





Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit

Dr. Marie Battiste



We are all treaty people.

Protocols of Place

Acknowledge Treaty Six Territory, territories of the nêhiyaw, Dene, Anishinaabe, Nakota Isga, and Niitsitapi Peoples and homeland to the Metis.



Ta'n
Wetapeksi...



John and Annie Battiste

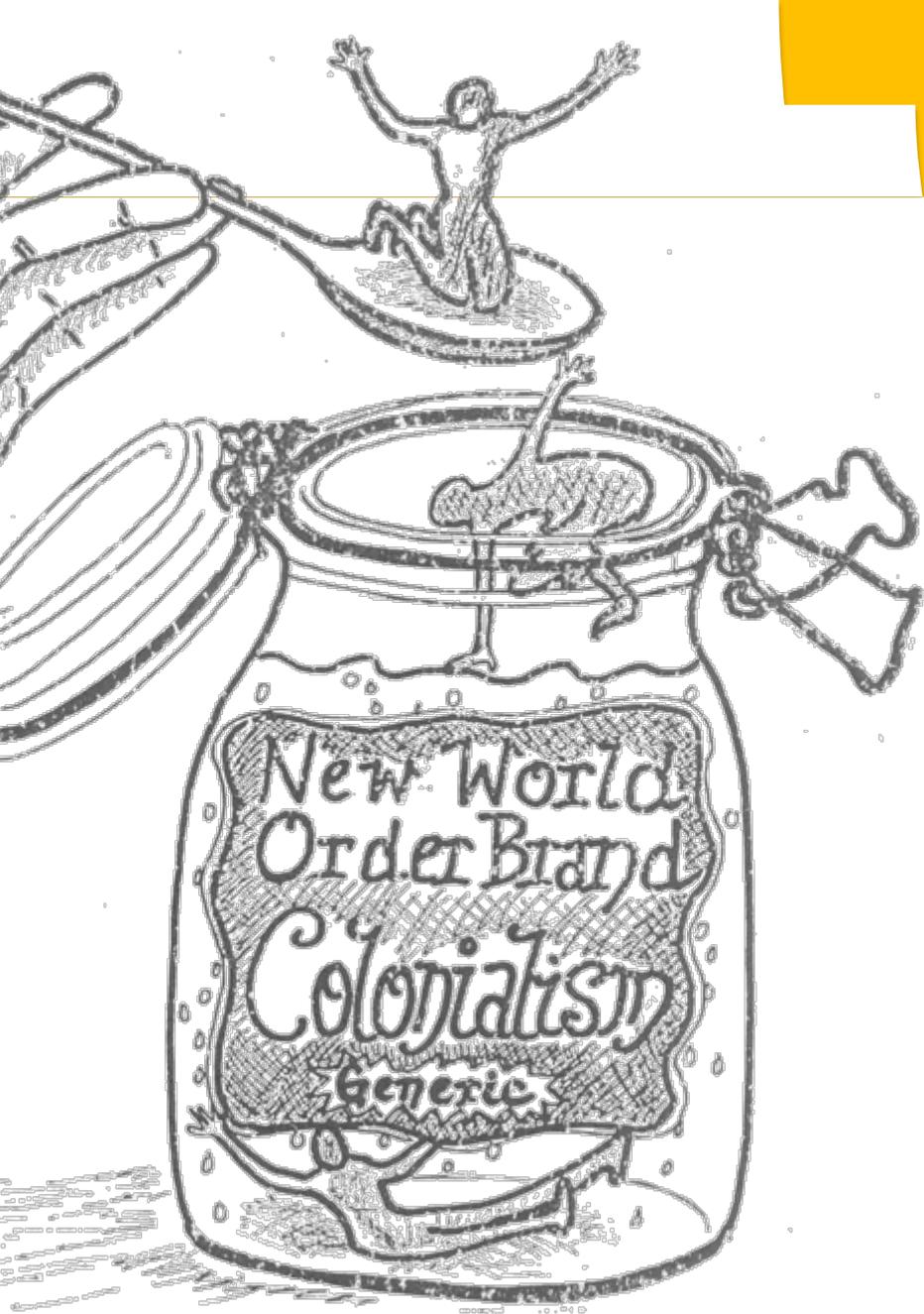
- Potlotek First Nation in Unama'ki
- Micmac Band of Aroostook



Moving Forward: Today's Journey



- Build a context for understanding Eurocentric colonialism as ideologies and practices of education
- Explore decolonization and Indigenization in the context of Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation, UNDRIP
- Identify value foundations and strategies for Indigenous self-determination through balancing Indigenous and transsystemic knowledges



Graphic by Dianne Rae

We have all
been
marinated
in
Eurocentris
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Eurocentris

A European 'centre' characterized by superiority, progress, hegemony, and monopoly over all other knowledge systems.

Characterized as a singularity in notions of universal and diffused to the periphery.

The engine of cognitive imperialism by which whole nations and groups of people have been denied their knowledge systems, their cultural and spiritual identities, and their land and wealth confiscated.

Indian Residential Schools

- 150,000 Aboriginal children in over 100 schools
- Failures: Lost knowledge, skills, & connectedness to the land, family, language, community, culture, spirituality, Indigenous humanity, sciences, knowledges
- Beginning of nihilism---meaninglessness, emptiness incoherence with community and family values and consequential changes

“The impacts of the residential school system were immediate ... ongoing... Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies, and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.” (TRC, 2015, p. 25,)



EDUCATING THE INDIAN RACE. GRADUATING CLASS OF CARLISLE, PA.



RCAP Report (1996) argued

....ethnocentric and demeaning attitudes linger in policies that purport to work on behalf of Aboriginal people, while actually withholding from them the power to work out their own destiny..

...Although no longer formally acknowledged, this does not lessen their contemporary influence and their capacity to generate modern variants

(RCAP, I:249, 252-53).

Modern Variants in Contemporary Education

- Settler relations and narratives privileged in the academy in notions of normalizing superiority and dominance, obscuring and erasing past and current racism, sexism and patriarchy.
- Indigenous students assimilated to conventional constructions of whiteness, civility, and citizenship.
- Conventional education gets to define 'difference' and how it is to be included.
- Education recognizes equity but ignores decolonization as Indigenous People's colonial experience with oppression and the marginalization of their language and collective knowledges to conventional western knowledge & pedagogies.
- Indigenous Peoples languages and knowledges viewed as having no contemporary significance and value, except as only for Indigenous students.
- Students living with dissonance and 'split brain' consciousness trying to navigate cultural dissonance and their own recovery of their eroding cultural identities and community's knowledges .

'Cognitive' Imperialism

Defines 'success' as integration and assimilation to colonial Eurocentric values, norms, and languages, knowledges and measurements to align with them.

Normalizes in multiple oppressions that are raced, classed, gendered; evident in discourses, laws, policies and ongoing actions

Erodes collective identities, ignores treaty rights, multi-cultures, diverse languages, by privileging colonial languages.



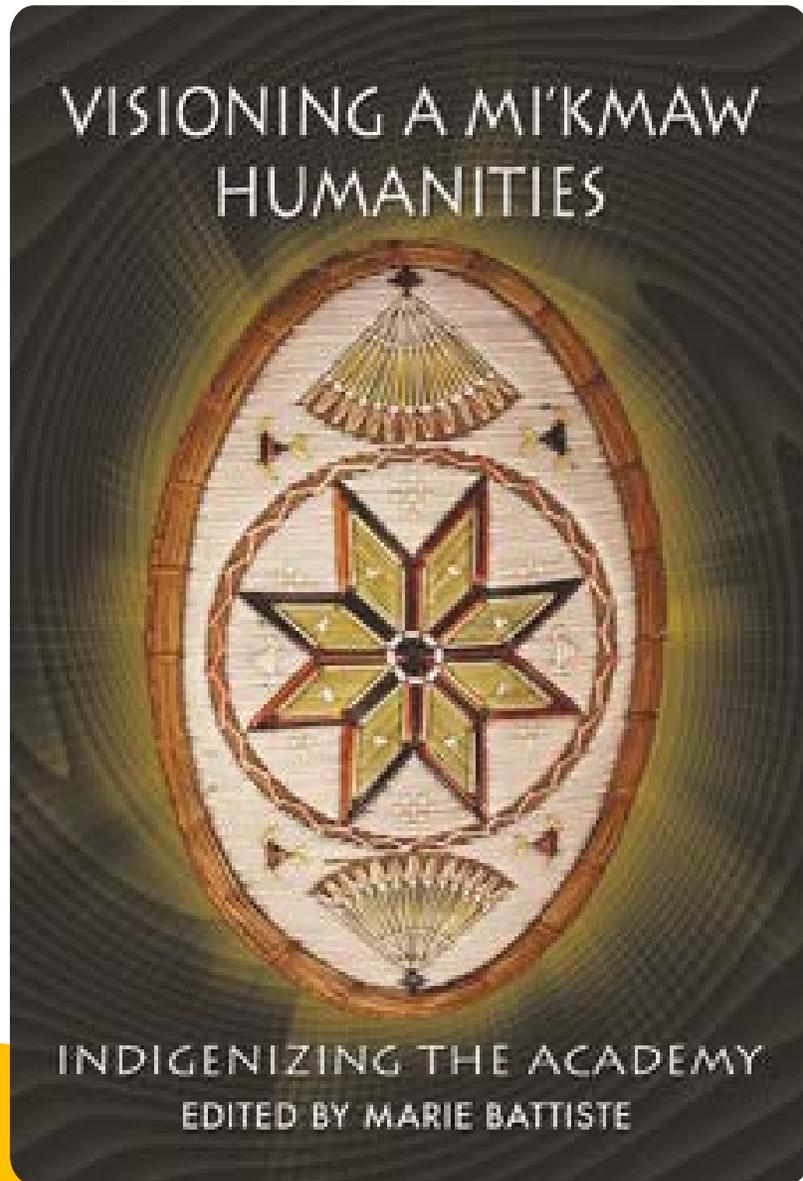
Agnology (or agnatologv)

- “Defined as the cultural production of ignorance, or how ignorance is produced through neglect, secrecy, suppression, destruction of documents, unquestioned tradition, and social political selectivity. (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008, p.1).

See: *Agnology: The making and unmaking of ignorance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

- ‘Agnosis’, the neoclassical Greek word for ignorance or 'not knowing', and ontology, the branch of metaphysics which deals with the nature of being. The public view of colonized peoples which is embedded in academic and general knowledge is often informed as much by what is not discussed, as by what is.”

<https://www.ingramacademic.com/9780804759014/agnology/>



Animating Mi'kmaq Humanities (2010-2014)

PI, Marie Battiste, Co-Applicants: Lynne Bell, Isobel Findlay, Len Findlay, Sakej Henderson, Murdena and Albert Marshall.

- Study of Nova Scotia Curricula and its examination of how Mi'kmaq were/are situated as discourse, text, photo imagery, inclusion, representation, agency and power.
- Critical Discourse Analysis
- From settler colonial education to 2010

National school curricula and textbooks have been key tools of Canada's 'aggressive assimilation policy'

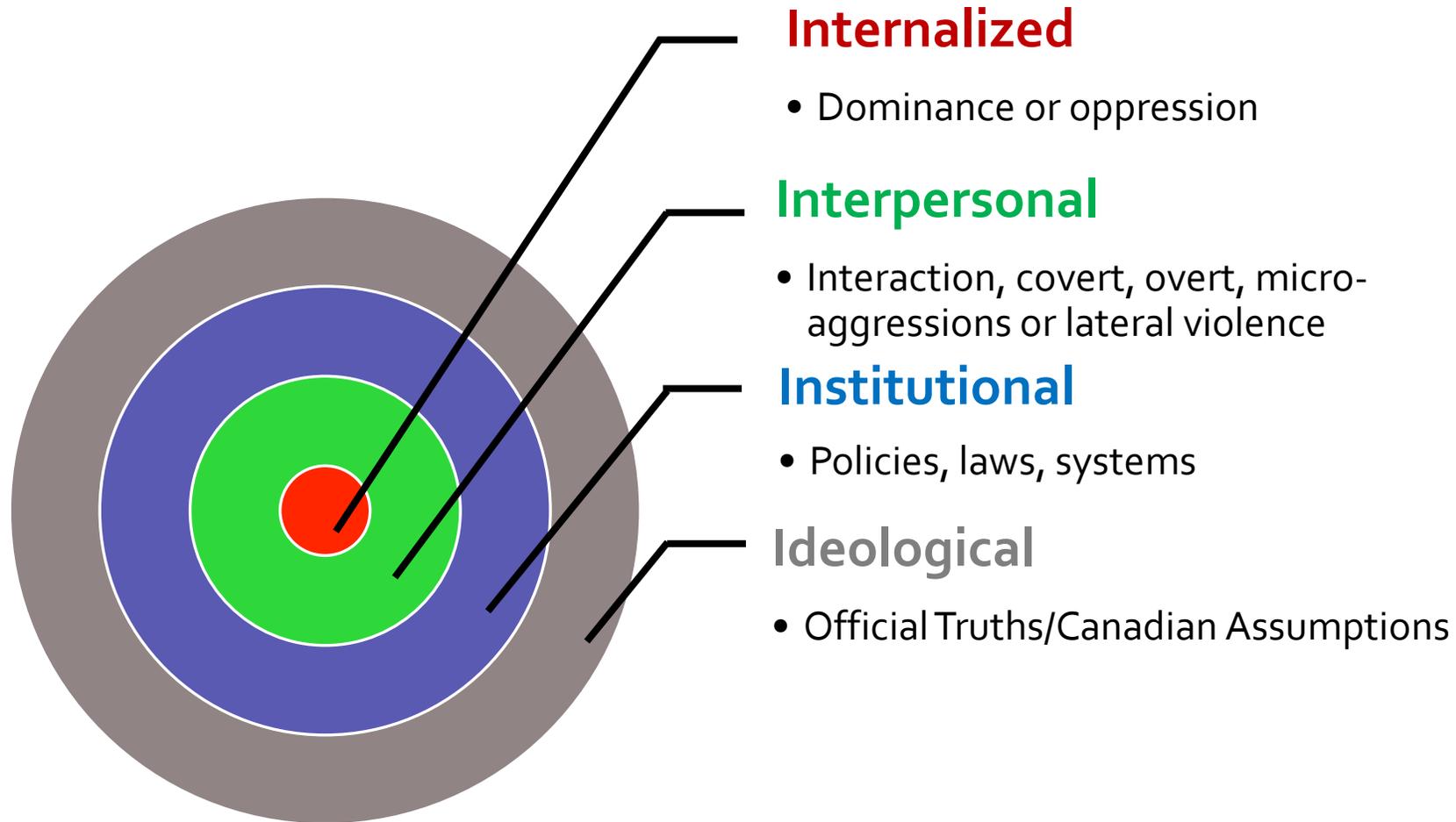
- Create the common discourses, values, and beliefs the state wants the citizens to hold
- Contain the baggage from colonial and Eurocentric values and attitudes
- Narrate the exclusion, erasure, and/or demonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Nancy Peters, 2016) in texts, grand narratives, curricula



“TALES TOLD IN SCHOOL”: SOME CONCLUDING TAKEAWAYS

- Curricula is NOT NEUTRAL, contextualized within power dynamics and privilege,
- Discourses of self and other are situated in the values, attitudes and perspectives of stakeholders & gatekeepers in power (Ministry of Education, schoolboards, book publishers, teacher training and education institutions, authors of guides, etc.).
- Approved texts: Reveal Eurocentric notions of good, normal, and problematizing Indigenous and others from perspectives of the privileged who centre themselves.
- Mi'kmaq viewed as the racialized 'other'.
 - **Feared** (savage warriors, land recovery), **pitied/ridiculed** (primitive, living in nature, poverty), **stereotyped/admired** (natural ecologist), **needing saving** (childlike, vanishing, scooped), **sexualized and romanitized** (men saving white women, or Indian princess saving men;MMIWG), **emulated/copied** (esp ceremonies, ecologists and environmentalists), **assimilated/aculturated** (Indian Residential Schools, Education; **scorned** (problem protestors/rebellious)

Truths: How Inequities are REINFORCED throughout time



Decolonizing Awareness

- Every teacher/student has been a victim and beneficiary of the same educational system.
- Few persons are privileged with the knowledge of how to achieve a decolonized education.
- We all must become critical learners and healers within a wounded space.



RESTORATIVE CONTEXT: INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE



- Indigenous elders, scholars, researchers and activists leading a discourse on respectful research and decolonization practices, self-determination and Indigenous knowledges and communities for healing the trauma and building well being.
- Non-Indigenous allies developing scholarship and theories and alternative approaches to address/end Eurocentrism, colonialism, racism, oppression, e.g., Critical Race Theory, antiracism, anticolonialism, anti-oppressive theories and practices.



International Decolonization: Politics and Theories of Peace

- Remediating the orientation of Empire as singular all powerful
- Reverse international law to move to decolonization
- Affirm Human Rights as fundamental to all humans of all nations
- Encourage Self-determination as foundations for recovery of nations subjugated by colonialism



Decolonization of Canada: Begins 1982

Constitution Act



- Creates constitutional and fiduciary obligations on Canadian and governments to respect Aboriginal and treaty rights-Section 35 (1)
- Creates Charter of Rights and Freedoms for designated groups- respecting human dignity of all individuals
- Canada further affirmed human rights in UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007
- Government of Canada passes UNDRIP Act 2021

Decolonizing Transformations



- Rights-based education not just culture-based, equity, diversity and inclusion, e.g., Aboriginal and Treaty rights, United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Decolonization: Address critically colonial origins as exclusions, privileged knowledges, normative colonial standards of excellence, and histories of cognitive imperialism and maintenance
- Reconstruction: learn from and with Indigenous Peoples, their knowledge systems and indigogies, not just about their histories of oppression and perspectives of Indigenous peoples



Decolonization: Two Layered Process

Deconstruction:

- Unpacking colonial privileging of Eurocentric languages, content, processes, and benefits
- Deconstruct the western lens and purposes of colonialization, erasure, silencing, appropriation of land, degradation of environment, assimilation, residential and public schools, privileging of colonial frames
- Reconcile all systems that have harmed: education, law, health, social work, governments, economy

Reconstruction:

- Recover and rebuild Indigenous identities, knowledges, systems, languages, relationships, families & communities
- Re-centre land as teacher
- Build on Indigegogies: Storying, ceremonies, Co-learning as students and instructors

Why decolonization and not just EDI?

- Decades of **unsatisfactory results** tweaking Eurocentric settler colonialism with weak policies of EDI
- **Scepticism** about EDI work and progress, what has changed and for whom?
- Indigenous peoples have not seen their **treaty and aboriginal rights** as EDI concerns.
- **On-going harm** with calls for on-going remedies: RCAP, TRC Calls to Action, Indigenization of schools, UNDRIP, MMIWG, Jordon's Principle, Treaty Rights court cases upheld, etc.

Decolonization: Not a metaphor (Tuck & Yang 2012)

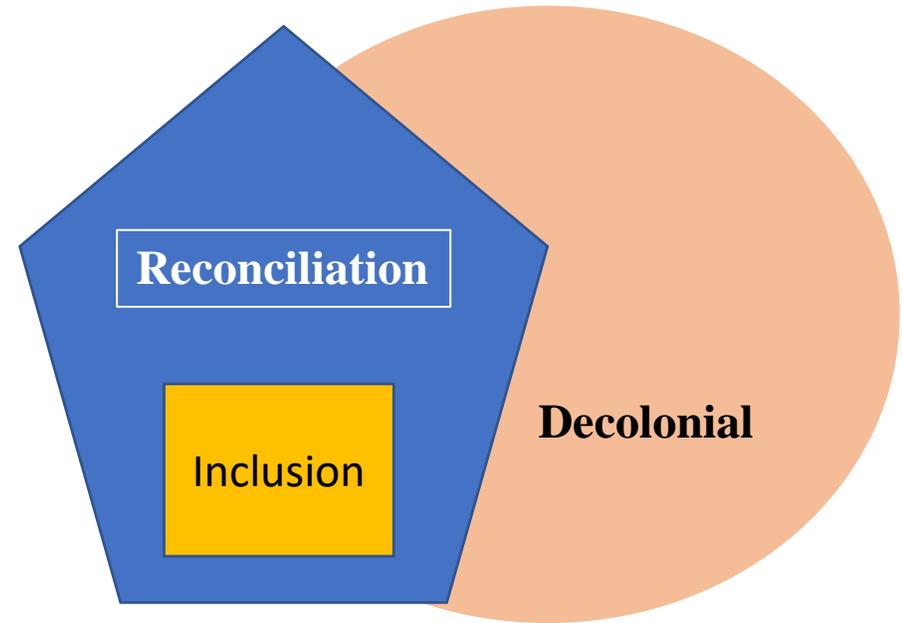
- ...for social justice, though social justice *is* necessary.
- ...for diversity though diversity *is* important.
- ---for a critical engagement with history and historical consciousness though it *is* connected to anticolonialism
- ...not mere additive content to courses, training, programming, but a deep interrogation of and how we have come to know, what counts as knowledge, who created the processes we now use, who benefits, who and what are the gatekeepers?
- Is a deep interrogation of the how an institution constitutes itself, its curricula, and methodologies (colonial legacies of empire, how its riches were gotten, disciplines created, intellectuals generated, whose grammars chosen, for what purposes, what damage done, etc.)
- Is about recovery and repair of knowledges marginalized, languages eroded, material and lands dispossessed, thus decolonial is material, cognitive, systematic

Indigenous inclusion is a policy that aims to address equity, diversity, and inclusion largely framed by an additive approach; increasing the number of Indigenous students, teachers, and staff in schools, ‘for’ Indigenous students or adding content ‘about’ diverse Indigenous Peoples and perspectives. Outcome is accommodation without structural change and for assimilation.

Reconciliation Indigenization is a vision that locates Indigenization for all members of the organization, re-educating everyone to Indigenous histories, realigning what counts as knowledge with conventional knowledge, considering how Indigenous knowledges can be reconciled, and building relationships in academic institutions with Indigenous communities.

Decolonial Indigenization envisions the wholesale overhaul of education to reorient or balance diverse knowledges, production, dissemination, and services based with knowledge systems, in various teaching and learning forms, styles, locations, realigning with Indigenous Peoples power, agency, and creativity, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new.

EVOLVING INDIGENIZATION



INDIGENIZATION INCLUSION & ACCESS



ADD	More Indigenous faculty hires, especially in departments where they may be only hire
ADD	Staff for Indigenous student services and add more spaces for Indigenous students
ADD	Programming for Indigenous students (counselling, tutoring, writing, math, etc.)
ADD	Resources for multicultural climate (Pow Wows, ceremonies, drumming, food, arts and crafts, etc.)
ADD	Orientation for staff and faculty on Indigenous Peoples (one-off approach)
ADD	Courses and Indigenous Elders to professions, law, education, social work, etc.

- Indigenous hires bear the burden of change, need more allies working the inside
- Indigenous hires are lone voice on all things Indigenous, their renewal and tenure contingent on non-Indigenous faculty
- Perception of diversity and fairness achieved by more diverse students and faculty
- Additive programming is viewed from a deficit lens of Indigenous students, needing upgrades as opposed to examining the colonial roots of colonial languages, structures, learning, and Eurocentric status quo
- Naturalizes an academic culture to Indigenous content to make them seem like they fit
- Make the climate hospitable for continued colonization

Reconciliation as Indigenization



- Promotes Indigenization as a plus for all educational staff and community
- Indigenous content, access to Elders, not just for Indigenous students but for all students and staff.
- School district shifts its strategic plans to include Indigenous knowledges, voices, scholars, students and materials
- Establishes larger circle of relationships and partnerships with communities, e.g. Indigenous advisory and/or reconciliation committees a
- Increases Senior Indigenous hires to affect the whole system
- Indigenous content mandatory for all students

Yet,...

- Lots more institution talk about reconciliation, less substantive action and direct change
- Adding more Indigenous hires, especially as Senior level but too few to make a difference
- Some power sharing, but fewer academic transformations in the hiring, profession development and promotion processes, due to the limited number of Indigenous or Equity deserving change agents in the institution.
- Often draws on diversity hires to take on extra work of educating, sensitizing and building the relationships for other staff.

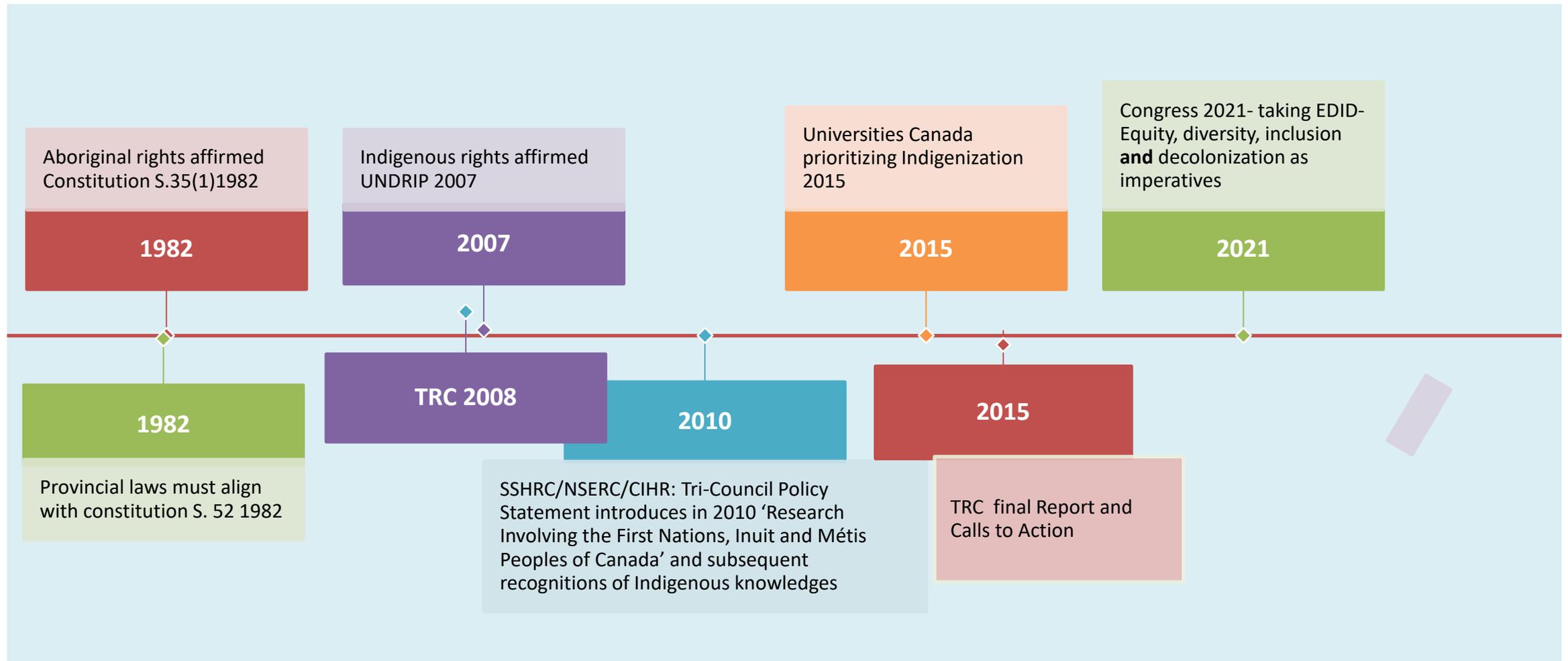
DECOLONIAL INDIGENIZATION



- Recognizes and supports self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, students, and communities drawing on their cumulative wisdom and knowledges
- Supports recovery of Indigenous identities based on Indigenous concepts of well-being from the land and communally based learning: Netukulunk, M'sit No'komaq,
- Reconciliation of Indigegogies to place and land-based learning, holistic foundations with Elders and in community-activated learning
- Transformative Indigenization programs rooted in decolonial approaches of teaching and learning, more holistic programming: honour the Learning Spirit

- Reclaim/recovery oral traditions: Origin Stories, holistic teachings, embed ceremony as renewal, concept of relationality and accountability.
- Build in diverse pedagogies and Indigegogies
Experiential learning, ceremony as frequent renewals, repetition and mastery emphasized, storytelling and narratives relatable subjects, contextualize history as local, relevant and involving local content, sharing circles, culturally responsive teaching
- Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination defined by and led by Indigenous Elders, Knowledge holders to lead and support the programming

DECOLONIZATION AND INDIGENIZATION IN THE THE ACADEMY





UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Article 1

Indigenous peoples have the **right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms** as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.

Article 2

Indigenous peoples and individuals are **free and equal to all other peoples** and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or Identity.

Article 3

Indigenous peoples have the **right to self-determination**. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Indigenous peoples have the **right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations** which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.



Article 16 (1) UN
Declaration of the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples (2007)

Decolonizing Education is a Postcolonial Agenda

- Education is viewed as the transforming agenda for undoing and superceding colonial myths and practices.
- Education can create new transforming practices that recognize the value and validity of Aboriginal knowledges, cultures, and communities as foundational to the future capacity building of Aboriginal peoples.

(RCAP 1996)

Core values of IK learning

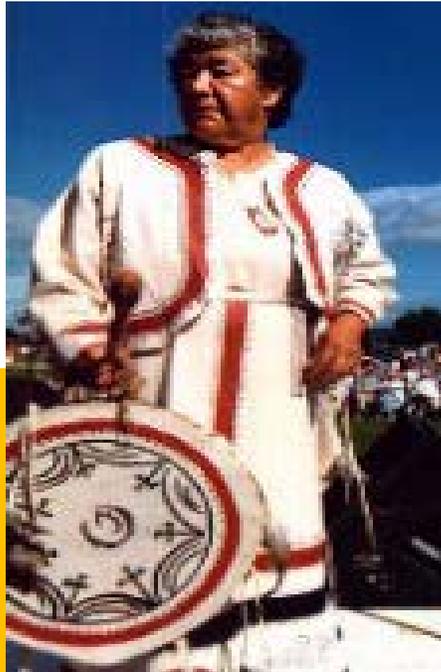
- Relational respect for the land, water, fire, animals, spiritual entities, and ourselves
- Honoring the Learning Spirit and individual gifts in all of us and in all things.
- Gentle teaching guided by 4 Rs: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relevance
- Teaching for the Seventh Generation

- Shared learning of Indigenous concepts
 - differentiating Indigenous and settler conceptions of land, self in relation to all things
 - focusing more on Indigenous continuities than historicization (intentional or unintentional)
 - Learning Indigenous rights in and through aboriginal and treaty rights, human rights and UNDRIP.
 - Ensuring cultural continuity, tribal sovereignty, Knowledge Production, sustainable communities not victims of history and trauma
 - Reconciliation ...a value, an object, a purpose and function, a journey unfolding...

Two-Eyed Seeing 'Etuaptumk'

- Vision of complementary knowledges in society and education – not resembling each other
- Strength-based knowing of Indigenous knowledge from their ontology and perspective, axiology and epistemology.
- Experiential co-learners - more than seekers of knowledge
- Finding common ground, respecting differences
- “We need teachers who can weave back and forth between knowledges.” (Albert Marshall, 2010, p. 16.)

Indigeegogy



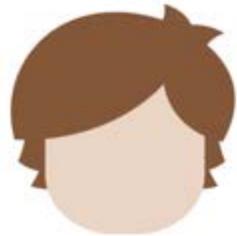
- A Placeholder term for Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and being.
- Taken from belonging and commitment to place/land and community
- Grounded in Indigenous ontology of respect and reciprocity, teachings, Elders in land-based activities, cyclical, sustainability within Natural Laws
- Honoring flux and renewals in ceremony, teachings, story, song, engaging with the more than human world
- Ensuring sustainability and security of food, medicines, animals, water, by our interrelatedness.
- Framed in Reciprocity, Gratitude, Responsibility, Reverence, Shared Learning and Reflection



RECONCILIATION

WHERE WILL YOU START?

HEAD



A starting point for Reconciliation is to get informed!

HEART



How do you feel about Reconciliation?

HAND



Reconciliation: It's time to act!



Office of the
Treaty Commissioner

TRANSYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATIONS



#NothingAboutUsWithoutUs

“Silence is the shield of domination.”

Minnich, E. K. 1990. *Transforming Knowledge*.

Wela'lin

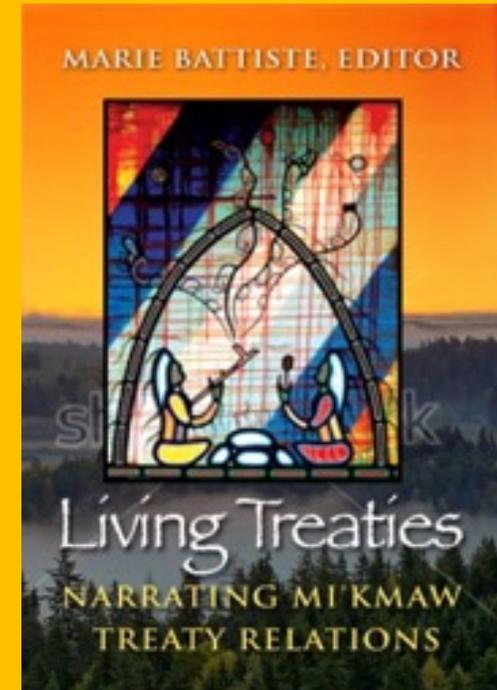
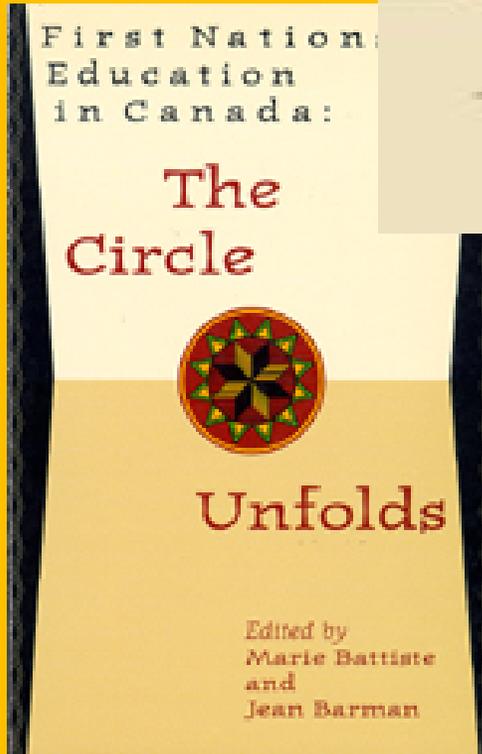
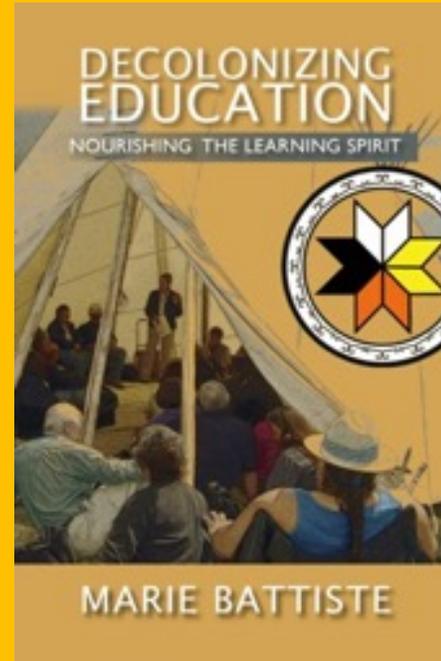
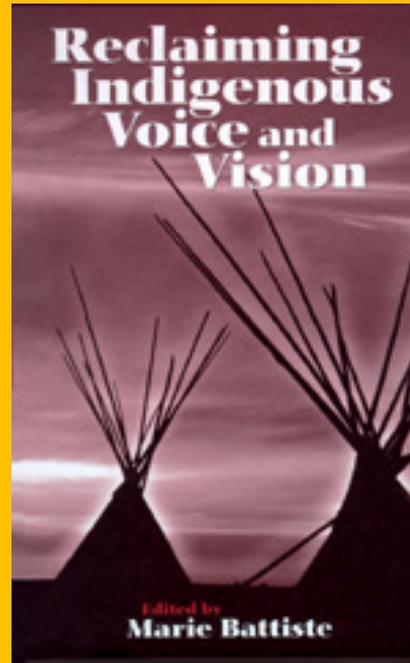
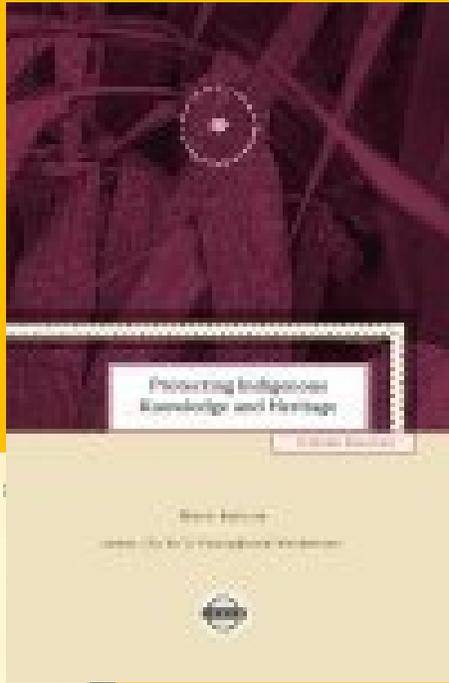
Ninâskomitin

Miigwech

Merci

Thank you





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Resources

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