

Washington State University

College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation

Date: March 11, 2021

Time: 11:00 A.M.

Location: Zoom by request

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

**TROUBLING MY SETTLER PAST:
A CRITICAL HISTORY OF WHITMAN COUNTY**

Chair: John Lupinacci

An abundance of historical scholarship about early Whitman County pioneers exists, but very little focuses on how on the devastating impact settlers had on Indigenous communities. Documentation exists, but much of the framing of this regional history is one-sided, and part of what Feagin describes as the “white racial framing” (2013) of the origin story of Washington Territory. Using counter-narrative and critical analysis I trouble the narrative of my own pioneer past as a 5th generation Washingtonian, and my present as a critical multicultural scholar and educator. As such, this dissertation is a qualitative narrative inquiry based that draws on historical research methods to tell the story of family history—a settler colonial subjectivity—juxtaposed against the Indigenous culture and history that was disrupted and displaced as part of colonization. As part of the narrative inquiry, I had an ongoing dialogue with Alex Kuo, a long-time Washington state poet, scholar, and mentor as the narrative takes shape in response to my responsibility as a critical multicultural educator to unsettling my subjectivities and historical roots.

While “another pioneer family history” might seem to be a well-covered subject, approaching this history by contextualizing and de-centering it with tribal history, particularly the Indian Removal Act and subsequent federal acts that “opened” the territory to settlement, and the effect that had on local tribes has not been covered in this way.

Using Critical Race Theory, TribalCrit Theory, and Critical Multiculturalism as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, I examine the settler colonial roots of qualitative research, which pave the way for using narrative inquiry as my methodology. Histories of the Palus, the context of that history within the broader histories of Indigenous histories vis a vis settler colonialism and westward expansion, and how my family and history is complicit in settler colonialism form the initial phase of my narrative inquiry. My contribution to the narrative inquiry includes six vignettes that illustrate my journey as a critical multicultural educator and the events and people that influenced me. My hope is that the work I do in this dissertation can be useful for future Critical Multicultural Educators.