

Whose Land?

Professional Development Series

OVERVIEW

This workshop series will introduce participants to Indigenous topics such as Indigenous naming terminology, history of Indigenous and settler relationships in Canada and the importance of land acknowledgements. First, to assess prior knowledge, participants will engage in small group discussions centering around the theme of culture, land and place. Next, participants will be tasked with learning one aspect of Indigenous history. Participants will rotate groups to share their knowledge with others. Finally, participants will collaborate on a suitable workplace Indigenous land acknowledgement.

Note: It is encouraged those workplaces make a list of mental health resources available for staff engaging in this training, as some of the topics may be emotionally difficult to learn about.

FORMAT

This workshop is designed to be an easily implementable lunch-and-learn series facilitated by a fellow co-worker volunteer or group of volunteers. Volunteer facilitators do not need to have any prior teaching or facilitating experience, as this professional development workshop plan will cover all the basics. It is expected that facilitators will engage in the discussions along with everyone else. It is up to organizations to determine if having one or more facilitators at a time will work best, and if there should be a new facilitator each session. Sessions are designed to be an hour long in length, with a total of four sessions.

FACILITATOR QUALITIES

While facilitators do not need to have any prior teaching or facilitating experience, they should have the following qualities: effective communication skills and ability to engage in respectful dialog about difficult topics, an openness to learning about Indigenous topics, a positive attitude, and a demonstrated commitment to anti-racism.

WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS AND COMPETENCIES

Learning about Indigenous topics is an essential step in building cultural competency. Cultural competency is the “ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one’s own”¹. In this case, learning about Indigenous topics will help participants better understand, respect and engage with Indigenous populations. Research shows that when a workplace values cultural competency, it can lead to a reduction of conflict, racism and discrimination both within the organization itself, and in the interactions of the organization with the public².

DURATION

4 one-hour sessions

Lesson Plan

PART 1: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS (1 HOUR)

Big Idea: Participants will engage in small group discussions to tap into prior knowledge and discuss prior learning as well as personal opinions and experiences relating to culture, land, and place

Begin the session by dividing participants into groups of 3-4. Inform them that they will be engaging in small group discussions, and you will pose one question at a time for groups to discuss for about 2-3 minutes. Every person in the group should speak, and participants who notice someone in their group is not speaking should invite them into the conversation by gently stating their name and asking what their thoughts or opinions are on the topic. This could sound like “*Rachel, what do you think about x,y,z?*” After the 2-3 minutes is up, solicit groups to summarize what they talked about with the rest of the class.

¹ DeAngelis, T. (2015, March). In search of cultural competence. *Monitor on Psychology*, 46(3). <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/03/cultural-competence>

² Black, Stewart, et al. “Diversity and Its Impact on Companies.” *Organizational Behavior*, OpenStax, 27 Feb. 2019. openstax.org/r/organizationalbehavioropenstax/chapter/diversity-and-its-impact-on-companies/.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between a discussion and debate? *This is an extremely important question to start off the lunch-and-learn series with. Possible answers might include that a discussion is open-ended, respectful and participants listen to understand; whereas in a debate there is a winner and a loser, and participants listen to respond. Discussions require an open-mind and debates require a closed mind.*

Inform the group that this workshop series will require participants to have respectful discussions rather than debates. Remind participants that the topics discussed in this workshop have a direct impact on the lives of Indigenous people and might be emotionally triggering, which is why it is essential that participants engage with these topics respectfully and with empathy.

2. Share a bit about your ancestral background. Where are your ancestors from? Do you know what their experience was like with the Canadian government?
3. Share something about your culture that you value. *Hint: Encourage participants to recognize that Canadian culture includes traditions such as celebrating birthdays and national holidays.*
4. How diverse is your social circle? Do you have social relationships with people from different religions, cultures, ethnicities and/or sexual orientations?
5. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your knowledge about Indigenous peoples history, culture, and current topics?
6. Discuss what you know about the history of the land we are all on right now. *Examples of discussion points might include the names of Indigenous nations, names of treaties or settlement agreements, other historical events in the area etc...*
7. Describe a place that is important to you. What makes it so special to you? *Examples might include your house, a place where you have a special memory, your home country, a grave site etc...*
8. How would you feel if you were no longer able to access this place? How would you feel if this special place was destroyed? *Note: This might be a reality for many participants, Indigenous and newcomer participants alike.*
9. Why do you think some people have a different connection to land and place? *Answers might include personal experiences and histories.*
10. **What is the definition of a stereotype? Where do stereotypes come from? A stereotype is "an exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group—a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation. Stereotypes are based on images in mass media, or reputations passed on by parents, peers and other members of society. Stereotypes can be positive or negative."**³
11. What do you think the definition of prejudice is? *A prejudice is "an opinion, prejudgment or attitude about a group or its individual members. A prejudice can be positive, but in our usage refers to a negative attitude.*

Prejudices are often accompanied by ignorance, fear or hatred. Prejudices are formed by a complex psychological process that begins with attachment to a close circle of acquaintances or an "in-group" such as a family. Prejudice is often aimed at "out-groups."⁴

12. What is the definition of discrimination? What are some examples of discrimination? How do you think stereotypes and prejudice lead to discrimination? *Discrimination is "behavior that treats people unequally because of their group memberships. Discriminatory behavior, ranging from slights to hate crimes, often begins with negative stereotypes and prejudices."*⁵
13. What topics related to Indigenous culture, history and current topics do you want to learn more about?

Thank participants for engaging in the group discussions respectfully and honestly. Inform

3 Southern Poverty Law Centre . (n.d.). Test Yourself for Hidden Bias. Learning for Justice. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>.

4 Southern Poverty Law Centre . (n.d.). Test Yourself for Hidden Bias. Learning for Justice. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>.

5 Southern Poverty Law Centre . (n.d.). Test Yourself for Hidden Bias. Learning for Justice. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>.

them that next time we are going to learn more about Indigenous topics related to history and place.

PART 2: LEARNING GROUPS (1 HOUR)

Big Idea: Participants will engage in collaborative learning about Indigenous Peoples and relevant topics

Set Up: Begin the session by setting up various stations around the learning space. Two stations need a computer/laptop. Other stations need the printed materials, and all stations need chart paper and markers. Alternatively, groups can spread out and work in alternate locations once the task is explained to them.

Inform participants that they will be working in groups to learn about one relevant topic in relation to Indigenous peoples in this country. How groups are decided is up the facilitator – the same groups can be used as last time, or participants can choose a station that interests them the most. Groups should spend approximately 40 minutes reviewing and learning the material, then 20 minutes planning their presentations where they will teach the other groups about their topic.

Note: The idea for this activity comes from the idea of professional learning communities (PLCs) in the field of education. PLC's serve to ensure teachers are continuously building capacity and committing to constant professional improvement⁶. Typically, PLCs choose their own topics, but for this workshop, we are adapting it so participants are given a topic to learn.

Stations:

1) Whose Land? Website Exploration

Participants at this station will review the Whose Land website at <https://www.whose.land/en/>

They will be responsible for teaching the group about the Indigenous people whose traditional territory they are currently working on, as well as any other relevant information they can find related to treaties/settlement agreements.

2) Legacy of Hope Foundation: Residential School Survivor Stories

<https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethechildren/stories/>

Participants at this station will watch 2-3 videos of residential school survivors telling their stories. Participants may try to find stories from survivors who went to schools near their areas. They will be responsible for teaching the group about the impacts of residential schools on individuals, families, and communities.

*Trigger warning: This station mentions difficult topics, namely, the abuse of children. It will be essential that this group be reminded of the mental health resources are available to them.

3) National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Executive Summary of the Final Report

https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf

Participants at this station will each read a section of the Executive Summary and collaborate on teaching the group about the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

4) Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action PDF

http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Participants at this station will read the relevant section of the TRC's Calls to Action and

⁶ Stoll, Louise & Bolam, Ray & McMahon, Agnes & Wallace, Mike & Thomas, Sally. (2006). Professional Learning Communities: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Educational Change*. 7. 221-258. 10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8.

collaborate on teaching the group about the calls and ways the organization can work towards achieving them.

If participants have not finished deciding how they are going to present their learning to the group next session, they may want to dedicate some more time to this. It is up to the facilitator to decide if another work session is needed before moving on to Part 3.

PART 3: TEACHING WHAT YOU LEARNED (1 HOUR)

Big Idea: Groups will present their learning

Inform the group that the topics presented today will be difficult to learn about. Remind them about the mental health resources available to them.

Groups will take turns teaching everyone about what they learned at their station. Typically, groups will take between 5-10 minutes to present their topics.

Facilitators can ask debriefing questions such as:

14. How did you feel while learning about the topic?
15. What piece of information surprised you the most?
16. How will you engage in self-care this evening?

Thank groups for presenting. Inform them that during the final session they will be taking all the information they gained and creating a meaningful organizational land acknowledgment.

PART 4: CREATING A LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (1 HOUR)

Review and summarize the learning from Part 3.

Show an example of a land acknowledgment made by an Indigenous person from the Whose Land Website homepage at: <https://www.whose.land/en/>

Once participants understand what a land acknowledgement is, inform them that you will, all together, create an organizational land acknowledgement.

Option 1: You will, all together, create an organizational land acknowledgement.

Ask participants what they think should be included in the land acknowledgement based on the examples they viewed and the information they learned last workshop.

Ideally, your land acknowledgement should include the following information:

- The name of the Indigenous nation(s) whose traditional territory the organization is on
- How we benefit from this land (*hint: we benefit from buildings on the land such as the workplace, schools, houses, hospitals, etc... plus we benefit from the land, water, sky, animals to provide us with live sustaining food, water and materials*)
- How Indigenous people were negatively affected by residential schools
- The legacy of colonization in relation to current issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- How the organization is going to commit to the relevant Calls to Action
- Plus, anything extra that participants suggested to make this land acknowledgment meaningful and personal. As an example, you might want to prompt participants to think about how they can commit to taking care of the land or how they can honour the treaties, if applicable to your region.

Together as a group, go through each part of a land acknowledgement and have participants collaborate on what they think should be included. Write down their ideas using chart paper, continuously editing/adding/changing until it reads just right!

This land acknowledgement can be used to open meetings, special celebrations and can be posted on the organizations website as a way to honour relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Option 2: Participants will create their own personal land acknowledgement.

Ask participants what they think should be included in their land acknowledgements based on the example they viewed and the information they learned last workshop.

Ideally, their land acknowledgements should include the following information:

- The name of the Indigenous nation(s) whose traditional territory they live and work on
- How they benefit from this land (hint: we benefit from buildings on the land such as the workplace, schools, houses, hospitals, etc... plus we benefit from the land, water, sky, animals to provide us with live sustaining food, water and materials)
- How Indigenous people were negatively affected by residential schools
- The legacy of colonization in relation to current issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- How they are going to commit personally to the relevant Calls to Action
- Plus, anything extra that participants suggested to make this land acknowledgment meaningful and personal. As an example, you might want to prompt participants to think about how they can commit to taking care of the land or how they can honour the treaties, if applicable to your region.

Allow participants time to create this meaningful and personal Indigenous land acknowledgment.

Have participants volunteer to share their personal land acknowledgements to wrap up the workshop.