

The Politics of Decolonization and Indigenization: Grappling with the colonial roots of our academic support services (Panel).

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The terms Decolonization and Indigenization are commonplace in this era of reconciliation, but how can they be translated into practice in academic supports, such as Writing Centres and Libraries? Academic institutions are steeped in Western traditions and have colonial foundations. Indigenous enrollment is on the rise, and, in order to provide appropriate and meaningful academic supports, our institutions need to both acknowledge these roots and create space for different ways of knowing. Bringing Indigenous ways of knowing into our work, however, can be a daunting task, requiring new ways of thinking about academic authority. What's more, acknowledging the colonial foundations of our work is personally challenging, particularly as it demands that we recognize our complicity in ongoing inequities.

In this workshop Ashley, an academic library technician, and Julia, a writing services associate, examine the colonial history and impacts within university libraries and their support services. They begin with a brief presentation to share what they have learned as part of a decolonizing task group, and through research undertaken to best support their students. Using Liberating Structures techniques, Ashley and Julia then invite participants to engage with the questions: "what does decolonizing mean to you, and how can it be achieved?" and "what/where is your sphere of influence?"

We recognize that asking and attempting to answer these questions may be accompanied by anxiety and even fear. Given this reality, we use Liberating Structures to support engagement in our session. Liberating Structures are powerful and engaging techniques that make workshops more productive, purposeful, and inclusive. In our session, these techniques create a structured and purposeful dialogue, opening space to turn toward, rather than disengage from, the anxieties that can stop us from even beginning the conversation.

The intention of this workshop is to support a meaningful discussion about why academic services need to engage with Decolonization and Indigenization. In an effort to counteract the paralysis that can accompany such challenging work, the session is intentionally set up to leave participants with ideas for next steps: actions that can be done without any additional resources or authority. We have also created a resource guide, which will be shared with session participants. In these ways we seek to empower participants not to wait for "the perfect" moment or approach to Decolonization and Indigenization, but instead to recognize that the work is happening and they need to be part of it.

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