

Teachin' Books Episode 1.9 - Interview with Jocelyne Vogt / Harold Cardinal's "A Canadian *What the Hell It's All About*"

[Music: "Homer Said" by [Dyalla Swain](#)]

Jess 0:10

Hey! This is Teachin' Books, a podcast all about the ways people teach, learn, and work with literature.

I'm Jessica McDonald, and on today's episode I am chatting with my friend Jocelyne Vogt. Jocelyne is a member of Métis Nation Saskatchewan and has been teaching mostly ELA in the Francophone school system in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, for eight years. And when she sent me that bio I had to double check with her that I still knew what ELA meant. And let me share that with you in case you don't, in case it's called something different where you are: ELA is English Language Arts, so Jocelyne teaches English and English literature in the Francophone system here in Saskatchewan, where I am.

I talked with Jocelyne about a short essay that she teaches in her high school English classes called "A Canadian What the Hell It's All About" by Harold Cardinal, who was a Cree writer, activist, and political leader.

The essay is originally from Harold Cardinal's second book called *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians* published in 1977. But more recently, you can find it in the anthology, *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, which was edited by Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie. That anthology is available online in on some websites, and it's also available in a lot of different libraries from what I can see. So take a look around and search for it, if you don't already have access to it, or to this essay. But if you do want to read Cardinal's essay and are having trouble accessing it or finding it, please do email me at teachinbookspod@gmail.com.

Okay, I will let Jocelyne take it away.

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

Jess 2:15

Anyways. Alright so why don't we start off if you just want to tell me -- I mean I already know about you -- but if you just want to tell me a little and tell the listeners a little bit about yourself, your work as an educator, anything else you think that we should know, as we get started here.

Jocelyne 2:29

Yeah, so I'm Jocelyn Vogt, used to be Jocelyn Dumonceaux, and as you know we met at the U of S, as an undergrad as an English major. I got into Pharmacy and that's where my life was going was pharmacy and I hated chemistry. So that's not good. So then I ended up being an English major, and, as I was saying before, my mom was like "Well I don't know if you know, PhD, Master's route is a smart choice for you." She's like -- she's a teacher so she was very encouraging to go into education and she said, and then if you want to do further education at least you have as a "backup," which is now not my backup, but so yeah. So then I have a Education degree from Campus Saint-Jean, which is the Francophone campus at the U of S. And then while teaching, I am a teacher in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, with the Francophone division, so French as a first language and I teach, I taught high school English all the way up until my first maternity leave, and then, funny enough, it's tough to find a high school English teacher that can speak French. So I ended up going down. They moved up to grade six teacher, and then in between babies I've been doing a bit of grade six I've had junior level English as well, which has been a great experience for myself. And then in amongst all that I did a Master's through the Université de Saint-Boniface, which is the Francophone campus associated with the University of Manitoba. So I did that in études canadiennes, which is a great program. It's bilingual, which was amazing. So I got to do it in French and English which was what, perfect for me. So that's where I'm at, that's who I am. I have three kids.,I've got a four year old a three year old and a five month old, so we're pretty busy here.

Jess 4:21

Wow. Yeah. And actually like now that you lay that all out... Obviously we've known each other for a long time so I had some sense of that but you really have a lot of different teaching and learning experiences, like you've been through all different like the fact that you were going into pharmacy and then you switched to English, and then you've been to a couple different campuses doing different types of degrees and different languages and that sort of thing. So, you have a real breadth of experience, not to mention juggling that with parenting.

Jocelyne 4:49

But you know, it is like... my husband also got his Master's. When he started, I said you know what like screw it we're both gonna do it at the same time, so he has his in Education Administration. Yeah, it's been awesome and I'm a big advocate for Indigenous Studies and Indigenous peoples as a Métis person myself. So to go and be able to do Canadian Studies with a focus on Indigenous literature was just the bee's knees, as I say, for myself. So it's good.

Jess 5:15

Mmhmm. Yeah, totally. That's awesome actually now that I think about it was the first time that we met, was it in a Canadian lit class? Like I feel like it was in Professor Wendy Roy's CanLit class -- unless it was before that...

Jocelyne 5:25

I think it was!

Jess 5:27

Yes, that's kind of cool now here we are again discussing literature that is not -- well, it's certainly about being a Canadian, I guess you'll get into that but, and it's written in a Canadian context, so I like that we are sort of going back to our roots. Our undergrad roots.

So yeah, let's actually get into I guess the text that you want to chat about today. Do you want to just tell folks, especially folks who might not have read it or who don't know it, what we're talking about today? And so what text and, yeah, just tell me a little bit about it.

Jocelyne 5:58

Yeah, so I love this text. It's one of my favorite texts to teach, it's an older one, published in 1977. It's actually an excerpt from *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians* by Harold Cardinal and basically it's entitled, it's like a short excerpt and they call it "A Canadian What the Hell it's All About," which is one of my favorite texts to teach and since it was written in 1977, we get to have a lot of discussion of what's happened post-this being written. So that's one of my favorite things to talk about. Yeah so Harold Cardinal is well known Indigenous author, advocate in from Alberta, and so we talk about his Cree roots and how that relates to Prince Albert because Prince Albert is lots of Cree people and things like that, so we really enjoy talking about it with my students.

Jess 6:51

So actually just to clarify, is that I guess you might have taught this multiple times but what is the exact context that you're usually teaching this in, like?

Jocelyne 6:58

Yeah, so this would be an English A30, which is English grade 12 is A30. Grade 12 is split up into A30 and B30 and A30 is Canadian and B30 is World Lit. So, yeah, the 18-17 year olds for sure. So.

Jess 7:15

So this is the grade 12 Francophone school system that you would normally teach this in?

Jocelyne 7:21

Yeah, well, the way that it works is A30 is across the board in Saskatchewan. So it's the same for me as it would be in any other high school. So that's where it is, but it is that's where I teach it in a Francophone school, A30, grade 12.

Jess 7:38

Okay, gotcha that's actually good for listeners to know as well as like what how the curriculum, I guess, sort of shakes down across the different types of schools and so. Yeah, so I might have interrupted you when you were getting into just maybe thinking about or talking about just generally what is Harold Cardinal saying in this text? Or what is it... what is this text about?

Jocelyne 7:58

Yeah so it's a summary, and basically it just discusses the miscommunication between... well, he says, "white" and "red" or "Indian" and "government," but obviously those terms are now not used. So usually we talk about in my classes like First Nation and settler disagreements between the government and the language used and the understanding and how the government works with First Nations people and what it means to be Canadian basically according to the Cree language and according to settler culture. So that's basically the gist of what it talks about in a few pages -- not, it's not long, which is always good for grade 12.

Jess 8:35

Yeah. And actually we will put some information -- I don't think I can link to it because I didn't find, kind of like an open access -- but I will put the information about the anthology that it's often included in, you know the Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie, I'll throw that in the, in the show notes. So actually if anyone wants to check that out for those who are listening.

So, I guess initially what what led you or what drew you to this text? Was it something that you were your attention was drawn to it by somebody else or by the curriculum or?

Jocelyne 9:03

Well it is dictated into the curriculum, but the joys of being a high school English teacher is that like there's like a humongous list of curriculum, and you can kind of pick and choose what you want. And when I pick you know I kind of had that's half of my job is picking texts that I find relevant. So then I find I found this text and it's in the curriculum, so then when I read it I said yep that is very relevant still today in the 2020s, the 10, to 2000s -- 2020 I guess, and just the fact that that it discusses language, which is a huge thing we discuss in the Francophone school system. So it was just a great segue to kind of incorporate that Francophone aspect into it as well because often English texts don't really talk about it, so it's kind of nice to kind of find texts that discuss language so we can talk about that third language there are French so it's good.

Jess 9:56

Mmhmm -- oh yeah, actually I was gonna ask you about that because of course in the piece itself, language and terminology and sort of communication comes up but there isn't a representation of the French language in this text right? Like, it's not about that. So I was just curious about how that fed into or that absence maybe came into your discussions at all in that kind of system, in a Francophone system.

Jocelyne 10:20

Well, what's often not known by the general population, especially the Anglophone English speaking community is that French speaking and teaching in French was actually illegal in Saskatchewan, and was actually punishable and so teachers had to hide -- I was, oh my gosh, I can't think of the name. The one where she has powers and there's Miss Trunchbull and minute Mrs. Honey. Matilda! There we go. I always compare I tell my students, or my students that's what it was like is, you know, the school supervisor would come in and the kids like Miss Trunchbull, and the kids would have to hide all of their French stuff. So we talk about assimilation and how that impacts the Francophone culture and how it was illegal and then -- I mean not to the equivalent of the Indian Act so don't get me wrong, but we do talk about how it relates to the Indian act and how Francophones deal with assimilation in comparison to First Nations and Indigenous peoples. So that's kind of where we go with this is talking about language and what that has to do with it because there is a little section in the text about assimilation.

Jess 11:24

So, do a lot of your students have even already like, you know, would they find this real world relevant to them? Like meaning, I guess what I mean by that is, you already mentioned, this is a text that was written in 1977, or published in 1977. It's speaking mostly about the differences and miscommunications between indigenous and settler relations. So I'm wondering in a Francophone school system, are they are students responding to this text, feeling like it's really relevant to them right now or?

Jocelyne 11:53

Yeah, I guess in some ways they understand that they are being assimilated all the time because let's be real, even in the Francophone system in the hallways I'm saying "Parlez Francais," speak in French, like come on, you know. All of their popular apps and things are in English, all their shows are in English, so they kind of understand that side of it. But then the whole Indigenous side is a lot of -- because I'm very lucky that I teach his kids 9 to 12, so I've basically know what I've taught them before then, and we've talked a lot about Indigenous relations, so I have less of talking about that and more about discussion of how that affects us, so then I guess for them it would kind of be understanding in Prince Albert what that looks like for Indigenous people, and then as Francophones what that looks like for them. So they do kind of see it now and we talk about how it's changed between 1977 to now, even for Francophones because we didn't have a school district until 1990s. So how that affects everything and how they like in 1977, how their grandparents, my parents didn't have a school system for them there was nothing and if they had it, it was illegal, pretty much, so they had to hide their stuff. So, it's kind of relevant they understand it for sure but, yeah.

Jess 13:06

Mmhmm. Well even just the first things you were talking about, like the the piece's discussion of language and terminology and, yeah, all of that does seem relevant of course to huge ongoing discussions that are happening beyond, beyond -- well, within Indigenous Studies and also beyond Indigenous Studies. So yeah so maybe those are some of the examples of I guess the ideas or the concepts that you focus on when you teach the text. Are there other sort of things that you like to pull from this text when you teach it?

Jocelyne 13:35

Yeah, honestly, because A30 in the curriculum is basically the whole concept of it is kind of like the Canadian identity: what does it mean to be Canadian? How does landscape come into, into text? And things like that. And this one is really great because it talks about what does it mean to be Canadian?

So I love teaching this text because it was written in 77 so it's an older text, and I talk about how being a Canadian has changed from 1977 to today - has it changed? I asked them, and things like that. But basically the whole way main reason I teach it as we talk about language and things but it's one of the first texts I teach because we talk about what does it actually mean to be Canadian? What does it mean as a Canadian? It's a difficult question to answer. So then we kind of talk about that and how Cardinal basically says for them, like Canadian means clean land. So then I say, "well what does it mean to be Canadian for you?" and things like that.

And what does it mean to be Francophone? And how is being French Canadian different than being Canadian? Because many of them identify as French Canadian and you have this whole debate where, which is a whole nother backstory, but you know in Quebec, they are considered French Canadian and

we are considered Fransaskois. Why are we, why does Quebec not consider us Francophone? Why is that an issue? And things like that.

So you get lots of discussions about the whole aspect of the Canadian identity, and even often I bring in - because this is one of the first texts I'm teaching -- they don't really understand the whole concept of even the conflict of a Canadian text in itself, like how Ondaatje wasn't born in Canada, but yet he's a Canadian writer and, you know, Atwood is Canadian but many of her books aren't based in Canada. Things like that. So then I say well this excerpt is nonfiction and it's obviously Canadian because it discusses Canadian things. But why is that Canadian and then other texts not Canadian? So there's so many routes I can go with this text, which is why I just love teaching it and we spend basically the whole hour talking about it in class which is, which is great and in high school I have to read it with them as well. They don't come with it read, so yeah that takes time as well. So, yeah, it's great. So that would basically be where I go with it.

Jess 15:44

Mhm, and that sounds like... your answer was so rich. So you're dealing with citizenship issues, you're dealing with identity, you're dealing with language, but I also feel like that, all of those things that you said you talked about have the potential to cause, maybe resistance in some folks? Or I guess what I'm saying is, like, I imagine because of the folks I grew up with that some folks might come to the classroom with a very specific definition, an idea of what being Canadian means. So, and this is a text that really blows that apart and says "hey being Canadian means a variety of different things to a variety of different people," including you know the meaning of Canada for Cree folks like like Cardinal says in the, in the piece, but also the meaning of Canada for a lot of different folks. So do you find any students who are resistant to this idea that being Canadian could mean a bunch of different things or do you have any resistance?

Jocelyne 16:35

You know, with with my grade 12s, I find I don't. I could totally see that. But because they're Francophones and because they're already sometimes on the outskirts per se, in a minority community. They definitely understand that to them, French culture is a big part of being a Canadian, whereas other people in Prince Albert or in Saskatchewan, that's not part of being a Canadian. So for them when they speak about the bilingual nature and having French language and, you know, participating in that culture, they can see how somebody else and Prince Albert has a different view. So I haven't had a ton of, you know, like resistance to it, per se, I definitely have had people look at the government versus Indigenous conflicts, definitely resistance on that you know because I'm very, you know, I, Saskatchewan is a racist -- often, I shouldn't say it is, but it there's often a lot of racism...

Jess 17:29

Absolutely.

Jocelyne 17:30

...against First Nations people and a lot of these kids come in with not their ideas but the ideas they hear around them. So then it's kind of breaking those barriers. So I find I find a lot more of a resistance and discussion and things about like that is the whole Indigenous side of things, compared to what they think Canadian is.

Jess 17:50

Right, just a different form of resistance to some of the ideas here, which is actually interesting for me because when I read this just recently to prep for this, I was thinking about how this piece is so generous in some ways. So for, for example the parts of it where Harold Cardinal says we have more like the essentially settler Canadians and Indigenous folks in Canada have more in common or more similar than we do dissimilar. Or when he says, you know, we need to start from a mutual place of agreement. I thought, Oh, that's very generous because this is a settler state, a settler colonial state that has, you know participated in the genocide of Indigenous folks, so it's a really... it's almost like a kind of perspective that anticipates reconciliation. And a lot of folks find reconciliation discourse a little bit troubling right because of because of its sort of naive optimism and even worse things than that, right. So, in a lot of ways I felt myself being resistant to this piece, too, but not for the reason you're describing with your students. Instead, because it was just so I mean, it's published in 1977 but it just felt so generous towards the Canadian nation state in a lot of ways in ways that I, um...

Jocelyne 19:01

I agree, definitely, it is generous. You know, and I I do talk to the kids about the fact that you know, he's talking about things and the '60s scoop probably wasn't I mean I wasn't born in 1977, or around by then. So he says you know the '60s scoop probably wasn't generally well known for him at this point like he probably had an idea, but it's not something that we know of now or, you know, Murdered and Missing Indigenous women and Girls, wasn't like it was an issue but it wasn't a public issue. So he said there's a lot of things that he's skipping over that we know now that we look at this text with a different light, you know, and, you know, he may be generous but there's lots of things that since 1977, we've seen and we've heard and I also explain that there wasn't Indigenous writing back then. So for him to say things very controversial, it would have been hit with huge criticism. Like look at Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, because I talk about it with my kids, like it was a big deal when it was published because it discussed things that people weren't willing to hear yet. So sometimes I find he is being generous but I do mention that if he wasn't generous. who knows if he would have even been published?

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

Like, you know settler culture has a long way to go, but start with, let's, let's focus and reconcile, and we do talk about now the Reconciliation Commission and things like that and how it's changed, and how there's been activism and there's you know reports on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and I do tell them it's because of texts like this --well, also activism, but we talk less about activism and more so about text in class, not that we don't mention it. But so yeah it's just a great piece to kind of have so much conversation with students that you know, this is kind of their first exposure especially to indigenous activism besides you know right now, if I was teaching I would have been talking about the protesting and Regina you know with Durocher or things like that. So that would be coming up in the conversation here about how activism changes things and how Cardinal was an activist and what you need to do to have your voice heard and things like that. But, you know, last time I taught this I didn't have that situation the real life situation for them, so. Yeah it's it's definitely a great conversation for them to have to kind of open their eyes into the whole concept of Indigenous view of Canadian according to Cardinal of course but, yeah.

Jess 21:34

Right. Yeah, yeah and totally applicable to so many of the real-world sort of events that you could, you know you could use to teach this text in the future.

So you sort of mentioned your methods but maybe I'll just ask more explicitly. When you do teach this text, text if there's any sort of usual teaching methods or that you use to teach it?

Jocelyne 21:55

You know, I'm a firm believer in prepping my grade 12s for university. So I often teach this text, I mean I read it with them, but I don't... I try to take it on a more of an academic post-secondary kind of side because most of my students are going that way. So I stop and I talk about it and we have discussions, and they're required to take notes and things like that. So what happens generally is I'll read the text with them and then we stop and have a discussion, and I tell them you know next year you'll probably have to read it yourself and come prepared. And then you talk about it having already had read it, so these are the kinds of things that you can do to prepare yourself. You think oh this is interesting maybe make a note on it and then you know you'll talk maybe you'll talk about that in class or you'll bring it up in class and things like that. So that's kind of where I go with it. And we do a lot of discussion with it and I kind of try to get them fired up about various things.

Jess 22:54

That is that is exactly my teaching strategy as well: getting students fired up. Absolutely.

Jocelyne 23:00

So that's it and, honestly, because I've taught these kids nine to 12, they do mention the White Papers in 69 in here and I, I know I haven't discussed it as much with them. So then I also do have to kind of do a little bit back history and explain what it was in 69 and what that meant and how it was kind of intended to for one thing, it wasn't taken in one way, so we kind of have to have a little mini backstory on that as well. So that honestly those texts, well, like any text really it could take, I could teach it for a month if I wanted to, but I'm restricted to one or two classes. So often it's usually a one or two class kind of text. That kind of gets us going for the semester on the whole concept of what it means to be Canadian and how that looks for Indigenous people versus Francophones versus Anglophones versus all of that. So I think the the challenges in teaching it though is again that I have to back teach a lot of the context. 1977 for them is very far removed. Like, I'm old to them and I'm 33.

Jess 24:06

I always love -- I don't know if you get this in papers and I know it's just inevitable and I was the same when I was younger and I'm not even that old -- but I get I get this line in papers that's like "Back in the 1900s..." and I'm like, the 19, that's like 1999 you're talking about, that was not that far ago! But I know this is just inevitable I realize that this is gonna happen but yeah so the context, obviously, is different than what they know, even though 1977 feels like 10 years ago, even though really that was, you know, 10 years before I was born. Yeah.

Jocelyne 24:40

So it's just kind of teaching them, you know that, and I try to backstory that activism a little bit like it's not a big part of my teaching but I just kind of explain that's how change happens and that's how it is just people had voices and they were able to finally start publishing things like this text and things like that.

Um, and then I just find I really sometimes have to say "Woah woah woah, like explain yourself, where is this coming from." The challenge is getting them to give me evidence from a text. I mean, that's still a challenge in undergrad, so you know so just kind of pushing them that way. So that would be my general text and then often I'll have an assignment to show that they can write to me just as much as they can speak to me and especially in high school, you have to consider you have the shy kid, so, who doesn't want to talk and I mean it's less so in my, in my classes because they're so small and because I've known them forever that they're pretty, pretty open but just to kind of hear maybe something that they're too nervous to discuss in class to see what others want to have to say sometimes the things you get in writing, you're like, really, really?

Jess 25:49

I still feel like that way like apparently I have a PhD but I honestly feel so much more comfortable writing and I am exactly that shy kid in class that you're talking about, where I'm like, I will not speak my thoughts out loud, but then I will write them in like apparently they're okay, they're decent.

Jocelyne 26:04

Yeah, totally.

Jess 26:05

I feel like that's such an it like everything you're saying about you know high school teaching which is a teaching context that I'm not familiar with, I've never taught in high school I've only been a high school student, a while ago, is so applicable to university. So even when you say you started off saying like one of your methods with this text is also talking them through or teaching how, how they can be prepared to be a university student sort of through this text. And everything about that like you know reading the text ahead of time and annotating or making notes and also yeah just all of the prep work for getting these folks into into university. That's so relatable because yeah that's prep work is still happening in university right? Like in undergrad.

Jocelyne 26:47

It's so important and I find you know as a high school student, I was not prepared. I remember being that nine high-90s English student getting to university. I failed a paper in 110, and I was shocked -- like what? I have a 98 and and in the Honors, like the high advanced program for English in high school, and I fail this essay? Like what is going on? So I tell my students that like, half of my job as a teacher is to prep you guys because I have students where out of them all like maybe one or two don't go to university, so I'm prepping them for that situation. So it's a little different in that sense. I mean I'm teaching them MLA formatting from grading from grade eight.

Jess 27:33

Wow. Oh wow. Yeah, see I don't think I learned that until like probably year four of undergrad, but it was probably also by choice. Like, I'd just been like, fuck all of this! I don't care. That's amazing. Like, I mean it's good because just teaching, I don't care that much about the logistics of MLA. In fact, I barely look at the MLA list, or the sorry the bibliographies, but the practice of citation is so important for ethical scholarship. The practice of good citation is... I'm not all about like following tiny rules or mechanics, but that's so awesome that they're learning from grade eight or, or however early on like that, citing is important and ethical and it's the way that we gratefully acknowledge other people's work.

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

Jess 28:25

Anything else you wanted to add about how students generally respond to this text or?

Jocelyne 28:31

Yeah, um, you know what I find that this text is generally well received because they've never really had a ton of discussion about Canadian, Indigenous Canadian versus French Canadian versus Canadian itself, versus multiculturalism I mean we've kind of talked about it but you know in 9, 10 11, the curriculum doesn't really dictate Canadian stuff as much, so it's kind of up to the choice of the instructor or the teacher or whomever. So for this, this is like a big discussion for them and they're finally getting to those abstract concepts of understanding and they're like digesting all this knowledge and they're kind of like oh I never thought about that before like that's a really cool thing to think about or, you know, and so for them it's generally well received that they kind of start thinking about this concept and then we spend the whole semester talking about it but that's generally they kind of go, oh it's like the light bulb moment, you know. So it's generally really well received.

Jess 29:30

I can imagine, too, that just like because of the topic and all of the ways that you're approaching it as like, it's all about citizenship, identity, being a Canadian, they all come in to like all of us who live in Canada come into class with some idea of for us what being Canadian means, even if we resist that title, even if we don't subscribe to that. So that's such a validating topic to bring up because everybody will have like a thought on that, everybody will have something some embodied experience so they bring in their own thoughts. The other thing I was thinking about when I was wondering how students would respond to this text, even the very title, "A Canadian What the Hell It's All About," as well as in the very first, in the first paragraph, Cardinal says something about trying to determine in our minds, just "what the hell this struggle really is all about." I was thinking about like how that language would come across to students and I feel like maybe because I was so uncool and continue to be uncool but I feel like that, that would be like a draw to me I'd be like, "ooh, the word Hell is in this text." So, therefore, like is there a sense of approachability? Like it's a pretty accessibly written text.

Jocelyne 30:42

Yes, it's, it's, you know, that's what I like about it is, it's, it's casual it's not like it's not super academia. So there's there's definite that's harder for the kids to understand but it is mostly for the most part, understandable and relatable and you're right the text that they always know that you say that they always are like, "Oh, that's a cool title, "What the Hell it's All About," like, woah, what are we talking about Madame?"

Jess 31:08

Yeah, I fully agree, too, that's the proper reaction to that.

Jocelyne 31:12

So, definitely.

Jess 31:13

And yeah it's just generally accessible. I don't know if we've said this already explicitly but yeah it is a nonfiction piece so this is, you know, it's written from Cardinal's perspective like it's not a fictional piece, it's not like a novel, and also it's written in just like a very. I was reading up on Cardinal about about sort of his oral skills his skills as an orator right. And it really comes through in this piece I feel like because it's just so powerfully and concisely written in such an accessible way so I could see how for, you know, a high school context and of course for an undergrad context and for beyond that it would be... that's a benefit of it I think.

Jocelyne 31:54

Definitely and I, I do like that and if, if I was to go in Advanced and I would talk about the oral storytelling aspect of it and how that is an Indigenous part of it and how it does come off very, as you know, the oral part of it you can hear his voice in it and things, but I never get to that level because, you know. We all wish we could teach more than we do

Jess 32:14

Oh totally. Yeah the brevity of trying to fit this into one class, even though it is only a few short pages like you said, Yeah, that would definitely restrict you especially with all of the con contexts that you have to introduce likely, like the white paper and other things, maybe things around Cardinal's own activism or whatever you choose to introduce in that context that would be difficult to fit in. Yeah.

Um, so anything that you would recommend to other educators who might after hearing this podcast let's say pick up this text and sort of decide to teach alongside it and this could be in a high school context or otherwise. What would you recommend?

Jocelyne 32:48

So my number one thing is my students always always always know from the day that I teach them the proper vocabulary and terminology when it comes to discussing Indigenous peoples and Indigenous

texts and how that goes. So it's very important when, especially when you're teaching high school students that you explain to them, this was written in 1977, the terminology is not what we use today. So when you say red and white that's not acceptable today. I guess you know with all the name changing, which is awesome, of the sports teams and things it's definitely becoming more of a known thing. But I discuss with them what does First Nations mean, what does Métis mean, what does Inuit mean, what does Indigenous mean, you know, and what is the term native? Where does that come out of? Even the fact that this anthology is called Native Literature, you know, things like that. So, that's my number one that I always discuss whenever I'm discussing this text. My students because of my Master's work I've kind of discussed the whole idea of putting on the settler lens on Indigenous writing, but my students don't know that, I don't ever discuss about it but I try to tell you know try to spin it more so with an Indigenous lens, when I'm reading Indigenous texts, but my students don't know that part they just know me and they just know that's how I teach it.

Jess 34:11

That's your I feel like your recommendation is such an important one like for non-Indigenous students you really need to make explicit and give them the tools to be able to approach reading ethically, reading indigenous texts ethically, so I feel like that's so important for other instructors that, and it's something that I've seen other instructors not do so many times, and it's just a real... it's like a political move not to do that, to make that kind of vocabulary training absent really says something about the kind of assumptions you're making and about the kind of teaching you're doing

Jocelyne 34:44

Well, mistakes like I always say mistakes happen as long as you. I tell this to my kids, if you say the wrong term, mistakes happen, it's just that you need to acknowledge it and say "okay I said the wrong term, what do I need to do next time, this is how I do it next time." You know it's for a lot of them it's learning. But you know, we're in Prince Albert. The Francophone community is very Métis. So there's a lot of us in the Francophone system already, so few of them will come in knowing but not many so it's just kind of explaining that. That would be my number one and then, yeah, just backstory for explaining it in high school, I mean, I remember going into 110 class and getting, well it's not 110 anymore I don't think but, getting into trouble because we didn't like research the background I was like "I'm supposed to do that?".

Jess 35:33

All of those like implicit things that we actually don't know when we get into university and the instructors are like "Oh, didn't you know like you should know about that historical thing, you should know about that whole movement, you should know that you have to read the texts ahead of time." This is all such like damaging implicit knowledge that really needs to be made more explicit.

Jocelyne 35:51

Yeah, so definitely. So for me to teach it, I teach the backstory in high school, but I tried to as I said before, do tell them like you know and next year this is not going to be explained to you so if you don't know the White Papers or you don't know like I was looking at this one. The Northwest Territories Dene Declaration, I wasn't even well researched on that. I had to go look it up when a student asked me I'm like, "you know what I don't even know," and things like that. So it's just kind of that kind of thing is kind of where I would go with it for sure in terms of before you go to teach it just definitely be prepared, especially in high school, to have the back knowledge, basically.

Jess 36:31

Yeah, very, good advice and also I love those moments when students do point out something that you don't know it's like, "that's amazing! I will go look that up right now, I'll get back to you." So it's always like a... they are modeling active learning like back to you which is always kind of cool.

Jocelyne 36:46

Always great. I would say, just let me go ask my other teacher Google!

Jess 36:51

Yeah that's, and I like that because it gives them permission to Google as well because, yeah, even though we can, like, tell them like Google isn't the be all end all and there's ways of doing googling sort of like ethically and doing it with good scholarly practice in mind, you are okay to go to Google. You can indeed.

Jocelyne 37:09

Yeah. Yes, totally.

Jess 37:12

So anything else you want to mention, or chat about regarding this text or did we cover what you want to say?

Jocelyne 37:18

Oh, you know, it's such a good text I love it I could talk about the ins and outs of it and with my students, you know, generally with assignments with this it is class discussion, because it's high school we try to get the writing, so often at the end if I have a lot of time, it'll be like, you know, discuss this in context

with the Oka crisis, or discuss this in context with this kind of thing, and then get a research paper out of it.

Sometimes I've just done a journal entry with "Write in your journal: Do you agree with this statement? Or do you feel that there is a disconnect?" I've also often talked about "okay so here he talks about assimilation of Indigenous peoples, talk about what does it mean for assimilation of Fransaskois people?" Discuss, compare, and contrast like this text with the Francophone context that's not discussed here. And other things I would say is, yeah, just getting them to write you know, because sometimes it's getting that pen to paper for me I'm the same as you, I could write, you know if I'm upset. I've definitely written an email to my husband upset because I'm like I can't say what I want, but I can write it.

Jess 38:25

That's amazing. That is very, yes that is very me as well. And I feel like, yeah, it's so good that you offer students the chance to be both verbally contributive as well as like, they can also write to you through journals.

Jocelyne 38:41

Yeah!

Jess 38:42

Great. Okay well Cool. Thank you, that was so lovely....

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

Jess 38:54

Thank you so much to Jocelyne for coming on the podcast to chat with me about this essay and to catch up, and really just for me to learn from somebody who is working in a K-12 context and in a teaching situation that I have a lot to learn about. Jocelyne has provided her email and her Instagram handle for you to get in touch with her, so I'll link to those in the show notes. But I also wanted to highlight here that she has a new Instagram account for educators and other interested folks to find reliable Indigenous resources in French, and that is @frenchiemetisteaches. And, again, I'll link to that in the shownotes as well.

We are on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. You might remember from a previous episode, on Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, that I talked about the podcast Métis in Space, created by two Métis podcasters, Chelsea Vowel and Molly Swain, who are based on Treaty 6 territory, in Edmonton. Today, at the end of the year, this last official episode of 2020, I wanted to mention that Métis in Space also has a Land Trust for land in Lac Ste. Anne county, and they have been fundraising for this through GoFundMe (and also through Interac e-transfers). And they call this Back 2 The Land: 2Land, 2Furious, and in the shownotes I'm going to link to an article in Briarpatch magazine that describes more about this critical LandBack initiative that Molly and Chelsea are organizing. But let me read out just a small bit of that article:

“Métis futurisms, like Indigenous futurisms more broadly, resist the colonial narratives that Indigenous people don't exist in the future and have no future; that we as peoples are disappearing and dying out; that we are unmodern and unmodernizable. Métis futurisms, which we build in the podcast by speaking back to colonial speculative fiction tropes and imagining decolonized futures, are intimately tied to the land. Land Back is Métis futurism in a very material sense – it's how we build, remember, and reclaim our relationships with one another and the land, how we enact fundamental principles of Métis governance. When we take the land back we also take the future back from the colonizer. So Land Back means space for us to do the work of bringing those futures into being.”

Please join me, if you're able, in contributing to Back 2 the Land: 2Land 2Furious. I'll put a link in the shownotes for where you can do that.

Thank you to Dyalla Swain for the podcast music. You can find more of their work at <https://soundcloud.com/dyallas>.

Thank you to Jade McDougall at muskrat-hands.com for the awesome podcast graphics.

You can follow the podcast on Twitter and Instagram @TeachinBooksPod, or get in touch via email at teachinbookspod@gmail.com. Since I am going on a break, I will just put it out there that I would really love to hear from folks who have been listening. I'd love to hear what you wanna hear from in the new year, who you wanna hear from, what kinds of topics you wanna hear about. If you have a particular topic, I will try to find an educator or somebody who fits that topic, if I think it's a good one for the podcast. And I just would really love to hear from folks. It's going to be a strange holiday season, and I hesitate to even use that word – the “H” word. So please do get in touch because it'll help me. I'll feel less lonely.

You can rate and review the podcast, if you like (and I encourage it), on Apple Podcasts, but also on other podcatchers, perhaps – any that allow you to do so.

Okay listeners: g'bye for now. You will not be joining me again next week because I am taking a break, as I mentioned, so I will be back in January. Before January, you may see me again for a small or maybe impromptu holiday episode, but you also may not. I'm gonna give myself permission to take the time off that I need from producing this podcast, and from whatever other bullshit I need to step away from right now.

So, have a safe and happy holiday season, if this is a holiday season for you. And if it's not, I hope that the rest of your year brings some rest and maybe some small joys. See you next year.

[Music: "Homer Said"]

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