COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS IN CHILD AND YOUTH CARE: NOTHING LOST IN THE TELLING

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Following the tradition of Indigenous and Korean elders with whom I have had the great privilege to work and learn from, I would like to start by sharing my gratitude for the land that we are on. In this way, we ground ourselves spiritually, emotionally, and physically by acknowledging the presence of our ancestors (current and past) in everything we do.

I am a child immigrant from South Korea so I want to acknowledge that this is not the Indigenous land of my ancestors. I would like to point out the privilege of being a visitor who can work, play, and raise my family on unceded traditional Coast and Strait Salish territories. Back in the early 1990s, the First Nations House of Learning was opened while I was a graduate student at the University of British Columbia. At that time, I understood that it was important to acknowledge traditional territories. What I used to believe was basic protocol in the presence of Indigenous people and during ceremonies has now been transformed to an embodied way of living that guides me in my daily practice.

I am deeply grateful for the continuous journey of self-discovery and decolonization practices that has been so patiently guided by my Indigenous friends and elders. With my growing appreciation of Indigenous knowledge, I am even more aware of the longest journey between head and heart.

The process of personal decolonization is a long and arduous journey. If you feel no pain, then you are not on the journey, except in your head. I would like to share a quote that literally guides me every day:

> If you have come to help me,
> You are wasting your time
> But if you have come because your liberation
> is bound up with mine
> Then let us work together.
> – Women's Aboriginal Activist Group, Queensland Australia, 1970s

This quote speaks to the necessity of working together for our collective liberation from the shackles of the dominant mainstream discourse of power and privilege. We have nothing to lose, we can only gain by working together. We have nothing lost in the telling of our stories, but everything to lose if we do not tell and, especially, if we do not listen.

I added the word "courageous" in front of "conversations" in the title of this talk because the child and youth care profession requires courage at this juncture. We are at a serious tipping point in human history. We need to make transformative personal change that will impact social change from the ground up. We are all in some form of practice and we all influence other people. We need to use these relationships and connections to tell our stories and to make space to hear others. As long as we manufacture and sustain the often unnecessary tensions in our field, we are doing anything but good practice.

Elephants in the Room

I chose the "elephant in the room" as a metaphor for my talk because as a minoritized faculty member in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, I often feel there are several elephants in the room. I cannot assume that everyone reading this is a fluent English speaker so let me give a brief explanation: An "elephant in the room" is an English idiom that refers to those things that are obvious truths but go unspoken or unaddressed.

Some of these elephants for me are not elephants for others so I do understand that it is entirely subjective. But what isn't experienced through the subjective self? From my many years of doing diversity training, anti-racism activism, and multicultural education I know that elephants cannot be seen by all people at all times. For those with social locations that overlap mine, the elephants are as clear as day, but for others, it may be an academic matter with limited personal interest. My intention is that exposing the elephants may start conversations and put some of my recommendations for change into action.

I am very grateful every day to my colleagues who took a leap of faith when hiring me 10 years ago. Would I be the model minority or the yellow peril? (An image of my family is projected onto the big screen that has "Le Peril Jaune" [French for "The Yellow Peril"] written on a banner on the side). "Yellow peril was used to attribute a wide variety of dangers to migration from Asia including loose morals that would corrupt society and cheap labour that would take away jobs from hard-working Canadians and Americans" (Madokoro, 2010).

This is a photo of my family on the day we received Canadian citizenship in 1972. It is a postcard that my sister made for an art project early in her art career. I was given an English name (Bonnie) by the United Church minister to help me assimilate into Canadian society. We came to Canada in the late 1960s before multiculturalism was introduced as a policy. For all the criticisms of the Multicultural Act of Canada enacted in 1988 (Citizenship and immigration Canada, 2011), as a racialized immigrant I feel that we are better off with it than without it.

In the "good old days" before multiculturalism and human rights, overt racism was rampant and socially acceptable. Back in those days, we were all considered Chinese or Japanese because we were among the first Koreans to arrive in Canada. That is largely why there is a strong identity now as Asian-Canadians: No one can really tell us apart!

The Maclean's article originally titled *Too Asian* (Findlay & Kohler, 2010) caused much controversy in November 2010. Many stated that it is a testament that there continue to be strong racist feelings against Asian people [it was retitled: *The enrollment controversy*]. How many is too many? Asian-Canadians were very upset about this article and have impressed me with their solidarity and political activism. We may yet be the yellow peril! Does that send a little jolt of terror in you?

Being a racialized minority in Canada

To be a racialized minority in Canada is about being minoritized or marginalized. As we know, the majority of the world's population of seven billion are people of colour and half are female, so this is not about numeric concepts of being a minority. It is about differential power and privilege, and failures of the democratic process.

We live in a neo-liberal and neo-colonial world order, where race is still a salient marker, even if inaccurately ascribed by others. Racial profiling and single-story stereotypes (Adichie, 2009) are not about how people see themselves, but about how others are informed by the body and then the action taken in response.

The term "racialization" addresses the construction of race as a potent force in our socialization. This is what compelled me to do my graduate work in understanding ethnic identity development. It continues to be a source of inquiry in my daily practice as I see varying levels of race consciousness.

My primary focus in this paper is to alert you to the changing demographics in Canada and that the elephants in the room must be addressed in this light. In doing so, I will offer some very basic recommendations for the field to take up intersectional practice frameworks, to rise to the challenge, to get ahead of the curve instead of responding woefully afterwards.

Changing demographics of Canada

We need to be really conscious of the changing demographics of Canada's future and how that will impact us in child and youth care. With the decline of the birth rate in Canada, an aging population with the baby boomer generation, and an anticipated shortage of labour, we are entirely dependent on large-scale immigration to sustain the Canadian institutions that we hold as the cornerstones of the nation such as universal health, education, and social safety nets (Fang, 2009).

Statistics Canada (2010) released projections for the racial diversity of the Canadian population 20 years from now. They suggest that the immigration will come from non-European countries, thus increasing the category that the federal government designates as "visible minorities". With current immigration projections, this translates into one-third of the Canadian population, and that is not counting those of mixed race heritage.
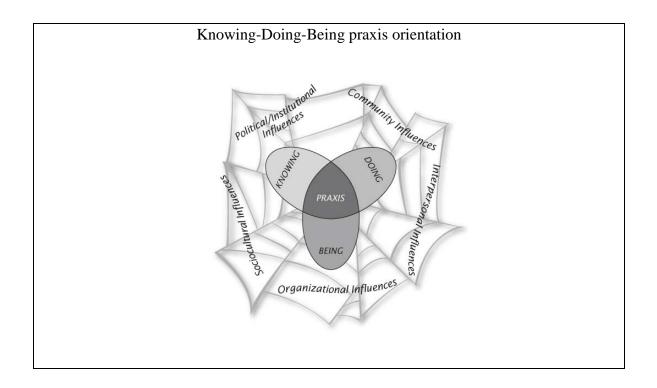
Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

According to the last census data from 2006, the Aboriginal population surpassed the one-million mark, reaching 1,172,790 (4% of the total population of Canada). The past decade has seen a large increase in the Aboriginal population: It grew by 45%, nearly six times faster than the 8% rate of increase for the non-Aboriginal population; 56% of the current Aboriginal population is under 25 years old with 40% of them under 16 years (Statistics Canada, 2009).

In the 2011 census, the census long form has been eliminated so we do not know if this kind of important data will be captured in the future (Scrivener, 2010). What these statistics are showing us is that there is a growing population of Indigenous people concentrated in the younger demographic. How can we use this knowledge of our future humanscape to conceptualize, define, and practice how "care" can be done differently?

How can we put into practice what we have learned from the past and present to imagine a kinder enlightened type of care?

It is with this that I feel an urgency to call child and youth care as a field to high alert. We need to prepare ourselves, our students and practitioners now in the field, with appropriate training through personal and curricular decolonization, intersectional frameworks, and cross-cultural skill development. We cannot afford in the face of this changing tide to do business as usual.

My greatest pleasure and honour in being in the child and youth care field is that we have the potential to be "agents of influence for social change" that can help to shape society's future citizens and leaders. As we work with children and youth, we can empower or oppress. We can inadvertently become normalizing agents who maintain the status quo or we can really support alternate ways of perceiving, supporting, and liberating youth.

Child and Youth Care Praxis Orientation

Knowing-Doing-Being praxis orientation

Thanks to the great work of Jennifer White (2007), we now operate from a more sophisticated version of the former KSS (Knowledge-Self-Skills) model to the Knowing-

Doing-Being praxis framework in child and youth care. The essence of the model incorporates the fundamental influences that couch our child and youth care praxis: These include the sociocultural, political and institutional, community, interpersonal, and organizational influences that frame how we operate and carry out the fundamental principles of child and youth care praxis. We identify the fundamental principles of our field as:

- Pluralism
- Social justice
- Relational practice
- Youth-engagement
- Community collaboration
- Ethical professionalism
- Holistic development
- Strength-based
- Ecological

Introducing the "Elephants in the Room"

To achieve these wonderful and noble aspirations of our field, we must address the elephants in the room. Let me introduce them:

1. The first elephant I have called "Eurocentric Worldview".
2. The second is "Western Cultural Hegemony".
3. The third is "Racism".

I know that there may be a lot of contestable points in how I have described each elephant and the way in which I have grouped the underpinning concepts. I also know that each one could be a lecture unto itself so bear with me in introducing it in such a compressed manner. Finally, please pay attention to your emotional reaction because some buttons may be pushed. Consider these emotional reactions as compasses and our minds as our engines and our bodies for action. It is difficult to navigate through psychological processes that need to take place in order for real social change and political activism to happen.

"Eurocentric Worldview"

Eurocentric worldview is everything we do in child and youth care as we know it today. It is not that I do not value it or want to dismantle it. What I am proposing is that we critically examine it to test for its robustness in applying it to the future humanscape of our field, not just to those who will be "receivers of care" but those who are and will be our practitioners.

I do not have time to review each and every one of these concepts so I will summarize why this worldview must be contested or, at the very least, critiqued. First, many people come from collectivist worldviews that are diametrically different from the Eurocentric worldview. Collectivist worldviews are deeply rooted in millenia-old Indigenous knowledges and traditions (Prowse, 2011).

This monolithic Eurocentric worldview impacts everything we do in child and youth care, from the very essence of the pedagogy and curriculum in academic training to the professional standards of practice and competencies in the community. It influences everything from student recruitment strategies, staffing, program design, skill development, and intervention methods.

Ethnocentrism is structurally upheld through government policies, enforced through law, and accepted by society as "normal and acceptable" if not superior. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that these pillars of "best practice" are exactly what exclude the marginalized and minoritized in Canadian society (Fryer, 2006; Stanfield, 1985).

Although some of these concepts have been systematically and historically contested in academia (for example, qualitative research methodology addresses issues of **objectivity** and **positivism**) there are others that are rarely questioned. The **print word** is something that is seen as the bedrock and it is well established as the method of knowledge production and dissemination. Why is oral tradition not seen as a bona fide knowledge exchange system of education and training (Rankin, Hansteen-Izora, & Packer, 2006)? Why do children learn not to tell stories when storytelling is an important method of imparting wisdom and guidance in so many traditions?

It is encouraging to see more and more people using expressive methods, but they remain still on the fringe of what are considered "valid and credible" forms of "academic or scholarly" [read: Eurocentric concepts of] leadership, particularly when they are couched in feminist, anti-racist, and/or Indigenous critiques (Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004).

Meritocracy suggests that we are all on a level playing field, that we have equal opportunities, and that hard work pays off (McNamee & Miller, 2004). It also intimates that there are natural consequences or "just desserts" for those who do not make it. We must address this myth of meritocracy by understanding the systemic and institutional barriers that exist rather than focusing on an individual's lack of will or effort.

Individualism and **independence** impact such things as how we conceptualize self-care and professional boundaries. Many of us are doing "relational self-care" not just caring for ourselves. How can we do "self-care" in the way Eurocentrism dictates when we are so intricately connected to the well-being of others in our practice, families and communities? I see students who are parents, especially mothers, who struggle with this all the time and I invite discussion on how we can collectively redefine what self-care

and boundaries look like so we can liberate ourselves from crippling guilt and inadequacy. Feminism has a lot to teach us, but what does it say when it is referred to as the "F" word (Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2004)?

"Western Cultural Hegemony"

The second big elephant in the room is called **Western Cultural Hegemony**. This is what is happening to our world community as it is dominated by powerful individuals and transnational corporations that threaten cultural and biological diversity. This has resulted in a global monoculturalism that many of our great thinkers are warning us about (Davis, 2003; Suzuki, 1999). While there is a considerable increase in Chinese and Indian influence, Western cultural hegemony is still the dominant force that shapes and dictates world financial institutions and economies, military and commercial interests, and globalized consumerism and materialism (Marsella, 2005).

Capitalism is at the heart of this elephant that has caused increasing economic disparities between the haves and the have-nots, nation by nation and within nations. With increasing privatization, corporatization, and standardization the world is being shaped by greed and profit. We must remind ourselves of this elephant as we work with those children, youth, and families we identify as needing our help. We are often positioned to be "helping" the indigent, the disabled, the broken, the mentally messed up, the frail, the vulnerable, the "at risk", the helpless, the hapless, the homeless. What I have learned in working in the field is how easily we as "the helpers" get caught in perpetuating the hegemony of human worth. We celebrate those who "rise above" their challenge and blame or pity those who don't or can't.

If we juxtapose the meritocracy myth and the principles of capitalism, homeless people are those who did not work hard enough, dream Disney enough, or play by society's rules. We tidily connect mental illness, substance use, or personality flaws as the reasons for their homelessness, not the ways in which the distribution of wealth is intricately established.

If we look at each other through our stories, there is a humanity that we cannot fail to see. It exposes all of us to see our complicity in society's current composition – who is on top and who is on the bottom of society's ranking of worth. I urge you to create situations where you hear the stories instead of segregating yourself from it. When we surround ourselves with those in our own social class and rank, it's very easy to get sucked into the "**myth of meritocracy**" as global hegemony shapes our thoughts.

The threat to cultural diversity and biodiversity in the world must be taken seriously. Our physical environment – the air we breathe, the water we drink, the other species that we share this planet with – is in such danger (Suzuki, 1999). When will we

see this elephant that will impact the next seven generations with frightening consequences?

I recommend you to watch the mockumentary film called *The Age of Stupid* (Armstrong, 2009) to drive this message home. We are in a fragile time in human and planetary history; we must not continue to act this stupidly as a human species. I truly worry for my children's children and if we all think along these lines, it is hard to believe how anyone can actually believe we are doing okay. What kind of legacy will we be leaving? How will they pay the consequences of our collective inaction? Do not deceive yourself and think this is just another crisis that every generation has faced and the following generations will do just fine.

Global cultural hegemony has shaped the very nature of social norms that stem from increasingly fundamentalist religious institutions and values. **Heteronormativity** results in socially accepted forms of homophobia and transphobia (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005). Gender variance has been accepted in many Indigenous cultures around the world, however we now have little tolerance for sexual and gender difference in many countries (Alaers, 2010; Bhaskaran, 2004; Rifkin, 2011). Instead of taking education to value Indigenous knowledges of inclusion and acceptance of cultural, religious, and sexual diversity, we create numerous programs in Canada to "stop bullying" and deflect attention from the social norms that perpetuate the conditions in the first place. Many people are skeptical that these types of school-based anti-bullying programs are even effective (Boesveld, 2010; Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007). So why are we so loathe to examine the social conditions instead?

Western standards of beauty are held up across the globe with value to light-toned skin, non-kinky hair, round eyes, thinness, height preferences, blue eyes, and hairlessness on the body as examples of that hegemonic impact (Ashe, 1995; Bordo, 2003; Frith, Cheng, & Shaw, 2004). Being able-bodied and youthful are standards that are voraciously desired across all age groups all around the world now. American popular culture is particularly responsible for the globally hegemonic shaping of cultural values of materialism, consumerism, narcissism, sexuality, romance, and heteronormativity. The fact that celebrities are more recognizable and have more popular influence than world leaders tells us something about this world domination (Marsella, 2005).

In our wired world of instant digital communication, English is the dominant language around the world, although not spoken by the largest number of people. Its currency is high and is instituted from the language of Internet content to educational, business, and financial systems around the world (Crystal, 2003). There is a frightening intolerance for accents as I see more and more programs for accent reduction. Why are we not promoting accent appreciation if we believe ourselves to be globally-minded?

DSM. In the field of child and youth care, we are heavily impacted by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the brainchild of the American Psychiatric Association

in 1952 (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The global reach of the DSM is truly shocking, especially in light of the omnipresence of Big Pharma (Chapman, 2011) or the pharmacological tsunami that holds us hostage to our own mental health and well-being. We need to be acutely critical when we talk about mental health, especially with respect to children and youth.

CYC is in the business of being "upstream" workers so we must be mindful to not be the agents of normalization, or uncritical automatons who keep order and insist on compliance and obedience. We need to liberate ourselves from the mainstream attitudes towards the mass production of children in the name of socialization. We must develop keen observational skills and pragmatic frameworks to see the strengths of an individual and the family instead of getting caught up in finding and focusing on deficits.

I find it chilling how easy it is to slip into the "diagnosis funding" game that uses children as pawns. Why do we have record numbers of children who are being diagnosed with anxiety and depression (Foxman, 2010)? Why are we not alarmed? Think of what this means for the future generation of adults? This is no longer only about personal stigma, this is about a pandemic that is shaping the resilience and outlook of our future generations.

Children today have more access to information from around the world than any previous generation and are what Marc Prensky (2001) calls "Digital Natives" (making we from the "older generation" Digital Immigrants). They are bombarded with imagery regardless of how purist we are as parents or practitioners in attempting to "keep them away from" media influences (Schuler, 2007). We are in a time when we no longer go somewhere for information like many of us did in our childhoods. This is the age when information and misinformation is banging on our doors and our screens 24/7, with tweets, notifications, and texts all with their own rings, beeps, and chimes. The digital generation is upon us and we need to educate it in a very different way, and really carefully and critically examine our contemporary modes of practice without losing the wisdom of those who came before us (Jukes, McCain, & Macdonald, 2007; Palfrey & Gasser, 2010). Our actions today will shape the landscape of the future so it is particularly crucial that we take this job very seriously.

Children know about the horrific effects of global warming and climate change; they see and hear about environmental degradation, animal extinction, food contamination and insecurity, and human poverty; they are the targets of rapacious marketers goading them to consume more and more of what is not good for them; they know that there are ugly wars fought that make no sense; they know about suicide bombers and what a terrorist looks like; they are aware of racial, gender, and sexual difference and power; they hear the gruesome details of a murder that happened not so far from their homes: With all that, **what kid wouldn't be anxious and depressed?** I am more worried about the children who do not experience anxiety than I am about those kids who feel helpless and worried for their futures. Why are we pathologizing those

children who really should be the "canaries in the coal mine"? Should we not be nurturing them as leaders instead of putting them in support groups and medicating them?

Thinking critically of this, we support an entire system where children are influenced to behave like everyone else. I know there are amazing parents and practitioners, but it is not about the individual actors. It is about an educational, social, and political system that is failing not only our children but also our families and communities (Robinson, 2010). When will we start lobbying for change and stop putting all the resources downstream? When do we challenge the status quo or "business as usual" when we know as a field that it is not working? More prisons are being proposed instead of improving conditions upstream (CBC News, 2010). These are serious concerns for our field; these are the big fights we need to take on.

We all know those who are disproportionately represented in social and health indicators of poverty, incarceration, sexual exploitation and assault, substance use, obesity, diabetes, suicide, child protection, and homelessness. I could spout out research study after study, fact after fact, to raise the alarm that Indigenous people are the most at risk (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, 2011; National Council of Welfare, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2009). Newcomer immigrants and refugees are not far behind (Campaign 2000, 2010; Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000). This is not an issue of contention, it is another indication that we need to do more than teach one or two courses in CYC education that have critical theory. We need to decolonize not only ourselves as individuals, but also ourselves as professionals in our wide-scoping field if we are serious about changing this tide.

"Racism"

This leads me to bring up the third elephant in the room, which is "racism". I am not talking specifically about individual acts of racism; rather, I want to address the structural, systemic, and institutional forms of racism and discrimination within the field. I could have easily expanded this into just "ISM" and address sexism, rankism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, sizeism, ageism, colonialism, but I am extremely limited in my time. I sincerely apologize that this is a speedy and limited analysis.

We prefer to use terms like "diversity", "multiculturalism", and "pluriculturalism" so that it is easier and less loaded than the "R" word. The consequences of this **colour-blind** approach has deep psychological and behavioural impacts on racialized minorities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). There is a cost to those racialized minorities who live in the psychological shadow of assimilation (Sue & Sue, 2008). For those who gain a critical consciousness of race and racism, it can be empowering to critically analyze oppression. However, it also requires a psychological state of "constant vigilance" that can result in a

pretty serious state of "cultural allodynia" (Comas-Diaz & Jacobsen, 2001) or "colour rage".

There are many challenges in maintaining a healthy outlook and working daily in the face of systemic and institutionalized racism. When there is no critical mass, it becomes even harder to challenge the status quo, particularly when the dominant discourse and practice is colour denial, colour blindness, cultural appropriation, and cultural tourism. The elephant is staring you in the face, but others have the privilege of not seeing it, or ignoring it. As "critical whiteness" studies becomes more recognized as a scholarly contribution to discourses on race, more and more white allies come to work in solidarity, not from a place of pity and patronization, but from a place of social liberation, and so the load feels lighter (Aveling, 2004).

We introduce Peggy McIntosh's (1990) seminal work on **White Privilege** in several courses in our undergraduate child and youth curriculum. Students have a range of emotional reactions to this. This is where being a racialized minority has the extra "emotional labour" component in our teaching while at the very same time putting us in danger of being accused of having our own personal agenda.

We cannot talk about racism without talking about **colonization.** We must all recognize that the dominant Canadian narrative is built on "the discovery myth" (i.e., North America was discovered) and that the Indigenous people who were living here did not count as a viable civilization (Slapkauskaite, 2004). How on earth will we ever improve the dialogue and relationships between minoritized communities and Indigenous communities if the very foundation of citizenship is built upon a terrible racist myth? How do immigrants avoid replicating "settler mentality" and perpetuating colonialism? This racist myth has long tentacles as many Indigenous individuals, families, and communities continue to feel the direct and residual effects of this in their daily lives. Ethnic and racial profiling results in single-story stereotypes that create cultural monoliths that are uncontested by the dominant discourse. When combined with low racialized or minoritized consciousness, there is internalized racism (or a low worth of oneself and others of colour) and, as a result, there is inter-cultural racism and distrust (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Our current practice is to focus on "the problems" or "risk factors" in minoritized groups that perpetuate racialized pathology. There continue to be efforts to "help" the Indigenous, the immigrants, the queer, and those who do not assimilate well. We provide initiatives and projects to develop community and develop strengths. But without us seriously shifting our gaze to whiteness and heteronormativity as the social norm and a consequent look at power and privilege, we will continue to spin our wheels and cause the lateral violence I witness every day.

Canada's federal election is upon us in a few days on May 2, 2011. How many times have you heard this term called "the ethnic vote"? This is another testament to the racialization and the minoritization of those who are not perceived as "real" Canadians. How many generations does it take? We must be aware of the human rights doctrine that distinguishes the difference between intent and impact. Our best intentions and goodwill is not enough. We need to expand our thinking to consider the impact, not only on individuals but on a systemic level as well.

This leads me to address the notion of **parochialism**. It is one of the reasons behind this challenge to unearth intent and impact. When people have limited interests and experiences in the world, parochial mindsets can be limiting, especially when that person occupies a position of power and influence. Even if there is experience in the world, if it is limited to cultural tourism and consumption, it can only fuel the pretense of global mindedness. As long as "other cultures" are consumed, appropriated, romanticized, pitied, or revered, there will be a huge gap between colonized mindsets and social justice practice. When "difference" is inadvertently translated as inferior or superficially glamorized, and ethnocentrism goes unchallenged, this parochialism is stifling.

I must admit that I find it most frustrating when I am confronted by the neo-liberal mask of racial acceptance and cultural knowing. What is inaccurately called "Political Correctness" has become the most effective silencing tool in the discourse of racism. When all the "right" words are spoken and lip service is given, but the racial intuition says otherwise, this causes much discord and dissonance. This tension is one that is often felt but not spoken about; this elephant is probably the one that will make people most uncomfortable.

In conclusion…we have much work to do! Without critical examination of these elephants in the room, we have no hope of putting the fundamental principles of child and youth care into solid practice. We need a major paradigm shift in how we work with children and youth, not only those who are minoritized. I am talking about social change that will impact the climate that we live in, that impacts the metaphorical air that we breathe. For some of us, the air is thinner, like on Mount Everest. We have more motivation for change because we experience how the current cultural hegemonic domination, Eurocentric worldviews, and racism choke us, making us gasp for air.

I am also mustering up every ounce of courage to speak about this because it is not easy saying these things to you [a largely white audience]. I don't want to offend; however, I do want to agitate for social change. My job here as a keynote speaker is to make you think and to be provocative. If child and youth care, as a field, really wants to make a difference in the increasingly pluricultural social fabric in Canada, we must address these elephants in the room.

Much of our curriculum and practice in the child and youth care field is based on a Eurocentric worldview, even though we might think we are contesting it. It falls on

some more than others, those who see the elephants, to address them via curriculum or in our personhoods to teach critical theory. Without critical examination, we do become perpetuators of the uncontested social norm.

We know that there are many minoritized people who are desperately trying to "fit in" in an attempt to belong to a society that claims tolerance and acceptance. We know that "fitting in" does not mean the same thing as "belonging". We also know that there is lots of goodwill and an existential search for meaning making. How can we in child and youth care educate ourselves to get our heads out of the sand, lest we deny so many people their rightful place in shaping Canada's future humanscape in a good way?

When will we in child and youth care see the elephants that threaten the very future of those with whom we work? How can we inspire hope and meaning in their lives when we won't commit to authentic personal change ourselves? When will we be outraged enough that we start thinking past our own interests? I know that many of us feel overwhelmed by the prospect of such looming threats to our very existence as we know it. We must take courageous leadership if we want to be relevant change makers. We must stop working against each other. The tremendous potential for us in child and youth care to influence the next generation of children, and their families and communities, is astounding. We cannot afford to alienate each other, we cannot have our own internal battles between theory and practice, between knowers and doers, between whites and non-whites. We must co-exist to fight a much larger battle. We need pragmatics as much as we need thought leadership.

So what to do? Here is a quote from Audre Lorde (2007, p. 138) that says it all:

> There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle
> because we do not live single-issue lives
> – Audre Lorde

Intersectional Practice

How can child and youth care take a lead role that combines theory and practice in a way that is both intellectually rigorous and practical? How do we become or remain pragmatic and relevant human service providers if we do not prepare to shape the future? How do we become respectful of the gifts and strengths each person brings instead of judging and loathing each other? Current leaders need to be strategic and invite people to step up, not expect that everyone else share the same feelings of comfort or welcoming in leadership positions. Cultural safety has to be established; otherwise, why would anyone want to step up when elephants in the room are ignored?

I offer the use of intersectional frameworks of praxis as a means to frame our future work as a field. Some people find this approach to be dangerously close to the anti-oppression frameworks that we often credit to our allied field of social work. I personally have no difficulty with it because I don't believe that it is productive to focus our energies on semantics and territorialism. We have a job to do, let's roll up our sleeves and do it with good spirit, some hard personal work, strategic planning, and political positioning.

An **intersectional framework** insists that we cannot separate race, gender, class, rank, ability, age, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and religion from political, historical, cultural, social, and economic realities. It allows salience of the interlocking aspects of our multiple and textured identities. Intersectionality has been widely featured in social sciences and humanities when considering theoretical concepts, but other fields are not as interested as we are in child and youth care in how this applies in practice. Feminist scholars have done an excellent job in defining intersectional approaches in research methodology (Daly, 1996; McCall, 2005). We are not starting fresh.

As I have reviewed earlier, the starting point is recognizing that there are elephants in the room that must be addressed thoroughly in our field. Child and youth care must not be in the business of custodial care and maintaining the status quo, but in the business of developing responsible, intelligent, and thoughtful citizens and leadership for the future. Traditional Indigenous knowledge holds so much wisdom for our future that we must be willing to seriously and respectfully engage in it without appropriating it. We must be willing to do the hard personal work that is painful and profound.

Cultural diversity, celebration, and ceremony are what we lean towards in this field because it is easier to talk about, not only to the instructors and students but also to the supervisors in practicum and in all our partner agencies. I have the privilege of having both the introduction and advanced practicum seminars so I get to go out into the community regularly. I also continue to work in the field in all sorts of ways so I see how discussions of colonization and racism are avoided and diversity is celebrated at a surface level. I am guilty of feeding into this; it is much easier to celebrate diversity than to identify and rectify racism when creating a relationship!

It is with much discipline that I must strategize to bring awareness starting from where I believe a supervisor and student are at in terms of their racial consciousness. Because the vast majority of our student body and practitioners in the field are white, I have to be so diplomatic to even introduce the discourse of difference, oftentimes aborting it to keep harmony and good relations.

This is a particular challenge for me, especially when we do not have much on diversity in our professional practice areas and competencies. We miss areas of strengths where our minoritized students can shine and where other students can further their

professional skill development. Instead, we operate on what is considered tried and true, which has certainly positively impacted many, while silencing and alienating others.

Recommendations

Culturally responsive pedagogy

I recommend that we have a more culturally responsive pedagogical approach to our curriculum. This means that we do not just "add culture and stir" and expect the racialized or sexualized minorities to represent "their people". We know that these approaches of representation, marginalization, and tokenism do not work; however, they are still practiced unintentionally. We know that this is a poor way to practice in the field and yet we see this all the time. In culturally responsive pedagogy, we start off with deconstructing what is already known and held to be true. It is wholly ineffective, however, if the instructor has no idea how to do this.

Professional development opportunities

This is why I recommend that we create professional development opportunities for instructors and practitioners and especially supervisors in the field to get versed in intersectional practice frameworks and decolonization. I also recommend that we dedicate a future child and youth care conference to intersectional practice. I see that many of the sessions in this conference are skirting the edges of it and some are right in the middle! This is exciting to see in our field and I ask that we give more credibility to those cutting edge voices that are likely modelling good practice. What I see often is that good practice is being done, but we have no measure of it in our dated notions of professional practice areas and competencies.

Revise professional practice areas and competencies

I recommend that a group of national representatives work on developing a new set of professional practice areas that are grounded in both theory and practice. Without a national movement to incorporate and shift to a more sophisticated form of practice, we will remain struggling to be recognized as a bona fide human service field in practice circles. We need to work collaboratively and strategically.

Encourage research

I hope that my talk has inspired graduate students to think about intersectional framework for practice as a potential **research** topic. We need so much research in this area. Combining it with the fine work that is already being done by brilliant graduate

students and professors, I have great hope that it will truly shape the direction of the child and youth care field, both in intellectual leadership and in community practice.

Decolonize the profession

The central paradigm shift must start with our own personhoods. We must decolonize ourselves. For some of you, the discovery myth of Canada is evident and incontestable. For those of you who are still convinced that Canada was founded on principles of fairness and equity to the Indigenous people, well…you have a little further to go.

For me, the starting point is to recognize the history of Canada from a different lens that is not the one of the dominant narrative. The dominant narrative continues to influence our children and youth through textbooks and curriculum, is reinforced by uncritical teachers, and then further validated through standardized provincial tests, at least in British Columbia. Anyone wanting to become a Canadian citizen is forced to study from a book that romanticizes Indigenous peoples as long-lost people of the past with little acknowledgement of the cultural genocide that was the result of assimilation policies and actions like the residential schools and the Sixties scoop (Assembly of First Nations, 2008; Indigenous Foundations, 2011).

Imagine a time when Canadians can take collective accountability and responsibility for the history and rectify it with better practices, policies, and politicians! Imagine how the health and wellness of Canada would prosper if we levelled the playing field and actually addressed the institutional inequities. Imagine a time when we stop thinking Canada is so morally superior to the United States when we're not…or maybe just a little. Imagine a time when we can actually say activism without calling it advocacy because we are no longer afraid of "radical ideas".

When I get called a radical, I laugh a lot and cry a little. I do not consider myself radical. I consider myself pragmatic. I cannot see how we can continue in the same old ways when we know that the Earth cannot sustain us at this rate, it just does not make sense to me. So if that's what a radical is, then so be it. I'm good with that.

I started this talk by acknowledging the land and the elders from whom I have learned such a great deal. I want to end with my gratitude to those who are here. I want to thank my parents for being here today from Vancouver. They taught us to incorporate the best of the two cultures. They raised us to be bicultural, comfortable with the hyphen between Korean ancestry and Canadian citizenship.

Contrary to popular Asian stereotypes, our parents never pushed us to be more academic. They pushed us only to live mindfully and with compassion, to put in our best effort, to stand up to injustice, and to be well-rounded human beings. The most important lesson they taught us was to understand the paradox of life: that happiness cannot come

without sadness and suffering; that the human body is fragile, but the human spirit is robust and indomitable.

They were both born during the Japanese occupation and went through the Korean War when they were adolescents. They have experienced human cruelty, colonization, and occupancy. It was only as an adult that I appreciated how incredibly resistant and resilient they were. I don't go a day without thanking them for their spiritual, intellectual, and emotional guidance and mostly for their unconditional love. It has not always been like this, but since I became a parent myself and saw their perspective on what is required for optimal child development.

I ask that we all be kinder and gentler with each other and not take each other for granted. Let us not lose our humanity and compassion in our quest to show the world how smart and clever we are. Let us not forget that as we have the privilege to be here today, that there are children and youth who are living horrific lives here in Canada and around the world at this very moment. Let us not forget that social justice means nothing if we don't fight for justice for all. Let us fight the good fight together. I leave you with another quote that inspires me to think of the future in my work today:

> What we have is because someone stood up before us. What our Seventh Generation will have is a consequence of our actions today.
> – Winona LaDuke, Annishnabe

Thank you all for listening to me today, it has been my honour. *Kamsahamnida.*

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