Aloha pumehana

ʻO wau nō o Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla. No Hawaiʻi mai au. He polopeka hope ma ke kulanui o Kolumepia Pelekania ma ka ʻāina ponoʻi o ka lāhui Musqueam.

My name is Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla from the island of Hawaiʻi. I am an Associate Professor in the department of Language and Literacy Education within the Faculty of Education and the First Nations and Endangered Language Program in the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies within the Faculty of Arts at the University of British Columbia on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.

Mahalo ā nui loa to Meike and Jeff for inviting me into this discussion with other colleagues who are teaching in Teacher Education and educating the next generation of teachers across Canada.

In addition to teaching graduate courses in Language and Literacy department, as well as undergraduate courses in the First Nations and Endangered Languages program, I also teach in the Teacher Education Program. More specifically, I have taught EDUC 440: Aboriginal Education in Canada, one of the required courses in the BEd program. This course responds to the 2009 Canadian Association of Dean’s of Education Accord on Indigenous Education that all Faculties of Education make a commitment to advance Indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values and knowledge systems in all Canadian learning settings.

As an Indigenous scholar practitioner, I have had the privilege to teach this course over many years, but also feel that it is part of my ongoing responsibility with my various positionalities as an educator, Indigenous language learner/speaker, language advocate, cultural practitioner, and Kanaka Hawaiʻi to continue my learning of the colonial histories of what is now known as Canada in order to help students better navigate through their teaching and learning the importance and value of cultural and linguistic diversities - those of which are indeed Indigenous to these lands in the country.

Before I share some remarks about our Teacher Education, and I’d want to mention that my engagement with Indigenous languages through research and teaching has been informed not only by my lived and cultural experiences of being born and raised in Hawaii - as an occupied nation, but also has been informed by international, national, provincial, and local documents, strategic plans, frameworks, legislation, and curricula that include, but are limited to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the TRC Calls to Action, Bill C-91 (the Indigenous Languages Act), Bill 41 (the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, as well as the up and coming International Decade of Indigenous Languages as declared by UNESCO.

EDUC 440 is not a course that specifically addresses multilingualism, but rather the course reflects the Faculty of Education’s commitment to preparing teachers who are knowledgeable, skilled, flexible, and compassionate in their professional practice and who are guided by a sense of social and ethical responsibility in relation to the communities in which they work. At the heart of the course are Indigenous histories, perspectives, worldviews and pedagogies that are
grounded in Indigenous knowledges. We know that the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledges has been disrupted, and along with this planned disruption is the loss of Indigenous languages – which is an intrinsic and inherent part of culture, traditions, knowledges, and belief systems.

Although we do privilege English as the primary medium of communication for the course, EDUC 440 is offered in French for BEd students with a teachable subject area in French. My EDUC 440 instructors and I find ways to expose students to Indigenous knowledges through the use and engagement with Indigenous languages, through multimodal resources, guests, Elders, and our lived experiences.

One simple practice that I use in the course is to use a Hawaiian greeting at every class meeting so Hawaiian language becomes routine and normal for students to hear. In addition, my communication via digital means always begins and ends in Hawaiian language. These intentional practices may make students on the receiving end of the message inquire further. Some of the questions that may transpire:

- What language is being used?
- What does the word/phrase mean?
- Why is this language being used with me?
- Why do I privilege English in my communication? or
- How can I use my mother tongue in my teaching, learning, and communication?

I am most inspired by students when they practice ways to decolonize our learning spaces by encouraging linguistic diversity. I am particularly appreciative when students:

- Embrace the Hawaiian language through oral communication with me;
- Respond and engage with me through written communication (e.g. digital or analog) by using Hawaiian words/phrases that they found via online Hawaiian language resources; or
- Use their own mother tongue with me as a way to share and honor their linguistic and cultural heritage.

As part of my pedagogy in this particular course, I take the students through a Hawaiian language immersive experience through a microteching language lesson that is followed by a traditional cultural practice – hula – that uses the language, sentences, and phrases that we have learned in context. It is important to note that Hawaiian language is the only language used throughout the lesson both by me and the students, and that no other language – English or other languages are used. Students get to recognize, in this example, how language is a cultural practice that is embodied, embedded, and experienced not only through traditional linguistic means of speaking, writing, reading, and listening, but also holistically which engages and affects our entire body and being. In addition, students are reminded of what it is like to be a language learner (again)– and in some ways be more attuned to the challenges that may arise with their students when there isn’t a common language of communication or cultural understanding.
I challenge and encourage all of us as instructors in Teacher Education to find meaningful and relevant ways that brings in our respective languages - Indigenous, mother tongue, and heritage languages - into our classrooms, so that we model multilingualism in action, practice, and education. Let us decolonize our learning and teaching by privileging our languages, and the languages of our students, and be open to the learning and relationships that will transpire.

I look forward to continuing this conversation with you all soon!