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Editorial: Assessment practices with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[Assessment practices with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities](#)

As has been intergenerationally storied and restored by Elders, Knowledge and Language Keepers, families, and communities on lands now known within dominant narratives as Canada, Hawaii, New Zealand, the United States (and more), Indigenous peoples have always known how to educate their children. This eBook draws on the Land/Place relationships, experiences, languages, and knowledge of diverse peoples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestries to explore understandings of assessment making. Assessment making is a holistic process shaped by desires to sustain and grow a child's, youth's, or adult learner's ongoing educative/healthy life-making within, between, across family, community, and schooling places. Highlighted throughout this eBook are ways teachers and teacher educators might live ethical relationality (Donald, 2016) with Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, youth, and adult learners by shifting toward assessment making lived out as a pedagogy of *pimosayta* (walking together in a good way) (Young, 2005).

Oral and personal stories (Littlechild, 1993; Jordan-Fenton and Pokiak-Fenton, 2011; Wagamese, 2012) and research have long noted the damage Western forms of education and assessment shape in the experiences, and therefore the identity making and life making, of children, youth, adult learners, families, and communities of Indigenous ancestry (Ermine, 1995; Battiste and Henderson, 2000; Cardinal, 2011, 2015; Young et al., 2012; Battiste, 2013; Swanson, 2013). Given the dominant colonial narratives of accountability that persist in schools and universities, too often assessment focuses on the learning deficits of Indigenous peoples (Peltier, 2017). This orientation demeans and ignores the educational aspirations of Indigenous peoples, because it fails to take into account the difference between Indigenous holistic ways of knowing and colonial ways. While there are calls for educators to promote cultural differences, appreciation, and success through cultural competence acquisition in children's autonomous learning

processes and to include essential aspects of Indigenous education, such as values and knowledge of Indigenous peoples' experiences, perspectives, and worldviews, these calls are seldom heeded within current school or university cultures of accountability (Bouvier and Karlenzig, 2006; Rameka, 2007; Claypool and Preston, 2011; Peltier, 2017). A focus on Indigenous holistic ways of knowing leads to the development of assessment making that is more meaningful and in harmony with Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) children's, youth's, and adult learner's learning as a deeply contextual, dynamic, intergenerational, and inter-relational process.

This eBook offers important opportunities to think alongside. Ball who emphasizes that "we need to show that we value diversity, not only in our rhetoric, but in our everyday practices, including how we assess children's learning and development" (p. 8).

Brown's stories and analysis that make visible how an educator can listen deeply and make spaces for emergence and possibility for all of the beings who form the context of a child's learning, and in doing so, seeing all as co-educators and co-learners.

Huber et al. who seek to deepen reader's understanding of assessment that centers Pimatisiwin (walking in a good way) and Pimosayta (walking together in good ways) by attending to the everyday assessment making pedagogies of children and families.

Peltier who shows how Indigenous Knowledge opens up colonial forms of assessment to situate children as capable and whose growth needs to be understood much more broadly than merely as academic achievement in schools.

Preston and Claypool who discuss what assessment could look like with Indigenous learners, describing that these possibilities need to involve dynamic forms, consider diverse worldviews, and sustained professional development, and align more closely with the cultural ways of knowing of the child/youth.

Rameka who speaks to the potential of Kaupapa Māori assessment, which builds upon the vital role of Māori philosophical and epistemological understandings in the struggle for educational equity for Māori peoples in Aotearoa's, (New Zealand's) education system.

Shultz and Englert who draw on critical race theory, TribalCrit, culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy, culturally responsive schooling, and culturally relevant education to offer understandings of the need for "cultural validity...as the foundation of an appropriate assessment for Native students" (p. 3). Key, too, is their desire to lift "sovereign pedagogies" (p. 4).

Stavrou who highlights ways the teachers he worked with embodied miyo-pimohtwen, a process guided by eight principles

supported by kohtawān (our spiritual being) that shaped their assessment practices.

Steinhauer who offers rich and multidimensional processes for privileging Indigenous language thought systems. She shows that if we begin to honor and privilege Nehiyaw māmītonēyihcikan—the Cree mind—then assessment and educational practices will be grounded within a compassionate mind, and a values based way of seeing, and living.

Tulloch et al. who highlight four key threads that emerged from their inquiry alongside teacher, community, university, and government co-researchers: 1) Ensuring community-established goals for language learning; 2) Using the Inuktitut language for everyday communication; 3) Involving parents and community members through school-situated events and displays of children's learning of the language; and 4) The desires expressed by teachers, students, and community members for Inuktitut learning and assessment to be land-situated.

White who opens potential to think about what kind of future we wish for our children and for the next seven generations by taking us on a journey through her familial stories. She offers ways to think deeply about the differences between western and Indigenous educational practices.

Author contributions

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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