

A scenic landscape featuring a range of mountains in the background, a body of water in the foreground, and a small island or peninsula in the middle ground. The sky is a mix of purple and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and natural.

# Decolonization

## Description

It is crucial to start thinking about not just EDI but decolonization in particular when starting your organization, as well as thinking about how to thoughtfully integrate these considerations into your work. This is especially important given Canada's long colonial history and its impacts which are still very prevalent today. This guide covers important concepts and definitions, discusses various approaches to decolonization for individuals, organizations and business schools, and provides links to many external resources.

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# Acknowledgments

This guide was created with the help of knowledge and experience obtained from:

- Mary Zhang
  - Co-President of Desautels Sustainability Network, SSMU Representative at Management Undergraduate Society (McGill Desautels)
  - McGill University, Bachelor of Commerce
- Jonathan Araujo Redbird
  - Band Member of Saugeen Ojibway Nation
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## About Re\_Generation

[Re\\_Generation](#) is a Canadian youth movement that seeks to build a regenerative, sustainable, and just economy. We aim to reimagine our schools, repurpose our careers, and remodel our companies to be aligned with regenerative principles. In particular, we provide resources for individuals to launch impact-driven careers and advocate for change within their companies and schools. We also aim to advance public policies that promote regenerative and sustainable business practices.

Our successful 'Our Future, Our Business' Manifesto campaign received the support of 65 youth organizations, 130 high-level executives, and 100 civil society organizations recognizing the need for reform in business education on sustainability. After three years of existence as the Canadian Business Youth Council for Sustainable Development, we have changed our name to Re\_Generation to become more inclusive of all youth, not just business youth.

We believe that the ideal society is a [regenerative](#) one. Regeneration to us means putting human and ecological [well-being](#) at the centre of every decision. It means restoring relationships, both within nature and within society, while helping all communities to thrive. Read more about our history and vision at our [About Us](#) page.

# Important Concepts and Definitions

## Decolonization

"Brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools". (Tuck and Yang, 2012). It is the process of challenging, critiquing, dismantling, disrupting current assumptions and systems.

Decolonization is a framework through which we understand systems of oppression around the world. It is an overarching framework, and only a small part of that work is what would be traditionally considered EDI work, and it requires us to critically re-examine the settler-colonial structures we are accustomed to, unlearn, deconstruct, and rebuild (Indigenize).

## Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a Canada-wide initiative to "establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada". (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015) Note that many Canadian documents use various terms due to old legal documentation, but we now use the term Indigenous peoples in Canada. We no longer use the term "Aboriginals", "Indians" or "Indigenous Candians".

Reconciliation is difficult because it implies the redoing of conciliation, which actually did not even exist in the first place. There was no recognition of trying to work together in harmony with one another and the earth. In order to move forward, we need an ally-ship that is proactive and genuine, however, the genuine aspect is what can be very difficult to arrive at. A big part of achieving this is through Indigenous peoples welcoming settlers/immigrants into their culture, which they are currently doing. That is a respect to the original treaty of working together, and can show an understanding of the symbiotic relationship through which we are all connected.

Indigenous people regaining the ability to legally manage their own land is the first step to genuine reconciliation. This is slowly coming into fruition with new legislation and institutional changes. Currently, what we have is a very paternalistic relationship, where Indigenous peoples have to prove their ability to manage their own lands since they were unjustly deemed "too savage" to do so before.

It is incredibly crucial for Indigenous peoples to have their perspectives featured in anti-racism conversations, and for Black and other POC activists to understand how they are part of the fight for decolonization as well.

While defining a scope and not getting overwhelmed is important, never lose sight of the fact that colonialism around the world is the same systemic problem, and tackling one aspect of it will always have implications on others.

## Unlearning

When thinking about understanding and acknowledging different knowledge systems and worldviews, we are going to have to question some dominant assumptions we have. All stakeholders in the school need to be open minded and willing to unlearn.

## Indigenization

"Movement centering Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being within the academy, in essence transforming institutional initiatives such as policy, co-curricular programs, curriculum, and practices to support Indigenous success and empowerment" (Pidgeon, 2016).

## Dual Approach to Building Real Equity Relations

Not only do Indigenous people need to overcome decades of access inequities, they also bear the heavy burden of healing from 150 years of intergenerational trauma from child abuse perpetuated by the residential school system. During the decades-long "Sixties Scoop", Catholic Children Aid separated Indigenous children from their families and adopted them out to settler families, forcefully assimilating "the Indian Child".

For true healing and progress to take place, this vicious cycle must first be broken: Indigenous peoples must be reconnected with their ancestral and familial wisdoms.

## Role as Individuals

Our gift as humans is that we can create and innovate, and we need to use that.

Find the people who have recovered from their trauma, have conversations, and build a team to solve problems together. We should always start with small problems, and build resources to scale up to larger issues.

## Role of Business Schools

Business schools currently perpetuate problematic systems including capitalism and colonial processes. There is a need to combat the perception that "progress on decolonization is too hard, too unlikely, too broad, and too separate from each of us as individuals." Instead, non-Indigenous peoples need to understand their roles in these problems and thus in solutions. Incremental changes can lead to systemic change, but we all have a role to play.

All aspects of the business school can be reflected upon. Schools can work to improve Indigenous representation among faculty, administration, and within the student body. Business Schools can assess curricula through the lens of both decolonization and Indigenization. They can build opportunities for partnership with Indigenous groups for experiential learning, co-op/internship experience, and the co-creation of research.

## Abundance Mindset and Approaches

To prepare for action, the best place to start is “role mapping” in order to identify where you fit in the system. Next, it’s important to recognize your agency, what you have the power to do, and your expertise, and consider where in the system that enables you to build trust and coalitions.

As individuals reflect on themselves through looking inward, individuals will be able to envision abundant futures that Indigenous communities and students deserve within our schools.

Envisioning Futures of Abundance:

- Business scholars leading conversations about alternative economies in the future
- Business schools understanding Indigenous ontologies and ways of being – taking them seriously and recognizing immense value this can bring to all disciplines
- Practicing scholarship that refills communities rather than extracts from them. For example, the practice of conducting research with an Indigenous community should not only be about collecting data. Instead, the process itself should be mutually beneficial and in fact led by the needs of the community, rather than the scholar.

## Business Undergraduate Societies' Approach

Business undergraduate societies could work with the faculty to integrate decolonization curricula, contribute to admission efforts that would make business education more accessible to Indigenous, Black, and POC students, and implement decolonization workshops for student leaders/student bodies.

Approaches to decolonization curriculum adaptation could consist of working with professors for curriculum changes to include Indigenous perspectives, developing working relationships with Indigenous communities/parties of interest, and conducting internal audits specifically for decolonization in addition to conventional EDI metrics.

A more extensive way to push for change as a student organization would be to establish a decolonization taskforce that especially focuses on decolonization issues, from training, events, working with professors/faculty on curriculum change, etc.. It is also important to implement internal training for student executives, preferably with an outside third-party that specializes in decolonization training, and externally hosting events that feature Indigenous speakers/issues.

[Read more about decolonizing curriculum](#) from our Waking Up Your Institution guides.

## Events Related to Decolonizing Business

Events related to the topics of decolonization and reconciliation are a great way to start these conversations and focus on Indigenous leaders and knowledge.

We highly recommend reading the summary from the [Reconciliation and Decolonizing Business Workshop](#) delivered by Jonathon Araujo Redbird, hosted by the Desautels Sustainability Network (DSN). This document outlines key concepts and takeaways from the event, including but not limited to:

- What is reconciliation?
- The Indigenous economy & decolonizing business
- Building “real equity relations” in government & corporate relations
- The future city
- What can we do as individuals?

## Resources

- [Desautels Sustainability Network \(DSN\) Decolonization “Manifesto”](#)
- Summary of [DSN Reconciliation & Decolonizing Business Workshop](#)
  - [Facebook Event](#) page for this event
- Indigenous Ally Toolkit
- [Decolonizing the Business School and Implications for PRME](#) Webinar
- Articles
  - [What Business Leaders Can Learn From An Indigenous Worldview](#)
  - [Class is in session for Indigenous entrepreneurs](#)
  - [“Time to put action behind university land acknowledgements”](#)
- Books
  - [21 Things You May not Know about the Indian Act by Bob Joseph](#)
  - [Price Paid the Fight for First Nations Survival by Bev Sellars](#)
  - [The Inconvenient Indian by Thomas King](#)
  - [First Peoples in Canada by Alan McMillan & Eldon Yellowhorn](#)
  - [Our Story by Various Indigenous Authors](#)
  - [Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Kimmerer](#)
  - [Blanket Toss Under Midnight Sun](#)
  - [All Our Relations: Finding the Path Forward](#) by Tanya Talaga: Essential reading for non-Indigenous peoples to continue to understand and inspire action on our relationship to colonization.
  - [Indegenous Toronto: Stories that Carry This Place](#): How Toronto became known as a significant culture hub and intersection that was also known as a Meeting Place long before European settlers arrived
- Videos
  - The other Side of the Ledger: An Indian View of the Hudson’s Bay Company
  - PowWow at Duck Lake
  - Encounter with Saul Alinsky – Part 2: Rama Indian Reserve
  - Native America
- Websites
  - [It’s Our Time Education Toolkit: Residential Schools](#)
  - [Yellow Head Institute](#)
  - [Unwritten Histories](#)