

Indigenizing Instruction

Darryl Isbister
Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning

May 3, 2024

Introduction

Who am I?

- Hello
- Good afternoon
- My name is Darryl Isbister
- I am Métis
- I am learning Michif
- My family comes from Kinistino,
Saskatchewan
- I am Lead for Indigenous Education
Initiatives – Gwenna Moss Centre for
Teaching and Learning – USask

Agenda

Introduction

Agenda

Terminology

Indigenizing Education

Feedback

Important
Terminology

01

Aboriginal

The term “Aboriginal” refers to the first inhabitants of Canada, and includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This term came into popular usage in Canadian contexts after 1982, when Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution defined the term as such. Aboriginal is also a common term for the Indigenous peoples of Australia. When used in Canada, however, it is generally understood to refer to Aboriginal peoples in a Canadian context. This term is not commonly used in the United States.

Important
Terminology

02

First Nation

“First Nation” is a term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and ‘80s and generally replaced the term “Indian,” although unlike “Indian,” the term “First Nation” does not have a legal definition. While “First Nations” refers to the ethnicity of First Nations peoples, the singular “First Nation” can refer to a band, a reserve-based community, or a larger tribal grouping and the status Indians who live in them.



Important
Terminology

03

Inuit

Inuit are an Indigenous people living primarily in Inuit Nunangat. The majority of our population lives in 51 communities spread across Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 40% of Canada's land area and 72% of its coastline. They have lived in their homeland since time immemorial.

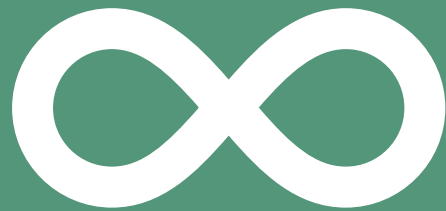


Important
Terminology

04

Métis

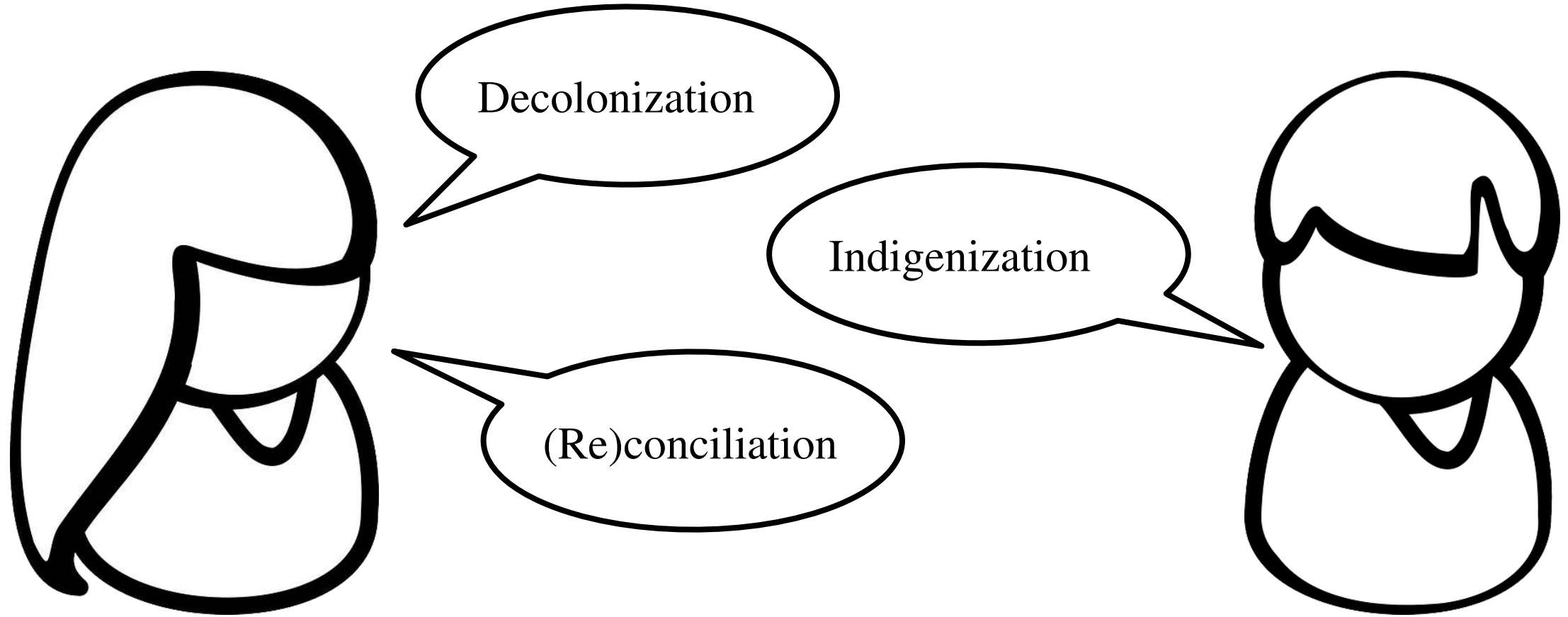
“Métis means a person, who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation.” – Métis Nation Saskatchewan



Important
Terminology

Understanding Our Current Reality

- **First**, we must acknowledge that the current reality is historical and persistent.
 - a) This reality was here when we arrived and given that we inherited this reality, we are responsible for responding to it.
- **Second**, if we are to change this reality for Métis, First Nation and Inuit people we must examine our own values, beliefs and behaviors in relation to the policies and practices of USask.
- **Third**, we can make a difference if we hear who our First Nation, Inuit and Métis people are and listen to what they need.
- **Fourth**, Hon. Senator Murray Sinclair eloquently stated on December 13, 2013, “Education has gotten us into this mess, and education will get us out.”



Definitions

Decolonization: is about shifting the way Indigenous Peoples view themselves and the way non-Indigenous people view Indigenous Peoples. Decolonization requires non-Indigenous Canadians to recognize and accept the reality of Canada's colonial history, accept how that history paralyzed Indigenous Peoples, and how it continues to subjugate Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenization: requires non-Indigenous people to be aware of Indigenous worldviews and to respect that those worldviews are equal to other views. Indigenization is about incorporating Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives into the education system, right from primary grades to universities.

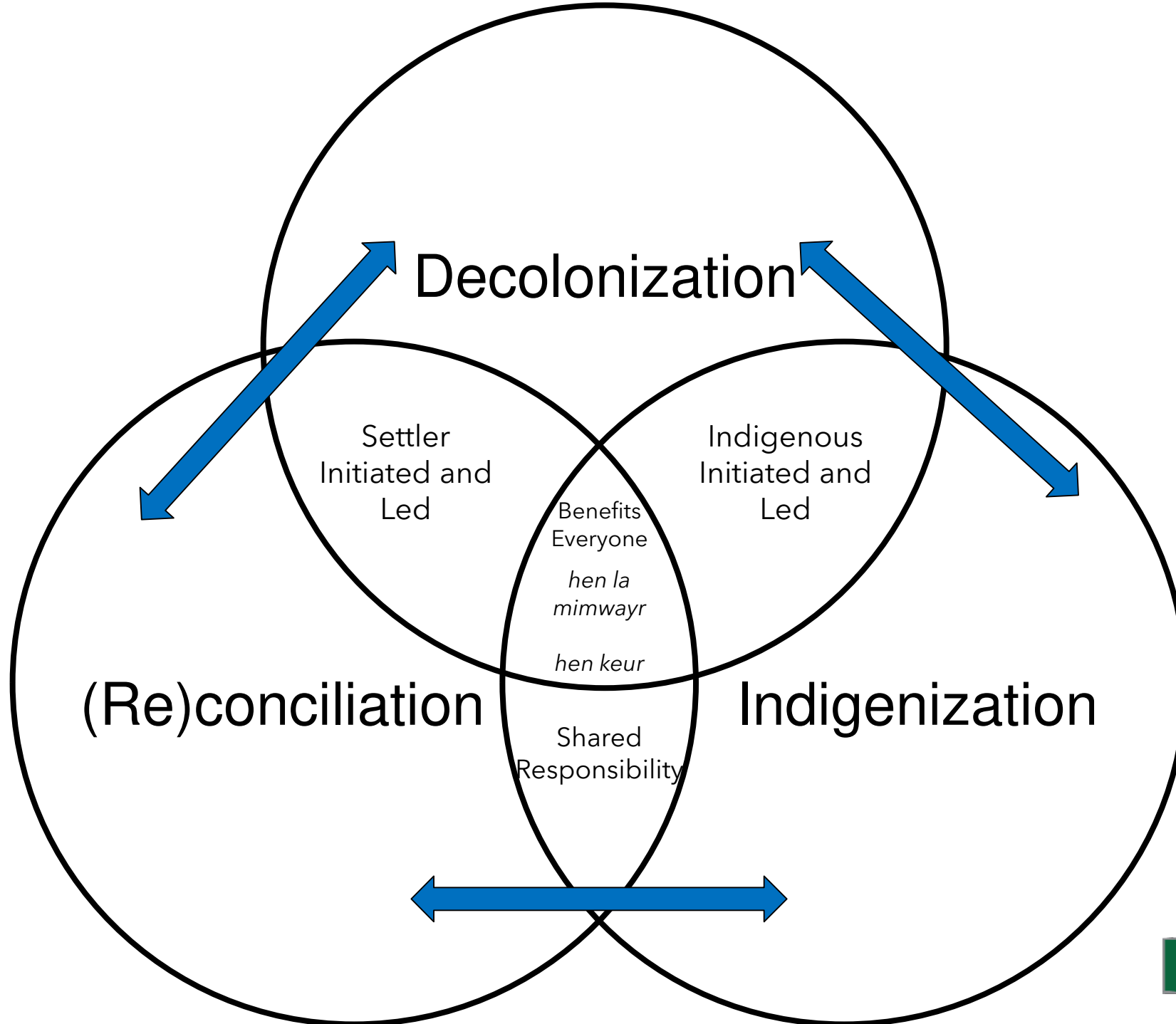
(Re)conciliation: is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

USask Definitions

- **Indigenization** challenges us to amplify the forces of decolonization. **Indigenization** strengthens the fabric of the University. It involves the respectful, meaningful, ethical weaving of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledges, lived experiences, worldviews, and stories into teaching, learning, and research. **Indigenization** is a gift that benefits every member of our community
- **Decolonization** practices contest divisive and demeaning actions, policies, programming, and frameworks. Indigenization is the healing, balancing force; it calls us to action, inspires opportunities for mutual cultural understanding, and helps us to find comfort in the discomfort **decolonization** can entail.

USask Definitions

- **(Re)conciliation** is a goal that may take generations to realize. It “is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts” (Senator Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission). As a community, we have a shared responsibility to honour and join in the journey of reconciliation; to repair, redress and heal relationships; and nurture an ethical space in which we can explore how we relate to each other through the lenses of history, culture, and lived experience



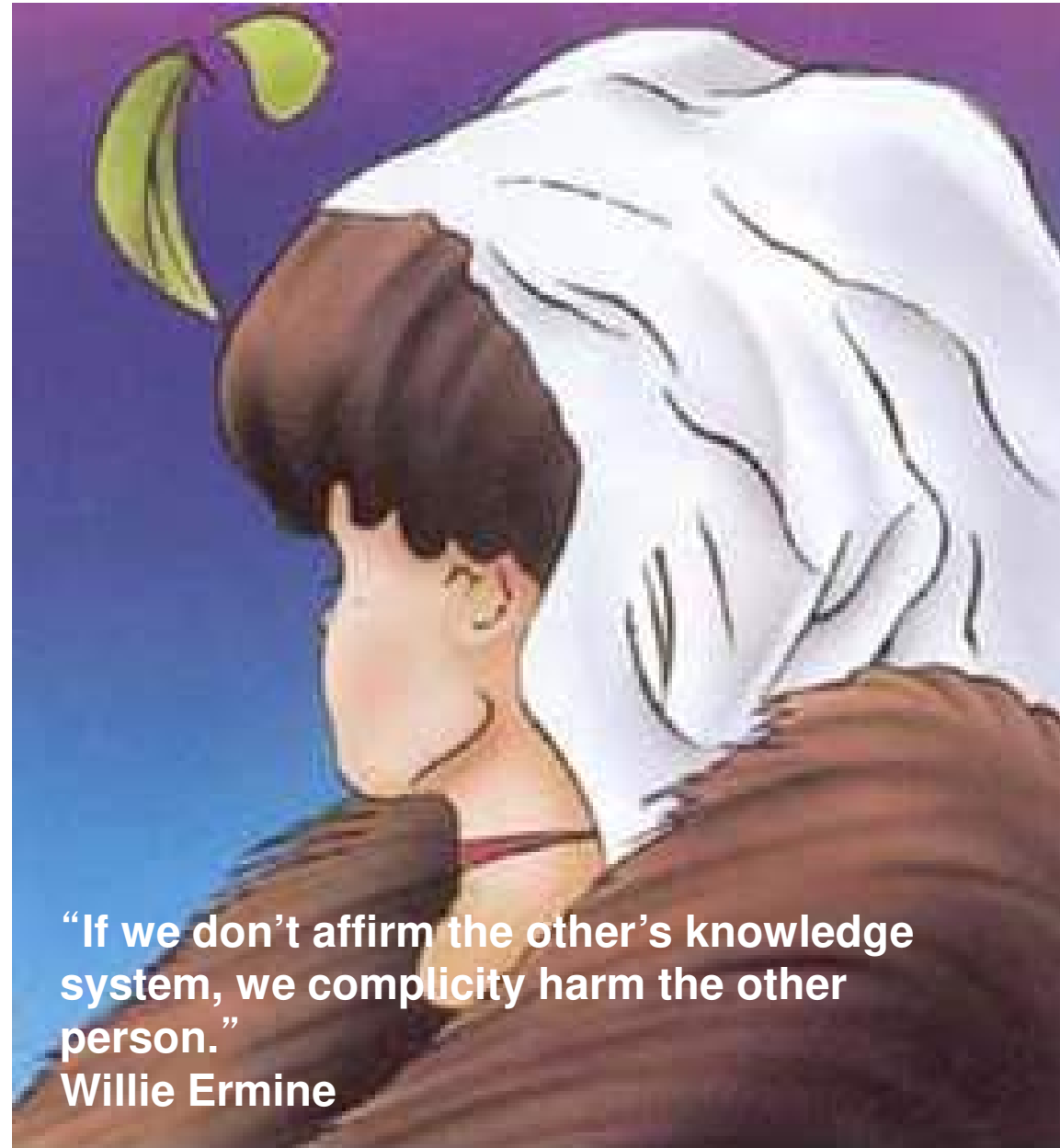
Indigenizing Instruction



Image by [Michaela](#) from [Pixabay](#)

How Did You Learn About Indigenous People?





“If we don’t affirm the other’s knowledge system, we complicity harm the other person.”

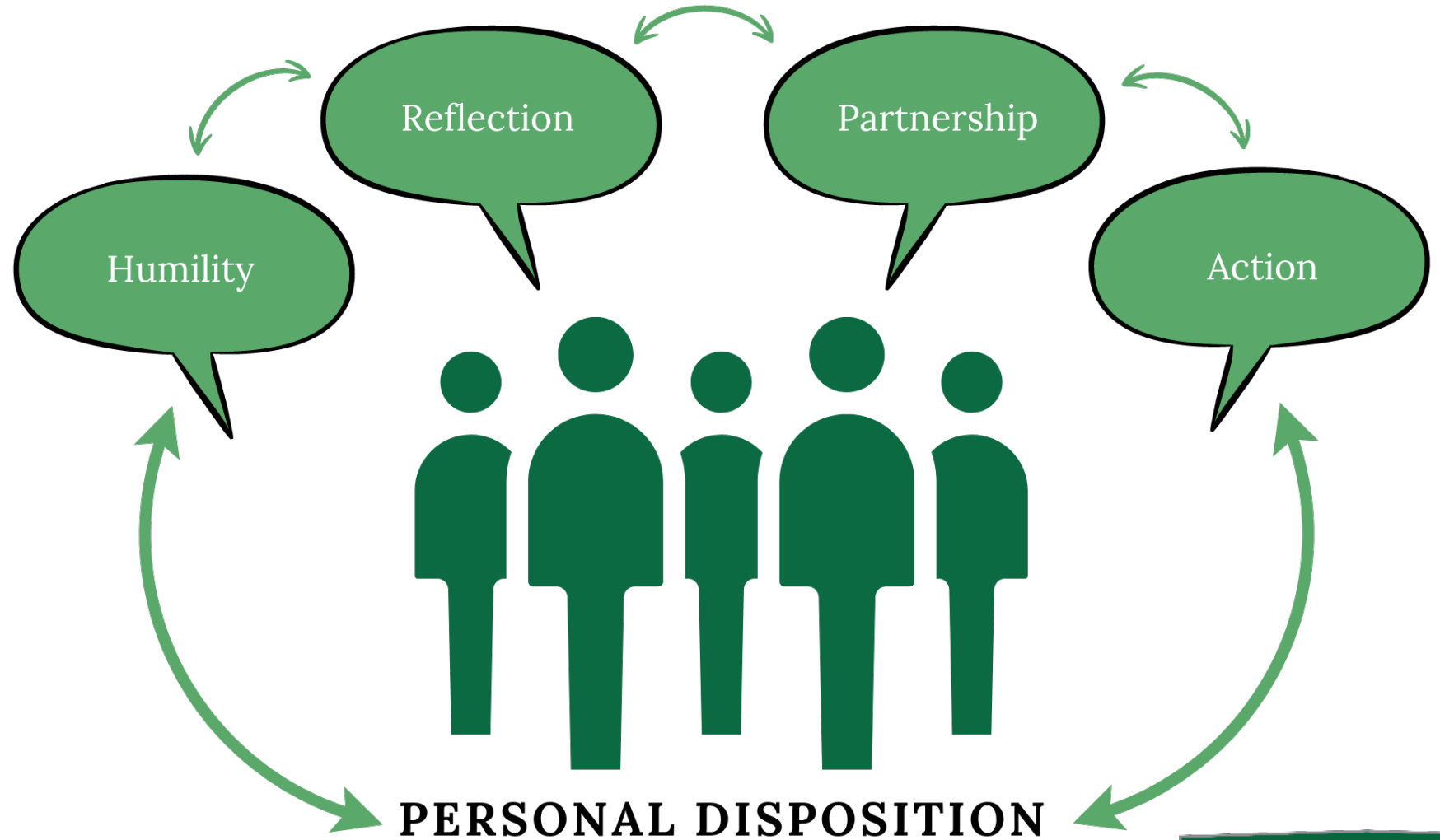
Willie Ermine

How do I begin to Indigenize instruction?

- **Build relationships with the learners**
- **Consult with Elders & Knowledge Holders**
- **Incorporate Indigenous Knowledge Systems**
- **Revise Course Content & Materials**
- **Incorporate Indigenous Pedagogy**
- **Create an Inclusive Classroom Environment**

POSITIONALITY

Reciprocity
of
Relationship



PERSONAL DISPOSITION

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

To view a copy of the license, visit [here](#).



Educator Disposition

- Mindset
- Responsibility
- Address inequities



Humility

- Honour prior knowledge
- Protecting space
- Flatten hierarchies

Reflection

- Recognition of:
 - Unconscious bias
 - Social positioning
 - Impact of worldview
 - Systemic bias

Partnership

- Respect for multiple worldviews
- Understanding of shared responsibility
- Professional responsibility to reconciliation



Action

- Respond to inequities on multiple levels
- Commitment to influence change
- Affirmation and inclusion of Indigenous ways of know, being, and doing

Bias – Intended and Unintended

1. Bias by Omission

2. Bias by
Defamation

3. Bias by
Disparagement

4. Bias by
Cumulative
Implication

5. Bias by (Lack of)
Validity

6. Bias by Inertia

7. Bias by
Obliteration

9. Bias by
Disembodiment

9. Bias by Lack of
Concreteness

10. Bias by (Lack of)
Comprehensiveness
& Balance

Impact of Language



Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

- “Let’s bury the hatchet”
- “Which one of your parents is First Nation?”
- “What about (another cultural group)?”
- “We need to get together and have a pow wow to discuss this.”
- “Low man on the Totem Pole”

Decolonizing Instruction

Teaching About First Nation,
Inuit, and Métis Peoples



Teaching with Métis, First Nation,
and Inuit Peoples

Decolonizing Instruction

- Build/grow relationship with Inuit, Métis, and First Nation scholars, elders, and community partners to impact learning with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis epistemologies.
- Disrupt the idea that Métis, First Nation, and Inuit ways of knowing are subordinate to dominant ways of knowing.

Decolonizing Instruction

- Practice challenging the belief that “it all happened a long time ago and Indigenous people should ‘get over it’ or ‘move on’.”
- If First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students are in your course, remind yourself they are here to learn.

Decolonizing Instruction

- Co-teach with Métis, First Nation, and Inuit people from outside the University; consider alumni, local professionals, and community members.
- Be prepared to address the statement – “There is too much Aboriginal content.”

Decolonizing Instruction

- Disrupt the dominant idea of deficit thinking directed toward Inuit, Métis, and First Nation learners.

Decolonizing Assessment

- Métis, First Nation, and Inuit learners may bring different set of life experiences to the classroom. Aligning assessment practices to recognize life experiences and culturally-based responses promotes inclusivity.
- Cultural practices that value oral and observational learning impact traditional assessment practices.

Decolonizing Assessment

- Meeting the needs and promoting strength in learning of Inuit, Métis, and First Nation learners can be effectively supported with varying forms of assessment practices.
- Using Multiple Assessment Methods
 - a) Create opportunity
 - b) Accommodate individual differences
 - c) Offer multifaceted view of student learning

Decolonizing Assessment

- Rubrics As Criteria for Success
 - a) Provide clear and concise expectations
 - b) Provide clarity on goal and steps to meet the goal.



Image by [Christina Smith](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Decolonizing Assessment



Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

- Share Clear Expectations
 - a) Integrate assessment and instructional planning processes
 - b) Match assessments and instructional approaches
 - c) Provide exemplars when possible

Decolonizing Assessment

- Self Evaluation
 - a) Supports cognitive achievement
 - b) Builds motivation
 - c) Promotes healthy attitudes toward assessment



Image by [Mohamed Hassan](#) from [Pixabay](#)

“Many educators still believe that good teaching transcends place, people, time and context. They contend it has nothing to do with the class, race, gender, ethnicity or culture of students and teachers. This attitude is manifested in the expression, ‘good teachers anywhere are good teachers everywhere.’ Individuals who subscribe to this belief fail to realize that their standards of ‘goodness’ in teaching and learning are culturally determined and not the same for all ethnic groups.”

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice - 2nd edition* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers' College Press. pg. 23



darryl.isbister@usask.ca