Building Bridges

INDIGENIZATION
WORKBOOK

Egale

THE Enchanté NETWORK | LE RÉSEAU Enchanté

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous Peoples, who have stewarded these lands for millennia. These lands, now known as Canada, are home to a rich tapestry of Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions.

We acknowledge the enduring presence and contributions of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to this land, and recognize their deep connection to the territories, waters, and resources.

We acknowledge the painful history of colonization, forced displacement, and cultural suppression that Indigenous Peoples have endured, and the ongoing impacts of these injustices.

We commit to honouring Indigenous rights, supporting reconciliation efforts, and fostering meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities based on mutual respect, understanding, and partnership.

May we all work together towards healing, justice, and a future where Indigenous Peoples are empowered to thrive and flourish across Turtle Island.

ABOUT

Egale Canada

Egale is Canada's national 2SLGBTQI organization working to improve the lives of 2SLGBTQI people in Canada and to enhance the global response to 2SLGBTQI issues. Egale achieves this by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education, awareness, and legal advocacy. Our vision is a Canada, and ultimately a world, without homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and all forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias.

The Enchanté Network

The Enchanté Network (TEN) connects and supports pride centres and other 2Spirit and 2SLGBTQI community organizations across Canada. They help build stronger 2Spirit and LGBTQ+ community organizations through providing resources, training, and peer to peer networking. Member organizations include everything from small, volunteer-driven 2Spirit and LGBTQ groups to large frontline service-oriented community centres. As an intersectional, gender, and sexually diverse network, TENs goal is to connect, enrich, and sustain healthy, vibrant, and Indigenized communities. They are a bilingual network spanning from coast to coast to coast.

About Centre in a Box

TEN's Centre in a Box program is a one-stop-shop on foundational topics for pride centres and other organizations supporting sexual and gender diverse communities across what is colonially know as Canada. The program is designed to help build the capacity of local frontline 2Spirit and LGBTQI serving agencies across the country through informational and educational supports on a range of topics, including grant writing, charity status, governance models, and more.

Acknowledgements

Finally, Egale and TEN would like to thank the following people for their constructive and insightful feedback throughout the process of drafting this document:

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1. INTRODUCTION

Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and intersex (2SLGBTQI) people form a vibrant and significant segment of Canada's population. However, it's often overlooked that 2SLGBTQI people also encompass various faiths, races, ethnic origins, and cultures. These intersecting identities can lead to unique experiences of marginalization, both within and outside 2SLGBTQI communities. This is especially true for 2SLGBTQI Indigenous people who must additionally navigate the ongoing impacts of settler colonization on their communities, Lands, personal well-being, and sense of self. Organizations serving or operating in allyship to 2SLGBTQI communities bear a crucial mandate: to create and sustain an environment that ensures that no 2SLGBTQI person is left behind. To do so, 2SLGBTQI community leaders and community serving organizations must build the capacity to confront all forms oppression within their spaces, services, and structure(s). These need to celebrate, account for, and reflect the diversity of 2SLGBTQI experiences.

Indigenization describes processes which aim to honour Indigenous worldviews, knowledges, practices and perspectives within a variety of contexts. This workbook aims to guide you in the practical aspects of Indigenizing key organizational areas. This need arises from a recognition of the distinctive historical and ongoing experiences of anti-Indigeneity in Canada, and the specific oppressive dynamics these generate. These issues can frequently remain unnoticed or insufficiently acknowledged by non-Indigenous individuals, including those within the 2SLGBTQI community.

We acknowledge and celebrate your aspirations to do your utmost for all 2SLGBTQI people and to fully embrace Indigenization within your organization. The Indigenization Workbook is a comprehensive resource designed to empower your organization in this transformative process. This workbook respects and integrates the unique experiences, cultures, and traditions of

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Indigenous Peoples, guiding you towards fostering inclusive spaces that honour Indigenous knowledge, practices, and voices.

1.1 Context

Many pride centres and other 2SLGBTQI community organizations in Canada begin as grassroots local efforts. As they continue to grow and establish themselves as formal organizations, they may grapple with how to translate their community knowledge and interest in providing critical anti-oppressive programming and services while functioning within traditional organizational structures and funding models. The task of balancing the operational requirements of traditional not-for-profit organizational and funding structures with the need to uphold Indigenous-informed, anti-oppressive principles can be particularly challenging.

Indigenization provides a useful framework and opportunity to re-envision your organization through a lens of Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge. The process of Indigenizing community programs and organizations challenges us to dismantle colonially influenced practices and models, replacing them with culturally responsive and affirming ones. It is a critical process that recognizes and centers the Indigenous peoples on whose lands we live, work, and gather. By actively committing to a process of Indigenization, we are able to highlight Indigenous perspectives, dismantle systemic barriers, and strive for reconciliation and decolonization within and through community-based organizations.

This workbook offers a multitude of practical resources, exercises, and insights to guide your organization's Indigenization efforts. It provides a framework for understanding and incorporating Indigenization into your organization's governance and leadership, programming, community and external relations, and collective spaces. As you embrace the principles of Indigenization, you

are not only amplifying the voices of Indigenous peoples but also committing to fostering safer, more inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals of diverse Indigenous backgrounds. We encourage you to recognize potential challenges and obstacles in this process and to value introspection in identifying areas for improvement.

We invite you to join us in this transformation, as we collectively redefine the role of 2SLGBTQI organizations and collectives in supporting and upholding Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and self-determination.

1.2 Objectives

This workbook serves a dual purpose: it acts as both a guide and a catalyst for change within 2SLGBTQI community serving organizations seeking to embrace Indigenization. It aims to:

1. **Empower** 2SLGBTQI organizations and collectives to integrate Indigenization practices into every level of their structure and operations.

2. **Provide** non-Indigenous individuals in 2SLGBTQI community serving organizations with a clearer understanding of key concepts and teachings and boost their confidence in engaging with Indigenization practices.

3. **Support** 2SLGBTQI community serving organizations in fostering culturally responsive, safer, and inclusive spaces for Two Spirit and Indigiqueer service users and staff.

1.3 Who is This Workbook For?

The **Centre in a Box** toolkits were designed for various people in mind, from executives, volunteer board members, and leaders to administrative personnel, program designers, and frontline staff of 2SLGBTQI community service organizations throughout Canada.

Our **Indigenization Workbook** presents essential guiding principles and practices that assist anyone committed to creating more inclusive programs and services for 2SLGBTQI service users who are Indigenous. The activities encompassed within this workbook are not exclusive to any organization size or maturity level; however, they may be particularly useful to grassroots groups and emerging organizations. These organizations can employ the workbook to thoughtfully integrate principles of Indigenization into their operations from the outset.

The workbook can help if you are:

1. a 2SLGBTQI community serving organization leader or staff member seeking to Indigenize your workplace structures, practices, public spaces, or services

2. a board member or committee chair leading your organization's equity-related portfolio efforts

3. a leader responsible for the organization's policies and procedures

4. a people manager or supervisor responsible for leading a diverse team

5. responsible for designing or delivering the organization's programming and services

6. a front-line staff or volunteer responsible for interacting with the public

7. a community-based program designer or facilitator working within 2SLGBTQI spaces

Finally, this is intended to be a living document that supports community needs. Indigenizing and/or decolonizing community spaces is an ever-evolving process as more people and organizations undertake the work necessary to making our spaces and our communities better for everyone – and then share the lessons they learned with others. As organizations begin to use this workbook, we anticipate it also to grow and evolve. We welcome feedback that helps us expand or refine the workbook and create additional resources that address the needs of people working in a particular area of the organization or providing a particular type of service.

1.4 How to Use This Workbook

We acknowledge the diversity in learning styles and information needs. Thus, this workbook is built for flexibility, ready to accommodate you at any stage of your learning journey.

For those new to the concepts of decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization, it may be useful to proceed through the sections in order. For those with prior knowledge or specific organizational roles, some sections may demand more of your attention and contemplation than others. Use this workbook in a way that aligns with your and your organization's needs.

The workbook features three main chapters, providing the information you'll need to begin creating more inclusive organizational spaces, programming, and operations.

- [Chapter 2](#) **– "What is Indigenization?":** This chapter introduces the concept of 'Indigenization'. It emphasizes the importance of understanding differing worldviews and provides a general overview of common beliefs and values shared by many Indigenous worldviews.

- [Chapter 3](#) **– "Indigenizing Your Organization: Key Considerations":** This chapter looks at common beliefs and values shared by Western worldviews and how these may inform common organizational practices in the areas of organizational structure and culture, external relations, and programs/services. Practical suggestions are then provided for your Indigenization efforts.

- [Chapter 4](#) **– "Avoiding Harm in the Process":** This chapter discusses key things to consider in order to avoid perpetuating harm through your organization's Indigenization processes. It focuses on the issue of tokenization as well as key steps for a trauma-informed Indigenization.

Most chapters also include subsections that explore common misconceptions, guided reflection questions, and links to additional readings or resources.

Note:

The provided reflection questions are a key part of this toolkit. They are designed to help you think critically about how your organization currently functions and what that may mean for your unique Indigenization efforts.

Be sure to take your time to sit with these reflection questions! Think them through by yourself and/or with your colleagues and let your answers guide you through this toolkit and the start of your Indigenization processes in general.

1.5 A Word About Language

Language is a powerful tool that can shape our understanding, respect, and appreciation for diverse cultures, histories, and identities. In the context of Indigenization, the conscious use of appropriate terminology is vital. It is a matter of recognizing the inherent dignity, rights, and identities of Indigenous Peoples. Misusing language or using outdated terminology can inadvertently perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to the erasure of Indigenous cultures and identities.

You may notice this document uses specific writing conventions. For example, we **capitalize** Indigenous, Indigenization, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, Elder and Indigenous Land. In *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Gregory Younging explains that the capitalization of these terms "is a deliberate decision that redresses mainstream society's history of regarding Indigenous Peoples as having no legitimate national identities; governmental, social, spiritual, or religious institutions; or collective rights".[1]

Additional considerations

This workbook uses the pan-Indigenous term 'Indigenous Peoples' because we are discussing the process of Indigenization (in general) within not-for-profit organizations. However, when speaking of specific Indigenous communities and/or Nations, or about a particular region, it is best to avoid blanket terms. The name a community uses for itself is an important way to render identity, such as the specific People (e.g., Nehiyawak), or Nation (e.g., Red Pheasant First Nation). It is therefore best to use the words that individual people use for themselves, asking them directly for them if you are unaware of which ones to use.

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1 Younging, G. (2018)

Additionally, possessives are often mistakenly used when referring to Indigenous Peoples, with phrases like "Canada's Indigenous Peoples," "our Aboriginal Peoples," or "the First Peoples of Canada."

These possessive constructs can insinuate a sense of ownership over Indigenous Peoples by colonial states, which is inappropriate. Indigenous Peoples maintain their sovereignty, and many do not affiliate themselves as Canadian. When referencing Indigenous Peoples in the context of their geographic location, suitable expressions would be "Indigenous Peoples residing in Canada" or "Indigenous Peoples in the region now known as Canada".[2]

Throughout these processes of Indigenization, we urge you to pay close attention to the language you use, seeking always to learn, understand, and respect the terms that Indigenous Peoples use to describe themselves and their experiences. Our words can either strengthen the path towards reconciliation and decolonization, or they can unwittingly maintain harmful, oppressive systems.

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2 Younging, G. (2018)

Key Words

The following are some key terms relevant to the process and framework of Indigenization.

Two Spirit (var: 2Spirit, 2S): An umbrella term used by some Indigenous people to express an interrelated identity of gender, sexuality, and/or spirituality. The specific term 'Two Spirit' was collectively endorsed during the 3rd annual Intertribal Native North American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference (now called the International Two Spirit Gathering) held in Winnipeg in 1990. However, Indigenous Peoples' recognition of Two Spirit individuals is not new. Two Spirit people were historically understood as being "born in balance" and continue to hold special roles within their communities.[3]

Indigiqueer: Coined by Plains Cree filmmaker TJ Cuthand, this contemporary term is used to describe the unique experience of living at the intersection of Indigeneity and queerness. It is becoming an increasingly popular term, particularly among younger LGBTQI Indigenous people who do not necessarily identify as Two Spirit.

Colonization: The expansion of European sociopolitical and cultural systems into territories already inhabited by Indigenous Peoples for the purposes of acquiring new lands and resources. It includes the marginalization and erasure of Indigenous languages, cultures, and traditional ways of life.

Decolonization: A collection of processes against the past and present colonialism and colonial mentalities centered in all modern institutions like education, health, sciences, humanities, etc.

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3 There is no standard definition of 'Two Spirit' since its meaning varies across Turtle Island ("North America"). Likewise, there is no standard spelling of the term.

In this document, we have chosen to spell the term out (Two Spirit) in reflection of the term as an adjective. This said, if any author quoted within this workbook has spelled the term using a numeric (2Spirit) within their own writing, we have remained faithful to their original text.

First Nations, Inuit, Métis (FNIM): The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. These are 3 distinct Peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

> **First Nations:** There are more than 630 First Nation communities in Canada, which represent more than 50 Nations and 50 Indigenous languages.
>
> **Inuit:** Inuit are Indigenous people of the Arctic. The word Inuit means "the people" in the Inuit language of Inuktut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.
>
> **Métis:** Métis are an Indigenous nation of people of mixed European and First Nations heritage. The related term, Michif, refers to a particular language, culture, and people within the Métis nation.

Settlers: This term is used to describe people whose ancestors migrated to Canada and who still benefit from ongoing colonialism. This could be also applied to "settlers of colour" but doesn't apply when referring to people who are descendants of slaves, considering they did not come to this continent willingly. Keep in mind the various intersections of a person's identity and how this translates into the types of privileges they are either afforded or withheld.

2. WHAT IS INDIGENIZATION?

Indigenization is a dynamic process that involves valuing and honouring Indigenous worldviews, knowledges, and perspectives within settler organizations and institutions. Motivated by the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Final Report in 2015, the process of Indigenization has been undertaken within various fields, such as social work, medicine, environmental conservation, and education.

The practical aspects of Indigenizing a space, a practice, or an institution are many and varied across fields, and are often subject to much debate. For example, within the context of post-secondary education, Indigenization could be considered as existing along a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, the educational institution may preserve most of its current frameworks, supporting Indigenous students, teachers, and personnel to flourish in this established system. On the other end, the institution may undergo a profound structural shift as a result of significant interactions with Indigenous communities, scholars, and their systems of knowledge.

While the practical aspects of Indigenization may vary from organization to organization, the process itself arises from a recognition that the impacts of settler colonization include the devaluation and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples' worldviews and knowledges. Colonial structures were designed to eradicate Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, and replace them with those of settlers. This has had devastating and ongoing impacts on Indigenous Nations' livelihoods and well-being. Indigenization processes seek to reverse that course by nurturing intercultural understandings and perspectives.

As you prepare for Indigenizing your organization, it is important to understand that this process is inherently community- and/or region-specific. Indigenization is not a generic set of practices that can be applied uniformly by every organization. It is an organizational approach rooted in respecting and embracing local traditions and knowledge. For this reason, 2SLGBTQI community serving organizations and leaders should not only seek to understand Indigenous approaches to knowledge and community at a macro level but also the particularities of the Indigenous cultures within their area of operation. These insights should inform and shape organizational practices and environments that foster safe, inclusive, and affirming services and programs for Indigenous 2SLGBTQI persons and all members of the community.

2.1 Indigenous Worldviews

A worldview consists of core values that guide how we live and understand our lives. Our worldviews define our understanding of reality, our moral compass, and our perception of what's possible. In Canada, recognizing Indigenous worldviews is crucial for gaining insights into Indigenous Peoples and their cultures. The term "Indigenous worldviews" is frequently referenced by Indigenous leaders in Canada when deliberating on Indigenous knowledge, values, and beliefs in political, educational, philosophical, and social discussions. Acknowledging the existence of Indigenous worldviews as distinct from settler (or Western) worldviews affirms the existence of Indigenous nations and paves the way for understanding and reconciliation.

Core Elements of Indigenous Worldviews

In this section, we introduce some common principles valued and upheld by many Indigenous Nations across the regions now known as Canada. The goal is to provide a sense of the features that unite Indigenous worldviews and contrast them to Western worldviews to help inform your organization's Indigenization efforts.

Despite their commonalities, Indigenous worldviews stem from distinct relationships between specific Indigenous nations and their Lands. As such, they are diverse and unique to their contexts. For that reason, we urge you to consider this overview as a starting point for ongoing learning regarding Indigenous worldviews and cultures.

According to Dr. Janet M. Derrick, a Registered Family Therapist of mixed Irish, English, and Kanien'keh:ka / Mohawk (of the Rotinonhsión:ni Confederacy) descent and researcher on Indigenous worldviews, some of the common principles shared by many Indigenous cultures include: relationship, Oneness,[4] spirituality, circularity, and balance.[5]

Concept 1: Relationship

Relationship is the cornerstone of many Indigenous worldviews, defining interactions with self, Creator, family, ancestors, communities, and the natural world. It governs roles and boundaries in social relations, even influencing how individuals address each other, often by their relationship or role rather than their name. Selfhood in Indigenous cultures is defined relationally, balancing individual autonomy with obligations to the social, physical, and spiritual environments.

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4 Original capitalization by the author.
5 Derrick, J. M. (2021)

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Every person within a given relationship is valued equally, regardless of age, knowledge, insight, or authority. Responsibility is paramount, both for one's actions towards others and for learning from others' behavior. Maintaining relationships with balance, respect, and truthfulness is a duty. This requires self–awareness and discipline, as words, actions, thoughts, and emotions impact relationship. Accountability is therefore essential.

Concept 2: Oneness

Oneness describes a holistic perspective that emphasizes interconnectedness and unity within all aspects of existence. Oneness is a process of becoming, which arises from a direct relationship with the cosmos ('Father Sky') and the Land ('Mother Earth'). It is characterized by respect and trust, stemming from a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all reality and the livingness of the Land.

The principle of Oneness is often understood and explained differently by individual Indigenous people or whole Nations. For example, Richard Wagamese, an Ojibway, explains:

"

> There is life force in everything. Everything is alive, animate and moving, and even if we can't see that, we can learn to feel it. When we do we come to true awareness of our ongoing state of relationship. That relationship lies beyond the brain. We feel it in our spirits, our hearts. It is there that the teachings live and learning occurs.[6]

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6 see Derrick, J. M. (2021), p. 286

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Oneness refers to a deep sense of unity and connectedness with oneself, others, and all aspects of the physical and spiritual world. It acknowledges and respects the interdependence of all elements of life, underscoring the significance of maintaining healthy and balanced relationships.

Concept 3: Spirituality

Spirit is the fundamental energy, cause, and driving force of life. It sits at the core of the principle of Oneness and the circle of life in many Indigenous cultures. As humans, our task is to safeguard our bond with Spirit and uphold the spiritual balance and structure of the world. Indigenous psychology and cultures can only be comprehended through the concept of Spirit.

Spirit is generally understood to be inherent in all elements on Earth – plants, trees, animals, rocks – fostering a close connection between humans and all facets of the planet. As a result, all components of Earth are treated with the same respect, kindness, and gentleness as human relationships. The bond with Land is an amalgamation of physical, biological, and spiritual environments.

Concept 4: Circularity

The term 'circle' is frequently used in discussions and teachings within Indigenous perspectives. Rooted in ancient traditions, it signifies communal living in harmony with others, life's cyclical nature, the circular patterns found in the natural world, and the circular movement of our actions in relationship with others.

Concept 5: Balance

According to many Indigenous worldviews, maintaining balance in life is a continuous process or journey. It involves promoting our personal growth and development, as well as achieving balance in our relationships and families. The act of rebalancing and taking responsibility for our actions, commonly known as 'healing', requires self-discipline and self-awareness.

It is understood that rebalancing is an ongoing process throughout

people's lives. It's crucial for upholding roles and respect for others. In this view, rebalancing oneself leads to 'Oneness' within ourselves and with our relatives, allowing a person to become whole and realize their complete selves.

Indigenous Perspectives on Personhood

Generally, in Indigenous worldviews, a person's identity is defined by four interconnected aspects: spiritual, emotional, physical (behavioral), and mental (cognitive).[7] Spiritual and emotional aspects transcend lifetimes, while the mind and heart (emotions) also maintain a deep connection, with the heart being the foundation of the mind. An individual's mind, spirit, and body are not separate entities, but form an interdependent unit.

Well-being arises from a harmonious integration and balance of these domains, coupled with the fulfillment of social responsibilities and proper actions driven by the will to act for the common good. This concept is often referred to as *mino-pimatisiwin* or 'the good life' in Cree culture.

Indigenous worldviews also emphasize a constant state of relationship, recognizing that each person is perpetually influencing others. The Kanien'keha:ka / Mohawk culture, for instance, portrays the world as a large brain with each individual forming an integral part of it. Consequently, all actions and existence impact the rest of this collective entity. Individuals are tasked with cultivating love, self-awareness, and self-discipline for the benefit of the whole.

This interplay between the self and collective underscores the Indigenous concept of personhood, highlighting the importance of maintaining balance within oneself and harmony with others.

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7 see Derrick, J. M. (2021)

As you work towards Indigenizing your organization, consider these broad principles that shape Indigenous worldviews and how these may impact the way your organization's spaces and programs are perceived and approached.

While the principles of relationship, Oneness, spirituality, circularity, and balance provide a basic framework for understanding Indigenous ways of knowing and being, they do not capture the full complexity and diversity of Indigenous worldviews. Each Indigenous community has its unique knowledge systems, values, and customs, shaped by its unique relationships with Land. These worldviews are deeply contextual, fluid, and complex – they cannot be reduced to a simple checklist or neatly summed up.

2.2 Common Misconceptions

The following are misconceptions you may have had yourself, or noticed in others, that could negatively affect your organization's Indigenization efforts:

> **"Indigenization is about swapping out Western things with Indigenous things."**

Indigenization isn't a process of simply replacing Western points of view or methods with Indigenous ones. Rather, it signifies the convergence of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems, nurturing a mutual appreciation that can yield entirely new perspectives. It is not replacing Western knowledge as much as it is an act of coming together.

"Indigenization and decolonization are just different words for the same thing."

Indigenization and **decolonization** are interrelated but distinct concepts. Both aim to describe specific strategies and processes for addressing the historic and contemporary oppression of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Indigenization is the process of integrating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices into existing structures, systems, and methodologies. This might look like incorporating Indigenous teachings in a school curriculum, acknowledging Indigenous land relations at organizational meetings, or ensuring Indigenous representation in decision-making processes. It's about making space for Indigenous voices within structures and systems that already exist.

Decolonization involves a critique and dismantling of the power relationships and structures that have resulted from settler colonization. It's not just about including Indigenous voices, but critically examining and challenging the foundational principles, systems, and structures that continue to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples today. This can mean reassessing land ownership, dismantling discriminatory practices, or challenging embedded power dynamics that oppress Indigenous persons and their communities. It's about deconstructing the structures of colonization and eliminating those aspects that are not conducive to Indigenous sovereignty and well-being.

Whereas Indigenization integrates Indigenous knowledge and perspectives within existing systems, decolonization adopts a more transformative stance by challenging and abolishing the very structures that perpetuate settler colonization and its repercussions.

2.3 Reflection Questions

Answer the following questions to reflect on how you yourself relate to the five general principles common to many Indigenous worldviews, both personally and within your organization's context.

1. Reflect on the interplay of relationship, spirituality, oneness, circularity, and balance in your personal and professional life. How do you think these concepts manifest in your interactions with others? In what ways are the principles present (or not) in your approach to work?

2. Reflect on your organization's governance structure, culture, external relations, programs, and collective spaces (physical or digital). What words, feelings or emotions, or even images come to mind when you think of each organizational area?

How do these words, feelings, or images resonate with or diverge from any of the five common principles of Indigenous worldviews? What insights might this provide for aligning your organization more closely with these principles?

2.4 Additional Resources

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (Report)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012

https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Indigenization, Decolonization, and Reconciliation (Chapter)

Asma-na-hi Antoine; Rachel Mason; Roberta Mason; Sophia Palahicky; and Carmen Rodriguez de France

https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/chapter/indigenization-decolonization-and-reconciliation/

https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/chapter/indigenization-decolonization-and-reconciliation/

3. INDIGENIZING YOUR ORGANIZATION: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In this section, we present a general framework and key considerations for incorporating Indigenous perspectives and community needs into your organization's programs and processes. The framework's design is rooted in the understanding that our worldviews influence our ways of being, knowing, and doing. In the context of not-for-profit organizations, these influences manifest in four main areas: organizational structure and culture, programs and services, community relations, and spaces and collective environments.

The framework will be used to guide reflection of these five aspects within your own organization, toward fostering a critical understanding of how the organization's worldview is impacting its daily operations. Ultimately, our aim is to support you in reshaping your operations to not only respect but also to honour and uphold Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing in alignment with your organizational goals.

3.1 First Things First: Whose Lands?

Indigenous communities and cultures are diverse. According to Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, there are more than 630 First Nation communities[8], 51 Inuit communities[9] and over half a million *Métis* people[10] across Canada. This represents more than 50 Nations and over 70 Indigenous languages!

Each may have distinct ways of doing things; what might be helpful or meaningful to one community might be harmful to another. Therefore, your Indigenization processes must be informed by the specific histories, cultures, and practices of the Indigenous communities on whose Lands you work and convene.

So how well do you know the local Indigenous communities in your area of operation? Consider the following checklist to assess your knowledge:

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- ☐ I can name the Indigenous nations that are historically tied to the Land on which my organization is located.

- ☐ I know the name(s) that Indigenous people use to refer to this Land.

- ☐ I'm aware of the languages spoken by local Indigenous communities.

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8 Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (2021). *First Nations*.
9 Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (2021). *Inuit*.
10 Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (2021). *Métis.*

Expanding Awareness

☐ I can identify some notable figures and historical events tied to local Indigenous communities or nations.

☐ I have a general understanding of the frameworks that inform modern relations between Indigenous Peoples and the state of Canada (I.e., the Indian Act and Indigenous treaties).

Deepening Understanding

☐ I am generally familiar with how local Indigenous communities approach decision-making, conflict resolution, teaching, learning, and other key processes.

☐ I am aware of key cultural practices, traditions, and/or ceremonies observed by local Indigenous communities.

How did you do? If you've spotted any knowledge gap, consider investing some time to learning more! Being aware and understanding these points will help you create the community serving organization you're envisioning.

> **Keep in mind:**
>
> It is not enough to simply gather information. You will need to consider how to apply this new understanding toward creating a more inclusive, respectful, and reciprocal relationship with Indigenous communities. This will be an ongoing process of learning and unlearning.

Additional Resources

- To learn more about Indigenous Lands and the Indigenous Peoples that call them home, see: Native-Land.ca | Our home on native land

- To learn more about the Indian Act, see: Assembly of First Nations's Introduction to the Indian Act

- To learn more about the significance of treaties, see: Assembly of First Nations's Treaties and Why They Are Important

- To learn more about the history and realities of afro-Indigenous people in Canada, see: Digital Stories — Proclaiming Our Roots

- To begin establishing points of contact with Indigenous communities in your area, consider locating a Friendship Centre near you: Friendship Centres — The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC)

3.2 Decentering Western Worldviews

Every culture has its unique ways of understanding the world which guide their practices (or ways of doing). Because your organization operates within a 'Western'/settler-led context, you need to be able to recognize the influence of Western beliefs and values on common organizational practices, structures, and spaces. In this section, we will explore five key characteristics of Western worldviews: Individualism, Rationalism and Empiricism, Linear Time and Progress, Dualism and Competition, and Secularism and Standardization.

We will spend time considering how each of these may influence your **organizational structure and culture, programs and services, community and external relations**, and **collective spaces and environments**.

Individualism

Individualism is often regarded as a distinctive aspect of Western worldviews. It refers to the belief that individual rights, needs, and freedoms are primary. In this view, the individual's characteristics and needs are distinct from its context. Individualism also emphasizes personal independence and achievement. This principle permeates various areas of organizational life.

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Organizational structure and culture

Individualism may influence how authority is distributed within organizations. Often leadership positions are held by a single person who are then tasked with making key decisions, establishing organizational goals, and directing workflow.

Alternatively, individualism can be seen in the common practice of emphasizing individual successes through individual performance metrics. This can come at the expense of celebrating collective successes or shared gains.

Reflection Questions

? How are rewards and recognitions distributed within your organization?

? How are conflicts typically resolved in your organization? Are conflicts handled individually or does the resolution process involve a broader team dynamic?

? How are professional development opportunities approached in your organization? Are these opportunities designed primarily for individual career progression or is there a focus on collective learning and growth?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Include staff at all levels in decision-making processes. This could involve regular staff meetings where everyone has a say or suggestion boxes for anonymous feedback and ideas.

▶ Hold regular trainings and workshops where staff can learn from each other. This could include sharing cultural traditions, professional skills, or personal experiences.

▶ Consider a shared or circular leadership model that distributes power and decision-making across the organization. You could rotate your leadership for each new project or initiative, giving an opportunity for any team member to lead depending on their qualifications.

▶ Encourage mutual accountability at all levels. This can involve '360-degree feedback' where all team members receive feedback from various perspectives, including their subordinates, peers, supervisors, as well as from self-evaluation.

Programs and Services

Individualism can show up in the focus on individual service users and their specific personal needs. This narrow focus may unintentionally overlook the broader community context or interconnected factors that influence an individual's situation.

Reflection Questions

? What are your programs or services' main objectives? Do these objectives focus primarily on individual needs or on collective/community benefits?

? How do your evaluation methods consider collective impact and communal benefit?

? How does your organization assess the effectiveness of resource use? Are individual achievements and outcomes a primary factor, or are collective benefits also considered?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Ensure that your programs address the holistic needs of the community, not just individual issues. This could involve considering physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects during program design.

▶ Develop partnerships with other organizations to deliver comprehensive services.

Community and external relations

Individualism can look like transactional relationships with external partners.

Community members, donors, and volunteers may be seen largely in terms of what they can offer to the organization, and interactions become directed towards achieving the organization's specific mission and objectives.

Reflection Questions

? What do you hope to achieve through your external relations? Do you have specific outcomes in mind, such as fundraising?

? How often does your organization engage with local communities? Does this level of engagement enable sustained relationship?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Ensure that interactions with Indigenous people and their communities are mutually beneficial. This could involve sharing resources, co-creating projects, or finding ways to provide value to all even when you're asking something.

▶ Invest some time in nurturing long-term, sustainable partnerships. For instance, you could designate regular times when community members can drop in (virtually or physically) to ask questions, share ideas, or just chat. This open-door policy can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

▶ Actively share resources with Indigenous communities. You may consider supporting local businesses, sponsoring community events, or contributing to Indigenous-led organizations. It could also mean providing training, mentorship, or resources to help Indigenous persons achieve their personal and/or community goals.

Collective spaces and environments

Individualism can result in organizations operating under strict boundaries and notions of ownership, rather than viewing spaces as shared and communal.

Reflection Questions

? Describe the way spaces in your organization are assigned and/or managed. How does this arrangement affect the use of these spaces?

? How does your organization facilitate community gatherings? In what ways are spaces adapted to encourage these collective interactions?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Adapt your space to better encourage community gathering and relationship-building. This could be a dedicated communal area, regular community events, or flexible spaces that can be adapted for different community activities.

Rationalism and Empiricism

Western worldviews have historically placed a strong emphasis on the importance of empirical evidence in gaining and validating knowledge. This has been foundational in the development of Western philosophy and scientific inquiry but has marginalized other forms of knowledge and their insights. This prioritization of a particular form of rationality over others is common in many organizational practices.

Organizational structure and culture

The influence of rationalism can be seen in how many organizations' decision-making processes exclusively rely on data that can be backed up by quantitative (or measurable) evidence.

This inclination towards rationality and objectivity can sometimes come at the expense of acknowledging the value of emotion and subjective experience in understanding social experiences and situations.

Reflection Questions

? What types of evidence are most frequently used to justify decisions in your organization and why? What are the pros and cons of this approach?

? Can you recall instances when your organization dismissed or overlooked certain types of information or data? Why do you think these were disregarded?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Incorporate other forms of knowledge, such as experiential, ancestral, or spiritual knowledge, into decision-making processes. For example, you could organize regular storytelling sessions where staff, community members, and/or cultural advisors can provide first person accounts of their experience(s) or even oral histories. These narratives can function as a success indicator for your strategic goals.

▶ Provide training for your staff on how to collect qualitative data. This might involve training on how to conduct effective interviews or focus groups, or how to document observations or case studies in an insightful and ethical manner.

Programs and Services

Organizations often favor quantifiable evidence for a program's success or failure. This is seen in how programs are developed with outcome-focused goals and objectives.

This emphasis on tangible, quantifiable outcomes may unintentionally narrow the scope of evaluation and overlook more holistic indicators of human well-being or of a program's impact.

Reflection Questions

? What kind of evidence is seen as most convincing in the assessment of a program or service's performance? How might this impact the way you approach holistic well-being, relationships, and community benefits in program design?

? How do your program evaluation methods capture the more subjective impacts a program or service can have on people and communities?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Widen the scope of your program goals and objectives to include holistic well-being, relationships, and community benefits from the beginning. This could involve, for instance, aiming for community cohesion, cultural enrichment, or increased mutual understanding, alongside more traditional objectives.

▶ Supplement your quantitative evaluations with qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, or narrative reports to capture more subjective aspects of a program's impact.

▶ When reporting to funders, partners, or the public, include a section devoted to qualitative findings. Use quotes, case studies, or narratives to illustrate your work's impact.

Collective spaces and environments

The way organizations design and use space may follow utilitarian principles. The result is often making functionality and efficiency the priority rather than considering their communal or shared significance.

This is often indirectly related to the organization's goals of continuous improvement and growth.

Reflection Questions

? How would you describe the primary purpose of each space in your organization? Are these purposes informed by a specific goal or set of outcomes?

? What are the commonly used names or labels for the spaces within your organization, and how do these names reflect their perceived function or utility?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Create spaces that tend to people's emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs not just organizational goals. This might include quiet reflection areas, communal gathering spots, or areas for creative expression.

▶ In your digital spaces, engage users on multiple levels – intellectually, emotionally, and even spiritually. This could mean including online forums for discussion, adding time for sharing personal stories, or making space for collective meditation, prayer and/or acknowledging Indigenous Land.

Linear Time and Progress

Western cultures often view time in a linear fashion, with a focus on progression, continued growth, and advancement. The concept of continual progress or improvement—be it in technology, society, or individual life—is central to many Western cultures. This feature goes along with a linear conception of time. This might manifest as an emphasis on punctuality and more rigid schedules. The linear conception of time and progress informs organizations in a variety of ways.

Organizational structure and culture
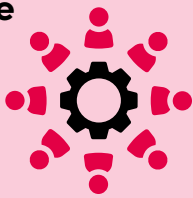
The notion of linear progression can be noticed in community-serving organizations' emphasis on strategic plans and pre-defined objectives.

This goal-oriented mindset suggests a beginning, middle, and end to projects and initiatives, with measurable outcomes being the desired endpoint.

Reflection Questions

? How does your organization define 'progress'? How do you know when progress has been made?

? Do your bereavement allocations, for example, consider cultural practices that do not (only or primarily) align within the 12-month calendar year?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Develop policies that allow for flexibility in time off, deadlines (when possible), and schedules. This could include providing additional time for bereavement, recognizing cultural days of importance not traditionally included in standard calendars, or offering flexible work schedules.

▶ View training and development as an ongoing, lifelong process rather than a series of one-time events. Encourage continuous learning and provide resources for self-guided professional development.

▶ Consider incorporating more flexible models of planning. This could mean setting flexible goals, focusing on long-term visions, or acknowledging that plans may need to change as circumstances evolve.

Building **Bridges**

Programs and Services

Linear time may reflect on the way programs are often divided into defined phases with clear milestones marking progress towards the end objective.

This linear orientation might overlook the non-linear nature of individual and community development, as well as the value of the journey itself beyond the end results.

Reflection Questions

? In what ways does your current program delivery accommodate changes in community needs and circumstances? How can you improve your responsiveness to these changes?

? How do you currently celebrate the journey and process of your programs, beyond just the final outcomes?

? In what ways is organizational knowledge being collected and shared? What are you doing to ensure past lessons are not repeated?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Build flexibility into your program design to accommodate unexpected changes and opportunities. This could be as simple as including open slots for activities suggested by participants.

▶ Establish certain hours where people can drop in to receive services rather than scheduling specific appointments. This can remove the pressure to arrive at a specific time and can cater to those with unpredictable schedules. You may also consider making services available at different times, like in the evenings or on weekends.

▶ Recognize and communicate the value of "non-linear" program outcomes to funders. These can include personal growth, strengthened relationships, increased resilience, or improved well-being, which might not follow a strict linear progression but are equally impactful.

Collective spaces and environments

Linear time perceptions might be reflected in how spaces are used and scheduled. Spaces might be designed for specific purposes at specific times, potentially restricting flexible and spontaneous uses of space. This approach may generally point to a preference for order and predictability.

Reflection Questions

? Can you identify any areas within your organization where the scheduling of space might be too rigid? What impacts does this have on the people who use these spaces, and how might it be improved?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Consider leaving open-ended time slots for spontaneous, unplanned activities. This can foster creativity, community-building, and a more organic use of the space.

▶ Create dedicated spaces that are not tied to any specific activity or time. This could be a community room that can be used for anything from meetings to leisure activities, or even a digital space like a chat room or discussion board.

Dualism and Competition

Western worldviews tend to embrace dichotomies or binary oppositions (good vs evil, nature vs nurture, body vs mind, etc.). This can result in competition and conflict, as this conception of the world tends to set up opposing forces against one another. Dualism can be more subtle to notice in the context of community-serving organizations, but it can be a factor across areas of operations.

Programs and Services

Many programs are designed for delivery by 'experts', creating a top-down dynamic that conflicts with more collaborative and equitable approaches. This reflects a dualistic view because of the line drawn between the knowledgeable expert and the 'unknowledgeable' non-expert whose role is simply to receive information.

Program design might also reflect the principle of dualism if the service user is never consulted in the design process. The organization may see itself as the expert in this case.

Reflection Questions

? Are your programs designed to be delivered by 'experts'? If so, what mechanisms are in place to account for this power dynamic?

? What role, if any, do service users play in the design of your programs or services?

? How do you incorporate the feedback and input of community members into your services or programs?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Involve service users in the design process from the beginning. Use methods such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups to understand their needs, preferences, and challenges. This ensures that the program is tailored to the real-world context of the people it is meant to serve.

▶ Consider adopting peer-led approaches to program delivery. This involves training service users to deliver the program to their peers, which can help to bridge the gap between 'experts' and 'non-experts' and fosters a more equal and mutual learning environment.

Community and external relations	Dualism here can look like organizations being narrowly focused on their own operations and/or cause independent of others in the space, or adopting an "us vs. them" outlook. The same pattern might even be observed between various departments within the same organization.
	This may result in missed opportunities to learn from the interdependence of things, like other departments, organizations, and social causes.

Reflection Questions

? Are there opportunities for partnerships with other organizations that may have been overlooked? What might be the potential benefits of such collaborations?

? How does your organization share learning or exchange knowledge with others in the community or sector?

? How involved is your organization in broader community initiatives?

> **Practical Suggestions**
>
> ▶ Ensure that your organization's communication and public relations strategies reflect the interconnectedness of social issues. Highlight your partnerships and joint initiatives and share the successes of other organizations.
>
> ▶ Take the time to facilitate collaboration and communication between different departments within your own organization. Consider implementing regular team meetings, cross-departmental project teams, and shared goals to break down silos and encourage a more holistic, interconnected approach to the organization's work.

Secularism and Standardization

Western worldviews value secularism in the workplace and organizational contexts. The result is a tendency towards standardization.

Secularism means separating religious and/or spiritual beliefs from public life. This perspective aims to achieve neutrality and ultimately fairness through that separation. Standardization is about making things or processes consistent and efficient. The connection between secularism and standardization arises as a result of the idea that spiritual/religious aspects of life can be legitimately split from other areas of public life and the assumption that there can exist a 'neutral' standard practice. This standard practice is believed to be universally applicable and unproblematic, specifically because of its assumed neutrality.

Neither secularism nor standardization are inherently bad. For instance, many 2SLGBTQI people have found the principle of secularism useful in the context of securing legal rights and recognition. Yet they both can become harmful when used to uncritically.

They both principles of secularism and standardization can influence diverse areas of community-serving organizations' operations with various results.

Organizational structure and culture

Secularism can lead to an organizational culture that sidelines the role of subjective experience and cultural nuances, leading to rigid standardization.

Reflection Questions

? Reflect on your organization's operations. Are there areas where strict standardization might be limiting flexibility and responsiveness to unique situations?

? Consider what 'neutral' means within your organization. Can you identify any potential biases that may inadvertently favor certain norms or cultures over others?

? How well does your organization address the complex and intertwined issues of the communities it serves? Are there areas where a more holistic approach might be beneficial?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Encourage and enable staff to learn about the diverse cultural and spiritual backgrounds of the people they serve. This might involve training sessions, workshops, or ongoing educational resources about different cultural norms, values, and practices.

▶ Review and adjust policies to ensure they are flexible enough to accommodate diverse cultural, religious, and personal practices. This might include flexible working hours and/or dress code modifications.

▶ Allow for a level of experimentation in your processes. Consider dedicating a portion of the work week for employees to work on projects or ideas outside of their normal responsibilities for example.

Programs and Services

Standardization often results in a one-size-fits-all approach to program design and delivery. This approach can be efficient but may overlook the unique cultural contexts, values, and practices of diverse community members.

Programs may unintentionally marginalize other practices by adhering to strict schedules, rigid formal rules, and insisting on official written documentation for communication and record-keeping.

Reflection Questions

? Have there ever been instances where strict rules or requirements have made it difficult for certain individuals to participate in programs or benefit from services?

? In what ways does your organization's services or programs acknowledge and honour the spiritual beliefs or practices of the communities it serves?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Recognize that people's needs are often interlinked and extend beyond the purely physical or material. Try to provide or connect people with services that address their spiritual, emotional, and cultural needs as well as their physical and practical ones.

▶ Facilitate participatory design workshops to involve community members in the design of programs. In these workshops, community members work together to co-design programs. This method can generate creative ideas and ensure that programs are tailored to the community's needs.

▶ Allow for personalization within your programs. While there may be a core structure, provide options for participants to customize certain aspects based on their interests, goals, or cultural practices.

Community and external relations

The standardization of community relations can similarly look like a one-size-fits-all approach. This way of approaching external relations fails to consider the particularities of various communities and the importance they may place to spirituality for example.

Many organizations also have standard communication practices like formal written communication for documentation and favor fact- and action-based approaches to dialogue. This is problematic if done with no consideration for alternative communication practices.

Reflection Questions

? What communication channels does your organization prefer using when engaging with external stakeholders or local communities? Do you accommodate various communication styles beyond written communication?

? Reflect on communication processes within your organization. How often do you rely on official written documentation versus other forms of communication?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Be mindful of spiritual beliefs and practices when communicating with community members. This might involve using inclusive language or acknowledging important religious holidays or observances.

▶ Provide multiple communication channels for community feedback like individual meetings or focus groups for in-person communication; online surveys or email feedback for digital communication; a drop box for written communication; or phone calls for verbal communication.

Collective spaces and environments

Standardization in the design and use of space may not account for the potentially spiritual, historical, and communal significance of spaces.

Cultural accessibility or creating a respectful and welcoming environment for different cultural backgrounds may often be overlooked.

Reflection Questions

? Consider how the design of your spaces might communicate unspoken messages. What might these messages be and who is most likely to resonate with them?

? Reflect on the spaces your organization utilizes. How might these spaces hold spiritual, historical, or communal significance for the communities you serve?

? How does your organization ensure its spaces are not only physically accessible but also culturally accessible?

Practical Suggestions

▶ Engage with local Indigenous communities to understand how your space can be more culturally accessible. This could include incorporating visual elements that represent the local Indigenous community, partnerships with Indigenous artists and designers, providing resources in Indigenous languages, or creating spaces for Indigenous cultural practices.

▶ Avoid imposing strict rules about how spaces should be used. Instead, allow community members to use spaces in ways that align with their cultural and/or spiritual practices and needs.

▶ Make your website and online resources accessible in multiple languages, and consider the cultural implications of the images, symbols, and narratives you use.

4. AVOIDING HARM IN THE PROCESS

Throughout your Indigenization processes, you will need to keep in mind that the harmful effects of settler colonialism are still being experienced by Indigenous people today. Therefore, in Indigenizing your organization, it is not enough to simply rely on your good intentions. Your good intentions must translate into activities that intentionally avoid causing further harm to Indigenous Peoples and their Lands.

Remember to consider intersectionality! An individual might be privileged in one area of their identity (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, physical ability) while being equity-denied in another (e.g., race, sexual orientation). These complex intersections of privilege and oppression mean that even individuals or groups that face discrimination can perpetuate harm through tokenization. For instance, non-Indigenous 2SLGBTQI persons can tokenize Indigenous members of the community within their community organizations. Being equity-denied in one area does not stop you from perpetuating harm in other areas.

This chapter explores how to avoid tokenization and how to incorporate trauma-informed approaches to your Indigenization efforts. Tokenization is the practice of making only superficial or symbolic efforts to be inclusive to Indigenous people. Trauma-informed approaches emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting the ongoing trauma that many Indigenous people and communities face as a result of settler colonialism.

4.1 Understanding Tokenization

Tokenization is a significant barrier to processes of Indigenization. It describes situations where a marginalized person is made the symbol of an organization's commitment to diversity and 'progressive' values. The tokenization of Indigenous people can occur in many areas of society. For example:

In media

- Tokenization exists when an Indigenous person is included in a story or advertisement merely for the sake of diversity. This can reinforce harmful stereotypes and stifle true representation.

In politics

- Tokenization happens when an Indigenous person is showcased as a candidate or official but lacks substantive power or support to instigate change. Instead, they are limited to being a symbol of diversity rather than an empowered representative of their community.

In the workplace

- Tokenization might involve hiring or promoting an Indigenous person to a highly visible but powerless role. It can also occur in frontline positions if Indigenous staff lack avenues to share knowledge or are used as symbols of an organization's Indigenization without proper support.

Tokenization ultimately devalues individuals by reducing them to a single characteristic (such as race, sexuality, Indigeneity, gender, etc.), and perpetuating stereotypes instead of acknowledging their unique strengths.

It's crucial to champion diversity and inclusion that value individuals for who they are, not just their equity-denied characteristic(s).

A. Common Misconceptions

The following are some common misconceptions about tokenization that could negatively affect your organization's process of Indigenization.

"Tokenization is a step towards diversity and inclusion."

Tokenization is not a genuine step towards diversity and inclusion. While it might give the appearance of diversity, it doesn't foster a culture of true inclusion and equity. Tokenization treats individuals as symbolic representatives of their group rather than allowing for their unique skills, experiences, and perspectives to shape critical decision-making.

"Only majority / historically dominant groups can tokenize."

While tokenization is often perpetuated by majority or historically dominant groups, it can occur in any context where individuals are reduced to their group identity. Any group, regardless of its social, cultural, or historical context, can tokenize others by treating them as symbols rather than as individuals with unique experiences and perspectives.

"It's tokenization to include any member of a minority group in decision-making roles."

Inclusion of diverse individuals in decision-making roles is not tokenization when it's done with an intent to foster genuine representation, equity, and inclusion. Tokenization becomes an issue when individuals are included only for the sake of appearance, without meaningful engagement or equal power.

Individuals may not always be aware of being tokenized, especially if the organization is outwardly supportive and inclusive. It's important for organizations to foster open dialogue and cultivate an environment where individuals feel comfortable discussing and addressing potential instances of tokenization.

B. Practical Implications

Here are a few suggestions for you to consider in order to avoid tokenization in your Indigenization efforts:

▶ **Representation at All Levels:** Ensure Indigenous representation at all levels, not just in public-facing roles. This includes board members, decision-making committees, and management, ensuring they have an actual say in the organization's operations.

▶ **Long-term Commitment:** Engage continuously with Indigenous communities in your area. Restricting your relationship to one-time events is tokenistic because you aren't acknowledging Indigenous communities outside of that one moment. Indigenous communities, like all communities, exist and have needs beyond a singular event.

▶ **Prioritize Indigenous Voices:** Prioritize and uplift Indigenous voices, histories, and experiences. This should be a regular part of your organizational culture and not only during specific events or awareness campaigns.

▶ **Informed Consultation:** Consult with Indigenous individuals and communities regularly on decisions that will affect them. Do this early in the decision-making process, not as an afterthought or formality.

▶ **Fair Compensation:** Fairly compensate Indigenous people who are providing guidance, knowledge, or services to your organization. Avoid asking for free labour under the guise of 'volunteering' or 'community service'.

▶ **Consent and Acknowledgement:** Understand and practice the principles of free, prior, and informed consent when working with Indigenous communities.

▶ **Transparency and Accountability:** Be transparent about your Indigenization efforts and hold your organization accountable for any missteps. Admitting mistakes and taking steps to rectify them is a vital part of the Indigenization process.

C. Additional Resources

Indigenous Washing: The Exploitation of Indigenous People by The Pharmaceutical Industry (Article)
Jemima Lowe and Kirran Ahmad, Drug Science
https://www.drugscience.org.uk/indigenous-washing/

Pan-Indianism, Pan-Métisism (Article)
Chelsea Vowel, âpihtawikosisân
https://apihtawikosisan.com/2011/05/pan-indianism-pan-metisism/

Pan-Indigeneity (Article)
Indigeneity, Language and Authenticity
https://johansandbergmcguinne.wordpress.com/2014/10/20/pan-indigeneity/

4.2 Trauma-Informed Indigenization

Your organization's Indigenization processes must recognize the ongoing effects of trauma in Indigenous communities. Settler colonialism creates intergenerational trauma with impacts on individuals' experiences, community well-being, and kinship to Land. This trauma must be acknowledged and addressed as part of your Indigenization efforts to ensure Indigenous people's safety and well-being.

Adopting a trauma-informed approach is one way that your organization's efforts can intentionally center the safety and well-being of Indigenous service users and staff. Trauma-informed approaches were first developed and used in the field of healthcare. Today, the benefits of these approaches have gained wider recognition and have been adapted to diverse sectors such as education, sports and athletics, and workplaces.

A. Common Misconceptions

The following are misconceptions about trauma-informed practices that could negatively affect your organization's implementation of trauma-informed Indigenization.

> **"You only need trauma-informed care if you've been diagnosed with a trauma-related disorder."**

Trauma-informed approaches aren't beneficial exclusively for individuals with diagnosed trauma disorders. Trauma-informed approaches can help anyone who may be grappling with past traumatic events or the latent effects of trauma on their well-being.

> **"Trauma-informed approaches are just about dealing with stuff that happened in the past."**

Trauma-informed approaches don't just focus on addressing past trauma. Its broader aim is to cultivate a nurturing environment that fosters healing, resilience, and prevents further trauma.

> **"Setting up trauma-informed care sounds like a huge, complicated task."**

Many trauma-informed techniques are quick and easy to implement. The first step to trauma-informed practices is straightforward: listen to the needs of those you serve. Most individuals know their needs best and are eager to collaborate in creating a safe, suitable service environment. As service providers, your role is to stay adaptable, respect their autonomy, and proactively prevent any potential harm.

Building **Bridges**

B. Practical Implications

Consider the following to ensure that your Indigenization efforts are trauma-informed:

▶ Safety and Trust

Prioritize creating an environment that is physically and emotionally safer to reduce the risk of re-traumatization.

Implement policies that ensure the cultural safety of Indigenous Peoples. This might involve respecting cultural practices, addressing microaggressions, and having procedures in place to handle discrimination issues if they occur.

Making trust and transparency central to all interactions will also be crucial. Regularly update the community about your operations, initiatives, achievements, and challenges. This can be done through newsletters, emails, social media, and community meetings.

▶ Culturally Responsive Programs/Services

Make sure all services and programs are delivered in a trauma-informed manner.

This means considering how trauma might affect an individual's engagement and interaction with services and ensuring that services do not inadvertently retraumatize.

Having Indigenous staff and/or community partners lead, or co-lead program design will be key.

▶ Peer Support

Integrate peer support groups for Indigenous staff and service users into the organization. These groups are composed of individuals who have had similar experiences. They can offer mutual understanding and validation, creating a sense of safety in the process.

You could also implement mentorship programs where new Indigenous staff members or service users are paired with more experienced peers.

Building **Bridges**

▶ Empowerment

Facilitate the autonomy, self-expression, and self-efficacy of Indigenous staff and service users by creating structures that encourage decision-making and problem-solving.

▶ Staff Training

Provide staff and leadership with comprehensive training on Indigenous histories and cultures, as well as Canadian settler colonialism and its impacts. This should not be a one-off event but integrated into regular professional development.

Encourage staff to undertake further self-directed learning and provide resources to support this.

Cultivate an environment where Indigenous persons can openly express their feelings and experiences without fear of judgment, harm, or re-traumatization.

Staff should also be trained in how to communicate with cultural sensitivity and how to de-escalate situations that could potentially be re-traumatizing.

Finally, all staff and volunteers within the organization should be properly trained to understand the impact of trauma, recognize signs and symptoms, and respond appropriately.

C. Additional Resources

Orange Shirt Day – Learning about trauma-informed care (Article)
Indigenous Health, Northern Health
https://www.indigenoushealthnh.ca/news/orange-shirt-day-learning-about-trauma-informed-care

Trauma-Informed Interventions through an Indigenous Worldview (Webinar, duration: 1:16:22)
Dr. Brianna Olsen, Western University
https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/webinars/recorded-webinars/2018/webinar_2018_5.html#:~:text=An%20Indigenous%20Trauma%20Informed%20Approach,interference%20and%20client%20self%2Ddetermination.

Trauma Informed Practice: Working with Indigenous Individuals (PDF, 33pgs)
Lisa George, Sarah Newton, Dominique-Michelle Legacy, Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre
https://www.omssa.com/docs/2.1_Trauma-Informed_Practice_Working_with_Indigenous_Individuals_-_Southwest_Ontario_Aboriginal_Health_Access_Centre.pdf

What's New is Really Old: Trauma Informed Health Practices Through an Understanding of Historic Trauma (PDF, 35pgs)
Dr. Patricia Makokis, University of Alberta and Dr. Margo Greenwood, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
https://www.nccih.ca/docs/context/WEBINAR-TraumaInformed-Makokis-Greenwood-EN.pdf

5. WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Congratulations on reaching the conclusion of this workbook!

Throughout this workbook, you've learned a few of the many dimensions involved in Indigenization processes, equipping yourself with the knowledge and tools needed to begin acknowledging, engaging with, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives and practices within your organization's structures, programs, and day-to-day activities.

The time you've put into learning about how to make your organization more attuned to Indigenous perspectives is commendable, yet this is only the beginning. Indigenization is continuous journey. It requires a commitment to regularly review your practices, assess their outcomes, and adjust them as needed. The experiences, feedback, and guidance of Indigenous communities in your area will be integral to this ongoing effort. We hope that your arrival to the end of this workbook represents for you the beginning of a sustained effort towards a fully Indigenized organization.

As you advance and start to put into practice the suggestions given in this workbook, we encourage you to seek avenues for continually widening your perspective by establishing relationships with other organizations that are also committed to Indigenous equity and rights. Such partnerships present opportunities to share insights and successful practices, as well as to foster mutual support and collaboration in a shared commitment to reconciliation and Indigenous self-determination.

Together, we continue to struggle alongside the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island for their inherent right to life, well-being, and community.

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