

# The whiteness of green: Racialization and environmental education

Sheelah McLean

Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan

*Numerous research studies have explored how institutions such as schools are produced as white spaces. Whiteness is a socio-spatial process that constitutes particular bodies as possessing the normative, ordinary power to enjoy social privilege. Within the Canadian colonial context, whiteness has been produced historically through the violent confiscation of land and resources from Indigenous Peoples. This violence has been silenced through grand narratives of Canadian "tolerance," and white-settler fantasies of the Canadian landscape as empty and wild. Many environmental education programs continue to rely upon and reproduce these colonial ideas of race and space. Escaping the classroom, Canadian environmental education programs propose to advance personal and educational decolonization through experiential land-based learning. Integrating the discussions in anti-racist, anti-colonial education with the literature on race and nature, this qualitative article draws from student interviews and artefacts to interrogate how whiteness continues to be normalized within environmental education through various dominant narratives of Canadian nation building, such as: the disaffiliation of whiteness from the violence of colonialism, reifying Canadianness as goodness and innocence; the ongoing erasure of Indigenous Peoples and histories from the land; and the reification of wilderness as an essentialized, empty space. These narratives continue to entitle white people to occupy and claim originary status in Canada, signifying wilderness and the environment as a white space.*

Keywords: environmental education, Indigenous Peoples, whiteness, colonialism, integrated anti-racism

## **La blancheur du vert : La racialisation de l'éducation relative à l'environnement**

*Un bon nombre de recherches se sont intéressées à la manière dont les institutions telles que les écoles se conçoivent comme des espaces blancs. La notion de blancheur peut être envisagée en tant que processus socio-spatial qui dispose certains corps à détenir le pouvoir normatif et ordinaire et ainsi bénéficier de privilèges sociaux. Dans le contexte colonial canadien, la blancheur est le résultat historique de l'appropriation brutale des terres et des ressources des peuples autochtones. C'est à partir des grands récits sur la « tolérance » canadienne et du fantasme d'un paysage canadien vide et sauvage créé par les colons blancs qu'on a réussi à faire taire ces actes de violence. À ce jour, les programmes d'éducation relative à l'environnement puisent et reproduisent ces types d'idées coloniales sur l'identité raciale et l'espace. Hors des murs de l'école, des programmes d'éducation relative à l'environnement conçus au Canada visent à contribuer à l'avancement de la décolonisation personnelle et éducative par une méthode d'enseignement fondée sur l'expérience du terrain. Se situant au croisement des discours sur l'enseignement antiraciste et anticolonial et de la littérature sur l'identité raciale et la nature, cette étude qualitative cherche à comprendre, à partir d'entrevues menés auprès d'étudiants et par l'analyse d'artefacts, dans quelle mesure la blancheur demeure toujours un des principes à l'origine de l'éducation relative à l'environnement, principes qui repose sur les points forts des plus grands récits de l'édification de la nation canadienne: la dissociation entre la blancheur et la violence du colonialisme; la réification de la canadienneté en termes de « bonté et innocence »; la suppression continue des histoires et des peuples autochtones du territoire; et la réification de la « nature sauvage » en tant qu'espace essentialiste et vide.*

Correspondence to/Adresse de correspondance: Sheelah McLean, Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, 28 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0X1. Email/Courriel: sheelah.mclean@usask.ca

*Ces récits donnent encore aux gens de race blanche tous les droits d'occuper et de revendiquer le statut de peuple fondateur au Canada, marquant la nature sauvage et l'environnement comme un espace blanc.*

Mots clés : éducation relative à l'environnement, peuples autochtones, blancheur, colonialisme, antiracisme intégré

## Introduction

Numerous studies have revealed the ways in which white spaces are pervasive in Canadian institutions, including educational institutions (Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Coleman 2006; Thobani 2007). In the wake of mass inequality created by colonialism, ongoing environmental destruction, and a growing neoliberal<sup>1</sup> agenda, many educational scholars have worked to integrate social and ecological justice pedagogies into public school curricula and pedagogical practices. Throughout North America, environmental education programs in particular propose to advance personal and educational decolonization through experiential land-based learning programs. This article will interrogate the assumption that all outdoor environmental education programs are a decolonizing intervention and contend that environmental education curricula may reproduce and extend structures of whiteness.

Integrating the discussions in anti-racist education with the literature on race and nature, this article will analyze some of the ways that whiteness may be extended into programs that seek to address environmental issues. For example, while outdoor education programs use place-based pedagogies to reconnect students with the natural world, this article will outline how this must be problematized given our colonial context. This article will also examine how many outdoor environmental education programs situate their curricula within a post-racial context, which masks the violence of ongoing white-settler colonialism, reifying Canadianness as “goodness and innocence.” The ongoing erasure of Indigenous Peoples and histories from the land justifies the white-settler state; this

<sup>1</sup> Neoliberalism privileges a market economy as central to the organization of society, supporting private interests over public needs. This is justified through discourses of a “fair and neutral” system, which pervades every institution within a capitalist society.

erasure is extended into public school systems and many progressive courses and curricula such as outdoor education. Finally, this research will contend that whiteness as innocence is a national discourse reified by environmental programs which construct wilderness as an essentialized, empty space. These discourses problematically entitle the white-settler society to occupy and claim originary status in Canada, signifying wilderness and the environment as white spaces.

I write this article as a PhD candidate in integrated anti-racist anti-colonial education, and as a white middle-class teacher with 20 years of experience teaching a social and ecological justice course to grade 12 high school students on the Canadian prairies. This research draws from data collected for my dissertation: “Talking back’: Teacher and student subjectivities and counter-narratives in public schools,” a qualitative self-study which investigates my pedagogy in relation to student learning within a course focusing on social justice. My dissertation research uses a triangulated approach of collecting data in the form of my own memory-work, as well as exercising student artefacts (assignments), and student interviews regarding their learning experiences in the course. The significance of how teacher self-study informs educational research has been well documented, as educators use this data to develop the reflexivity that creates authentic pedagogy (Loughran et al. 2004; Mitchell et al. 2005). The impetus for this article originates from my own effort to integrate social and ecological justice in a classroom setting.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The goal of this locally developed high school program is to centre anti-racist anti-colonial praxis in an integrated English language arts and history program. The dominant discourses that construct Canada as a democratic, tolerant nation free from violence and racism are pervasive in the storying of nation building. The course materials allow us to interrogate the impact of white-settler invasion on Indigenous Peoples and lands, as well as investigate colonial identity-making practices that (re)produce markers of sexuality, gender, race, class, ability, and other subjectivities. This student-centred course facilitates learning using the inquiry method to guide

Of the 16 student-participants interviewed for my dissertation, nine discussed their experiences in outdoor environmental education during both elementary school and/or high school. All of the student-participants have graduated from high school and consented to my use of their given names. Using discourse analysis (Foucault 1981), this article will position the student-participant texts and interviews within a larger framework of anti-racist, anti-colonial theory in order to problematize outdoor environmental education in a colonized setting. Generally, the student-participants who completed outdoor education regarded their learning experiences as progressive, and considered the integrative teaching methods to be informative; yet when they entered my program, they continued to employ discourses which reproduce white innocence in a space where the social, political, and economic disparities between Indigenous Peoples and the white-settler population are indicative of violent and ongoing injustice. These observations have created the impetus for this article, which seeks to understand how whiteness is reproduced in some of the most progressive educational programming. This article contends that it is essential to frame environmental education curricula by centring the historical impact of white-settler colonialism on Indigenous Peoples and territories in order to create an anti-colonial pedagogy of the environment.

### Environmental programs as educational intervention

According to Gruenewald (2004), environmental education emerged in response to the growing awareness of human damage to the environment. Drawing from numerous fields such as the environmental movement, experiential learning, and critical pedagogy, environmental awareness is believed to be enhanced through outdoor excursions that construct knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences (Gough 2003; Palmer 2003). Environmental education can be understood as both a process and method to deliver the ideas and skills associated with ecological

research into the ideologies, policies, and practices that construct and perpetuate inequitable social relations and the ensuing material consequences.

issues. The goal of environmental education is to build an understanding of scientific systems of ecology that frame the nature of environmental problems and their possible solutions (Gough 2003; Palmer 2003; Kahn 2008). Students are required to research subjects such as local biosystems and watersheds, as well as investigate topics which include soil erosion, food production, or species and habitat extinction. Environmental education scholars “support[] the idea of a ‘curriculum for ecology,’ in which ‘ecological problems become educational problems” (Gough 2003, 54, quoting Pinar et al. 1995, 840, 841; Bowers 1993; Gutek 1993). The student-participants in my study confirmed that the environmental programs they were enrolled in focused on a study of the sciences:

Nick: In outdoor school ... we did a lot of, say geology, for example ... So when you're learning about how the glaciers moved and formed the country, it's great to be actually out in the field doing that kind of thing. So a lot of stuff like that, plant studies ... We did do some trips, and they're all way more grounded in the whole sustainable, especially physically sustainable. So we went to kind of pilgrim, so to speak, of like people making their own gardening, alternative energy, straw built homes, things like that.

Often, the goal of outdoor environmental education is to raise student consciousness and concern for environmental destruction, as a mode of intervention which may shift individual consumption practices, sometimes referred to as an ecological footprint. Environmental education is often regarded as the embodiment of a philosophy rather than a subject of study.

While there are multiple definitions of environmental education, this article is focused on the outdoor experiential learning programs in elementary and secondary public schools derived from western scientific notions of ecology and the impact of environmental destruction on water, soil, and air systems (Kahn 2008). In these programs, students are invited to reconnect with nature and the land, enjoy the beauty and aesthetics of the outdoors, and think about their place within natural systems (Palmer 2003). Environmental education programs attract students from predominantly white middle- and upper-class families, who therefore have access to the

clothing and other necessary resources which allow them to engage in the many outdoor excursions and activities that are an expectation of the programming. This reflects how environmental programs are often marked by a racialized class system.

### The disaffiliation of whiteness from colonialism

Kahn (2008) and González-Guadiano (2005) argue that, across North America, environmental education programs are primarily experiential and lack a connection to social and political issues. Critical scholars also acknowledge that environmental education lacks a critical race analysis and generally does not include a history of colonial violence or a political analysis of the destruction of the environment. The theories, policies, and discursive themes in environmental education are drawn from a western framework and often disregard Indigenous issues globally (González-Guadiano 2005). Many critical scholars contend that these western theories essentialize nature and create binary views of nature and wilderness (Baldwin 2009a, 2009b; Erickson 2010). According to Kahn (2008), this can be traced to the history of environmental education and the foundational role that forest conservation played in its inception. The first two waves of environmental education were led by middle-class white male scholars, and have proved harmful in promoting strategies that could work across historically produced differences such as gender, race, class, and sexuality (Kahn 2008).

Numerous environmental education programs position their curriculum within a post-racial context, where sustainability is proposed as a panacea for industrialism, while silencing industry's relationship to colonization. This problematic positioning was commonly identified by many outdoor education student-participants: "Even in [outdoor education] that was more environmentally focused and the environmental movement, as critical as it is about a lot of things it isn't critical about race or privilege or any of those types of issues" (Xochitl).

As Churchill (2003) contends, the destructive elements of contemporary globalization—insatiable greed for resources, genocidal disre-

gard for life, militarism, and racism—all trace their lineage in North America back to the invasion by Europeans in the 16th century. The colonial relationship between white-settler society and Indigenous Peoples is foundational to land-based struggles. The construction of whiteness as a form of individual accumulation relies on the consumption of land and resources. Canadian whiteness was not simply imported from Europe but forged through the colonial encounter (Milligan and McCreary 2011).

Many environmental education programs problematically centre ecology in a frame that focuses on the effects of environmental destruction, which depoliticizes and silences primary causes such as colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy. As a result, the socially acceptable solutions students are invited to engage in are often individualistic, and celebrate white middle-class subjectivities through activities such as recycling, biking, or buying from organic Farmer's Markets—such solutions do not challenge racialized systems of inequality.

Sarah: I felt like [outdoor education] actually was more like environmentally based and I feel like I had a really good handle on that but then I wanted more of the human rights side of things like colonization, things going on with the government, and all that kind of stuff.

Sheelah: What did the [outdoor education] program focus on when you were there?

Sarah: It was totally environmentally based, conservation based but it wasn't really the systems that make the environmental situations the way they are. It's more focusing on your personal ways to change things, like riding your bike everywhere, recycling, all that kind of stuff.

Sheelah: Like our own footprint...?

Sarah: Exactly. Instead of looking at the government that passes legislature [sic] that allows big companies to do whatever to the environment.

Student-participants indicated that their environmental education curricula did not allow for the type of power analysis that might evoke crucial questions such as *who benefits* from environmental destruction? This absence of a race analysis encourages a failure to acknowledge

white supremacy as a system of ongoing colonial privilege and consumption. Where there may be discussion of environmental racism in environmental education, this type of analysis focuses on the effects of particular discriminatory acts on communities of color (Pulido 2000). Pulido (2000) argues that this frame conveys a limited understanding of racialization, failing to analyze how environmental injustice has been co-constructed through a set of relationships between spaces that have been racialized. Without an analysis of the unequal consequences of environmental destruction on all racialized communities, environmental education can become a place where “good” white people can maintain superiority by saving both the environment and people of color, which includes Indigenous communities devastated by environmental destruction.

### **The genocide of Indigenous Peoples as integral to whiteness**

Many environmental education programs continue to rely upon and reproduce colonial ideas of race and space by perpetuating colonial frameworks through the erasure of Indigenous bodies, histories, and territories from the curriculum. The students in my courses who graduated from environmental education programs continued to construct Canada as a benevolent state in their course work submitted to me. These discourses were prevalent in my informal and ongoing collection of written assignments, poetry, art projects, and artefacts on the Canadian identity. One paper I regularly assign students the first week of my course is an informal essay on the question, “What is the Canadian identity?” This excerpt from Kris’s assignment is an example of discourses that are startlingly uniform in their response: “We are a very multicultural country and I think this is really great because it provides something unique and interesting to our country. People from all over the world move to Canada in hopes of finding a better life, this shows that people all around the globe view Canada as a safe place.” Student-participants describe Canada as a democratic, multicultural country free from racism and violence, and imagine Canadian citizens as caring, tolerant people who have a global reputation for peacekeeping. These narratives of Canadian

innocence are combined with a gaping silence on Indigenous Peoples—in other words, none of my students included the history of Indigenous Peoples as central to the question of Canadian identity. It is also important to interrogate how students come to explain and understand the vast inequalities that exist in our society given these pervasive narratives of Canadian innocence.

In order to understand the function of these ongoing narratives, it is critical to examine the historical relationship between Indigenous Peoples and white-settler society. Thobani (2007) examines how national subjects have been produced through state policies and social practices which elevate white-settler status, while Indigenous Peoples are co-constructed as inferior and marked for genocide. It is through these processes that the white-settler comes to embody the values and ethics of the Canadian nation. As Thobani (2007, 4) states: “There prevails in Canada a master narrative of the nation, which takes as its point of departure the essentially law-abiding character of its enterprising nationals, who are presented (for the most part) as responsible citizens, compassionate, caring, and committed to the values of diversity and multiculturalism.”

Thobani (2007) contends that Canadians imagine state rights are attained by white-settlers because of their own superiority and goodness, and not through the practices of colonial violence which create political, social, and economic inequality. Canadian nationhood is founded on the removal of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, as white-settlers are produced as the true subjects of the nation. “The settlement activities of these true subjects accomplished the violent dispossession of Aboriginal populations – a dispossession duly constituted and preserved as ‘lawful’ to this day” (Thobani 2007, 13). These narratives define both the national identity and determine the policies and practices which continue to shape Canada’s social, political, and economic landscape.

A. Smith (2006) similarly argues that white-settler society marks Indigenous Peoples for practices of erasure and genocide, revealing the multiple ways that genocidal practices are not against the law in Canada and the United States, but rather protected by the law. Smith (2006) contends that white-settler society marks

Indigenous Peoples for genocide because of Indigenous inherent rights to the territories now controlled by the settler society, and that ongoing genocidal policies are a result of increasing desire for the nation's legitimate title and control over Indigenous lands and resources. This struggle for Indigenous title continues in land claim negotiations across North America today. "Native peoples are a permanent 'present absence' in the US colonial imagination, an 'absence' that reinforces, at every turn, the conviction that Native peoples are indeed vanishing and that the conquest of native lands is justified" (Smith 2006, 68). Smith notes that notions of democracy and equality are used to justify ongoing invasion onto Indigenous lands and threats towards Indigenous sovereignty.

The mythologies of innocence are an integral aspect of the social fabric of a settler society, and can be reproduced in educational settings. The outdoor environmental education students in my courses did not question these national mythologies, nor the inequitable material consequences from them. **Instead, many outdoor education programs are problematically inviting students to "reconnect with the land" without incorporating an analysis of the violent history that led to white-settlers' illegitimate occupation of Indigenous territories.**

### **The construction of whiteness as innocence**

Canadians are actively socialized to deny the nation's violent colonial history, as well as the ongoing systematic denial of Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights to the land. Historical amnesia is the foundation of our identity as white Canadians (Baldwin 2010; Coleman 2006). White-settlers are socialized to defend racism and inequality, as well as the mobility and privilege of middle-class whiteness. The history of colonial violence must be silenced in order to maintain a national identity of innocence (Baldwin 2010). This identity is reproduced in educational institutions, and conditions Canadian youth to not only accept, but often justify the numerous inequities that exist.

Many anti-racist anti-colonial scholars contend that the production of whiteness as innocence

reifies its position of superiority; in fact, the distancing of whiteness from colonialism allows white-settlers to imagine that they participate in a post-racial culture (Baldwin, 2009b, 431). Whiteness refers to the ways that white bodies are racialized as superior, and socialized onto positions of political and economic dominance (Kobayashi and Peake 2000). These racializing processes intersect with identity constructions such as gender and sexuality to produce varying degrees with which white bodies are marked for positions of privilege and power.

Critical geographers Kobayashi and Peake (2000) contend that our communities are deeply divided by historical practices of racial oppression, and they therefore centre critical race theory in order to account for the ways in which spaces become racialized. White dominance is maintained through the control of institutions, as well as exercising the ability to occupy spaces "within a segregated social landscape" (Kobayashi and Peake 2000, 393). Racializing practices are the foundation of nation building in Canada, making it necessary to centre the production of whiteness in a study of social and geographical landscapes.

Similarly, critical geographer A. D. Smith (1999) argues that ethnicity and terrain are linked by a common history and shared narratives. Smith (1999, 150) refers to racialized spaces as ethnoscares, terrain which "covers a wide extent of land" that comes to represent "a tradition of continuity." Smith contends that terrain is marked with historical significance fundamental to particular communities. In Canada, these grand narratives constitute historical versions of voyageurs, pioneers, and people from the colonies who survived the hardships of Canada's wilderness, domesticating the land in order to found the nation. This connection between whiteness and "hard, purposeful labour" produce discourses that secure white identities as superior and mark the terrain as a white space (Baldwin 2010, 892).

### **Occupying wilderness and embodying whiteness**

There are many examples where Canadian photography, art, and film projects have portrayed

wilderness as an empty space, erasing the presence of millions of Indigenous people across this continent (Baldwin 2010). Although wilderness has been a contested space in geography and other disciplines, Baldwin (2010, 883) contends that wilderness is often “invoked as a universal symbol of Canada” and linked to whiteness and settler nation building. In classroom projects I have asked students to write about and discuss what it means to be Canadian, many students link discourses of nationhood with an essentialized form of nature and wilderness. An excerpt from Julie’s assignment reproduces this narrative: “What does it mean to be Canadian? ...how can one claim to know what it means to be Canadian without having ever hiked through the Rockies, lain in warm grass to watch clouds in the prairie sky, or braved the biting cold of the Arctic winter to take in the most brilliant northern lights in the world?” These discourses construct the beauty of the geographical landscape—the mountains, prairies, and in particular, the wilderness, as an essential aspect of the Canadian identity. As Baldwin (2009b, 432) argues, “The concept of wilderness enjoys the dubious distinction of being one of colonialism’s most enduring symbols in Canada, an empty space, devoid of humans... which is quite literally founded on the erasure of aboriginality”.

Numerous environmental education programs across North America centre experiential learning at the core of their pedagogy. As discussed previously in this article, my students experienced various and sometimes extensive trips that include hiking, camping, canoeing, and other outdoor activities that allow them to study and reconnect with the land. Students from these courses describe these experiences in countless ways, maintaining that the experiences of camping and canoeing are memorable:

Irena: [Outdoor education] has a huge environmental focus and it was a full day, not just in the morning. The thing that really sticks out in my mind about [it] were like the field trips, the big field camping trips.

Sasha: [It] is intensive, it was every single day all day and so we were able to do bigger projects, go on our trips for a week at a time and stuff like that so those are super impacting.

While many student-participants indicated that this type of experiential learning was transformative, it is useful to analyze how critical geographers have problematized the construction of white-settler relationship to wilderness within a colonized space. For example, according to Baldwin (2009b, 431), “white bodies become white” through the essentialization of nature as a pure uninhabited space. In this way, nature is constructed as a cleansing system, a place where white bodies can escape the negative consequences of urban industrialism, and reclaim identities of innocence (Baldwin 2009b). As Baldwin (2009a) contends, while urban centres and in particular urban ghettos are often racialized as multicultural, wilderness evokes the innocence of white-settlers in Canada. These discourses work to produce environmentalism as a space where white identities safeguard and maintain the land, rather than consume and destroy it.

Critical geographers such as Braun (2003) claim that many aspects of nature are constituted by racialized subjectivities. For example, adventure sports such as mountain climbing and white water rafting are dominated by white middle- and upper-class subjectivities, marking outdoor adventure sports as a white space (Braun 2003). Baldwin (2009b, 431) also analyzes how “established forms of external nature continue to work in the service of white identity in Canada,” revealing how lake front cabins as well as provincial and national parks are produced as white spaces. These studies reveal the pervasive extent to which wilderness is constructed as a white space.

Baldwin (2009b, 434) also contends that “Canadians are characterized by their relation to wilderness,” and describes the canoe as “the main vehicle by which this relation is established, further reinforc[ing] the ‘Canadian-ness’ of the ethnoscape. ... this ethnoscaping [is] the territorialization of whiteness.” In addition, wilderness canoeing suggests that people can reclaim Indigenous heritage through camping and canoeing, a practice that is now dominated by middle- and upper-class white Canadians. In this way, the canoe becomes a symbol of both wilderness preservation and the revitalization of Indigenous culture (Erickson 2010). Erickson has written extensively about the canoe as an iconic symbol of Canadian nationalism, which

problematizes the extensive canoe excursions that are central to experiential learning in many North American environmental education programs. As A. Smith (2006) contends, the final act of erasure of Indigenous Peoples from the colonial landscape is for white-settlers to appropriate and perform dominant notions of Indigenous culture.

Often, when Indigeneity is inserted into environmental education, it is essentialized and secondary to the environmental destruction faced by all Canadians, concealing the additional impact of colonialism on Indigenous people (Baldwin 2009b; Willow 2010). White subjectivities are problematically positioned “as the moral equivalent” of Indigeneity (Baldwin 2009b, 435), as subjects deemed post-racial are “repositioned within a ‘global’ discourse of climate change” (Baldwin 2009b, 441). The belief that a post-racial context is possible ignores the differential access of white subjectivities and political projects that are taken up broadly and legitimized on the national and global stage. Indigenous projects concerning the environment, such as outstanding land claims and the protection of territories from resource extraction, are constructed as special interest group activity, and therefore “unworthy of universality” (Baldwin 2009b, 441).

When Indigenous Peoples are made visible in environmental education, it is predominantly through essentialized constructs of Indigeneity that erase individuality and multiplicity and deny the contemporary realities of colonial oppression. According to Willow (2010), western proponents of environmental education have long been nostalgic for the environmentally sustainable Indigenous ways that colonialism destroyed. In this way, environmental education casts whites as “caring guardians” or “equal partners” in conservation (Baldwin 2009b, 435). These discourses are an attempt to transcend the political conditions and material consequences of racial and gendered class hierarchies.

## Conclusion

Drawing from anti-colonial theory and the literature on race and space, this article contends that national narratives of white-settler good-

ness mask the colonial violence used to create the national subject, and work to construct a false national identity of innocence. This research also maintains that the marking of Indigenous Peoples for extinction is indispensable to the colonial state. In the case of Canada, there are multiple sites historically constituted as part of a larger system of genocide. This process is extended into our public school systems, where classrooms and curricula perpetuate acts of genocide through the erasure of Indigenous histories and territories. These discourses continue to be reified in many outdoor environmental education programs that reproduce white-settler fantasies of innocence by disassociating from colonialism.

There are many examples of how whiteness as dominance is maintained within local and global environmental movements, normalizing white subjectivities as the only legitimate caretakers of the land. These racializing practices are problematically infused into various environmental education programs, creating a false separation between social and environmental issues that reifies white supremacy. Kahn (2008) argues that outdoor environmental education programs are in need of radical politicization as they fail to develop a critical analysis in students. **Critical analysis is essential in guiding students to question their own subjectivities, which are presently dominated by positions of accumulation and consumption.** Unless the dominant narratives of whiteness are disrupted, outdoor education students are problematically positioned in their quest to occupy and reconnect with wilderness. As educators seek to build integrated social and ecological justice programs, it is essential to frame curricula by centring an interrogation of the impact of white-settler colonialism on Indigenous Peoples and territories in order to create an anti-colonial pedagogy of the environment.

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