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The acclimation of historical thinking to the "northern spirit" of northern Canadian social studies curricula

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Abstract

This article details our findings from the Thinking Historically for Canada's Future project, wherein we conducted a descriptive survey of selected social studies curricula from the Canadian territories of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. Examining documents published between 1996 and 2021, we sought evidence of the presence of second-order historical thinking concepts. We found that certain principles of historical thinking were being acclimated to purposes and pedagogies evident in five themes that characterize and distinguish the history education in northern curricula: 1) history education as cultural reclamation; 2) reconciliation and resistance framings; 3) linear and cyclical models of time; 4) the role of non-human beings; and 5) student-centred, experiential learning. We provide empirical examples of how curriculum authors in Canada's northern territories integrate tenets of Indigenous education, incorporating knowledges, languages and cultures relevant to northern communities, while nested in a curricular system grappling with colonial and Euro-Canadian roots and ongoing influences. Northern social studies education pursues historical thinking while acclimating itself to the goals and aspirations embodied by "northern spirit."

Keywords

History education, historical thinking, social studies curriculum, Indigenous knowledges, curriculum analysis

1 Introduction

The work of Peter Seixas and his colleagues (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015; Peck & Seixas, 2008; Seixas, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013) in theorizing and crystalizing a set of six historical thinking concepts to support history instruction is prevalent in the curriculum documents and classrooms of most Canadian provinces and territories (Clark, 2018; 2019; 2024; Seixas & Colyer, 2014). Curriculum scholars, however, have identified potential shortcomings in the historical thinking approach to history education, with respect to how it may silence, undermine, constrain, misinterpret, or crowd out Indigenous voices and historical meaning-making (Cutrara, 2018; Gibson & Case, 2019; Karn, Llewellyn & Clark, 2024; Marker, 2011; McGregor, 2017; Miles, 2018; Wallace-Casey, 2022). This is particularly salient for settler-colonial states like Canada, where public schooling has played

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a significant role in shaping the country's development by attempting to assimilate Indigenous culture according to white, Eurocentric, universal, and Western norms (Battiste, 2013; Carleton, 2022; Kirkness, 1999). Fundamental questions remain about the use of historical thinking concepts in teaching contexts that serve predominantly Indigenous communities, which privilege local, place-based knowledges and cultural practices. The relationship between Indigenous knowledge and historical thinking in history or social studies classrooms is a theoretical and practical problem compounded by the absence of recent empirical reviews of the curricula in predominantly Indigenous contexts such as the three northern Canadian territories (Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut).

This article describes our findings from analyzing selections of social studies curricula from Canada's northern jurisdictions as part of the Thinking Historically for Canada's Future (THFCF)[1] project. The THFCF project, led by Dr. Carla Peck at the University of Alberta and funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Partnership Grant, is the first major national review of K-12 Canadian social studies and history curriculum since 1968. Heather McGregor is a project co-investigator, and Harrison Dressler worked on the project as a researcher from 2023 to 2025. The THFCF project analyzed at least two history and social studies curriculum documents from each province or territory then in use in classrooms by educators (see also Karn, Llewellyn, & Clark, 2024). We analyzed a sub-set of curricular selections from the northern territories using the methodological approach of the national project framework. To select the curricula for our analysis, Heather first created an inventory of northern social studies curricula and then examined how each was written and by whom. Since our goal was to analyze curricula produced by northern authors specifically for northern teaching and learning audiences and contexts, we prioritized made-in-the-North curriculum documents. This selective approach was necessary because territorial governments can lack the capacity and economies of scale required to create proprietary curricula, driving them to adapt, or sometimes adopt wholesale, curricular guidelines from other Canadian jurisdictions.

The analysis of made-in-the-North curriculum documents offers insight into how educational authorities serving predominantly Indigenous populations in rural and remote locations engage with historical thinking concepts and integrate them into curricula, often using storytelling practices, ecological concepts, and land-based education. As shown below, historical thinking approaches to history and social studies education are not merely transported into the curriculum indiscriminately, nor are they used to the exclusion of Indigenous knowledges. In applying a European model of historical thinking to the curricula of Canada's northern territories, we found our analysis would be overly reductive if formulated as a checklist of the presence or absence of the six historical thinking concepts. Instead, our primarily descriptive survey shows that the authors worked to acclimate—that is, to integrate, reappropriate, adapt, or synthesize—second-order historical thinking concepts using local Indigenous content from history, philosophy, culture, and politics. Our purpose is to describe the unique offerings of these northern curricular documents, allowing future curriculum developers to mediate the tensions of diverse theoretical influences, rather than to problematize the historical thinking framework or Indigenous knowledges as such.

We begin the article by setting the curriculum documents in historical context, showing how northern education systems have pursued distinct objectives in curriculum and education policy. Then, we outline the methodology used to examine keywords, content, pedagogical approaches, and the roles of teachers regarding historical thinking. Understanding the difficulties inherent in applying a rigid model of historical thinking to predominantly Indigenous curricula, we decided that our responses to the research prompts could be used for showcasing what stories the documents tell us about the place of history and historical consciousness in northern educational priorities. Our content and critical discourse analysis identifies five themes specific to northern curricula: (1) history education as cultural reclamation; (2) reconciliation and resistance framings; (3) the interplay of linear and cyclical models of time; (4) the role of non-human beings; (5) and student-centred, experiential learning. We highlight that the social studies education courses of Canada's northern jurisdictions, which are embedded with Indigenous knowledge systems and aspirations, pursue the acclimation of second-order historical thinking concepts in locally-specific ways. Throughout nearly all the documents, we can identify the will of Indigenous northerners to sustain their collective "Northern spirit," defined by the Government of the Northwest Territories (2015) as the "spirit that will be fundamental in creating a sense of belonging for each one of our students as he or she engages in active and responsible citizenship locally, nationally, and globally" (p. 1).

1 See the project website: thinking-historically.ca

1.1 Author positionality

Heather was born and raised in Canada's North to white settler parents, who were both involved in northern teaching and educational administration. She worked for the Department of Education in Nunavut on curriculum and policy initiatives for several years, in addition to conducting research on educational change over time. Heather does not speak Indigenous languages, nor carry Indigenous cultural knowledges, although her prior scholarship has intended to document the processes of infusing public education in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut with those knowledges, languages, cultural practices and ways of being (McGregor, H. E., 2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2013, 2017; McGregor, H. E., & McGregor, C. A., 2017; 2020). Her motivation in carrying out this research is to ensure that the complexities and opportunities of the unique educational contexts of the northern jurisdictions are accurately represented in research occurring on a national scale, aiming to yield a national portrait. Harrison is a white settler-Canadian and English speaker who does not purport to represent an Indigenous perspective. He is an independent scholar with limited experience researching the role of the media and public sphere in shaping the resistance of Indigenous nations to state-managed energy projects in New Brunswick. His research is largely shaped by an ecological, non-developmentalist materialism sensitive to the environmental and bodily impacts of colonization and industrialization on Indigenous nations, disabled people, and workers in Canada and elsewhere.

2 Northern Canadian context of curriculum development and selection

The scope of this article does not allow for a comprehensive review of the environmental, political, economic, and educational contexts of Canada's North (see e.g., Fraser, 2024; McGregor & Millar, 2015). Canadian northern populations are largely rural Indigenous peoples, with many communities accessible only through air travel, ice roads, or lengthy highway journeys. Settlement agreements between the Crown and Indigenous nations or peoples have resulted in the right to educational autonomy in many northern contexts, but its implementation is hampered by limited capacity for curricular development, insufficient human resource training, and the entrenched nature of colonial systems. The Indigenous peoples of Nunavut are closely related and politically affiliated (Inuit, Inuvialuit), whereas nations in the Northwest Territories and Yukon are more linguistically and culturally diverse, meaning that one cultural program or set of teaching materials may not align with the beliefs, customs, and practices of all communities. Northern peoples are committed to protecting and stewarding their lands, waters, and Arctic species, but resource extraction industries remain a dominant economic force in the region.

Northern and rural areas of Canada face significant difficulties in retaining a skilled workforce (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010). Reporting from CBC News in 2019—prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic that significantly worsened teacher shortages—suggests that Nunavut was re-hiring 50% of its teaching positions, demonstrating very low rates of retention (Hill, 2019). Many teachers employed in the North are white, Euro-descendent "Southerners" trained in southern universities and schools, who may struggle to relate to or understand northern culture. According to APTN News, out of a total of 682 teachers employed in the Northwest Territories in 2015, only 108 were Indigenous (Kassam, 2015). Other challenges stem from deficits in how northerners receive professional training; even Indigenous teachers familiar with northern culture must navigate manifold challenges with local and cultural integration (Berger, Johnston & Oskineegish, 2016). For instance, northern teachers are most commonly trained in teacher's colleges for K-6 Indigenous language integration rather than middle- or high-school subjects like social studies and history, making in-depth knowledge of Canadian and Indigenous history difficult to acquire. Similarly, since many Indigenous teachers have attended schools and universities that teach predominantly Euro-Canadian and colonial perspectives, they may not have had sufficient opportunity to learn how to deliver social studies content informed by northern values.

2.1 Yukon

Perhaps the most significant, and still largely prospective, change to education in the Yukon happened only in 2021, when 10 out of the 14 Yukon First Nations finalized an agreement with the Government of Yukon to create a First Nations School Board, thereby beginning steps to

administer an autonomous school system (Wallingham, 2021, p. 1). According to numerous final settlement agreements with the Crown, the Yukon First Nations have the right to authority over education and heritage. But, like elsewhere in Canada, the exercise of Indigenous educational rights is constrained by challenges with generating enough capacity to write and replace Euro-Western curricula, as well as retrain teachers, to reflect First Nations language and culture. All schools in the Yukon are using the British Columbia (BC) provincial curriculum. The First Nations Initiatives branch of the Department of Education provides Yukon-specific supplementary materials to the BC curriculum and textbooks at various grade levels. Teacher's Guides and Student Booklets are provided for units on First Nations Clans and First Nations Languages in elementary social studies, which are among the documents selected for our analysis.

2.2 Northwest Territories and Nunavut

Catherine McGregor (2015), in examining the development of the social studies curriculum of the NWT and Nunavut, argues that curricula written in the North at the turn of the twenty-first century could be called "culturally founded." Functioning as an extension and elaboration of what curriculum scholars consider "culturally responsive" approaches—meant to affirm and adapt to the diverse cultures that children bring to school—"culturally grounded" pedagogy is distinct in: "the purposes for teaching; perspectives on, and sources of, knowledge; the depth of cultural content; and the extent to which Indigenous teachers, community members, and Elders are involved as significant knowledge-holders and educators" (McGregor, C. A., 2015, p. 61).

The unique legislation and policy contexts of the NWT and the eastern Arctic region that would become Nunavut in 1999 provided the conditions in which culturally founded curriculum could be created. The highest required social studies credit in secondary school was converted in 1991 from social studies to a grade 10 "Northern Studies" course in the NWT (McGregor, C. A., 2015). The 1990s were a crucial time for the creativity and momentum of the movement for Indigenous-made curriculum and education materials, which propelled the documentation of Elder knowledge across subject areas. When the *Dene Kede* curriculum (reflecting Dene worldviews) and the *Inuuqatigiit* curriculum (for Inuit knowledge) were issued in 1993 and 1996, respectively, they provided foundational understandings of Indigenous languages, worldviews, knowledge, and educational practices in terms of attitudes, training, and life skills. Teachers were expected to refer to these documents but were offered little guidance concerning how and what to teach on a day-to-day basis. As McGregor (2015) observes: "One element was still lacking, however: neither *Inuuqatigiit* nor *Dene Kede* fully explained how teachers reconcile instruction of these curricula with other required social studies documents representing conflicting Euro-Canadian worldviews, content, and skills" (p. 68). Further curriculum work has sought to improve the long-term viability of northern thought and schools by providing teachers with classroom-ready supports and resources. In Nunavut, Elders, Inuit educators and long-term settler teachers are working to bridge the gap between Inuit knowledge frameworks and concrete implementation by developing more in-depth classroom ready materials. Key Inuit values and attitudes—such as respect, harmony, planning, and pursuing the common good—are integrated throughout. Grade 10 social studies curriculum (or Nunavusiutit, as the strand is called in Nunavut) introduced full modules for teachers, focusing on the history of Inuit land claims, the intergenerational impacts of Canadian and northern residential schools, Inuit forms of governance and leadership, and Inuit and Canadian perspectives on rights, responsibilities, and justice.

Critiques of northern curriculum continue to reverberate, however, from teachers, parents, and communities. Commentators allege that schools and governments have yet to sufficiently align the standards of curriculum and teacher training with the social, cultural, and practical knowledge required to live a fulfilling life in the North. These values and habits include a strong sense of identity and belonging, skills in bilingualism or multilingualism, and preparation for entry into what remain predominantly Eurocentric post-secondary educational opportunities (Berger, Johnston & Oskineegish, 2016; Lewthwaite et al., 2013; Sallaffie et al., 2022). Despite the salience of some of these critiques, we intend to spotlight the insights and innovations of the curriculum developers of the northern jurisdictions in producing curricula that reflect the values and aspirations of northern place and people. These curricula are, in many cases, distinct from their southern Canadian counterparts, especially in how they adapt or adopt historical thinking. Although Nunavut, NWT, and Yukon are distinct administratively, socio-politically, culturally, and with reference to curricula, here we carefully construct generalizations that we view as fair across the three territories, in the interest of contributing a northern portrait to a larger national picture of history education.

3 Curriculum documents

Curriculum documents in the territories, like elsewhere in Canada, are updated at varying frequencies across different jurisdictions, depending on political will, policy context, and available resources. It can take a decade or more for a territorial government to update curriculum at any given grade level. The documents under review, published between 1996 and 2021, were being used in classrooms from Grade 4 to Grade 12 as of 2021. As shown in Table 1, they reflect a range of Indigenous worldviews, showcasing the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of their respective jurisdictions. These worldviews include the perspectives of Inuit (or, at times, of Inuvialuit specifically), Yukon First Nations, Dene, and Gwich'in.

Table 1: Curriculum documents selected for analysis from Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut

Grade	Date	Document title	Worldviews	Use of historical thinking	Production influences
			Yukon (YT)		
4[2]	2008	Yukon First Nations – Languages teacher's guide	Yukon First Nations, Moieties: Crow and Wolf, Gwich'in	Absent, uses "critical thinking" framework	
4	2008	Yukon First Nations – Clans teacher's guide		Absent, uses "critical thinking" framework	
12	2020	Yukon First Nations Studies 12: Localization considerations	Yukon First Nations	Present	
			Northwest Territories (NWT)		
5	2011	Canada: The peoples and stories of this land; A curriculum and guide to implementation	Dene (primary First Nation referenced), Inuvialuit & Innuinait	Present, combined with "critical thinking" framework	Adapted from Manitoba education, citizenship, and youth
10	2015	Northern Studies 10: Northern Homeland		Present	
			Nunavut (NU)		
5	1996	Inuuqatigiit: The curriculum from the Inuit perspective	Inuit	Absent (published before historical thinking literature)	
5	2021	Grade 5 2021-22 core curriculum		Absent	
10	2014	Inuuqatigiitsiarniq: Seeking harmony; Teacher's handbook 10-1		Present	The skills and competencies are "borrowed from other provinces, primarily Alberta" (p. 21)

2 Although the documents themselves refer to grade 5 in their title, as of 2021 they were listed for grade 4 use in the Yukon's inventory of curriculum.

3.1 Pedagogical guidance in documents

Some documents considered curriculum for the purposes of this study function as more than a list of learning outcomes, offering teachers in-depth content, guidance, and pedagogical support, given the challenges retaining well-trained staff in northern schools, as discussed above. The documents sometimes contain, for example, fleshed-out lesson plans, as well as advice on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and educational practices in the classroom. While these detailed guides may depart from what is traditionally expected of curriculum documents in other jurisdictions, for the purposes of our analysis, they provided important contextual information that deepened our understanding of the intentions of the curriculum developers in producing uniquely northern lessons and pedagogy.

4 Historical thinking analysis framework & method

The curriculum documents were analyzed for historical thinking using a content and critical discourse approach (see also Karn et al., 2024). The analysis protocol was developed by multiple researchers involved in the THFCF project and applied consistently across the documents from all Canadian jurisdictions. It was not developed specifically for, nor adapted to, northern or predominantly Indigenous jurisdictions, nor customized for the inquiry we feature here. The protocol consisted of a series of questions indicated in Table 2 and a list of keywords indicated in Table 3. These questions were crafted to loosely resemble the structure of the six second-order historical thinking concepts and associated vocabulary used in classrooms across Canada, constructed and defined in the work of Seixas and Morton (2013).

Table 2: Historical thinking curriculum analysis protocol (January 2022)

	Analysis question
1	What is the view of history in this curriculum document (e.g., uncontested descriptions of what really happened, historians' interpretations of extant evidence)?
2	In a few sentences, describe how the curriculum explains and/or applies historical thinking.
3	How does the curriculum explain and/or apply historical significance?
4	How does the curriculum explain and/or apply use of evidence and interpretation? Are primary sources provided for student inquiries? Does the curriculum emphasize contextualization, corroboration and sourcing?
5	How does the curriculum explain and/or apply the concepts of continuity and change? Does it refer to related concepts such as periodization or progress and decline?
6	How does the curriculum explain and/or apply the concepts of cause and consequence? Does it refer to related concepts such as historical actors or historical agency?
7	How does the curriculum explain and/or apply the concept of historical perspective? Does it present diverse historical perspectives?
8	How does the curriculum explain and/or apply the concept of the ethical dimension? Is the ethical dimension made explicit or is it simply assumed?
9	Does the curriculum include attention to the concept of historical consciousness? If so, in what ways?
10	Does the curriculum provide suggestions for pedagogy to support historical thinking?
11	What are your general comments about this curriculum based on your analysis?

Table 3: Historical thinking keywords examined in curricula

Keywords	Sub-concepts	Further embedded concepts
Competencies		
Historical consciousness		
Historical literacy		
History	Narratives; first-order or substantive concepts; second-order concepts	
Historical thinking	Historical significance	Importance; impact; quantity; durability; relevance to today; resulting in change
	Use of evidence	Interpretation; primary sources (traces; accounts; relics; records) secondary sources; sourcing; contextualizing; corroborating
	Cause and consequence	Short-term and long-term; intended and unintended; not inevitable; historical agency; historical actor(s)
	Continuity and change	Progress and decline; periodization; rate of change; location of change; turning points
	Historical perspective	Historical context/historical empathy; presentism; diverse historical perspectives; factors that shaped lives and actions; motivations
	Ethical dimension	Implicit and explicit; historical context; informed judgments; judge/evaluate; presentism; type of judgment

Further to the questions in Table 2, as indicated by Table 3, there was a keyword analysis step in the methodology, where the analyst looked at the presence, absence, and frequency of keywords or concepts. The appearance of the keywords in the documents were examined for observations related to: noteworthy coupling of words, emphasis of words, exclusion of words, or affirming of wording in visuals/graphics.

To conduct each review, an initial analyst responded to the questions in Table 2 and examined the keywords from Table 3. Then, a secondary review was completed by another analyst. The secondary analyst read the curriculum with the framework questions in mind, examined the work of the first analyst, and then affirmed their findings, added details or examples, or provided contrasting perspectives (each analysis is between 1,900 and 4,000 words). Some curricula were published before Seixas' work on the historical thinking concepts, causing analysts to, at times, adapt or stretch the THFCF project framework to account for the lack of specific references to historical thinking. Harrison was responsible for the secondary analysis of every northern document, and Heather reviewed each final analysis, at times reconciling differences of opinion between the initial and secondary analyst.

Taking stock of the meaning to be made from the use of the historical thinking analysis protocol, we designed the last stage of analysis specifically for this article, resulting in the identification of each of the five themes detailed below. The synthesis was, in each case, informed and guided by at least one, and often two or three, THFCF project questions in Table 2. Due to the exploratory nature of this article, each section of the thematic analysis provides a broad yet granular and textured descriptive survey. Iterative revision, close reading and review led to the detection of "descriptive themes" intended to "stay close" to and remain representative of the curriculum content (Thomas & Harden, 2008). We elucidate how shared or common ideas

and topics are theoretically and practically applied, including but not limited to the role of students, teachers, parents, and the community, the conceptualization of time and space, and the institutional direction or hierarchies of formal schooling.[3] By signposting areas of tension and synthesis, highlighting unique or challenging ideas, and identifying the curriculum's specifically northern characteristics, this article provides insights for curriculum developers working to balance Western models of historical thinking with Indigenous worldviews.

There are several ways in which this research is limited. In terms of evidence, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of a curriculum review in conveying the practical use of curricula in classrooms, or in representing the experiences of teachers and students who are interpreting normative guidelines. The focus on curriculum analysis in this project under the THFCF banner (see also Karn et al., 2024) was later extended to review accompanying learning materials, such as textbooks, and those findings will be published in the future. Another sub-project of THFCF in which Heather was involved pursued interviews with a small number of teachers from each Canadian jurisdiction regarding, among other things, the use of social studies curricula and textbooks in supporting teaching historical thinking. In the future, we could explore the interview data set alongside these findings. However, currently we do not have other forms of empirical data, such as classroom observations, on which to base our claims.

With respect to limitations in drawing conclusions on the construction of contextually-relevant knowledge through schooling, we must note that public education has, across different regions of Canada and throughout different periods of Canadian history, supported a program of racial, cultural, and linguistic assimilation (Carleton, 2022; Curtis, 1988; Di Mascio & Hortop-Di Mascio, 2011; Marker, 2009; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). The historical legacies of schooling for Indigenous children, adolescents, and adults compels us to avoid reductionism and the reproduction of cultural essentialisms, especially given our backgrounds as non-Indigenous settler scholars. Furthermore, the complex task of analyzing curriculum produced in the northern territories using a national project framework intended for use in the provinces was a challenge in itself; analysts were regularly confronted with the difficulties associated with juggling Western and Euro-Canadian historical thinking concepts with Indigenous philosophy and worldviews. While the analysts were particularly concerned with advancing curricular imperatives and modes of analysis that confront the colonial legacies of Canadian schooling, we believe that researchers and practitioners should be reticent to declare that curricular reforms of any kind have resolved, or can resolve, the system's underlying tensions. We believe that historical thinking is embedded in and should be informed by discussions about the respective merits of reconciliation and Indigenous resurgence (Alfred, 2022; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011). Unfortunately, we cannot delve deeply into the theoretical and practical applications of reconciliation and resurgence with respect to Canada's northern territories and Indigenous nations and peoples. By pursuing an open and flexible approach, building upon the strengths of the local people and context, we worked to avoid imposing a strict view of historical thinking that solely privileges fidelity to Seixas' theories. As Glen Coulthard (2014), a political theorist of the Yellowknives-Dene First Nation, located in the NWT, explains:

> [W]hen [normative and] constructivist views of culture are posited as a universal feature of social life and then used as a means to evaluate the legitimacy of Indigenous claims for cultural recognition against the uncontested authority of the colonial state, it can serve to sanction the very forms of domination and inequality that anti-essentialist criticism ought to mitigate. (p. 21)

Promoting a rigid and inflexible approach to curriculum analysis, in prioritizing a set of educational imperatives primarily informed by European theory and philosophy, can reimpose colonial epistemologies onto teachers and students. At the same time, assuming a priori the fundamental incompatibility of Western and Indigenous perspectives can prevent the natural transmission of ideas across cultures—in effect, siloing Indigenous worldviews (Santiago & Dozono, 2022). We are therefore interested in exploring, across both approaches, potential avenues for debate, rupture, and synthesis.

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3 For example, Questions 7, 8, and 9 of the THFCF project framework (Table 2) foreground the ethics of engaging with historical consciousness by illustrating how power and the positionality of the historical subject and historian shape the construction of historical narratives, informing the elaboration of Theme 2, "Reconciliation or Resistance?" Questions 1 and 6 fuel discussions about the periodization and process of history, supporting the synthesis of Theme 3, "linear and cyclical models of time." Questions 3 and 10 centre around the issue of how historical significance is understood and practically applied, leading to the development of Theme 5, "experiential learning through on-the-land, student-centred activities."

5 Literature review

The THFCF project's historical thinking framework, serving as the basis of the curriculum analysis methodology described above, is drawn primarily from the scholarship of the late Peter Seixas (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015; Peck & Seixas, 2008; Seixas, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Drawing from British, American, and German theories and pedagogical practices, Seixas (2017) promoted an approach to history education that eschews rote memorization in favour of instilling in students the conceptual tools, habits, and methods required to recognize and construct informed, evidence-based historical interpretations. Proponents of the historical thinking approach, reconceptualized by Seixas for the Canadian context, contend its pluralistic foundations can allow curriculum designers to extricate the discipline's legacy of, and tendency towards, nationalist and racist undertones, allowing learners to garner a more well-rounded and representative understanding of how various actors conceptualize the past, present, and future (Seixas, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Emphasizing skills and practices over content alone might allow public school curriculum to explore much-neglected topics in Canadian history, including, for example, labour history, disability history, the history of sexuality, gender history, and Indigenous history. As Penney Clark's research documents, the historical thinking approach has been generative and popular in both history education scholarship and curriculum writing across Canada since Seixas' Historical Thinking Project began in 2006 (Clark, 2011; 2018; 2019; 2024; Lévesque & Clark, 2018). Former graduate students of Peter Seixas, students of his collaborators, and other history education scholars across Canada, have since published extensively on historical thinking from dozens of perspectives, producing too many studies to list here.

As mentioned above, critiques of Seixas' model have emerged relative to Indigenous knowledges and educational practices, particularly in terms of its potential to re-entrench nationalist themes, Eurocentric biases, and colonialist narratives (Cutrara, 2018; Marker, 2011). Seixas (2012) was himself doubtful about the compatibility of Indigenous epistemology and historical thinking concepts. While the literature has delineated important differences between the historical thinking approach and Indigenous epistemologies, many scholars argue that both schemas contain helpful guidelines for Canadian and Indigenous educators, particularly when using evidence-based methods of historical analysis (Gibson & Case, 2019; McGregor, 2017; Miles, 2018). The centrality of Indigenous scholarship in guiding the development of history and social studies education is clear, even considering its tendency to avoid commenting on specific models of historical thinking (Dion, 2009; Donald, 2012; Marker, 2019). As Arapaho scholar and former THFCF co-investigator Michael Marker (2019) posits, "If the students of the future learn about Indigenous mindscapes as they learn about the history of colonization that shattered sustainable ways of life, they may gain new insights about the possibilities for being in innovative relationships with plants, animals, humans, and the more-than-humans" (p. 197). Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste, a THFCF project co-investigator, is leading concurrent work to conceptualize approaches to history education better suited to advancing what she calls "trans-systemic approaches" to history curricula, ideas which are yet to be published.

Recognizing the contestations described above, to exclude the northern curricula from this study because the methodology asks questions derived from Seixas' framework of historical thinking would be to leave out an important segment of the country. It would plaster over the complexity of asking what history education is and does in a federation composed of provinces, territories, distinct nations within nations, and a wide variety of publicly funded school systems. For example, Karn et al. (2024), as co-investigators on the THFCF project, drew from the same curricular dataset referred to here, combined with analyses of provincial curricula from other regions of Canada, demonstrating the potential and future utility of this analysis exercise.

At the same time, building on the work of Marker (2011; 2019) and Battiste (2013), we find major issues with asking documents informed in large part by Indigenous knowledge systems to account for their "match" or a one-to-one correspondence with European-derived epistemological frameworks. Rather, even while using European-derived epistemological frameworks in the methodology, we worked to analyze the Indigenous or local, place-based knowledges on their own terms. Thus, this article does not neatly resolve the differences and tensions of European and Indigenous worldviews—if such a goal would even be possible or preferable—but rather gives valuable materials to future curriculum developers responsible for supporting northern schools and pedagogies. The themes we identified could be discretely explored through the literature on Indigenous knowledges related to each theme: history education as cultural reclamation (Brownlie, 2009; Dion, 2009); reconciliation or resistance in education (Styres & Kempf, 2022);

circular notions of time (Fixico, 2024; Marker, 2015); the agency of non-human beings (Simpson 2014; Watts, 2020); and experiential, land-based learning (McCoy et al., 2016; Kress & Horn-Miller, 2023). Each of these themes is not a new feature of Indigenous or northern knowledge systems and teaching and learning approaches. Since belabouring an extensive literature review of these topics would exceed the scope of this article, some references to literature have been threaded through the Discussion and Conclusion sections to wed these themes with the Indigenous voices who can say more about them.

Extending from and building upon the existing literature, our study offers empirical analyses of the curricula of multiple northern jurisdictions, with a focus on how they engage predominantly Indigenous learners in a public-school context. Our project aims to spark much-needed discussions among teachers, education researchers, and curriculum writers about how different frameworks for history education can enable meaningful, place-responsive learning without flattening complexity and difference.

6 Thematic findings

In this section, we summarize the five identified themes, providing examples and evidence from the documents. For brevity, and given the large number of references, we refer to each document throughout our analysis by its jurisdiction abbreviation (YT, NWT, NU) and grade level, rather than by its full title.

6.1 History education as cultural reclamation

Most northern curricula demonstrate a commitment to reclaiming or perpetuating the traditional practices of local Indigenous cultures. Practices of cultural reclamation allow educators to showcase the linkages between Indigenous worldviews and present-day realities, including but not limited to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural consequences of colonization. These discussions familiarize students with historical thinking concepts like continuity and change, the ethical dimension, and historical significance, which are present in the curricula, albeit to varying degrees. Students might wonder, and teachers might ask: Why are people in the North concerned with preserving elements of traditional Indigenous culture, and how might their efforts compare to Euro-Canadian projects of nationalism and nation-building? How might someone celebrate the traditional values and authentic practices of Indigenous nations or peoples while valuing the experiences and identities of people from diverse backgrounds?[4]

Two curriculum documents—NWT10 and NU10—underscore the sense of common values shared by northern Indigenous nations by connecting histories of survival and adaptation to present-day concerns about environmental stewardship. Both documents explore a kind of pan-northern historical consciousness that, at times, transcends the temporal boundaries of disciplinary history. Whereas NWT10 explores a "common Northern spirit" (p. 1) rooted in the "connectedness" (p. 9) and "incredible resilience and courage [of northern culture and history]" (p. 3), NU10 identifies several "natural laws" that Inuit "have always followed." These natural laws include: "working for the common good," "having respect for all living things," "maintaining harmony," and "planning for the future" (p. 19). Still, the curricula refrain from portraying Dene, and Inuit peoples as unchanging or static. As NWT10 states, "our Northern culture and history are not artifacts of the past" (p. 4). Students are expected to participate in the "evolving future" (p. 3) of a "democratic and pluralistic Northern society" (p. 9). Likewise, in NU10, students "understand that societies are dynamic and change over time" (p. 29).

NU5 and YT4 provide a foundational, traditionalist style of pedagogy, which explores the ethical values, practical skills, and traditional knowledge necessary to thrive in a northern rural society. NU5 explores a "true Inuit essence" (pp. 4–5) and privileges the views of Elders, who are "almost the only ones who have the knowledge of traditional skills and language" (p. 47). Students consider how: the introduction of waged labour affected the social roles of men, boys, women, and girls (pp. 51, 55, 59, 63); traditional shamanistic practices were displaced by modern medicine (p. 71); Inuit legal structures were altered by colonial intervention (p. 75); and traditional Inuit fishing, whaling, and trapping practices were affected by international regulations

4 Specific questions asked by NU10 include: "How has the economy changed over the years?"; "How has the [Inuit] lifestyle changed over the years?"; "What was important to Inuit in the past?"; "What is important to Inuit today?"; "When did Inuit travel and why?" (p. 36).

and the penetration of the market (p. 125). Likewise, YT4 foregrounds the "traditional laws" of the Yukon First Nations (Clans, pp. 9, 71), with kinship networks functioning to "[keep the] language and culture [of the Inuit and Yukon First Nations] alive" (Languages, p. 37). The curriculum is framed as a response to the decline of traditional Indigenous culture: "Today, all Yukon First Nations languages face extinction" (Languages, p. 9). It uses creation stories to strengthen the foundational ethical mores of Yukon First Nations (Clans, p. 10; Languages, pp. 50–61), encouraging students to attend dances (Languages, pp. 9, 41), recreate potlaches (Clans, p. 65), meet artists (Clans, p. 77), watch dancers in costumes (Clans, p. 73), and identify regalia (Clans, p. 10, 75).

The cultural generalizations and essentializations on which the curricula rely can pose concerns and may demand sensitivity or adaptation on the part of each teacher, especially given present understandings surrounding the fluidity and complexity of identity. For example, despite how NU5 celebrates the contributions of women, girls, men, and boys to Inuit society, its understanding of sex and gender is relatively fixed. Whereas women are "raised to nurture" and have "authority in the home" (p. 51), "men provide food and other things [like money] for their families" (p. 55). Similarly, YT4 states that children were traditionally expected to revere authority, exhibit "appropriate behaviour," and remain silent, obedient, and reserved (Clans, pp. 41, 45, 49, 87; Languages, pp. 43, 105, 107, 118). Regardless of how one responds to these claims, the dominance of Euro-descendent cultural knowledges and practices, even in northern communities, are being met by the curricula with Indigenous supplements and alternatives.

6.2 Reconciliation or resistance?

Northern curricula encourage students to engage with histories of colonization; each document can be positioned along a spectrum between reconciliation and resistance. Reconciliation framings within the documents promote a collective rights-based political program that encourages the co-existence of Indigenous nations and settler-Canadians, whereas resistance framings emphasize the structural nature of colonial violence, illuminating its operation in the present. The issue of Indigenous-settler relations encourages students to consider, to varying degrees of effectiveness, questions relating to historical thinking concepts like historical perspectives, the ethical dimension, and cause and consequence. The implicit categories of reconciliation and resistance, which are permeable and non-exclusive within the documents, help students investigate the relationship between structure and agency. That is, students consider the ethical and emotional dynamics of colonial violence, charting its evolution from the past to the present. Students might wonder, and teachers might ask: Which economic, cultural, and political factors motivated settler-Canadians to pursue control over Indigenous territory? How might Indigenous nations, settler-Canadians, and the federal government choose to respond today, and how will the legacy of historical events condition these responses?

Both NWT10 and NU10 promote a reconciliation framing of Indigenous-Canadian relations, in that they adopt a collective rights-based approach to politics, encourage community-led initiatives, and promote healing between Indigenous nations and Canadian settlers. For example, NWT10 highlights the importance of "participating in the political process" and valuing "democratic ideals such as equality, freedom, rights, and responsibilities" (p. 7). It encourages students to "engage in community life" (p. 2) and "strengthen the critical relationship between the community and the school" (p. III). The response of Northerners to contemporary political issues, the curriculum contends, will promote "healing and reconciliation" (p. 25). Second, NU10 investigates concepts like "rights, responsibilities and justice through an Inuit perspective," encouraging the "participation [of students] in the political and electoral processes [*sic*]" (pp. 13, 28). The curriculum intends to develop "responsible citizens" who "[contribute] to their community" (p. 25). These discussions are, ultimately, meant to promote "reconciliation and healing" (p. 31). The approaches taken by NWT10 and NU10 during their discussions of the harms of colonization offer different answers to the question of structure and agency. NU10 focuses on the residential school system, which it describes as a "dramatic and tragic period of Canadian history" (p. 14), perhaps insinuating that patterns of colonial violence have since ended. NWT10 stresses that colonial violence operates in the present, stating that actors can "[redress] past wrongs." The "impact[s]" of colonization were "powerful and sometimes negative," the curriculum states, and "many colonial policies are still in existence today" (pp. 3, 25, 28).

In contrast, YT12 can be said to use a resistance framing, as the document asserts that colonial structures are embedded in Canada's "political, social, and economic [institutions]" and critiques its "legacies of colonialism" (p. 1). These legacies include: "intergenerational trauma," inequitable access to "housing, education, and employment," and "missing and Murdered [*sic*]

Indigenous women and girls" (p. 7). The curriculum details the "provincial and federal government policies and practices that have affected, and continue to affect, the responses of Yukon First Nations to colonialism" (p. 1). In upholding ethical values like "self-governance" and "self-determination," the curriculum encourages students to struggle against "ongoing colonialism" (p. 1) and "disrupt [...] social violence" (p. 4)—for example, through "protests" for "ecological justice," exemplified by the "Idle No More" movement (p. 9).

6.3 Linear and cyclical models of time

The curriculum documents borrow from Indigenous and Western epistemologies to integrate elements of both linear and cyclical understandings of time and space. These representations of culture and history, especially when complemented by thoughtful engagement with competing perspectives—for example, through storytelling, philosophy, and science—may align with historical thinking concepts like historical perspectives, continuity and change, and cause and consequence. Discussions of time, if complemented by detailed guidelines for educators grounded in historical analysis, could help students question how subjective experiences are conditioned by place and circumstance. Students might wonder, and teachers might ask: Is time scientific and objective, measured exclusively by globally dominant technologies like clocks, watches, and calendars? Or, from a more sociological view, is time slippery and socially constructed, shaped by a culture's underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions?

Three documents—YT12, NU5, and NWT10—foreground cyclical understandings of history. Cyclical models emphasize the experiential, qualitative, and relational elements of time, often through discussions of ecological processes. First, YT12 introduces an "indigenous concept of time," described as "spiraling versus linear." The oral tradition "shapes identity and connects to the past, present, and future," thereby providing "guiding principles for living" (p. 6). Second, NU5 merges past and present verb tenses to explore the non-linearity of history, a strategy we interpret as attempting to "create a link between past and present" (p. 5). Finally, NWT10 criticizes Western disciplinary history, which "tries to organize events in order, with dates and blocks of time, and to write these things down" (p. 13). According to the curriculum document, "Dene ways of knowing history place more value on the living of the events themselves, and on the role of the listener in giving that history meaning" (p. 14). The non-linearity of time and the relational qualities of storytelling, the curriculum suggests, means that creation stories "live in [the] past, present and future simultaneously" (p. 20).

Two curricula—NU10 and NWT5—borrow certain elements from both Western and Indigenous traditions, integrating their precepts to varying degrees. First, NU10 recognizes linear time by framing itself as a "journey through an arc of change for Inuit in Canada"; it develops a three-stage periodization thesis, which "begins with the period of Inuit independence and self-sufficiency," reaches its midpoint with the "challenges of colonization," and concludes with "Inuit leaders reclaim[ing] their land and their rights" (p. 13). Second, NWT5 adopts a mixed approach that encourages students to organize events chronologically but nonetheless criticizes Western models of linear time. While the curriculum criticizes Western disciplinary history for "tr[ying] to organize events in order, with dates and blocks of time," it tends to prioritize the agency of settler-Canadians while relegating Indigenous figures to passive roles. According to the curriculum, whereas Europeans "explor[ed]" and "developed roots" in Canada, overseeing its "development [...] as a nation," Indigenous nations merely "inhabited" the territory, "a vast land rich in natural resources." Indeed, in focusing on "how the history and geography of this land has shaped Canadians," the curriculum either assumes that Indigenous nations are an ethnic minority within a larger Canadian identity or claims that land has not impacted Indigenous leaders and their communities (p. 27).[5]

6.4 The role of non-human beings

Most of the curricula include discussions about the environment that centre around the role of non-human beings—including plants and animals, as well as weather events and earth systems like the wind, water, and sky—in ecology, social life, and storytelling practices. By conceiving of the land as providing the basis for all life on earth, the curriculum documents present a networked understanding of historical change in which the economy and society are necessarily

5 The sections that emphasize Indigenous contributions and self-determination are considerably shorter: "They [students] explore the origins of First Peoples and their ways of life before and after European contact. Students consider how Aboriginal cultures have influenced this country" (NWT5, p. 27).

intertwined, which relates to historical thinking concepts like cause and consequence and continuity and change. Teaching creation stories and Elder knowledge helps students learn about the philosophical and ethical basis for their relationship with the planet, shaping their historical consciousness through an engagement with the ethical dimension. These discussions, especially if expanded with supplemental materials that explore the history of climate change and the origins of Western science, might allow students to consider the respective merits of humanist and non-humanist philosophies. Students might wonder, and teachers might ask: What is the role of non-human beings in affecting social relations and the environment? How might the perspectives of Indigenous storytelling and Western science inform each other in their application to the issue of climate change and environmental stewardship?

Three documents emphasize the role of non-human beings like land, water, ice, air, sky, wind, plants, animals, and bugs in history, politics, and ecology. First, NWT5 emphasizes the study of non-human beings because "the land and our [Inuit] history" are intimately connected (p. i). Social studies, the curriculum states, is the "study of people in relation to each other and to their world" (p. 6). Second, NWT10 pursues the study of non-human beings because "humans exist in a dynamic relationship with the land" (p. 6). Students are expected to "appreciate the relationship between people and the land and animals" (p. 29). Both NWT5 and NWT10 state that traditional storytelling practices provide a philosophical rather than a literal or scientific basis for historical consciousness:

> In Inuuqatigiit, 'the land' includes all of nature: the earth itself as well as the water, the ice, the wind, the sky, the plants and animals. [...] [Creation stories] create a sense of wonder, of connection, of teachings, and of understanding behaviour. [...] Inuit creation stories aren't trying to explain the physical arrival of Inuit in their part of the world, but are dealing with other levels of existence. (NWT5, p. 29; NWT10, p. 14)

Finally, NU5 prioritizes the study of non-human beings, which are "part of the life cycle" and "not to be treated cruelly" (p. 145). As the curriculum notes, "all living things are connected in a continuous cycle of life, and cannot actually be separated" (p. 91). It states that Inuit recognize that "weather controls humans and that humans do not control the weather" (p. 109), decentring humans as the proverbial owners of nature: "The land has given life to Inuit, but it can also be harsh and dangerous and can take life away" (p. 91).

While the curriculum documents of NU10 and YT12 do not explicitly discuss the role of non-human beings, they view environmental processes as interdependent and relational. First, NU10 presents the economy as socially embedded within the environment. Inuit are "part of a larger world in which everything is connected" (p. 18). According to the curriculum, "Everything that becomes a resource, including ourselves, is the economy" (p. 18). The curriculum's "Great Conversation" framework stresses that the search for "truth" is "elusive" and shaped by global power dynamics that have largely excluded indigenous peoples (p. 16). Second, YT12 understands Inuit identity as connected to the land and water, underscoring the "connectedness or the reciprocal relationship between people and place" (p. 1).

6.5 Experiential learning through on-the-land, student-centred activities

The curricula exemplify the belief that schooling is meant to be integrated within the community, shaped by community values, and representative of the will of its constituents. The pedagogical function of place-based and experiential learning gives students significant autonomy in deducing historical significance, feeling historical empathy, and understanding historical perspectives, all while using their skills of evidence and interpretation. Experiential learning activities, especially on-the-land experiences, retain certain elements of traditional Indigenous education, which has, for centuries, relied on learning through games, play, and harvesting to transmit practical and conceptual knowledge across generations. The curriculum documents stress that classrooms should be student-centred and catered to the diverse aptitudes and interests of the children and adolescents involved. Students might wonder, and teachers might ask: How has the land shaped the course of history in the North, and how have Northerners, in turn, shaped the land? How might have different figures in history behaved during specific places and times, and how might have their emotions and patterns of thought differed from mine?

Several documents, especially YT12, NU5, and NWT10, favour community-based education practices that help students learn from and on the land. First, YT12 relies on "place-based and "experiential" activities (p. 2), which foreground the perspectives of "Elders" and the "community" (p. 4). Students are encouraged to visit local sites of displacement and resistance (p. 6). Sec-

ond, NU5 uses a bottom-up approach that situates the power of education as emanating from within the community to the student to the school. It prioritizes hands-on, practical activities like hunting, trapping, cooking, and sewing, the mastery of which by students strengthens their relationship with the land. "Families contribute to their community," the curriculum document states. "The family, immediate or extended, is very important" (p. 39). Students are intended to "respect the traditional structure of Inuit families and kinship" and "represent the traditional family at school" (p. 39). Finally, NWT10 expects students to "learn from the land and from Elders" (p. 3). It attests that students have "multiple needs" (p. v), meaning that, since children are "naturally curious," lessons should be "student-driven" (p. 3). Students move from a "theoretical to a deeply grounded exploration of identity and citizenship" (p. 1), from "knowing to doing" (p. 3). Students are, after class, expected to "take their learning back to their community" (p. 2).

Similarly, NU10 and NWT5 prioritize the role of student agency in the classroom, allowing youth to guide their own education. First, NU10 recognizes that children possess different intellectual aptitudes and interests (pp. 11, 18), meaning that the length of time required to complete lessons "all depends on your students" (p. 6). The curriculum uses "game[s]" and "drama activit[ies]" to strengthen Inuit culture (p. 10). These activities can, at times, make questionable decisions about how to deliver learning outcomes. For example, in *Staking the Claim*, the teacher's guide for NU10, the "E-tags" activity has teachers replace the names of their students with disc numbers for an entire module to simulate the "level of frustration and lack of control Inuit felt" during the 1940s (p. 21). Second, NWT5 privileges "student choice" (p. 5) because "children are born with integrity" (p. 6). It prioritizes "open-ended, student-driven inquiry" (p. 15), with students learning from "resource-based and experiential learning [activities]" like "on-the-land experiences," "role-plays," and "mock trials" (pp. 52, 56). The curriculum gives students considerable authority in shaping historical interpretation, but the included prompts tend to reinforce patterns of binary thinking based more on subjective opinion than critical analysis: "Which [Aboriginal] group seems to you to have had the best way of life?" (p. 37); "Who was the best explorer to come from Europe to Canada?" (p. 37); and "Can forcing people off their land ever be the right thing to do?" (p. 38).

7 Discussion and conclusions

This descriptive survey of northern curriculum has aimed to avoid applying an inflexible model of historical thinking (Seixas, 2017) to Indigenous educational contexts, or dwelling on its absence, without also acknowledging the value of what is present in the curriculum documents. Applying a rigid view of what constitutes "thinking historically" could lead analysts to make ethnocentric judgments about the quality of curricula. Curriculum analysis in general, including when using historical thinking methods, should not be reduced to an exercise in disciplinary scorekeeping, wherein Western theory and philosophy is used to undermine Indigenous thought. Our value-added approach has, instead, worked to conceptualize second-order historical thinking concepts—themselves conditioned by history—as valuable yet context-dependent and mutable guidelines for northern educators. Historical thinking concepts should be acclimated and applied discriminately, where and when they advance learning.

We faced challenges in balancing the need to accurately identify the depth of northern history and thought, without sacrificing analytic rigour or neglecting the significance of curricular trends towards historical thinking skill development. Indeed, we uncovered ambiguities and contradictions between the stated aims and actual content of some documents, namely places where conflicts between Western and Indigenous values might inadvertently reproduce Eurocentric assumptions about Indigenous nations and cultures. But most of these conflicts stem from curricular influences originating in southern jurisdictions, leading us to argue that historical thinking is best mobilized when guided and applied by Indigenous and northern voices. Documents created by northern curriculum developers are rooted, both formally and informally, in notions of "Northern spirit," a uniquely Indigenous conception of historical consciousness wedded to localized and place-based understandings of history, culture, and politics.

Despite frontmatter commentary that clearly establishes northern curricula as being carefully crafted by the author teams, the documents themselves do not explicitly critique historical thinking frameworks or concepts, and they do not speak to the propensity of disciplinary historical practice to exclude Indigenous skill development. We do not view the resolution of these tensions as within the scope of this article, nor do we regard the development of Indige-

nous pedagogy as the prerogative of two white, Anglophone scholars. The evidence presented here could, however, be used in a more systematic problematization of historical thinking in the future. Furthermore, this project only reflects a small selection of curriculum, and our analysis does not parse by jurisdiction—among or between the three distinct northern territories. Rather, we have distilled themes that were common across the three northern territories. Perhaps another project could apply a comparative framework to the analysis of northern curricula.

The precepts embedded in northern curriculum provide several innovations that may not play a central role in southern Canadian or non-Indigenous contexts. Take, for example, the theme of history education as cultural reclamation, which appears in several curriculum documents. Haudenosaunee historian Susan Hill (2017) regards the primary task of non-Western Indigenous history as the elaboration and rediscovery of a uniquely Indigenous historical consciousness, expressed through land- and place-based practices that decentre humans and "great men" from historical narratives. Practices of cultural reclamation, especially in regions that predominantly serve Indigenous peoples, can also offer a vehicle to reaffirm the slower rhythms of work and lifestyle sustained by the commons. Residents of rural places may uphold principles like community identity, cultural heritage, and support for extended family, as well as control over the form and pace of work and labour—ethical values and economic imperatives frequently marginalized by formal schooling (Corbett, 2001; Corbett, 2004; Curtis, 1988). The focus of the curriculum documents on preserving authentic Indigenous perspectives allows educators to cultivate interpretive zones where students might critique Western developmentalist narratives, which foreground colonial endeavours like resource exploitation, territorial expansion, and economic growth. But challenges remain. As Indigenous scholars Coulthard (2014) and Leanne Simpson (2011) explain, the project of cultural reclamation consists of balancing claims to cultural authenticity while recognizing that people belong to diverse backgrounds and may possess hybrid, fluid identities. Implementing a culturally founded yet inclusive curriculum begins with, first and foremost, acknowledging that people belong to a plurality of backgrounds. As our analysis shows, curriculum developers and writers are clearly working to strike that balance.

Northern curriculum documents share a commitment to addressing the impacts of colonization, each aligning with reconciliation or resistance, partly owing to the time and place of publication. These different approaches to settler-Indigenous relations are distinguished by, on the one hand, a recognition-based approach to state-Indigenous relations that attempts to accommodate the unique status of Indigenous nations by providing concessions through legal mechanisms (Taylor, 1992) and, on the other hand, a more recent, radical politics of resurgence that stresses the self-determination of Indigenous nations, maintains a commitment to community organizing, and draws firmer boundaries between Indigenous and settler interests (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson 2011; Alfred, 2022). Historical thinking, especially concepts like historical perspectives and cause and consequence, can serve Indigenous objectives by illuminating the dialectic of structure and agency (Seixas, 2017). Curriculum documents attuned to the structures of the colonial encounter can avoid the construction of a moralizing discourse that blames colonization on a few "bad apples"—a "distancing strateg[y]" that absolves the federal government, extractive industries, and settler-Canadians of responsibility in the present (Schaefli et al., 2018, p. 491). Regardless of the frame, each curriculum should ideally identify the structures of colonization; investigate specific episodes of conquest and resistance; and recognize patterns of settlement and dispossession as ongoing processes.

To adequately address differing conceptions of time, curriculum writers need to provide teachers with supplemental materials that examine the emergence of both linear and cyclical understandings of time. Exploring linear and cyclical time without explaining how the former overtook the latter could reimpose a kind of pedagogical imperialism onto Indigenous concepts, since teachers unfamiliar with alternative perspectives may ignore rather than integrate Indigenous epistemology. One could employ E.P. Thompson's (1967) notion of time-discipline, which interprets "clock time" time as implicated within the disciplining of an industrial workforce under capitalism, to showcase how colonization imposed synchronous clock-time onto Inuit and Dene societies. That is, it replaced a qualitative time-sense measured by the completion of tasks, cycles, and seasons, with a quantitative time-sense measured by clocks, schedules, and minutes. Exploring debates concerning linear and cyclical time does not mean, however, that history teachers should be on the frontline of providing conclusive statements about science and physics to students (Gibson & Case, 2019). Rather, history educators are concerned with, above all, revealing to students the historical conditions that allowed divergent time-senses to become considered definitive knowledge—that is, explicating their emergence in history.

By exploring the role of non-human beings in society and history, northern curricula infuse historical interpretation with ethical principles concerning the well-being of the land, plants, and animals. Storytelling practices in general, and creation stories in particular, serve in northern classrooms a similar function to liberal political philosophy in the Canadian provinces: by outlining a common political and moral philosophy, they frame how to ethically engage in politics using knowledge of the past. But, whereas Enlightenment philosophy endorsed the mastery over and domination of nature (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002), drew strict divisions between the "civilized" and "uncivilized" (Knight, 2019), and idealized the fully perfectible human being (Burghardt, 2018), northern curricula convey a less dualistic and more animistic, non-humanist conception of people and the environment, advancing an ecologically grounded philosophy that decentres human beings as the necessary locus of historical change. Northern curriculum, we contend, provides a counterweight to the common-sense positions naturalized by the Western, developmentalist paradigm. In presenting a heterodox understanding of the economy and environment that stresses the social embeddedness of economic activities, northern curriculum documents recognize nature as providing the basis for all life on earth, framing the interdependence of humans and the land as an inescapable feature of social life. Given the existential threats facing humanity today, we believe that northern curricula hold immense value for social studies teachers looking to provide effective lessons on sustainability and climate change.

Northern curriculum documents also tend to prioritize land-based and experiential, student-centred learning, which, in keeping with the foundations of historical thinking, gives students agency in deducing their own historical interpretations. The curriculum documents, in championing student choice through games and play, are concerned with revitalizing a form of Indigenous education displaced by the federal government and religious institutions through residential schooling. Considering these historical legacies, efforts to ensure the self-determination of students, and to help decentre the teacher as the sole authority figure in education, are representative of the self-determination of Indigenous nations themselves. History and social studies are both subject areas rife with opportunity for use as sites of cultural intervention and continuity for Indigenous nations and peoples in Canada and elsewhere. History education can provide a venue for northern Indigenous peoples to tell their own stories, assert their own visions of the past, present, and future, and elaborate unique forms of historical consciousness. Our findings suggest that developers and writers of social studies curriculum have drawn on educational reforms evident in other jurisdictions, including the historical thinking concepts; however, these innovations have, by and large, not come at the expense of Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers and students are encountering both dissonance and consonance between multiple knowledge systems and, we can presume, learning to tolerate that complexity. But there is undoubtedly more curriculum and resource work to be done to support teachers in the North, as well as in untangling the colonial roots of formal public schooling from pedagogical theory and practice. If curriculum developers and the teachers who embody their work continue to support the trajectories towards Indigenization evident in these documents, then future reforms to history and social studies education in the territories will be likely to demand an ongoing adherence—and, in all likelihood, an even greater commitment—to representing the goals and aspirations of northern peoples through place, language and culture.

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