



## Unlearning Colonialism In Education

In reference to the article *A Curriculum for Education Differently: Unlearning colonialism and renewing kinship relations*, by Dr. Dwayne Donald (Education Canada, September 2022)

### Learning Objectives

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- 1** Participants will begin to understand the pervasive influence of colonialism and how that “gets in the way” of Indigenous-Canadian relations.
- 2** Participants will consider how they could begin to “unlearn colonialism” in education and honour other ways to know and be.

### Preparation

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Participants should read the [article](#) in advance and bring a copy to the session. The [recorded discussion](#) between Dr. Donald and education professionals can be used as a springboard into staff discussions. The [podcast interview](#) is also very helpful background (all available on [www.edcan.ca](http://www.edcan.ca)).

**REVIEW:** 5 minutes**AIM: TO INTRODUCE THE SESSION'S THEME BY REVIEWING KEY POINTS FROM THE ARTICLE**

- 1 Colonial ideologies and structures that disregard and devalue Indigenous (and other cultures') ways of knowing and being pervade our society in ways that can be difficult to recognize. Before Reconciliation (the establishment of healthy and balanced Indigenous-Canadian relations) is possible, a broad social, cultural, and educational reckoning process must be undertaken that focuses on unlearning colonialism.
- 2 Colonial worldview and its cultural assumptions deeply inform the structure and character of the "common-sense" conventions of education.
- 3 The "Western code" teaches us to divide the world and deny relationship, for example by placing human needs before all other forms of life, and by placing the mental aspect of a human being above emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects. In contrast, Indigenous wisdom teachings see human beings as enmeshed in networks of human and more-than-human relationships that enable life and living.
- 4 Nêhiyaw (Cree) teachings about the numbered treaties reveal the possibility of a "treaty relationship" that goes far beyond most Canadians' view of treaties as business deals. Dr. Donald suggests that this understanding of the treaty as a commitment to a kinship relationship can be an inspiration as we do the work of unlearning colonialism.

**WATCH AND DISCUSS THE VIDEO** 30 minutes +**AIM: TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S IDEAS THROUGH HIS CONVERSATION WITH SCHOOL EDUCATORS, AND TO SHARE THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS**

*Choose from the questions below:*

- What questions or insights do you have after watching this conversation? Did anything Dr. Donald or a participant said resonate with you (or upset you)?
- As educators, we strive to have positive relationships with our students. Yet Dr. Donald argues that the long-established colonial worldview teaches us "relationship denial," and that this has affected our education system. What do you understand that term to mean? Can you see examples of relationship denial in education (in, for example, what we teach, how we teach it, or how we organize schooling)? Can you think of examples of ways educators are trying to make education more holistic, inclusive, and relational?
- Dr. Donald writes that to the nêhiyaw (Cree) people, the handshake on the Treaty 6 medal symbolizes much more than a business contract, and is understood to signify "for us to get along well," "for us to live as Nations," "for us to share the land and live as good neighbours," and "for us to raise each other's children well." How do you imagine things might be different if that was a shared understanding between our nations?

**APPLY****20 minutes****AIM: TO BEGIN TO APPLY THESE IDEAS TO YOUR OWN SCHOOL, CLASSROOM, OR LIFE**

*Individually or in small groups, select one or more questions to respond to.*

- What have been your personal and professional experiences with Indigenous-Canadian relations and how do these resonate with the insights shared in the article, podcast, and video?
- What possibilities do you see for unlearning relationship denial with your students? How could you get started?
- What, for you, is the biggest challenge in unlearning colonialism and honouring other kinds of wisdom within the school system? What would help you with that challenge?