

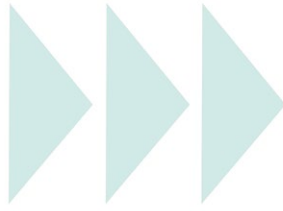
Decolonize First

a liberating guide & workbook
for peeling back the layers
of neocolonialism

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Move beyond neocolonial denial and admit there are problems



Decolonize First calls to action a process of peeling back the layers of denial we've all been taught to normalize.

While colonialism refers to domination over peoples and dispossession from their territories, neocolonialism refers to ongoing political, cultural and economic oppression. So neocolonial denial would mean denying that control over Indigenous Peoples continues and denying that non-Indigenous Peoples benefit from those systems.

Moving beyond neocolonial denial includes NOT saying things like "colonialism happened a long time ago, it has nothing to do with me. I didn't have any control over what my ancestors said or did." Or completely ignoring inequity and injustice because you are comfortable.

Decolonizing how we see and what we believe is needed before we can self-actualize within the settler-colonialism of Canada.

Read more about settler colonialism here:

www.unwrittenhistories.com/imagining-a-better-future-an-introduction-to-teaching-and-learning-about-settler-colonialism-in-canada

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Decolonizing is a lot like the word healing, it is different for everybody everyday, there is no final end point, and it's not easy. Nobody knows exactly what it looks like but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't work towards achieving it.



This framing has helped me become bold with decolonization. I used to be nervous to talk about it, thinking I hadn't read enough. It seemed out of my realm even though I am deeply impacted by settler-colonialism. Now, I see the perceived inaccessibility of decolonization as a protective barrier to dismantling colonialism. I've chosen to embrace decolonizing as an active liberating process.

Ta7taliya Michelle Nohé 

Credits

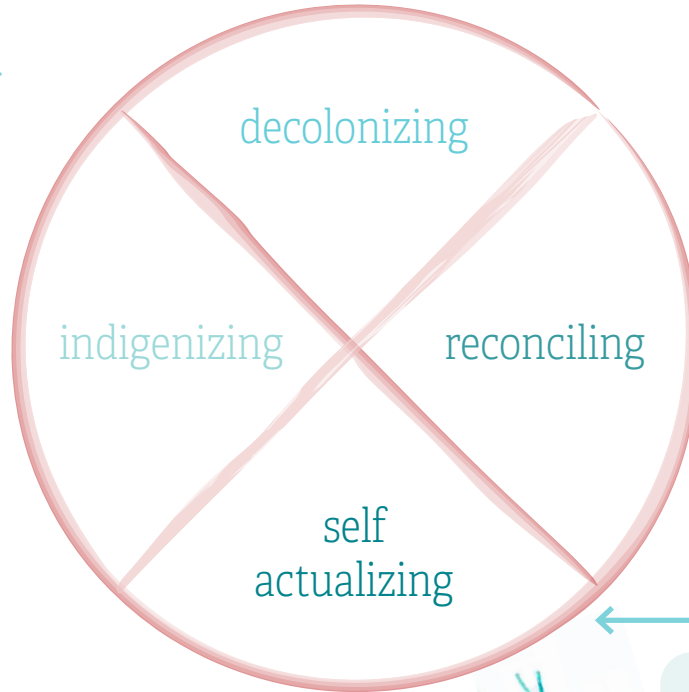
Concept, writing and design by Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee, Squamish, building on the strength and wisdom of my Ancestors and critical decolonial scholars I admire. Thanks to Jamie-Leigh Gonzales for her assistance and collaboration. Thanks to Zuleyya Prado for the cover photo. Thanks to my husband and daughter and chosen family for their encouragement and support. Thanks to everyone who is working to dismantle colonialism everyday, in your way. I hold my hands up to you.

It's not one or the other, and it's not someone else's job ...

decolonizing first starts with you. I've been told that decolonization is too negative and "we prefer to focus on reconciliation and indigenization." But there's a big stall in reconciliation because decolonizing our approaches, which includes our normalized supremacy, has to happen first. And, indigenization is awesome but can overburden Indigenous peoples and also get ugly with appropriation and commodification. Most importantly, decolonizing is an unencumbering of colonial narratives and impacts towards our best, actual, selves.

Decolonizing is undoing colonial impacts including surfacing our assumptions and beliefs as well as the ways we learned them.

Indigenizing is centering the ways of Indigenous peoples, beyond tokenism and commodification, to connect with the land and be better ancestors.



Reconciling is repairing relations, redressing harms and realizing balanced benefit for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Self Actualizing is being your best self, carrying your name and Ancestors in a good way, moving towards your highest potential.

Why Decolonize Now?
Why is it important to you?

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- Links to deeper definitions:**
- www.queensu.ca/ctl/teaching-support/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/what-decolonizationindigenization
 - opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/chapter/indigenization-decolonization-and-reconciliation

MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the framework most connected to self-actualization, is rooted in the Blackfoot world view. Maslow stayed with the Siksika Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy, in the summer of 1938 and received the name "Naamitapiikoan" before publishing "his" model of self-actualization. Check out Ryan Heavy Head's presentation about Blackfoot influences, research relationships, and some of the fundamental differences between Indigenous and colonizing cultures. youtu.be/WTO34FLv5a8

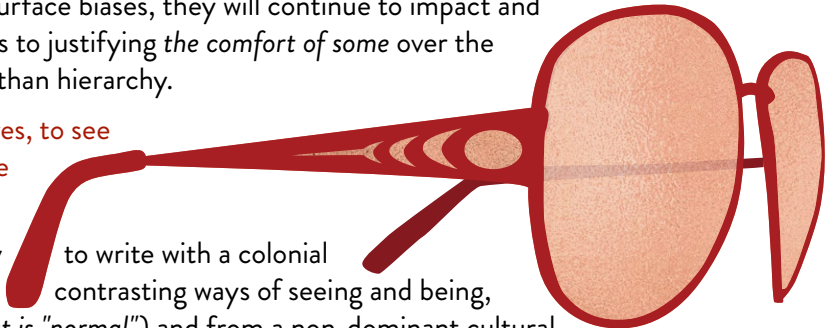
Colonial Narratives

Decolonizing how we see and think and act includes asking "why do I believe what I believe?"

An even deeper analysis asks about our hidden beliefs, our biases and where they come from AND who or what systems they serve. For example, colonial narratives frame Indigenous peoples as less deserving, less intelligent, less wealthy, naturally impoverished and less able. If we do not surface biases, they will continue to impact and impede all of us. If we do not link colonial narratives to justifying *the comfort of some over the discomfort of others*, we continue to normalize less-than hierarchy.

Try wearing a decolonial lens to see hidden narratives, to see what is made to seem *less valuable* and what is made to seem *more valuable*.

In the columns below, pick a topic or topics and try to write with a colonial lens and a decolonial lens. Practice comparing and contrasting ways of seeing and being, how does it look from a dominant culture lens (*what is "normal"*) and from a non-dominant cultural lens (*others' ways*)? I've provided "Education" as an example. **How about contrasting land, medicine, Elders, wealth, ownership? Or, harder topics like access to clean water?**



colonial lens:

Education: curriculum designed by age, decided by distant governing body, delivery varies depending on class, outcomes can relate to prestige and career.

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decolonial lens:

Education: designed to fit learners gifts, decided by people who know the learner and family, delivered in community, outcomes related to how the learner can serve community.

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Keep strengthening your Decolonial Lens! Make sure to check out the Teachings page of the Decolonizing Practices website for an open-source Decolonization Reading List and our sharable Decolonizing Memes. There are so many great IG accounts to follow too, we hold our hands up in thanks for all the decolonial teachers! www.decolonizingpractices.org/teachings



Helping and Harm

Ché̓nchenstway

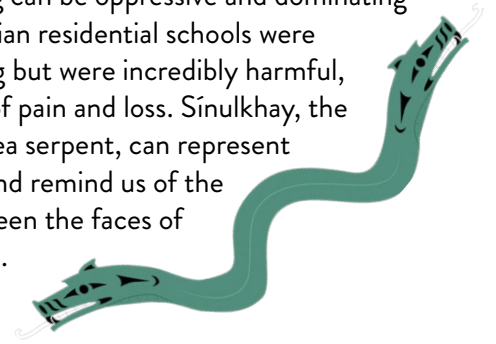
is a Squamish verb that means to uphold one another and support one another. We also say we are lifting each other up. It is a sacred law, a teaching to guide our behaviour and relations. In Ché̓nchenstway, all parties have equal power and bring equal value.

Upholding one another means *I bring my best to the situation and so do you, we co-create the best solution together.* This approach takes more time and requires good relations. A decolonial lens is needed.



Helping

means to contribute strength or give aid. When helping, one party has the power and means to achieve the goal and the other party does not. It gets tricky when power relations and access to means are not examined critically. Helping can be oppressive and dominating but justified. Indian residential schools were framed as helping but were incredibly harmful, leaving a legacy of pain and loss. Sínulkhay, the double-headed sea serpent, can represent transformation and remind us of the connection between the faces of helping and harm.



Can you think of scenarios that look like helping but are harmful? In your work? Your spheres of influence? Within your own assumptions and approaches?

I designed Sínulkhay + Ladders to surface dialogue about oppression + colonial conditioning in the workplace. Neocolonial oppression that I experienced, heard about and also participated in. The game came from a "what can I do about this?" moment.

“Every day we are on this land, it connects us to the teachings of our Squamish ancestors. When we think of the tenacity and love that brought us here to this moment, prayers for the next generations that will be a part of this beautiful weaving together of our lives. To dissolve barriers and clear the path to living a life, where have the connections to the land we live on, and the people on this land, feel invited to work together, one mind one heart, moving forward together.”

-Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George



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in Canada on
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