

“Closing the Circle”

in *Decolonizing Equity* (2022)
by Billie Allan & Rhonda Hackett

In this final chapter of their book, the authors identify the key points of *Decolonizing Equity*. It is necessary to decolonize the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work being done in postsecondary institutions in the lands presently known as Canada to correct the harms of historic and ongoing colonialism. Decolonizing equity requires a commitment to decolonial analysis and decolonial practices (explained below). For equity programs to be transformative in colonial institutions, decolonial analysis and decolonial practices must be part of the governance to ensure they are meaningfully present and practiced.

Decolonial equity must:

- Honor sovereignty, well-being, and sustainability of Indigenous Peoples.
- Include return of Indigenous lands.
- Center anti-colonialism.
- Address anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism in all its efforts.
- Center the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), with the goal of bringing forward ancestral knowledges.
- Emphasize capacity, relationship building and the interconnectedness of BIPOC lives.
- Be accountable to Indigenous Nations on whose land EDI is taking place which requires Relationship, Relationality, Relational Accountability.
- Include representation to show meaningful invitation to and reflection of BIPOC presence, making institutional spaces welcoming (anchoring intergenerational presence), not token inclusion.
- Tend to trauma, unmet needs, ongoing colonial harms and impacts of equity work on BIPOC spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies.
- Respect and reflect that BIPOC desire and labors are rooted in responsibility to and love for Indigenous and Black Ancestors (past and future) and “All Our Relations.”
- Show accountability to BIPOC: Decolonial equity outcomes must be assessed by those who are the target of and subject to colonial inequities.

Decolonial analysis and practice will:

- Decenter Eurocentric frameworks, with the goal of neutralizing root systems of colonialism.
- Recognize colonial systems that have and continue to determine whose voices, knowledge, and presence are valued, suppressed, or ignored.
- Make visible the colonial relations of power, privilege, violence, silence, and harm, in order to change them.
- Contextualize, historicize, politicize, and collectivize equity efforts to avoid recycling colonial practices that disappear the subjugation of Indigenous Peoples.
- Incorporate learning from, not about, Indigenous knowledge.
- Not reproduce harm while working towards change in colonial systems.
- Recognize that decolonizing equity can be seen as an act of harm reduction, health promotion, and reconciliation for and with BIPOC.
- Reject the settler/Indigenous binary that:
 - hides the history of stolen Black lives on stolen land
 - erases the experiences and realities of those who identify as Black and Indigenous

- disappears colonialism as empire building across many lands
- Support decolonial solidarity by holding space for the complexity and complications of BIPOC relationships while BIPOC continue to develop their relations with each other.
- Engage in practices of repair.
- Practice non-disposability.
- Engage in practices of witnessing.
- Refuse the colonial construct of a perceived economy of scarcity.
- Follow Indigenous ethics of focusing on the process as a necessary way of ensuring that the outcome of the work is meaningful, usable, and accountable, requiring revolutionary patience and a decolonized sense of time.

For BIPOC, decolonial equity is neither conceptual nor optional: it is an act of resistance, survival, and well-being.

How will we know if EDI work is decolonizing?

- Identify metrics that will evaluate efforts towards advancing equity.
 - Is accountability to Indigenous Peoples centered?
 - Is it anti-racist?
 - Is the work done thoughtfully and unrushed?
 - Does it respect Indigenous Nations' sovereignty?
 - Does it show critical reflexivity, relational accountability, and practices of repair?
 - Does it embody willingness to unlearn colonial constructs?
 - Does it transform power relations?
 - Does it eliminate inequities?
 - Does it nurture deep and lasting change?
 - Does the work embody an ethic of love and joy?
- Responsibility of settlers for doing the work of reconciliation and reparation must be genuine and authentic and felt by BIPOC.
- White settler individuals and society, who benefit from colonialism, will feel the change towards equity.

Why now? Right now, equity work centers the colonizer/settler, maintaining Eurocentric frameworks that undermine Indigenous sovereignty and anti-Black racism without challenging or changing colonial perspectives.

- EDI work is popular now but it is not centered in decolonial analysis and decolonial practice.
- Lack of substantial progress makes now the time to disrupt the re-inscription of colonial conceptualizations of equity in EDI work.
- EDI work is performative, conventional, and superficial, not striving for root changes to the problems of colonialism.
- EDI work does not do what it is being represented as doing.
- White women have been the primary beneficiaries of EDI work.
- BIPOC staff and students face disproportionate stress (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) as a result of being racialized as minorities in colonial institutions.

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