Reimagining Canadian Citizenship in Newcomer Serving Sector: From White Civility to Land Stewardship

Chizuru Nobe-Ghelani

Toronto Metropolitan University

Nadia Devi Umadat

Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

Abstract

Drawing on reflections from a community action research project on Indigenous-refugee relations in the context of settler Canada, this paper critiques the current script of Canadian citizenship that shapes the newcomer-serving sector. We call for a discursive shift of Canadian citizenship, from the one that is built on white civility, to the one that is centred on land stewardship. We highlight a personal story of migration, immigranthood, and work with newcomer communities and argue that when the script of citizenship operates within racial and colonial politics, it invisiblizes racism, settler colonialism, and global geopolitics of migration and evokes a sense of disconnection and placelessness. We draw on the teachings of the Hodinohso:ni Thanksgiving Address from Cayuga Elder Gae Ho Hwako Norma Jacobs and theorization of landed citizenship by Annishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows and discuss the transformational potentials of land-centred citizenship for the newcomer-serving sector, specifically regarding Citizenship Test preparation, Official Language Education, and Community Connection Program. We suggest that when newcomers are equipped with land-centred knowledge and experiences in their integration process, they are more likely to foster a sense of belongingness that honours Indigenous history, presence, and sovereignty, which ultimately contributes to meaningful truth and reconciliation work.

Keywords: Land-centered citizenship; Truth and reconciliation; Indigenous-Migrant relationality; Social work with newcomers

Introduction/ Context

Welcome! It took courage to move to a new country. Your decision to apply for citizenship is another big step. You are becoming part of a great tradition that was built by generations of pioneers before you. Once you have met all the legal requirements, we hope to welcome you as a new citizen with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Canada has welcomed generations of newcomers to our shores to help us build a free, law-abiding and prosperous society. For 400 years, settlers and immigrants have contributed to the diversity and richness of our country, which is built on a proud history and a strong identity. Canada is a constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary democracy and a federal state. Canadians are bound together by a shared commitment to the rule of law and to the institutions of parliamentary government. Canadians take pride in their identity and have made sacrifices to defend their way of life. By coming to Canada and taking this important step toward Canadian citizenship, you are helping to write the continuing story of Canada. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 3)

This passage comes from the introductory section of *Discover Canada*, the Canadian citizenship guidebook (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Designed to assist an individual as they prepare for the Canadian citizenship test, the guidebook provides the potential citizen with an idea of what it means to be Canadian. As stated, becoming a Canadian is not simply about "meeting all the legal requirements" but about "becoming part of a great tradition that was built by generations of pioneers before." Canadians-to-be are invited to embody this 400-year history of "welcoming newcomers" as well as to contribute to the "continuing story of Canada" as a "free, law-abiding, and prosperous society." Nowhere to be found in this passage is Indigenous history, lands, or communities nor how Canada was born out of violent land dispossessions.

While this passage only communicates the official version of Canadian citizenship, it is indeed a standardized script that many Canadians take as common sense. We are familiar with this script of Canadian citizenship. Chizuru is a first-generation migrant settler from rural Japan and came to settler Canada to pursue a post-secondary education. Nadia is the Canadian-born child of racialized migrants from Guyana. We have both worked in the newcomer-serving sector: Chizuru left the sector to pursue an academic career but continues to work closely with the community through her research practice; Nadia, after many years of direct practice, remains in the sector on a local planning body. Through our work with newcomer communities, we reflect that both of us directly and indirectly have contributed to reproduction of the racial and settler colonial script of Canadian citizenship that is expressed in the

Canadian Citizenship Guide. We argue that such a script is shaped by the discourse of white civility (Coleman, 2016); a discourse which is produced via racial and colonial politics and produces a sense of disconnection and placelessness. This is harmful to Indigenous communities, newcomer communities, and lands that we share. The aim of this paper is to interrogate this pattern, disrupt it and offer a new conceptual framework of citizenship that is grounded in land stewardship. We argue that land-centred citizenship can transform the sense of disconnection and placelessness into a sense of responsibility on the part of newcomer communities. Our conversations are limited to or targeted towards the newcomer-serving sector. We recognize that there are other newcomers who never go through settlement/newcomer services: this point is beyond the scope of our paper.

The paper is organized as follows: we first provide the background of the research project that this paper is based on; we then introduce Nadia's reflexive piece on her own migration trajectory, social work practice with newcomers, and participation in the project. This is followed by the discussion on conceptual framings of citizenship and arguement for the discursive shift from white civility to land stewardship. We end by discussing the implications of such reconceptualization in everyday work with newcomer communities.

Background

In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) produced a report as an initial step towards reconciliation between the First Peoples and the settler community, with a focus on the lasting societal effects of the residential school system. The report proposed 94 Calls to Action. The final two, items 93 and 94, address the concerns related to newcomers to Canada. Item 93 calls for a more inclusive history of diverse Indigenous Peoples of Canada in settlement education and Canadian citizenship testing, including information about treaties and the history of residential schools. Meanwhile, item 94 calls for the change of the citizenship oath to include the acknowledgement of Indigenous presence (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). These calls to action are put forward with the key message of the TRC that "[w]e are all Treaty people who share responsibility for taking action on reconciliation" (2015, p. 12).

This paper is based on reflections that emerged from a community action research project on Indigenous-refugee relations that both authors were involved in, Chizuru as a researcher and Nadia as a participant. This project was conducted between Fall 2020 and Spring 2022. It explored Indigenous-

refugee relations in Canada, particularly, the role of refugee communities in truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Chizuru worked with a refugee-serving organization, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT), to explore what it means for refugee communities to uphold the responsibility of reconciliation and to think about decolonizing praxis in everyday refugee resettlement and integration. The aim was to think more deeply about the message of the TRC beyond the usual rhetoric.

The project asked: What does refugee integration look like when local Indigenous history, presence, and knowledge are considered? We explored this question via a community action research methodology centred on land-based education from the Hodinohso:ni's perspective and focus groups with eight participants from CCVT (a mix of clients and staff members). The project was divided into three phases: the first phase was a pre-workshop focus group to examine the current understanding of refugee integration and Indigenous issues among the participants; the second phase included six land-focused education workshops, where the participants learned about local Indigenous histories, presence, and knowledge; and the final phase was a post-workshop focus group where participants discussed the learnings from the workshops and their application to future service delivery of refugee integration, including trauma healing and citizenship education. The sessions were co-facilitated by Cayuga Elder Norma Jacobs of Six Nations of Grand River and decolonizing scholar Dr. Timothy Leduc of Wilfrid Laurier University. We had five virtual sessions and one in-person session. During and after the project, we had numerous discussions on the implications of this research project and how it affects everyday practice with newcomer communities.

In the next section, we highlight the reflection of Nadia, one of the participants and co-author of this paper. Nadia's reflection elucidates how nation-state-based citizenship does not foster a sense of place or belongingness and challenges the taken for granted idea of Canadian citizenship embedded in the newcomer-serving sector.

Reconnections to Land: Nadia

My family hails from Guyana, which is situated on the north coast of South America, an English-speaking anomaly on the continent and linked culturally to its nearby Caribbean neighbours. Today, it is home to nine official First Nations tribes, in addition to the descendants of several other diverse ethnic groups. Our migration journey commences in the aftermath of the abolishment of African slavery when

Indian indentured workers were brought over in a labour scheme designed by the British. The indentured workers were promised return passage to India or a parcel of land in exchange for a set commitment to undertake grueling agricultural work. Most had no hope of upward economic mobility in their homeland for a variety of socio-cultural reasons and opted to remain. The land was presented as terra nullius, despite the pervasive Indigenous presence in the region. Against a backdrop of dictatorship, social and racial tensions, and increasing scarcity, both of my parents migrated respectively to Canada in the mid-1970s: my father as an international student and my mother as a dependent whose older sibling already lived in Toronto. Canada's immigration policies at the time were easily navigated, had nominal fees, and lent an overall impression that Canada valued and welcomed newcomers. Acquiring Canadian citizenship was straightforward, and from the recollections of my parents, not especially remarkable.

I was born in east Toronto, Scarborough to be precise, an area which is highly racialized and constructed as marginalized by the media. It is home to the largest Indigenous population in Toronto, while simultaneously structured to appear devoid of their history and presence. As a product of the Toronto District School Board, I recall being exposed to the adventures of Samuel de Champlain and Jacques Cartier and the other 'explorers' who were framed as brave and ambitious men. It wasn't until much later, in my undergraduate years as a mature student, that I was shocked to learn of the eradication and degradation of Indigenous peoples since the onset of European arrival and how this legacy has contemporarily impacted their communities. It was also through academic discourse that I learned about settler colonialism, which Canada as a nation-state has and continues to impose on the First Peoples. And, to my great unease, I became aware of my inadvertent ongoing role as a settler and also my family's journey as settlers for many generations and across places as dictated by colonial geo-politics.

I share this background to situate myself, developmentally and to some extent, contemporarily, as existing in the realm of insider-outsider citizenship, never taken up as authentically South Asian or considered Caribbean enough, and never exuding the ideal of what is thought to be 'Canadian.' There are many things, places, people, and cultural practices I can relate to and feel a connection with, but often not deeply. This perspective is entwined with a sense of placelessness. The places of my family history seemed distant and exotic, while the place I physically inhabit always offers the impression of being borrowed or temporary. By the sheer nature of my birth I am a Canadian citizen, the one and only citizenship I hold. This has never meant much to me other than I can travel with relative ease. If

citizenship is understood by an individual as a formalization of their belonging to a group, place, or a people, I was sorely left out and surprisingly apathetic on the subject.

I later trained as a social worker and have spent the entirety of my professional career supporting refugees and newcomers in some capacity. The irony of my vocation is not lost on me. Social work in Canada has actively sought to (re)produce whiteness, aid cultural erasure, and oppress communities of colour (Badwall, 2014). The notorious 60s Scoop utilized social workers in separating Indigenous children from their families and social work continues to be instrumental in the disproportionate number of BIPOC children in the child welfare system (Pon et al., 2011). My formal training was in tandem with ongoing learnings of academic theories addressing systemic and societal racism and exclusion of ethnic and racialized groups. As my formal education progressed, it became evident to me that Canada has a long and sordid history of racial violence, although in the present day the violence has now morphed into seemingly neutral policy applications. My realization of the nation-state's culpability in such horrors led to further estrangement in my personal sense of belonging and self and challenged my already insecure ideals of Canadian citizenship. I lacked a desire to (re)engage in a system which prioritizes the replication of white supremacy in everyday life.

Supporting newcomers with integration in Canada effectively aids the project of nation building and the image Canada maintains as a welcoming and benevolent nation (Nobe-Ghelani & Ngo, 2021). Implicitly, my work with newcomer communities underscores national efforts for newcomers to become model citizens who will contribute to settler nation building: immigrants who formally become model citizens (Li, 2003). One of my deliverables as a frontline worker was to provide guidance in the citizenship process, which I approached much like any other exam preparation. Interestingly, I observed this as an extraordinarily different experience for the majority of service users I supported. To be a Canadian citizen was to them a meaningful achievement. It was a tangible reward after years of hardship, loss, and sacrifice. These service users felt it was proof they finally belonged to the country where they had fought so hard to gain status and find their 'place.' I found myself almost envious of their joy when a test was passed or a ceremony completed, knowing it was not an experience I would ever partake in.

The settlement sector, via citizenship education and preparation, continues to promote a myth of belonging, which does not prepare migrants for the harsh realities of reflection in daily life. The entire

process of settlement and immigration set the attainment of Canadian citizenship as the ultimate triumph, which may be dispelled after the realization that attaining citizenship does not necessarily lead to inclusion and belonging in the Canadian nation-state. The myth of inclusion and belonging in Canadian citizenship is deliberate. Korteweg and Yurdakul (2024) position the concept of non-belonging "as actively constructed, entailing the denial of personhood… as well as the human and citizenship rights tied to this. Non-belonging affects group formation, community building, and social relationships" (p. 294). At the surface level, non-belonging is presented as the individual failure of the 'other' to successfully integrate in the nation-state through their own (lack of) merit. However, in reality, it is an intentionally designed mechanism to include and welcome particular bodies and exclude and marginalize undesirable ones. I use this argument to explicate my personal experience of non-belonging which highlights its transnational coloniality via white supremacy and white civility in the building of the colonial settler state.

In March of 2020, the world shut down and I, like many others, experienced plague-induced angst. My frontline work shifted to an online platform and I struggled to remain present with supportive tasks. To occupy my spare time, I began to venture out into nature, mainly due to limited alternative options. I was soaking in greenspaces and enjoying the relative quiet. I relished the heat of the sun on my skin and noticed the calming effect fresh air had on alleviating my anxiety. Encouraged by all the sudden natural beauty hidden in plain sight, I gradually began to forge a connection to my hyper locality. When invited by Dr. Nobe-Ghelani to contribute to the land-based research project along with Dr. Leduc and Elder Norma, I was only too excited for the opportunity to share my zeal with the other research participants. The project created the conditions for the convergence of the numerous individual thoughts I was processing. My position in the study was unique as I was the only individual who was born in the Canadian nation-state with a recent family migration story: my insider-outsider perspective was finally being harnessed positively. Thoughtful discussions on reclamation of land, its healing properties, and understanding our responsibility as settlers to offer protection, combined with my newfound sense of belonging to location, resulted in a transformation of perspective.

Korteweg and Yurdakul elaborate on how this type of transformation can have profound impacts in our world. "Breaking the us-them binary, with its roots in coloniality, those operating from spaces and through logics of non-belonging potentially produce new forms of community" (2024, p. 301). When the citizenship discourse is shifted from the nation-state to a discourse that is centred on land

stewardship, there is little space for disenfranchisement as each and every entity has a custodial responsibility for the land. Elder Norma's teaching provides a disruption to the normalized dichotomy of citizens and state. Recognizing the interconnectedness of all natural objects dismantles the accepted narrative and creates a reordered system which places value on all things, cultivating a sense of belonging without prescriptive conditions or criteria for engagement.

Citizenship: From White Civility to Land Stewardship

While Nadia's narrative presented above is only one migration story, it captures many common elements of migration and immigranthood in settler Canada: transnational coloniality, invisibility of Indigenous presence, and sense of loss of identity and place. It also addresses the myth of Canadian citizenship and how the newcomer-serving sector plays a major role in myth making. Nadia also speaks about the potential for a land-centred approach to citizenship. In this section, we will build on Nadia's reflection and make a case for a discursive shift of citizenship that is founded on a move from white civility to land stewardship.

As Nadia accounts, for many newcomers to Canada, gaining citizenship is an undeniably positive milestone. It is celebrated as an occasion of achievement, and a beginning of a more fulfilled life in Canada. As Bosniak (2016) argues, there is a romanticism attached to citizenship, and it is reproduced via discourses, policies, and practices. The passage from the Citizenship Study Guide we shared in the introduction reflects this romanticism, and the newcomer-serving sector is a key player in this reproduction through its everyday work. As a practitioner and researcher with newcomer communities respectively, we hope to disrupt this romanticism by challenging the fundamental assumption of citizenship as an ideal state of democratic belonging and inclusion. We are interested in understanding what this citizenship romanticism does and how it produces a particular citizen subject. For this investigation, we draw on Charles Lee's (2016) conceptualization of citizenship as a cultural and material script that regulates the human experience. Lee (2016) explains the citizenship script as:

> a materially scripted way of life—that is, as a standardizing and domineering cultural script of citizenship brought into being by European capitalist modernity to govern how human subjects ought to live and participate as 'proper' citizens in different realms, such as the political, the economic, the gender binary, and life itself. (p. 38)

Lee clarifies that:

> this standardized citizenship script is… cultural not in the ethnocultural terms but in the ideological-cultural sense, wherein a cultural hegemony of citizenship is articulated and interpellated in the sphere of everyday discourse and institutions as common sense and materialized into a way of life. The script is thus not merely cultural but material, as it is linked to material rewards, entitlements, and protections and is lived by human subjects. It is also inflected by biopolitical calculation, since it induces and fosters particular modes of individual corporeal bodies and mass social bodies toward the normative reproduction of liberal social life. (p. 44)

Lee further argues that the citizenship script is utilized by liberal democracies as an essential tool of surveillance and control to ensure the continuity of their life cycle. In its production of liberal citizenship, the script produces normality (proper citizens) and the abject (abject subjects) as mutually constitutive relations (p. 38).

Similar to Lee's argument, Anderson (2014) suggests that citizenship within the nation-state is shaped not only by legal status but also by the community of value, which is populated by "good citizens," who are "imagined law-abiding and hard-working members of stable and respectable families" (p. 3). Anderson asserts that the "good citizen" subjects are constructed in opposition to the "failed citizen" subjects, who "are imagined as incapable of achieving, or failing to live up to, national ideals" (p. 4). Drawing on Lee and Anderson's work, we suggest that the standardizing script (Lee, 2016) and community of values (Anderson, 2014) that demarcate the boundaries of Canadian citizenship are produced through the discourse of civility. For example, the passage from the Citizenship Study Guide we introduced earlier represents how Canadian citizenship is built on the discourse of civility. The emphasis on law—"legal requirements," "law-abiding," and "rule of law"—points to the orderliness required for civilized Canadians, while the glorified version of history and "continuing story of Canada" suggest the perceived temporal progress the Canadian nation-state has made over the years. Moreover, the complete erasure of Indigenous peoples illustrates how the discourse of civility erases the violent land dispossession that Canadian citizenship is built on. We suggest that it is through the discourse of civility that Canadians are bound together and have come to take such a citizenship script for granted.

Further, the discourse of civility is intimately connected with white supremacy. In his discussion of "white civility," Coleman (2006) contends that whiteness came to be tethered to notions of civility as

Canada established itself as a sovereign nation-state. This linkage between whiteness and civility has been confirmed and normalized via various discursive and material practices historically, exalting the white subject as "the citizen" (Thobani, 2007). The discourse of white civility continues through contemporary Canadian citizenship, including in the sphere of the newcomer-serving sector. It is often intermingled with the discourses of neoliberalism, humanitarianism, and multiculturalism, normalizing and legitimizing racial and settler colonial practices with newcomer communities (Nobe-Ghelani, 2019). The focus on English or French language acquisition, employment, and further education in newcomer integration all contribute to settler-citizen making.

We are committed to disrupt this settler-citizen making in the newcomer-serving sector. To do so, we propose that we need to shift away from citizenship that centres white civility and instead move towards citizenship that centres land stewardship. For that we now turn to Indigenous understandings and relationship to land.

One of the key and first teachings we received during the research project was the Ganǫhǫnyǫhk - Hodinohso:ni Thanksgiving Address (or Words before All Else) from Cayuga Elder Norma Jacobs. Jacobs explains that Thanksgiving Address acknowledges interconnectedness of all things in our lives. This includes People, Mother Earth, Plant medicine, Hanging Fruits, Sustenance, Forests, Game Animals, Birds, Waters, Winds, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, our Teachers, our Spiritual Helpers, and the Creator. In her 2021 book with Leduc, Elder Norma summarizes the spirit of Thanksgiving Address this way:

> When I look around, I see the many gifts that surround and nurture us – all of life in its many forms, from plants and medicines to trees and animals. This great abundance of energy and love that is this great Turtle Island, North America, came from E tinoha ongwesidage'dra gwe' (our Mother Earth).

What is powerful about the Thanksgiving Address is that it acknowledges non-human elements as part of nations and citizenry. As Jacobs explains, every element has a role to play and one cannot exist without the others. Gratitude is shown to acknowledge interconnectedness and interdependence. Human beings are only one element of citizenry, not the central piece. This radically differs from the western concept of citizenship that only acknowledges the relationship between individual citizens and the

nation-state. The Thanksgiving Address, grounded in a Hodinohso:ni worldview, offers an alternative conceptual framing of what it means to be a citizen in company with other elements on earth.

This is similar to what Chippewa–Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows (2000) proposes as landed citizenship, as a way of conceiving of citizenship rights for the land, and citizenship as defined by a relationship with the land. By acknowledging land as a part of citizenry, landed citizenship reminds us that each of us has multiple allegiances, belongings, and responsibilities as citizens of the Earth that cross national, political, and cultural borders. Borrows suggests that Indigenous communities have a developed notion in their philosophies and practices about how to recognize the land as citizen. Drawing on Borrows, Debicki (2015) argues that stories from diverse nations, such as Siksikaitsitapi, Hodinohso:ni, Anishinaabe, and Nêhiyawak, affirm Indigenous alliances with the environment and with each other, and their long-standing presence on and stewardship of the land. These stories also offer insights as to how difference and division—between peoples, races, and nations—can still support an inclusive citizenship based upon our shared interdependence with the Earth (Debicki, 2015).

We found Jacobs' teaching on the Thanksgiving Address, along with insights from Borrows and Debicki transformative. We see an urgent need to shift the discursive practice of Canadian citizenship from white civility to land stewardship in the newcomer-serving sector. In the next section we will elaborate on what the discursive shift could look like in practice.

Implications: Everyday Work with the Newcomer Sector

In what follows we discuss possible ways in which land-centred citizenship can shape the newcomer-serving sector. We focus on three key service areas: 1) citizenship test preparation; 2) official language classes; and 3) community connections. What we suggest is not particularly radical: it is a practical direction to meet the obligations of the TRC Calls to Action regarding the newcomer-serving sector and actualize an alternative citizenship script that may facilitate a deeper sense of inclusion and belongingness.

Citizenship test preparation

Citizenship test preparation is an integral part of the newcomer-serving sector, given that gaining legal citizenship is imagined as a key step of the integration process. All new Canadians over age 14 must take the oath; all prospective Canadians between the ages of 18 and 54 must score 15 out of 20 on the citizenship study guide test.

As discussed earlier, the TRC Calls to Action items 93 and 94 urged the federal government to update the Canadian citizenship guide and test, as well as the oath, to reflect a more inclusive history of Indigenous Peoples and a recognition of their treaties and rights. In 2021, in response to the item 94, Bill C-8, an Act to amend the *Citizenship Act,* received Royal Assent. This Act inserted a new language into the Oath of Citizenship that refers to the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. While this change is often celebrated, the change in itself does little to address the settler colonial script of Canadian citizenship. El-Sherif (2023) argues that the revised oath for new Canadians still rests on respecting the monarchy as the final arbiter of Canadian relations, not Indigenous nations. In this way, the revised oath could function as a performative gesture devoid of substance or meaningful action.

Further, the efforts to address item 93, to update the Canadian citizenship guide and test to reflect "a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the treaties and the history of residential schools" (TRC, 2015), has been severely limited. The citizenship guide has not gone through revisions since 2012. As a result, the citizenship education program that is offered by newcomer-serving organizations continues to revolve around a racist history, primitive notions of Indigenous peoples, and descriptions of colonial relations that reproduce settler harm. El-

Sherif (2023) argues that erasing genocide, normalizing colonial plunder, and venerating settler exploration in the citizenship guide all lead to a misleading map to Canadian citizenship.

We propose that in order to meet the obligations of the TRC Calls to Actions 93 and 94 in a meaningful manner, the revision of the citizenship guide, test, and oath need to centre Indigenous nations, knowledge systems, and land. As discussed earlier, multiple Indigenous nations, such as the Hodinohso:ni, understand that every object, living and otherwise, has a role on the earth and a story to uplift each other. If this worldview is taken up, it can serve as the catalyst of a discursive shift in citizenship, from one that is founded on white civility to one that is centred on land stewardship. Pragmatically, reframing of citizenship as land stewardship will prompt the revision of the citizenship guide and citizenship test content with Indigenous perspectives, focusing on local land relations, treaty relations, histories, environmental issues, and social movements. Such revision is not unrealistic. In fact, a growing number of municipalities such as Vancouver, Surrey and Toronto, as well as the province of Saskatchewan, have developed Indigenous-centred guides for newcomers. The development of such resources can also provide guidance as to how the citizenship oath can be further revised to one that unmistakably asserts Indigenous Peoples and lands as Hosts.

Language Classes

Official language instruction is a key program of the newcomer-serving sector. Although our discussion will focus on English instruction given our particular geographical location (Ontario), both English and French language education are racialized practices and operated via colonial politics (Haque & Patrick, 2015). As Haque & Patrick (2015) put it, language ideologies in Canada have "positioned English or French as superior and Indigenous languages as 'primitive' and as barriers to 'civilisation' and modernity" (p. 28). They argue that the historical moments of the post-World War II era, such as multiculturalism and the rise of Quebec nationalism, exalted the status of English and French language, while the importance of preserving and promoting Indigenous languages was largely ignored.

Currently, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is funded by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship (IRCC) Canada, and operated by for-profit and non-profit entities, including newcomer-serving agencies. Established in 1992, LINC officially linked language education with the settlement process of newcomers (Government of Canada, 2004). With the introduction of LINC, English language acquisition became framed as a crucial step to Canadian citizenship (Bettencourt et.al,

2003). Several scholars have critiqued how LINC policy and programs have further contributed to marginalization of newcomers. Haque (2017) speaks about how LINC constructs language acquisition as a trait, skill, and commodity. Through this commodification, the language gains legitimacy solely based on its perceived utility in the labour market. With its focus on skill development and employability, LINC policy has reduced the level of English being instructed to newcomers to only basic, or survival-level English, leaving newcomers to low-wage labour after LINC classes (Fleming 2007; Haque 2010). Furthermore, Guo (2013) argues that LINC classes and assessment are operated via a white, Anglo, and middle-class standard, accordingly reproducing the discourse of white civility that settler Canada is founded on.

A discursive shift to land stewardship has potential to challenge the current practice and policy of English language instruction. Land stewardship does not simply mean that we take care of land in an ecological sense; it also requires that we understand the history and realities of the land we are on. Speaking about anti-colonial pedagogy in language instruction with newcomers, Carpenter & Haghgou (2023) argue that it is important to introduce a disjuncture and a convergence in colonial realities by bringing together geographically disparate colonial practices. Many immigrants, particularly those who arrive as refugees, experience land dispossessions similarly to Indigenous Peoples in the context of settler Canada. Displacement from the land at local and global levels operates via the same logic of imperialism, capitalism, and white supremacy. Forced migration to and in Canada needs to be incorporated in English language instruction in order for newcomers to deepen the sense of land stewardship.   Deepening the sense of land stewardship can also be facilitated through place-based pedagogy that centres English instruction in local ecology. Learning about land acknowledgement can serve as an introduction to local land histories, stories and treaty rights. Indigenous teachings of trees, waterways, and plants in local areas can be incorporated in English language instruction and play a powerful role in helping newcomers engage in critical conversations about what it means to be a steward of the land they now call home.

Community connection

Another key program of the newcomer-serving sector is facilitation of community connections for newcomers. One of the earliest efforts by the newcomer-serving sector was the Host Initiative, which was introduced as a pilot in 1984. The Host Initiative began as a community-based service to sponsor

refugees. Sponsoring groups, mainly churches, matched newly arrived refugees with individuals or families, who then assisted their 'friends' to cope with the challenges of moving to a new country. The Host Initiative was extended to other classes of immigrants when it became a permanent program in 1990 with the introduction of the Federal Integration Strategy (Government of Canada, 2010). The intention of the Host Initiative was to facilitate the settlement of newcomers in Canada through Canadian volunteers (Government of Canada, 2010). With the introduction of modernized approaches to settlement in 2008, the Host Initiative was integrated into the general community connection stream though the practice of matching newcomers with established community members and communities in Canada, and continues to exist.

Recently, IRCC has begun to prioritize and fund programs that foster relationships between Indigenous people and newcomers. While this is indeed a positive shift and can act as an important starting point, the nature of relationship-building cannot be simply cultural or about mutual learning: rather it has to centre Indigenous communities and their lands, and vocally name Indigenous Peoples and lands as Hosts. This means that the relationship building must benefit local Indigenous Peoples and lands, while newcomers learn about local Indigenous histories, cultures, and knowledge systems. It also means that newcomers will connect, not only with humans but also with broader ecological elements that are specific to local communities. In practice, community connections programming that is centred on land stewardship will introduce opportunities for newcomers to learn about local ecologies and land histories, to connect with them experientially, and to engage in activities that protect land, including joining the land rights movements led by local Indigenous communities. Such land-centred approaches to community connection will foster a sense of allegiance and kinship with local lands while also promoting the idea that we are all citizens of Earth.

Conclusion

In this paper, we called for a discursive shift of Canadian citizenship, from one that is built on white civility to one that is centred on land stewardship. We have argued that diverse Indigenous knowledges that acknowledge land as part of citizenry offer a transformative conceptual framework for such a shift. Land-centred citizenship has the potential to disrupt the settler colonial script of Canadian citizenship and foster a sense of inclusion and belongingness that honours Indigenous Peoples and lands.

We want to end with an example of how discursive practice can disrupt the settler colonial script of citizenship. In the 2023 NBA All-Star Game, Toronto singer Jully Black altered the lyrics of the Canadian national anthem, *O Canada*, replacing "our home *and* native land" to "our home *on* native land" to acknowledge the Indigenous presence living on this land before settlers arrived from Europe. The word change in itself was small but has had powerful impact through generating a lot of public attention. In an interview with *Toronto Life* magazine, Black discussed her decision to change the lyrics this way:

> I thought of what I did as a musical land acknowledgment. I consulted various Indigenous friends. I told them, "This is what feels right in my spirit, in my soul." Their response was very emotional, and they thanked me for my sacrifice. I didn't even think of it as being rebellious. I sang the truth. My parents immigrated to Toronto from Jamaica in 1968. We're settlers. Because I'm a first-generation Canadian, I find it easy to see that this is not our land. (Silver, 2023)

This story demonstrates the possibilities of how newcomers to Canada can engage in the act of truth and reconciliation from our unique positionality in the context of settler colonial Canada. When newcomers are equipped with the knowledge that we are on native land, and that integration means fostering good relationship with the land and its stewards, it writes a different type of citizenship script, one which disrupts the settler colonialism of Canadian citizenship.

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