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Truth before Reconciliation in Mathematics and Mathematics Education: An Invitation to Action

This session considers where I am in my journey to understand and implement decolonizing practices in thinking, doing, and teaching mathematics. Through my mathematics and mathematics education academic lenses, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015) often seems to belong to someone else, that it is their problem, not mine – after all, mathematics, being abstract and rational, should be immune to colonialism, hegemony, and oppression. One might even ask, other than dropout rates, what else is there to reconcile from a mathematics or school mathematics perspective? Are treaty-based activities, such as the calculation and comparison of reserve and non-reserve population densities, leading to meaningful reconciliation or are they potentially destructive acts of tokenism? Land-based learning is often promoted and supported by Indigenous scholars, as well as embraced by teachers, but does only pedagogy need to be questioned and changed in the seeking of mathematics-based reconciliation? These questions have ruminated in, even dominated, my thinking for some time, until two encounters, a comment from a colleague and a title of an opinion piece in Maclean's, challenged me to scrutinize my truths before attempting reconciliation. Both encounters asked, that as Canadians, we examine what we hold to be true from a perspective beyond ourselves, and challenge the power and privilege that those truths are given. Accepting this challenge, I now ask "what mathematical and mathematics education truth(s) need to be challenged and disrupted so that reconciliation can be enacted?" This is the question grounding this session.