

Challenging Canadian Citizenship and Identity: Re-Imagining New Narratives of Belonging

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“No pride’: Growing calls to cancel Canada Day amid residential schools discovery” (*Global News*, June 28th, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7986663/cancel-canada-day-2021-residential-schools/>)

“Statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II torn down in Canada” (*BBC*, July 2, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57693683>)

“Done with Dundas: Toronto to remove racist figure’s name from streets, infrastructure” (*Global News*, July 15th, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/video/8032648/done-with-undas-toronto-to-remove-racist-figures-name-from-streets-infrastructure>)

“Reports of Anti-Asian hate crimes are surging in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic,” (*CTV News*, March 20th, 2021), <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/reports-of-anti-asian-hate-crimes-are-surgin-in-canada-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-1.5351481>

The news stories above illustrate some significant contemporary issues in Canada, which can be linked together as a challenges to understandings of Canadian identity and citizenship, whose causes are historically rooted and closely weaved to Citizenship Education programs, which have emphasized narrow and exclusionary nation-building narratives. Canadian identity and citizenship have been continuously subject to contention since “Canada” was carved out on lands housing rich and diverse Indigenous cultures. The papers in this edition critically consider this history and contemporary Citizenship Education programs and materials, providing spaces for new conceptions of the meaning of citizenship and identity in 21st century Canada that will, in turn, provide spaces for the development of reimagined and inclusive Citizenship Education programs in schools that respond to our current challenges.

Exclusionary and positive nation-building narratives have been taught—and continue to be taught—in schools, as the papers in this edition illustrate, with the aim of stitching together European colonies in ways that have been (and continue to be) exclusionary to some groups, such as Indigenous Canadians and racial and ethnic minorities. At this time, as the headlines above illustrate, Canadians are confronting their past and are in confusion about who is a Canadian and what Canada is about. The papers in this edition open ways to explore and consider diverse Canadians’ perceptions of citizenship and identity and Citizenship Education, as foundations for the development of more inclusive Citizenship Education programs in schools.

This edition begins with Cao’s perspective piece which illustrates the problematizing of contemporary Citizenship and Citizenship Education narratives and perspectives through a theoretical discussion of Critical Race Theory and Social Constructivism that provide ways of deconstructing thinking and narratives that are historically-developed and embedded in social inequalities and power. This deconstruction opens spaces to reimagine how we understand Citizenship Education, which Cao connects to Global Citizenship Education with a focus on relationships, critical thinking, inclusion of diverse perspectives and actions that strive towards making the world more just and democratic.

Trevor Gulliver’s paper follows Cao’s and connects past Canadian historical narratives and inequities to the present by discussing how racism continues in Canada today through denials of racism. Gulliver describes and discusses social media comments discussing the findings of unmarked graves at former Residential Schools in Canada and develops a typology of various forms of denial of racism. Gulliver’s paper illustrates how various ways of denying past historical wrongs make

confronting the past challenging, supporting the need for critical deconstruction of thinking and the narratives we may be unwittingly a part of.

Thus, the first two papers of this edition critically explore and deconstruct notions of what it means to be a citizen in Canada today and how ideas of citizenship are socially and historically constructed and rooted in inequality and power and narratives that are exclusionary, yet justified, through beliefs about citizenship. Taciana de Lira e Silva's paper, which won CERN's Best Graduate Student Paper Award in 2020, illustrates how these inequities are illustrated and embedded in school curricula. Her paper discusses a comparative analysis carried out on the ESL and FSL curriculum for Grades 9-12 in Ontario and finds that the curriculum doesn't promote global citizenship education but rather focuses on preparation for jobs. The paper concludes with recommendations for revising curricula in Ontario in order to develop students' Global citizenship values and understanding of human interconnectedness, illustrating how language learning can provide opportunities for students to develop intercultural competence and become global citizens. De Lira e Silva's paper thus describes contemporary social inequalities found in—and supported through—school curricula and provides an alternative that aims towards developing a new conception of citizenship rooted in care, connection and intercultural understanding.

Wiebe's paper that follows cautions us to consider how Global Citizenship and Global Citizenship Education are theorized, as Global Citizenship discourse can be embedded and framed in neoliberal discourses. Weaving in public comments from a discussion board in Canada, Wiebe continues this edition's focus on critically exploring what we believe about citizenship, why we might believe this, and what the implications of our thinking are. She concludes her paper with suggestions about how we might reframe our thinking about Global Citizenship Education rooted in alternative epistemological perspectives that honor local place and Indigenous understandings.

Gaius' paper concludes this collection by also providing us with an alternative way of thinking about and framing Citizenship Education as/through local-global, hands-on, place-based education that draws from Dewey's work and aims to develop students' local and global citizenship, their sense of care and connection to others and their natural and social world, as well their sense of agency. Gaius argues that this form of place-based education not only develops local and global mindedness in children, but also develops 21st century skills, academic and cross-disciplinary knowledge and better prepares children to manage the complexities and uncertainties of our current world, opening spaces for hope and positive change.

The papers in the edition thus highlight issues with citizenship in Canada today that are illustrated in the news headlines at the beginning of this preface, while providing new possibilities for critically exploring and reframing how citizenship and Citizenship Education are understood and taught in Canada. Their work has implications for the kind of society youth understand Canada to be, and how they act, in an uncertain and complex world rooted in past injustices but with the potential to move towards new possibilities.