

DR. MICHAEL ANTHONY HART, CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR IN
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND SOCIAL WORK *present:*

POSSIBILITIES FOR SETTLER EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT IN THE SPACE BETWEEN CULTURAL APPROPRIATION & AVOIDANCE



PRESENTATION BY SILVIA STRAKA & MICHAEL A. HART

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501 TIER BUILDING
FORT GARRY CAMPUS

Many settler educators are seeking appropriate ways to integrate Indigenous knowledges into their pedagogy. The TRC process has unsettled and disrupted many of our usual ways of doing things. Despite our deep commitments to social justice, we ourselves may often struggle with how to decolonize ourselves, our classrooms, our schools, as well as how to respectfully and courageously engage with Indigenous knowledges in our educational work. A common strategy for settler educators is to dedicate one class in a course to Indigenous issues with readings by Indigenous authors. We may also frequently invite our Indigenous colleagues, Indigenous experts, and Elders as guest instructors, allowing our students to benefit from their sharing of Indigenous knowledge. Yet some of us may be asking ourselves, "Is this enough?" The TRC Calls to Action are calling us all to reflect more deeply on our individual and collective responsibility for creating change. Thus many settler scholars are questioning how they can move forward in a good way. There is a desire by some to learn how to further unsettle the colonial foundations of their knowledge base and bring Indigenous knowledges and ways of being and doing into the classroom.

In this presentation, Dr. Silvia Straka hopes to engage in some of these questions with Dr. Michael Hart and others who are in the room. She believes that such brave conversations—among settler educators as well as by settler educators in dialogue with Indigenous educators—are an important starting point to deeper change in ourselves and the work we do. The presentation will begin by considering respectful and anti-colonial ways of entering into the space between cultural appropriation and avoidance. The relational and wholistic nature of this work will be highlighted. We will also discuss various strategies settler educators can use to bring Indigenous knowledges – and what kinds of knowledge -- into the classroom. The fears and anxieties of doing this work will be acknowledged, as well as how to move forward when we make mistakes. Participation and dialogue will be an important aspect of the presentation.

About Guest Speaker

Silvia Straka, MSW, PhD, RSW, a first-generation Austrian-Canadian, is a social work faculty member at the School of Social Work and Human Services, Thompson Rivers University. Dr. Straka describes herself as a social change agent, educator, capacity builder, and researcher. Since attending the First TRC National Event in Winnipeg in 2009, she has been engaged in a learning process on how to be a settler ally as a researcher, educator, and in her personal life. Throughout this process, she has been frustrated by the lack of material that could provide guidance to settler researchers/educators such as herself. Although disavowing an expert role, Silvia believes that people such as herself need to begin such scholarly conversations with other settlers and Indigenous colleagues and Elders. Her recent co-authored publication on Working Across Contexts (Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2016) spoke to the research context and her presentation in the Indigenous Pedagogies Showcase at Congress 2017 shared some of her learning in the educational setting.

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