the world through white eyes. Janet and Viviane understood they must use their guilt to ensure that this does not happen again – the guilt that white people feel, or that the white students feel, is something to learn from; the horror that Indigenous peoples have experienced has resulted in damaged lives – some damaged to the point of death. What is their white guilt, which so many people quickly rationalize and walk away from, compared to the lives that have been lost?

It is through Lugones' (1987) concept of playfulness, by being open to being a fool, recognizing our own incompetence, and finding ambiguity within our experiences, that we have been able to develop greater depth to our identities. We are attempting, through narrative inquiry, to move through our lives with loving perception (LUGONES, 1987).

## **6.2 A Pedagogy of Dis/Ease and Vulnerability for Healing and Inclusion**

As we attended to the above narrative accounts what became apparent was that loving perception of teachers and of students could support us in offering a pedagogy of dis/ease and vulnerability, aiming towards inclusion.

The conceptualization of dis/ease we propose in this study is based on Lugones (1987, p. 3), when she discusses the concept of loving perception, in which a person perceives the other in accepting and caring ways, rather than being judgmental. Lugones says that ‘outsiders’ to the mainstream have “acquired flexibility shifting from the mainstream construction of life [...] This flexibility is necessary for the outsider, but it can also be willfully exercised by the outsider or by those who are at ease in the mainstream”. Quite without going to another country, people, either outsiders or those from the mainstream, can put themselves into situations where they are pushed to experience the world from an-other’s perception, to be put into a situation where they are not at ease, and therefore experience dis/ease. She recommends this willful exercise, calling it “world-travelling”, and she also recommends that the willful exercise be animated by an attitude that she describes as “playful”.

Our reflections about a pedagogy of vulnerability (BEHAR, 1996; LUGONES, 1987) go beyond the issues of gender and race we have discussed so far. Imagining future classrooms and students in universities, we would like to question what might have been taken for granted in teachers’ practices. In every classroom, there are many different students, each one with his/her own stories and beliefs, needs, and dis/eases.

Following Lugones’ thought, a pedagogy of dis/ease and vulnerability implies a fool teacher, since “playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight” (1987, p. 17).

The Blanket Exercise is a powerful tool we can use, as we start to world travel with loving perception (LUGONES, 1987) in order to see the world through our students’ eyes, considering their specific dis/eases. In Brazil, the work is going to be harder, since Brazilians, besides a history of Indigenous genocide, also have a history of 350 years of African peoples’ slavery. Currently, human rights are once again more threatened than ever, with extreme right parties gaining more power and only Christian religions validated in schools and politics. In education, teacher education, and language teaching, there is still an image of the ideal student, who is able bodied, cis-gendered, white skinned, with no intellectual challenges. Indigenous communities have been witness to a destructive attack on their basic rights, especially in the first 100 days of 2019. Brazilian conditions are getting worse, according to Cowie (2019):



Invasions of Indigenous lands jumped from 59 in 2016 to 96 in 2017, according to CIMI's annual report "Violence Against Indigenous People in Brazil." The study highlighted that "one can see a significant increase in invasions; theft of natural resources such as timber and minerals; illegal hunting and fishing; soil and water contamination by pesticides; and fires, among other criminal actions." [...] under Bolsonaro, Indigenous leaders in the region believe that the actions of unscrupulous loggers and land grabbers will only get worse. Leo Xipaya, an Indigenous leader who fought against Belo Monte for years, has no doubts about it: "Bolsonaro's plans put Indigenous people at risk."

In her book *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*, Ruth Behar (1996) invites us to reflect on the challenge of embracing vulnerability. Based on Behar's work, we position ourselves as "vulnerable observers" as researchers, writers, and teachers, pointing to the rewards of opening up to our students, our peers, and ourselves. Considering the relational ethics of narrative inquiry (CLANDININ *et al.*, 2018; BENGZEEN, 2018), by embracing vulnerability, recognizing uncertainty, and not knowing, but also continually marked by a feeling of responsibility, we can create safe spaces to connect with each other, our research participants, and our students:

Such a relational ontology requires that we undertake research with an understanding of relational ethics that call us to larger questions of who we are in relation with participants but also who we are in relation with the larger world or worlds that people, including us as researchers, inhabit. This relational ontology interwoven necessarily with a relational ethics calls us to consider mutuality, respect, and reciprocity. But it also calls us to questions of responsibility to the person and to the worlds in which we are nested, to questions of complicity in the worlds within which we currently exist as well as to future worlds that our work leads (CLANDININ *et al.*, 2018, p. 45).

Being a vulnerable observer (BEHAR, 1996), as a researcher, means entering the teaching education world as more than inquirers. Working within the concept of vulnerability, the teacher educators should open themselves to their students, to allow them to express their ideas that might cause the teachers to re-think their own. Unfortunately, teachers have the choice of closing off their vulnerability, silencing their students, walking away from their pain. Some students might not leave their pain. Instructors must be open to feeling shame and guilt, they must learn from these

emotions to support them in reinterpreting their experiences in light of what they learn of their students' experiences. As teachers learn, and as they act, they are supported in remaining open and vulnerable. When teachers keep themselves open to being vulnerable, they must be willing to enter into non-safe places – non-safe for them. They will listen to, hear, their students, supporting them in their expression of shame, guilt, pain. This will, we hope, make classrooms at least a bit safer for a diversity of students.

### 6.3 Temporality and Intergenerational Stories of Healing

Sometimes, past generations do not want to discuss issues of dis/ease with their children or grandchildren. Reflecting on the temporality aspect of narrative inquiry and the stories we live and share, and how different generations deal with the story of colonization (especially because there are stories, not just one single colonization story), one could wonder if it is something to forget, not to speak about, leave in the past. Or is it something we should bring to the new generations? We do not ignore this. We believe we have to learn as much as we can about the history and culture which has led to oppression, and we have to learn how best to move out of the mire we have created. Researchers should not leave this un-discussed. Ignoring that there was and is racism will not lead to a better future.

Janet, in her exploration of her story on this storied landscape, recognized that her mother had taught her to value all people, that all people were similar. She noted:

*I carry within me a background that is racist, that did not ever examine what it was to be Indigenous in Canada. I was taught that all people are the same, as if they live in the same world, and I still have to remind myself, daily, that when I walk down the street in Saskatoon, I am treated very differently than my Indigenous friends and colleagues. Basically, in my mother's attempt to raise her children to be non-racist, she created us as racist. We see only white experience, as if all people experience the world the way we do. Like me, most of my students have been taught that all people are born into the same world. They have not learned that experiences create your world, nor have they been taught the kinds of experiences that Indigenous people grow up with.*

(Interim research text based on field notes, March, 2017).

Janet believes that she can make a difference by teaching teachers to be more caring, to insist that the teachers and they in turn with their students,

attend to the experiences of Indigenous peoples. In her work with teacher candidates, she struggles to teach against racism. The most significant learning for her, in this inquiry, has been that White experience is different than Indigenous experience. White settlers benefit daily from White privilege, the ability to see the world as benevolent, full of opportunities. If white people do not learn about the experiences of Indigenous peoples, they will neither recognize their privileges, nor will they take responsibility to work for change.

## **7 Some Concluding Thoughts**

As we look backwards, we feel that the process of participating in this narrative inquiry, considering the relational ethics of it, has greatly pushed our understanding of the degree to which racism can penetrate the being. We struggled to make sense of what it is to be an ally. This deeper understanding of ally as per our identities has, perhaps, made us more humble about who we are, and more thoughtful about what we say. We have grown up on storied landscapes, and those landscapes, as revealed through the Blanket Exercise, have and continue to oppress Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples were constructed as undomesticated, as wild, intolerable in countries that were in the process of being “civilized”.

This construction has led to ongoing fear and misunderstanding of Indigenous peoples, conferring privilege on whites, absolving them of responsibility for their supremacist beliefs and genocidal actions. This story affects (even though in a different way) all people in Canada and Brazil. Edie’s story of her childhood, attending a school which portrayed her and her Indigenous cousins and friends, as ‘less than’, revealed how her stories to live by were aligned with this story. Following Connelly and Clandinin (1999), we must stop educating and inquiring as if everything will “return to normal and everything will be alright.” We understand that, instead, we must educate and research for “shifting stories to live by”.

As we engaged in reflecting on the places where we lived and as we told our stories, we came to understand that the College of Education is actively working to reduce White supremacy, but the province of Saskatchewan, the government, the general population (with some significant counter-examples) are not. We wonder, if teachers take up anti-racist education, can they make a difference for the province? The Blanket Exercise made

a difference to the three of us, as we considered our work with beginning teachers. However, we are three people willing to take up Lugones' (1987) concept of play as being willing to be the fool. Being willing to be the fool leads to being willing to be vulnerable (BEHAR, 1996). Moreover, we are willing to examine our stories and reinterpret them in light of deeper interpretations of the stories of our experiences. We hope that we can support readers in reflecting on privilege. To do this, teacher educators could model their vulnerability, and how they deal with white privilege, and how they are working to take responsibility for making the world more equitable for all. If teacher candidates can be mobilized to understand their role in racism, can be vulnerable and act with loving perception, they can make a difference in their classrooms.

However, there is more that the College of Education can do. Although all undergraduate teacher candidates now must take at least one course in anti-racist education, the practicing teachers who enroll in graduate programs do not, and many of them did not take the undergraduate course when they initially took their teacher training. Some of the undergraduates are young, and they have not recognized that the world is or can be narratively constructed. Most are still caught in a realist ontology, believing that everyone will experience an event in the same way. When practicing teachers take a graduate level course in anti-racism, almost all of them are profoundly changed. It is unfortunate that, of the four departments in the College of Education, only one requires a course in anti-racist education. Perhaps the department where the course is most needed is the department where teachers learn how to be school administrators. If administrators could be convinced of the need for change, they would support their teachers in taking up anti-racist education.

Thus, change in the teaching profession would come much faster if all graduate students were to take anti-racist education, so as to recognize privilege and systemic racism. In Brazil, there is also a lot to be done, as we recognize the lack of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, anti-racism education courses in universities, and change in the way non-Indigenous people refer to the Indigenous. Recent language policies do not seem to care and include more study on Indigenous issues in school curriculum. Munduruku (2018, p. 61, our translation), who is an Indigenous professor and writer, says that

it is already well-known that Brazil has a very large sociodiversity. It is a markedly mestizo people, in a process that involved Europeans, Africans, and native peoples, who are mistakenly called Indians, a generic term reproduced by the school with various synonyms: backward, ugly, lazy, wild, cannibal, infantile, to mention only a few. This type of treatment has, for a long time, hidden the truth about the wealth that our people possess within their socio-biodiversity context.<sup>12</sup>

We hope the stories shared here reverberate, although they are only the first steps on a long journey. We agree with Szundy (2017, p. 78), about the Brazilian Common Curricular Framework (BNCC) in the area of Language, Codes, and their Technologies, specifically the curricular components of Portuguese and Modern Foreign Language and their implications upon language teachers' development, which we need in order "to problematize the literacy practices legitimated (or not)". Once official documents in Brazil are made considering white and male supremacy, there is concern about bias and inaccuracies. To change the big picture, more needs to be done in opening up the conversation concerning truth and reconciliation.

### **The authors' contributions**

Viviane: 50% – She conceived the research, provided the narrative framework, and was the person in charge of ensuring that we each contributed equally to the project.

Janet: 25% – She participated by providing data, engaged in reading articles, which applied to the analysis and in the analysis, and helped to edit the final text.

Edie: 25% – She participated by providing data, engaged in reading articles, which applied to analysis and in the analysis, and helped to edit the final text.

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<sup>12</sup> Original: já é do conhecimento de todos que o Brasil possui uma sociodiversidade muito grande. É um povo marcadamente mestiçado, num processo que envolveu os europeus, africanos e povos originários da terra, que equivocadamente são chamados de índios, termo genérico reproduzido pela escola com sinônimos diversos: atrasados, feios, preguiçosos, selvagens, canibais, infantis, para dizer apenas alguns. Este tipo de tratamento esconde, desde muito tempo, a verdade sobre a riqueza que nossos povos possuem dentro do seu contexto sociobiodiverso.

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## Appendix – a portion of The Blanket Exercise (KAIROS, 2017).

**Narrator:** These blankets represent the northern part of Turtle Island, or what we now know as Canada, before the arrival of Europeans. You represent the Indigenous peoples, the people who have been here for at least 10,000 years. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Turtle Island was your home, and home to millions of people like you. You lived in hundreds of nations. You fished and hunted and farmed. Each community had its own language, culture, traditions, laws and governments. As communities you worked together and cooperated with one another. Before the newcomers arrived, one of the ways in which you, the original peoples, ended disputes was by making treaties.

**Narrator:** The land is very important to you. All of your needs – food, clothing, shelter, culture, your spirituality – are taken care of by the land, which is represented here by the blankets. In return, you take very seriously your responsibility to take care of the land.

If you are using traditional items, take some time for participants to trade and share their items with one another.

**Scroll 1:** “One of my favourite things about my culture is how we’re taught that everything on the Earth is to be respected. It’s an important part of the culture and covers everything. That includes respecting yourself. Respecting yourself is one of the most important things my culture has taught me. Also, the land, water, plants, air and animals are all very important to our culture and need to be respected. Without any of it, what would we be?”

—Kateri, a Mohawk youth from a community in Quebec

Introduce the volunteer(s) representing the European settler(s).

**Narrator:** Things were happening in Europe at the end of the 15th century that would mean a huge change for you. In 1493, the King and Queen of Spain asked Pope Alexander to make a statement that would help Spain’s explorers when they arrived in new lands. The statement is now called the “Doctrine of Discovery” and this is what it said:

**European – in a loud, pompous voice, striding around the blankets:** In the words of Pope Alexander the 6th: “We...by the authority of Almighty God ... give, grant, and assign to you and your heirs and successors, kings of Castile and Leon, forever, all islands and main lands found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered, towards the west and south, ... from the Arctic pole ... to the Antarctic

pole ... And we make, appoint, and depute you and your said heirs and successors lords of them with full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind.”

**Narrator:** And so began the so-called European “discovery” of Turtle Island.

**Scroll 2:** “At contact with Europeans, each of the hundreds of Indigenous Peoples of Indigenous America possessed all the elements of nationhood that were well-established by European settlers: territory, governing structures, legal systems and a historical continuity with our territories. Nothing since the arrival of Columbus has occurred to merit any reduction in the international legal status of Indigenous Peoples. The recognition of Indigenous Nations and our rights pose no threat to non-Indigenous Peoples.”

—*Sharon Venne, Cree*

**European:** *step onto the blankets from the east. Begin shaking hands, moving around and handing out the index cards.*

*Blanket Exercise* | © KAIROS, 2015 15

**Narrator:** When the Europeans first arrived on Turtle Island there were many more Indigenous people than Europeans. The newcomers depended on you for their survival, and you helped them to understand how you did things – how you taught your children, how you took care of people who were sick, how you lived off the land in a way that left enough for future generations, and how your governments worked.

In the beginning there was lots of cooperation and support between you and the settlers. The settlers and their leaders recognized you, the First Peoples, as having your own governments, laws and territories. They recognized you as independent nations. They made agreements or treaties with you. These treaties explained how you were going to share the land and the water, the animals, and the plants.

These treaties were very important because they were agreements between you and the kings and queens of countries in Europe. They made these agreements with you because you were here first, the land belonged to you, and you had your own governments. The treaties officially recognized your power and independence as nations.

The Europeans understood they could not force their laws or way of life on the people who were here long before they ever arrived. They understood that you had rights.

**European [speaking in a loud voice]:** In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, King George the Third said Indigenous nations own their lands. The King said that the only legal way newcomers could gain control of those lands was by making treaties between the two nations. The year 2013 marked the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation.

**Narrator:** Later on, the Government of Canada was formed, and the Royal Proclamation became part of Canadian law. For you, the Indigenous peoples, the treaties were very special and sacred agreements. They were statements of peace, friendship, and sharing, and they were based on respect and honesty. Sharing was very important to you. The hunters shared their food with everyone and the families helped one another raise the children. In the treaties, you tried to help the Europeans understand what you meant by sharing.

**European:** Begin to slowly fold the edges of the blankets, making the blanket space smaller and smaller. When blankets are empty you can take them away and put them in a pile outside the activity. Very gradually fold and remove blankets until the middle of the exercise when the Indian Act is introduced and participants are placed on reserve.

**Narrator:** Remind participants that they must NOT step off the blankets. The goal is to stay on the blankets, even as they get smaller. The Narrator should also remind everyone that Indigenous people have always resisted when someone tried to take the land away.

**Narrator:** But the Europeans didn't see it that way anymore. They now had a different view of the treaties. For them, land was something that could be bought and sold, and treaties were a way of getting you, the Indigenous peoples to give up your land.

**Scroll 3:** "Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created."

—Georges Erasmus, Dene Nation, co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

**Narrator:** After a while, you didn't get along very well with the Europeans.

When the War of 1812 ended, the Europeans no longer needed you to help them with the fighting. As the fur trade dried up, the European newcomers turned more and more to farming and started looking for more land.

Before too long, there were more Europeans than Indigenous peoples. One reason for this was the diseases the Europeans brought with them: diseases such as smallpox, measles and tuberculosis. You, the Indigenous peoples, suffered badly from these diseases because you had never had them in your communities before. Millions of you died. In fact, there are some people who believe that half the Indigenous people alive at the time died from these diseases. In some communities, nine out of ten people died.

16 *Blanket Exercise* | © KAIROS, 2015

**European:** *walk up to a person who does not have a yellow or blue card, hand them the folded blanket and read* – Blankets infected with the deadly smallpox virus were given or traded to the Indigenous people by military leaders such as Lord Jeffrey Amherst. You represent the many Indigenous people who died from smallpox after having come into contact with such blankets. Please step off the blanket.

**Narrator:** *ask those participants with white index cards to step off the blankets telling them that they represent people who died of the various diseases.*

Please be silent for a moment to remember those who died from the diseases.

**European:** *walk up to one person in the “east” who does not have a card and tell that person* – You represent the Beothuk, one of the original people of what is now the island of Newfoundland. You also died from diseases you had never seen before. Because the Europeans overhunted some of you starved. Some of you died in violent encounters with the settlers trying to take your lands. Some of you were hunted down and killed. In 1829, the last person recognized by the Europeans as your people, Shanawdithit (Shanna-deet-dee), died in St. John’s. Your language and culture became extinct. Please step off the blankets. **One person only.**

**European and Narrator** *walk to the “south” and choose two people who are standing close together.*

**Narrator:** You represent the First Nations that were divided when the border between the United States and British Canada was created. This border divides communities and cuts you off from each other. Please move to separate blankets.

[...]

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