

Title: Understanding Indigenous academic realities in the context of reconciliation

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Abstract: Indigenous wellness and higher education in Canada, through the creation of Indian Residential Schools, has a dark history and has left a legacy of intergenerational trauma for Indigenous peoples. Currently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report (2015) provides a timely context for systemic change that can improve the lives of Indigenous individuals and provide healing to Indigenous communities. This presentation addresses Indigenous academic strengths and challenges in Canada and provides practical implications of implementing decolonial change in higher education settings. Examples from Dr. Stewart's community-based Indigenous ethics and educational research provide concrete illustrations of issues such as racism, oppression, cultural identity, tensions between Western and Indigenous worldviews, and the importance of traditional knowledges.

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# **Understanding Indigenous academic realities in the context of reconciliation**



**14 April 2020**

**Colloquium - Perimeter Institute**

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# Territorial Acknowledgement

Six Nations of the Grand River and  
Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation



# Canadian Indigenous Peoples

The Canadian Constitution recognizes three distinct groups of Indigenous People: First Nation, Inuit and Metis.

There are approximately 2 million Indigenous people living in Canada; **375,000 in Ontario.**

- \* More than half are living in an urban environment.
- \* **More than half are under the age of 24**
  - \* **Over half of those under the age of 24 are under age 16**





# Background: Colonial Past & Present

1. Indigenous peoples across Canada have experienced multiple historical colonial aggression and assaults.

- \* Education was used as a tool of oppression for Indigenous peoples through residential school.
- \* Child welfare, health care, and segregation are also sites of intensive and invasive harms.

2. Education continues to be a site of systemic and personal oppression for Indigenous peoples across Canada

# Indian Act 1876



# What is Residential School?

- \* Primary objectives were to forcibly
  - \* Remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families and cultures
  - \* To assimilate them into the dominant culture





# “To kill the Indian in the child.”

Based on assumption that Indigenous cultural beliefs and spirituality were inferior and unequal to Euro-Canadian Christian ones



# Residential School Facts

- \* About 150,000 Indigenous children from 1870s to 1990s
- \* Min of 3000 children are known to have died, 500 are children whose identities are unknown
- \* Disease was major killer (tuberculosis, flu)
  - \* Second to malnutrition, drowning, exposure
- \* Many victims of physical assault and sexual abuse
- \* Many died trying to run away or by suicide.

(Mass, 2013)

Post secondary education systems have carried out Canada's Federal Indian Act by perpetrating historical and continued harms on Indigenous individuals and communities, these include:

- Harmful research
- Imposing Western health care, policy, and educational practices
- Delegitimizing and ridiculing traditional knowledges, medicines, healers and healing practices, and Indigenous pedagogies
- Historical and current institutional and personal racism and discrimination
- Overly pathologizing Indigenous peoples, and
- Supporting western health education and professionalization that is not accessible or hospitable to indigenous students

July 2008 Prime Minister Harper made an official apology to Indigenous peoples:

“Today we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”





## Colonization, Trauma & Healing

- factors of colonization have influenced aspects of health in many Indigenous communities and linked to high rates of mental health, education, and employment challenges
- these traumas are rooted attempts in cultural extermination and deep-set pains in regards to identity
- healing and health promotion can begin through the reconnection and the relationship with current Indigenous traditional knowledge.

# Intergenerational Trauma is a Legacy of Residential School

Intergenerational trauma

- \*is passed on through generations (parents to children to grandchildren) and is conducted through family and community relationships and experiences.

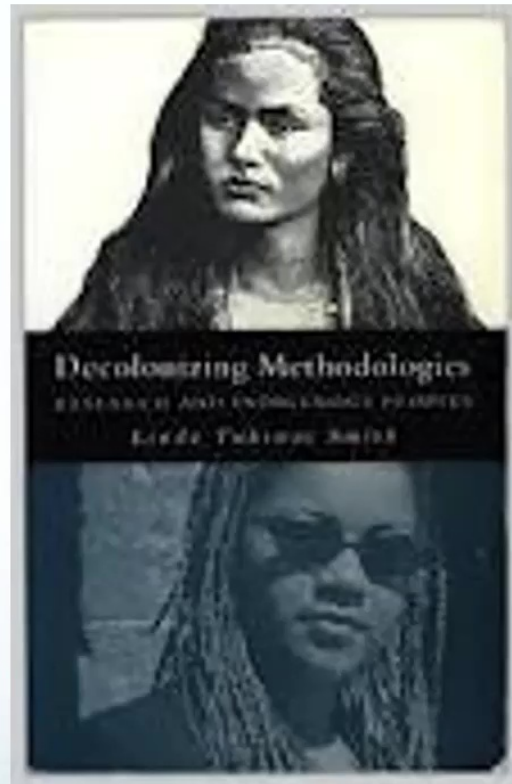
- \*Some concrete examples where intergenerational trauma is evidenced is in parenting, education, employment outcomes, interpersonal and family relationships, health and mental health...can you think of other?

# Continued oppression

Researchers and educators have suggested that employing a Western paradigm of both education with Indigenous peoples is a form of **continued colonial oppression...and this continues to perpetuate intergenerational trauma.**

(see Gone, 2004, Battiste 2002, Stewart 2008)

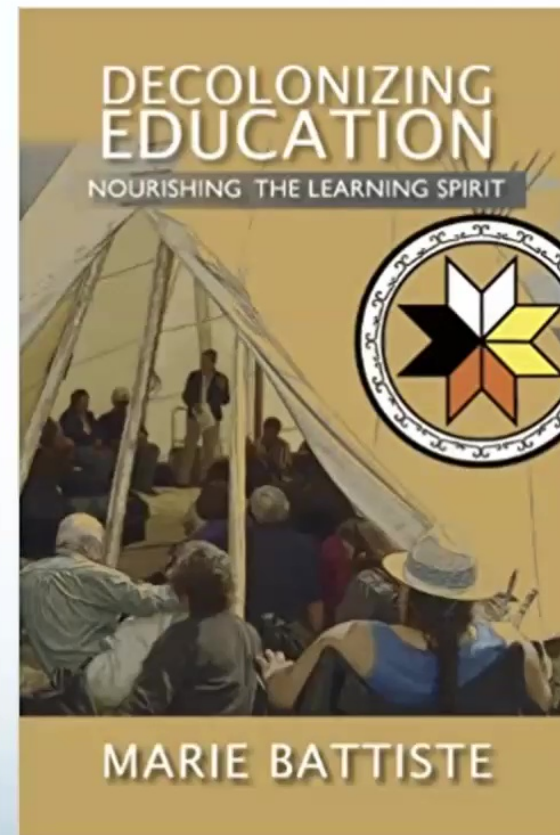
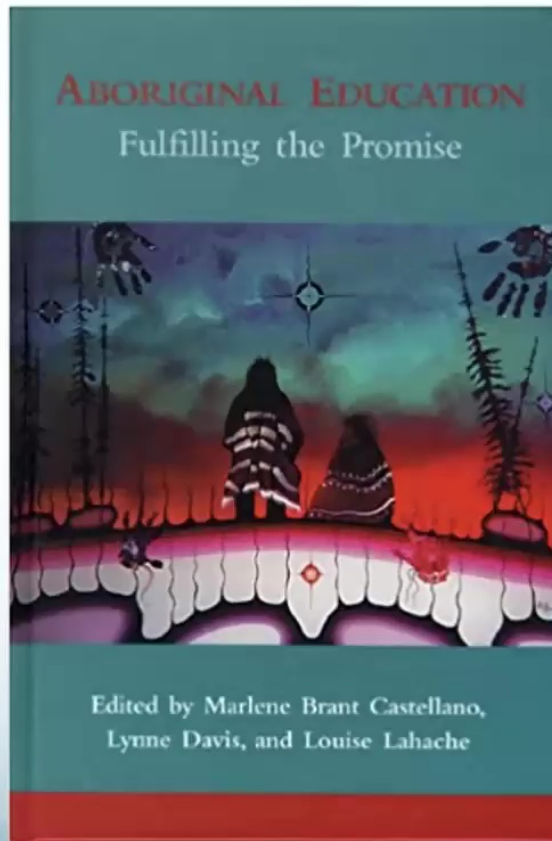
# Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999)



Decolonizing Methodologies



# Ethics and Higher Education



# Current Issues

Indigenous people continue to live under colonial oppression

- Indigenous education and research must be reconceptualized and practiced differently to emphasize **Empowerment** rather than oppression.
  - Less than 5% of the researchers have specialized training in cross-cultural methodology and less than .5% have any knowledge of an Indigenous language.

# Current Issues

- Research is often nothing more than cultural tourism to benefit the tourists (researchers and their audience)
- Indigenous communities continue to lack CONTROL of research processes and results because there is no unified policy, guidelines, or methodology to regulate this

# Current Issues

- Who Indigenous groups and appropriate authorities is often unclear off reserves
- Big Data is a challenge for Indigenous populations, especially in health and education
- Research on strengths and solutions continues to lack



- Lack of capacity for Indigenous research in both academic and community settings



- Universities are not hospitable or safe spaces for Indigenous peoples to work, learn, or be.



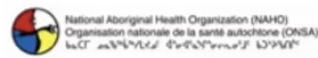
## Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) or Self-Determination Applied to Research:

A Critical Analysis of Contemporary First Nations Research  
and Some Options for First Nations Communities



First Nations Centre  
October 2005

Note: This is an illustrated and reformatted version of a paper published in the *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2004). This paper was first prepared for the First Nations Information Governance Committee. All illustrations are by Terry Daks.



[http://www.naho.ca/documents/fnc/english/FNC\\_OCAPCriticalAnalysis.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/documents/fnc/english/FNC_OCAPCriticalAnalysis.pdf)

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Canada

Panel on Research Ethics  
www.pre.ethics.gc.ca

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Home » TCPS 2 »  
9. Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples Of Canada

**PRE** **TCPS 2 - Chapter 9**

Terms of Reference  
Members  
Organizational Structure

**The Policy (TCPS)**  
TCPS 2

Introduction  
1. Ethics Framework  
2. Scope and Approach  
3. The Consent Process  
4. Fairness and Equity in Research Participation  
5. Privacy and Confidentiality  
6. Governance of Research Ethics Review  
7. Conflicts of Interest  
8. Multi-jurisdictional Research  
9. Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples Of Canada  
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Glossary

TCPS 2 Interpretations Consultations

**The Secretariat**  
Terms of Reference  
Staff  
Organizational Structure

**Education**  
TCPS 2 Tutorial  
Webinars  
Workshops

**Introduction**

**Preamble**

This chapter on research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including Indian (First Nations<sup>1</sup>), Inuit and Métis peoples, marks a step toward establishing an ethical space for dialogue on common interests and points of difference between researchers and Aboriginal communities engaged in research.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities have unique histories, cultures and traditions. They also share some core values such as reciprocity – the obligation to give something back in return for gifts received – which they advance as the necessary basis for relationships that can benefit both Aboriginal and research communities.

Research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-

# TCPS-2 (2014) Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human

# A deeper look at education and intergenerational trauma.....

The familiar and concerning statistics of low high-school completion rates remain an important part of the picture of Indigenous learning (CCL, 2009)

- In 2006, 40% of Indigenous people aged 20 to 24 did not have a high-school diploma, compared to 13% among non-Indigenous Canadians.
- The rate was even higher for First Nations living on reserve (61%) and for Inuit living in remote communities (68%).

These numbers are distressing given the importance of a high-school diploma in the pursuit of further education, training and employment

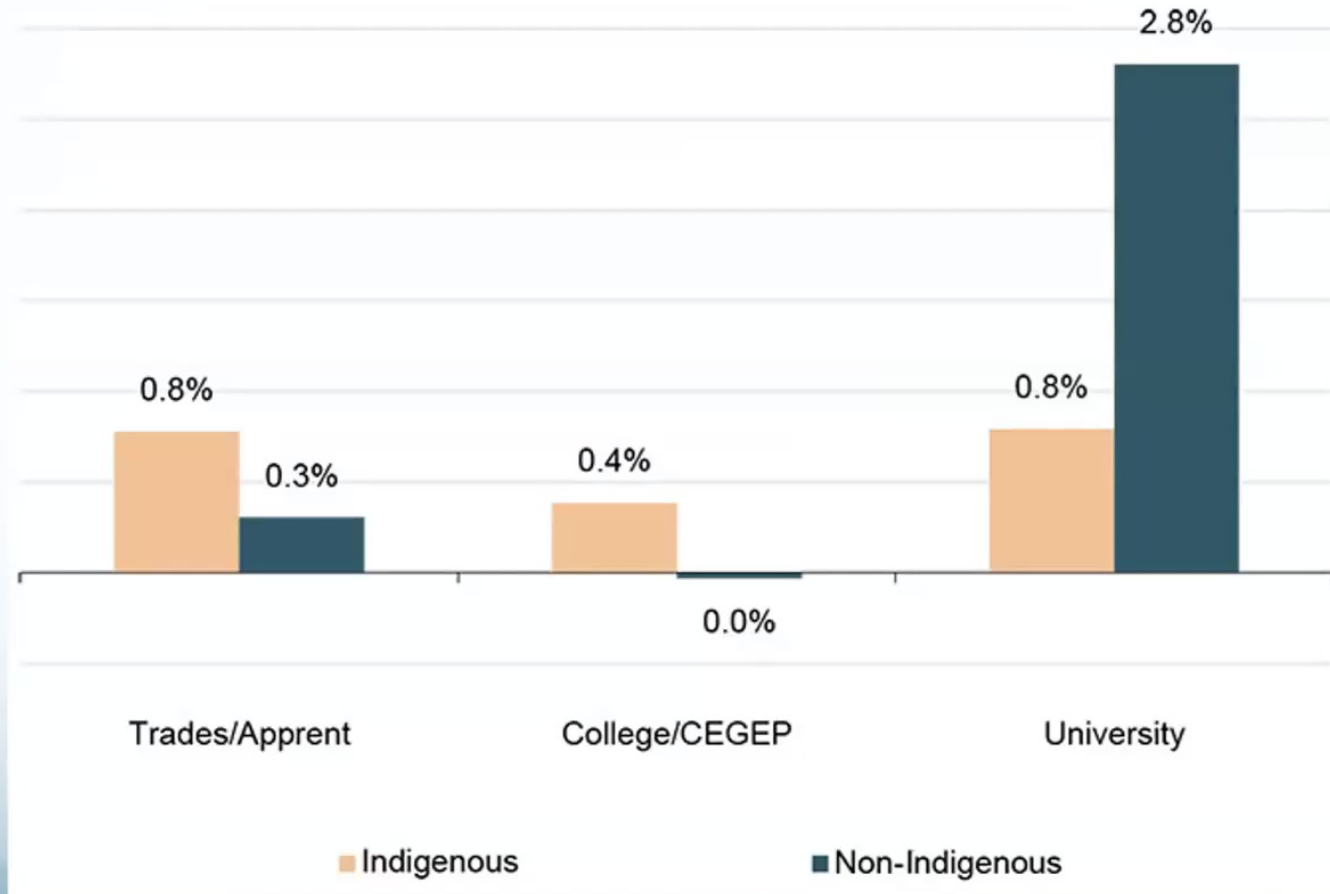


*An important piece to Indigenous education is  
a focus on the understanding and process of  
healing....*

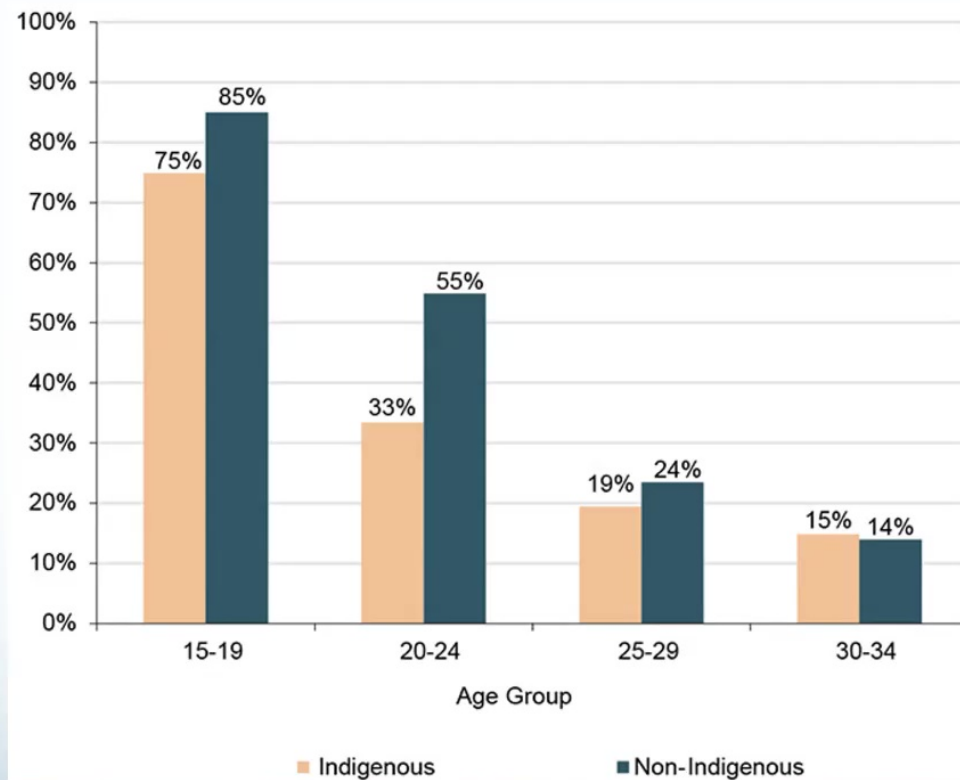




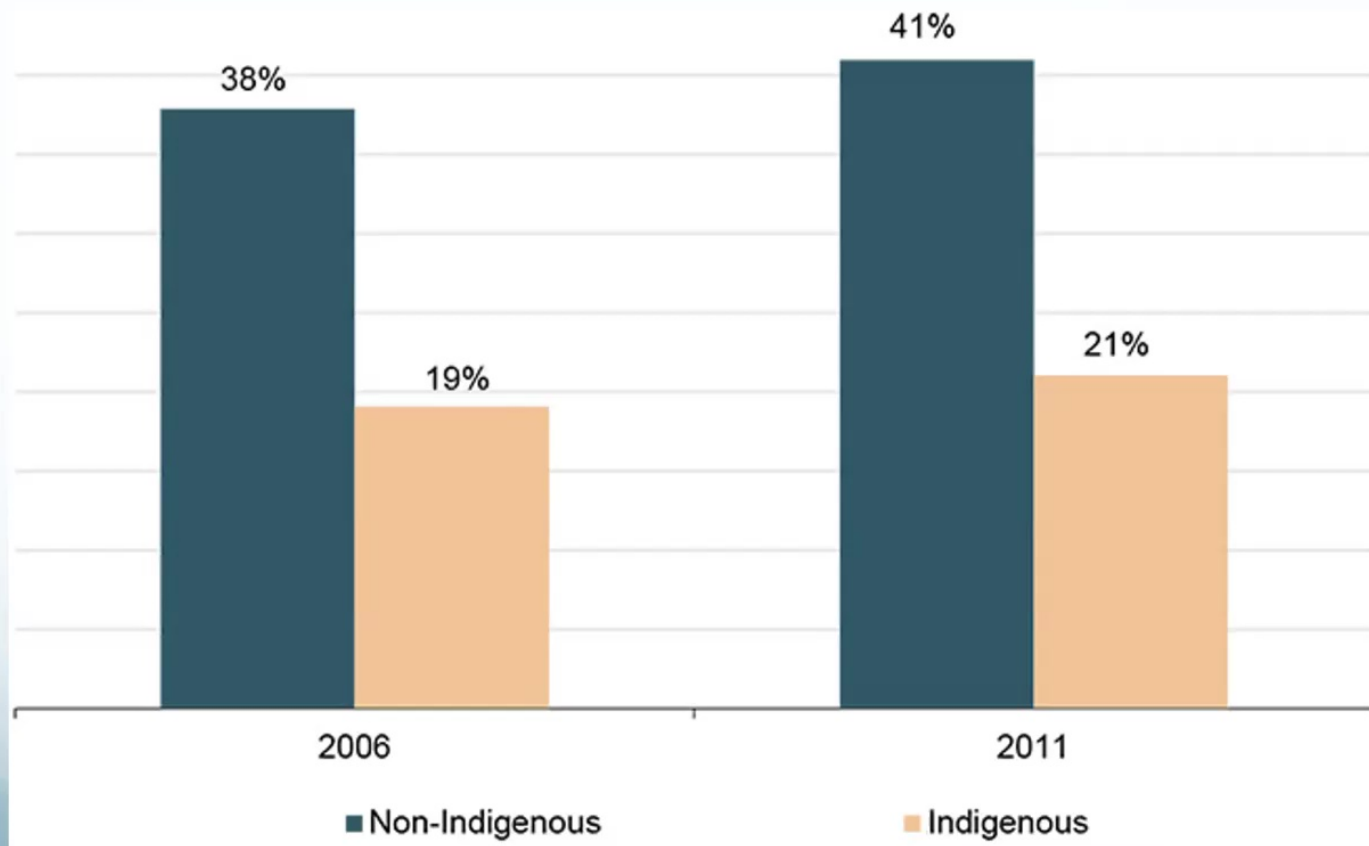
## Change in the Proportion of the 15-29 Year Old Population with Post-Secondary Certification by Type and Identity, Canada, 2006-2011



## Proportion of the Population Attending any Level of School by Identity and Age, Canada, 2010-2011



## Proportion of the 15-29 Year Old Population with any Post-Secondary Certification by Identity, Canada, 2006 & 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016)



# Challenges

2. Post secondary education system continues to practice ineffectively

- Access
- Racism & discrimination
- Non-Indigenous educational practices
- Need for Indigenous healing, medicines, spirituality
- Lack of control by students and community

# Now and into the Future: Healing and Reclamation

## 1. Reconciliation



## 2. Indigenous determinants of health and education



# TRC Report

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) published 94 recommendations, after six years of research, to address the current and historic impacts of the residential school system on the lives of individuals and communities, and to restore relations between Indigenous peoples and non-Native Canadians. The recommendations focussed on 4 areas identified as the most impacted by the residential school experience:

**Child welfare**

**Education**

**Health**

**Justice**

# Now...what are you thoughts about calls to action?

Suzanne's reflection:

- The issues raised in this report are not going to disappear...even if the report does.
- This report is an excellent tool to educate and to begin a **national and international discussion on solutions**
- Canada wants to know “what do Natives want from us? The TRC report provides this in concrete terms.
- It is up to you to take action; Native people seem to be taking responsibility for their own healing, what are you doing?

# **Why is Indigenous reconciliation important at Post Secondary Schools?**

# DROPPING THE "T" FROM CAN'T: Enabling Aboriginal Post-Secondary Academic Success in Science and Mathematics



Michelle M. Hogue, PhD

# ACHIEVING INDIGENOUS STUDENT SUCCESS

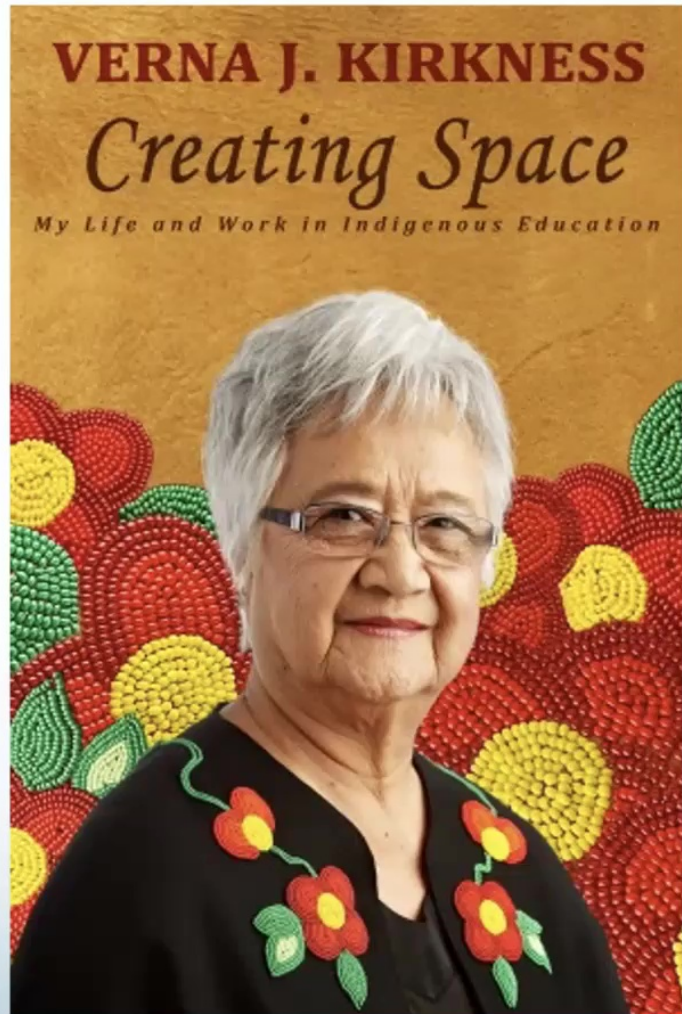
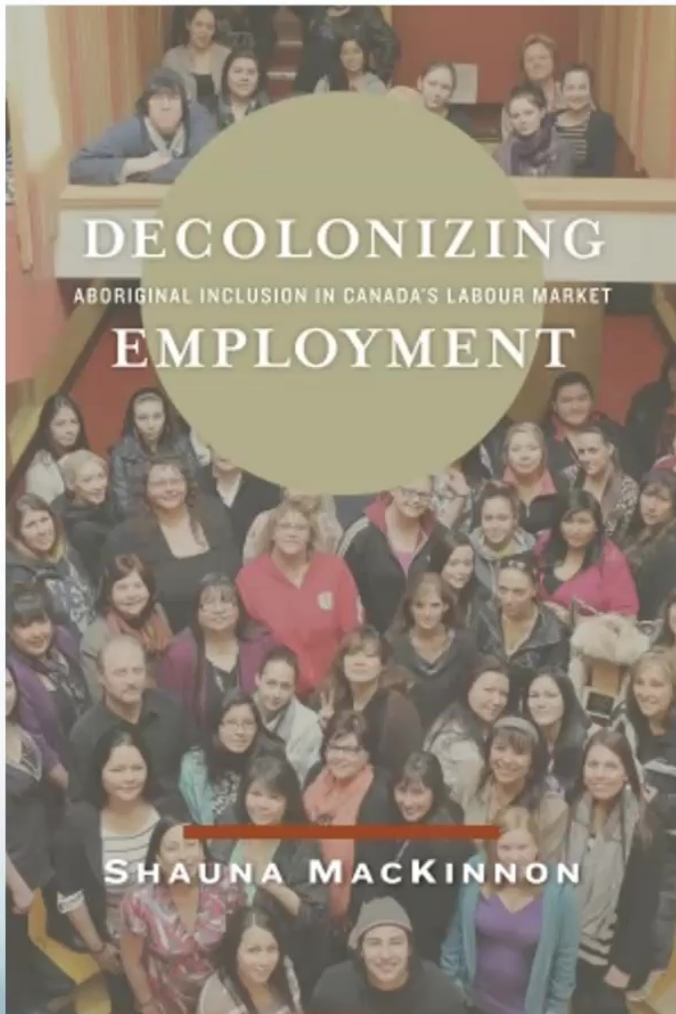
A Guide for Secondary Classrooms



Pamela Rose Toulouse









## 2. The legacy of colonization: social determinants of health

As a result of colonial history, Aboriginal people experience a broad range of health issues, many of which lead Aboriginal people to suffer from among the poorest health levels in the country.

- The Indian Act took it away



# INDIGENOUS DETERMINANTS OF WELLNESS

(Stewart, 2017)

Elders & Traditional Knowledges

Language

Being on the Land

Traditional Foods

Community

Ceremony

Love and Relationships

Recovery from Colonial Trauma



# Recommendations

- Specific example of programs for student success
  - Scholarship and Bursary programs
  - Mentoring
  - Elders & Knowledge Keepers
  - Ceremony on campus
  - Tuition
  - Legal services
  - Indigenous practicum program across schools
  - Cultural safety training for staff and faculty



- Indigenous quality assurance
- Indigenous evaluation frameworks
- Formalized campus-community partnerships based on Indigenous principals, values, and protocols
- Formalized relationships to local, regional and national Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices and peoples—**creating best practice models**



# In Conclusion...

- **Racism and negative stereotypes** of Indigenous people continue to be a major issue for Indigenous students and peoples in general, as they are ostracized and isolated from mainstream society.
- The influence of family, community, and knowing the history and background of one's ancestors, especially at a young age creates pride and strengthens Indigenous identity for youth, increasing efficacy in education and employment—we need to foster this at postsecondary level.





- Connection to culture through ceremony, language, peers and involvement with other community members strengthens identity as an Indigenous students and translates to successful educational and employment outcomes (see Dr.Stewart's Research 2009-2015)



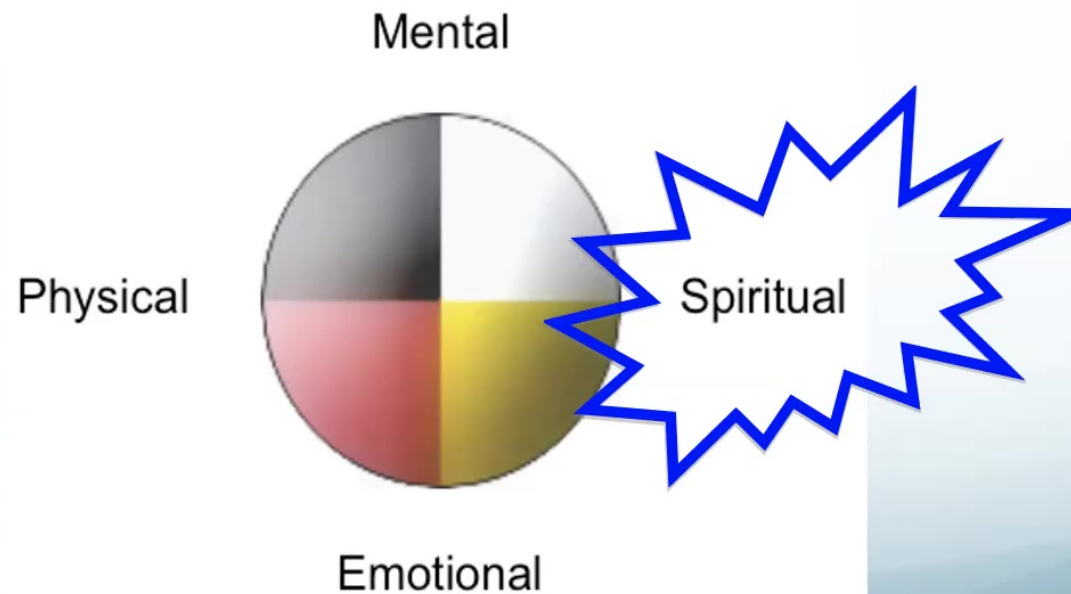
# Holistic Approach to Education & Healing

- \* Holistic approach in an Indigenous context means incorporating the spiritual, the emotional, the physical and the mental ways of being into **education** (Stewart 2011/12/13)



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# Mahsi cho!

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