

BUILDING BRIDGES TOGETHER

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR INTERCULTURAL
WORK BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND
NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

MAY 2008



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Introduction

From June 2006 to April 2008, the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC) and the members of the *Building Bridges Together* Advisory Committee built two resources that aim to encourage intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC: (1) *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide*; (2) *Building Bridges Together Workbook*.

Building Bridges Together Resource Guide is a compilation of a wide range of resources that can inform local initiatives to engage in dialogue and action-planning between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The resource guide was designed to help you and your community access relevant information as you engage in community processes to explore history, reflect on the present, and take action leading to a better future for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Building Bridges Together Workbook compliments the resource guide by outlining a three part process to creating an intercultural dialogue series with and for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The workbook is the 'how-to' component of the *Building Bridges Together* series and contains assessment sheets and planning worksheets to help you work with people in your community to develop a locally relevant dialogue series.

Outline and learning objectives

There are three chapters in *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide*. In chapter one, we provide an overview of the definition, dynamics and guiding principles for intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC. In chapter two, we present the personal reflections, hopeful imaginings and critical questions about intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that were developed by members of the *Building Bridges Together* Advisory Committee. Chapter three features a wide range of short discussions and resources related to topic areas that are central to intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC. The appendices consist of supplementary readings and resources and a comment sheet.

Although this resource guide does touch on a wide range of topics, it is by no means a comprehensive treatment of the subject of the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC and Canada. Nevertheless, it does aim to provide a thumb nail sketch of some of the ideas and developments that relate to intercultural work between the two groups. As such, all content in this resource guide has been developed with a view to facilitating the achievement of three learning objectives for the reader:

- To understand some of the key concepts, as well as the historical and contemporary developments that typically inform discussions about intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC;
- To gain an awareness of the diverse perspectives and lived experiences inherent to intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC;
- To acquire information about online and text resources that relate to intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in BC.

Intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples: Definitions, dynamics and principles

In this chapter, we provide a working definition of intercultural work and discuss some of the dynamics of intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. This chapter also includes a summary discussion of the guiding principles for renewing relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples as developed in the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)*.

Defining intercultural work

Before we can talk about intercultural work, it is necessary to first define what is meant by the term culture. Although there are ongoing debates about what does and doesn't count as culture, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides a useful description that we feel captures the essence of what culture is: "... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. It encompasses... art and literature, lifestyles, language, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."¹

Given this wide definition of culture, we consider intercultural work in similarly broad terms, which is to say that intercultural work involves the activities and thoughts that are created and changed in and through human interaction across and in between different cultures.² Intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is centered on the recognition that working in between cultures does not take place in a power vacuum or in equal-power relations. It is situated in the context of power imbalances and inequalities, most of which have their historical roots in the most destructive phases of colonialism.

Based on this recognition, intercultural work with respect to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations encourages people to exercise their capacity to talk, learn and work together regardless of their cultural difference. It reveals the deep underlying differences between members of a community and aims to identify the commonalities through which new understanding and relationships can be forged. It is appealing to some because it assumes that it is important to integrate different forms of knowledge into new multicultural strategies for achieving positive change at the local level.

Intercultural work also includes gritty and unpredictable feelings especially when working across uncomfortable historical legacies and current day differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Simply defined, intercultural work is a form of work that is as unique as the people who engage in it. It is a place-based phenomenon that takes shape according to local stakeholders' priorities and follows the interests and needs of the group of people who have decided to improve local relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Dynamics of intercultural work

A wide range of dynamics can come into play whenever you engage in intercultural work. In this section, we provide some working definitions and related questions for you to use in your personal reflections about how you engage in intercultural work. The set of dynamics that we explore below include: categorization, prejudice and stereotypes, discrimination, racism and white privilege.

Categorization

Research in social psychology suggests that we are all 'categorizers' who attempt to understand the world by comparing new information to generic concepts stored in our memory about stereotypical situations, sequences of events, and characters. The up-tight upper class people, the kind grandmother, the shady used-car sales person, are examples of 'stock' images that many of us have of certain types of people, and which we use to 'make sense' out of the different people we meet.

Once we have acquired a mental image of a person or a group of people, we often hold onto this image and, through a psychological process known as cognitive dissonance, reject information that contradicts how the given image portrays the person or people in question.³ Cognitive dissonance involves denying or rationalizing away discrepancies between one's pre-existing beliefs and new information about a type of person or group.

Whether we are creating 'new images' or trying to preserve 'old images' of people, our mind is almost always busy selecting, screening, and filtering information. Consequently, our perceptions depend not only on what happens in daily life but also on how we interpret and internalize those events. For some people, it is easy to revise their mental images to accommodate new realities of peoples in their shared social world. Other people need to work hard at examining and revising their mental pictures to better reflect their current reality.



Prejudice and stereotypes

When we don't really know what people are like, it's easy to make generalizations about them based on very limited knowledge. We often make judgments about others before we know the full story of who they are.

Whether it paints people favorably or not, prejudice is typically based on ignorance, misinformation, and/or fear of differences. Prejudices are driven by stereotypes, which can be simply defined as a distorted image about a person or group. Stereotypes assume that everyone in a group has the same characteristics, leading people to falsely believe that 'they' are all alike.

No one is born believing stereotypes. Instead, stereotypes are learned from media, school, parents, peers and other sources. Many child psychologists believe that we begin to learn prejudices and stereotypes as early as two or three years old. As we are exposed to more stereotypes, we tend to form attachments to our own cultural group and develop negative mental images and attitudes about other groups.

As negative mental images and attitudes crystallize over a person's lifetime, they are difficult to change. As we get older, we tend to see the things that support our mental images and attitudes of others (however distorted they may be) and disregard or ignore experiences that challenge our pre-existing images of others.

Critical Questions:

- What stereotypes do you use to talk about people who are different from you?
- How do stereotypes affect your workplace or community?
- Where do you think these stereotypes come from?
- Do you think these stereotypes are accurate? Why or why not?

Discrimination

Discrimination is an action that involves treating people unfairly because of their membership in a particular group. Discriminatory behaviors take many forms, but they all involve some form of social exclusion or rejection.

You may have witnessed individual acts of discrimination, such as a person who will not stand beside people of a certain background or exclude them in a decision-making process. Often, these individual acts are a reflection of a larger system of social exclusion. When discrimination becomes part of a use of power by one group over another group, that action becomes part of 'how things are done,' it is known as an 'ism.' Racism and sexism are a few "isms" you may be familiar with.

Critical Questions

- Have you ever not wanted to have someone on a committee or in your workplace because of their affiliation with a particular group?
- Has anyone rejected or excluded you because you self-identified with a particular group?
- What do you think can be done to prevent or eliminate discrimination? What do you think you can do?

Racism

In general, a racial group is any group of people who are defined by reference to their race, skin-colour, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic origin. As far as racism goes, there are many different definitions, most of which are hotly contested. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, racism is a belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as being either superior or inferior to another race or races.

Some sociologists who study racism in North America take the definition of racism further by arguing that racism is an institutionalized system of producing privileges for people of European decent. In David Wellman's book *Portraits of White Racism*, he defined racism as "culturally sanctioned beliefs, which, regardless of intentions involved, defend the advantages whites have because of the subordinated position of racial minorities."



Related to the term racism is the term racial discrimination, which is defined by the United Nations' Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."

Today, racist beliefs and practices of racial discrimination abound in formal and informal settings, ranging from kitchen table conversations over coffee to shareholder meetings of corporations in the extractive industry. Racism and racial discrimination are issues that we all have a responsibility to tackle.

Critical Questions

- Have you ever witnessed someone express a racist comment? How did it make you feel? What did you do?
- Have you ever held a racist belief? If so, how did you learn such a belief?
- In your opinion, what do you think is the best method for preventing and/or addressing racism in your community?

White privilege

Although some people deny the existence of a distinctly 'white way of being', there exists a sufficient amount of evidence to confirm that "whiteness is real in that white folks still habitually order their experience according to white supremacist norms and non-white people still habitually categorize certain people, cultural artifacts, and institutions as white."⁴

Many scholars argue that white people are relatively privileged partly because of their white skin and way of being.⁵ Dr. Peggy McIntosh suggests that white privilege and racism are connected. She remarks that:

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life... I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white

privilege... I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious.⁶

In an effort to make clear what she means by the effects of white privilege, McIntosh develops a list of 50 social benefits that she is able to claim on a daily basis because of her white skin. Although McIntosh is writing for a primarily American audience, her list can be a useful starting point for local discussion in BC about the relationship between white privilege and other visible and unseen dimensions of racism. Here is the complete list:

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about 'civilization,' I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.



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13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
 14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
 15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
 16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
 17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
 18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.
 19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
 20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
 21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
 22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
 23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
 24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the 'person in charge', I will be facing a person of my race.
 25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
 26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
 27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
 28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.

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29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.
30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.
32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.
33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.
37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.
43. If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.
44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to people of my race.



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45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.
46. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in 'flesh' color and have them more or less match my skin.
47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.
48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.
49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.
50. I will feel welcomed and 'normal' in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.⁷

Critical Questions

- Do you think white privilege exists? Why or why not?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed a moment of white privilege? If so, how did it make you feel?
- In your opinion, do you think that it is important to talk about white privilege as part of local discussions about racism? Why or why not?

Principles for intercultural work

In this section, we provide an overview of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) principles for developing relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Although the RCAP principles are useful starting points, we encourage the development of local principles for either renewing and/or initiating relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

The RCAP principles are useful because they incorporate a recognition that it is unjust to suggest that we can use a blank slate to develop relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The RCAP principles suggest that it is problematic to:

attempt to wipe the slate clean, ignoring both the wrongs of the past and the rights flowing from our previous relationships and interactions. At the same time, we are hardly prisoners of the past, locked forever in the same historical postures, with the same attitudes, grievances, suspicions and prejudices. If the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of Canada are not embarking on a journey entirely afresh, as strangers and neophytes, neither should we travel with all the accumulated baggage of the past on our shoulders, or assume that we know how to deal with all the challenges awaiting us along the road.⁸

In light of the above recognition, the contributors to the RCAP laid out four basic principles for any effort to renew and/or initiate relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. These four principles can be summed up as follows: mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility. Each one of these principles are explained in some detail on the following pages.

Mutual recognition

According to Richard Klassen, who was writing for the Aboriginal Rights Coalition during the publication of the RCAP, mutual recognition is a call to non-Aboriginal Canadians:

to recognize that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants and caretakers of this land and have distinctive rights and responsibilities that flow from that status. At the same time, it calls on Aboriginal people to accept that non-Aboriginal people are also of this land, by birth and by adoption, and have strong ties of affection and loyalty here. More broadly, mutual recognition means that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people acknowledge and relate to one another as equals, co-existing side by side and governing themselves according to their own laws and institutions. Mutual recognition thus has three major facets: equality, co-existence and self-government.⁹



Mutual respect

The principle of respect is central to any healthy and lasting human relationship. This fact is echoed throughout the RCAP and is defined in some detail in the excerpt below:

From mutual recognition flows mutual respect, the second basic principle of a renewed relationship. In the present context...we want to focus on one aspect of the concept of respect: the quality of courtesy, consideration and esteem extended to people whose languages, cultures and ways differ from our own but who are valued fellow-members of the larger communities to which we all belong. In this sense, respect is the essential precondition of healthy and durable relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country.¹⁰

It is important to also note that the RCAP authors emphasized the importance of a two way form of respect, one which is truly mutual in character. The words of Gary LaPlante, who was employed with Kewatin Communications at the time of the RCAP release, provided insight into what is meant by mutual respect:

My point here is that race relations is a two-way street. While we make all kinds of comments about what the non-Aboriginal community should do or that the non-Aboriginal government should set up certain institutions on how to deal with racism, I think we have to deal with it as well. I am prepared to say it because in the past I have had to deal with my own racism. I know other Aboriginal people who are racist and I hear negative comments toward non-Aboriginal people.¹¹

Sharing

Human relationships that are worth celebrating usually involve extensive sharing of goods. There exists a long history of sharing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. In the RCAP, the authors address the question about how sharing can be built into Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations.

[A]s in any modern co-operative relationship, the partners must recognize each other's basic rights, including, in this instance, rights of self-government and rights of equality as peoples. They must also display respect for their respective cultures and institutions...[Moreover], as a long overdue act of justice, Aboriginal people should regain access to a fair proportion of the ancestral lands that were taken from them... [If] sharing is to be a valued part of the renewed relationship, both parties need to be in a position to engage in exchanges on an equal basis. Meaningful sharing is not possible under conditions of poverty and dependence, so strong and effective measures need to be taken to address the often appalling inequalities that separate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians in such sectors as health, housing, income and overall living conditions.¹²

Mutual Responsibility

The fourth principle underpinning the RCAP vision for a renewed relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada is the principle of mutual responsibility. This principle involves the transformation of the colonial relationship of guardian and ward into one of true partnership. This principle applies to all Canadians who want to work with Aboriginal peoples toward a more just society.

This partnership can be realized, however, only when Aboriginal peoples secure political and constitutional autonomy, as constituent members of a distinct order of government, and an economic and resource base sufficient to free them from the debilitating effects of long-term 'welfare'.¹³

In addition to the responsibilities Aboriginal peoples and Canada bear to one another, it is important to also note the RCAP description about the responsibilities to the land we all share.

Aboriginal elders explained to the Commission that the identities of their peoples are strongly related to the places where they live, that the Creator placed them here with the responsibility to care for life in all its diversity. This responsibility is timeless. Twelve years have passed since the RCAP was released and the call to embrace our shared responsibility to care for each other and our shared world is more relevant than ever. In the next section, we feature some stories about lived intercultural experiences that relate to the definitions, dynamics and principles outlined in the previous pages.

Examples of Intercultural Work

In this section, we feature the stories and personal reflections that were written by Advisory Committee members. Some of the writings featured below are based in real life experience and others are fictional accounts. In many of the pieces of writing, the authors have provided some reflective questions for you to consider.

Brenda Ireland and Paulette Regan talk about “Unsettling Dialogues of History and Hope”

Brenda Ireland (Anishnabe) and Paulette Regan (Euro-Canadian) first met when they were graduate students in the History Department at the University of British Columbia in 1991. A deep interest in exploring how history influences contemporary Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations has been at the heart of their friendship and the professional work they have done both individually and together over the last few years. Building upon an intercultural workshop developed a decade ago with elder advice from the Tseil waututh, Stó:lō, Métis and Wabanagii Nations, they have created a community-based intercultural workshop called “Unsettling Dialogues of History and Hope: An Intercultural Workshop on Transforming and Reconciling Indigenous/non-Indigenous Relations.”

A labour of love — ‘Unsettling Dialogues’ evolved as a way to share their ideas about, and passion for creating greater understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In their work as an intercultural team, they model a way of being together that is based on shared principles and ethics of mutual respect, recognition and responsibility. Brenda and Paulette believe it is important to ‘walk their talk’ so they continuously reflect upon and learn from their life experiences and their work. They also incorporate new ideas and activities in the workshop based on feedback from participants, and new developments and emerging issues in Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. This keeps their work fresh, exciting and alive. “We are constantly humbled by the wisdom of students, workshop participants and community people we have been privileged to work with. We are life long learners and we cherish the gift of our journey together.” Paulette and Brenda describe their workshop below.

In developing our workshop, we were intrigued by questions such as: Why are relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people so often problematic? How do our attempts to work together get bogged down in recriminations, denial, distrust and guilt? What can we do to change this destructive dynamic in ourselves, our work, and our communities? How can history help us transform our troubled relationship, creating new space for more just and peaceful relationships? Do we need to rethink our ideas about reconciliation?

Based on our own practical experience, we are convinced that in our rush to build constructive new partnerships and achieve reconciliation, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are reluctant to engage in dialogue processes about our shared, but conflicting stories — our histories. For Indigenous peoples, the past is a painful story of broken treaties, stolen lands, Indian residential schools, and the Indian Act. For non-Indigenous people, the past is a celebratory story of settling new lands, nation-building and helping unfortunate ‘Indians’ to adjust to a new way of life.

We believe that this shared yet conflicting history is not in the past — it still sits with us in meeting rooms, at negotiating tables, and in schools and community halls. Whether or not we acknowledge its presence, we know intuitively that this history is still alive. But because we cannot change the past, we try to ignore it. Talking about the burden of history makes us feel frustrated and overwhelmed. We don’t know how to put the past behind us, so instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue, we get stuck in destructive monologues. We talk past each other — never hearing the deeper truths that reside in these stories that are deeply unsettling for us to tell and to hear. It is vital that we also understand that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experience this ‘unsettling’ differently depending on whether we are from the ‘colonized’ or ‘colonizer’ group.

Therefore we ground the workshop in our own practical experience, speaking from our respective personal perspectives as an Anishnabe or Euro-Canadian woman, linking these back to the broader workshop themes we are exploring. We create space for participants to examine their different worldviews, values and cultural systems and how these impact

intercultural relations. We provide a brief overview of history and impacts of colonial policies such as Indian residential schools, the Indian Act, and enfranchisement on Indigenous peoples and how these have damaged Indigenous-Settler relations. We then encourage participants to explore the coping strategies that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have developed — distrust, anger, denial, distancing, etc. that keep us stuck in a colonial relationship. We have found this to be a critical part of the workshop as participants experience an ‘aha’ moment in which they see how their own personal coping strategies prevent them from transforming relationships.

We then move into the heart of the workshop by asking these questions: What if instead of denying our past, we were to embrace these unsettling stories as powerful teachings that can help us to transform Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships at the personal and political level? How can we learn to work respectfully together to create community visions that acknowledge the past in ways that engender hope? Is reconciliation a goal to be achieved or a process of repairing relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadians? How can we rethink our ideas about what reconciliation is to explore its potential for healing and transforming Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations? Finally, we work with participants to identify some strategies and tools that they can use in their own lives and work.

In our work together we are constantly reminded of how ‘history matters’ in our daily interactions as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Doing the workshop is always a powerful and moving experience for us, and we hope that we are able to convey our ideas to participants in ways that empower them to engage in their own “Unsettling Dialogues of History and Hope.”





Ellie Parks talks about organizing a national conference

In this short reflective piece, Ellie Parks explains some of the steps that she took with a team of conference coordinators to ensure that the event was inclusive of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Ellie explains her experience below.

I was part of a team of organizers coordinating a national conference. One of our goals was to include more Aboriginal presence and voice than previous conferences. In order to do this in a way that was respectful and successful, we asked Aboriginal practitioners to join in the local steering committee early on in the planning.

In discussion with Aboriginal members and colleagues, we crafted a conference program that was of interest to and a showcase for Aboriginal practitioners.

The result was one of the seven conference content streams was focused on Aboriginal community economic development. A wide range of projects, programs and communities were presented in workshop format. We sought to have an Aboriginal leader address our conference and were delighted to have Judith Sayers Chief of Hupacasath First Nation as one of three keynote speakers. Her speech was inspiring and informative, as her nation is a model for CED and sustainable development. Overall, the number of Aboriginal participants was significantly higher than previous years.

We made special efforts to invite and encourage Aboriginal participation because the CED experience of the Aboriginal communities enriches the learning experience for all participants. There is a wealth of knowledge to share, and we developed learning opportunities that were not 'about' Aboriginal people, but learning opportunities with them.

As non-Aboriginal conference organizers, it took extra effort to go beyond the opening welcome by a local First Nations elders and dancers. It was important to recognize the CED work in Aboriginal communities and encourage the sharing of lessons learned.

Here are some key questions to consider as you organize events:

- Is participation by Aboriginal persons a goal? If so, why?
- Do you have Aboriginal persons in governance roles that involve decision-making power over content of the conference?
- Have you sought the inclusion of Aboriginal people on your steering committee?
- Have you asked your Aboriginal contacts for assistance in reaching potential participants, planners and presenters?
- What supports (i.e. training, translation, access to childcare, access to travel subsidies, registration bursaries, etc) need to be in place in order to ensure diverse participation?
- Is there representation and voice by Aboriginal people in both the planning and in the event itself?
- Are your methods of registration accessible for all?

Ellie Parks discusses the work of Salt Spring Islanders for Justice and Reconciliation (SSIJAR)

In the paragraphs below, Ellie Parks discusses the recent work of a community-based organization that was formed to work in solidarity with Aboriginal groups.

Salt Spring Islanders for Justice and Reconciliation (SSIJAR) was formed in 2001 to increase awareness of Aboriginal culture and history and to promote understanding within Salt Spring's mainly non-Aboriginal community. We came together initially to oppose the BC government's plan for a referendum on treaty negotiations, and while our focus since that time has been on the concerns of Aboriginal people, we have always remained open to addressing other justice issues on the island. During the BC Treaty Referendum we participated energetically in the Ballot Boycott, made a presentation to the Special Legislative Committee hearings, sponsored guest speakers to come to Salt Spring to challenge the validity of the referendum and collected over two hundred protest ballots that we delivered to Chief Judith Sayers of the Hupacasath First Nation.



In the year following the Referendum, we continued to strengthen ties with our First Nation neighbours, attended meetings pertaining to the Hul'qumi'num and Snuneymuxw treaty negotiations, and presented a brief to the federal government's Standing Committee on the First Nations Governance Act in Nanaimo. As well, we mounted a successful 2002-2003 Aboriginal Speaker Series that included Chief Judith Sayers, Robert Morales — Chief Negotiator of the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group and Guujaaw — President of Haida Gwaii.

In addition to such public educational events, we have also facilitated presentations on treaty issues, including local First Nations speakers, at both the high school and middle school on Salt Spring.

SSIJAR maintains contact with the ongoing BC Treaty process, attending Main Table Treaty negotiations between the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, Provincial and Federal governments and making presentations to local government on treaty matters. In the fall of 2003 SSIJAR took a significant bridge-building step in hosting a visit to Salt Spring Island by elders and councilors of the Tsawout First Nation, owners of the Reserve at the south shore of the island, honouring them with a community potluck feast. Then in 2004 SSIJAR invited archaeologist Eric McLay to speak, helping to raise awareness of the destruction of sacred sites in the Gulf Islands. This was concurrent with, and in support of, an appeal by the Penelakut Tribe to halt the desecration of a Coast Salish burial site at Syuhe'mun, or Walker's Hook, located in their traditional territory on the northeast shore of Salt Spring.

In the spring of 2006 SSIJAR hosted Elders and Chiefs of all the Saanich First Nations, Douglas Treaty holders, at a public gathering on Salt Spring Island, to hear them share their cultural and historical connections in the region and to hear their concerns. This ground-breaking event was enthusiastically received by participants and audiences alike.

This includes SSIJAR members traveling throughout the year to attend events hosted by neighbouring First Nation communities, such as the South Vancouver Island Elders Gathering, annual war canoe races at Tsawout First Nation in Sidney, National Aboriginal Day celebrations, and most recently the National Day of Action event in Duncan.

The core aims of SSIJAR are based in Recognition, Understanding and Respect. We seek to increase awareness of Aboriginal culture and history, including contemporary issues for First Nations such as language and cultural renewal. Beginning with our work around the Treaty Referendum, our group has focused on four overlapping areas:

1. Political action: supporting First Nations on local Treaty matters and national issues such as the First Nations Governance Act;
2. Public education: speaker series, presentations in schools, letters and articles in local newspapers;
3. Community bridge-building: meeting and supporting our aboriginal neighbours;
4. Self-education: increasing our own understanding of the history of where we live.

In the long term, we want to promote better understanding and awareness in Saltspring Island's non-Aboriginal community about First Nations history and present needs. We believe true reconciliation will only come from mutual respect and understanding.

Lauren Whyte Talks about “Making the Grade”

The following discussion is reproduced with the assistance of Lauren Whyte, author of *Making the Grade: A guide to success in corporate-Aboriginal relations*. The information below is re-produced with permission from the Industry Council for Aboriginal Business and the partners in this case study: Old Masset of Haida Nation and Golder Associates.

Lessons learned from the analysis of sixteen case studies of corporate-Aboriginal relations is featured in the following discussion, as well as an overview of the specific case study of Old Masset of Haida Nation and Golder Associates. Lauren Whyte explains her findings below.

Making the Grade: A guide to success in corporate-Aboriginal relations is a publication that was commissioned by the Industry Council for Aboriginal Business to assist Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses with developing and building effective

relationships by drawing from the experiences of successful initiatives in British Columbia and Yukon.

As more and more First Nations assert their nationhood by taking control of their governing institutions, including economic development, the practical aspects of making partnerships work become relevant to other nation-building activities such as governance, social development, treaty negotiations and land claim settlements.

To succeed in their business objectives, corporations are creating longer-term engagement strategies built on working relationships that are close enough to establish trust and multi-faceted enough to survive the next project or referral.

First Nations in British Columbia and Yukon are creating economic development infrastructure at a rate not seen until recently. This can be explained, in part, by the pace and extent of treaty and land claims processes, increasing education attainment levels of Aboriginal youth and similar findings from applied community development research in Indigenous populations elsewhere in North America and abroad.

At a time when First Nations are asserting their nationhood, economic development becomes crucial to their ability to institute effective mechanisms of governance. Government transfers are not suited to the pursuit of self-sufficiency through nation-building and control over land use. Instead, First Nations are increasingly approaching corporations to partner with them so they can acquire the expertise and resources needed to create business success for their communities.

At the same time, many corporations are becoming more skilled at working with Aboriginal communities and organizations, and are pursuing a broader array of objectives, such as access to employees and markets. In situations where corporations seek access to land, water and resources in areas of interest to First Nations

(rights/title), case law and government policies are continuously raising the level of engagement required of business. For corporations and Aboriginal communities where common ground exists, the stumbling block for many is knowing 'how' to engage. The 16 case studies that are reviewed in *Making the Grade: A guide to success in corporate-Aboriginal relations* show that, in situations where the leaders provided clear objectives and mandates to those within their organizations, there was less likelihood of losing the intent through misunderstandings by employees, or missing the mark completely. Corporate-Aboriginal partnerships are susceptible to misinterpretation of terms and concepts so clarity of intent and mandate from senior leadership is crucial.

These joint initiatives often challenge organizations to be creative and purposeful in their decision-making. In the case studies, corporate negotiators found it necessary to build more time and dialogue into the process than is necessary in a corporate-to-corporate transaction. Engaging effectively by aligning policies and systems with the needs of the partnership is both necessary and challenging for corporations. Also essential are awareness of the business objectives, and opportunities for participation by community members.

Several Aboriginal leaders noted that value is measured in terms of the impact on the health of their communities and culture. Profits from enterprise are funding the rebuilding of culture and protection of rights that are vital to the health of First Nation communities. On both counts, these communities are seeing encouraging results that further build community support for economic development. The joint venture business has created a platform for other business and community investments (streets, sidewalks, gymnasium, daycare, etc), and provided construction and skill development opportunities through content requirements on construction contracts.

Elements of Success

From the case studies, some common themes emerge that can help corporations and Aboriginal businesses understand the successful tools, approaches and practices that led to their success in partnership and in achieving their business objectives.

These elements are:

1. Practice integrity.
 - Integrity and demonstration of commitment are key in the corporate-Aboriginal milieu for a number of reasons. First, the cultural divide lends itself to misinterpretation of concepts and terms. The partners must create a comfortable space for dialogue and inquiry before attempting to make decisions.
2. Create tangible value for both parties.
 - When clearly articulated, shared values give meaning and purpose to the venture.
3. Clarify objectives, expectations, what you offer — and what you don't.
 - *We understood each other well, which gave us comfort in putting our cards on the table—having the type of relationship that allows us to expose our respective ignorance creates opportunities to address potential gaps.* (John Disney, Kluu laanas Economic Development Corporation)
 - A deep knowledge provides both with predictability and stability, and leads to achievable plans with reasonable expectations.
4. Understand the respective business environments/cultures, learn and be flexible.
 - The leading Aboriginal development corporations studied here acquired the means to “bridge” the different business cultures, typically through business managers who can create a shared understanding of business priorities, while at the same time preserving the integrity of the respective organizations. Corporate culture is grounded in opportunity and calculated risk. However,

it is not simply a business-to-business relationship. If it were, the Aboriginal business would either refuse an offer to work together or not stay for long. Without cultural awareness, employees would not understand why a First Nation would walk away from what seems like a good opportunity.

5. Assess the readiness of both your organization and the potential partner organization and address deficiencies.

6. Understand the role of timing.

- Business is conducted in an environment of trust and respect, which usually takes a long time to acquire. Achieving support from the Aboriginal community entails longer timelines than in traditional business joint ventures. Corporations benefit from starting dialogue before project plans are finalized and building time for relationship building into advanced planning phases.

7. Look to the long term and plan.

- A corporate-Aboriginal partnership can create a platform for growth and new opportunities if the revenue stream is invested consistent with community plans and expertise is transferred from the corporate partner.

Highlighted Case Study: Haida Environmental

One case study that exemplifies a successful partnership approach that bridges and harnesses the strengths of cultural differences is Haida Environmental.

Partners and Contact Information

Haida Environmental (division of Kluu laanas Community Development Corporation)

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Project Overview

Haida Environmental was established by Old Massett Village Council to offer environmental services to projects primarily in Haida Gwaii. Golder Associates provides services and support to Haida Environmental in the areas of environmental services, training, continuing education and employment for Old Massett Village members and other Haida. Together, Haida Environmental and Golder conduct environmental assessments for several projects in the Haida Gwaii.

Reasons for Entering the Partnership

The idea of developing an environmental services company grew from informal discussions and an established working relationship between Golder and the Haida over a period of about 12 years. With major developments planned for Haida Gwaii, the economic development branch of the Old Massett Village Council felt they needed to create a parent company capable of managing business and profits according to the priorities of Haida communities.

Witnessing the loss of land, water and forest resources over time, the Haida wanted to re-establish a role in managing these resources. Capacity to work in the environmental field provides the Haida with the ability to gather and interpret data themselves, while at the same time creating employment and revenue for the community.

Golder Institute, a specialized training group of Golder Associates Ltd., provides certified continuing education training as the starting point for collaborative projects with Haida Environmental. Being able to work effectively with a client group serves the interest of the business. The training setting provides a forum for mutual exchange of information and ideas that further develops the working relationship between the community and Golder. As Haida Environmental embarks on new projects, its employees increase their capacity, adding new skills with each training and employment opportunity.

Objectives and Decision-making Processes

Both organizations work toward similar objectives, which ensure that the required investments of both parties will generate worthwhile outcomes — commitment to similar objectives also eases the negotiating process and keeps objectives realistic. Haida Environmental and Golder wanted to produce high quality environmental reports that would satisfy technical requirements and form the basis for good decisions by the community. As a team, the companies pursue contracts and use their respective capabilities to create additional value.

Accomplishments

The initiative has created a relationship that enables both parties to access business opportunities: business for Golder and project work for Haida Environmental. It has defined a path for training that leads to employment opportunities for those willing to take them. The revenue is intended to fund other business and community initiatives.

John Disney, who heads up the economic development corporation and Haida Environmental, underscores the importance of starting out with a venture that is certain to succeed. For First Nations unfamiliar with the business world, a productive working relationship with a trusted partner opens the minds and hearts of people who would otherwise not engage. Even for those communities like Haida with a history of entrepreneurial activity, the whole concept of business is a huge challenge; it requires a leap of faith for leaders who are willing to do something new.

“It is important to work with a company that “gets” the importance of ties to the land and respects the role of elders; [the company] must understand how the important aspects of life in Aboriginal communities are expressed (i.e. through art in Haida culture).”

—John Disney, Economic Development Officer, Old Masset Village Council

Lessons Learned

The training/learning model is powerful because learning happens both ways; for example, the element of bringing elders into the process is different from working with non-Aboriginal businesses. This makes

the process slower because you need to build in enough time for the community members to be involved. However, Natasha Thorpe of Golder observes that the resulting quality of the environmental information is superior, which will attract more customers.

Elements of Success

- Clarify decision-making processes and responsibilities.
- Create tangible value for both parties.
- Practice integrity.

Summary of lessons learned from Haida Environmental

- Staff your business organization with seasoned business people who have a working knowledge of contracting.
- Work with a model of training that leads directly to meaningful employment.
- Listen and allow for silence; investing the time in relationship-building pays back in loyalty and commitment
- Involve corporate employees who demonstrate respect when working with Aboriginal communities

Verna Miller reflects on Indigenous Knowledge and Respect

In the following discussion, Verna Miller of the Nlaka'pamux Health and Healing Society offers some reflections about the importance of respecting and honoring First Nations peoples knowledge, land and way of being.

The main themes of my discussion below are respect and honoring that which is unknown by the 'Other' culture. Everything we do today is within the context of the dominating society without thought or acknowledgement of what Indigenous cultures can contribute besides the Pan-Indianism we are exposed to. Unfortunately, in many cases, Indigenous Intellectual Knowledge and Property Rights have been taken for granted by those who 'study' Indigenous cultures. This is reflected within the educational institutions where the focus is on Euro-centric studies, instead of the knowledge that exists right in our own front yards. And no, we have not lost everything regarding our culture, social structures and language. They have been diminished, but not forgotten.

Our Indigenous science, history, mathematics, lexical development, social studies and even our own anthropological methodologies have not been honored. Our relationship with the environment and how generations of careful observations helped to maintain what is known as the ‘seventh generation’ concept to ensure that seven generations before us will be assured of resources for survival — not just for humans but for all that humans depend upon. In other words, our old people never thought of us as mutually exclusive of anything on the earth or in the sky.

There is a lot of positive work being done in many Indigenous communities that is never highlighted or acknowledged. For example, there is an Indigenous research group using a holistic approach to determine land and natural resource use within their homelands. They interviewed Elders and community members and used their stories within maps (GIS) along with archaeological overview assessments/surveys etc. to be used in conjunction with forestry planning. The local forestry companies have had to ‘tow the line’ to ensure proper consultation has taken place and that the amended plans are followed. Not only is the information used in natural resource and land planning but it has presented a place for our language to be preserved and used for teaching. The eventual idea is to incorporate this same information into school curricula.

The language of racism can be insidious, sub-conscious, outright blatant or just plain borne out of ‘staying in the comfort zone’. Colonialism is the major driver of this. Whenever I hear someone say “why can’t we all be the same?” or “we should all be the same” I realize that it would only work if everyone did exactly as I told them. Humans aren’t made that way. Different cultures exist. Learning the benefits and being non-judgmental goes a long way to closing the gap. How to do this will take time.



Greg George talks about “All Nations Gathering”

In the following discussion, Greg George (Wet’suwet’en) summarizes his involvement with a local effort to improve intercultural understandings.

Elementary school can be a formative experience for children. It is a time where values begin to form. While working at an elementary school in a city, I came to see that Aboriginal children were often surrounded by non-Aboriginal influences. I came to believe that Aboriginal cultural initiatives in the school would not only heighten an awareness of Aboriginal culture, but also provide Aboriginal children with a sense of place and further their cultural identity. It was important to also acknowledge the diverse nature within the Aboriginal community.

Thus began the planning of a community event. This community event was held on a weekend at the school. The event was well advertised and emphasized that everyone was welcome. Free Admission! The event highlighted Aboriginal drummers and dancers, food from various nations, including nations of a number of students. The event was an “All Nations Gathering”. There was also Aboriginal food served at minimal cost. The purpose of this event was to heighten awareness of Aboriginal cultures and the diversity within Aboriginal cultures and to provide Aboriginal students with an event celebrating their cultures at their school. The staff and faculty at the school were also fully engaged in the activities. As a result, many Aboriginal children witnessed their teachers’ participation. The event was successful and during my tenure at this school, the event became an annual event.

1. In what ways was this event successful in raising awareness of Aboriginal culture?
2. Do you think an annual event such as this is important for the community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal?
3. How do you think this event influenced the students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

SEE/BLIND: A collaborative story by the “Building Bridges Together” Advisory Committee

The following story was a collaborative effort of the *Building Bridges Together* Advisory Committee. Although it is a fictitious story created by the committee, the story’s elements are based on some of the personal experiences of Advisory Committee members.

In a small coastal community comprised of equal numbers of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (mostly Euro-Canadians), the local school played home to an exchange of racist remarks. On the north-facing wall of the local high school someone spray-painted: “no dirty Indians”. Two days later, on the south-facing wall of the school, someone spray painted: “no whitey land-thieves”.

A small group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students decided to tackle this issue and formed an ad hoc committee called SEE/BLIND (Students Encouraging Equality by Bringing Love In Not Discrimination) which aimed to open discussions about the troubling ways local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students interact and how student relations can be improved.

SEE/BLIND contacted First Nations leaders, representatives from the municipality and the local social planning council to convene a meeting to discuss how local relations could be improved. The students were interested in moving beyond the surface learning they engage in about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and wanted to dig deeper into the history to better understand the current state of affairs. They also wanted to move beyond the gestures that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people make in relation to one another — gestures like token invitations, flash-in-the pan discussions about racism, and simplifications of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

After the meetings between the youth and community leaders, an action plan was developed. The local school district also got on board and supported the plan. In a collaborative effort, all parties managed to raise funds and provide enough volunteer time to effect four local changes in one year: (a) the K-12 school curriculum was reformed to include more

education with and about local Aboriginal peoples; (b) a totem pole was erected in front of the school right beside and at equal height to the BC and Canada flags; (c) a potlatch was hosted by the local First Nation for the entire community which over 2,000 people attended; (d) the city struck and are committed to sustaining the SEE/BLIND committee of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth to advise the city on youth intercultural issues.

1. What aspects of this story seem far-fetched in your mind?
2. Why do these aspects seem far-fetched?
3. Some people say: "when the people take action, the leaders will follow". Do you agree with this? In what ways does the story above reflect this idea?
4. What about this story would you like to see happen in your community?

Discussions and resources on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations

In this section we present very short discussions about some of the central concepts and activities related to the interactions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. In some sections, we have also included links to resources that are available online and in print for you to consult if you are interested in learning more about a particular aspect of the historical and contemporary perspectives on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in BC and Canada.

Terminology of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples

In the language of the Canadian constitution, the term 'Aboriginal' is used to collectively describe three distinct groups known as the 'Inuit', the 'Métis' and 'First Nations'. Status and non-status Indians are also often included in the category of Aboriginal peoples. However, as a general rule, most Aboriginal people prefer to be referred to by the specific nation to which they belong (St'át'imc, Stó:lō, Métis, etc.).

As is noted in the fact sheets on common misconceptions about Aboriginal peoples that were produced by the Assembly of First Nations, within the group known as 'First Nations' there are 633 First Nations bands, representing fifty-two nations and more than fifty languages in Canada.¹⁴

In this resource guide we use the term Aboriginal peoples to refer to the multiple different First Nations and Métis peoples in British Columbia. However, it is important to note that there is not always agreement about terminology.¹⁵ For example, in Thomas Isaac's article *The power of constitutional language: The case against using 'Aboriginal Peoples' as a referent for First Nations*, he critiques the constitutional language of Canadian society and argues that the term 'Aboriginal' should be abandoned altogether in favour of 'First Nations' (see: Thomas Isaac, "The Power of Constitutional Language: The Case against Using 'Aboriginal Peoples' as a Referent for First Nations," 19 *Queen's Law Journal* 415 [1993-1994]).

Non-Aboriginal peoples are defined as any other person who does not fall into the category of Aboriginal as defined above.



Ways of understanding history

We include a section about different ways of understanding history because we recognize that there are significant differences between how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (especially European descendants) construct historical accounts. The following discussion is informed by the section in the RCAP that focuses on different ways of understanding history.

We acknowledge that history is not a single phenomenon, but rather a complicated set of past moments that take on different meanings depending on who you talk to and what you look at. If we agree that history continues to live today in our memories, relationships and institutions, then it is important to inquire into the histories that live among us.

- What histories inform our memory and imagination?
- How can we explore new ways of understanding histories together and the relationships between history and the present?
- What stories of the past do we need to learn together in order to make sense of the current issues that trouble Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships today?
- How can learning history together help us improve our relations in the present and future?

Most people agree that any one-sided account of history is nothing more than a loud story that usually silences other versions of the same historical moment. It is neither fair nor respectful to assume that the history of people in what is now called Canada can be easily reduced to one standard account.

Instead, it is useful to inquire into the histories that have been and continue to be buried and/or pushed outside of the standard stories that surface in our formal educational experiences, as well as in our experiences with popular media. How we inquire into histories on the surface and those that have been buried depends on how we understand the process of creating history in general.

Although it is overly simplistic to talk about how history is created and understood in terms of an 'Aboriginal' approach to history and a 'non-Aboriginal' (i.e. Euro-Canadian) approach to history, it is useful to speak in these terms as a general

starting point for exploring how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples generally construct historical accounts of the past.

Generally speaking, Euro-Canadian historians work within the western scientific method of making knowledge about the past and tend to emphasize scholarly documentation of historical items, which are chronologically organized in a linear manner. This kind of history-making assumes that persons recording or interpreting events can escape the limitations of their own perspective of the world and the cultural tradition to which they belong — and thereby transcend their position in the world to occupy a ‘neutral objective position’ from which the truth of an historical moment can be captured.

The primary purpose of making history according to western scientific methods is to establish an ‘objective historical truth’ that can be defended through the presentation of evidence and a rational defense of the evidence. Creating history of this type also involves locating human beings at the center of history and locating everything else in a peripheral position.

In the RCAP, the Aboriginal method of recording history pre and post contact is described as neither linear nor steeped in the same notions of ‘neutrality’ and ‘objectivity’. It is not usually human-centered in the same way as the western scientific method of knowledge construction because it does not assume that human beings are anything more than one aspect of the natural order of the world. Moreover, Aboriginal histories are typically oral and generally involve legends, and stories that are handed down through the generations in oral form. Some argue that it is less focused on establishing objective truth and assumes that the teller of the story is so much a part of the event being described that it would be arrogant to classify or categorize the event exactly or for all time.

Accounts of history by Aboriginal people are also likely to be rooted in specific geographical locations, making reference to particular families and communities. This contributes to a sense that there are many histories, each characterized in part by how a people see themselves, how they define their identity in relation to their environment, and how they express their uniqueness as a people.¹⁶

General phases of colonization and decolonization

Dr. Emma LaRocque remarks that the history of Canada is, in large part, a history of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples.¹⁷ So what is colonization and the process of decolonization? Professor of Psychology and advocate for the integrity of Indigenous knowledge Virgilio Enriquez of the Philippines, has developed a useful description of the general phases of the colonial project as it played/plays itself out around the world and the steps in the decolonization project.¹⁸

Enriquez proposes five general phases of a people's colonization. These are:

1. Denial and withdrawal
2. Destruction and eradication
3. Denigration, belittlement and insult
4. Surface accommodation and tokenism
5. Transformation and exploitation

According to Enriquez, a common first step in the process of colonization is the practice of denial and withdrawal, which entails a colonial people (typically European) meeting Indigenous peoples and assuming that they are a people without morals or have anything of social value. This assumption was re-enforced by the notion of *Terra Nullius*, a concept that means 'empty land' and which colonizers commonly used to define 'the new world'. This erroneous idea made it easier for colonizers to deny the fact that the land they were claiming for themselves belonged to Indigenous people.

The second general step in the colonization process is referred to as destruction and eradication. In this second phase, the colonists take bolder action, physically destroying and attempting to eradicate all physical representations of Indigenous culture. This may include the burning of their spiritual art, their spiritual images, the destruction of their sacred sites, etc. In most cases, the destruction applies not only to cultural representations but can also lead to the systemic elimination of the peoples, especially if they stand in the way of the plan for colonial expansion.

Denigration, belittlement and insult comprise the third step in typical colonial projects. As colonization takes a stronger hold, the new systems that are created within Indigenous societies, such as churches and education systems will serve to denigrate, belittle, and insult any continuing practices of the Indigenous culture.

Churches will style Indigenous religious practices as a form of devil worship and condemn the practitioners. Imported medical practitioners will typically categorize Indigenous doctors as witches if their medicine is successful and ignorant superstitious fools if their medicine fails. Colonial style education systems will aim to assimilate the Indigenous peoples into Euro-centric ways of knowing and will punish those who speak in their original language or behave in ways that do not conform to European norms.

According to Enriques, the fourth phase of colonization is surface accommodation and tokenism. At this stage of colonization, whatever remnants of culture have survived the onslaught of the earlier steps are given surface accommodation in the health and education systems, media, law and in social policy-making arenas. The token representations of the colonized Indigenous culture are regarded by the colonizer as an exhibition of the colonial regime's sense of tolerance toward the 'intractable' differences of the Indigenous peoples.

Enriques argues that the final phase of colonialism is best defined in terms of transformation and/or exploitation. In this fifth phase of colonialism, Enriques notes that those aspects of the Indigenous culture that continue to resist assimilation into dominant colonial society are fused with the culture of the dominating colonial society. For example, a Christian church may be led by an Indigenous person who uses the Indigenous language and incorporates some Indigenous terms and practices within the church's framework of worship. Moreover, Indigenous art which has survived may become popularized and form the basis for local economic developments. Where such developments do not directly benefit Indigenous people, the resultant can be the commodification and exploitation of cultural representations and practices for the benefit of members of dominant colonial society.

Enriques also proposes five phases of a people's decolonization. These are:

1. Rediscovery and recovery
2. Mourning
3. Dreaming
4. Commitment
5. Action

The phase of rediscovery of one's history and recovery of one's culture, language, identity, etc. is a fundamental part of developing pathways to decolonization. It forms the basis for the further steps to follow. Given the diversity of Indigenous peoples around the world, how this first step is taken depends on the specific laws, learning systems, artistic expressions, governance structures and overarching world view of each Indigenous peoples.

According to Enriquez, a natural step out of the first phase is toward mourning — a time when Indigenous people are able to lament their victimization. Enriquez explains that this is an essential part of the healing process of Indigenous people who have suffered at the hands of colonial agents. Each Indigenous person will take the required time that is needed to work through the mourning phase. Similar to individual responses to tragedies, societal mourning depends on the depths of the injustices and the current day circumstances of the Indigenous peoples in question.

The mourning stage can also accelerate the earlier stage of rediscovery and recovery. People in mourning often immerse themselves totally in the rediscovery of their history making for an interplay between these two phases, both feeding upon one another. The second phase may also be expressed in great anger and a lashing out at all symbols of the colonizer. A sense of justified violence, either in words or action, can convince some to remain in this phase and go no further, finding sufficient satisfaction in naming the historical injustice and the troubling legacies of such injustice.

Enriquez suggests that, for many Indigenous peoples, the phase of mourning is followed by a period of dreaming. According to Enriquez, this phase is the most crucial for decolonization. Here is where the full horizon of possibilities are expressed, considered through dialogue and deliberation, and the collective exercise of building dreams which eventually becomes the foundation for the development of new social orders informed by and ordered according to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Enriquez remarks that in the dreaming phase, people who have been colonized are able to explore their own cultures, their own aspirations for their future, considering their own structures of government and social order which encompass and expresses their hopes.

The dreaming process is intensive since it involves more than simply placing Indigenous peoples into the positions held by colonizers. Thick decolonization processes include a reevaluation of the political, social, economic and judicial

structures of contemporary times, and the creation of, wherever appropriate, new structures that can foster the values and advance the aspirations of Indigenous peoples. In the wake of, and often in conjunction with the process of dreaming, Enriques suggests that Indigenous people interested in moving toward action engage in a series of decision making processes that result in a commitment to acting on some of the proposed dreams for an improved future.

Enriques notes that several context-specific dynamics come into play in the messy process linking dreaming to the fourth phase of commitment. This bumpy transition involves wading through the positions of local personalities, family histories, and the residual shackles of paternalistic colonial social policies and law. In many cases, Indigenous communities transform dreams into action-strategies leading in a direction that has been, ideally, defined through consensus.

The final and ongoing phase of decolonization is action. Enriques notes that this phase can be properly taken only upon a consensus of commitment reached in the fourth phase. Otherwise, the action taken can not truly be said to be the choice of the Indigenous peoples in question, but rather some group of leaders that act for their own self interest.

Although the sequential process described above suggests that each phase leads gradually into the next through predictable incremental steps, the reality of many decolonization efforts suggests that each phase interpenetrates other phases in complex ways that defy simple classification. The final and ongoing phase of action can also lead to new dreaming, decision making and strategic action planning, all of which is typically housed in a culture of learning and prompted by creative insights into new social and legal orders, combined with cultural integrity, sustainable economic developments and care for the earth.

Settler and Indigenous social policy in Canada

Prior to Europeans coming to what is now known as North America, Indigenous populations were healthy and sustainable, each nation consisting of its own unique legal, spiritual, linguistic, governance and learning system. In most nations, women held leadership roles and were responsible for a wide range of decision-making processes.¹⁹ The natural environment was treated with the utmost respect and, especially in the case of British Columbia, provided nutrient-rich food.²⁰ Although

the initial contacts between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in North America consisted of a range of cooperation, conflict and coexistence, the aggressive settlement efforts of colonists quickly translated into unequal relationships. Historian Andrew Armitage provides a useful description of four general phases of social policies for relations between Settler and Indigenous populations since European contact. Although Armitage only tells one side of this history, his analysis is nevertheless useful for understanding the current status of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. In the following paragraphs, we summarize Armitage's four phases of Indigenous/settler social policy: dominance, paternalism, integration and pluralism.

The first major phase is best described in terms of domination, which occurred when European voyageurs/settlers began establishing colonial governance structures and policies for their relations to Indigenous peoples in an effort to gain control of their land.

In some parts of North America, treaties were signed between Indigenous groups and settlers, which confined Indigenous groups to reserves. In the case of British Columbia (excluding the territory covered by Treaty 8), land was reserved for Indigenous peoples with no treaties and no compensation.²¹

Armitage defines the second phase of settler and indigenous social policy in terms of paternalism. Similar to the policies of domination of phase one, the paternalistic policies of phase two were presupposed by the troubling idea that European settlers were 'naturally' superior. Oppressive laws such as the Indian Act and corresponding governmental institutions were created for the purpose of reinforcing the misguided notions of European superiority. European settlers used laws and social institutions to position themselves as 'care-takers' of Indigenous peoples. One of the most egregious examples of paternalistic social policy is the residential school system, which was designed, to systematically extinguish Aboriginal culture.

In the wake of paternalistic social policies, the Canadian government developed a new policy framework that sought to integrate Aboriginal peoples with Canadian society and take a place in the Canadian 'mosaic'.²² The most notorious example of integration social policy is the 1969 Canadian White Paper on Indian Policy. Written by Jean Chrétien for the Trudeau government, the White Paper espoused the principles of equal and individual rights and proposed the idea of eliminating

the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, doing away with the reserve system and a process by which all treaties would come to an end — assuming that such measures would make everyone 'equal'.²³

Aboriginal peoples across the country rejected the policy for several reasons, most notably because the White Paper failed to recognize Aboriginal rights to land. In the famous book entitled *The Unjust Society*, Cree leader Dr. Harold Cardinal offers a stinging rebuttal of the White Paper, summing up the government's approach as "the only good Indian is a non-Indian."²⁴ His voice demanded radical changes in government policy on Aboriginal rights, education, social programs and economic development.

According to Armitage, the final and current phase of settler/Indigenous social policy can be labeled as pluralistic, which he defines as a type of social policy that strives to recognize Aboriginal peoples' inherent rights and distinct cultural identities. There are several recent developments that aim to realize the goals of pluralist social policy, including the creation of the legal category 'Aboriginal', which is formalized in section 35 of the 1982 *Constitution Act* and serves to enshrine a set of rights for Aboriginal peoples. A series of court rulings by the Supreme Court of Canada (i.e. *Delgamuuk v. British Columbia*) have also forced the federal government to take seriously Aboriginal claims to land, fishing and hunting rights, as well as rights to be self-governing, including control over education and health care.

E-learning about peoples' experiences with colonization

The University of Victoria has developed an excellent series of online e-learning modules that explore the idea of cultural safety as it relates to the practices of human service provision. According to the site, the purpose of these e-learning modules is to reflect on Aboriginal peoples' experiences of colonization and racism as these relate to health and health care. Although each module is designed to stand-alone, the site developers recommend you work through the modules in the following order:

- Module 1: Introduces the relationships between colonial history and health.
- Module 2: Explores power and privilege and the intersections of peoples' experiences in relation to marginalization, oppression, and dominance.

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- Module 3: Explores the intersections of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in relation to health, health care, and healing.

The website can be found at the following link:

<web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/courses/csafety/mod1>

Historical and legal facts regarding Aboriginal peoples

Most people either do not know or are in denial of the colonial origins of Canada and often find it difficult to understand why Aboriginal peoples have and continue to resist assimilation and continue to struggle for self-determination.

Addressing this troubling ignorance and denial in Canadian society means identifying and defining the misconceptions that we believe about historical and contemporary Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships. There are two particularly good sources of legal and historical information about Aboriginal peoples and the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

The first resource on historical and legal facts is developed by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). In 2002, the AFN produced a set of Fact Sheets entitled *Top Misconceptions about Aboriginal Peoples*, which addressed twelve of the most common misconceptions about Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. The complete fact sheets can be downloaded on the AFN site: <www.afn.ca/article.asp?id-434>.

The second source of useful information is the Scow Institute, which is a charitable organization of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal British Columbians, initiated in 2001. The Society was founded by and is named after retired Judge Alfred J. Scow, the first Aboriginal person called to the Bar and to the Bench in British Columbia. The Institute is currently focusing on legal issues that affect Aboriginal people and has commissioned research reviews on a wide range of important issues, all of which can be downloaded from the Scow Institute website:

<www.scowinstitute.ca/documents.html>. Some topic examples include: Aboriginal self-government, taxation of Aboriginal people, political and fiscal accountability of band governments, etc.

Territories, names and languages of First Nations in British Columbia

The BC Ministry of Education has developed a useful map of First Nations in BC. As is noted on the BC Ministry of Education website, the map is designed to highlight the diversity of First Nations in BC. The fuzzy delineations that divide First Nations territories are intended to illustrate the complex nature of territorial relationships between First Nations. It is also important to note that many boundaries are presently being negotiated by several First Nations as part of the BC Treaty Process.

Also on this BC Ministry of Education site is a table that offers a phonetic guide to common pronunciation of First Nations; however, the best way to learn proper pronunciation is to listen closely when in the presence of someone who can speak the language or ask for a short lesson on proper pronunciation. All names and map details can be retrieved from the BC Ministry of Education website: <www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm>

British Columbia treaty process

In many parts of BC, the process of making treaties is a central consideration in the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. For an in depth look at the treaty processes around the province, visit the web site of the BC Treaty Commission, which is an independent and neutral body responsible for facilitating treaty negotiations among the governments of Canada, BC and First Nations in BC.

The BC Treaty Commission and the treaty process were established in 1992 by agreement among Canada, BC and the First Nations Summit. They are guided by those agreements and the 1991 Report of the BC Claims Task Force, which is the blueprint for the made-in-BC treaty process. The Treaty Commission and the six-stage treaty process were designed to advance negotiations and facilitate fair and durable treaties. You can learn more about the BC Treaty Commission and treaty process at: <www.bctreaty.net>

For information on First Nations communities not involved in the BC Treaty Process, research the Union of BC Indian Chiefs website: <www.ubcic.bc.ca>.

Partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples

There are several Aboriginal partnership guidebooks and engagement toolkits that have been developed in BC. Recently, Community Futures Development Corporation British Columbia produced the *Community Futures British Columbia Aboriginal Engagement Toolkit*, which includes a wide range of useful information about how to approach and engage in partnership development. The complete toolkit can be down loaded at the following site:

<www.communityfutures.ca/provincial/bc/aboriginal-initiatives/aboriginal-engagement-toolkit.pdf>

Also, in 2002 the Centre for Municipal-Aboriginal relations developed a similar resource that is focused on the relations between local government and First Nations. The resource is called *Partnerships in practice: Case studies in municipal and First Nations and economic development co-operation*. The complete resource can be accessed at the following site: <ubcm.ihostez.com/contentengine/launch.asp?ID=1577&Action=bypass>

Also see the guidebook produced in 2006 by Laureen Whyte for the Industry Council for Aboriginal Business, entitled *Making the grade: A guide to success for Aboriginal–corporate initiatives*. The complete guidebook can be downloaded at the following site: <www.icab.ca/images/Publication/mtg2007.pdf>

Appendices

The first appendix in this section consists of a list of supplementary resources, including online resources, books and scholarly articles that relate to intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The second appendix consists of a feed back sheet that you can use to provide us with your comments on this resource guide.

Appendix One: Supplementary resources

In this appendix, we have provided you with a sample of websites, books and articles that relate to the following topics:

- Diversity in community planning and development work;
- Historical and contemporary perspectives on relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada and abroad;
- Indigenous research methodologies;
- Intercultural communication.

The first section contains online resources and the second section includes the title of relevant books and academic articles.

Online resources

Assembly of First Nations
<www.afn.ca>

Aboriginal Canada Portal
<www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca>

BC Assembly of First Nations
<www.bcafn.ca>

BC Métis Nation
<www.mpcbc.ca>

BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
<www.aaf.gov.bc.ca/aaf>

Canadian Historical Association
<www.cha-shc.ca/english/>

Centre for Native Policy and Research
<www.cnpr.ca>

Center for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS)
<www.cwis.org/wwwvl/indig-vl.html>

First Nations Summit
<www.fns.bc.ca>

Interinstitutional Consortium for Indigenous Knowledge
www.ed.psu.edu/icik

National Film Board: Aboriginal Perspectives Website
<www.nfb.ca/enclasse/doclens/visau/>

Turning Point: Native Peoples and Newcomers online
<www.turning-point.ca>

United Native Nations
<www.unns.bc.ca>

Where are the Children?: Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools
<www.wherearethechildren.ca>

World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium
<www.win-hec.org>

Union of BC Indian Chiefs
<www.ubcic.bc.ca>

Union of BC Municipalities
<www.civicnet.bc.ca>

Books

Alfred, Taiaike. *Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005.

Ball, Jessica & Alan R. Pence. *Supporting Indigenous Children's Development: Community-University Partnerships*. UBC Press, 2006.

Battiste, Marie & James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson. *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2000.

Bird, S. Elizabeth. *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*. Westview Press, 1996.

Burrows, John. *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law*. University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Chamberlin, J. Edward. *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?: Finding Common Ground*. Vintage Canada, 2004.

Dickson-Gilmore, Jane & Carol La Prarie. 'Will the Circle be Unbroken?': Aboriginal Communities, Restorative Justice, and the Challenges of Conflict and Change. University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Forester, John F. *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*. MIT Press, 1999.

Furniss, Elizabeth. *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Community*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999.

Graveline, Fyre Jean. *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Fernwood Publishing, 1998.

Harris, R. Cole. *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 2003.



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Miller, J. R. *Reflections on Native-Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Miller, J.R. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Perry, Adele. *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Pickles, Katie and Myra Rutherdale. *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*. Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2005.

Regan, Paulette. "Unsettling the Settler Within: Canada's Peacemaker Myth, Reconciliation, and Transformative Pathways to Decolonization." (PhD dissertation, University of Victoria, 2006).

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, 1999.

Tully, James. *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Articles

Bhandar, B. "Anxious Reconciliation(s): Unsettling Foundations and Spatializing History." *Environment and Planning D-Society & Space* 22, no.6 (2004).

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Craps, M. et al. "Constructing Common Ground and Re-Creating Differences between Professional and Indigenous Communities in the Andes." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 14, no.5 (2004).

Green, M.J. "Examining Discourses of Whiteness and the Potential for Reconciliation." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 15, no.6 (2005).

Goodall, H. "Too Early Yet or Not Soon Enough? Reflections on Sharing Histories as Process." *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no.118 (2002).

Kirkwood, S. et al., "Challenging the Standard Story of Indigenous Rights in Aotearoa/New Zealand." *Journal of Community & Applied Psychology* 15, no. 6 (2005).

Kliger B. and L. Cosgrove. "Local Cross-Cultural Planning and Decision-Making with Indigenous People in Broome, Western Australia." *Ecumene* 6, no.1 (1999).

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- Smith, Cherryl Waarea-I-Te-Rangi. "Straying beyond the Boundaries of Belief: Maori Epistemologies inside the Curriculum." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 32, no. 1 (2000).
- Worchel, S. "Culture's Role in Conflict and Conflict Management: Some Suggestions, Many Questions." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, no. 6 (2005).



Appendix Two: Comment sheet

The *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide* is one of SPARC BC's first attempts to explore possible forms of intercultural work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

We are very interested in hearing about your opinion of the *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide*. Help us improve this resource by providing us with your responses to the following questions.

What did you like most about the *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide*?

What did you like the least about the *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide*?

Is there anything missing that should be included in future editions of the *Building Bridges Together Resource Guide*? _____

Do you have any intercultural success stories that you would like to share?

Other comments?

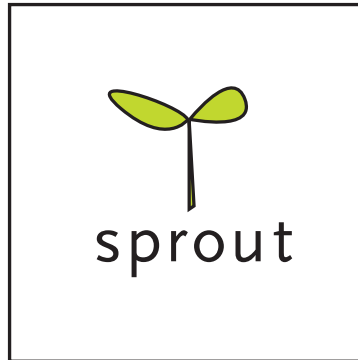
Please send your responses by email to cde@sparc.bc.ca, fax to 604.736.8697, or mail to 201-221 E. 10th Ave., Vancouver, BC V5T 4V3



Endnotes

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14. Assembly of First Nations, "Top Misconceptions about Aboriginal Peoples," <www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=434>
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resources for social change

As SPARC BC's ongoing knowledge transfer initiative, Sprout resources are designed to facilitate learning about and the practice of community-based research methods and community development strategies.

Sprout is a symbol of growth and innovation and can be found on all SPARC BC resource guides and workbooks that have been developed for you to use with groups of committed people who care about community well being. By nature, Sprout resources are fusions of theory and practice — mixtures of big ideas and small steps for cultivating positive change in your community. Each year, we will add new publications to Sprout based on your input. Let us know what you would like to see in Sprout!

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