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The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot: Obstacles and Opportunities

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Wilfrid Laurier University resides on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnawbe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

Abstract

The history of systemic racism against Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario is an important area of research in relation to Canada's immigration goals and outcomes. The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) was introduced in 2019 and seeks to welcome hundreds of working immigrants to five Northern Ontario cities over the next five years. Unfortunately, Northern Ontario has obstacles that may prevent a smooth transition for incoming Immigrants. For example, Northern Ontario's previous and current racist treatment towards Indigenous peoples exemplifies the region's troubles with fostering social cohesion. This research will be presented in several parts. First, a history of racism against Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario will be offered. Second, other approaches that could help to inform RNIP will be analyzed. This includes a discussion of the case studies on successful programs that have helped to foster social inclusion between Indigenous peoples, Immigrants, and White Settlers in other Canadian cities. Third, an analysis will more widely engage with literature that seeks to understand relevant themes and concepts such as Indigenous opinions on immigration, White noise and dismantling colonial discourse. This research is of high importance and relevance because the RNIP recipient cities are currently accepting applications from potential working immigrants. It is paramount to the success of RNIP that dialogue-centered programs are put in place, and adjustments made, that are designed to promote social inclusion and social cohesion between all three groups.

Keywords: Immigrants, Indigenous, White Settlers, dialogue, Rural and Northern Immigrant Pilot, social cohesion, social inclusion

The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot: Obstacles and Opportunities

The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) was unveiled in early 2019 (Frangione, 2019). Designed to be a solution for fixing Northern Ontario's declining economy, RNIP intends to send working immigrants to Northern Ontario over the next five years (Government of Canada, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2016). The practicality of RNIP remains questionable and in need of further research. There are numerous historical accounts whereby Indigenous groups have been targeted and subjected to a long history of systemic racism and oppression. Some of these issues are outstanding but less well-known, including the avoidance of offering accessible and satisfactory education to Indigenous youth (Angus, 2015), the murders of several Indigenous people in Thunder Bay (Talaga, 2015), and the frail conditions that Indigenous peoples are forced to live in. Northern Ontario's history of racism towards Indigenous peoples (Angus, 2015) draws concern over the region's ability to accept Immigrants and to help integrate them into its society. As is evident in a number of literatures, racism is a force that promotes voiceless-ness which in turn prevents Immigrants from settling into their new homes (see, "In from the Margins", 2013; "Integration Barriers", 2012; Omidvar & Richmond, 2013; Wong & Fong, 2012). However, when reviewing the efforts made by municipalities, non-profit organizations and individuals in other Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Winnipeg and Brantford, incorporating dialogue-centred programs will foster social cohesion. Implementing programs designed to promote healing, cross-cultural dialogue and compassion between Immigrants and Indigenous peoples, is an important step in promoting social cohesion and social inclusion in Northern Ontario. The aim of this paper is to make it evident that the history of racism in Northern Ontario is an indicator when considering whether RNIP will successfully be able to integrate Immigrants to the region. However, in order to overcome obstacles of racism, intercultural dialogue will aid in desired goals of social inclusion

and social cohesion. Adapting and implementing similar programs to those in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Brantford will ensure that Immigrants are successfully settled, and it will improve relations with Indigenous peoples as well.

This paper is divided into a number of sections. First, an overview of RNIP and its intended outcomes, will be provided. A contextual section will provide a brief history of racism against Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario. It is against this backdrop that immigration projects such as RNIP will occur and so it is necessary to contextualize the complex social arena in which Immigrants will be moving into. Next, this paper will examine the efforts made in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Brantford to foster social cohesion and social inclusion. These cities, although different from one another and from Northern Ontario, provide a diverse outlook on the outcomes of engaging in intercultural dialogue. Lastly, the importance of dialogue-specific programming in relation to Northern Ontario's unique geographical and social circumstances will be analyzed before wider conclusions are drawn.

Positionality

Before introducing a historical analysis, it is first necessary to discuss my influences. After all, it is one's positionality that shapes "what we know about the world and how we understand new information" (Abdou, 2019). My family emigrated from Poland in 1858 in an attempt to escape Prussia Rule (M.A. Ruske, personal communication, October 14 2019). I was born in Northern Ontario, approximately two hundred kilometers north of North Bay. When reflecting upon the three groups discussed in this work (i.e. Immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and White Settlers), I do not identify as being an Immigrant, nor do I consider my ancestors' stories similar to those of present-day Immigrants.

However, I do feel as if I have a strong connection with Northern Ontario where I have lived most of my life. I have been both an observer and a participant in Northern Ontario culture, which is an advantage to this research. Identifying myself as a White Settler is important as I have been a witness to the racism that occurs in Northern Ontario, in particular racism towards Indigenous peoples and the small current population of Immigrants. It is only through my commitment to continue learning, un-learning and re-learning that I feel confident to commit to this research as an ally-in-progress. It is my hope to continue developing research in the overlapping areas of immigration and Indigenous issues and to include a variety of voices. I intend to make space in academia to consider how we can ensure Northern Ontario is an attractive place for all to live and work.

Method and Theoretical Influences

This research is concerned with the potential outcomes of RNIP and intends to consider it through a speculative lens. Prior research analyzes the existing racism faced by Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario (Yantha, 2019) and it is further developed to consider how it might hinder the successful settlement of Immigrants. This research will be added to by investigating what other Canadian cities have attempted to ensure social cohesion. A number of sources are used. Primary sources such as the Government of Canada and census data help to explain what RNIP hopes to achieve as well as the demographics of the region involved. Secondary sources were compiled with a special emphasis on including the voices of Indigenous and Immigrant authors and scholars. Lastly, municipality and non-profit reports are used to articulate the success that these efforts have had in creating inclusive communities.

A mixture of theoretical influences is evident in this work. A Historical Analysis largely appears at the forefront of this paper to account for the historic and ongoing systemic racism that

Indigenous peoples face. Colonial and Racial Discourse Analyses are also used to account for a long standing us versus them relationship that has been recreated in Northern Ontario. Intergroup Contact Theory is also discussed. Lastly, a physics theory is used to indicate significance. According to Bauder (2011), the Parallax Gap is "the representation of two closely linked perspectives between which no neutral common ground is possible" (p.517). This theory summates a Critical Discourse Analysis to argue that Indigenous issues and issues within immigration policy are often, but should no longer, be considered separate.

The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot

Northern Ontario's Economy and Demographics

The residents of Northern Ontario have spent the 21st century concerned about their declining population (Aziz, 2020). According to the Northern Policy Institute, the population has been facing a large demographic shift (Zef, 2019). Baby boomers are now retiring, and the region is becoming disproportionately older. In addition, the region is facing an outmigration of youth (Lynch, 2002). Northern Ontario is less racially diverse than other parts of the province. The 2016 census, which collects data on Northeastern Ontario and Northwestern Ontario separately, indicates that White people make up 82.5% and 71% of the populations respectively (Statistics Canada, 2016). 15% and 26.2% are Indigenous, and 2.5% and 2.8% are visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2016). The minority population is mostly South Asian and Black (Statistics, 2016). Unfortunately, when dramatic demographic shifts occur, it can have grave effects on the economy (Zef, 2019). The local economy is made up of resource extraction such as mining, agriculture and forestry (Zef, 2019), yet it is the retail sector that employs the most people ("Northern Ontario Least Educated in Province", 2013). Other sectors are unable to secure workers in positions that require higher education and levels of experience (Zef, 2019).

Northern Ontario's cities have agreed to take part in RNIP in an attempt to mitigate these issues (Aziz, 2020).

RNIP Overview

RNIP was introduced in early 2019 (Frangione, 2019). According to the Government of Canada,

> "The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot is a community-driven program. It's designed to spread the benefits of economic immigration to smaller communities by creating a path to permanent residence for skilled foreign workers who want to work and live in one of the participating communities" (Government of Canada, 2019, para. 1).

Eleven municipalities across Canada who have chosen to take part in RNIP, five of which are located in Northern Ontario. The communities taking part are North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay (Government of Canada, 2019). The host communities range from having 41 000 inhabitants to 161 000 inhabitants (Statistics Canada, 2016). Upon further research it has been implied that some cities intend on placing Immigrants in towns up to 150 kilometers away from the city (Frangione, 2019).

Community Requirements

The Government of Canada notes that each community has agreed to "assess prospective candidates who (a) best fit the economic needs of the community, (b) have a genuine employment opportunity that meets their community requirements, and, (c) have the intention on staying in the community" (Government of Canada, 2019, para. 3). It is the municipalities' responsibility to recommend candidates for permanent residence to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and to connect Immigrants with appropriate services, mentoring and other programs that will help them to integrate into their new communities (Government of

Canada, 2019). It is expected that up to 250 workers will arrive to each city per year and as of August 2020 most cities are accepting applications (Aziz, 2020; Government of Canada, 2019).

Worker Requirements

The Government of Canada has a number of requirements that prospective Immigrants must meet in order to be eligible for acceptance. Applicants must have work experience or have graduated from an institution from within the host community. Workers must also meet or exceed language and educational requirements. Finally, workers must demonstrate that they have adequate funds to support their transitions into their new communities and have the intention to reside long term (Government of Canada, 2019). Although each city has different needs, Timmins City Council for example, is hoping to attract Immigrants who can fill positions such as engineers, veterinarians, chefs, physicians, and social service workers ("New to Timmins", n.d.).

History of Racism in Northern Ontario

To fully contextualize the social environment in which RNIP will be taking place in, a history of three issues that Indigenous peoples have faced will be offered. These issues include the Residential School System, murders and violence against Indigenous youth, and ongoing poverty. This will draw conclusions that racism has a long-standing history and holds a current presence in Northern Ontario life.

Gaps in Education

It is important to recognize the impact of Ontario's education system has had on the lasting inequality experienced by Indigenous peoples. Civil servant Duncan Campbell Scott made a promise that the province would provide schooling to the children of Fort Albany (First Nations Caring Society, 2016). In 1905, Treaty 9 was made that stated that the government would pay teaching salaries and provide school building to aid with educating Indigenous

children (Bolen, 2015). However, rather than upholding the treaty, Scott rerouted the responsibility by handing it over to the church, which at the time was part of a national strategy of forcing Indigenous children to attend Residential Schools (Angus, 2015). The Residential School System had already been used in other regions of the country, but it was Scott who persuaded the government to use this type of school system to strategically "eradicate the language, culture and community structures" of Indigenous groups (Angus, 2015, p.14).

Shortly thereafter, the Department of Indian Affairs began taking Indigenous children across Northern Ontario and placing them in Residential Schools. The children of James Bay were taken to St. Anne's Residential School, which was located in Fort Albany (Angus, 2015). The school's isolation and the purposeful lack of Indigenous leadership led to abuse. In 1907, a report found that 24% of students had either died while living in the Residential Schools, or shortly after leaving them (Angus, 2015). Despite immediate calls for change, the abuse only became worse as more Residential Schools opened across the North. Within the first five years of Residential Schools being opened, Canada's national Indigenous population had dropped over five percent (Angus, 2015). In the 1940's, Residential Schools began closing in various parts of Ontario. However, St. Anne's Residential School was the last school in the province to close, more than three decades later (Angus, 2015).

Although Residential Schools in Ontario were closed in 1975, many Canadians are unaware of how access to education continues to be a struggle for Indigenous youth in Northern Ontario. Attawapiskat, a smaller reserve on the James Bay coast that lost many children to St. Anne's school, began to see signs of hope in 1975. Named after a respected elder, they began building JR Nakogee School. It was a symbol of progress. Unfortunately, it was underfunded and faced obstacles over difficulty with construction (Angus, 2015). Pipes running underneath the

school were designed to provide a heating source. One was placed incorrectly and broke open. Over the next two decades, complaints of a diesel smell became prominent. Students became ill from breathing in the fumes (Angus, 2015). By 1999, 151 000 liters of diesel had leaked from the broken pipe and soaked into the ground, making it one of the largest brownfields in Canada. Young children were losing consciousness in their classrooms. Teachers were forced to quit to protect themselves from the side effects (Angus, 2015).

In the year 2000, the school was condemned, and classes were held in portable buildings. However, the portables were poorly made, and children froze in the winter (Angus, 2015). In 2007, local children garnered national attention which in turn pressured the government to rebuild the school. This means that for over one hundred years, Indigenous children in Northern Ontario were denied safe and inclusive education. The Residential School System and the ongoing issues with educating Indigenous youth are an ongoing struggle that takes place in the region of focus. It demonstrates education for Indigenous peoples remains a matter of concern in Northern Ontario and this implies that Northern Ontario has instable relations with the region's Indigenous communities.

Murdering Indigenous Youth

In Thunder Bay, the grave effects of the Residential School system have also had a harmful effect on youth. Talaga, a self-proclaimed "mixed blood Indian" has thoroughly research the deaths of several Indigenous youth in Thunder Bay (Talaga, 2015, p.15). She argues that every death, whether historic or recent, is a result of systemic racism (Talaga, 2015).

Chanie Wenjack was an Indigenous boy who was forced to attend Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School which was located in Kenora (Talaga, 2015). Cecilia Jeffrey was notorious for their staff who sexually abused the children (Talaga, 2015). In 1966 Wenjack decided he

would attempt to run away from the school. He walked approximately one hundred kilometers down the railroad tracks before he froze to death. His death sparked national attention which prompted an inquest and four subsequent recommendations were made (Carley, 2016). Wenjack's death, although one that occurred several decades ago, is demonstrative of a long history of violence against Indigenous people in the area. Unfortunately, it also marks a moment in which there became a gap between recommendations to prevent harm against Indigenous peoples, and action that would truly prevent such fatal and violent outcomes.

Over a period of only eleven years, six more Indigenous boys were killed. Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Paul Panacheese, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morrisseau and Jordan Wabasse all passed away between 2000 and 2011 (Talaga, 2015). Jethro Anderson was fifteen years old when he went missing in November of 2000 (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, n.d.). He was from Kasabonika Lake First Nation and was living in Thunder Bay so that he could attend Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School to achieve his high school diploma (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, n.d.; Talaga, 2015). His remains were found in the Kaministiquia River in Thunder Bay and police determined that his death was due to an accidental drowning (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, n.d.; Talaga, 2015). The bodies of Strang, Bushie, Morrisseau and Wabasse were also found in the river and police ruled out foul play in each case (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, n.d.; Talaga, 2017; TB News Watch, n.d.).

Apart from the fact that the bodies of these Indigenous youth had turned up in Thunder Bay, there were other common themes. All were forced to move from their home reserves in order to gain access to services that their reserves could not offer. Today, there are only five high schools on reserves in Northwestern Ontario, yet this geographic area makes up over a quarter of the province's landmass (Hay, 2018). In addition to this, the Thunder Bay Police Department

was largely criticized for inadequately investigating the deaths of each of the youths. Each of the boy's families were distraught over the lack of proper communication between the department and the reserves. As a result, a provincial coroner's inquest was ordered. Titled "The Seven Youths Inquest," it began in 2015 and lasted eight months. It resulted in 145 recommendations but concluded that all seven deaths were either accidental or had undetermined causes (Hay, 2018). Each of the deaths were a result of ongoing colonial discourse, made worse by improper investigations (Hay, 2018).

Sadly, these deaths are another example in which Northern Ontario is not only racist towards Indigenous peoples, but it is a region that is made unsafe for them (Hay, 2018). The coroner's inquest was criticized for heavily operating within settler-colonial racism and in a number of studies, it has been argued that the safety of Indigenous youth in Thunder Bay and across Northern Ontario has worsened (Hay, 2018). In 2017, Indigenous youths Josiah Begg and Tammy Keeash went missing in Thunder Bay. They were attending school in Thunder Bay but were originally from northern reserves. Both deaths were ruled accidental despite eye-witness testimony that suggested otherwise (Hay, 2018).

Violence rooted in racism continues to take place. In 2017, an attack on 34-year-old Barbara Kentner made the news (Talaga, 2017). Kentner and her sister were walking along a street in Thunder Bay when they were struck by a trailer hitch (Hay, 2018). Brayden Bushby, a White Settler, allegedly yelled out "got one!" after the object struck Kentner (MacDonald, 2017). Kentner lived through the initial five-hour surgery that repaired her ruptured organs, but she died due to complications five months later (Talaga, 2017). That summer the Chief of Police was suspended and the entire police service was put under review for its treatment of Indigenous peoples. The acting police chief told media, "I don't see our current situation as a crisis… for us

currently what we see is business as usual" (Hay, 2018, p.5). And so, the police chief's language suggests that there is a "culture of normalization" of settler colonial discourse and violence in Northern Ontario that continues to be reproduced by leadership (Hay, 2018, p.5). This violence is the second example that helps to contextualize the extreme extent to which racism is a common and current theme in Northern Ontario, made worse by the denial of White Settlers.

Ongoing Systemic Racism in Northern Ontario

Systemic racism that contributes to unsafe living remains a dominant issue. For example, access to clean water is an ongoing struggle for many Indigenous communities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "100% of urban and 99% of rural dwellers in Canada have access to sufficient water" (Chambers, 2019, p.290). However, those without access are namely those on Indigenous reserves. According to Palmater (2015), 116 Indigenous communities across Canada do not have clean water. Neskantaga First Nation is living with Canada's longest unbroken boil water advisory which was first imposed in 1995 (Barrera, 2018). The water system in Pikangikum First Nation also failed in 2000 and has yet to be fixed (Chambers, 2019).

Lack of clean water has a number of consequences. Water-borne illnesses and diseases are much higher in Indigenous communities than in communities off reserve (Chambers, 2019). Infant mortality rates are also four times higher on reserves. When considering the Human Development Index (HDI), Canada ranks quite high, at fourth place (Palmater, 2011). "However, if the data is adjusted to consider only the conditions in First Nations and Inuit communities, Canada would rank 78th, below countries like Cuba and Paraguay" (Palmater, 2011, p.119).

There are a number of other ways in which Indigenous peoples in this region are being harmed by racism, both at the government and local levels. The gap between White Settlers and Indigenous peoples is increasing. Education, employment, food security, clean water, health care

and access to mental health services continues to improve yearly for White Settler Canadians. However, “the statistics clearly show that the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous peoples are on a downward trend” (Palmater, 2015, p.65). Nationally, one in four Indigenous children are living in poverty. For every non-Indigenous youth suicide case, there are seven Indigenous youth suicide cases (Palmater, 2015). Lastly, Indigenous peoples account for five percent of Canada’s total population but twenty-two percent of all homicide victims (Roy & Marcellus, 2019). The proportion of Indigenous victims were highest in Northern Ontario, with 75% of murders being committed against them (Roy & Marcellus, 2019). Therefore, systemic racism and the subsequent living conditions it perpetuates is dire and demonstrates that the racism directed at Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario is not improving.

Racism Towards Indigenous Peoples and Its Link to RNIP

The racist treatment of Indigenous peoples informs future immigration and settlement outcomes. But there is currently an existence of two separate fields of research. One area considers Indigenous studies and the other considers immigration (Pellerin, 2019). Bauder (2011) agrees. “Immigration and Indigenous narratives have been systematically separated from each other” (Bauder, 2011, p.517) but in reality, they are closely linked. There are two ways in which the history of systemic racism towards Indigenous peoples relates to RNIP. First, it lends the ability to observe how White Settlers perceive Immigrants and Indigenous peoples. Second, it demonstrates how Indigenous and Immigrant communities are likely to face similar social exclusion. Both connects are implicit yet they aid in hypothesizing the difficulties Immigrants will face while participating in RNIP.

When considering the opinions of Canadians, there is a widespread misunderstanding of Indigenous people and immigration. In a study that investigated the opinions of White Settlers, it

was found that 72% of Canadians do not want to increase levels of migration (Ipsos, 2012). Ipsos also found that when questioned about Indigenous issues, 66% of respondents agreed that Canada's Indigenous peoples are treated well by the Canadian government and 64% believed that Canada's Indigenous peoples receive too much monetary support (Ipsos, 2012). The history of racism aimed at Indigenous peoples, along with current White Settlers' opinions, indicates that White Settlers may be reluctant to understand and aid in RNIP's settlement goals.

Indigenous peoples and Immigrants are also likely to share similar obstacles moving forward. Both groups are more likely to experience difficulty in accessing services, wealth, employment, and housing (Pellerin, 2019). In many cases, they share similar vulnerability. Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario have experienced direct and systemic forms of racism. As discussed above, they too lack opportunities such as education. Immigrants have also suffered economic discrimination and marginalization in Canada (Pellerin, 2019). The similarities show that these communities are not gaining access to the services they need.

Although there have been national attempts at mending the gap in services between Immigrants and White Settlers, a report by the Canadian Senate urges that more is needed. This report emphasized that

> "social inclusion is not solely about having sufficient financial resources, but about having ties and engagement with one's community, about contributing to the life of the community and having that contribution acknowledged… inclusion is about feeling part of things, and feeling part of things means that you are connected to others" ("In from the Margins", 2013, p.7).

There are a number of realities that prevent the successful settlement of Immigrants, one of which is racism. According to a report by the Laidlaw Foundation, racist or other exclusionary

attitudes such as a lack of recognition or acceptance promotes voiceless-ness and is a major threat to social cohesion (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Rather, a location with a capacity for inclusion is one that has existing positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and ability to respect the needs of the out-group (Esses, 2012). When reflecting on the history, it is evident that communities in Northern Ontario are missing the mark.

The historical context also implies that Indigenous peoples will continue to experience racism. Canada's immigration goals and intentions for a multicultural nation continues to marginalize and exclude Indigenous peoples (Reesor, 2013). Indigenous peoples are not being acknowledged across all levels of government and this ensures that Immigrants are placed within settler colonialism (Reesor, 2013). Immigration and settlement in Canada continue to exclude Indigenous peoples by continuing a colonial system that leaves Indigenous peoples out of Canada's multicultural agenda (Ressor, 2013). It divides Immigrants and Indigenous peoples, ensuring that negative perceptions between groups are (re)established.

Therefore, the history of systemic racism in Northern Ontario is relevant as it demonstrates that Indigenous peoples are being excluded from the wider community. Further, it strongly indicates that the existing racism will be detrimental to the facilitation of RNIP. Indigenous voices, history and knowledge are being excluded from the process of settling Immigrants. Immigrants are also unknowingly being excluded from Indigenous affairs. This ensures that communities continue to be put against each other, reinforcing the Parallax Gap and us versus them (Bauder, 2011; Reesor, 2013). If Indigenous peoples do not feel as if social cohesion has been achieved, it is unlikely Immigrants will feel socially included either. The above history indicates social exclusion and it situates the prevailing gap between groups.

Fostering Social Cohesion Through Dialogue

Beyond arguing that Northern Ontario is a location with a complex history that is problematic for welcoming Immigrants, there is still hope for RNIP's potential. Racism remains a nationwide obstacle, but unique programs in other Canadian cities demonstrate innovative ways of fostering social cohesion between White Settlers, Indigenous peoples and Immigrants.

The Vancouver Dialogues Project

The Vancouver Dialogues Project was initiated in 2010. It strives to promote understanding and strengthens the relationships between Indigenous peoples and Immigrants (Wong & Fong, 2012). Dialogues Circles- which are discussion groups where participants gather to discuss preplanned topics- were the key element of the project (Suleman, 2011). These circles were hosted at various community locations such as Immigrant settlement organizations, First Nations territories, and Neighborhood Houses ("Dialogue Between First Nations", 2011; Suleman, 2011). They took place nine times and each circle was hosted by a different facilitator which was usually an Indigenous elder or a community member who was knowledgeable about Indigenous-Immigrant relations (Suleman, 2011).

The city of Vancouver is located on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people, which includes the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, who still reside there today ("Dialogue Circles Summary Report", 2010). Today, half of Vancouver's population was born outside of Canada and Immigrants and Indigenous peoples are now the city's fastest growing populations ("Dialogue Circles Summary Report", 2010). Although both groups coexist in this multicultural city, the Dialogues Project acknowledged that there has been little interaction between them ("Dialogue Circles Summary Report", 2010). Indigenous peoples felt that their history and culture was misunderstood by Immigrants. And for Immigrants, it seemed as if there

were few opportunities to learn about Indigenous peoples ("Dialogue Circles Summary Report", 2010).

According to a report by the City of Vancouver (2010), several themes arose during the Circles. First, issues regarding racial and cultural identity were discussed. Many participants felt conflicted about their identity, especially those with mixed cultural backgrounds. Immigrants explained feelings of confusion over their identity that appeared to grow during their immigration to Canada ("Dialogue Between First Nations", 2011). In fact, identity was largely linked to participants' experiences with marginalization, exclusion and racism. Both groups described experiences with extreme racism. Participants also agreed that education plays a significant role in teaching about Indigenous history and participants felt that Immigrants were undereducated about Indigenous history. There were also discussions of the challenges both groups have faced when moving into a new, urban setting. Participants noticed similarities between their struggles of living in urban centers and shared strategies to overcome these obstacles. Lastly, it was agreed that both communities are largely misrepresented in Canadian and international media which shapes preconceived notions ("Dialogue Between First Nations", 2011).

The Circles were praised by Indigenous leaders for making Indigenous issues important and creating arenas in which Indigenous peoples are part of finding solutions (Grant, 2012). The groups used dialogue to discover similar struggles and triumphs. Leaders hope by continuing to host circles nationally, more solutions can be found (Grant, 2012). The Immigrant participants also found that recognizing shared interests and struggles like identity, language, and culture, helped to create trust and communication between the groups (Wong & Fong, 2012). Wong and Fong (2012) also agreed that greater emphasis needs to be placed on educating Immigrants about

Indigenous issues and history, and that having continued intercultural exchange through art and cultural activities would be ideal avenues to promote further engagement. Therefore, even though Vancouver is intensely urbanized in comparison to Northern Ontario cities, it presents a unique case study that demonstrates the benefits of dialogue.

The Ka-ni-Kanichihk

Ka Ni Kanichihk (KNK[1]) means "those who lead" in Cree ("Who We Are", n.d., para.1). It is an organization that is led by Indigenous elders who believe in Indigenous efforts to create social transformation by maintaining culturally safe environments. Although cities like Vancouver are known to be culturally diverse, smaller cities like Winnipeg have also seen increases in immigration rates (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Winnipeg is now experiencing higher rates of immigration from non-European sources such as Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). The purpose of immigration to prairie cities is to increase economic and population growth, which is similar to RNIP (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Unfortunately, Immigrants continuously face racism and discrimination while trying to settle in this region. As a result, this Indigenous-led organization seeks to decolonize spaces in the city and has refocused to take into account the surge of racialized migrants (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010).

In response to the recent surge of immigration, while also fearing a lack of connection between themselves and Immigrants, they created The United Against Racism/Aboriginal Youth Circle (UAR/AYC) which deliberately "works toward the elimination of racism and discrimination in society" (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010, p.8). They aim to foster cross-cultural understanding and relationships between both groups with the goal of creating inclusion in Winnipeg (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). The UAR/AYC focuses its efforts in empowering Indigenous

[1] The organization's website refers to the acronym "KNK" and so it will be used in this paper.

youth through anti-racism programs (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). It collaborates with local newcomer settlement organizations to create programs where both groups can interact and build relationships (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). The Aboriginal Awareness Workshops and Youth Peacebuilding Gatherings are two programs that have been facilitated through UAR/AYC. The Aboriginal Awareness Workshops Program is a monthly event that welcomes Immigrants into the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples and educates them about their history and culture (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Similarly, the Youth Peacebuilding Program is a summer camp that brings together Immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and White Settlers to share their views on diversity and racism (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). These programs focus on improving the public's understanding of Indigenous groups and to correct the idea that Indigenous peoples are problem-ridden and disempowered (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010).

Four central themes have emerged during this programming. First, giving all three groups the ability to communicate in a positive environment appeared to encourage cross-cultural communication and decreased existing tensions (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Participants admitted to avoiding areas of Winnipeg where Immigrants or Indigenous peoples live. This dialogue encouraged participants to reconsider their choice in permitting these social boundaries (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Second, there was a decrease in misunderstandings and negative perceptions between Indigenous peoples and Immigrants. Third, youth-based segregation and tensions in high schools reportedly decreased. It was found that Winnipeg high schools were culturally and religiously segregating students to keep the peace but students who attended the youth program were adamant that this needed to change. Fourth, these programs created space for dialogue which in turn made participants realize their shared experiences with racism (Gyepi-Garbrah,

2010). In particular, Indigenous peoples and Immigrants from African countries recognized their shared history of colonial rule and the systemic racism they both have faced.

The KNK was praised for bridging the gap between Indigenous groups and Immigrants in Winnipeg (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Immigrants were given the opportunity to learn about Indigenous history and current struggles. Indigenous youth were satisfied in that a friendly atmosphere was used to promote mutual respect (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Both groups were able to participate in a safe space to identify other ways in which there are gaps between Indigenous groups and Immigrants (Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). Therefore, this case study demonstrates the importance of Indigeneity and dialogue when creating socially inclusive cities (Chung, 2010).

Crossing Lines: An Intercultural Dialogue

The third occasion that used dialogue to promote respect and mutual understanding between Immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and White Settlers was the efforts made by an individual. Srimoyee Mitra, a curator and writer, recognized that the 2008 apology to Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government failed to remember the multicultural reality of Canada (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011; “Srimoyee Mitra”, n.d.). She discovered that much of Canada is framed “as a simple binary relationship between European settlers (i.e. the perpetrators) apologizing and seeking forgiveness for their actions in the past from Indigenous peoples (i.e. the victims) (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011, p.277; “Srimoyee Mitra", n.d.). A woman of South Asian descent, she believes that South Asians and Indigenous peoples are examples of the complex coexistence between Indigenous groups and Immigrants in Canada.

In response to recognizing the shared obstacles of systemic racism that both groups face, Mitra organized an art exhibition to gather individuals with the purpose of encouraging dialogue. She hoped this would build mutual understanding, trust and solidarity. She invited eight artists

from different Indigenous and South Asian backgrounds and requested artwork that would explore themes of solidarity (Chung, 2010). The exhibition was titled “Crossing Lines: An Intercultural Dialogue” and was held at the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant. Brantford is located on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. It also happens to be a location with a growing South Asian migrant community (Chung, 2010).

Although each of the artworks contributed themes that spoke to shared experiences, one example will be highlighted. Indian filmmaker Ali Kazimi and Iroquois photographer Jeff Thomas collaborated in an effort to offer a reflect on Thomas’ art practice while offering an autobiographical approach that revealed the filmmaker’s own history as an Immigrant. Their collaboration prompted internal reflections on thinking about personal histories while also giving art enthusiasts at glance at the contradictions of “Indianness” (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011, p.281). Mitra’s choice in setup is also important to note. She chose to project Kazimi’s film in the same room and directly across from Thomas’ large photographic print. This was intended to convey the ongoing importance of cross-cultural dialogue (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011).

Although this exhibition did not work directly to achieve social cohesion, it had many benefits. By organizing and creating a space where both Immigrants and Indigenous peoples had an opportunity to artistically demonstrate their stories and struggles, it went against what Mitra argues is the “colonial status quo” (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011, p.286). Mitra was surprised at the previous lack of interactivity and knowledge exchange between Immigrants and Indigenous peoples in Brantford. This exhibit allowed artists to break down barriers and stereotypes between one another (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011). By sharing their work at an event, it prompted further dialogue and mutual understanding among White Settlers as well.

Mitra learned that cross-cultural dialogue can provide opportunities of self-reflexivity and learning that would otherwise not be in the mainstream (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011).

Further Analysis

The final section will consider some findings in relation to fostering social cohesion between Immigrants, Indigenous peoples and White Settlers. There are various components to consider when discussing themes of immigration and promoting social cohesion. And so, these next sections will consider the general Indigenous perspective of recent immigration, discuss the concept of White noise, and examine the general efforts made to dismantle colonial discourse.

Indigenous Opinions of Immigration

When considering RNIP and methods of fostering social cohesion, the opinions of Indigenous peoples are the most important in order to avoid recreating colonial discourse through immigration (Yantha, 2019). Although it is unclear how Indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario perceive RNIP, general Indigenous viewpoints can be drawn on. Quoted in Chung's (2010) work is a Cherokee reading about cultural pluralism.

> "Mother earth and all her children teach us that diversity is necessary to our health and well-being. You do not see the trees insisting that they bear the same fruit… what one being leaves as waste another considers food. Even death and decay serve to nurture new life. Every one of Mother's Earth's children co-operates so that the family survives" (Chung, 2010, p.34).

While the Cherokee are an Indigenous community exiled from the southern United States to Oklahoma in the 19th century (Garrison, 2004), this passage is important because Canada has also dictated spaces that Indigenous peoples are allowed to live and study in (i.e. creating reserves and Residential Schools). Chung, a Chinese-Indigenous scholar, agrees that Indigenous

peoples and Immigrants are too often put against one another in Canadian politics but also while sorting out personal identity. She argues that Indigenous peoples have been transformed to reflect ideals created by colonialism. As a result, their opinions of immigration have likely shifted so that they are more likely to welcome such goals (Chung, 2010). She went on to summarize various viewpoints of Indigenous peoples, including that of Makere. Makere, a pseudonym, says that she struggled with her feelings toward immigration (Chung, 2010). Makere feels like she is caught between two worlds, or as if she has "a moccasin on one foot and a shoe on the other" (Chung, 2010, p.35). For many Indigenous people, migration of any kind can feel threatening to Indigenous culture (Chung, 2010). However, Makere in particular feels that it is her duty to share her Indigenous views on migration whenever possible because "if we don't bring our voice to the table, they'll never understand out story" (Chung, 2010, p. 36). Amplifying Indigenous voices and stories was a noticeable theme in the above case studies. Each organizer recognized the racism that their group faced and created programs to inform Immigrants about the issues.

Makere is also one of many Indigenous people who view dialogue as being an opportunity to break the cycle of racism. She advocated that Indigenous communities across Canada were multicultural long before the word was coined in North American discourse. Ultimately, she agrees that one being is not more valuable than another (Chung, 2010). While some Indigenous people may accept immigration, some may feel further at risk of losing their culture (Chung, 2010; Gyepi-Garbrah, 2010). In addition to placing the opinions of Indigenous peoples at the forefront, it is also necessary to create more opportunities where Indigenous voices are included from inception. Otherwise, a recreation of colonial discourse will continue.

White Noise and White Participation

Although this paper considers the needs of Immigrants, Indigenous peoples and White Settlers, it primarily focuses on the needs and social inclusion of Indigenous people and Immigrants. However, it is important to be aware of White noise. White noise, although most often referring to the intentional background noise to reduce auditory distractions ("White Noise", n.d.), it is defined in this paper as the intentional drowning out of the voices of racialized people, usually with the sounds or voices of White Settlers (Lee, 2016). Lee (2016) argues for the creation of spaces in which politically informed dialogue can take place among Immigrants and Indigenous groups without being interrupted by White noise. Specifically, spaces that re-center the discussion around those who are marginalized by avoiding the interference of White noise can help to reveal much needed alternative strategies that could enhance the life experiences of both groups (Lee, 2016). Currently, Whiteness is the pivot point whereby binaries are upheld, and White people are at the center (Lee, 2016). Finding alternatives to the Eurocentric, heterosexist, masculinist spaces has the potential to create real change (Lee, 2016). Turning away from Whiteness as the norm constitutes "a deliberate act of decolonization" (Lee, 2016, p.22).

Lee's (2016) arguments are also reflected in conjunction with Intergroup Contact Theory. Intergroup contact theory was introduced by Alport in the 1950s. He suggested that positive intergroup contact occurs in situations that have four elements ("Intergroup Contact Theory", n.d.). There must be equal status among groups, a cooperation or action towards a common goal, and some level of support from exterior authorities ("Intergroup Contact Theory", n.d.). The Vancouver Dialogues Project, the KNK and the art exhibit employed these elements. Two groups of at least similar social status, Indigenous peoples and Immigrants, attempted using

dialogue to promote mutual understanding and respect. In each case, the voices of White Settlers were deliberately left in the background or invited to be participants after the fact.

Although it may seem apparent that White noise will need to be addressed when incorporating programs that facilitate social cohesion during RNIP, the uniqueness of Northern Ontario demands that White noise is managed differently. White Settlers make up the vast majority of the population in Northern Ontario. In Vancouver and Winnipeg there was a concern for discrimination between Immigrants and Indigenous peoples. In Northern Ontario there is a larger concern over White Settlers discriminating against Immigrants. If this is a legitimate concern, then it needs to be mitigated appropriately. For example, increasing programming where Immigrants and Indigenous peoples can participate in dialogue would be important to break down colonial discourse in the region. Denying it, according to Lee, is "a White Settler strategy stemming from fears that any collaboration outside of their direct surveillance and involvement might be a threat" (Lee, 2016, p.17). Breaking down colonial discourse should be striven for in Northern Ontario.

On the other hand, it would also be beneficial if there was additional programming designed to generate acceptance, knowledge and respect from the White Settler population. Although there is limited Indigenous content in schools, this region would benefit from more inclusive programming that promotes true ally-ship towards Immigrants and Indigenous peoples. White Settlers in Northern Ontario are the main contributors for placing Indigenous peoples into an inferior out-group. Eliminating White noise should be a priority but in order for RNIP to be successful, anti-racism education directed at the White Settler also has to be created. As Mitra wrote, dialogue "challenges the colonial mindset and hegemonic narratives of a national history that legitimizes the disparities and socio-economic privileges that exist between Indigenous,

Immigrant, and (White) Settler communities" (Mathur, DeGagne & Dewar, 2011, p.287). Therefore, there is a growing movement across Canada to decenter White voices in order to amplify the voices of underserved populations. In Northern Ontario, the desire to uplift these voices needs to be balanced with the reality that White Settlers need to somehow be included as they are most often perpetrators of racism, which will impact the success of RNIP.

Concluding Remarks

Northern Ontario presents unique challenges in fostering social inclusion and social cohesion. Creating appropriate programming will be difficult but not impossible. Dialogue-centered programming would have endless benefits including vital education for the wider community and the establishment of mutual understanding and respect. Effective programming can foster social inclusion and social cohesion which has the potential to outlive RNIP if done correctly. Possibilities of suitable programs may include mandated workshops for teachers that feature Indigenous storytelling and other intercultural training. Outdoor learning for youth could also be successful as there are a number of settings that would be appropriate for overnight camping and canoe trips, which would mimic the efforts of the KNK. Community picnics are a free alternative could foster dialogue through the sharing of food. Lastly, working to publish a co-authored guide to local services could prompt dialogue between Indigenous and White Settler host communities while offering a way of sharing local expertise with Immigrants. Each of these programs could be enacted in the participating RNIP cities and will result in dialogue. Ideally, it will also lead to mutual understanding, respect, and facilitate feelings of belonging for all. Regardless of the chosen programs, locations such as schools, workplaces, governments, media, recreational areas, and the arts, are all sites in which the Government of Canada believes that social cohesion can begin to be fostered ("In from the Margins", 2013).

Although this paper considers how small-scale efforts can create dialogue and social cohesion among communities, it is not enough. Significant change will not ensue after establishing one program. Shifting a culture of normalization of systemic racism requires multiple efforts from various stakeholders. These efforts to bring groups together needs to be matched with government policy to achieve long-lasting social inclusion and social cohesion ("In from the Margins", 2013). Moving forward, RNIP's success relies on the implementation of programming that recognizes the evolving nature of the relationship between Immigrants and Indigenous peoples (Pellerin, 2019). "Nothing about us, without us" is a slogan originally used by those fighting for disability policy (Charlton, 1998). The message remains true in the context of Indigenous issues and issues in immigration. Programs need to occur in consultation with Indigenous peoples and Immigrants alike. All the more, it requires their representation in leadership and policymaking. Otherwise, efforts are endangered of resulting in a re-creation of colonial discourse.

In summary, RNIP is being implemented in an area that is rich with opportunity. Unfortunately, the racism that Indigenous people face is indicative that Northern Ontario White Settlers will be apprehensive of helping to settle Immigrants. It is important that a multitude of approaches are used to encourage smooth transitions and to counter any racism that will arise. Dialogue has extraordinary capabilities that can do more than aiding in the transition of Immigrants, it can help decolonize social spaces. In conclusion, RNIP has several obstacles that lay ahead, the first and foremost being that there is a challenging opportunity for social inclusion and social cohesion. By employing the lessons learned by other cities, and by avoiding a "one size fits all" approach (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. viii), RNIP will be successful. It should be the region's foremost goal that RNIP is structured in a way that it benefits every person in

Northern Ontario, whether they are Immigrants, Indigenous, or White Settlers, and to focus their efforts in a way that brings about lasting, optimistic change.

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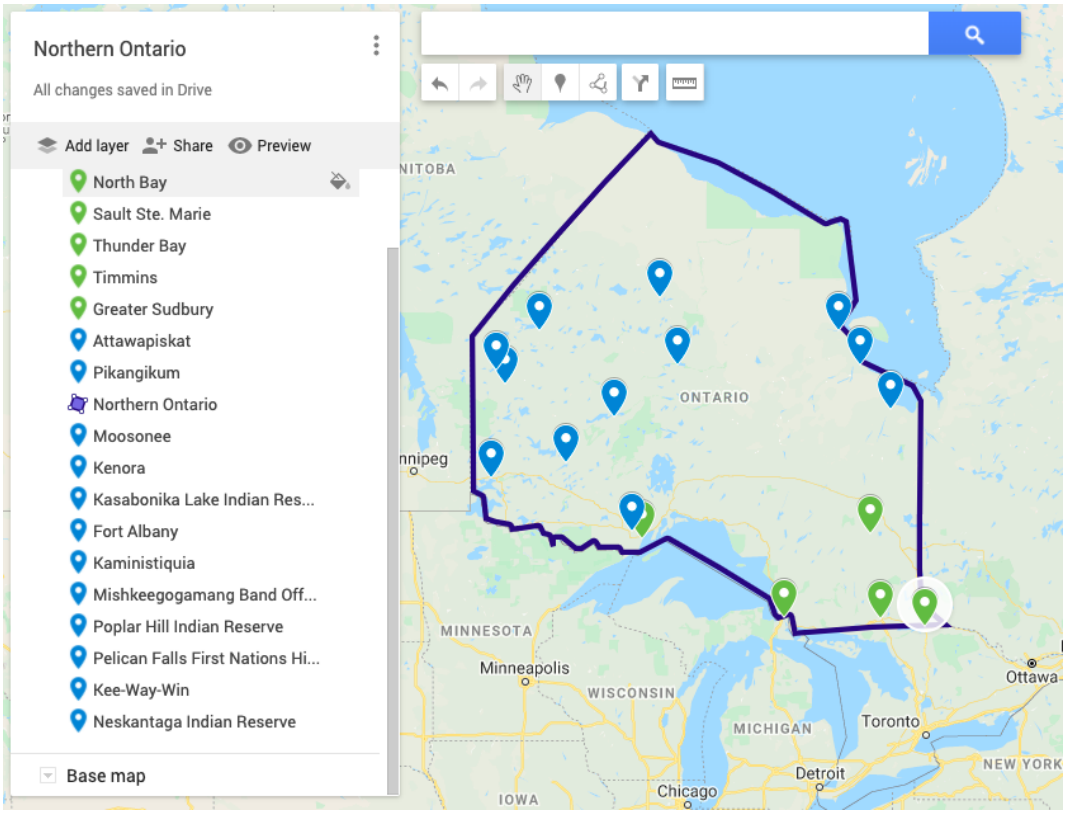
Appendix

Image 1



https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1Stt89f38hsPkIG4O6BNTqcBA_RwTuOjm&usp=sharing

Note. This map demonstrates the approximate geographical and cultural boundary lines encompassing Northern Ontario. The green flags indicate the cities participating in RNIP and the blue flags refer to other communities and First Nations reserves mentioned throughout the paper. The map has an interactive feature and can be accessed using the link above.

Glossary

Immigrant. Northern Ontario's largest demographic is White Settler Canadians who have origins in Western Europe (Statistics Canada, 2016). However, this paper strictly refers to the word "Immigrant" in relation to Chung's (2010) definition, which is those who are visible minorities, and are of the first and second generations (p.5).

Indigenous. Although this term has been re-evaluated and reassigned many times over the last century, Indigenous is arguably the most politically correct and current term. According to Proulx (2014), Indigenous "defines all peoples of Indigenous ancestry" and includes "First Nations, Metis, Inuit and urban Indigenous peoples" (p.84). And as it will be discussed in the third case study, the term Indian was and is sometimes used to address Indigenous peoples.

Northern Ontario. This paper considers the moving of Immigrants to Northern Ontario. Terms such as "The North" and "Northern Ontario" will be used interchangeably. This refers to the geographic northern part of the province which is illustrated in Image 1. The cultural boundary tends to change however this paper recognizes that North Bay is the gateway to the North.

Racism. According to Hoyt (2012), racism is "the belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races. Racism is a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups" (p.225).

Social Cohesion. According to Esses (2012), social cohesion "can be thought of as community connectedness or the glue that connects individuals within a given community" (Esses, 2012, p. 35). It includes the willingness to participate in the community, as well as sharing values and mutual respect. Esses (2012) believes that positive attitudes are typically associated with improved social cohesion.

Social Inclusion. Similar to social cohesion, social inclusion is defined as "the situation in which individuals or communities are fully involved in the society in which they reside, including the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of that society" ("In From the Margins", 2013, p.6). With relevance to immigration, neither term should be confused with an attempt to assimilate or create a melting pot. Rather, it is an indicator that a community celebrates and accepts differences in relation to race, culture, religion and so on.

White Settlers. Although I debated what term would be most proper to refer to White inhabitants in Northern Ontario, I agree with Lee's (2016) choice of using "White Settler." This refers to White people, and or their ancestors also of European descent, who have come to Canada. As it will be discussed in the body section, European immigrants make up the vast majority of the population in Northern Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2016).