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Indigenizing and Decolonizing Pedagogies at CEGEP

Editors: Michelle Smith, Debbie Lunny, Alyson Jones

Introduction

By **Deborah Lunny, PhD**, Humanities, John Abbott College

She:kon, Tsungngatsugitsi, Waachiya, Taanshi, Bienvenue, and Welcome to the final edition of the CDC Bulletin!

Readers will know that the *Bulletin* regularly introduces teachers, pedagogical counsellors, and managers to CDC's resources, but this issue on *Indigenizing and Decolonizing Pedagogies at CEGEP* offers something more. Decolonization and Indigenization are profoundly deep, humanizing processes that demand a total change in ways of doing and relating, particularly for settlers (non-Indigenous inhabitants of Quebec) who have been socialised into colonial ways of understanding the world (and education). ReconciliAction demands that we do things differently, so *this CDC Bulletin does things differently!* It includes two personal essay-format calls to action by Indigenous writers as well as a literature review of Indigenous-authored texts by a settler teacher done in dialogue with Indigenous experts.

We hope you will be inspired to begin, or deepen, your own transformative, decolonial learning journey and share the benefits of learning to do things differently in your CEGEP classrooms, offices, and meetings. Decolonizing and Indigenizing Pedagogies offers a timely promise to teachers in post-pandemic classrooms: we hope that you will see how these critical, grounded, humanizing pedagogies can help you to connect with all students, create culturally safer spaces for Indigenous CEGEP students, and engage Indigenous Peoples and curricular content in respectful ways.

When we began developing this issue in early 2020, we were hoping to share strategies from the grassroots [Intercollegiate Decolonization Network \(IDN\)](#), a loosely structured network of Montreal-area Anglophone CEGEP folk collaborating with Indigenous students and educators. IDN members were excited by the self-advocacy of Indigenous CEGEP students, the process of unlearning Eurocentric educational values through Indigenous-led teacher trainings, and strategizing to remove systemic barriers. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the *Bulletin*

was put on hold, and IDN members shifted our focus to addressing the pandemic’s heightened impact on Indigenous students and communities, which delayed and in some cases ended students’ CEGEP studies.

Four years later, we are undoubtedly in a moment of colonial re-entrenchment in Quebec as attested to by Joyce Eschequan’s death, the discovery of children’s remains at residential schools, and the colonial imposition of Bill 96/Loi 14. Indigenous-led struggles for sovereignty, land back, protecting the Earth and waters, as well as cultural and linguistic revival are increasingly known in CEGEP classrooms and Quebec society at large. We are heartened by some significant gains in these politically repressive times: the growth in Indigenous-led CEGEP programs at *Kiuna*, *Nunavik Sivunitsavut*, *Iysekuwiiu*; successful students return to leadership positions in their home communities; and the recent hiring of Kim Tekakwitha Martin as Quebec’s first Dean of Indigenous Education at John Abbott College. Then, as now, the positive impact of Indigenous-led learning is undeniable, even in a political climate marked by both growing awareness and denial of systemic racism in Quebec.

Decolonize and Indigenize pedagogies at the CEGEP level : three Essays

The three essays included herein explore different facets of what it means to decolonize and Indigenize pedagogies at the CEGEP level. We hope you find inspiration and challenge in these offerings!

Reconciliation through meaningful Indigenous-led Indigenization in Québec Cégeps
by Michelle Smith 2025

I have worked in English Cégeps in and near Québec (including Montréal) since 2011. As Coordinator of the Aboriginal Studies Certificate at John Abbott College, Coordinator of the Juniors First Peoples Program (JFP) at Dawson College, and teacher at an alternative program at the Université de Québec, I have had many opportunities to engage with Indigenous students and staff. I am fortunate to have been invited to participate in the 2025 Indigenous Education Exchange (IEE) and am completing my PhD on the topic of Indigenous Educational Sovereignty. I am proud to have been invited to the event, and I have deep respect and gratitude for the custodians of this land and the many nations that call this place home. As a Métis woman working in Kaniakcheha territory with Indigenous students from diverse nations in a largely western educational framework, my experience is one of contrast. I get very frustrated by the slow pace of change at the institutional level and some days as a teacher, but most days are filled with great learning and I'm profoundly grateful for the lessons from the land, from colleagues, community members, and especially students, who have me to become a better teacher and learner by my own doing as a Métis woman far from my homeland.

The first article distills insights from Red River Métis filmmaker and educator Michelle Smith's early pathbreaking work with Indigenous programs at John Abbott and Dawson Colleges. Now Assistant Professor in Education at McGill University, Michelle's contribution ensures that the Indigenous approach is front and center as she weaves reflections on her experience as a Métis educator with lessons learned from Indigenous students and communities, offering provocative questions and actionable suggestions. Michelle shows how taking the lead from Indigenous students and communities can transform relationships and decision-making in CEGEPs and make education more accessible to Indigenous students.

■ Smith, Michelle (2025). *ReconciliACTION through meaningful Indigenous-led Indigenization in Québec Cégeps*, EDUQ.info, 6 pages.

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Principles for Decolonizing Education
by Alyson Jones 2025

Principles for Decolonizing Education: A Literature Review

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we live in a world of white supremacy. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to Indigenous people. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the land. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the water. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the air. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the sun. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the moon. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the stars. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the earth. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the sky. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to the universe. To be good, we must first and foremost be in relationship to everything.

In the current socio-political context it is more important than ever to listen to Indigenous voices about decolonization and education. Many settlers should not be working in education directly, instead of a teacher, a white settler, or a parent. I acknowledge that I am not, and cannot ever be, an expert in Indigenous studies or decolonizing education. I am a white settler, and my role is to support and encourage other Cégep faculty and staff to continue their own.

I came to this project first by attending workshops about Indigenous pedagogies at Vanier College and other anglophone Cégeps in the Laurentians. Seeking to learn more, I then applied for a pedagogical research project release from my college, which allowed me to conduct a literature review of pedagogical approaches to decolonizing Indigenous education courses focusing on the literature on Indigenous studies, mostly from northern Turtle Island (Canada). A subsequent project provided a small budget for meeting with Indigenous pedagogical consultants, concerning their feedback on my review and about specific pedagogical strategies for Cégeps courses. The points below are gathered from that larger literature review, which also included feedback from Michelle Smith and other faculty. I have also consulted with Annette Larkin, Katherine George, and Katherine Curran. I would like to thank them for their feedback on that larger review, and thank Michelle Smith and others for their assistance with this article. The ideas shared below are those of Indigenous scholars, to whom I owe immense gratitude for their generosity and insights, and the particular words and any errors or omissions are my own, offered here as a small part of the larger collective process of decolonizing post-secondary education.

Drawing from the literature by Indigenous scholars, I will focus below on five key principles for decolonizing and Indigenizing postsecondary education, both in our classrooms and across our institutions:

1. "Decolonization is not a metaphor" (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonization cannot happen without the expatriation of Indigenous lands.
2. Decolonizing or Indigenizing education is not a multicultural project, and multiculturalism works against Indigenous sovereignty.
3. Decolonizing education requires settlers taking the responsibility for unlearning stereotypes about Indigenous peoples.
4. Decolonizing education cannot happen without acknowledging colonial privilege and "settling" frameworks, which are meant to colonize and repair of being.
5. Decolonizing or Indigenizing education means centering Indigenous ways of knowing and learning across all areas of the curriculum and institution.

These principles also imply a critical reflexivity and understanding of one's own relationship to ongoing settler colonialism. Not to be afraid to ask oneself: "What is my role in this? In my own practice? What do I acknowledge that I am a white settler? I live and work in Turtle Island, on the unceded lands of the Kaniakcheha Nation. I acknowledge that my presence in this form of a western university and possibly my descendants, have been occupying and exploiting the lands of Indigenous peoples. I acknowledge that at the moment I sit with this document, my presence here is a result of a Eurocentric way of thinking. I have started learning from the Indigenous consultants named above and other Indigenous educators in Turtle Island such as Rose Beaudry, Cathy Day, Tracy Gillingham, Kim Martin,

■ Jones, Alyson (2025). *Principles for Decolonizing Education*, EDUQ.info, 12 pages.

The second article by Alyson Jones, a white settler teacher of Humanities from Vanier College, is a literature review of the Anglophone academic literature on decolonizing and Indigenizing education by Indigenous thinkers. Alyson distills this growing body of Indigenous scholarship into five principles for decolonizing CEGEP education, and explores key concepts in Indigenous education such as decolonization, decolonizing pedagogies, and Indigenous/Indigenizing pedagogies. Pay attention to Alyson’s unique approach to conducting the literature review in dialogue with Indigenous experts as an example of an accountable way to do this complicated work as a settler.



■ **Beauvais, Fran Kaherihshon (2025). *Truth, Honour, and Care on Orange Shirt Day*, EDUQ.info, 3 pages.**

Next, Kaniénke'ha:ka counsellor **Fran Kaherihshon Beauvais**, former Coordinator of the Indigenous Students' Resource Center at John Abbott College, issues a powerful call to action to CEGEP employees for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Day or Orange Shirt Day (Sept 30). Fran addresses the ethical and practical dimensions of designing trauma-informed public pedagogies for Orange Shirt Day at CEGEPs, in tandem with provision of safe spaces for Indigenous students and staff to reflect together. Written at the time of the devastating discovery of the first 215 unmarked graves, Fran's essay captures the rage, pain and clarity of Indigenous calls to justice that can both sensitize settlers and guide our efforts at respectful *reconciliation* in the CEGEP context.

Calls to action and justice and Government Reports

We want to remind readers that formal Indigenous calls to action and justice as well as government reports are only a click away:

- **United Nations (UN) *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***
- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) *Calls to Action, especially on Education***
- **College and Institutes Canada's (CICan) *Indigenous Education Protocol (IEP)***
- **Gouvernement du Québec *Viens Commission's Calls for Action***
- **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry's (MMIWG) *Calls to Justice***
- ***Joyce's Principle***
- **Intercollegiate Decolonization Network's (IDN) *Action Plan on Systemic Racism in Cegeps***

Finally, in the "Going Further" section, readers will find resources to guide respectful engagement with Indigenous Peoples, students, and pedagogies in the CEGEP context as together we strive to create a CEGEP system that is more responsive to Indigenous students, realities, values, and analyses.

Going Further

Resources: Compiled by **Michelle Smith**

First Peoples' Postsecondary Storytelling Exchange (English)

<http://fppse.net>

In this community-based project, over 100 people from First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities told stories of education and learning at school, college, university, in family and on the land. Storytelling exchanges, talking circles, and filmmaking took place in the Tiohtiá:ke/Mooniyang (Montreal) area, in Kanien'kehá:ka communities and in Inuit territory in Northern Quebec.

This website shares what the team learned including narrative and testimonial films and participants' recommendations for better educational opportunities. It also documents the collaborative methodology used and provides [resources for educators](#), students and families.

Tremplins DEC's Autochtones / Indigenous Transition Programs (French/English)

<https://fppse.net/resources/indigenous-transition-programs>

Springboard to Success: Skills Upgrading in a Context of Cultural Safety is a participatory project developed by faculty at John Abbott and Dawson Colleges to review their Indigenous transition programs and provide resources for teachers across Quebec colleges. This Needs Assessment includes perspectives of students, teachers and stakeholders, highlighting successes, challenges and recommendations for improved programs.

C'est le Québec qui est né dans mon pays (French) : Bande dessinée par Emmanuelle Dufour

<https://www.emmanuelledufour.com>

Emmanuelle Dufour "entrepris un long cheminement pour aller à la rencontre des réalités autochtones et entamer un dialogue plus que jamais nécessaire. Que révèlent le silence sur les pensionnats autochtones dans les manuels d'histoire et les clichés sur les « Indiens » dans la culture populaire ? Comment a été vécue la crise d'Oka par les Autochtones ? Racontée à partir de sa propre expérience mais aussi celle de nombreux Autochtones et Allochtones, cette œuvre polyphonique explore les legs de notre inconscient colonial et fait surgir des histoires trop longtemps restées dans l'ombre." <https://ecosociete.org/livres/c-est-le-quebec-qui-est-ne-dans-mon-pays>

■ Guide pédagogique accompagnateur (French) :

<https://www.emmanuelledufour.com/guide-peacutedagogique-laquo-cest-le-queacutebec-qui-est-neacute-dans-mon-pays-raquo.html>

■ **Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire? (French)** : Graphique pédagogique basé sur le B.D. *C'est le Québec qui est né dans mon pays* : <https://www.emmanuelledufour.com>

Dewemaagannag : My Relations : Indigenous engagement guide / Mes relations : Guide pour l'engagement avec les peuples Autochtones (French/English)

<https://www.concordia.ca/about/community/resources/indigenous-engagement-guide.html>

“Créé par le Bureau de l'engagement communautaire, ce guide est un outil d'auto-réflexion qui offre des principes directeurs et valeurs pour les chercheurs et étudiants non-Autochtones qui souhaitent décoloniser les relations avec les communautés autochtones.”

L'outil d'accompagnement à une démarche de sécurisation culturelle au collégial

<https://view.genial.ly/6312202118f4460014b50a6f/presentation-inclusion-et-reussite-des-etudiantes-autochtones-au-collegial>

Les pistes de solutions proposées proviennent de l'expertise du Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'œuvre Huron-Wendat (CDFM), d'une recherche portant sur la réussite et la persévérance des étudiant.es autochtones au collégial et des témoignages d'étudiant.es autochtones.

Les illustrations ont été réalisées par Wikwasa Newashish Petiquay, artiste atikamekw et étudiante en Arts à l'UQTR @wikwasa (compte instagram)

■ Vidéo introduction à l'outil : La sécurisation culturelle au collégial - un facteur de réussite essentiel. Résultats d'une recherche PAREA (Mareshal, Denault et coll. 2020)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzSb_vAUT24

Most of the documents referred to in this Bulletin are available [online](#) or upon request from the Centre de documentation collégiale (CDC).

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