



BRIDGING THE GAP: A DECOLONIZATION GUIDE K-12 EDUCATORS

April 24, 2023

[decolonize_frameworkDownload](#)







DE·COL·O·NIZE

The Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard

Quality superintendent leadership occurs when the superintendent's ongoing analysis of the context, and the superintendent's decisions about what leadership knowledge abilities to apply, result in quality school leadership, quality teaching and optimum learning for all students in the school authority.

Competencies



Building Effective Relationships

A superintendent establishes a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment by building positive and productive relationships with members of the school community and the local community.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as:

- collaborating with community and provincial agencies to address the needs of students and their families;
- employing team-building strategies and using solution-focused processes to resolve challenges;
- building and sustaining relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders, local leaders and

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

57. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

CHURCH APOLOGIES AND RECONCILIATION

58. We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims of abuse and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.
59. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary.

- ii. Community-controlled culture- and language-revitalization projects.
- iii. Community-controlled education and relationship-building projects.
- iv. Regional dialogues for Indigenous spiritual leaders and youth to discuss Indigenous spirituality, self-determination, and reconciliation.

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
- i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

The DE·COL·O·NIZE framework comprises of ten interconnected components and I will only go into the first six in this guidebook. They are as follows:



1. **Disrupting Colonial Narratives (D)** Educators must engage in a rigorous process of decolonizing and understand that willful blindness does not exonerate them from partaking in a colonially violent process.
2. **Empowering Community Voices: Centring Indigenous Laws (E)** Elevate the voices of Indigenous communities by centring Indigenous laws that often get ignored or mistranslated as another 'diversity initiative'. Indigenous peoples have sovereign rights that extend well beyond 'nice' meetings.
3. **Cultivate Being the Ethical Translator & Stop Being Nice (C)** The fact that a person's right to a non-violent education system can be lost in the very process of being represented in education by people who think they know how to decolonize and espouse non-violence because they are effective leaders and they got to the top because of their 'hard work' and 'merit' and 'attend yearly Indigenous workshops' should be quashed.
4. **Ongoing Self-reflection and Accountability (O)** Educators must engage in regular self-reflections and critical examinations of how they continue to practice in colonially violent systems and how they are going to get out of it.
5. **Localized Indigenous & Indigenized Decision-making (L)** Promote decision-making at the local Indigenous levels, because that is where the laws are.

~decolonization hoop~

The ~decolonization hoop~ serves as a comprehensive and versatile instrument for addressing various aspects of the decolonization process. It can be effectively employed across diverse domains, such as governance structures, policy development, advocacy, Ministry collaborations, and the transformation of pedagogical approaches and curricula. The profound potential of this tool lies in its ability to facilitate systemic change and promote a more equitable and culturally responsive landscape in the pursuit of decolonization.



I utilize the ~decolonization hoop~ in my Indigenization and decolonization teachings so I have imparted it on to you. (I call it a hoop after the hoop dance) (the above photo depict the hoops used in this particular sacred Indigenous dance).





Commitment to Reconciliation: apply Indigenous laws on top of all of this and avoid parsing us off into the “alternative” or “diverse” or “minority” category, We are more than an acknowledgement and we are more than your sensitivity training.

The Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard

Quality superintendent leadership occurs when the superintendent’s ongoing analysis of the context, and the superintendent’s decisions about what leadership knowledge abilities to apply, result in quality school leadership, quality teaching and optimum learning for all students in the school authority.

Competencies



Building Effective Relationships

A superintendent establishes a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment by building positive and productive relationships with members of the school community and the local community.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as:

- collaborating with community and provincial agencies to address the needs of students and their families;
- employing team-building strategies and using solution-focused processes to resolve challenges;
- building and sustaining relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders, local leaders and community members;
- modeling ethical leadership practices, based on integrity and objectivity;
- establishing constructive relationships with students, staff, school councils, parents/guardians, employee organizations, the education ministry and other stakeholder organizations; and
- facilitating the meaningful participation of members of the school community and local community in decision-making.





Sovereignty...more than just another diversity initiative:

Indigenous Peoples possess the right to assert their sovereignty.

Sovereignty requires an explicit acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples as the first peoples of Canada, whose rights are specifically recognized in the Canadian Constitution. Recognition of this difference and knowledge of the legacies of Canada's colonial history has to be part of appropriate training required for educators in the context of reconciliation.

In fact, the longstanding and continued assertion of sovereignty sets Indigenous peoples apart from other minorities in Canada today.

The Legal Implications of the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery:

The Church's recent repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery has far-reaching implications for the legitimacy of Canadian laws and policies that have historically been premised upon this antiquated and injurious ideology of "being discovered" and the land as "terra nullius". This recent announcement necessitates a comprehensive reexamination and potential revision of Western academic, education, and legal frameworks.



Critical Failure:

A common misplaced belief is that cultural competence can be acquired through add-on courses or skill-development workshops in the absence of broader curriculum-wide changes. Scholars point out that treating culture as a separate module, or cultural competence as a technical skill that can be learned in a short time, is an oversight. **A commitment to cultural competence requires fundamental changes in ways of thinking and interacting.**







III. DE·COL·O·NIZE FRAMEWORK

As we endeavor to establish more inclusive and equitable educational systems, it is imperative that we confront the enduring colonial legacies that permeate K-12 education and governance structures. This requires a thorough examination of policies, laws, and decision-making processes within leadership and regulatory bodies to effectively identify and dismantle the lingering impacts of colonialism in education. While education itself is not a "one size fits all" proposition, adopting the ~decolonization hoop~ application to uncovering, addressing, and dismantling systemic issues can contribute to significant progress in fostering decolonization in educational environments.

I developed the (work in progress) DE·COL·O·NIZE framework - an initiative aimed at deconstructing colonial systems and integrating Indigenous perspectives into the K-12 educational governance space and the broader educational landscape.









CULTIVATE BEING THE ETHICAL TRANSLATOR & STOP BEING NICE (C)

The mistranslation of Indigenous peoples pedagogies, epistemologies, laws and practises, sometimes by well-intentioned educators who may otherwise be committed to ensuring justice...happens frequently.

It is important to understand that the issue of mistranslation is not only one of linguistics and cross-cultural communications as emphasized in the cultural competence approach but also of failures in conceptual translation across legal and educational systems.

The fact that a person's right to a non-violent education system can be lost in the very process of being represented in education by people who think they know how to decolonize and espouse non-violence because they are either nice allies, or are 'effective' leaders who got to the top because of their 'hard work' and 'merit' and they 'attend yearly Indigenous workshops' should be quashed.

STOP BEING NICE. You aren't doing anyone any favours. Start dismantling NOW. (We love nice people, but you need to stop it).

The TRC Calls to Action necessitates a response focused on **ACCOUNTABILITY**, and the education profession should seize Calls #40, #50, #62 and #63 and the UNDRIP Articles 3, 4, 8(2), 13, 14, 15, 18, 19 as an opportunity to DECOLONIZE education within the **multi-juridical** context of Canada.

Article 14: Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. States shall take effective measures to provide appropriate resources for these purposes.

Article 15: 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. States shall take effective measures to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding, and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters that affect their rights through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.



ONGOING SELF-REFLECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY (O)

Ongoing self-reflection and accountability are essential components of the DE·COL·O·NIZE framework. By regularly examining fears, hesitations, and privilege that has a ripple effect on the way you create, teach, lead

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING ONGOING SELF-REFLECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

1. Provide professional development opportunities to dismantle policies, guides, strategies and rubrics.

Use the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP to guide you.

2. Create trauma-informed and ethical spaces to invite Indigenous people in at appropriate times.

You will notice you do not have the stamina to do this work, and it will seem incredibly difficult and discomforting.

We need you to dismantle everything. You will be good at it.



LOCALIZED INDIGENOUS AND INDIGENIZED DECISION-MAKING (L)

The importance of localized Indigenous and Indigenized decision-making in the context of decolonizing education cannot be overstated. By encouraging Indigenous-centric decision-making at the local level, we can ensure that each zone makes room for Indigenous local laws. We are not all the same!





OPEN DIALOGUES & TRAUMA-INFORMED & ETHICAL SPACES (O)

Creating open dialogues and trauma-informed and ethical spaces within the education system is essential for decolonizing education and truthing your way forward. By providing trauma informed and ethical spaces for sharing experiences, voicing concerns on the violence of colonialism in practice, one can learn to utilize heart-centred wisdom in order to create

THE TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

Comprehend the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma on Indigenous peoples, such as the consequences of the Residential School System and past and current day colonization, racism, discrimination and loss of identity Indigenous peoples experience. Is someone coming across as "rude"? Or is it time for you to decolonize your emotional spectrum? It is also important to comprehend that Indigenous peoples lives are on the line when we speak to you, but to you, it is just an intellectual exercise and you are not understanding why we are so distraught. Keep this in mind as you go along.

Learn about the manifestations of trauma, intergenerational trauma, and historical trauma and how it affects their learning, behaviour, cognition, health, etc. in a colonized world that they have NO AFFINITY with. This includes being aware of the potential triggers that may arise.

Incorporate knowledge from a trauma-informed lens into educational policies, procedures, teaching practices, support services, and the K-12 educational governance system. This includes providing ongoing professional development opportunities for educators to deepen their understanding of trauma-informed approaches and ensuring that school policies and procedures prioritize this approach both internally and externally.

Diligently prevent re-traumatization within the educational environment and decision-making spheres. This involves creating trauma-informed responses you can pre-prepare, and also design meetings, teachings and practices to be in an ethical space that is not neutral or "safe" but with ETHICAL trauma-informed boundaries.

Lessen the risk of triggering traumatic responses by holding yourself accountable and remember to be honest, humble, brave, wise, and utilize your heart space (love), by creating trust (by becoming aware and alive to the issues), and practise listening and respecting Indigenous communities and students' viewpoints even if you do not understand them. Remember: you do not currently have the stamina for this.

