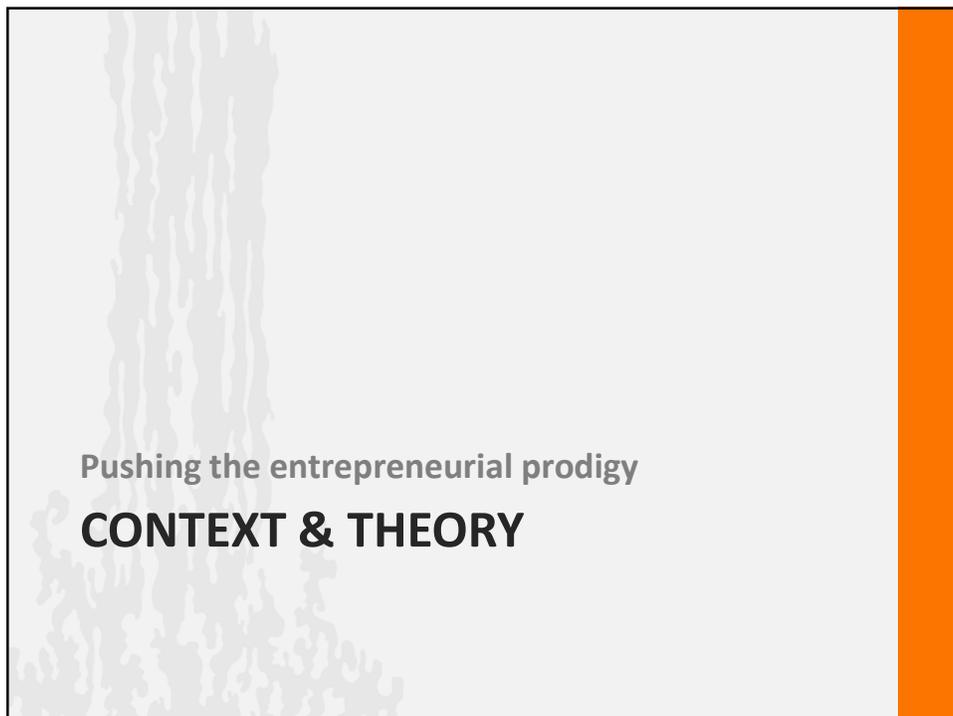




Pushing the Entrepreneurial Prodigy
Colonialism and Inequity in Canada's
'New' K-12 Policy Emphasis

Laura Pinto & Levon Blue 1 November 2014



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CONTEXT & THEORY

CANADIAN POLICY CONTEXT



Provincial **Federal** **Global**

Provinces are responsible for mainstream education policy, but **Federally**, the First Nations Education Act funds and guarantees First Nations control over education. **Global forces**, including NGOs (e.g. OECD) and policy borrowing practices, influence local education.

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THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP BANDWAGON

- **A crisis that can be solved by entrepreneurial education?**
 - *National Post* headline: “A cure for youth joblessness”
 - Canada’s lackluster education ranking in EY’s G20 Entrepreneurship Barometer
 - 16.5% youth unemployment rate
- **Most provinces introduced high school entrepreneurship courses in the 1990s**
- **Recent policy developments emphasize entrepreneurship, and cross-curricular inclusion in elementary school is being mandated**

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TRUTHINESS AND RHETORIC?

- **Evidence that entrepreneurial education does NOT remedy unemployment** (Pinto, 2014)
 - High new business failure rate in Canada
 - Lower wages and longer working hours than employed counterparts in Canada
 - Research in 23 OECD countries over 28 years identified a “refugee effect:” entrepreneurial activity during periods of high unemployment does not lead to lower unemployment
 - Questionable developmental appropriateness, especially for elementary school students

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LIT REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS: ABORIGINAL ENTREPRENEURS

- Policies driven by unsuccessful “passive welfare” systems; entrepreneurship activity thought to lead to autonomous participation in mainstream economic systems (Hindle & Moroz, 2010)
- Western-style entrepreneurship has reproduced inequality among Aboriginal peoples (Revely & Down, 2009)
- Entrepreneurs struggled to fit into a white business world, experienced alienation from Indigenous peers (Revely & Down, 2009)

Enter MAEI & AYEP



Former PM Martin at an MAEI event

MAEI: Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, a special interest group founded by former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin

Mandate: “Improve the social and economic strength of Aboriginal people” by providing them with “tools and opportunities they need to succeed”

Activity: Obtains funding and partners to design and coordinate education programming

AYEP: Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program, “teaches Aboriginal youth about business and entrepreneurship, in order to help prepare them to engage in business activity with competence and confidence”

Activity: Coordinate and champion the development and delivery of Grade 11 and Grade 12 AYEP secondary school credit courses

The official “AYEP STORY”

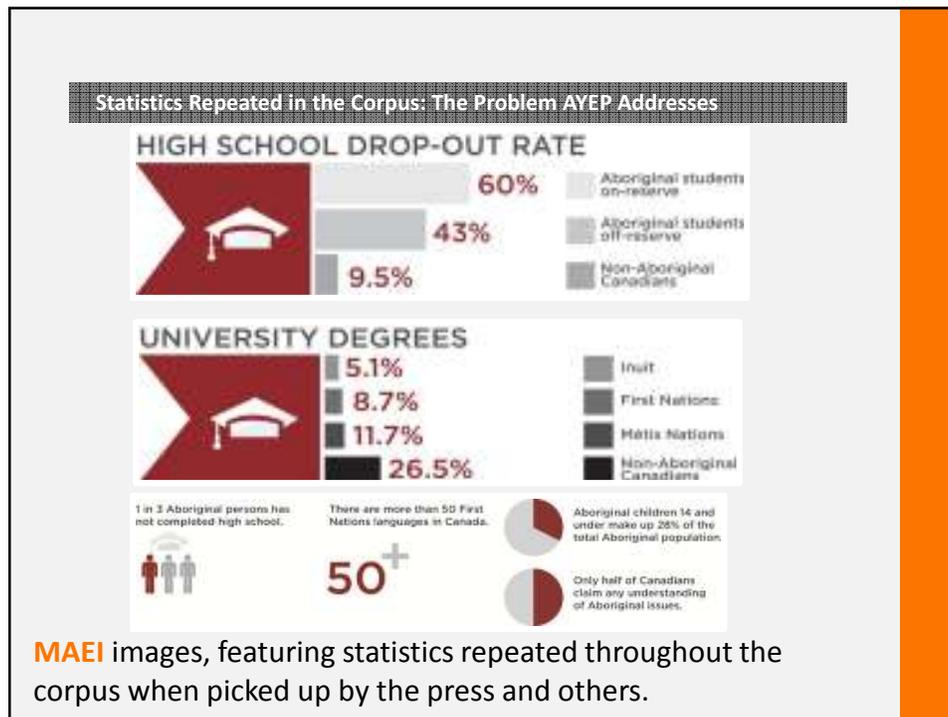
- 2007: AYEP pilot with support of the Grand Chief and Council of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation
 - Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nation High School (DFC) in Thunder Bay
 - Students from remote fly-in First Nation communities, and stay with local Thunder Bay families while completing their high school education.
- 2-credit program towards secondary school diploma
- Input from Aboriginal leaders, business community and educators

AYEP Reach and Goals



THE GOALS OF AYEP:

- Build capacity in business and entrepreneurship
- Teach financial literacy skills
- Develop self confidence in developing and communicating ideas
- Enhance critical and creative thinking
- Enrich project and time management skills
- Cultivate leadership and collaborative skills
- Help students develop long term personal and education goals
- Move students closer to secondary school completion and in turn one step closer to post-secondary studies



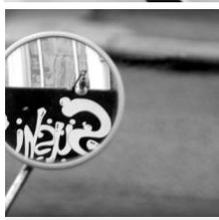
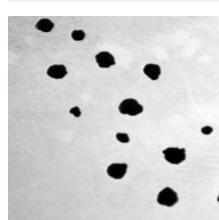
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THE POST-COLONIAL IDEAL

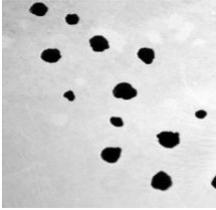
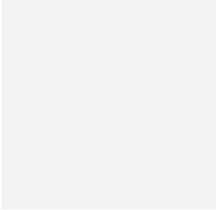
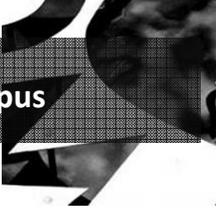
- **“Ideal” yet to be realized** (Battiste, 2013)
- **Aim of disrupting Eurocentric ideologies entrenched in education**
- **Spectrum of conceptions, with these common features:**
 - Takes a position against Western imperialism
 - Questions underlying assumptions
 - Social justice for those oppressed by Eurocentric practice is the goal

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METHODS

<p>CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS</p>		<p><i>Without official curriculum, we can only draw conclusions based on published accounts of & perceptions of AYEP</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify objects, subjects, rhetoric• Identify discourses			<p>CORPUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No access to "official" textbooks <p>Relied on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AYEP website• School-produced slides publicly available• Newspaper sweep (Cdn Newsstand Database)
<p>CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS Corpus & Analysis</p>			

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FINDINGS

Construction of "fictive" student		Construction of "fictive" entrepreneur	
	"Benev(i)olent" saviours		
	Discursive Organization Categories in the Corpus		

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CONSTRUCTING THE 'FICTIVE' STUDENT

- **"Fictive" student** to which the curriculum is addressed and in the mind of the educator constructed through discourses (Jones, 2012)
- **Neoliberal Discourses: Economic Agents, Not Humans**
 - Students "goals of action" rather than "agents of action" (Fairclough, 1992) - entrepreneurial education is "done to" them in order to achieve narrowly-defined success outcomes
 - Repeated rhetorical framing of learner in economic terms: "Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing segment of the population and will be key drivers of the Canadian economy"
 - "not only is there a moral imperative to correct this inequity, it makes business sense"
 - "First Nations youth are the largest potential source for new entrants in the work force to replace baby boomers"

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CONSTRUCTING THE 'FICTIVE' STUDENT

- **Deficit Discourse**
 - Underachievement is thought to be caused by problems in students, their families, their culture, or their communities, and can be solved by changing the individual
 - Entrepreneurship education attempts to "fix" the deficits in students
 - **Synechdoche:** Chelsea was "typical of the students" – "when she arrived, she could not look a stranger in the eyes; the day she graduated, she stood, and in a strong confident voice, thanked the former PM for making all this possible."

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...AND THE 'FICTIVE' ENTREPRENEUR

- **Anyone can do it!**
 - Martin: objective that students “understand that their choices become limitless, there is no restriction on their choices, if they get an education”
 - Journalist: “refreshing” that the program focuses on what students can accomplish, “not the roadblocks”
- **Highlighting Aboriginal Entrepreneurialism**
 - Rhetoric implying culturally responsive pedagogy by including Aboriginal authors of curriculum materials
 - Topics appear to be the conventional entrepreneurial canon – highly Eurocentric
 - Examples of the “results”....

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PROGRAM STRUCTURE: THE CANON

Grade 11

- Challenge and Opportunity
- Analyzing Ventures
- Elements of a Venture Plan
- Financing Ventures
- Creating the Venture
- Project

Grade 12

- E-Commerce
- Expanding the Venture
- Managing the Venture
- Web Design
- Promotion-Broadcast Advertising
- Project

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- Case studies of successful Aboriginal business owners
 - Medicine wheel used as a graphic organizer
- Seven Grandfather Teachings (wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth) are the courses' philosophy of business

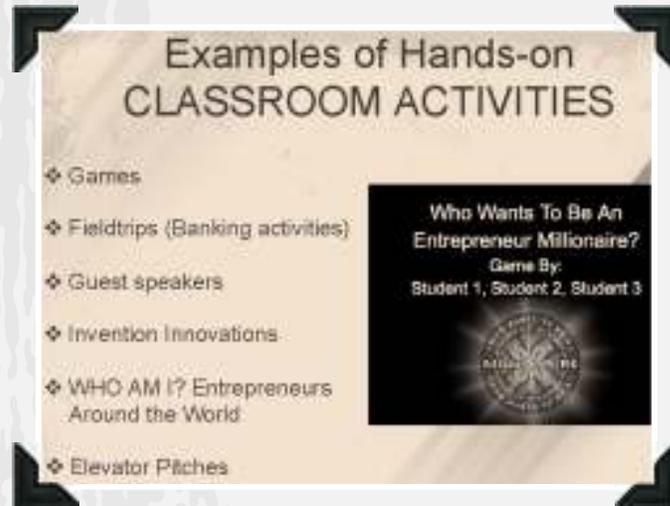
Culturally responsive pedagogy?

**Examples of Hands-on
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**



- ❖ Students will create a gift basket that they could sell
- ❖ MAEI supplies the materials used
- ❖ Students determine selling price
- ❖ Profit goes back to the student with 10% going back to a charity of their choice

Culturally responsive pedagogy?



The Fictive Entrepreneur

DISCOURSES

Colonial Discourse

- AYEP and its press coverage claim to recognize that Aboriginal students have unique learning needs that are enhanced by culturally responsive pedagogies
- Materials seem to contradict that recognition: Eurocentric point of view, with emphasis on rationality, individualism, narrow notions of “success” and “prosperity” (tied to wealth via free market sale of goods and services) (Similar to the findings of Welter, Brush, & De Bruin, 2014 elsewhere)
- Assumes passive student acceptance of existing economic, labour market, and social conditions – for example, expectation they will deal with conventional financial institutions, conform to “elevator pitch” practices, learn to dress in “business clothing” (an activity not shown here, but in the corpus)
- Activities including bank pitches cement a link between highly-colonial corporate-friendly attitudes and program/business success

The Fictive Entrepreneur

DISCOURSES

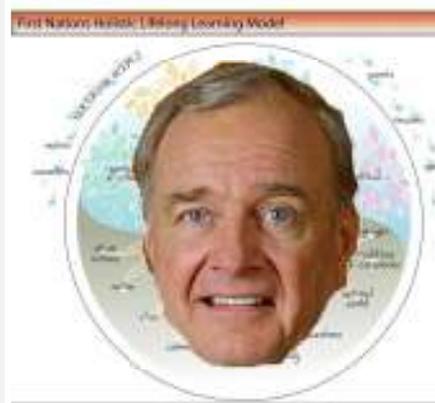
Meritocratic Discourse

- Relies on assumption that personal effort determines reward and status
- Entrepreneurial discourse and practices typically exclude oppressed groups (e.g., Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio, 2004; Welter, Brush, & De Bruin, 2014)
- Occludes discussion of systemic barriers. One article cites that aboriginal workers were more likely to lose jobs in 2008-2009 earn less – but no attention to equity or systemic factors – rather, the solution is situated in entrepreneurship
- Denies historical and contemporary issues of material, cultural and representational injustice that serve as very real barriers

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BENEV(I)OLENT SAVIORS

- **“Hero” and “partners”**
 - *“felt” and “believed” that education “is the key to the turnaround in conditions”*
 - *Gets “standing ovations” in response to claims about “break[ing] the cycle of poverty, that generation that builds the great companies...”*
 - *Teacher explains how Martin’s name “opened the doors”*
- **Majority of corpus devoted to stories of the primarily male and white champions of the program (not teachers, students, communities)**
- For example...



“Watch the fire in **Paul Martin’s** eyes...listen to the sadness in his voice. And don’t ignore the hopeful determination in his spirit...[he is] a man on a mission”
 ...“at age 73, he is a millionaire who could be relaxing in retirement...”

(this passage repeated in several newspaper articles)

Benev(i)olent saviors

MARTIN’S NARRATIVE CONTINUES

...Martin reminisces how “old buddies” in the city of Windsor, Ontario talked about how they would “**conquer the world**” in adulthood.

The narrative goes on to describe Martin’s observations about Aboriginal friends made while he worked in northern Canada had a “lack of hope” (contrasted to conquer the world); “not as excited about their future prospects as he was”

He concluded that a Canadian dream was “**true for the Irish and the Italians and everybody else who immigrated to this country, why isn’t it true for the first peoples?**”

“What Aboriginal Canada needs, [Martin] said, **is a robust middle class.**”

Community? Benev(i)olence?



Partners



Sponsors



Seed money funder

Partners cited in the corpus

Benev(i)olent saviors

DISCOURSES

Assimilationist Discourse – assumption that a “robust middle class” who wants to “conquer the world” is a universal goal for all

- Benevolence accentuates AYEP’s “necessary” skills to redeem the Aboriginal population so they can become contributors to the capitalist and market-driven economy – “an intention that may not necessarily be too strikingly different from the assimilationist colonial practices of years gone by” (Cherubini, 2010, p. 15)

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CONCLUSIONS

- Neo-liberal promise that entrepreneurship is open and accessible to all; meritocratic view that personal effort determines reward and status
- Like many other education programs targeted to Aboriginal learners that preceded it, entrepreneurship attempts to be “the solution to a host of problems and complexities related to education, assimilation, compliance, and identity that was created by the colonial presence in the first place” (Cherubini, 2010, p. 19)
- Should Aboriginal entrepreneurship be segregated, or mainstreamed to provide all learners with valuable IK perspectives?
- What would a post-colonial entrepreneurship curriculum look like?
- Further research needed:
 - Content analysis of AYEP materials
 - AYEP participant voices

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Questions?

