Trends and Issues in Citizenship: Exploring the Past to Understand the Present and Imagine new Possibilities of Belonging

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Abstract

This paper argues that contemporary issues in Canada illustrate a call on the part of Canadians for a re-examination of the nature of citizenship and citizenship education, whose roots are based in European concepts and traditions. This paper describes the history of efforts to cultivate citizenship in Canada, foregrounding its roots in Europe and illustrating how exclusionary and positive nation-building narratives have been taught with the aim of stitching together European colonies on lands now called "Canada." These conceptions and practices have harmed groups, such as Indigenous Canadians and ethnic minorities. Currently, Canadians are recognizing "historical wrongs" as illustrated in contemporary events including the finding of unmarked graves of Indigenous children, the tearing down of statues, and the renaming of streets and universities. After describing these and other contemporary events and tracing the connections between these events and the history of colonialism and citizenship education in Canada, this paper argues for a reconceptualization of the nature of Canadian identity as the foundation for a new way of thinking about citizenship and citizenship education which aims to address contemporary issues. This new conception aims to be rooted in place, inclusion and belonging. This paper serves as a case-study exploration of the legacies of colonialism and the possibilities of moving beyond colonial conceptions to new possibilities of the nature of citizenship, identity and belonging, and their associated educational programs.

Keywords: History of Education and Canada; Citizenship; Identity and Education

Beginning with Land Acknowledgements

It has become increasingly customary to begin a paper or presentation in Canada with a Land Acknowledgement, which recognizes the traditional Indigenous People's territory on which one is situated. This acknowledgement connects a person's reflection to the aims and process of Truth and Reconciliation and decolonization, which is increasingly highlighted nationally and educationally in Canada. For example, I begin this paper by situating myself on the lands of the Syilx Okanagan People and recognizing myself as an uninvited settler on these lands that were not ceded during the process of European colonization. This process aims to acknowledge past and present problems with European settlement that go the core of what it means to be a citizen of the nation-state of Canada, and which are illustrated in a number of contemporary challenges to nation-based citizenship.

Contemporary Problems & Issues

On the 27th of May 2021, news that 215 unmarked graves of children were found at the site of Kamloops Residential School sent shockwaves across Canada (Supernant, 2022). More unmarked graves were to be found at other Residential School sites across Canada over the year. The graves were those of Indigenous children that had been removed from their families and forced to attend harsh boarding schools that aimed to erase their cultural identity. These news stories were followed by calls for the cancelling (or "toning down") of Canada Day celebrations, the toppling of historical monuments, and the renaming of streets and a university, which aimed to remove colonial names and figures (BBC, July 2, 2021; CTV News, March 20, 2021; Global News, June 28, July 15, 2021). In addition to these events, there was news coverage of an increase in racist attacks. This news called into question the nature and form of Citizenship in Canada and of past Citizenship Education programs that taught nation-building historical narratives that were narrow, exclusionary and assimilationist, as will be discussed next.

Reviewing the History of Conceptions of Citizenship

Citizenship is defined as being a member of a group that entails rights and responsibilities (Author, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021). Citizenship education relates to the knowledge, skills, values, concepts of belonging, and rights and responsibilities that are taught to children. *Values (Packham, 2023) are an integral part of Citizenship and Citizenship Education as they identify what qualities of character are thought to be important for children to learn. These values have varied over time in the field of citizenship, ranging from values that aimed towards maintaining the status quo, such as obedience (as discussed below), to values that support inclusion in more recent Citizenship Education programs.*

The nature and form of citizenship and citizenship education varies from place-to-place and across time (Author, 2021; Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Castro & Knowles, 2017). Canada's current conception of Citizenship and its associated Citizenship Education program is rooted in the European conception of national, civic citizenship. A review of European history identified two general conceptions of citizenship (Kohn, 2005). In one conception, belonging is understood to be tied to one's family or clan, and thus "citizenship" entails knowing who is one's clan, what one's duties and rights are, protecting the group from perceived threats, and developing governance structures for resolving issues that might arise. People are connected together through shared traditions that might include language, culture, or place. This form of citizenship has been called *ethnic citizenship* (Kohn, 2005). The second type, often

contrasted to the first, is *civic citizenship* (Kohn 2005). Civic citizenship belonging is conceptualized as being a member of a nation state, which entails rights and responsibilities within and to the state. *In both forms, conceptions of citizenship are ideals, in the sense that they conceptualize what those who have developed the programs identify as social aims and dreams. That is, citizenship education is rooted in what a society strives towards being through its citizens' actions (Edwards & Hobbs, 2023).*

In England, the concept of civic citizenship developed along with industrialization, nationalism and imperialism, *as well as political and social changes overtime such as the legacies of tensions between parliament and king* (Bury, 1960; Colley, 1992; Newman, 1997). England slowly developed as a state governed by a ruler, within which diverse ethnic groups lived. Developing from the ideas of Feudalism, subjects were to give loyalty to their ruler in return for protection (security) and help in addressing their needs and resolving issues (governance). Diverse groups were brought together as subjects of the monarch, who developed traditions and symbols that drew these groups together, and horrific punishments for those who were identified as "traitors" such as the punishment of being hung, drawn and quartered. *Tours of the Oxford Castle and Prison and the London Dungeons highlight some of the cruel punishments of the Monarch which included the punishments of beheading, torture and imprisonment in horrendous conditions, such as being chained together with others and having to sleep standing up and without access to toilets.*

Industrialization and imperialism brought the English together beyond the local regions where they had previously focused their lives. Industrialization led to a national-level economy and the growth of a new middle class, and new technology enabled connections across space. *Workers employed in the new factories faced difficult working conditions including long hours of physical labour, which led to advocacy for change. Margaret and Rachel McMillan worked tirelessly to develop "baby camps," the first nursery schools in the UK, for children of working mothers (Liebovich, 2023).*

Nationalism—identification with the "nation-state" of England—was consciously cultivated in the late 1700s and 1800s through literature, scholarship, and the development of symbols, traditions and heroes (Bury, 1960; Colley, 1992). This feeling of being part of a nation, of nationalism, spread throughout Europe fueled by a desire for land, economic power and influence and a need for safety from war. War has been identified as an important factor in the development of nationalism, pulling people together ("insiders" against those who they are at war with) (Grayling, 2001; Posen, 1984). Nation-states are thus constructs in bounded physical spaces which have means of identifying who is a member of the nation-state, that is, who is a citizen and what rights and duties are conferred on citizens.

In the nineteenth century, new nation-states such as Italy and Germany emerged in Europe. The developing sense of belonging to a nation was connected to that of liberalism, leading to concepts of citizenship as liberal, national ("civic") citizenship (Marshall 1950). In this form of citizenship, belonging is tied to being a member of the "nation" which provides individuals who are members ("citizens") with particular protections and rights and the management of their common issues through a centralized national government, in return for which the citizens accept their responsibilities to work in the best interests of the group (the nation).

Citizenship Education

With the development of nation-states, governments developed education on, about and for the development of national civic values. Without the cultivation of a national identity or a sense among the people of wanting to be together (Renan, 1882; Singley, 2003), nation states were understood to be

fragile, in danger of fracturing apart. Yugoslavia was seen as an example of the dangers of hastily created states that lacked unifying force. Prussia became one of the first nation-states to develop free public schools as a means of building nationalism, or a common feeling of association to the state (Cordasco, 1976; Boyd & King, 1975). Prussian schools aimed to nurture a sense of allegiance to and the dispositions needed to maintain (and further develop) the nation-state. These schools were free as they were paid for by taxes, and they became models for other nations, including the United States, Canada, and England. *For example, Horace Mann was influenced by Prussia Schools and aimed to develop universal and free public schooling in New England. Egerton Ryerson aimed to do the same in Ontario, Canada.* Public schools were consequently established across nation-states in the nineteenth century and controlled by governments through funding, state-developed policies and curricula, state-approved teachers (that is, those certified by the state), standardized tests and inspection (Author, 2016; Doheny, 1991; Stamp, 1970).

Traditional Citizenship Education programs focused on teaching normative concepts and activities associated with national political life, such as learning about the structures and functions of government departments and the law, and about the actions that citizens should engage in, like following the political news and voting. The nationalist citizen was correlated with the compliant citizen who conformed within, and actively supported, current political structures in the nation-state (Bliss, 2002; Granatstein, 1998; Sears & Hughes, 1996; Sherrod, Torney-Purta & Flanagan, 2010; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). That is, good citizens were versed in governmental procedures, took part through informed voting and other civic actions as best as they were able—and were nationalistic/patriotic supporters of the current state. Citizenship Education fostered students' values that supported the nation-state. These values, chosen by those in positions of power, included values such as being respectful of authority (obedience) and doing one's work.

Colonization, Citizenship and Citizenship Education in Canada

European exploration of North America led to settlement and the establishment of colonies controlled by European monarchies. Canada as a nation was officially born in 1867, when four British colonies joined together to create a federation under the Canada Act, and as part of the British Empire. Over the nineteenth century, more colonies across the lands that are now Canada joined this confederation. European immigrants settled on lands that housed Indigenous peoples, who were pushed aside onto reserves through Treaties that were unclearly understood. In some parts of Canada, such as in parts of British Columbia, settlement occurred without treaty agreements, so Indigenous groups have taken the government to court over land claims. Since the Canadian government began to recognize Indigenous land claims in 1973, 1844 claims have been submitted, with 935 of these having been settled (Wikipedia). In a recent settlement between Northeastern Indigenous peoples and the Federal and Provincial government, as an example, the Federal government paid $800 million dollars, and the province of British Columbia returned 109,395 acres of land to these Indigenous peoples (Pawson, 2023).

Over the twentieth century, settlers have come from increasingly diverse parts of the world supported by the policy of Multiculturalism, which was established in 1971. As a federation of colonies, scholars and leaders have aimed to identify the symbols and stories of Canada and how citizenship education is to occur. The Maple Leaf flag, one of Canada's most well-known symbols, was officially adopted in 1965. Schools have been tasked with teaching about and for the nation of Canada.

Citizenship Education

The civic citizenship view of citizenship—an imagined community (Anderson 2006) within nation-state borders—dominates conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education in Canada, as illustrated in this quote from a 1925 Royal Commission report:

> The development of a united and intelligent Canadian citizenship actuated by the highest British ideas of justice, tolerance, and fair play should be accepted without question as a fundamental aim of the provincial school system. Such an aim has stood the test of time. (Putman & Weir, 1925, 38)

Citizenship Education has been understood primarily as the fostering of a sense of connection to Canada through learning about the nation's history by studying nation-building narratives and the duties and responsibilities of citizenship (Department of Education, 1890-1968; Ministry of Education, 1985-2020). Citizens are to vote, be informed of issues, and participate in society (the nation-state). The educational program for developing this has focused on teaching factual knowledge of the government and interweaving Canada's nation-building narratives, linked and rooted in Europe, into history lessons (Author, 2012). Textbooks illustrate the aim of fostering national sentiment through the teaching of historical "narratives" of the development of Canada (Author, 2011 as illustrated in texts such as Jeffers, 1884; Jenkins, 1918; McArthur, 1927; McCaig, 1930). For example, one early text describes Canada's development:

> The new order of things gave an impulse to the country which now began to make steady progress. New roads were opened up, and the navigation of the St. Lawrence was improved (Jeffers, 1884, 44).

While the direct inclusion of religion in public schools has changed over time through law and court cases (Fuller & Elias, 2023), religious content was included in children's readers of the early 1900s (Author, 2011). Texts also make reference to pride in the birth of Canada in 1867 and its explicit connection to the United Kingdom:

> While the first "Dominion Day" was observed with rejoicing throughout the country, at Ottawa Lord Monck took the oath as the first Governor-General of the Dominion of Canada. He then, in the name of the Queen, bestowed various imperial honors upon the public men who had been foremost in bringing about Confederation (Jeffers, 1884, 105).

In these narratives, public figures—who were white, male, European settlers—were positively described. Statues to honour John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, were erected. Egerton Ryerson, who helped to found the Public School System in Ontario was described at his death, as one, "…whose life and works will be felt for good in this province, in ages yet to come" (Jeffers, 1884, p. 119). A university in Ontario was named after Ryerson. Now, however, public feeling has changed as illustrated in events such as cutting off the head of the statue of John A. Macdonald in 1992 and repeatedly splashing it with red paint, in recognition of his role in developing the Residential School system (Stevenson, 2022). The university named after Ryerson has changed its name from Ryerson

University to Toronto Metropolitan University, stating that it has done so as part of its commitment to Reconciliation (Griffin, 2023). Despite some recent inclusion of negative historical events carried out by the government in the past, what some have called "historical wrongs," such as biased immigration policies, curricula remain embedded within European "civic" and "liberal" conception of citizenship, aiming to develop in youth a sense of belonging to the nation-state of Canada. Curricula aim to instill a belief in youth that they receive rights from belonging to this nation-state, which also require responsibilities from them, such as voting and informed participation in improving Canada (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Problematizing this Conception of Citizenship

In short, Canadian Citizenship Education has been a traditional, nationalist civic citizenship education program. One concern with this conception is that curricula emphasize conformity to values chosen by those with power, are assimilationist and arise from colonialism. Those who resist this indoctrination, or who hold other views, may be viewed negatively as not meeting the values or morals being taught, as illustrated in the cases of Indigenous children who were forced to attend Residential Schools and Canadians from ethnically diverse backgrounds educated in public schools who have been pushed to conform. The damaging effects of Residential Schools on Indigenous children who lost their lives, identities or cultural roots has been documented, as illustrated in the work of the poet Dennis Saddleman, the biography of Augie Merasty, and the writings of Maxine Battiste. Augie writes that he wants people to know of his sufferings and abuse at Residential School (Medley, 2015). Scholars have also described racial inequalities in Canada, and how Canadians of diverse ethnic backgrounds are not equitably treated and are subject to racism (Banks, 2019; Cao, 2021; Guo, 2021; Guo & Maitra, 2017; Guo & Guo, 2015; Lei & Guo, 2022; Pillay, 2015). *Gender is also a factor, as traditional conceptions of citizenship have developed in historically patriarchical societies, and history has been literally "his" (white male) "story." Women have worked hard to gain equal rights, and this work continues today (Randell, 2023; Naicker, 2023).* These problematics illustrate that this is an opportune time to reimagine the nature and form of citizenship in Canada.

Recommendations: Reimagining Citizenship

Some scholars are developing new conceptions of citizenship beyond that of national, civic citizenship. Bickmore et al. (2017) has written about Peace Education. Joshee & Thomas (2017) argue for slow peace as a way of increasing social justice in Canada, and scholars writing from social inequality and critical race theory have argued for "relational conceptions of citizenship… that conceive citizenship in terms of belonging, community, and cultural identity" (Vickery, 2016, as cited in Sabzalian, 2019). Williams (2003) and Vitikainen (2021) have discussed a concept of citizenship as "shared fate." Citizenship as shared fate argues that citizenship is not based upon a "shared identity" as people can hold multiple forms of such, but rather, citizenship is about recognizing how diverse people with varying identities share contemporary and interconnected conditions and contexts, which are historically-formed and future-oriented–as people can consider what to do about—how to collaborate about— issues that inextricably connect us together. Citizenship education thus involves learning about different historical interpretations and how past events have informed an inequitable present, understanding different

perspectives and traditions and learning how this shapes a future-shared goal of working together to address contemporary and common challenges.

Other scholars are developing conceptions of citizenship rooted in Indigenous perspectives and place (Battiste, 2013; Blackburn, 2009; Gellman, 2019; Krawec, 2022; Sabzalian, 2019; Vitikainen, 2021; Weibe, 2021). *Indigenous scholars have discussed the significance of land and water, love, reciprocity and relationship to decolonization and reconciliation (Tuhiwai Smith, Tuck & Yang, 2019). Krawec (2022) writes of the impact of European settlement and colonialism in North America, of forgotten or incomplete histories, and of where we go from here. She describes looking back and learning forgotten or unknown histories, learning our own histories that have shaped who we are, and then of moving forward from these stories to build community in the present through personal commitments to improve the world we live in. She describes how we are all related: We are relatives, which entails bonds and responsibilities to each other.*

How can these theories relate to the contemporary reality of nation-states, whose governments have power and their own agendas? This paper explores a model of citizenship and citizenship education that aims to consider new possibilities while acknowledging the realities of contemporary nation-states, *as well as the changing nature of society that is resulting from social and technological change (Chiasson, 2023).*

Bridging Divides

Drawing together Western colonial models of citizenship with Indigenous and new perspectives, citizenship can be considered to be encased in the "place" of the nation state (recognizing its current existence), but actualized in the unique features and essence of the local spaces we all inhabit. *Like Krawec (2022) writes, citizenship is lived through relationships in and between people.* Drawing on conceptions of democracy as that of government of, by and for the people *and ways of thinking that value Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Kendrick, 2023) and recognize how social factors influence schools,* citizenship is understood to include all people (including Ethnic, Indigenous, and Multi-national groups) as part of formal government structures within which all people discuss and negotiate shared commitments to contemporary concerns. In other words, a democracy is a community in which individuals share common bonds (Dewey, 1916). The more diverse and numerous the members of the community are, the richer the community. Dewey writes:

> A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. (np)

Kymlicka (2011; 2021), an influential thinker in Canada, describes how Canada is composed of "multi-nation" and "multicultural" features. By multi-nation, he refers to groups that have their own claims to nationhood (such as the French and Indigenous Canadians) as these groups pre-date the establishment of the nation-state of Canada, and by "multicultural" he refers to the Federal Multiculturalism policy which states immigrants can keep their cultural/ethnic identities and be Canadians, and that this rich diversity of cultural/ethnic traditions enriches Canada. Citizenship in Canada today should consider how to reconcile these diverse factors, while at the same time aiming towards decolonization. This paper argues that this can done through citizenship based in relationships

that focus around a shared fate (Vitikaininen, 2021; Williams, 2023), rather than through attempts to create a shared identity. These relationships can be drawn together through democracy.

Kymlicka (2011) writes, however, that:

> Democracy is rule by 'the people', but this requires an agreement that the citizens of a state do indeed form a single 'people' who exercise their popular sovereignty through a common state within agreed borders. Without agreement on the unit of self-determination, democracy becomes unstable (Offe, 2001, p .285).

This paper disagrees with Kymlicka's statement about a "single people": Each person is singular and unique within a community, and it is this singularity and uniqueness of lived experience, perspectives, culture and traditions that shape us. Diversity is actually the "people." Instead of being a weakness, this is a strength as long as: (1) different points of view are subject to authentic discussion and negotiation in a community which values all voices (moving beyond colonial notions of Western superiority that have done harm in the past) and (2) the decisions agreed upon aim to address the challenges of a shared fate (Willams, 2003; Vitikainen, 2021).

Drawing on Indigenous traditions and new work on the shifting and debated nature of citizenship in these times, discussions of shared concerns can be rooted in place as it "shifts one's positionality and responsibilities (aikau, arvin, goeman, & morgensen, 2015 as quoted in Sabzalian, 2019). Two points to keep in mind: (1) Canadian governance is divided into local, provincial and federal responsibilities, and includes both multicultural and multinational features, as discussed. For Kymlicka (2011), "multicultural citizenship within multination states" involves a multinational approach in which immigrants identify with a smaller national grouping within the larger context of a nation. Thus, there would be multiple overlapping narratives where meanings are discussed and negotiated. This paper goes further by suggesting government that includes all groups (Indigenous, settler, and immigrant), which is actualized in particular places, as place is our anchor of connection and life (Dobson, 2003).

Indigenous scholars may disagree with the suggestion for Reconciliation and citizenship which are described here are there is a call for sovereignty (Sabzalian, 2019). In consideration of this, this paper argues for a view of citizenship based on the diverse peoples who live in the lands now called "Canada" who cooperate together to address issues of a "shared fate" (Vitikaininen, 2021; Williams, 2023). That is, local government can involve a measure of sovereignty of affairs over local concerns and issues, but this requires all groups to participate in discussion and negotiation, anchoring government in place and people *and citizenship in addressing shared issues and concerns.* Government at the provincial and federal levels can include attention to common issues of shared concern (shared fate in Vitikainen, 2021) through the opportunity for all groups to share their ideas and for these to be considered through discussion and negotiation. *This values the cultural wealth of all citizens across diverse ethnic backgrounds and traditions (Berdecia, 2023).*

Examples of issues of shared concern include: (i) climate change which has led to winter storms, summer heat domes and destructive forest fires that have killed or injured Canadians and damaged infrastructure and livelihoods; (ii) social media and misinformation on these platforms *and the destructive forces of online bullying and peer and social expectations and pressure (Kendrick, 2023)*; (iii) dramatic rises in food prices; (iv) substandard living conditions and limited access to necessities such as health care and water experienced by some Canadians and Indigenous peoples in Canada; and (v) *gender and ethnic/cultural inequalities (Randell, 2023; Naicker, 2023; Berdecia, 2023)*. For discussions and

negotiations to be effective, lobbying and special interest groups who push their interests through money or power should be managed through the democratic processes of open discussion and negotiation that respects the voices and perspectives of all participants, and within which all respect each other, and work towards common agreement.

As such, Canadian citizenship education can focus on teaching students to value each one of us and the contributions that each can make, as well as the places we share. Education can include students' complex and diverse views, from localized "place-based" standpoints–recognizing and valuing Indigenous and post-colonial conceptions and ethnically-diverse Canadians– within a framework that values the ecological place where we live, and where we all "share fate" (William, 2003). Students can learn to collaboratively envision a future-shared goal of building a more just and equitable society rooted in place, community and possibility. *Teaching methods for this include problem-based learning (Bergen & Tapley, 2023), role-playing, and the power of story (Nardi, 2023), as well as Social-Emotional learning that builds students' self-esteem and their beliefs in their capacities for positive social change, liberatory design thinking (Bergen & Tapley, 2023) and personalized learning (Makhluf, 2023). In this digital age, technology can be integrated into collaborative, learning communities (Beam & Dunn, 2023). Real experiences are valuable for learning, so students can get involved in civic experiences such as collaborative community projects (Stemple, 2023), student leadership initiatives and local and overseas student exchanges (Bergen & Tapley, 2023). School leadership plays an important role in creating the conditions for teaching citizenship in schools through leaders who model citizenship and value, empower and create the conditions that promote conflict resolution and social growth (Denzine, 2023).*

This paper began with a Land Acknowledgement; it ends with a people acknowledgement: I recognize the history of wrongs done to people, including Indigenous and Ethnically diverse Canadians, on the lands we now call Canada. I aim to work towards addressing social inequalities today and to work towards a better society for all on these lands in the future, acknowledging our shared fate.

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