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Decolonizing Citizenship Learning With International Students: Exploring the Possibilities Through Photovoice

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the possibilities for decolonizing approaches to inter-cultural learning for international students in Canada. In this article the authors present the findings from a series of photovoice workshops conducted as a part of a larger mixed-methods project that explores how informal and everyday pedagogies shape international students' mobility decisions in the Atlantic Canadian province of Nova Scotia. Participants' collaborative analysis of their own photographs reveal how everyday citizenship learning emerges from international students' affective relationships to place in such a way that obscures how international education is implicated in processes of settler colonialism. However, evidence suggests that participants' sense of belonging is deeply implicated in their connections to place, highlighting potential opportunities for integrating international students in current initiatives to "decolonize" higher education in the Canadian context.

Keywords: Canada, citizenship learning, place-based education, decolonizing education

In Atlantic Canada, attracting international post-secondary students is a strategic priority toward achieving the region's economic and demographic growth objectives (Atlantic Growth Advisory Group, 2018; El-Assal & Goucher, 2017; Toughill, 2018). At the same time, in light of the release of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report in 2015, there has been critical attention

paid to how post-secondary institutions, including those in Atlantic Canada, must transform to meet the educational needs of Indigenous communities (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; Pidgeon, 2016). While these two priorities are rarely considered in counterpoint, scholars have begun to question and complicate international student positionality in relation to Canada's violent and ongoing colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples (Chatterjee, 2019; Gomez, 2020). A small subset of recent scholarship on this question calls for the integration of Indigenous place-based pedagogies to challenge and stretch international education policies and practices in settler colonial states (Anderson & Bristowe, 2020; Beck & Pidgeon, 2020).

As part of a mixed-methods research initiative that examines how informal and everyday pedagogies may shape post-secondary students' mobility decisions in Atlantic Canada, the present study offers an analysis of findings derived from a photovoice project undertaken with university students in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. While the broader project explores the first-voice perspectives of both domestic and international students, in this article we focus specifically on international student participants' reflections. We examine how participants' collaborative analysis of their own photographs reveals how everyday citizenship learning (Biesta et al., 2009) emerges from their affective relationships to place in such a way that obscures how international education may be implicated in processes of settler colonialism. In highlighting how participants' sense of belonging is deeply implicated in their experiences of connecting to place, we discuss how critical place-based pedagogies (Johnson, 2012; Simpson, 2017; Tuck et al., 2014) may present an opportunity for critically engaging international students in the process of 'decolonizing' the Canadian academy. We identify as white-settler allies working as educators in academia and the non-profit sector who are committed to both migrant and Indigenous justice, and to advancing anti-racist and decolonizing approaches to post-secondary education and lifelong learning.

CONTEXT

International Education in Nova Scotia

Canada relies on immigration to meet human capital and demographic objectives. In Atlantic Canada, the region of Eastern Canada comprising of four provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), immigration is seen as a policy response to decades of out-migration and a rapidly aging population (El-Assal & Goucher, 2017). For example, in 2018, Statistics Canada reported that Nova Scotia, the most populous of Canada's Atlantic provinces, had experienced its largest three-year population increase in a generation (2.8%), and cited immigration as integral to this demographic surge (Public Policy Forum, 2018). This is the local context in which international education policies in this region have evolved. In short, international education policies are considered an important tool to attract young and skilled immigrants who will eventually be integrated into local labour markets (Sharma,

2020). Policymakers thus perceive the internationalization of higher education as an economic and political strategy for Canada's peripheral regions to maintain a competitive advantage in the global knowledge economy (Knutson, 2020; Sharma, 2020; Trilokekar & el Masri, 2019). In Atlantic Canada, the retention of international students post-graduation is consequently a key priority (Gardner Pinfold Consultants Inc., 2018).

In Nova Scotia, a province which is home to 10 universities and 1 community college, there were a total of 14,760 international students enrolled in post-secondary institutions in 2020, by far the largest share of international students in the Atlantic region (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2022). To better integrate retention priorities with international education policies, in 2017 the province initiated the Study and Stay program, a provincial education co-operative that brings together government and educational partners to support the long-term retention and economic integration of international students (EduNova, 2018). The program incorporates mentorship and informal cultural programming targeted at select international students across the province. The province has also initiated the Nova Scotia Experience-Express Entry pathway, a fast-track immigration program targeted at international students who have studied at a Nova Scotia post-secondary institution and who have at least one year of work experience in a high skilled occupation (Nova Scotia Immigration, 2022). Nova Scotia has thus spent a lot of political capital to attract international students to permanently settle in the province, and since 2015 the province has reliably exceeded the government's annual retention target of 10 percent (Dodds, 2020).

Indigenizing the Academy

Nova Scotia is located on Mi'kma'ki, the traditional lands of the Mi'kmaw people, the First Nations people indigenous to Atlantic Canada (Bernard et al., 1997). The British established an alliance with the Mi'kmaw people through the signing of several treaties, the first of which signed in Boston in 1726. While these treaties did not deal with the surrender of Mi'kmaw land and territory (Wicken, 2010), they did establish the British colonization of Mi'kma'ki, the forced assimilation of the Mi'kmaw people, and the interruption of Indigenous relationships to land. In Nova Scotia, and in Canada generally, Indigenous land dispossession continues to be a profound act of violence epistemically, ontologically, and cosmologically (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and represents an assault against Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (Wildcat et al., 2014).

In 2015, the TRC report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) identified several 'Calls to Action' that dealt with transforming Canada's educational system in such a way that aims to heal the legacy of colonization and facilitate the process of reconciliation (Louie et al., 2017; Pidgeon, 2016). Scholars writing in the area advocate for a process of "decolonizing" the academy and call for the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies in all areas of academic institutions (Battiste, 2013; Cote-Meek, 2014). Mi'qmaw educational scholar Marie Battiste (2013, p. 186) calls on

educators to "reject colonial curricula" and to teach critical perspectives on the historical and contemporary context of settler colonialism and recommends that Canadian educational institutions blend Indigenous and Euro-Canadian epistemologies and pedagogies. Calling for a genuine commitment toward social transformation, for many, the process of decolonizing the academy is seen as an opportunity for Indigenous students to become "more empowered in who they are as Indigenous people" and for non-Indigenous students to develop a deeper understanding of the "complexities, richness, and diversity of Indigenous peoples, histories, cultures, and lived experiences" (Pidgeon, 2016, p. 87). Styres (2019, p. 33) describes this as a process of developing pedagogies that can foster a learning environment in which students are encouraged to question "their own positionalities, prior knowledge, biases, and taken-for-granted assumptions together with the ways they are implicated in and/or affected by colonial relations of power and privilege".

From the perspective of decolonizing education, the post-secondary classroom can thus be thought of as a pedagogical "contact zone" in which all students are invited to experience and discuss the intersections and overlaps between immigration trends and policies, settler colonialism, and the process of reconciliation (Chatterjee, 2018).

Internationalization and Indigenization

Recent scholarship highlights the tensions between international education practices and the movement toward Indigenization (Beck & Pidgeon, 2020; Gomez, 2020). It is not often recognized that the movement toward internationalization in post-secondary education takes place within this simultaneous movement to challenge Canadian universities' historical and ongoing relationship to settler colonialism. The question arises of how to integrate internationalization policies and practices in such a way as to respect and support efforts to promote reconciliation. While it is important to note that many international students come from countries with their own histories of colonization, international students themselves are beginning to reflect on their own complicated relationship to settler colonialism in Canada (Chen, 2021). Increasingly, there is an acknowledgement that post-secondary institutions must develop critical interventions to support a more nuanced understanding of the politics of reconciliation among international students (Chen, 2021; Shin, 2022). Scholars in the area suggest re-centring the framework of internationalization from one that promotes neoliberal institutional outcomes and regional demographic/economic goals toward one that prioritizes a wholistic international education framework that respects Indigenous knowledges (Beck & Pidgeon, 2020).

Embedding a commitment to decolonizing education into internationalization practices would involve supporting pedagogies, both formal and informal, that would ultimately increase international students' understanding and relationship to place that include critical discussions of settler colonialism. In what follows we explore how place-based educational interventions may be explored as a

framework to promote an approach to citizenship learning among international students that would support the movement towards decolonizing internationalization practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent conceptual developments in the area of youth citizenship learning are helpful when considering the possibilities of decolonizing post-secondary education in the context of internationalization. Specifically, scholars have explored how youth learn citizenship not only through formal school-based curricula but also through their participation in practices and communities in their everyday lives (Biesta et al., 2009). These scholars argue that approaches to teaching citizenship should incorporate an understanding of how young people actually learn to become citizens, and therefore must not ignore the non-cognitive dimensions of citizenship learning. This view, which highlights how youth citizenship learning is socially situated, emphasizes the affective, relational, and embodied dimensions of citizenship (Biesta et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2018). This understanding of citizenship learning is consistent with recent scholarship that accentuates the view that citizenship is a "lived" practice – one that is "experienced and enacted in various real-life contexts" (Kallio et al., 2020, p. 713). More than just a formal status issued by the state, citizenship, and the feelings associated with it, are rather shaped out of the "mundane spatio-temporalities of everyday life" and constituted through people's "localised and relational experiences" within the worlds they inhabit (Kallio et al., 2020, p. 717).

While the legal citizenship status of international students in Canada is precarious in so far as it is temporary and contingent on their standing as post-secondary students, it is important to remember that while they are in Canada, international students are members of the communities in which they reside. Thinking of citizenship as a lived practice can thus help us to understand how international students may develop a sense of belonging to a particular place despite the limitations of their formal citizenship status (Quintero & Zerva, 2022). This understanding of citizenship has implications for how we think about citizenship learning for international students. Wood and colleagues (2018) argue that curricular approaches to citizenship education that combine learning across both affective and cognitive domains can provoke opportunities for students to engage more deeply in critical thinking and learning. We make the additional case that the spatial dimension of citizenship learning is a particularly salient domain to consider, as geographers have demonstrated that young people experience deep emotional relationships to place (Bartos, 2013; Power et al., 2014).

There is thus an informal element to youth citizenship learning that often goes unrecognized, namely that for young people, developing a sense of belonging can be experienced as an accidental by-product of engaging with their everyday physical environments (Allaste et al., 2022). However, while international students can develop meaningful place attachments in their host destinations (Quintero & Zerva, 2022), Canadian scholars have argued that they often fail to develop a strong understanding of their own relationship to the Indigenous

communities on whose lands they reside (Chen, 2021; Shin, 2022; Zhu, 2020). The everyday engagement with their immediate physical environments may increase international students' sense of belonging and citizenship. However, when international students do not have access to Indigenous place-based pedagogies, places remain taken for granted, and the deeper cultural and political significance of their connection to place is overlooked. Holistic approaches to citizenship education should therefore prioritize international students' informal and social geographies of place (Wood & Black, 2018) while also incorporating critical and decolonizing place-based pedagogies (Johnson, 2012; Sabzalian, 2019). Connecting international students' lived experiences of their physical environments to the anticolonial struggles for meaning that a given place (in this case Mi'kma'ki) embodies could help international students to situate themselves more firmly in the cultural, political, and economic landscapes of contemporary Canada. Attending to the problem of Indigenous erasure from their everyday experiences of place could contribute to international students' citizenship learning in such a way that goes beyond a narrow focus on labour market integration, the primary concern of internationalization policy as it is currently expressed in Canada (Sharma, 2020).

In their research with international students in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, Zhu (2020) found that international students increase their sense of belonging, felt more connected to their physical surroundings, and developed a deeper awareness of environmental sustainability and human rights when educators actively engaged them in Indigenous pedagogical methods. Indigenous pedagogies can therefore be employed as a crucial component of critical and anticolonial citizenship education for international students. However, no research currently explores what engaging international students in place-based, or land-based, Indigenous pedagogies might look like. Land is deeply embedded in Indigenous epistemologies and is thus central to conceptualizations of Indigenous pedagogy (Simpson, 2017; Tuck et al., 2014), an experiential educational approach that is both grounded in the physical environment and centred on discussions of colonization in relation to land. Indigenous scholars and educators have persuasively argued that land-based Indigenous pedagogies that integrate an experiential, embodied, and reflexive approach to learning that balances the "spiritual, emotional, and relational" (Styres, 2019, p. 27) elements of humans' interactions with their physical environments, can help to promote critical consciousness of reconciliation (Styres, 2011). By incorporating such land-based learning opportunities, Canadian post-secondary institutions could provoke international students to think about and decode their own situated experiences of inhabiting occupied territories (Johnson, 2012). Land-based post-secondary curricula may thus contribute to transformational change in how universities and their student populations, including international students, engage with Indigenous communities (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2019). While recent partnerships between Canadian universities and Indigenous communities are integrating a place-based and Indigenous land education approaches to promote a deeper understanding of reconciliation (Marom & Rattray, 2022; Zurba et al., 2022), these do not intentionally include international students. Given the stated

importance of retaining international students in Atlantic Canada, together with international students' own experiences of developing place attachment through lived practice (explored below), it is important that such initiatives include international students to build newcomer-Indigenous relations (Shin, 2022), support a critical understanding of settler colonialism (Chen, 2021), and deepen their political and cultural connection to the communities where they live.

METHOD

The findings discussed in this paper are drawn from a mixed-methods project on post-secondary students' mobility decisions in Nova Scotia. The research explores how university students in the province (be they local or international) are learning to adapt to an increasingly mobile world. The project incorporated an "explanatory sequential design" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 66), and thus began with a province-wide survey which was followed by qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and photovoice). The survey was designed to understand the regional dimensions of youth mobility through the lens of "mobile transitions" (Robertson et al., 2018), and emerging framework in the area. The purpose of the qualitative methods was to shed light on the survey data. The project involved participation from three Nova Scotia universities (St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, and Cape Breton University in Sydney). In keeping with the mobile transitions framework, the survey (n=1013) focused on how economic, relational, and civic factors play into post-secondary students' mobility decisions. Respondents identified as Canadian citizens (approximately 60%), international students (approximately 35%), and permanent residents (approximately 5%). Roughly 5% of the Canadian citizen respondents identified as Indigenous. The survey was followed by 36 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with international students (n=23) and domestic students (n=13) that took place in the municipalities of Halifax, Antigonish, and Sydney. The interviews were then followed by two online photovoice workshops with 4 participants (3 international and 1 domestic). No Indigenous students participated in the qualitative research components of the project. This article offers an analysis of the photovoice data.

Photovoice is a qualitative research technique that lies at the intersection of visual methodologies (Pink, 2013) and participatory action research (Wang & Burris, 1997). The technique involves individual participants taking photographs inspired by a particular research topic, followed by group photo elicitation sessions whereby participants are invited to collaboratively discuss the participant-generated photographs and organize them into themes. The use of visual qualitative methods differs from verbal-only qualitative techniques, such as interviews, as the incorporation of images can evoke different kinds of information (Harper, 2002). First, having participants express themselves through images means that individuals can represent their experiences and their feelings in a way that may be difficult to express through words (Rania et al., 2015). Second, the discussion of photographs that follows provides a means for participants to collaboratively elicit meaning from their collective experiences

(Harper, 2002). In addition to photography and collaborative photo-elicitation, for this project, we asked participants to include a brief reflection on each of their images. This decision proved to be methodologically significant, as it gave individual participants the chance to add meaning to their visual representations and to begin to make sense of their experiences using their own words. These individual reflections in turn helped to guide the collective discussions.

Image-based qualitative methods have been used successfully with young people (Bartos, 2013; Power et al., 2014; Strack et al., 2004; Wang, 2012; Wang & Hannes, 2014; Warne et al., 2013), and are increasingly being used in higher education research (Wass et al., 2020), including with international students (Corcoran, 2018). For this project, we found that image-based methods were particularly good at capturing data on post-secondary students' emotional and embodied connections to place. Indeed, the literature provides provocative evidence to support the use of photovoice methods as "culturally accepted and appropriate ways of thinking, talking, and feeling about place" with young research participants (Power et al., 2014, p. 1114). For example, Power et al. (2014, p. 1124) found that taking and discussing photographs "helped to reveal those largely obscured, deep-seated affective connections youth have to their communities". Similarly, in her research with children, Bartos (2013) found that participant-generated photographs brought to attention how specific places became meaningful through the feelings that are generated from young people's experiences with their everyday environments.

For this project, photovoice took place online over two days. On the first day we had a professional photographer teach participants some basic photography skills. Participants were then instructed to go out into the world and take photographs related to the project themes, and to include corresponding reflections. To focus the discussion, we asked each participant to submit a maximum of 10 photographs, for a total of 40. Three weeks later we reunited to share the photographs and reflections, and participants were asked to thematically organize photographs and to reflect further on their significance. Because the participants were so familiar with the project aims, having previously participated in both the survey and the interviews, we felt that their photographs, reflections, and collaborative discussion were all quite rich. For this paper we are focusing on the results from the international student participants. The complete results can be accessed on the project website (https://adamperry.ca/photovoice/). Note that for this project we received REB approval from all participating institutions and that we have provided participants with pseudonyms (Aadav from India, Barbara from Singapore, and Ethan from Singapore). To introduce the topic, we have also included two examples from the interview data. Interview respondents are identified by their university acronym, followed by a number.

RESULTS

During our analysis of the data, we noticed how many of the photographs and reflections from international student participants revealed an embodied and emotional connection to their physical environments – a connection that was

obscured in the survey data and which emerged only peripherally in the interview data. From the photovoice analysis it became evident that participants were developing a sense of place attachment to Nova Scotia through their embodied interactions with the world around them. For our international student participants, physically interacting with place was a means of learning about the world. The photovoice data highlights the spatial dimension of informal citizenship learning, namely that the experience of physically being in the world is crucial to our participants finding meaning in place and to developing a sense of belonging in a new home. Nonetheless, we argue that this informal citizenship learning remains shallow from both a political and cultural perspective, as the photovoice data also highlights the erasure of Indigenous relationships to place, and thus exposes participants' ambivalence toward their own relationship to settler colonialism. However, given how participants are already engaging in everyday practices of place-based citizenship learning, we make the case that an intentional critical pedagogy of place that includes international students could support reconciliation goals.

Going into the photovoice sessions, we did have some inclination from having conducted the interviews that engaging with their physical surroundings was an important aspect of international students' developing an attachment to place. For example, one interview participant from Bangladesh (CBU9) talked about how he and his friends would often take long walks on the beach or go fishing on the weekends Cape Breton, a rural island off the Northeastern coast of the Nova Scotia mainland peninsula. Another interview participant from Mauritius (STFX2) talked about his desire to settle in the most remote part of Northern Cape Breton, which he said he "loved to death" because of what he perceived as a laid back and worry-free lifestyle. Incidentally, of all the international student participants, STFX2, an environmental science student, was the only respondent to mention injustices against Indigenous peoples. When discussing his affection for the province's natural environment, he referenced a legal battle between a local First Nation community and a proposed natural gas project that was in the news around the time of the interview. Drawing a connection between his own experiences of exploring his own natural surroundings, he said:

> It made me really mad that if you are a big company with a lot of money and a lot of resources you can just take whatever you want and not care about the first people that was here before anybody else.

This one isolated comment from an interview participant underscores how international students' embodied and everyday practice of being-in-place can support informal civic learning. It also highlights the possibilities for intentional and critical place-based interventions to further encourage a deeper political understanding of international students' own responsibilities toward reconciliation.

The photovoice data further elucidated international students' everyday practices of being-in-place, and how these impacted their sense of belonging and

attachment to place. All the international student photovoice participants discussed how engaging with what they referred to as "nature" was very important to their daily experience of living in Nova Scotia. In both the photography sessions and the interviews that preceded them international students talked about a bourgeoning and intimate relationship to their immediate physical environments and how this connection played a major role in their decisions to either stay or leave the province long-term. They discussed at length for example the importance of being surrounded by water, of going for hikes, and how spending time in nature provided them with the space to reflect on their lives. These experiences were integral to their developing a sense of place and belonging. This is evident from the following participant reflections:

> … living in Cape Breton, it is mountains and hills and has the ocean, two of my favourite things combined. Staying here has always been an option because I like the quiet lifestyle and you can always go and take a hike into the woods or trails anytime you want. At the end of the day, I will eventually settle here. (Aadav, international student from India)

> … nature has always been a gateway space for me from my day-to-day life. That's where I find most comfort and it gives me an opportunity to think about my life and my activities in a compassionate manner. (Ethan, international student from Singapore)

> … the students that choose to come to Nova Scotia for post-secondary education, it's very much a self-selecting group. The fact that there is so much in nature, like everywhere. I think that it's definitely a major factor that attracts people who prefer to spend a lot of time outdoors. (Barbara, international student from Singapore)

Participants' attachment to place is just bound up with the informal, or even accidental, learning that occurs from their purposeful interactions with their physical environments.

The type of engagement with "nature" that participants depict is a highly experiential and reflective practice – one that participants described as contributing to deeper understandings of self and of their surroundings, and thus contribute to their sense of belonging and rootedness. In the words of Aadav, "Out of my chaotic life of study, work and home, this is my comfort zone" and Ethan, "being able to go down to the water at the end of South Street [in Halifax] has really given me a chance to kind of reassess and rethink about where I am in life at the moment". The two corresponding photographs (Figure 1 and Figure 2) accentuate these reflections.

Figure 1

Figure 2

While participants' reflections suggest an awareness of and involvement with the "physical, cognitive, emotive and spiritual elements" of their spatial

interactions, their photographs and reflections omit any awareness of place as a site of struggle for Indigenous communities. Participants' experiences of Nova Scotia's physical environment are thus divorced from an awareness of Indigenous ways of knowing, the realities of Indigenous land dispossession, and contemporary concerns about truth and reconciliation. Nonetheless, we found that, while decontextualized from the Indigenous epistemologies that inform a deeper understanding of land as pedagogy, and a lack of connection to the issue of decolonization, participant photographs and reflections do highlight how international students make their own connections to place through their active engagement with the local landscape. As such, we suggest that there is an opportunity to develop carefully orchestrated land-based educational interventions that bring together international and Indigenous students to support broader Indigenization and reconciliation objectives.

Two photographs with corresponding reflections, both by Aadav, an international student from India studying at Cape Breton University, are most illustrative of participants' openness toward approaching place as a way of understanding their place in the world.

Photograph 1: The Spider and the Wasp

Figure 3

The first photograph (Figure 3) is a close-up of a spider eating a wasp caught in its web. The reflection states:

> While looking for bugs, bees, and other insects this wasp zooms by me and gets caught in the spider's net and the spider starts to wrap it in its

> silk. It made me realize we are all like that wasp speeding with our life suddenly getting caught by the monster called 'time' – wrapped and ready to be devoured.

In reflecting on how this event "made him realize" his own mortality, Aadav is reflecting on the pedagogical value of experiencing life within the natural world. In his reflection he articulates how the relationship between the wasp and the spider taught him that we are all dominated by the Earth's natural rhythms. The photograph and reflection underline Aadav's embodied and intimate engagement with place. Aadav is expressing a feeling of physical and spiritual interconnectedness with the world around him – a feeling that provokes a deep reflection on his own positionality in relation to it.

Photograph 2: Together, Chasing Butterflies

Figure 4

The second photograph (Figure 4) is a wide-angle shot of a wooded trail, with two unidentified people halfway through the frame walking away from the camera. The person nearest to the photographer is holding a butterfly net. The reflection states:

> Going into nature has always been a special feeling to me. Healing my soul and sanity and enjoying what Mother Nature has to offer. And the best part about it is when you have people you love and respect accompanying

> you, parting their knowledge and understanding, making you wise and humble.

Aadav's photograph and reflection accentuate the spiritual ("healing my soul") and relational ("people you love and respect accompanying you") aspects of learning from one's physical environment. For Aadav, the healing properties of the natural world are amplified when the experience is shared with others, emphasizing a "whole-body intelligence" that is gained through the collective realization of a loving and interdependent relationship to our physical surroundings (Simpson, 2017, p. 151).

While these reflections are indicative of participants' engagement with their everyday environment as a site of learning, the omission of Indigenous connections to land underlines how this learning is shallow both politically and culturally. The meaning and knowledge that Aadav and other participants derive from their experiences of Nova Scotia as a physical space are therefore decontextualized from international students' relationship to settler colonialism, and thus underscores a gap in intercultural education and decolonizing goals in higher education. Nevertheless, in expressing the spiritual, intimate, embodied, and relational experiences attached to communing with their physical surroundings, these photographs and reflections demonstrate an openness to learning from the land in such a way that does respect both the realities of colonial violence and Indigenous ways of knowing.

DISCUSSION

With their focus on international students as workers in waiting (Choi et al., 2021; Sharma, 2020; Trilokekar & el Masri, 2019), or as a convenient policy instrument to address regional demographic concerns (Toughill, 2018), Canadian policymakers fail to understand the lived dimensions of international students' citizenship learning (Kallio et al., 2020). The photovoice data presented above demonstrates that there is an important spatial dimension to international students' lived experiences that accentuates the importance of place as a site of everyday civic learning. In keeping with research on young people more generally, the data suggests that international students' sense belonging is at least partially shaped through the embodied experiences they have with their immediate physical environments (Bartos, 2013; Power et al., 2014). Participants treat the physical world around them as a text from which they may learn about the world and their place in it. This resonates with Johnson's (2012, p. 833) observation that "being-in-place is continually an act of engaged/active learning". That being said, Indigenous erasure emerges as an element of participants' experiences of learning from place, revealing an important gap in international students' political and cultural learning, a gap that has also been highlighted recently by others (Chen, 2021; Gomez, 2020; Zhu, 2020).

However, highlighting how everyday geographic interactions influence participants' civic learning brings to light the possibility of creating novel

opportunities for international students to engage with Indigenous place-based pedagogies that can support a critical consciousness toward reconciliation. If applied with care, these may contribute to decolonizing internationalization practices. We make the case that a "mindful and purposeful" (Styres, 2019, p. 29) praxis-oriented and whole-body approach to land-based education could provide an opportunity to resist the characterization of international students in purely economic terms, and to encourage international students to engage with their new environment in a much deeper and more meaningful way. In short, developing non-formal educational opportunities that engage with the "old pedagogies" of land as teacher (Styres, 2011) could strengthen international students' relationship to place, "promote transformative citizenship action" (Wood et al., 2018, p. 260) and support deeper intercultural learning.

Our findings suggest that citizenship learning for international students in Nova Scotia is situated, at least partially (and perhaps accidentally), in their everyday and experiential interactions with the physical worlds they inhabit. While participants do not associate these experiences with a commitment to social transformation, we make the case that pedagogical interventions that prioritize an experiential and embodied approach to land education and which intentionally foster new relationships between international students and Indigenous communities can support reconciliation efforts. We recommend developing curricula that acknowledges the spatial situatedness of international students' citizenship learning (Wood & Black, 2018)while also attending to the development of decolonizing pedagogies (Battiste, 2013) grounded in a commitment to learning from experiential place-based interactions (Johnson, 2012).

We suggest that government-funded programs, such as Nova Scotia's Study and Stay, partner with educational institutions who are already engaged in community-based approaches to decolonization, to develop land-based programs to promote inter-cultural learning. We also suggest that campus-based internationalization offices partner with indigenous student services to develop integrated programs that focus on inter-cultural learning and land-based citizenship education. Cape Breton University, a partner in this project, is in an ideal position to lead such an initiative, as they are considered a leader in Indigenous post-secondary education and also has the highest proportion of international students of any post-secondary institution in Atlantic Canada, accounting 61% of their student population in 2021 (Association of Atlantic Universities, 2021). In keeping with current literature on the topic, this would mean involving Indigenous communities, and in particular Indigenous Elders, in the development of land-based curricula targeted at both Indigenous students and international students (Marom & Rattray, 2022; Zurba et al., 2022). International students' deeply emotive interactions with their immediate environments as reported in the findings above suggest that place-based pedagogies that intentionally layer a critique of settler colonialism along with the direct engagement with Indigenous communities could support transformative citizenship learning for this population. In the words of Styres (2019, p. 33), such an approach could "open up spaces with the learning environment where students

can question their own positionalities, prior knowledge, biases, and taken-for-granted assumptions together with the ways they are implicated in and/or affected by colonial relations of power and privilege." This type of experiential place-based citizenship learning with international students would effectively "clear space" for developing a deeper awareness and engagement with Indigenous peoples as well as with the continued history of settler colonialism (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2019), and of the role that current immigration policies may play in perpetuating colonial relations in Canada.

CONCLUSION

There is a need to better integrate Indigenous pedagogies to critically engage international students more directly in the process of 'decolonizing' the academy in settler colonial contexts (Anderson & Bristowe, 2020; Beck & Pidgeon, 2020). This need is particularly acute in Atlantic Canada, a region that has identified international education policy as key to its economic and demographic future (Toughill, 2018). In this article we reflected on international students' experiences of engaging with and learning from their physical environments. We find that participants' connection to the natural environment is integral to their developing a sense of civic belonging and relationship to place. While scholars in Canada are beginning to raise the importance of working with international students to develop a nuanced and critical understanding of Canada's history and contemporary politics of settler colonialism, and the role that internationalization policies play in these politics, the photovoice data reveals how participants' sense of place is divorced from an understanding of Indigenous land dispossession. However, the data do point toward an opportunity for engaging international students in carefully crafted land-based educational interventions that aim to foster relationships with Indigenous communities and promote a critical understanding of reconciliation. Based on the positive results reported from resent land-based education projects elsewhere (Marom & Rattray, 2022; Zurba et al., 2022), we suggest that Atlantic universities better integrate internationalization and Indigenization practices and that they prioritize efforts to critically engage both international students and indigenous students in land-based curricula that critiques settler colonialism and supports reconciliation.

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