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OPENING SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE

Guidelines for Indigenous Cultural Safety in Facilities Management

GUIDELINES FOR INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Organizations across Turtle Island (North America) are working to integrate Indigenous cultural safety into their organizational cultures and the professional skill sets of their teams. To strengthen this important work, organizations can cultivate spaces that support the resurgence of Indigenous nations, cultures, peoples and knowledge systems. **For settler organizations and team members, supporting spaces of Indigenous resurgence is an important way to continue the ongoing work of reconciliation.** These guidelines provide a framework and some important considerations to apply Indigenous cultural safety with respect to facilities management.

These guidelines are intentionally non-prescriptive. There is not a checklist for this work; it is about creating space that embodies Indigenous worldviews and invites people to situate themselves in relationship to them[2,3,4]. Like all aspects of cultural safety, this is relational work; the process itself is transformative and how you get there matters as much as the physical outcomes.

HOW DOES COLONIZATION STRUCTURE THE SPACES WE USE?

In settler colonial contexts like Canada and the United States, the process through which land and sovereignty are taken from Indigenous nations is less an event, and more a structure that acts to erase Indigenous nationhood from multiple fronts[10]. This structure consists of a complex and dynamic set of racist ideas, policies, institutions and acts of violence that together work to:
(1) remove Indigenous nations and peoples' power in relation to their territories, and (2) establish a settler power over lands and peoples[11].

Settler colonialism works to structure the spaces we move through to achieve its goals at various scales, including:

- Geographically through instruments like the "frontier" and the parceling of land through surveying[1]
- Racist policies like the Indian Act that restrict Indigenous peoples access to and movement throughout their territories
- The systematic exclusion and erasure of Indigenous cultures, languages, histories and place names from space

HOW CAN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY CHANGE THIS?

Indigenous cultural safety empowers people to work against the structure of colonialism by offering strategies to share power back to Indigenous nations and peoples. Indigenous cultural safety asks us to continually displace a violent colonial structure and open space for Indigenous nations and peoples to animate more of who they have been since time immemorial and how they would like to self-determine into the future.

Indigenous cultural safety allows us to lift the colonial veil that seeks to exclude and erase Indigenous nationhood from the spaces we inhabit. In doing this, Indigenous cultural safety opens up new spaces for Indigenous resurgence and healing.

Through Indigenous cultural safety, we can build environments that make it impossible for people to forget who's land they are on, who those people are, and how their worldview continues to be essential to everyone's responsibilities while existing on that territory.

DECOLONIZING SPACES BY SHARING POWER

As part of reconciliation efforts, organizations across Turtle Island are working to decolonize and "Indigenize" their spaces[2,4,5,6,8]. This is important work to ensure workplaces and services are safe and relevant to Indigenous peoples.

The work of decolonization must be Indigenous led. Mi'kmaq law professor and activist, Pam Palmater, explains that:

> Like all things Indigenous, decolonization should be a balance of both resistance and resurgence, where we withdraw from harmful government processes and relationships and re-engage in those relationships that have sustained us for millennia – with the land, the water, our people and our culture[7].

Further to this, Tuck and Yang's acclaimed work, Decolonization is not a metaphor, reminds us that decolonization is not about making non-Indigenous organizations or institutions "better" or more "Indigenous", but rather is about sharing land and sovereignty back to Indigenous nations[9].

All of this means that when thinking about decolonizing spaces, non-Indigenous organizations and people must be diligent to ensure that this work remains oriented around sharing space, power and sovereignty back with Indigenous nations and peoples. **Sharing power is difficult, vulnerable, and essential work. It is the essence of what needs to be done.**

A FRAMEWORK FOR DECOLONIZING ORGANIZATIONAL SPACES

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This framework is meant to help get organizations started. Depending on the context, the steps may overlap. Your organization may already have started this work. This should not be thought of as something to complete. Rather, **the framework will allow you to iteratively move towards decolonizing spaces within your organization**. You may start with connecting and return back to it later to deepen the work you have started. **The four areas of this work are detailed below, including connecting, designing, implementing & building, and animating.**

CONNECT

This is relational work. The first step to opening space for Indigenous resurgence is for your organization to connect with the histories, cultures and people of the nation(s) that you do your work on[5]. Depending on the nature of your work, it may also be important to connect with other nations that your clients or partners belong to.

Connecting can be done in many different ways. Find strategies that are appropriate for your organization's readiness and the work that you do, and ensure that you are centering *reciprocity* in your approach. Learning whose territory you do your work on and ensuring your team is comfortable doing a territorial acknowledgment is a great place to start.

From there you may:

1. **Learn** - Explore further learning about local nations through media, cultural education, or community events.
2. **Build relationships** - Examine opportunities to partner with local nations or Indigenous organizations. Consider opportunities to make your spaces available to Indigenous nations or organizations as a way of sharing space back.

LPC and other Indigenous organizations can support your team in doing the complicated work of responsibly connecting to the histories and spaces that you inhabit.

DESIGN

A cultural safety informed approach to design work involves deep engagement with Indigenous cultures and histories. In order to make spaces relevant to the cultural context of a territory and/or the Indigenous peoples using a space, organizations need strong relationships that allow design work to be guided by Indigenous worldviews with integrity and respect. To make this happen, organizations should consider:

1. Supporting Indigenous-led design work by hiring Indigenous organizations (particularly from local nations), or companies with expertise in engaging Indigenous peoples in design work responsibly.

2. Purposeful engagement to ensure spaces are relevant to the cultural context of the Indigenous peoples who will be using them and/or the nation(s) who's territory the space is on.

3. Wherever possible, support the design of spaces that promote cultural practice, gathering, ceremony, education and community, led by Indigenous peoples.

4. Include Indigenous languages in spaces, wherever possible and with the consent of Indigenous nations.

IMPLEMENT & BUILD

When implementing changes to spaces or building new ones, there exists lots of opportunities to support Indigenous cultural production and the vitality of Indigenous nations. This may include:

1. Supporting Indigenous artists (i.e. purchasing artwork or commissioning murals)

2. Larger projects may present opportunities for economic reconciliation through partnerships with local nations.

3. Hiring Indigenous-owned businesses wherever possible for facilities construction.

ANIMATE

Physical changes to spaces must be continuously animated to have the desired impact. For example, if you include Indigenous artwork in your meeting spaces, how is that artwork being used to inspire conversations, learning and to shape the way your team does your work? **It is not just about the changes we make to our spaces, but also how we let those spaces *change us*.**

Organizations should also ensure that their spaces are operated in a manner that is aligned with goals of sharing power through cultural safety. This may include staff training to ensure culturally safe & equitable operations and client servicing. For example, venues should train maintenance staff to temporarily disarm smoke detectors to allow for smudging ceremonies.

Other ways to animate cultural safety in your space may include:

1. Inviting in Indigenous artists and educators to share cultural teachings.

2. Engaging local communities about how and why your spaces are transforming.

3. Bringing traditional foods into gatherings by hiring Indigenous caterers.

4. Educating people about how to pronounce Indigenous language integrated into spaces, along with the culture embedded in that language.

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