

Event Brief

Using the KDE Hub's Indigenous Inclusion Lens

December 10, 2021

Please [email the Hub](#) if you would like more information about the webinar, including a recording

Purpose

The Hub's [Indigenous Inclusion Lens](#) (the Lens) was developed in collaboration with lead author, Dr. Kathy Absolon, professor in Indigenous wholistic knowledge at Wilfrid Laurier University. The Lens seeks to foster conversations, planning and actions toward inclusion of Indigenous voices and knowledge in ways that are respectful and culturally appropriate. This webinar was led by Kathy and explored use of the Lens in project work and beyond.

Participants

The webinar was attended by 18 Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund (MHP-IF) project team members, nine KDE Hub team members, and four Public Health Agency of Canada members.

Meeting structure

- Kathy opened the session with a ceremony to welcome all participants. Each participant introduced themselves and shared their location and organizational affiliation.
- Kathy acknowledged the diversity of MHP-IF projects and provided an overview of the Indigenous Inclusion Lens.
- Participants then took part in small group discussions guided by the Lens and explored ways of including Indigenous peoples and perspectives into all stages of project work. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four breakout rooms, each one corresponding to an aspect of the Lens (Heart, Spirit, Mind, Physical).
- Upon returning to plenary, one individual from each breakout room shared highlights from their group's discussion and Kathy provided a few additional reflections.

What did we learn?

Kathy discussed the historic and ongoing colonial trauma and violence against Indigenous peoples. She used the term "colonial erasure" to describe the omission of facts from main-stream narratives and consciousness about colonial events and impacts, lack of accountability and action to mitigate these impacts, and ongoing exclusion of Indigenous peoples from discussions and decision-making. Using the Indigenous Inclusion Lens is a way to work against colonial erasure because its application fosters consciousness, conversation, and action around wholistic and intentional Indigenous inclusion.

The summary below offers a few highlights from small group discussions about ways in which Indigenous peoples and perspectives can be engaged according to the four aspects of the Lens.

Heart

- Intentional, non-tokenistic relationships require power-sharing and an awareness of who is present, who is missing and why. Ways forward include co-mentoring, reimagining ways of working, thinking about how to initiate relationships, and using a strengths-based approach that includes a focus on cultural wisdom and reclamation. It is helpful to keep in mind that the process of relationship building is long and has no end but should always have a beginning.
- Given experiences of tokenism and insincere Indigenous engagement, persistence and ongoing trust-building is key.

Spirit

- Integrating ceremony and language relevant to geography and cultures is an important part of Indigenous inclusion. Learning and making space for culturally appropriate customs and ceremonies may require consulting with an Elder or community member – this should be included in budgets.
- Given the connection between language and spirit, revitalizing and learning aspects of Indigenous languages (e.g., greetings, saying ‘thank you’) are important.

Mind

- Building knowledge is a lifelong process and colonial violence is ongoing and evolving. Access to resources, training and support should be available to team members for continued learning.
- Having a good understanding of relevant historical and cultural contexts, cultural humility, conversations about eurocentrism, and using participatory approaches facilitate knowledge sharing and partnerships with Indigenous groups.

Physical

- Wholistically-informed actions benefit from ongoing needs assessments, input from advisory committees, agreement on mutually beneficial goals, and having clear expectations.
- Participating in Indigenous events, getting involved in Indigenous communities, and assessing barriers to engagement can strengthen Indigenous engagement and inclusion.

Kathy concluded the webinar by encouraging project teams to continue to use the Lens to inform their work and to identify what can be done one step at a time to engage, invite and build relationships with Indigenous peoples and to create space to be informed by their perspectives.

How will learnings from this event be used?

- Project teams are encouraged to get in touch with the Hub, kdehub@uwaterloo.ca, with input, questions, and comments about the Indigenous Inclusion Lens.
- An annotated list of resources related to decolonization and reconciliation will be available on the [Hub website](#) in early 2022.

