

Self-Location Exercise

We all come to reconciliation and redress work with different histories, perspectives and experiences. Our inheritances from settler-colonialism are not the same. On the theory that a little knowledge produces guilt, but a great deal of knowledge leads to the process of unlearning which can change your subject position, your politics, and your relations to others. Please think about the following questions:

What is your personal and family history that brought you to this land?

Why do you think the terms “settler” and “immigrant” are differentiated? Should they be?

Are you aware of the history of the land you live and work on? What sources have you drawn upon for information?

<https://native-land.ca/> (be sure to read the qualifying information on this website)

Were your family or ancestors impacted by colonization, oppression, structural violence or war?

What is your understanding of the impacts of colonial violence against indigenous communities?

What does reconciliation mean to you? What does reconciliation look like to you?

How does your gender affect your engagement with these readings?

Are there other parts of your identity, history and experience that affect your engagement with truth and reconciliation and the issue of women who have been disappeared from the downtown eastside (DTES)?¹

What work have we inherited?

How is it possible to avoid a politics of representation, speaking for or on behalf of other women?

How can we retain the specificity of their stories, their difference, without radical othering?

We must unlearn our own dominance by acquiring specific knowledge about others and then using that knowledge to continuously undermine generalizations about the so-called “Other.”

You must do your homework, to earn the right to speak:

“I will have an undergraduate class, let’s say, a young, white male student, politically-correct, who will say: “I am only a bourgeois white male, I can’t speak.” ... I say to them: “Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?” Then you begin to investigate what it is that silences you, rather than take this very deterministic position—since my skin colour is this, since my sex is this, I cannot speak”

-Gayatri Spivak, from Sneja Gunew “Questions of Multiculturalism” interview with Spivak in *The Post-Colonial Critic*, p. 62.

...so, what is it that silences?

¹ Adapted from:

2016. “Towards a New Relationship: Toolkit for Reconciliation/Decolonization of Social Work Practice at the Individual, Workplace and Community Level.” BC Association of Social Workers. <http://www.bcasw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reconciliation-Toolkit-June-16-Edit.pdf> accessed 11/20/2017.

