

**Alberta Curriculum Controversy: Ideology, Messaging, and the Construction of Meaning**

by

Ayla Sevigny

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts (Honours)

in

Political Science

Department of Political Science  
University of Alberta

© Ayla Sevigny, 2024

## Abstract

In March 2021, the Alberta Government released the draft kindergarten to grade six curriculum. Because of backlash from the public, former Minister of Education, Adriana LaGrange, paused the implementation process of the social studies curriculum, and committed to further consultation. Using the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and TribalCrit, combined with the methodology of critical discourse analysis, this thesis examines the influence of ideology on the proposed social studies curriculum reforms as well as the news media coverage of said reforms. Through this discourse analysis, this thesis argues that (1) the draft curriculum is not value neutral and (2) that the news media reporting had the effect of politicizing education. The effect of (1) is that the curriculum does not create space for or encourage students to think critically about the world they inhabit. The effect of (2) is that the media constructs curriculum reform as something to be won for a particular side rather than in children's best interests.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Corey Snelgrove. This project would not have been possible without your guidance and constant support.

Thanks must also go to our honours seminar professors, Dr. Aitken and Dr. Anderson, for their encouragement and feedback over the last year and a half. I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to my honours cohort. Your encouragement meant the world to me this year.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and for believing in me as I undertook this thesis.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Part I – Introduction to the Alberta Context.....	4
Part II – Literature Review.....	6
Part III – Theoretical Framework and Methodology.....	14
Part IV – Chapter Overview.....	19
<b>Chapter Two: Media Analysis.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Part I – Introduction.....	20
Part II – Findings.....	22
i) Alberta Context.....	22
ii) Key Players in the Curriculum Process.....	23
iii) Coverage of the Draft Social Studies Curriculum.....	25
iv) Outcome of the Drafting Process and Importance of Curriculum.....	33
v) Ideology in the Media.....	39
Part III – Conclusion.....	47
<b>Chapter Three: Curriculum Analysis.....</b>	<b>48</b>
Part I – Introduction.....	48
Part II – Findings.....	49
i) Gender.....	49
ii) Race.....	54
iii) Colonialism.....	59
iv) Class / Financial Literacy.....	68
v) Americanization of Canadian History vs. Narratives of Canadian Superiority.....	71
Part III – Conclusion.....	73
<b>Chapter Four: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Part I – Summary of Findings and Conclusion.....	75
Part II – Limitations and Further Research.....	77
<b>References.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Media Analysis Sources.....	85

# Chapter One: Introduction

## Part I – Introduction to the Alberta Context

As institutions of the state, schools are not value neutral. They play a critical role in socializing and teaching children through written and hidden curriculums (a hidden curriculum includes the norms transmitted to students through classroom interactions). Education plays a role in instilling cultural values and norms in future generations by teaching children ‘legitimate’ knowledge through the officially mandated curriculum. Through emphasis and omission, messages about what is important and what is not are taught to children. As such, a written curriculum plays a powerful role in influencing how young people come to make sense of the world. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the power that curriculum holds to shape the future.

The former New Democratic Party (NDP) government of Alberta (in power from 2015 to 2019) was undergoing curriculum reform. Their priorities for the guiding framework of the curriculum were “critical thinking, problem-solving, managing information, creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration, cultural and global citizenship, and personal growth and well-being” (French, 2018, para. 35). In 2019 the NDP lost government, as the UCP won a majority of seats in the province. In March 2021, Alberta Education, with the direction of the Alberta Government, released its draft kindergarten to grade six curriculum. Under the leadership of former Premier Jason Kenney, the United Conservative Party (UCP) argued that they were “depoliticizing the curriculum ... [removing] any political bias to offer an objective interpretation of history and civics and our home” (Rutherford, 2021, p. 4384). According to the former Premier and the UCP, a goal of the curriculum renewal was to remove ideology from the draft curriculum. The UCP argued that this previous draft created under the NDP government was ideological, resulting in an urgent need “to stop the NDP’s ideological curriculum” (Kenney,

2021, p. 4386). However, the NDP argues that the UCP draft curriculum is ideological. Although the NDP and the UCP agree that the curriculum must be reformed, they do not agree on how to write it or what content to include in the new curriculum.

At the end of March 2021, the draft curriculum for all subjects was publicly released. Immediately, the social studies curriculum received much public attention and backlash. The outcry and pushback from teachers and parents caused the Ministry of Education to pause implementation and to make changes to the draft. In December 2021, an updated draft social studies curriculum was released. It received as much backlash as the first edition, with educators and others arguing the changes were not sufficient. Therefore, former Education Minister Adrianna LaGrange promised to scrap the draft and engage in additional consultations before more rewriting occurs. In September 2023, current Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides announced that the government was in the process of rewriting the social studies curriculum, which was released in March 2024 and will be piloted in classrooms during the 2024–2025 school year.

The draft curriculum has received much attention in the media since its initial release in 2021. In the last few years, many Albertans have read news reports about the draft curriculum and have formulated their opinions based on what is reported. Because of the length of the document, not many people have read the entirety of the draft curriculum or even all of one subject; the social studies curriculum is 52 pages alone. As such, through their reporting on the curriculum, the media has the power to shape the opinions of Albertans. As Fowler (1991) argues, news is a constructed representation and “is not a value-free reflection of ‘facts’” (p. 4). The news media holds the power to shape the presentation of particular narratives about the draft curriculum and is thus a critical unit of analysis.

With this in mind, this honours thesis asks: How does ideology impact the content of the draft kindergarten to grade six social studies curriculum in Alberta? What claims are being made by the online news media about the draft Alberta social studies curriculum? How do these discussions operate ideologically? This thesis argues that the draft social studies curriculum is not value neutral and, thus, will always operate ideologically. Therefore, any claims to depoliticize the curriculum serve a particular political project. In this way, all curriculum serves a political project, and the issue is what kind of political project it serves. This draft curriculum does not create space for or encourage students to think critically or reflexively about the world they inhabit. The goal of the social studies curriculum must be to equip students with the tools they need to become engaged and active citizens upon leaving school. Moreover, this thesis argues that the news media reports on the draft curriculum and its writing process in a way that contributes to the politicization of education. This increases partisanship in education, which creates divisions that construct curriculum reform as something to be won instead of something to be undertaken with children's best interests in mind.

## Part II – Literature Review

Since the publication of the first edition (1979) of Michael Apple's book on ideology and curriculum, there has been increasing scholarship on the subject, particularly in the United States. Apple (2019) argues that ideology must be considered through a framework of hegemony, as this allows for the understanding of how individuals employ ideological frameworks that "both assist them in organizing their world and enable them to believe they are neutral participants in the neutral instrumentation of schooling, while at the same time, these frameworks serve particular economic and ideological interests which are hidden from them" (p. 21). Moreover, Apple (2019) argues that ideology has three distinctive features that work to

inform experiences and worldviews; these are “legitimation, power conflict, and a special style of argument” (p. 18). Therefore, ideology is complex and multi-faceted.

Apple (2019) draws on the work of Gramsci to conceptualize hegemony. As Bates (1975) explains, Gramsci theorizes hegemony as the idea that people are “not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas” (p. 351). Drawing on Gramsci, Bates (1975) argues that politicians and other leaders secure their legitimacy through “the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class” (p. 352). Apple (2019) adds to this definition of hegemony, arguing that it “refers to an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective, and dominant system of meanings, values, and actions which are *lived*” (pp. 4–5). His emphasis on hegemony as ‘lived’ experiences and practices is made clear through the hidden curriculum because the hidden curriculum is an everyday lived experience of children in schools. Giroux and Penna (1979) argue that the hidden curriculum is “the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life” (p. 22). An example of the hidden curriculum is classroom organization and management, including learning not to talk over each other and to raise a hand in answering questions. However, the hidden curriculum also includes socialization into gender norms. For example, comments made in a physical education classroom about how girls throw versus how boys throw. Giroux and Penna’s (1979) understanding of the hidden curriculum counters the notion that the Alberta draft curriculum is non-ideological because no curriculum is non-ideological. Therefore, Apple (2019) argues that the hidden curriculum is an example of hegemony in education. He argues that students interact with the hidden curriculum by “living in and coping



with the institutional expectations and routines of schools” (Apple, 2019, p. 13). As such, he argues that the school curriculum is rooted in social control.

Ideology understood through a framework of hegemony will provide a lens for examining the curriculum, as the UCP government refers to it as non-ideological, and the NDP opposition refers to it as ideological. Understood through hegemony, it is not possible for a curriculum to not be ideological. It will always serve a particular political project. Therefore, Apple’s (2019) understanding of ideology as hegemony is foundational for the methodology of this thesis.

Conducting research through a survey of university students in China, Cantoni et al. (2017) present an argument consistent with Apple’s (2019) understanding of curriculum as ideological. The authors found that “alongside other mechanisms of social and political control, political elites can shape students’ attitudes by choosing the content of the education system” (Cantoni et al., 2017, p. 343). Political elites do this through their decisions about what to include in the written curriculum. As such, there is a need to critically examine the content of the curriculum because it will impact students’ experiences. Although I am not specifically researching these impacts, it is important to understand that curriculum has the power to shape the development of students’ ideologies.

Even though there is less research examining ideological influences on specific curriculums (such as provincial or state curriculums), there have been discourse and content analyses of textbooks focusing on ideology. These articles are critical to consider because they discuss how ideology, through language in textbooks, informs students’ learning and school experiences. Chappell (2010) argues that “although textbooks purport to be objective and factual, they are socially constructed artifacts presenting particular perspectives, interpretations, and activities for students” (p. 250). I extend this argument to the school curriculum. The UCP

government claims they are portraying an objective version of Canadian and Albertan history, but according to Chappell (2010), even if portrayed as factual, they are implicitly ideological. Like Chappell (2010), Sajid (2015) argues that discourse is never neutral. Looking at textbooks, he argues that their discourse “is always ideologically charged and reflects a certain type of worldview of a nation” (p. 575). Therefore, it can be inferred that textbooks written in the Canadian settler context would reflect a settler colonial worldview. Similar to Apple’s (2019) argument about ideology as hegemony, Sajid (2015) argues that ideology in relation “to power, hegemony, identity, political ideology, gender and class differences are very effectively presented through discourse of the textbooks” (p. 575; see also Chisholm 2018). I also argue that this is true of the discursive production of curriculum.

Beyond the literature exploring the impact of ideology on curriculum and textbooks, there are articles about the 2021 Alberta draft curriculum. Freeman et al. (2021) examine the new science curriculum, looking specifically at colonial influences. Their study of the curriculum revealed “misrepresentation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, erasure of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, and [the] assertion of Western hegemony” (Freeman et al., 2021, p. 11). They argue that the assertion of Western hegemony relates to Tuck and Yang’s (2012) conception of settler moves to innocence. Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that “settler moves to innocence are those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” (p. 10). Therefore, the science curriculum includes Indigenous perspectives as a move toward innocence. However, unlike the social studies curriculum, the science curriculum was implemented in schools during the 2023–2024 school year. Students in elementary schools are being taught settler moves to innocence through their exposure to Indigenous epistemologies that are “tokenistic,

misleading, and underdeveloped” (Freeman et al., 2021, p. 24). The authors argue that it is tokenistic because the government has only included Indigenous ways of knowing when it is of value to them. Importantly, they argue, this tokenism is related to “the colonial ethos of extraction: taking what is deemed to be “of value” to the settler and leaving the rest” (Freeman et al., 2021, p. 23). In this way, Indigenous knowledge has been ‘extracted’ only if deemed beneficial to support the narratives within the curriculum.

In addition to Freeman et al.’s (2021) analysis of the science curriculum, Clifford (2023) and Patrick (2023) examine elements of the draft social studies curriculum. Patrick’s (2023) article explores the inclusion of religion in the draft social studies curriculum. Their research found that the draft social studies curriculum “ignored Albertan demographics and history” (Patrick, 2023, p. 23), and the “absence of Indigenous spirituality in the draft curriculum tells students that it is not important” (Patrick, 2023, p. 24). The depiction of religion throughout the draft sends messages to students about what religions are considered the most ‘important.’ This analysis offers a starting point for my analysis as I seek to examine all learning outcomes in the social studies curriculum. Clifford (2023) does this as they examine depictions of gender and whiteness throughout the whole draft social studies curriculum. Like Apple (2019), Clifford (2023) argues that the curriculum is “permeated with hegemonic narratives” (p. 45) that claim to be non-patriarchal and use gender inclusivity to hide and normalize these discriminatory hegemonic narratives. Clifford (2023) argues that an example occurs by including certain women’s voices and experiences while claiming to be gender inclusive. Through the centring of “white women’s experiences and foregoing their own complicity in Canada’s settler-colonial project, the curriculum reproduces hegemonic whiteness obscured by gender equality” (Clifford, 2023, p. 55). Although government members have claimed that the curriculum is inclusive of a

diversity of perspectives and voices, it is only inclusive of certain voices, thus working to uphold and further “white supremacist logic masked in narratives of equality” (Clifford, 2023, p. 54). I believe that this will remain true for depictions of colonialism as well. The former education minister prided herself on Indigenous content in the draft social studies curriculum. However, Clifford (2023) exposes the racializing discourse in the curriculum that “promotes a facade of diversity that is promulgated on the construction of an us/them binary that portrays Albertans as a white European entity that excludes Indigenous and minority groups from its narrative” (Clifford, 2023, p. 59). Therefore, Clifford’s (2023) article provides a strong foundation upon which I will complete my analysis.

Moreover, the arguments that the curriculum is advancing Eurocentric discourses are interesting upon reading Solverson (2018), who analysed the previous draft curriculum created under the Progressive Conservative government and continued under the NDP government. Their analysis offers stark differences from the current draft, published under the UCP government, as they argue that the previous draft engaged in meaningful reconciliation and addressed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action. Under the NDP draft curriculum, Solverson (2018) argues that “it will no longer be possible for teachers to avoid teaching about contemporary Indigenous experiences” (p. 32). This is consistent with the TRC Calls to Action on ‘Education for Reconciliation,’ which calls for an age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools at all grade levels. Additionally, they argue that “by prioritizing diverse narratives as a core component of the curriculum, space has been provided for the inclusion of (un)usual narratives from Indigenous perspectives which challenge and disrupt [narratives] which stand as barriers to meaningful reconciliation” (Solverson, 2018, p. 82). By

reconciliation, Solverson (2018) refers to reconciliation that occurs through meaningful action and not just superficial ‘talk’ of reconciliation.

Additionally, considering critical race theory (CRT) in the context of education is valuable because it exposes racism in schools and curricula. For this reason, CRT is central to my project and will be discussed in the subsequent section on methodology. López (2003) argues that CRT is a crucial framework because it “introduces the fact that racial progress cannot be made by politics or policy alone—because racism cannot be remedied without substantially recognizing and altering White privilege” (p. 86). Therefore, achieving racial progress is not possible through politics and policy unless they address and attempt to alter structures of white privilege. An example of this can include challenging the content of a curriculum that tells a particular version of history and advances whiteness. Moreover, López (2003) argues for the urgency of this work, noting that “when racism becomes “invisible,” individuals begin to think that it is merely a thing of the past and/or only connected to the specific act” (p. 70) when it must be understood within broader power structures. CRT also includes exposing and rendering visible how racism impacts curriculum and education because, as Gillborn (2023) argues, the education system is “actively implicated in maintaining and extending the grip that white people have on the major sources of power” (p. 47). Therefore, CRT is an important framework for conducting this work.

Furthermore, Yosso (2002) argues that CRT “can be a guide for educators to expose and challenge contemporary forms of racial inequality, which are disguised as “neutral” and “objective” structures, processes, and discourses of school curriculum” (p. 93). CRT can be a guide because it gives educators the language to challenge structures and discourses that uphold racial inequality. Therefore, they argue that CRT must be incorporated into the curriculum

because current curricular discourses work “to maintain racial, gender, and class inequality” (Yosso, 2002, p. 94). Incorporating CRT into the written curriculum involves ensuring the representation of multiple perspectives of history, not only the dominant white settler one. Gillborn (2023) takes this argument further, arguing that “*education policy is an act of white supremacy*” (p. 52) because “race inequity and racism are central features of the education system” (p. 52). In their article, Gillborn (2023) identifies an example of this as they argue that “schools are increasingly using “setting by ability” and other forms of internal selection to separate children into hierarchical teaching groups” (p. 50). This hierarchical separation of students includes gifted and talented programs, which Gillborn (2023) argues are racialized in nature as evidence is “emerging that certain minority groups, especially Black students, are markedly under-represented” (p. 51) in these programs. Therefore, it is crucial to challenge and dismantle these structures of white privilege and white supremacy.

Finally, there has been literature published about the impacts of media on education policy and the impact and influences of media on public opinion. Anderson (2007) argues that analysis of the politics of education must consider the role of the media because it plays a part in how “the “reality” of educational reform and policy decisions is constructed” (p. 105). Additionally, Daly et al. (2019) argue that the debate about education policy “in this current era is being created and furthered by the confluence of fact and fiction, information rampant on both sides of every debate and used to further individual ideologies—and they are spread through social means” (p. 22), such as social media. Similarly, Shanahan et al. (2011) argue that policy narratives are “strategically constructed “stories” contain[ing] predictable elements and strategies whose aim is to influence public opinion toward support for a particular policy preference” (p. 374). This can include policy narratives about education and curriculum. Moreover, media plays

a powerful role in the dissemination of these policy narratives, which “includes and excludes who is quoted ... characters who are poised to fix or hinder the problem and those who suffer from the opposing policy preference” (Shanahan et al., 2011, p. 393). Thus, the media has the power to shape the story which the public consumes. As such, Anderson (2007) argues that “no analysis of contemporary educational politics can ignore the role of the media” (p. 104). This is precisely why the media is crucial to this thesis. Moreover, Horniak (2016) examines the role of the media in influencing public opinion in the Slovak Republic, arguing that “politics are manipulating the public opinion [through the media] by the biggest possible means for their personal success” (p. 197), as politicians seek to achieve popularity and electoral success. This links to Bate’s (1975) discussion of hegemony, in which he argues that “public opinion is strictly linked to political hegemony. It is the point of contact between civil society and political society, between consensus and force” (p. 363). Therefore, the media may be contributing inadvertently to this political hegemony through their choices about what to publish and the discourse they use within their stories.

### Part III – Theoretical Framework and Methodology

As I mentioned above, my thesis seeks to answer the following questions: How does ideology impact the content of the draft kindergarten to grade six social studies curriculum in Alberta? What claims are being made by the online news media about the draft Alberta social studies curriculum? How do these discussions operate ideologically? To answer these questions, I utilize critical race theory (CRT) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Firstly, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argue that CRT is “interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (p. 2). Because CRT understands that race and racial hierarchies

are socially constructed, it interrogates these assumptions about race that “inform our public civic institutions – government, schools, churches – and our private, personal, and corporate lives” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 2). This theory is crucial to understanding how ideology influences the Alberta draft social studies curriculum, working to uphold unequal power structures within the curriculum and in society more broadly. However, CRT by itself is not enough because it lacks attention to colonialism and pays more attention to race than it does to gender and class. For these reasons, to enhance its theoretical framework, my thesis draws from theories of intersectionality and Tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit).

My research uses Crenshaw’s (1989) definition of intersectionality, which critiques the single-axis framework which erases the experiences of those who face multiple oppressions. Intersectionality challenges this single-axis framework by naming and recognizing the intersection of discrimination because once a problem is exposed, those in power have difficulty ignoring the issue. CRT employs a single-axis framework when other areas are not considered, as it leaves out gender, class and colonialism. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) argue intersectionality is critical because “no person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity” (p. 10). Therefore, expanding the CRT framework to emphasize intersectionality is important in my work so that I do not erase the experiences of those living with the experiences of multiple forms of oppression. An intersectional CRT framework aims to “advance a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining (hierarchically) gendered social arrangements” (Lazar, 2007, p. 141) while still being attentive to other intersections of identity. My thesis also employs intersectionality throughout the analysis of the curriculum and the news articles. MacKinnon (2013) explains that employing intersectionality as a method interrogates and names the problem as “white supremacy and male dominance” (p. 1023). As



such, my research is attentive to the multiple forms of power that interact to inform the content of the curriculum.

In addition to intersectional CRT, I employ TribalCrit to understand the implications of colonialism in the Alberta curriculum. Jones Brayboy (2005) argues that “colonization is endemic to society” (p. 429). The theory of TribalCrit also goes a step further to focus on policies oriented toward Indigenous peoples in the United States. Although it is also applicable to Canada (as both are settler colonial states), “are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain” (Jones Brayboy, 2005, p. 431). This theory is important because CRT misses imperialism. TribalCrit focuses on colonialism within institutions such as schools and universities. It seeks to expose how these institutions uphold colonialism while at the same time claiming to be progressive and committed to reconciliation. According to TribalCrit, as a document created by the government, the school curriculum is rooted in colonialism. Jones Brayboy (2005) importantly notes that “CRT in education posits that racism is endemic in society and in education, and that racism has become so deeply engrained in society’s and schooling’s consciousness that it is often invisible” (p. 428) the same is true of colonialism and thus colonialism must be examined. Therefore, as a document created by a settler colonial government in an era where reconciliation is crucial, how the social studies curriculum reproduces or challenges colonialism is an important question to examine.

In addition to intersectional CRT and TribalCrit, the methodology employed to analyse the curriculum and online news articles is critical discourse analysis (CDA). Fairclough (2023) defines CDA as a method that “addressed the ideological character of discourse” (p. 12). It is crucial to this project because of the emphasis placed on ideology. My research explores the influences of ideology on the written curriculum and news stories published online, which is why

I center CDA as its methodology. CDA pays attention to the latent messages produced and reproduced within the discourse. I am paying attention to what power dynamics are reinforced within the discourse to understand what is constructed as the most important for children to learn and how these are influenced by ideology (as defined by Apple, 2019). Therefore, as I work through critical theory, my research emphasizes qualitative interpretations of the latent messages found within the curriculum and news media. The validity of my research findings comes from my adherence to intersectional CRT and TribalCrit. My interpretations are not my opinions but are grounded in and informed by theory.

Informed by intersectional CRT and TribalCrit, in the discourse analysis of the curriculum and the news media coverage of the curriculum, I am paying particular attention to constructions of gender, race, colonialism, and class. I am considering who the curriculum includes, how it depicts Canadian and Albertan history, and what vision of society it projects.

In my curriculum analysis, I am grouping content and learning outcomes across grade levels based on the presence of themes such as colonialism and gender. For the curriculum, I have deployed a three-part discourse analysis. Step one consists of an analysis to gain an overview of the contents of the curriculum when interpreted through intersectional CRT and TribalCrit frameworks. This phase does not look too deeply into the specifics of the curriculum. It attempts to gain a ‘big picture’ understanding of the curriculum content. In the second portion of the discourse analysis, the content of the curriculum is grouped into common themes within each grade and across grade levels to examine which themes are recurring. Recurring themes throughout the curriculum send messages about what is deemed ‘important’ knowledge by the Government of Alberta. The third and final portion of the discourse analysis closely examines the content of the previously identified themes through intersectional CRT and TribalCrit lenses

to uncover the latent messages they procure. By latent messages, I mean the messages constructed in the curriculum about society and history, who belongs and who does not, and what is presented as normal and what is not. The curricular discourse is interpreted through CRT and TribalCrit frameworks to uncover its latent messages.

As for my media analysis, the purpose is to understand what claims the media makes about the Alberta draft social studies curriculum and what language it uses to make these claims. I am considering whether ideology influences the news media and informs their interpretations of the curriculum. This allows me to compare how the media explains the curriculum with my findings on the curriculum and to understand if our interpretations are similar or different and what these implications are.

Because my research is critical discourse analysis through intersectional CRT and TribalCrit frameworks, I must acknowledge my positionality as a researcher. My position is critical to this research because the CRT places importance on the voices of marginalized groups. I cannot erase their voices and views on the curriculum by attempting to speak for them, which is why I acknowledge my privileged position as a white settler student receiving a post-secondary education in Canada. As Parson (2019) explains, positionality requires “identifying how the privileged aspects of one’s identity have structured their life such that they view others through the lens of being in power” (p. 18). CRT informs my analysis of power and ideology in the draft curriculum and media. However, I must acknowledge my position because it may influence my analysis, although this is not my intent. I do not want to fall into the same trap that the curriculum does, as government members claim it is ideology-free.

## Part IV – Chapter Overview

The next chapter of this thesis will be the media analysis. This chapter will explore and examine the results of the discourse analysis of the online media coverage of the Alberta draft curriculum. It explores the findings of the questions that guided my analysis, which include:

- (1) Who are depicted as the key players?;
- (2) How is the curriculum process described?;
- (3) What is the description of the outcome of the curriculum drafting?;
- (4) Is the importance of the curriculum renewal discussed?;
- (5) Is there ideology present in the articles?

The chapter finds that, overall, the media sides with the opposition to the curriculum and paints the UCP draft as problematic and not in the best interests of the province or students.

Chapter three is the curriculum analysis, which explores the findings from my analysis of grades one to six. The chapter discusses the findings of the themes that I identify and analyse. These include gender, race, colonialism, class (examined through the financial literacy section), and the Americanization of Canadian history versus narratives of Canadian superiority. Through a discussion of the findings, the chapter argues that the curriculum is not objective or value neutral. Rather, it advances a particular understanding of the world that we live in.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of how the findings in the media analysis relate to curriculum analysis and how both operate ideologically. Further, it includes a consideration of the limitations of the research and areas for further study.

# Chapter Two: Media Analysis

## Part I – Introduction

This chapter explores the results of the discourse analysis of the online media coverage of the Alberta draft curriculum. As outlined in Chapter One, working through a CRT framework, I have conducted a critical discourse analysis of news articles. Therefore, I am paying particular attention to discussions of race, gender, and colonialism within these articles, particularly about the social studies curriculum. When reading the news articles, I considered five questions:

- (1) Who are depicted as the key players?;
- (2) How is the curriculum process described?;
- (3) What is the description of the outcome of the curriculum drafting?;
- (4) Is the importance of the curriculum renewal discussed?;
- (5) Is there ideology present in the articles?

These questions provided me with a way to group the content of the articles, which focused my analysis. I use local, provincial, and national online newspapers with varying ideological leanings to include multiple perspectives. I do this to understand how different news outlets report on the curriculum and how right and left-leaning newspapers may use different discourses to report on the same story. I use 26 articles in total, spanning from October 2020, with the leak of the draft curriculum, to September 2023, with the coverage of the social studies curriculum rewriting process. I obtained articles from CBC (nine sources), CTV (two sources), Global News (four sources), National Post (one source), Red Deer Advocate (two sources), Edmonton Journal (five sources), The Sprawl (which is a local Calgary paper; one source), Lethbridge Herald (one source), and Fort McMurray Today (one source). I attempted to have the Globe & Mail represented. However, I ran into issues with their paywall and could not access the article. I use

free online news media sources because these are what are most accessible to Albertans online. Therefore, in my research, I limited myself to the articles I could find for free online.

In my analysis, I found that the media often sides with the opposition to the curriculum and paints the UCP draft as problematic and not in the province's best interests. Therefore, the findings reveal that the media has contributed to the amplification of the politicization of the curriculum. Politicization, in this sense, refers to the increasing partisanship in education. It also refers to divisions that construct curriculum reform as something to be 'won' for a particular side, as opposed to in the best interests of children, which is the problem of the media in educational policy. Thus, my media analysis argues that the media politicizes education in two ways: first, through the number of quotes that it publishes from those opposed to the curriculum versus those who favour the draft, and second, the media politicizes the curriculum through the discourse that it uses, specifically the leading language that guides readers to form a particular opinion.

I discovered more left-leaning newspapers, such as CBC, have published about the draft social studies curriculum. My media analysis obtained many sources from CBC because they have published many articles on the issue. It was easier to find articles from left-leaning newspapers that took a more critical approach to analysing the curriculum and its drafting process than articles from right-leaning newspapers, such as the National Post. As I was reading the news articles, I found that CBC is left-leaning; Global News appears to be centre-left; the Red Deer Advocate and CTV are more centrist; the Edmonton Journal appears centrist and perhaps slightly centre-right; the National Post is right-leaning; and other local newspapers such as The Sprawl (Calgary), the Lethbridge Herald, and Fort McMurray Today appear to be centrist. It is important to consider before examining the findings of the analysis because the ideological

leaning of the newspaper may influence the way stories are covered and the discourse used to report on events and politics.

## Part II – Findings

### i) Alberta Context

I organized the articles according to the broader Alberta context to contextualize them and to understand the larger political debate operating in the province at the time, specifically regarding education. I attempted to find more than one source about each event to consider how different news media outlets were reporting on them. I will briefly explain some key events regarding the curriculum in Alberta before moving into a more detailed analysis of the articles.

As mentioned, the first articles I analyse were published in October 2020 after the draft social studies curriculum was leaked to the public. After this initial wave of coverage, media coverage of the curriculum slowed until March 29, 2021. For this period (March 29 to the end of April), I obtained many articles, including accusations of plagiarism, the week following the curriculum release (particularly in social studies). After April, there was not a lot of media coverage of the draft curriculum (I only have two sources for these months) until September 2021. In the first week of September, an article was published covering the release of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) report on the feedback of Albertans on the curriculum. The timing of the release of the report and its subsequent news coverage is interesting, as it was released the first week of the school year when the other curriculum subjects were being piloted. Another article was released in the first week of September. However, it is an opinion piece published by someone who worked in Premier Jason Kenney's office. The two articles are an interesting contrast. They were both published when parents started to pay more attention to their children's education for the upcoming year. Following the articles in September, a key event in education

politics was the December 2021 government edits to the draft social studies curriculum before the decision to scrap the draft and start new.

When it became apparent to Albertans that the curriculum edits were not sufficient enough to address their concerns, they began to protest and call on the UCP government to re-write the social studies curriculum. The protests occurred primarily in April 2022. In the same week as the protests, Premier Jason Kenney delivered a speech to his caucus, in which the main topic was education and the curriculum. An article was published in June 2022 after the government published a report on the findings of a survey about the curriculum. The following political event occurred in February 2023 when the Northwest Territories officially announced that they would no longer teach the Alberta social studies curriculum in their schools. In May 2023, Alberta held a provincial election in which education was a central issue. In July 2023, after the re-election and announcement of Premier Danielle Smith's new cabinet, including a new education minister, the government announced that they would re-write the draft social studies curriculum. The final articles I analyse were published in September 2023 and cover the government announcement of the social studies curriculum re-writing. There are also other articles that I have analysed that were not related to larger political events in Alberta but are nonetheless critical to consider.

## ii) Key Players in the Curriculum Process

With the timeline of the broader Alberta context in mind, I turn to the findings from the analysis, which will include common themes, phrases, and their ideological implications. In considering the description of players in curriculum writing, several findings emerge throughout my analysis of the 26 articles. Most news articles mention the UCP party, often negatively, as they reference the UCP as the government which brought in the problematic curriculum changes.



However, if the article does not explicitly mention the UCP party, other politicians within the party are. Most often, the news references former education Minister Adrianna LaGrange. The news mentions LaGrange by name in more articles than her party. Therefore, she becomes linked to the curriculum drafting process. Some articles even use photos of LaGrange giving speeches (four articles from CBC; two from the Edmonton Journal; one from Fort McMurray Today; and two Global News articles). Once Demetrios Nicolaides became Minister of Education, the Edmonton Journal used a photo of him giving a speech. The news coverage of the curriculum does not only mention the education ministers. As the premier who brought in the draft curriculum, the news mentions former Premier Jason Kenney as a critical player in the curriculum drafting process.

When the news cites the NDP as a voice against the curriculum, quotes from Rachel Notley (the former leader of the Alberta NDP) and MLA Sarah Hoffman (the education critic from 2019-2023) are prevalent. When the NDP shadow cabinet shifted after the election in May 2023, MLA Rakhi Pancholi became an education critic and thus became more cited in the news than Hoffman. Additionally, the ATA is a strong voice opposed to the draft social studies curriculum. The news cites ATA President Jason Schilling frequently, providing critiques of the curriculum, specifically the social studies portion. Moreover, the media quotes scholars in faculties of education across the province in opposition to the curriculum. These include Carla Peck (University of Alberta), Amy von Heyking (University of Lethbridge), Maren Aukerman (University of Calgary, Werklund School of Education), and Sarah Elaine Eaton (University of Calgary). However, professionals are not the only key players mentioned in the curriculum drafting process and its response. Three articles mention the Facebook group “Albertans Reject Curriculum Draft,” two published by CBC in 2021 and one from the Red Deer Advocate

published in 2021. The news mentions this group in strong opposition to the draft social studies curriculum. The creation of this group happened in the days following the release of the draft curriculum, and within one week, the group had gained more than 32,000 members.

### iii) Coverage of the Draft Social Studies Curriculum

This section of the Chapter will consider how the news media covers the release of the draft social studies curriculum and the public backlash or support for the curriculum. It will discuss the findings that emerged by asking the following questions: How is the curriculum process described?; What is the description of the outcome of the curriculum drafting?; Is the importance of curriculum renewal discussed? The goal is to broadly understand the depiction of the curriculum to Albertans before delving into discussions about the ideological implications of their discourse. I have organized this section according to the news media outlet, which allows me to compare across news sites and ideological lines.

In considering the news articles describing the curriculum drafting process, I found that early articles published by news sources focus on the drafting process, including the implications of those involved. For example, after the curriculum leak in 2020, CBC coverage of the drafting process focused on the individuals appointed by the Education Minister (LaGrange). They note that there were eight subject matter experts, all of whom were men, including Chris Champion, the social studies (French, 2020, para. 27). In their coverage of the drafting process, *The Sprawl* highlights the implications of Champion being the advisor, noting that he “recently tweeted that students who attended the schools were having an “absolute blast”” (Sharpe, 2021, para. 27). As Clifford (2023) explains in their article, “Champion’s vociferous writing is predicated on hegemonic, masculinized, and white presuppositions” (p. 52). However, there were more individuals involved in the curriculum drafting process. The provincial government began to

redraft the curriculum in 2019. From the summer of 2020, when the writing process began, to February of 2021, “the drafted curriculum was open to the public to review and provide feedback” (Frew, 2022, para. 5). Additionally, teachers provided feedback. In December 2020, before the release of the draft, Mark Swason (ATA coordinator of professional development) told CBC that 102 teachers were invited to discuss the entire draft curriculum document, which was around 600 pages. Swanson said that “participating teachers ran into technical difficulties and were not able to open it” (Edwardson, 2021, para. 22).

Through the quotes published by CBC, it becomes clear that LaGrange believes the curriculum drafting process is transparent. In response to the curriculum leak, LaGrange’s press secretary told CBC that “proposals will go before hundreds of teachers and experts who serve on curriculum working groups for feedback later this fall before the minister signs off on the curriculum” (French, 2020, para. 16). Along this line, LaGrange explains that “hundreds of people have had a hand in drafting the new K-6 curriculum through a very transparent review process” (French, 2021b, para. 7). This is interesting because the Minister of Education advanced the narrative about transparency after the curriculum leak in October 2020, and continued to advance this narrative after the curriculum release in 2021, despite the continued public backlash. However, with the organization of more protests across the province, LaGrange and the UCP government backpedalled. CBC notes that “the province said the level of concern about the social studies draft has prompted it to discard its working copy, and draw up a new blueprint rearranging the order the information should be taught in” (French, 2021c, para. 6). The “concern” in the province was enough to push the education minister to reconsider the draft curriculum.

The coverage of the curriculum redrafting process in the media takes on a different tone and discourse than the original drafting process. It may be because of the change in the Minister of Education after the Alberta Spring 2023 election or because the government is attempting to address the concerns about the original draft curriculum. The other subjects in the curriculum are currently being piloted and implemented in schools across the province, so there may be a sense of urgency on the government's part to finish drafting the social studies curriculum.

The quotes CBC has published from the current Minister of Education, Nicolaides, take on a different tone than his predecessor. Whereas LaGrange's discourse was defensive and not collaborative, as she stood by the "transparent and open" (Frew, 2022, para. 16) curriculum review process, Nicolaides has taken a collaborative and consultative approach. The news release that CBC chose to publish from the Minister says that the "engagement process with teachers, parents, Indigenous, Métis, multicultural and francophone leaders, subject matter experts, school boards and others will build a comprehensive curriculum" (Dupuis, 2023, para. 2). Interestingly, with the change in discourse from the government, the ATA has also changed how they talk about the curriculum to the media. Instead of being a critical voice in opposition to the social studies curriculum, ATA president Schilling has said that it is "'refreshing" to hear Nicolaides strike a collaborative tone" (French, 2023, para. 14). This discourse of "refreshing" implies that Albertans should be hopeful about the new drafting process. Instead of instilling fear in parents, teachers, and students, this discourse from an expert in education tells individuals that they should be less worried about the current process. Schilling told CBC that "he believes the development of the K-6 social studies curriculum is "back on track"" (Dupuis, 2023, para. 5). This implies confidence in the curriculum redrafting process. Global News also published on the curriculum redrafting process. However, their coverage focuses less on Nicolaides than CBC, as

they only mention his name once in their article. Instead, Global News refers to the whole government because the curriculum redrafting process is a government decision (see Swensrude, 2023). Therefore, it is clear that much of the politicization of the social studies curriculum in CBC coverage comes from the choice of quotes they publish.

Through their choice of quotes, CTV News contributes to the politicization of the draft curriculum. For example, they publish quotes from former Premier Jason Kenney about the curriculum and why the government began to redraft the K-6 curriculum. CTV quotes Kenney saying that his government “did tread the NDP’s ideological curriculum rewrite and [they] began carefully developing a modernized curriculum that gets back to basics” (Lachacz, 2022, para. 6). The language that Kenney uses when discussing the curriculum redrafting process is selected to create confidence in his government and to create fear of the alternative to his curriculum. By repeatedly arguing that the other curriculum draft was “ideological” (Kenney has said this both on record in Alberta Hansard and to various news media outlets), he is contributing to the polarizing and politicizing discourse around education in the province. Moreover, Jason Kenney is quoted in the article accusing the former curriculum draft of including “divisive, woke, left ideology like critical race theory, [and] cancel culture” (Lachacz, 2022, para. 7). This discourse is concerning because it echoes right-wing rhetoric from the United States that seeks to discredit CRT.

CTV News is the only news outlet covering the NWT shifting away from the Alberta curriculum to the British Columbia school curriculum. The NWT has been using the Alberta curriculum in their schools since the 1950s and announced in 2023 that they will no longer be relying on the Alberta curriculum, instead transitioning to the BC curriculum by 2028. Carla Peck talked to CTV about this transition. The news quotes her saying that “the plan for

implementation that the Northwest Territories has laid out is really exactly what a curriculum implementation plan should look like” (Lachacz, 2023, para. 37). She goes on to argue that it is a transparent and collaborative process with teachers and stakeholders. Moreover, Peck told CTV that “it speaks volumes about the quality of the curriculum that has been and is being developed under the current UCP government” (Lachacz, 2023, para. 40). This implies that the implementation plan that Alberta has laid out for its process is not adequate. As such, the discourse used in the coverage can be interpreted negatively by Albertans, and it likely was interpreted by many in this way. It argues that the curriculum is not good enough for students in the NWT and should not be considered good enough for Alberta students. This discourse creates fear as parents wonder why their children will learn the curriculum if it is not good enough for another province. In this way, the language utilized by individuals quoted in the article contributes to the politicization of the social studies curriculum.

Global News has published similar articles to CBC about the curriculum drafting process after the leak in October 2020. Through the quotes that Global News published, it is clear that the Minister of Education is advancing a narrative that the curriculum was written not by the government but by independent advisors. However, Global News points out that the Ministry of Education chose these advisors, as “the curriculum advisors who put the document together were all short-term contracts hired by [LaGrange’s] department” (Bench, 2020, para. 11). In this way, they are alerting Albertans to the fact that these advisors cannot be considered independent from the government and the ideology of the party in power.

In their coverage of the announcement of the social studies curriculum delay, Global News quotes LaGrange saying that the reason for the delay is because “some Albertans feel the draft content has students learning too much, too soon and too quickly” (Baig, 2021, para. 10).

The discourse used by LaGrange does not address the main reason that Albertans did not want the implementation of the social studies draft. She does not address the accusations that it advances a colonial agenda or how it leaves out the history of non-white Albertans. LaGrange uses a carefully selected discourse that does not paint her government or those who wrote the curriculum in a negative light. However, the discourse also minimizes the concerns of parents and teachers by not meaningfully considering and responding to their concerns.

It is not only major news outlets which publish about the curriculum but also local ones. The Red Deer Advocate is one of these news outlets. Although Red Deer is often considered conservative in Alberta, as both their MLAs are part of the UCP, the news articles advance a similar narrative to those of CBC and CTV. The Red Deer Advocate uses discourse that positions the curriculum negatively and is critical of the drafting process. When discussing Jason Schilling's comments on the curriculum, Hackett (2020) uses language such as "regressive and inappropriate" (para. 8) to describe the social studies curriculum. Important to note is that this is not a direct quote but language the news media selected to describe and explain his comments. The second article I found from the Red Deer Advocate is an opinion piece written by a retired teacher and school principal. The discourse they use does not paint the curriculum in a positive light as they argue that it "is superficial and trivial" (Brown, 2021, para. 3). Moreover, Brown (2021) argues that in the curriculum, "there is no attempt to scaffold knowledge or build new understandings on previous learnings" (para. 3). This language implies that with this curriculum, students are not going to have the skills to succeed in their future education. As such, this discourse causes concern in Albertans reading the article. For my analysis, I am not treating opinion pieces as separate or distinct from other news articles because it is not always clear to the average reader what is opinion or fact. Yet I note in this chapter when I analyse an opinion

piece because these pieces use more leading language than non-opinion pieces. In this way, opinion pieces heavily contribute to the politicization of education.

The Lethbridge Herald also covered the draft curriculum. In their article, they rely on quotes from Amy von Heyking, a professor at the University of Lethbridge. The following quote counters the UCP government's argument that the NDP draft curriculum was ideological.

“(Alberta) has a long history of curriculum debates, public concern about what is going on in schools, every generation has a specific concern. But there are some unique elements to this latest curriculum development. In the sense that it's become very partisan and ideologically driven, which doesn't serve students well,” said Heyking. (Clarke, 2022, para. 3)

The professor clearly articulates that the current curriculum development process is ideological. Moreover, her discourse implies that the government rhetoric around the draft curriculum should be cause for concern because it has not been seen in education before.

The Edmonton Journal is the final local newspaper that published extensively on the curriculum, likely due to its proximity to the Alberta Legislature. These articles are interesting to consider because LaGrange's discourse about the curriculum has changed over the years, and it is clear how the narrative changed when Nicolaides became Minister of Education. In 2021, after the curriculum release, the Edmonton Journal quoted LaGrange describing the curriculum process as detailed and long, as it was 19 months long (see Johnson, 2021). In contrast to this, when Nicolaides became education minister, he told the media that he would “continue moving forward in engaging with parents and teachers and other groups to continue to get their feedback” (Johnson, 2023a, para. 7). By continuing with the engagement and consulting processes, Nicolaides is critiquing the rushed previous process that did not meaningfully engage



with stakeholders. Nicolaides' discourse on the content of the draft curriculum has emphasized engagement and consensus building. However, he told the Edmonton Journal that he does not “believe that we should be playing political football with our social studies curriculum, or any curriculum for that matter,” he said, adding that regardless of what the final product looks like, there's “always going to be a level of disagreement” (Johnson, 2023b, paras. 6-7). The discourse is a shift from collaborative and wanting to come to a consensus to cautioning about disagreement. “Level of disagreement” (Johnson, 2023b, para. 7) is a more subtle way of saying that there are still going to be many people who are upset by the new social studies curriculum.

Similar to the Red Deer Advocate, the Edmonton Journal published an opinion piece written by: Dustin Archibald (a parent); Angela Grace (registered psychologist, former elementary teacher); Carla Peck (professor of social studies education at the University of Alberta); Nate Siler (president of the ATA Red Deer City Local 60, teacher, counsellor); Jayne Werry (a writer and parent who worked in public education); Andrea Willman (teacher since 2005); and Heather Quinn (teacher with 22 years experience, president of the Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the ATA). The language they use in this article is harsh, and it will instill fear and worry in Albertans reading it. The authors use words such as “complete disaster,” and they state that the curriculum development process was hidden and political (Archibald et al., 2022, para. 1). This language is pointed and purposefully chosen to counter the narrative of transparency that LaGrange advances. Additionally, it serves as an example of media politicization through its usage of leading language. Moreover, Archibald et al. (2022) argue that “the near-universal rejection by school boards, and the very existence of non-disclosure agreements show that this is no ordinary curriculum update” (Archibald et al., 2022, para. 1).

Important to remember is that these individuals have connections to public education and have worked in public education. As such, they are experts in this area.

The National Post published an opinion piece article. This article is interesting to examine because it is the only one I found that completely supports the draft social studies curriculum. It is important to note that Jason Kenney's former principal secretary wrote this opinion piece. Because of this, there is much overlap between the discourse used in the article and the discourse used by the UCP government. Regarding social studies, this article uses the same discourse as the government to justify the abandonment of the work done under the previous NDP government. The author argues that "the new curriculum contains far more Alberta history than either the current one or the NDP's historically-empty 2018 draft" (Anglin, 2021, para. 8). However, Anglin (2021) does not discuss the fact that the previous curriculum renewal process began under the Progressive Conservative government before the NDP government.

#### iv) Outcome of the Drafting Process and Importance of Curriculum

The news articles discuss the outcome of the curriculum drafting process and the importance of the curriculum. This section of the analysis considers the implications of the UCP curriculum in its original form. It considers the consequences of what the media has called a "regressive, racist, unsupported by research" (French, 2020, para. 7) social studies curriculum and the effects that it would have on students' learning.

In their coverage, CBC News uses language such as 'laughingstock,' 'embarrassing,' and 'out of step' (see French, 2020). This discourse creates fear and uncertainty about children's education in Alberta. Moreover, in an article covering the ATA report on the draft curriculum, a former member of the ATA is quoted as saying that the "curriculum is a failure" (Edwardson,

2021, para. 16). CBC has that quote in the article title and two more times throughout, including as an article subheading. The language of ‘failure’ will not instill confidence in the readers about the state of education in the province. By calling the draft curriculum a ‘failure,’ the former ATA member tells Albertans that the curriculum is not good enough for students and must be rewritten. CBC writes, in their quoting of NDP education critic Sarah Hoffman, that the government’s curriculum writers “have considerable expertise” in curriculum writing, but this curriculum is a failure because “politicians interfered with the process by appointing unqualified advisers to make edits” (French, 2021b, para. 29). The discourse of political interference is powerful because it damages trust between the government and its constituents that the government will not interfere in particular issues. It is an interesting contrast to LaGrange’s claims about the independence of those appointed by her ministry throughout the curriculum drafting process. However, with the public backlash, the UCP backpedalled their discourse of a transparent curriculum writing process. CBC reports that they acknowledged that “consultation was superficial”(French, 2023, para. 12) and feedback from teachers, academics, and Indigenous experts was “largely dismissed” (French, 2023, para. 12). Therefore, the UCP government has shifted their narrative about the curriculum and the news has picked up on it.

Before the UCP government backpedalled on the social studies draft, LaGrange justified the curriculum drafting process “saying that voters had told government they wanted to dispense with educational fads and return to traditional methods of teaching, including an emphasis on acquiring knowledge, numeracy and literacy, and practical skills” (French, 2021c, para. 21). Furthermore, Global News quotes LaGrange saying that voters “wanted to leave behind educational fads and unproven methods of discovery or inquiry learning” (Bennett, 2021, para. 5). Using discourse such as “unproven” and “fads” implies that the previous curriculum would

have been outdated within little time of its implementation. Language such as “unproven” implies that Albertan students would have been test subjects for these methods of teaching and learning. However, the quotes from LaGrange reveal the importance of the curriculum renewal process for LaGrange and the UCP government. In striking contrast to LaGrange’s comments about inquiry learning, The Sprawl wrote that “a line of argument that pits critical inquiry against the learning of essential knowledge is based on a false dichotomy: No good educator would encourage critical thought without also emphasizing knowledge” (Sharpe, 2021, para. 14). This counters the narrative LaGrange advances about the negative impacts of inquiry learning on students. Moreover, it is crucial to note that inquiry-based learning in social studies can include activities such as field trips to museums and research on an issue/topic.

Furthermore, writing an opinion piece for CBC, Berner (2021) argues that the new curriculum “fosters an open classroom climate, with routine, structured opportunities for students to debate, to deliberate out loud, and to encounter a variety of viewpoints and opinions” (Berner, 2021, para. 9). However, crucial to remember is that this was an opinion piece written by an individual who served on the government’s curriculum advisory panel. Even though it is an opinion piece, it is refreshing to see the same news outlet publishing many opinions on a political issue. In contradiction to what Berner (2021) published in CBC, the Red Deer advocate discusses the implications of the curriculum, arguing that an open classroom climate will not occur through the draft. Because the social studies curriculum does not include a diversity of perspectives, “many Alberta students will come to realize that they are “the other” and that this province sees them as “different” (Brown, 2021, para. 8). This has implications for minority students. If they do not see themselves represented in their schooling, it implies they are less important than those the curriculum represents. I will return to the importance of this in the following Chapter.

Further, CBC exposes a “mismatch between the proposals and provincial teaching quality standards adopted last year, which require all Alberta teachers to be competent in teaching about treaties and residential schools” (French, 2020, para. 52). The quote is an interesting observation because the government sets provincial teachers’ standards. Moreover, Hoffman told CBC that “the government’s draft curriculum falls short of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action by omitting mentions of treaties and residential schools until later in elementary school” (French, 2021a, para. 31). This is a serious accusation because for meaningful reconciliation to occur, the TRC Calls to Action must be upheld by all. By not meaningfully engaging with the Calls to Action, institutions (such as schools) maintain colonialism. Interestingly, when writing about the draft curriculum leak in 2020, Global News noted Minister LaGrange’s response to the accusation that elementary schools will not teach about residential schools. She told the news that “the government is “absolutely committed” to truth and reconciliation, and it will keep residential schools in Alberta’s K-6 curriculum” (Bench, 2020, para. 9). However, these comments go against the leaked draft and what was released in 2021.

Moreover, Frew (2022) writes that “educators, parents and Indigenous leaders and elders called [the social studies curriculum] racist, Eurocentric, age-inappropriate and misinformed” (para. 6). As Dwayne Donald, a professor of education at the University of Alberta, was quoted saying in the Red Deer Advocate, “there’s no recognition of the current existence of Indigenous people in Canada ... any mention of Indigenous tradition is framed in dismissive ways as mysticism” (Hackett, 2020, para. 16). In addition, quoted in Global News, Jason Schilling argues that the social studies curriculum represents “Indigenous and Métis communities in “tokenist” ways” (Swensrude, 2023, para. 8). This is a settler move to innocence that works to keep Indigenous peoples as a thing of the past while advancing a settler future. As Tuck and Yang

(2012) write in their article, settler moves to innocence attempts to alleviate feelings of settler guilt and responsibility “without [settler] giving up land or power or privilege” (p. 10). By not meaningfully engaging with the implications of settler colonialism in the curriculum, the UCP government is participating in actions to alleviate their guilt.

Former Alberta NDP Leader Rachel Notley is also heavily quoted in the media, and her discourse is powerful. The Edmonton Journal has published that Notley “said the draft has lit a firestorm of concern from parents and may discourage families from moving to Alberta” (Johnson, 2021, para. 9). The language from Notley is divisive and creates fear. It will create fear in all Albertans, as she argues that this curriculum will negatively impact the entire provincial economy by discouraging people from moving to the province for work. In addition, she said that the draft curriculum “could jeopardize the economy by not providing children with the critical-thinking skills they need to succeed” (Johnson, 2021, para. 9). This discourse may have two effects on readers. Firstly, it may cause fear in parents and students as it implies students will not succeed through this curriculum. Secondly, it may inspire parents and students to push back against the curriculum draft because it highlights the importance of a strong curriculum and argues that students need that foundation to succeed in their schooling and upon graduation. Along similar lines, Fort McMurray Today published a quote from Notley claiming the curriculum will “take the quality of education our young people received back about 50 to 75 years” (Herring, 2023, para. 15). This will create uncertainty in parents that their children who attend school in Alberta will be prepared for the world as it is today.

Moreover, the opinion piece published in the Edmonton Journal by experts in education uses discourse that invokes a range of emotions in those reading the article. The authors write that Albertans “are being lied to” (Archibald et al., 2022, para. 4) by the government when they

say the curriculum will prepare students for success. This language of “lying” removes trust from government officials involved in the curriculum process. The authors in that piece also write that the curriculum “is on track to undermine public education” (Archibald et al., 2022, para. 9). This language causes fear in Albertans, especially those with young children who were planning on having their children attend public school in the province.

Further, both the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) and the new NDP education critic, Rakhi Pancholi, are quoted in the Edmonton Journal talking about the need to depoliticize the curriculum and education in the province. Pancholi told the news that “any way forward must depoliticize the curriculum and return to a process that ensures teachers, experts, parents and students are meaningfully involved in its development” (Johnson, 2023b, para. 12). Moreover, quoting Heyking (a professor at the University of Lethbridge), the Lethbridge Herald writes that the curriculum must be written by educators, all while “leaving the political agendas for after school” (Clarke, 2022, para. 11). Although the media is calling out the need to depoliticize education, by choosing who to quote and what language to use while covering the curriculum, they are contributing to the politicization of education in the province. Moreover, depoliticization at this point is not possible, especially not when the media actively contributes to the politicization of the province.

Finally, an article that uses aggressive and inflammatory language is the opinion piece published in the National Post. In the article, Anglin (2021) writes that “the reaction from the education establishment and the opposition NDP [to the curriculum] has been incendiary” (para. 4). This discourse works to discredit the concerns raised by the NDP opposition and the experts within the education field. By calling it “incendiary,” the author implies that the negative reaction to the draft curriculum is a political move designed to evoke negative emotions from

Albertans. Further, Anglin (2021) implies that the opposition is attempting to fan the flames of controversy for their personal political and partisan gain. The claim is further evidenced when the author writes, “the partisans of ignorance come roaring back in the criticisms of the new Alberta K-6 social studies curriculum” (Anglin, 2021, para. 1). In response to the concern about the exclusion of content on residential schools until Grade 5, Anglin (2021) argues that this is not being “raised as a well-intentioned concern [but] as a way to deploy a serious tragedy as political ammunition” (Anglin, 2021, para. 11). By saying this, the author is discrediting the concerns of Indigenous peoples, arguing that they are politically motivated. However, residential schools are not “political ammunition.” It is an outrageous comment, and it ignores the calls from the TRC for a curriculum that teaches students about residential schools in age-appropriate ways.

#### v) Ideology in the Media

As Fowler (1991) writes in their book *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, “language is not neutral, but a highly constructive mediator” (Fowler, 1991, p. 1). Therefore, the news is not neutral either, but it “is a practice: a discourse which, far from neutrally reflecting social reality and empirical facts” (Fowler, 1991, p. 2). Throughout this chapter, I have considered what the news has published and the implications of the language it uses when describing the draft curriculum. The final section will look more closely at the ideological implications of the news reporting on the draft curriculum.

There is a pattern in the CBC coverage of the draft curriculum. Although CBC is said to report on events and issues factually, I have found that they tend to favour the position of those in opposition to the draft curriculum. Particularly in articles published by French, there is ideological language. In the first CBC article I analysed (French 2020), the only individuals quoted were those opposed to the draft curriculum. The only other individual quoted is LaGrange



in defense of her commitment to teaching about residential schools in the curriculum and her press secretary, who was talking to the media about how the draft is a draft. A reason for the decision to quote many individuals opposed to the draft is an attempt to understand the intense controversy that emerged when the curriculum was leaked. However, a more subtle implication of this choice is the representation of one side. It implies a ‘right’ way to view the curriculum and its contents. In this way, it may appear to readers that CBC is not in support of the curriculum draft and instead supports the opposition to the draft.

The Red Deer advocate draws on similar sources to the previously mentioned CBC article. However, they do not include perspectives supporting the curriculum except when quoting LaGrange’s press secretary. The only thing that the press secretary told the news was that the leaked draft curriculum is not the final curriculum and that “the new curriculum will teach our students a full history of Canada, including First Nations, Metis and Inuit history, including residential schools” (Hackett, 2020, para. 12). Although this newspaper is more centrist, through their decisions about who to quote, they are taking a position that does not view the draft curriculum in a positive light.

The second CBC article covers accusations of plagiarism in the draft curriculum the week after its release in 2021. In this article, an academic from the University of Calgary is quoted in opposition to the draft curriculum and is incredibly critical of the development process. Through the language that she uses, a neutral perspective is not advanced. Instead, the news uses ideological language to fuel the debate around the draft curriculum. For example, they told CBC that “this was not accidental plagiarism ... the people developing this curriculum should have known better” (French, 2021b, para. 16). The implication of plagiarism not being accidental is that the curriculum writers purposefully and with malicious intent copied sections of the

curriculum. It further implies that they knew what they were doing but continued anyway. Thus, they do not have the best interests of students at heart. Additionally, CBC writes that “the United Conservative Party alleged the NDP had put political ideology into the curriculum and pledged to review any work done so far” (French, 2021b, para. 32). They point out that the UCP believes the previous curriculum draft included political ideology that must be removed. However, in the article, CBC takes a position and argues that the opposite is true.

In an article covering the UCP announcement that it would delay the implementation of the social studies curriculum, CBC attempted to show both sides to the debate – those in favour of the delay and those who continue to call on the government to scrap the curriculum. However, the language used favours the side in opposition to the government. An example of this occurs in the following quote: “The curriculum rewrite had started under the province’s Progressive Conservative government and was continued under the New Democratic Party government elected in 2015” (French, 2021c, para. 32). Similar to the previously mentioned article, CBC counters the UCP narrative about the NDP curriculum draft as ideological by pointing out that the NDP draft started its development under the former PC government. While this is a fact, the media ideologically discusses this. For example, French’s (2021a) March coverage of the draft curriculum spends the first four paragraphs discussing the most problematic aspects of the social studies curriculum (discussed in more detail in Chapter Three). This choice has implications as it is the first thing Albertans will read in the article. Therefore, the media directs Albertans to be critical of the government’s curriculum. Beyond this, the article discusses the curriculum drafted by the NDP government.

Years after claiming Alberta’s K-12 school curriculum development had been skewed by political influence from the former NDP government, the United Conservative Party

government unveiled its first public draft of a new elementary school curriculum in every subject, in English and French. Unlike the previously proposed curriculum, which was constructed to teach students concepts, the government is now adopting a philosophy that there is a common cache of knowledge every child should know, and which should be taught in chronological order. It is an approach that curriculum experts have previously panned as outdated and with no basis in modern research. (French, 2021a, para. 7-9)

This quote is interesting because the author favours the previous approach to curriculum drafting under the NDP government. Moreover, they are very critical of the current government and their vision for the curriculum, as French (2021a) argues that the UCP approach to curriculum development is termed “outdated” by curriculum experts.

Although CBC favours a perspective opposed to the UCP government, a few articles I analysed were more neutral in their discursive choices. For example, in Frew’s (2022) coverage of the protests against the draft curriculum, there is an effort to include diverse perspectives. It is achieved by including a multiple-paragraph response to the protests from LaGrange’s press secretary (Katherine Stavropoulos), who acknowledges and respects citizens’ right to protest about the curriculum. Furthermore, in recent coverage of the announcement of the redrafting process, CBC’s reporting uses less ideologically charged language, even in the quotes they chose to publish. Instead of being critical of the government and their curriculum, more credit is granted to the new redrafting process. For example, Schilling told CBC that it is ““refreshing” to hear Nicolaides strike a collaborative tone” (French, 2023, para. 14). This language of “refreshing” implies that it is a welcome change and one that will be beneficial to students. Dupuis (2023) takes a more positive tone. Their article, however, uses ideological language in

quotes, such as through Schilling's criticism of the math curriculum implementation, but it is more neutral overall.

In my analysis, I found that CTV News tends to be neutral in its reporting on the curriculum, while most ideological language occurs through the quotes they publish. Therefore, CTV is reporting on ideology and, in so doing, contributes to the politicization of the curriculum through the amount of quotes from the opposition. For example, one article contained quotes from Kenney's speech to the UCP. He said that his government "reversed the NDP's attack on parental authority in education" (Lachacz, 2022, para. 4). He then went on to attack the merits of critical race theory in school, which he deems to be a "woke" theory. The language published in this quote is ideological as this is an argument that is made by those on the right of the political spectrum and, increasingly, by Republicans in the United States. To show both sides, CTV News published Dr. Peck's response to Kenney's comments she calls "wildly inaccurate" (Lachacz, 2022, para. 9). This language implies Albertans should not trust Kenney's comments about education in the province to be true and accurate. In the other CTV News article I analysed, ideological discourse comes from the quotes it uses. It includes quotes from educators about how it is sad that the Alberta partnership with the NWT has ended. Dr. Peck told CTV News that the end of this partnership is "a really sad commentary about what the current government has done to Alberta's reputation in education" (Lachacz, 2023, para. 25). This type of discourse evokes negative emotions in the reader and will compel those reading about the curriculum to long for a different time of education in the province.

In articles published by Global News, Bench's (2020) coverage of the 2020 curriculum leak includes quotes from the government supporting the draft curriculum and NDP members who are opposed. However, the language used by the NDP is not neutral and will instill fear and

uncertainty. For example, the article includes a quote from Rachel Notley's Twitter account saying that "the plans would essentially erase history" (Bench, 2020, para. 26). Likewise, there is a quote from Sarah Hoffman about the Education Minister in which she argues that LaGrange "can't be trusted to keep her word" (Bench, 2020, para. 18). This language of 'cannot be trusted to keep her word' implies that Albertans should not believe what LaGrange has said she will do, and that they should expect things to change with little to no warning. This choice of language creates fear in the readers (including parents of children affected by the curriculum) about the state of education in the province. Moreover, in their article covering the announcement of the curriculum delay, Baig (2021) writes that "the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association says he's pleased with the government's decision to delay full implementation of its proposed curriculum for kindergarten to Grade 6 after fierce opposition from some teachers and students" (Baig, 2021, para. 1). Upon first reading this language does not appear to have ideological implications. However, the use of the word "fierce" is not neutral.

The Edmonton Journal uses discourse with ideological implications, but most of their reporting is neutral. Like the previously mentioned news outlets, most of the ideology in the articles comes from the published quotes. For example, ideological discourse in Johnson's (2023a) article is from Jason Schilling's quotes in which he voices concern about the discussion of the drafting of a new high school curriculum. However, the article does publish quotes from the UCP, the NDP, and the ATA. In doing this, they attempt to show all sides of the debate and include more than opinions. The article includes facts to balance the opinions on both sides of the political spectrum. However, an article published in the Edmonton Journal by the same author a year prior is critical of the UCP government and accuses them of not 'listening' to Albertans' feedback on the draft curriculum. Johnson (2022) writes that the insights which came

from teacher piloting of the draft curriculum were “not summarized” (para. 14), and the government does not “point to any subsequent changes” (para. 14), even though they claimed to have published these insights publicly.

Additionally, in the September 2023 coverage of the announcement of the new draft curriculum, the Edmonton Journal published more critically than other news sources (Global News and CBC) that covered the same story on the same day. The media achieves critical coverage through their choice of quotes, specifically the quote from NDP opposition education critic Pancholi. She told the Edmonton Journal that the approach the government is taking is wrong and “any way forward must depoliticize the curriculum and return to a process that ensures teachers, experts, parents and students are meaningfully involved in its development” (Johnson, 2023b, para. 12). Interestingly, the opposition is calling to “depoliticize” the curriculum while also publicly discussing it through language that will invoke fear and worry in Albertans. This being said, the article does give some credit to the new government plan and is not entirely critical.

Moreover, the opinion piece published by academics and experts in education use ideologically charged language. Although the article states it is an opinion piece, the Edmonton Journal chose to publish it and attach the name of their newspaper to the ideological language and arguments. Firstly, the academics who wrote the article have spoken to the media against the draft curriculum many times. They are open and vocal about their opposition to the draft. An example of the language used in this article includes calls to Albertans to “step up the pressure” (Archibald et al., 2022, para. 11) against the government and the curriculum. It is evident through the discourse that the authors are calling on Albertans to oppose the curriculum and, by correlation, the government that wrote it. However, this is not the only opinion piece I analysed

that uses ideological language. The other piece was published in the National Post and provides the other side of the debate. The author of this opinion piece uses strong language in his writing. However, he acknowledges his biases near the start of the piece so readers are conscious of his position on the issue. Anglin (2021) writes that he does “not claim to be an objective source ... [but he has] tried several times to set aside [his] biases and read through the whole curriculum as someone coming to it from the outside might” (para. 3). Interestingly, the author makes this claim about attempting to be unbiased and then proceeds to use language such as the reaction to the draft social studies curriculum was “incendiary” (Anglin, 2021, para. 4). This language is not unbiased as the author is calling out the reaction by the opposition, and attempting to delegitimize their concerns by claiming that they are overreacting to the draft.

Finally, in local coverage of the draft curriculum, reporting is more neutral as the language is less ideological. In the article published by the Lethbridge Herald, University of Lethbridge professor Amy von Heyking does not support the draft curriculum. However, the language used to discuss their opposition to the draft is not as strong as in the opinion pieces. The discourse has less ideological implications and is less harsh. Moreover, it does not appear that the goal of the discourse is to invoke strong negative emotions, as seen through the quotes of NDP opposition members published in the news articles. However, the article published by Fort McMurray Today uses more neutral discourse until the quote from Rachel Notley argues that the draft curriculum will set Alberta students back 50 to 75 years if implemented. Therefore, through the discourse and the quotes it chooses to publish, the news media contributes to fear around education in the province. Moreover, how the media is reporting on quotes politicizes the draft curriculum. Interestingly, this article talks less about the K-6 draft curriculum than it does about the new UCP’s plan to create more skilled workers.

## Part III – Conclusion

Returning to the question of whether the ideological leaning of the newspaper impacts their reporting on the curriculum, after considering these findings, it is evident that although the ideological leaning of the newspaper impacted the discourse used to describe the draft curriculum, newspapers with different political bias often reported similarly, using quotes from the same individuals. Politicization occurs through the choice of quotes published by the media. The NDP opposition is quoted consistently in articles across news media sources. In their quotes, the media uses language that evokes negative reactions and fear in Albertans, specifically those linked to education, whether parents, students or teachers. Moreover, the NDP discourse implies that Albertans should not trust the government to act in their best interest. However, some of the quotes published from those in favour of the curriculum, specifically the UCP government, use discourse that works to discredit the concerns of Albertans and uphold the work that they have done. Overall, the media tends to side with the opposition to the curriculum and paint the UCP draft as problematic and not in the province's best interests.

The purpose of the media analysis is to understand what claims the media makes about the Alberta draft social studies curriculum and what language it uses to make these claims. Having done this, I will now be able to compare the findings about how the media explains the curriculum with my findings about the curriculum in the following Chapter.



# Chapter Three: Curriculum Analysis

## Part I – Introduction

This chapter examines the Alberta draft k–6 social studies curriculum, released in March 2021. The social studies curriculum was the subject of public backlash, widely covered by the media (considered in Chapter Two). The goal of this chapter is to understand why public outcry occurred. This analysis works through critical race theory (CRT) and TribalCrit to interpret the curriculum discourse. Because these are the theoretical frameworks, I have grouped content into themes of gender, race, colonialism, and class (explored through financial literacy). Moreover, throughout my analysis, the theme of ‘Americanization of Canadian history’ and the advancement of narratives of Canadian superiority emerge. I interpret the content in these categories through CRT and TribalCrit as they often overlap with other categories of analysis.

I conduct a three-part discourse analysis of the draft social studies curriculum. I analysed grades one to six and chose to leave out kindergarten because there was less content and it is more base-level knowledge, such as in the first learning outcome, which includes learning about stories and about the community that the child is a part of (Alberta Education, 2021, p.1). The first reading and analysis of the curriculum sought to gain an overview of the contents of the curriculum when interpreted through CRT and TribalCrit frameworks. I consider portrayals of gender, race, colonialism, and class. This phase of analysis attempts to gain a ‘big picture’ understanding of the curriculum content. In the second part of my discourse analysis, I group the content of the curriculum into common themes within each grade and across grade levels. This allows me to examine which themes are recurring and thus considered crucial to emphasize according to the government. In the third portion of the analysis, I closely examine the discourse used in the curricular themes I identified in part two. I use CRT and TribalCrit to interpret the

curriculum content within these themes. As such, the final portion of the discourse analysis closely examines the content of the previously identified themes to uncover the latent messages they procure. The government structures the social studies curriculum in three parts: knowledge, understanding, and skills and procedures. These parts structure and break up the content that students are learning. Each section is further organized according to the organizing idea, guiding questions, and learning outcomes.

Before continuing, I am not attributing sole responsibility to the curriculum authors for latent message production. My intent is not to critique these individuals and the work that they did on the curriculum. Rather, I seek to understand and critique the influence of larger systems of power and knowledge on the curriculum and the latent messages within its content. With this in mind, this chapter argues that the curriculum is not objective or value neutral. It advances a particular understanding of the world that we live in and is not free of ideology, as was claimed by the UCP government. The second section of the chapter will only consider my findings from the second and third discourse analysis I conducted. It will consider the content of the curriculum in the themes I identified in my first read and what messages are produced therein. It will also discuss how the content of the curriculum has implications across themes.

## Part II – Findings

### i) Gender

In the social studies curriculum, women are not meaningfully included or represented. When learning outcomes and examples include women and examples, it is often the wife of a male figure in Canadian history. Rarely are women granted political agency and recognized for their contributions to Canadian history. As Clifford (2023) argues in her article examining gender in the curriculum, the document is “permeated with hegemonic narratives” (p. 45) that obscure

patriarchy through the facade of gender inclusivity. Because of this, gender is a crucial theme in my analysis. Moreover, gender is important to consider when conducting an intersectional CRT analysis because this theoretical framework aims to “advance a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining (hierarchically) gendered social arrangements” (Lazar, 2007, p. 141). The curriculum emphasizes the role of men in Canadian history.

In grades one and six, there is a lack of women and girls represented. For example, the learning outcome that asks students to explore and understand the “aspects of past civilizations [that] continue to influence the way people live within societies today” considers only patriarchal organization (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 7). Students must understand that, in the past, societies and groups were organized in different ways, including the ways that they chose their leaders. The curriculum provides examples, such as “hereditary chiefs/kings, military leaders” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 7). Including only these examples implies that women were not involved in past leadership. However, in grade five, students learn about the structure of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which is matriarchal (see page 40 of the curriculum). One might suggest that this inclusion problematizes European patriarchal structures. Given the skills and procedures section that asks students to compare the Canadian Constitution with the Great Law of Peace, and because the discussion of early European civilization emphasizes the role of men in society as leaders, discussing the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as matriarchal may imply that their leadership is ‘less than’ European leadership and ways of organizing.

Furthermore, in grade two, students learn about “some major contributions of ancient Western and Eastern civilizations to life and society today” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 3). In this outcome, students should know “Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor” and the “class

structure (nobles and vassals, lords and serfs)” that does not examine or consider women’s place in society (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 5). Importantly, this outcome also includes knowledge of Joan of Arc. Her inclusion is important because of her saint status in France. Nevertheless, her inclusion is superficial. For example, students consider how Robin Hood continues to influence society today. However, students only learn about Joan of Arc when asking the following questions: “Why is Joan of Arc considered a heroine in history? Who didn’t consider her a heroine and why?” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 5). In this learning outcome, Robin Hood is considered to have influence today, but Joan of Arc is relegated to the past. Therefore, even when mentioning the contributions of women throughout history, it is done in a way which historicizes them.

Considerations of gender also overlap with discussions of colonialism. For example, in grade three, under the guiding question of “how did the world change with colonization of North America?” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 13), students are expected to learn about the “legend of Madeleine de Verchères” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). The language of ‘legend’ implies her role in history, and her story may have been exaggerated or altered to portray a particular narrative of Canadian history. Additionally, I find it interesting that in a learning outcome about the impacts of colonization in North America, the role of a girl from New France is considered, rather than the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, Madeleine de Verchères is introduced to students in this section as a “14-year-old Canadienne heroine” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). However, in the skills and procedures section of the curriculum, students are asked to “weigh different viewpoints” and to consider who viewed “the young Canadienne woman [as] a hero” and how the Iroquois viewed “her act in rallying the defences” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). Because Madeleine’s introduction to students is as a ‘heroine,’ it implies this perspective

should be considered legitimate, even though students must consider other viewpoints, specifically from the perspective of the Indigenous population. Therefore, the curriculum structure and language lead students to form a particular opinion and perspective on the issue before they can “weigh different viewpoints” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). Additionally, the term ‘Iroquois’ is colonial. The curriculum should refer to these people as Haudenosaunee and even the Canadian Encyclopedia page about Madeleine de Verchères refers to them as Haudenosaunee (see Harris, 2008).

Moreover, in grade four, gender is superficially included in the discussion of the fur trade. The learning outcome asked students to examine “how fur trade rivalries, early explorations, North West Mounted Police rule, and Treaties led to early settlement and to the transfer of Rupert’s Land to the Dominion of Canada” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 13). This learning outcome includes men such as John A. Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie. The curriculum mentions women once to state that “women, mostly Métis, were present in fur trade country and many intermarried with traders living a la façon du pays (in the fashion of the country)” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 13). The learning outcome is an example of tying women’s role in history to marriage. Also in grade four is a discussion of John Ware, a “famous Black rancher” and “a ranching pioneer and folk hero in Alberta” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 15). The curriculum mentions his wife, Mildred, as his wife, and there is no discussion of how she also contributed as a pioneer in Alberta.

Also linked to colonialism is the inclusion of women in grade five. The first learning outcome of this grade asks students to consider the impacts of the “Great Migration on early modern Canada” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 27). In this learning outcome, there are many women included. However, it is done so in a problematic way that advances colonial discourse.

For example, students learn about Susanna Moodie when discussing the “pioneer experience” (p. 27). Students must analyse “short age-appropriate passages (in the original language) from Susanna Moodie’s famous accounts, *Roughing It in the Bush* and *Life in the Clearings*” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 27). The title of this book implies that there was nothing in Canada except for ‘untamed’ land.

Moreover, there is a learning outcome about Mercy Coles, the daughter of Prince Edward Island Premier George Coles. She is discussed regarding social life during the Canadian Confederation, as she wrote a journal detailing her perspectives of this in Ottawa political circles. The curriculum states that “according to Mercy Coles, women lived in “separate spheres” during Confederation times in the 1860s” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 30). This language implies that women did not live in ‘separate spheres’ after this period, and it implicitly discredits women’s struggle to have a political voice. The historicization is problematic as it confines women to the private sphere in which they are ruled by their husbands. It removes them from the public sphere in which they have a political voice.

Finally, students in grade five will learn about Laura Secord. The curriculum writes that “the tale of a young Upper Canadian woman, Laura Secord, warning the British before the battle of Beaver Dam (June 23, 1813) is legendary” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 28). It is one of the only learning outcomes that includes women in meaningful ways. Additionally, students consider “why her warning the British was not honoured until 1853” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 28). This question is crucial because it will prompt students to discuss gender and consider the minimization of women’s role in history. However, prompting students to consider why it “was not honoured until 1853” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 28) implies that the non-recognition of women’s part in history is a past problem.

With all of this in mind, why is it important that the curriculum meaningfully include women's role in Canadian history? Students need to see themselves and their identities reflected in the curriculum. The draft curriculum advances a narrative that women are only significant if they become a wife. It will teach young girls that they do not have a meaningful place and role in society or much power without support from men. This is demonstrated in grade four when the curriculum states that "the province is governed by a Premier in Council (with his cabinet)" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 20). The quote is interesting because Alberta has had three female premiers. But this language implies that women are not meant to and should not be premiers. Therefore, the curriculum works to reinforce and uphold patriarchy.

## ii) Race

The draft social studies curriculum includes race in problematic ways which uphold racism and advance particular narratives about groups of people. The discourse of the curriculum upholds white supremacy. The clearest example is in grade six with the learning outcome about the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Through the language used to discuss the KKK, white supremacy is advanced overtly and subtly. The guiding question for this portion of the curriculum is "how do Canada and the United States compare when looking at interactions with Indigenous peoples and other racial minorities?" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 37). Students need to gain an understanding of the treatment of Indigenous peoples and racial minorities across North America, yet how the curriculum does this is highly problematic. Additionally, how this section is organized, through mostly a discussion of the United States, primes students to think about Canada as a more tolerant place than the United States.

The curriculum states that the KKK "tormented Black people and other groups from the 1920s, until well into the 1930s in Canada" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 38). The learning

outcome is problematic because the KKK did not decline in Canada until after the 1930s, and it has an underground following today in some white supremacist organizations (see Banfield, 2006). As such, the curriculum presents white supremacy as a thing of the past, but this is not the case. The messages advanced by the KKK have persisted, and the organization has evolved into other kinds of white supremacist organizations. The curriculum further relegates the KKK to the past through their usage of past tense language, such as “the Ku Klux Klan appealed to Americans and Canadians” and their slogan “attracted thousands” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 38). Therefore, the curriculum historicizes this white supremacist organization.

Moreover, whiteness is normalized through this learning outcome as the curriculum writes that “the KKK sought to enforce racial segregation, such as keeping Black people and other groups out of mainstream white society” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 38). The discourse used in this learning outcome is problematic. The language of “mainstream” implies that ‘whiteness’ is the norm, which has the potential to create further racial divides by implying the normalization of whiteness. It is a more subtle way that the curriculum advances white supremacy. Finally, and as a brief aside, some of the content that the curriculum includes about the KKK is not needed to enhance students’ understanding of the group. For example, the curriculum contains the KKK slogan (see Alberta Education, 2021, p. 38). The slogan is not necessary to include for students to learn about the KKK.

In grade four, students learn about what led to the creation of the province of Alberta, including Black settlement. Students must learn and understand the many different groups of people that helped to build the province. However, the curriculum discusses Black settlement in a problematic manner. In the same learning outcome, as students learn about the successful Black women in the province, they are expected to learn about the “arrival of the Ku Klux Klan



(1920s)” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 18). The learning outcome states that students should learn about the KKK, “racism and eventual disappearance of Amber Valley (1940s to 1971); success stories – lawyer Violet King and teacher Gwen Hooks” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 18). From a CRT perspective, students must learn about the racism that Black individuals faced in Alberta. Yet this should not be included in the same learning outcome paragraph as the “success stories,” those stories of Violet King and Gwen Hooks deserve their section of the curriculum and consideration.

Moreover, across grades in the curriculum, racist and benevolent discourse is used. For example, in grade one, as students learn about how the legacies of ancient societies influence the present, orientalist understandings of Eastern societies are advanced. Orientalism is a Western construct of the East, in which the East is constructed as the ‘Other’ to the West, which is the ‘norm.’ The West controls this construction “through a hegemony of power relations, working through the tropes, images, and representations of literature, art, visual media, film, and travel writing, among other aspects of cultural and political appropriation” (Burney, 2012, p. 24). The ‘skills and procedures’ section asks students to “explain some features that make Eastern civilizations, like China, different from civilizations mostly founded on European laws and cultures, like Canada” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 6). The phrasing of this question will reinforce Orientalist understandings of Eastern societies and construct societies heavily influenced by European law as superior. This type of discourse is utilized in grade two as students “analyse some major contributions of ancient Western and Eastern civilizations to life and society today” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 3). The ‘skills and procedures’ activity has students retelling “the story of Marco Polo’s journey to the Orient and back” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 5). This language of “the Orient” carries implications as it works to uphold a vision of

society in which ‘Western’ and European ways of knowing and doing are the norm. This language is also evidenced in the following learning outcome, as students should be able to “recognize and explain the origin of the two-way silk and spice trade with China and the Orient” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 9). This language reproduces Orientalist understandings of Eastern countries and communities.

Furthermore, the discourse used in the curriculum subtly implies white supremacy and European superiority in other ways. In grade four, students learn about the discrimination faced by Chinese rail workers in Canada. This learning outcome is very problematic, and I will take time to unpack the implications of the language. Overall, the language used is benevolent and thus functions to advance the narrative of a benevolent Canadian state. For example, when discussing the building and completion of the railroad, the curriculum acknowledges the “mistreatment of Chinese railway workers” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 16). However, the language of ‘mistreatment’ advances a version of history that is less violent than what occurred. It also does not meaningfully engage in a discussion of the implications of the Canadian state in the discrimination against Chinese rail workers. But the curriculum does discuss “exclusionist policies” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 16) introduced to restrict the number of Chinese immigrants entering Canada and how “the “Yellow Scare” sparked open discrimination against Chinese immigrants” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 16). The curriculum does not name the government or the state as the driver of these exclusionist policies, which is a strategic use of discourse to uphold the narrative of a benevolent state.

Further, students respond to the question, “why did [Chinese immigrants] face overt discrimination and how did they fare?” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 16). This language implies that the discrimination against Chinese immigrants was their ‘problem’ to deal with. This

narrative is also advanced through the curriculum discourse when it says that “racism, discrimination, and exclusion were everyday realities, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. Some Black Albertans overcame prejudice and achieved individual success. Many Chinese pioneers persevered and established successful local businesses” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 18). This discourse advances a narrative that if individuals were affected by racism to the point where they could not “overcome” it to work, then it is their fault. It does not address the systemic aspect of racism. Moreover, the learning outcome implies that racism was not a pertinent issue in Canada before or after the 1920s and 1930s.

Finally, my analysis found that the curriculum discusses slavery in problematic ways. The first discussion of slavery occurs in grade three as students learn about slavery in New France. The curriculum states that “slaves existed in New France until it was abolished in Upper Canada (1793) and then in all British North American colonies in 1807” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 15). The information in this learning outcome is incorrect. Upper Canada did not abolish slavery in 1793, but the legislation was to limit the number of slaves that were being brought into Upper Canada (see Henry-Dixon, 2022). British North America did not abolish slavery until 1834 (see McCulloch & McRae, 2018). The discussion of slavery continues into grade five. However, slavery becomes depicted as an American problem as students explore how “early modern Canada [was] affected by the Atlantic slave trade” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 32). The language and the content of this learning outcome make it seem like Canada was not implicated in or contributed to the slave trade. This also occurs as students “recognize the causes and effects of American slavery” (p. 32) but do not consider Canadian slavery. Slavery in Canada is discussed in this section to paint a picture of a more advanced Canada than the rest of the British Empire. This is demonstrated when the curriculum writes that “slavery was officially abolished

by law in Upper Canada beginning in 1793 (Governor John Graves Simcoe) and then across the British Empire beginning in 1807” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 32). Therefore, the curriculum presents Canada as more progressive and tolerant than other countries within the British Empire.

The discourse used when discussing slavery also functions to construct Canada as a ‘safe haven’ while ignoring the discriminatory policies that existed in Canada. For example, in grade six, the curriculum writes that “Canada became the main escape destination for escaped slaves via the Underground Railroad, a network of friends and associates. African-American fugitive slaves followed the North Star (Polaris), a symbol of freedom, to Canada” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 30). First, this completely ignores slavery in Canada and the fact that a “reverse Underground Railroad” (Bakan, 2008, p. 5) existed with escaped slaves fleeing Canada for the Northern United States. It also ignores politicians such as Frank Oliver, who attempted to pass legislation which would “bar Black immigrants fleeing persecution in the American South from entering Canada” (Snowdon & Chowdhury, 2024, para. 16). Second, the language used in this learning outcome advances the national myth that Canada is a place of freedom and safety. There is no consideration of Canadian slavery in this outcome. Another example of the construction of Canada as a ‘safe haven’ exists in grade four with the discussion of John Ware, a Black rancher. The curriculum states that he was “born a slave in South Carolina, [and] escaped into Canada” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 15). Therefore, the discourse that the curriculum uses overtly and subtly advances white supremacy and the narrative of Canada as a safe and tolerant country.

### iii) Colonialism

The draft social studies curriculum upholds a colonial narrative. This section of my analysis will be organized by grade rather than according to concept because there is much evidence of colonialism in each grade. This section draws heavily on TribalCrit, which argues

that “colonization is endemic to society” (Jones Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). This analysis explores how the curriculum contributes to this. Through the discourse choices in the curriculum, colonialism is upheld and legitimized.

To begin, in grade one, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are depicted in the past. This occurs on the first page of the curriculum as students learn that Indigenous cultures are connected to the land and nature, “which were believed to have spiritual qualities” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 1). Using past-tense language implies that this connection to nature and the land is no longer a part of Indigenous cultures today. The discourse works to create and uphold the narrative that Indigenous peoples are rooted in the past and that their spiritual and cultural practices do not exist in the present moment. Additionally, students should “describe Indigenous stories of the origin of the world and diverse Indigenous groups that inhabited the land of what is now Alberta and North America” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 2). This learning outcome utilized colonial language because if students learn about Indigenous peoples before colonization, North America should be called Turtle Island. As well, students learn about Indigenous peoples in the first learning outcome, and in the second learning outcome, they learn about ancient civilizations that “have vanished” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 3). It implies that Indigenous peoples have “vanished” as well. In addition, students “recognize the role of protocols and customs in First Nations and Inuit communities, which were unfamiliar to the ways of early Europeans” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 7). This language of “unfamiliar” is highly problematic as it has been used in the past to justify colonial violence. Therefore, this implicitly advances the justification of colonial violence because of these “unfamiliar” practices.

In grade two, students learn about governance in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Students learn about Athenian democracy and how there “were several phases of Roman

government that are important for the origins of democracy” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 7). A meaningful discussion of Indigenous governance systems and practices is missing from grade two. Many Indigenous societies had advanced governance systems, such as the Haudenosaunee peoples. Since students learned about Indigenous peoples and their culture in grade one, they have foundational knowledge to learn about their governance systems.

In grade three, the first discussion of colonization occurs. In this discussion, Canadian history is depicted through colonial language and thus works to uphold the colonial imaginary. For example, one of the guiding questions is “what were the earliest forms of government in Canada from New France to British colonial rule?” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 20). But then, there is no discussion of Indigenous governance practices, only colonial governance.

Additionally, and like in grade one, the curriculum uses past-tense language when discussing Indigenous peoples. For example, it says that “Indigenous peoples lived in many different places, spoke different languages, and had differing cultural practices” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 22). The discourse implies that these cultural practices and languages are something of the past with no present implications. Furthermore, the language utilized throughout grade three implicitly upholds colonialism and legitimizes it. For example, it states, “although the first European explorers came to North America searching for routes to the East Indies and spices and precious metals, they found fish and furs that attracted them to explore and colonize” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 13). The second portion of the sentence is worthy of attention because it implicitly places the blame for colonization on the land and the fact that there were resources on the land. Therefore, the discourse functions to deflect responsibility for colonization and colonial violence away from settlers and onto the resource-rich nature of the land.

Many learning outcomes related to colonization in grade three utilize colonial language. The most prominent example of this is the referral of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to the Iroquois Confederacy. ‘Iroquois’ is the French colonial name for the Confederacy. Thus, its usage is harmful and colonial. Moreover, on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy website, it states that they are “called the Iroquois Confederacy by the French, and the League of Five Nations by the English, [but] the confederacy is properly called the Haudenosaunee Confederacy” (Haudenosaunee Confederacy, 2024). Therefore, the curriculum should use the Indigenous name for the Confederacy. However, it is not only by using colonial names for Indigenous peoples that colonialism is upheld but also through the more subtle ways that it depicts Indigenous resistance. For example, the curriculum states that “since the time of Champlain, relations with the Iroquois had deteriorated and towns and villages lived under fear of attack as the Iroquois sought to retain possession of their lands” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). This language paints the Iroquois efforts to resist colonial expansion and stay on their lands in a negative light, as it states that villages lived in fear.

One of the research projects students undertake is to explore the “challenges new settlers faced in what is now Canada and identify how Indigenous communities sometimes supported them” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). The language oversimplifies the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples, and it describes early relations between them as something that is only positive. It works to uphold the narrative that early relations were cooperative. I am not arguing that they were not cooperative, but I believe that this oversimplifies history and works to erase colonial violence. Furthermore, the curriculum asks students to “compare and contrast the Magna Carta and the Iroquois Confederacy Great Law of Peace” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 20). It is important to understand the Great Law of Peace. However, the comparison with a

colonial document should not occur because it creates the opportunity to uphold colonial superiority if students find that the Magna Carta contains more Canadian ‘values’ than the Great Law of Peace.

Grade four continues to build on earlier grades, which utilize colonial language and depict Canada’s history through a colonial lens. When students are learning about the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and the fur trade, they study “key passages of the charter of the Hudson’s Bay Company” and consider “how much land was granted to the Hudson’s Bay Company by their charter” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 13). There is no mention of Indigenous dispossession or the theft of this land by the HBC. Stating that access to the land came through the HBC Charter justifies the theft of Indigenous land through colonial legal documents. Moreover, students learn about the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) and their role in Canadian history. The curriculum states that they primarily worked to uphold “law and order to encourage settlement” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). Additionally, the curriculum says that “perspectives on NWMP presence among First Nations and settlers were both positive and negative, with the Mounties generally distinguished as being more reliable and trustworthy than their United States’ counterparts” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 14). This language implies that the NWMP played a positive role in ‘settlement’ and does not consider their violent role in colonization. It also creates a narrative of Canadian superiority, as the language advances the narrative that Canada’s NWMP is better than the early colonial police in the United States.

In grade four, students learn about Métis peoples. This learning outcome depicts the Red River Resistance as a rebellion. The causes of the resistance are oversimplified, and the curriculum states that Métis scrip was at the root. According to Alberta Education (2021), “Métis scrip was an attempt by the government to compensate Métis for the loss of land base through



their acquisition of Rupert's Land. Very few Métis were successful in exchanging scrip for land" (p. 16). This language depicts the Métis' challenges for scrip as their problem and not that of the colonial government. However, the Métis did not lose their land. The colonial government stole the land. After learning about Métis peoples, the curriculum turns to the "'Last Best West' campaign" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 17). Students examine the advertisements from this campaign and consider what attracted farmers to the West and whether a plan like this would work for Alberta today (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 17). Essentially, students must engage in practices that uphold and expand colonialism. The "'Last Best West' campaign was colonial, as it promised "free land for thousands of settlers" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 18). Not considered here is the impact of this campaign on Indigenous peoples, as it was their land that was considered to be "free" for settlers.

The first mention of treaties occurs in grade four. The discussion has some positive aspects, but many learning outcomes remain problematic. First, one of the more positive things the curriculum does is emphasize that "treaties are living documents that still apply today and are a foundational part of Alberta" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 20). It also wants students to understand that "all people living in Alberta are Treaty people" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 20). It is important because it implicates all students in ensuring that Treaty commitments are upheld. It also reminds us that we must work to uphold these commitments. However, in the same learning outcome as Treaties, students learn about how Frederick W. G. Haultain challenged Edgar Dewdney and campaigned "for "responsible government"" (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 20). Dewdney's inclusion in the same learning outcome as Treaties is problematic because he violated Treaty commitments and advocated for residential schools.

In grade five, students learn about residential schools for the first time. This discussion uses colonial language that implies a less harsh reality than what was experienced by Indigenous children in residential schools. First, the curriculum uses the term Indigenous boarding schools when describing the residential school system (see page 38). The implications that ‘boarding schools’ carry are different than those of residential schools, as boarding schools are a choice and residential schools are not. Further, the curriculum states that “the whole system remains a black mark on Canada’s national reputation as a compassionate, tolerant, and caring society” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 38). When they say “national reputation,” they refer to Canada’s position in the international sphere as a welcoming country that prides itself on diversity. Yet this “national reputation” includes Canada’s national myth of benevolence that works to make settlers innocent of the past and present violence committed against Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, when learning about residential school survivors, students are asked to “listen to an Interview with Chief Wilton Littlechild on the residential school experience” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 38). Students must learn about the experiences of survivors. However, I worry that including one story advances a particular narrative of residential schools. Chief Littlechild has said that residential schools were not all bad, and he has stated that parts of it were good. By including only his story, the advanced narrative is that residential schools were not all bad, a narrative used to uphold settler benevolence. Furthermore, it is stated in the curriculum that “personal testimonies are revealing and one of the most powerful is Chief Wilton Littlechild” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 39). This discourse implies that other survivors’ stories are not as ‘legitimate’ or as ‘powerful’ as his story.

Students in grade five also learn about Treaties and the Indian Act. The language used when discussing treaties is odd as students learn about “First Nations and Indigenous land rights:

western expansion of settlement and the displacement of Indigenous peoples (treaty system)” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 37). This learning outcome seems to be equating treaties to displacement, even though that was not the spirit and intent of treaties. Moreover, the discourse used when discussing the Indian Act is too gentle and erases its violence. According to Alberta Education (2021), the colonial government used the Indian Act “to assimilate Indigenous peoples into mainstream Canadian society” (p. 37) to gain access to their lands. The colonial government did not seek to assimilate. They sought to eliminate. Moreover, students must “describe how the Indian Act placed limitations on First Nations and communities and defined their legal status, rights, and privileges” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 37). The idea that Indigenous peoples were granted ‘privileges’ through the Indian Act is a colonial move to innocence by portraying it as something that is not entirely negative, even though the same learning outcome acknowledges that it “banned Indigenous peoples from conducting their own ceremonies” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 37), which is incredibly damaging.

Like early grades, grade five utilizes colonial language when discussing Canadian history. For example, students learn about the Great Migration and “the arrival of eight million immigrants from England, Scotland, and Ireland to British North America and the American Thirteen Colonies” and how they “laid claim to land in the so-called “new country”” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 27). What is not discussed but should be is that these settlers could lay claim to the land through the Doctrine of Discovery and the concept of *terra nullius*. Students should learn about the Doctrine of Discovery because it “provided religious authority for Christian empires to invade and subjugate non-Christian lands, peoples and sovereign nations” (Tomchuk, 2022). Moreover, students should understand that “the Great Migration of British peoples shaped the society, customs, structures, and practices of the population” (Alberta Education, 2021, p.

27). However, they ‘shaped’ the society through the colonial imposition of cultural values. Additionally, Indigenous peoples continue to be portrayed in the past. For example, students should know about “traditional Indigenous lands in early Canada” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 47). This discourse paints the picture that these lands are not Indigenous lands today, only in the past. Finally, like in grade three, the colonial name for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is utilized in the learning outcome about the Great Law of Peace. The curriculum refers to the Confederacy as the “Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) Confederacy” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 40). By placing the Indigenous name in brackets, the curriculum works to normalize settler perspectives of the Confederacy. This section begins with a learning outcome on the governance structures of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Then, the next couple of sections cover the Canadian political system. It does not consider how the Canadian political system infringes on Indigenous governance. Thus, this organization implies the legitimization of colonial governance.

Grade six does not include Indigenous peoples in substantive ways. In the Canadian context, they are glossed over through discussions of early colonial America but not Canada (see page 27). Moreover, the curriculum discusses the American residential school system in great detail but does not mention Canadian residential schools. The curriculum states that “assimilation was the explicit goal of American Indian Affairs policy with respect to educating Indigenous children in day and boarding schools” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 27). The focus on American residential schools and the purposeful omission of Canadian residential schools implies that they were not a reality in Canada but an ‘American’ problem. Therefore, this reinforces the narrative of a benevolent settler Canadian state.

Finally, the learning outcome directly before residential schools focuses on religion. The curriculum organization is problematic and may be triggering for some children who are impacted directly by the legacies of residential schools. In the learning outcome on religion, Christianity is listed and considered first. It sends the latent message that Christianity is the norm, and different religions are ‘Other’ to it. Further, the section on religion considers and includes Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Confucianism and Taoism but excludes Indigenous spiritualities. The curriculum works to uphold a colonial narrative of Canadian history which excludes meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples.

#### iv) Class / Financial Literacy

I did not include this as an initial category of analysis. However, it is important to consider the implications of the language used in the financial literacy section throughout the curriculum because it has implications for class, a category of analysis in intersectional CRT. Upon first reading, the financial literacy sections did not appear too problematic, and financial literacy is crucial to teach to children throughout their education. Upon a second and third close reading, how it reproduces narratives about poverty and money may cause harm to some children and their families. There are latent messages that poverty is a personal decision that results from not investing money wisely. While this may be the case sometimes, it does not acknowledge that poverty is systemic and generational. Therefore, the curriculum advances a neoliberal understanding of economics.

In grade four, when students are learning about the fur trade in Canada, they are expected to understand that “a balance sheet shows the difference between revenues coming in (for goods and services) in relation to expenses (costs going out) in a business or trading area” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 24). While learning about the fur trade is important because it is a large part

of Canadian history, the curriculum presents it problematically because it does not consider colonialism. Further, the curriculum asks students to “make a business plan to plan for the Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 25). This project is too complex for grade four students because the CPR was one of the largest business projects of its time (see Alberta Education, 2021, p. 25). The outcome does not discuss the colonial implications of the CPR.

The financial literacy section of the curriculum utilizes neoliberal language. Neoliberalism is a system which argues that “political and economic institutions should be robustly liberal and capitalist, but supplemented by a constitutionally limited democracy and a modest welfare state” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). Those who subscribe to neoliberalism “endorse liberal rights and the free-market economy to protect freedom and promote economic prosperity” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). Neoliberal language implicitly advances a narrative that if individuals work hard, they can succeed. It does not consider or account for the systemic aspects of poverty or the gendered and racialized aspects, as women and racial minorities make less than white men. This language is utilized across grade levels but is most prominent in grades one, two, and three. For example, in grade one, students learn about needs and wants. The curriculum states that “once basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter) are obtained, humans seek more for themselves and others” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 10). This learning outcome does not acknowledge students’ families who can only fulfill basic needs and live paycheck to paycheck, thereby not having money left for other items. This way of thinking carries into grade two as students learn that “managing your money involves making a few decisions each day, including how much to keep for savings, drinks, and treats, and how much to share with friends” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 12). This learning

outcome does not account for people who cannot make decisions like this because they do not have enough disposable income. The idea of saving money for “treats” and to “share with friends” is not a reality for many individuals.

Further, the financial literacy section paints poverty as the individual’s fault. In grade three, students consider what happens when a province or a family “lives beyond its means” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 25). It does not account for the rise in the cost of living and that some families may be living beyond their means by simply attempting to put food on the table daily. Many young students may not know or understand their families’ financial realities, but this language may make some students feel bad or ashamed of themselves and their families.

Furthermore, there is a connection between settler colonialism and capitalism in the financial literacy learning outcomes. In grade one, students learn about and examine the European / settler way of doing things before learning about Indigenous understandings of trade. Students begin by learning that “money (currency) was invented to represent value in exchange” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 10). They then learn about Indigenous trade, gift-giving, and bartering. Teaching about the settler colonial way of trading with money before learning about Indigenous bartering implies that the settler way of doing things is more legitimate. Additionally, the curriculum uses past tense language when discussing Indigenous trade and gift-giving, which implies that it is not a practice today. For example, “trade and gift giving was common among First Nations and Inuit” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 10). Further, in grade two, students learn that “money has advantages over bartering by being more portable and by having an exact value” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 10). It discredits the Indigenous way of trading and bartering. Students in grade one learn that Indigenous trade was conducted through bartering, and in grade

two, they learn that bartering is ‘less than’ trade with money. Through this learning outcome, the curriculum advances the narrative that capitalism is the most legitimate economic system.

Additionally, one of the most problematic learning outcomes in financial literacy asks grade five students to “examine a bank account in your family ... and a printout of transactions” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 51). The learning outcome will make some students feel bad about themselves if they see that they have less money than others. It has the potential to alienate poorer families and children. Nevertheless, it does state that students could use “an example from elsewhere” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 51). Even with this option, this section remains highly problematic as it advances many problematic narratives. For example, the curriculum tells students to “be money wise with borrowing money from others” and to consider why ““pay day” loans [are] risky and expensive” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 52). There is no discussion about inequality and the fact that some individuals may not be able to engage in more ‘secure’ loans. Moreover, the grade six financial literacy section implies that individuals have access to money to spend on things like art, hockey cards, and figure skates (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 51). This section of the curriculum implies that parents of students are in their current situation because of their decisions. Once again, there is a lack of acknowledgement of the systemic aspect of poverty. The economics and financial literacy sections implicitly and explicitly advance neoliberalism and capitalism as legitimate systems.

#### v) Americanization of Canadian History vs. Narratives of Canadian Superiority

This analysis did not reveal findings in every grade, although it did for grades three, five, and six. In these grades, the curriculum teaches American history to advance a particular sanitized version of Canadian history. In grade three, one of the learning outcomes asks that “students examine the fall of New France, British colonization, and how the American War of



Independence altered the course of Canada’s evolution and how changes in Canada are reflected in the Canadian emblems, symbols, and songs” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 16). The advanced narrative is that Canada would be different today without the American War of Independence. While this may be true, this section problematically conflates American and Canadian history and provides a sanitized version of Canadian history through the teaching of American history. Further, in grade five, students learn about the Haudenosaunee Confederacy’s Great Law Of Peace. The learning outcome is important as students consider how the Confederacy governs and how it makes decisions. However, one of the questions that students explore is whether “the Great Law Of Peace [shaped] American democracy?” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 40). The question could be extended to consider its influence on Canadian democracy.

In grade six, in particular, the curriculum content is much more focused on the United States than it is on Canada. The curriculum appears to be more American history than Canadian (and Albertan) social studies. Students spend quite a bit of time learning about the American Revolutionary War, and they learn that “the American Revolution spirit, expressed in the Declaration of Independence, may have given birth to two countries, the United States by design and Canada by accident” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 40). The discourse makes it seem like Canada was not an autonomous actor from the United States. Moreover, students learn about how symbols of American national identity emerged through the Revolutionary War, including how “the battle of Fort McHenry (1814) produced an anthem, Star-Spangled Banner” (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 29). Furthermore, students in grade six learn about assimilation policy in the United States “and American Indigenous residential schools” (p. 37), but not Canadian residential schools. Yet, there is a selection of particular aspects of Canadian history which

positively reflect Canada. For example, the curriculum advances the narrative of the American melting pot versus the Canadian mosaic:

A popular theory, proposed as a way of drawing a distinction between two different societies, the United States and Canada: It suggests that there is a difference between the Canadian mosaic, where ethnic groups have maintained their distinctiveness while functioning as part of the whole, and an American melting pot, where peoples of diverse origins have allegedly fused to make a new people. (Alberta Education, 2021, p. 32)

Important to note is that this learning outcome was plagiarised, word for word, from an article written by Howard Palmer in 1976. Moreover, in other areas of Canadian history, Canadian superiority is conveyed by implying that these policies and experiences, such as residential schools, are unique to the United States. Further, these narratives of Canadian superiority also arise in the discussion of slavery and residential schools in the United States while painting Canada as a ‘safe haven’ that is less discriminatory than the USA. Therefore, teaching students American history is a purposeful decision as it allows the curriculum to advance narratives of Canadian superiority over the United States.

### Part III – Conclusion

In the Alberta draft social studies curriculum, ideology, operating as hegemony, is functioning to advance a hidden curriculum of intolerance. In the curriculum, ideology constructs a particular version of Canadian history, which is dominated by white settler men. Therefore, this curriculum is not representative of the diversity of Albertans or Canadians, and many students will not see their lived realities or histories included in the curriculum.

My analysis reveals that across grade levels, women are depicted as only significant throughout history if they are the wife of an important male historical figure. The curriculum

teaches girls that their contributions are only significant if they are supported by men. Further, the findings on race reveal that the curriculum upholds racism and advances white supremacy, as is most clearly demonstrated through the findings on the KKK. In the context of colonialism, the curriculum uses colonial discourse that relegates Indigenous peoples to the past, thereby removing contemporary obligations settlers have with Indigenous peoples. Next, the financial literacy sections of the curriculum do not acknowledge the systemic quality of poverty and advance the narrative that if individuals work hard enough and manage their money wisely, poverty will not occur. Finally, in some grades, there is too much focus on American history. Within this focus, narratives of Canadian superiority are advanced, which portray Canada as a more tolerant society than the United States. The narrative is clear through the discussion of slavery that portrays Canada as a 'safe haven' for American slaves who escaped the country.

# Chapter Four: Conclusion

## Part I – Summary of Findings and Conclusion

In summary, this thesis has answered the question: How does ideology impact the content of the draft kindergarten to grade six social studies curriculum in Alberta? What claims are being made by the online news media about the draft Alberta social studies curriculum? How do these discussions operate ideologically?

In exploring and answering these questions, this thesis has argued that the media, through its discourse, politicizes curriculum reform and creates division. However, this thesis has also found that the 2021 kindergarten to grade six social studies curriculum drafted under the UCP government is not value neutral or ideology-free. Considering ideology as hegemony, this thesis argues that curriculum and media can never be ideology-free. They always operate within power structures that work to advance a particular understanding of the world and individuals' place in it.

Throughout my discourse analysis of the online news media coverage of the draft curriculum, I have found that the media takes a position that upholds the opposition to the curriculum and thus paints the UCP draft as not in the best interests of the province, and as detrimental to children who would be taught the curriculum. Therefore, the media is not value neutral and does not neutrally report on education. The media politicizes education in two ways: first, through the number of quotes that it publishes from those opposed to the curriculum versus those who are in favour of the draft, and second, through the discourse that it uses, specifically the leading language that guides readers to form a particular opinion. Therefore, the media politicizes the curriculum by constructing curriculum reform as something to be won for a given

side of the political spectrum rather than focusing on creating the best possible resources for the education of future generations.

I have found that although the news media politicizes the draft social studies curriculum. Overall, its reporting on the curriculum and the language it uses in the reporting is warranted. Through my curriculum analysis, I sought to understand more deeply the language used in the curriculum and why it had become such a contentious and controversial issue in Alberta. I found that the curriculum draft, as published in March 2021, upholds white supremacy, sexism and settler colonialism. Because of this, the curriculum is not representative of the diversity of Albertans and Canadians, and many students will not see themselves reflected in the content. A social studies curriculum should not be about memorizing people and events, as is the reality in the draft. Instead, it must advance critical thinking and inspire children to explore their questions about society.

So why is all of this important, and why should we care about the politicization of education in Alberta? Although the claims that the media makes about the curriculum are warranted, the issue with the media lies in its construction of curriculum and education as something to be won for a particular side and/or political party. The way that the media writes about the curriculum makes it seem impossible for people to come together and write a curriculum with Albertan children and their futures in mind.

The written curriculum legitimizes knowledge, and students are taught what and who are deemed important. Thus, education instills values and norms in future generations by teaching children 'legitimate' knowledge through the mandated curriculum. Written curriculum plays a crucial role in influencing how young people come to make sense of the world and understand their place within the world. Moreover, social studies is of particular importance because, as

Alberta Education wrote in 2005, social studies are crucial because it “develops the key values and attitudes, ... and processes necessary for students to become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change” (p. 1).

Consequently, the latent messages advanced by the social studies curriculum must be taken seriously and exposed because of social studies’ role in shaping the next generation.

## Part II – Limitations and Further Research

A limitation of this study is its specific focus on Alberta. While the findings of the media may be generalizable to other contexts, as the media is not value neutral and contributes to the politicization of many issues other than education, the findings of the curriculum analysis are not generalizable. The findings of the curriculum analysis uncover and reveal latent themes and messages. They are not generalizable to other provinces because each province is responsible for its curriculum. However, the research provides insights into what should be examined in different curriculums, and it provides a methodology through which to conduct this work. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial to consider other provincial curriculums across Canada and compare the vision of society they project to my findings about the Alberta curriculum. Moreover, it would be crucial to explore, uncover and examine the hidden curriculum within all school systems and compare this to the written, officially mandated curriculum.

A further limitation of this research is the exclusive focus on online news media. It is valuable to explore social media and how it contributes (or not) to the politicization of education. It should be a further consideration because politicians have a social media presence and following. Thus, it is critical to examine how they use social media to advance certain narratives about the curriculum. Moreover, I did not speak to Albertans and educators about their views on

the curriculum. I have focused solely on the discourse used in the debates and how this may impact public opinion. In a future study, it would be interesting to expand this work to include interviews with Albertans to understand their views on the curriculum and what they deem important in social studies.

In March 2024, the Government of Alberta released a new draft of the social studies curriculum, with an overview of all the topics covered in kindergarten to grade 12. Therefore, an examination of this draft must occur with the same rigour as the 2021 draft. It would be interesting to examine whether the controversy around the original draft prompted substantial content changes to the new draft and whether the version of society it projects is the same or different. Thus, a comparison of the two drafts is necessary. Furthermore, between the release of the original draft and the new draft, the government gathered much public feedback. Further research should examine whether or not this feedback was meaningfully incorporated into the new curriculum, as the data from the survey is publicly available online.

Given the results of the media analysis in which the media constructs the curriculum as something to be won, further research should consider the following question: should the media not be politicizing education? There should be exploration and consideration of whether the depoliticization of education can occur. Moreover, there should be consideration of whether individuals from across the political spectrum and political parties can come together to work on a social studies curriculum that is in the best interests of the future of Alberta children.

## References

- Alberta Education. (2005). *Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12* [Program Rationale and Philosophy]. <https://education.alberta.ca/media/3386090/program-of-study-grade-12.pdf>
- Alberta Education. (2021). *Draft Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 6 Curriculum* [Program of Studies]. <https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en>
- Anderson, G. L. (2007). Media's impact on educational policies and practices: Political spectacle and Social Control. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(1), 103–120.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01619560709336538>
- Apple, M. W. (2019). *Ideology and Curriculum* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Bakan, A. (2008). Reconsidering the Underground Railroad: Slavery and Racialization in the Making of the Canadian State. *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes* 1(4): 3– 29.  
<https://doi.org/10.18740/S4C59D>
- Banfield, P. (2006, February 7). *Ku Klux Klan*. The Canadian Encyclopedia.  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ku-klux-klan>
- Bates, T. R. (1975). Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36(2), 351–366. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2708933>
- Burney, S. (2012). Chapter One: Orientalism: The Making of the Other. *Counterpoints*, 417, 23–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981698>
- Cantoni, D., Chen, Y., Yang, D. Y., Yuchtman, N., & Zhang, Y. J. (2017). Curriculum and Ideology. *Journal of Political Economy*, 125(2), 338–392. <https://doi.org/10.1086/690951>
- Chappell, D. (2010). Training Americans: Ideology, Performance, and Social Studies Textbooks. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 38(2), 248–269.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2010.10473424>



- Clifford, S. J. (2023). Silent Masculinity: The Discursive Interplay of Gender and White Logic in Alberta's K-6 Draft Curriculum. *Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science*, 55, 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.22151/politikon.55.3>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989(1), 139–167. <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Daly, A. J., Supovitz, J., & Fresno, M. D. (2019). The Social Side of Educational Policy: How Social Media Is Changing the Politics of Education. *Teachers College Record*, 121(14), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811912101402>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479851393.001.0001>
- Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In M. Handford & J. P. Gee (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 9–20). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809068>
- Fairclough, N. (2023). Critical discourse analysis. In M. Handford & J. P. Gee (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed.), (pp. 11–22). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003035244-3>
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315002057>

- Freeman, S., Fraser, B., & Higgins, M. (2021). *Examining the Alberta K-6 Draft Science Curriculum for Markers of Colonial Influence* [Conference/Workshop Poster]. WISEST Summer Research Program / WISEST Research Posters, University of Alberta.  
<http://www.dx.doi.org/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.7939/r3-zz3r-4563>
- French, J. (2018, January 10). Hitting the books: how alberta education is rewriting curriculum for the next generation of students. *Edmonton Journal*.  
<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/hitting-the-books-how-alberta-education-is-rewriting-curriculum-for-the-next-generation-of-students>.
- Gillborn, D. (2023). Education Policy as an Act of White Supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory, and Education Reform. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (3rd ed., pp. 42–58). Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A., & Penna, A. N. (1979). Social Education in the classroom: The dynamics of the hidden curriculum. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 7(1), 21–42.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1979.10506048>
- Hammersley, M. (2020). Ethics and the Study of Discourse. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Discourse Studies* (pp. 465–486). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108348195.022>
- Harris, C. (2008, January 21). *Marie-Madeleine Jarret de Verchères*. L'Encyclopédie Canadienne.  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/fr/article/vercheres-marie-madeleine-jarret-de-1>
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy. (2024). *Who We Are: About the Haudenosaunee Confederacy*.  
<https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/who-we-are/>

- Henry-Dixon, N. (2022, February 7). *1793 Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada*. The Canadian Encyclopedia.  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/1793-act-to-limit-slavery-in-upper-canada>
- Horniak, R. (2016). Influence of political parties and the media on the formation of public opinion. *Izzivi Prihodnosti / Challenges of the Future*, 1(4), 188–200.
- Jones Brayboy, B. M. (2005). Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education. *The Urban Review*, 37(5), 425–446. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y>
- Kenney, J. (2021, April 8). “Educational Curriculum Redesign.” Alberta. Legislative Assembly of Alberta. *Alberta Hansard, Day 94*. The 30th Legislature, Second Session.  
[https://docs.assembly.ab.ca/LADDAR\\_files/docs/hansards/han/legislature\\_30/session\\_2/20210408\\_1330\\_01\\_han.pdf](https://docs.assembly.ab.ca/LADDAR_files/docs/hansards/han/legislature_30/session_2/20210408_1330_01_han.pdf)
- Lazar, M. M. (2007). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(2), 141–164.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900701464816>
- López, G. R. (2003). The (Racially Neutral) Politics of Education: A Critical Race Theory Perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(1), 68–94.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x02239761>
- MacKinnon, C. A. (2013). Intersectionality as Method: A Note. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 1019–1030. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669570>
- McCulloch, S., & McRae, M. (2018, August 22). *The story of Black slavery in Canadian history: Slavery was part of Canada’s colonial nation-building for over 200 years*. Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

- <https://humanrights.ca/story/story-black-slavery-canadian-history#:~:text=The%20overall%20practice%20of%20slavery,abolition%20of%20slavery%20in%201825>.
- Palmer, H. (1976). Mosaic versus Melting Pot?: Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States. *International Journal*, 31(3), 488–528. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40201356>
- Parson, L. (2019). Considering Positionality: The Ethics of Conducting Research with Marginalized Groups. In K. K. Strunk & L. A. Locke (Eds.), *Research Methods for Social Justice and Equity in Education* (pp. 15–32). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05900-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05900-2_2)
- Patrick, M. (2023). Keeping whose faith? Religion and Alberta’s social studies curriculum. *Our Schools / Our Selves*, 22–25.
- Rutherford, B. (2021, April 8). “Educational Curriculum Redesign.” Alberta. Legislative Assembly of Alberta. *Alberta Hansard, Day 94*. The 30th Legislature, Second Session. [https://docs.assembly.ab.ca/LADDAR\\_files/docs/hansards/han/legislature\\_30/session\\_2/20210408\\_1330\\_01\\_han.pdf](https://docs.assembly.ab.ca/LADDAR_files/docs/hansards/han/legislature_30/session_2/20210408_1330_01_han.pdf)
- Sajid, M. J. (2015). Ideology in Text Books. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 3(6), 575–581. ISSN: 2321–2799
- Shanahan, E. A., McBeth, M. K., & Hathaway, P. L. (2011). Narrative Policy Framework: The Influence of Media Policy Narratives on Public Opinion. *Politics & Policy*, 39(3), 373–400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2011.00295.x>
- Snowdon, W., & Chowdhury, N. (2024, January 23). Oliver no more: Edmonton neighbourhood adopts new Cree name. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/oliver-neighbourhood-edmonton-renamed-1.7092029>

- Solverson, E. (2018). *Education for Reconciliation: A study of the draft curriculum for mainstream social studies in Alberta, Canada*. [Master's thesis, UiT The Arctic University of Norway]. UiT Norges arktiske universitet.  
<https://hdl.handle.net/10037/13077>
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2021, June 9). *Neoliberalism*.  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/neoliberalism/#ExplChalTerm>
- Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., Ladson-Billings, G., & Gillborn, D. (2023). Education Policy as an Act of White Supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory, and Education Reform. In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (3rd ed., pp. 42–58). Routledge.
- Tomchuk, T. (2022, November 2). *The Doctrine of Discovery: A 500-year-old colonial idea that still affects Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples*. Canadian Museum for Human Rights. <https://humanrights.ca/story/doctrine-discovery>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1–40.
- Yosso, T. J. (2002). Toward a Critical Race Curriculum. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 93–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713845283>

## Media Analysis Sources

Anglin, H. (2021, September 7). Howard Anglin: Alberta's social studies curriculum is filled with facts, and the left can't handle that: *For the education establishment, direct instruction of factual knowledge is 'old fashioned'*. *National Post*.

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/howard-anglin-albertas-social-studies-curriculum-is-filled-with-facts-and-the-left-cant-handle-that>

Archibald, D., Grace, A., Peck, C., Quinn, H., Siler, N., Werry, J., & Willman, A. (2022, April 15). Opinion: New curriculum will undermine education in Alberta. *Edmonton Journal*.  
<https://edmontonjournal.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-new-curriculum-will-undermine-education-in-alberta>

Baig, F. (2021, December 13). Province announces changes to Alberta's controversial school curriculum. *Global News*.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8447676/alberta-government-changes-school-curriculum/>

Bench, A. (2020, October 21). UCP under fire for K-4 curriculum plans that suggest leaving out residential schools. *Global News*.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7410812/alberta-curriculum-education-residential-schools/>

Bennett, D. (2021, March 29). Alberta's proposed K-6 school curriculum focuses on basics, practical skills. *Global News*.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7726173/alberta-proposed-k-6-curriculum-basic-skills/>

Berner, A. (2021, April 16). In defence of Alberta's proposed elementary school curriculum: Advisory panel member says draft K-6 curriculum's underlying assumptions rest on very solid ground. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/road-ahead-alberta-draft-curriculum-defence-as-hley-berner-1.5988835>

Brown, R. (2021, April 8). Opinion: Draft Alberta curriculum concerning. *Red Deer Advocate*.

<https://www.reddeeradvocate.com/opinion/opinion-draft-alberta-curriculum-concerning/>

Clarke, R. (2022, December 9). Curriculum debate ‘partisan and ideologically driven’ SACPA told. *Lethbridge Herald*.

<https://lethbridgeherald.com/news/lethbridge-news/2022/12/09/curriculum-debate-partisan-and-ideologically-driven-sacpa-told/>

Dupuis, L. (2023, September 18). Alberta government announces K-6 social studies curriculum plan, timeline: ‘The news release today shows that the government listened to the criticisms’: ATA president Jason Schilling. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-education-social-studies-curriculum-news-release-1.6970919>

Edwardson, L. (2021, September 29). ‘A failure’: Teachers overwhelmingly oppose K-6 draft curriculum, ATA reports: More than 6,500 Alberta teachers participated in the ATA's analysis of the province's K-6 draft curriculum. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/a-failure-teachers-overwhelmingly-oppose-k-6-draft-curriculum-ata-reports-1.6193547>

French, J. (2020, October 21). Education experts slam leaked Alberta curriculum proposals:

Lessons would make Alberta a ‘laughingstock,’ education professor says. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/education-experts-slam-leaked-alberta-curriculum-proposals-1.5766570>

French, J. (2021a, March 29). Alberta unveils new draft elementary school curriculum with focus on common cache of knowledge: ‘This is a curriculum that is hugely overloaded, with lists of information, with names and places’. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-unveils-new-draft-elementary-school-curriculum-with-focus-on-common-cache-of-knowledge-1.5968354>

French, J. (2021b, April 5). Academic finds segments of Alberta draft curriculum lifted without credit: ‘This was not accidental plagiarism,’ says University of Calgary education professor. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/academic-finds-segments-of-alberta-draft-curriculum-lifted-without-credit-1.5976245#:~:text=CBC%20News%20Loaded-,Academic%20finds%20segments%20of%20Alberta%20draft%20curriculum%20lifted%20without%20credit,of%20information%20cribbed%20without%20credit>

French, J. (2021c, December 13). Alberta’s draft K-6 curriculum to be delayed in 4 subjects, LaGrange announces: Changes will also push back introduction of new junior, senior high curriculum. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-s-draft-k-6-curriculum-to-be-delayed-in-4-subjects-lagrange-announces-1.6283773>

French, J. (2023, July 25). Alberta education minister to do further consultation on new social studies curriculum: Demetrios Nicolaides says more perspectives will make a stronger final product. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-education-minister-to-do-further-consultation-on-new-social-studies-curriculum-1.6917910>



Frew, N. (2022, April 2). Protesters call for Alberta government to scrap K-6 draft curriculum: Province stands by process, believes it will provide students with best education possible. *CBC*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-education-k-6-curriculum-protest-1.6406653>

Hackett, B. (2020, October 21). Critics tear down Alberta government's leaked curriculum proposal: 'Children are framed as these empty vessels that need to be filled up with facts and dates'. *Red Deer Advocate*.

<https://www.reddeeradvocate.com/news/critics-tear-down-alberta-governments-leaked-curriculum-proposal/>

Herring, J. (2023, April 18). Alberta boosting career-focused programming for middle, high school students. *Fort McMurray Today*.

<https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/alberta-boosting-career-focused-programming-for-middle-high-school-students>

Johnson, L. (2021, April 6). Alberta government defends draft K-6 curriculum against backlash, plagiarism allegations. *Edmonton Journal*.

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/alberta-government-defends-k-6-draft-curriculum-against-backlash-plagiarism-allegations>

Johnson, L. (2022, June 2). Feedback on Alberta's K-6 curriculum shows low levels of support, frustration over process: *Expert says she doesn't see any 'listening to feedback' on the part of the UCP*. *Edmonton Journal*.

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/politics/feedback-on-albertas-k-6-curriculum-shows-low-levels-of-support-frustration-over-process>

Johnson, L. (2023a, July 25). Alberta's education minister to press forward with developing new social studies curriculum. *Edmonton Journal*.

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/albertas-education-minister-to-press-forward-with-developing-new-social-studies-curriculum>

Johnson, L. (2023b, September 18). Alberta starts fresh social studies curriculum consultations with fall survey. *Edmonton Journal*.

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/politics/alberta-starts-fresh-social-studies-curriculum-consultations-with-fall-survey>

Lachacz, A. (2022, April 11). 'A political football': Concern over Alberta's premier pushing U.S.-style views on school curriculum. *CTV*.

<https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/a-political-football-concern-over-alberta-s-premier-pushing-u-s-style-views-on-school-curriculum-1.5858075>

Lachacz, A. (2023, February 6). N.W.T to complete curriculum transition by 2028, a 'sad commentary' for Alberta. *CTV*.

<https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/n-w-t-to-complete-curriculum-transition-by-2028-a-sad-commentary-for-alberta-1.6262179>

Sharpe, B. (2021, August 4). How Will Alberta's Social Studies Curriculum Size Up?: Experts say a focus on facts isn't enough. *The Sprawl*.

<https://www.sprawllcalgary.com/comparing-alberta-social-studies-draft-curriculum>

Swensrude, S. (2023, September 18). Alberta government redrafts social studies curriculum, asks for public feedback. *Global News*.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/9969502/alberta-redraft-social-studies-public-feedback/>