

Event Brief

Webinar- Indigenous Understandings: ongoing impacts of colonialism in Canada

January 25, 2024

The webinar [recording](#) and [slide deck](#) are available

Purpose

The legacy of colonialism has had historic and ongoing impacts on generations of Indigenous people across Canada. Led by Amber Bedard (Research Steward) and Sofia Vitalis (Lead for Education and Mentorship) from [Reciprocal Consulting Inc.](#), this webinar explored current understandings of colonialism in Canada and the destructive effects of colonial worldviews on Indigenous identity and culture. It also highlighted the importance of recognizing the continued influence of colonialism in shaping the way we look at the world and of examining our own worldview and positionality.

Participants

This open webinar was attended by 102 individuals. Attendees included members of project teams served by the KDE Hub (i.e., projects funded as part of the *Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund, Supporting the Mental Health of Those Most Affected by COVID-19, and Mental Health in the Early Years*), members of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Knowledge Development and Exchange (KDE) Hub, and others.

Meeting structure

- The webinar opened with Colleen McMillan (Scientific Co-Director, KDE Hub) making a land acknowledgement and introducing the presenters from Reciprocal Consulting Inc.
- Amber and Sofia gave a presentation that explored the historic roots and ongoing impacts of colonial worldviews on Indigenous people in Canada.
- Alice Schmidt Hanbidge (Scientific Co-Director, KDE Hub) closed the webinar with brief announcements from the KDE Hub.

What did we learn?

- First Peoples in Canada have diverse languages, cultures, beliefs, and spiritual groups, and their identity is a complex spectrum informed by the unique history and worldview of each Indigenous community. Indigenous identity has also been shaped and constrained by interactions with the Canadian government and legislation under the Indian Act.

- For thousands of years Indigenous societies managed their own lands and resources, laws and traditions, and systems for commerce and government. With the formation of Canada, the government developed policies that forced a system of band governance, blocking Indigenous people from following their own systems and ways of life.
- Grounding ourselves in a deeper and more historically accurate understanding of the past provides a benchmark to better understand our current context. The misconceptions and false assumptions arising from Canada's colonial past include damaging paradigms of:
 - *Terra Nullius* (the land was vacant when colonizers arrived)
 - *Doctrine of Discovery* (colonizers had the right and authority to claim land beyond Europe)
 - *White Supremacy* (Euro-Canadian society and civilization is superior to that of Indigenous peoples), and
 - *Paternalism* (colonizers have the right and authority to restrict the autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous peoples, and to treat them as wards of the state).
- Powerful colonial worldviews established a dominant narrative that has been institutionalized into race-based legislation designed to control, assimilate, and eradicate Indigenous sovereignty and culture. Resulting discriminatory policies and practices such as the Indian Act, residential schools, segregated hospitals, and the 60's scoop have had historic and ongoing destructive impacts on generations of Indigenous people in Canada.
- It's important to recognize the continued impact of colonial worldviews in shaping the way we look at the world today and to examine our own worldview and positionality. One tool to guide self-reflection on different world views within the Canadian Eurocentric perspective can be found at: <https://developmentalist.org/worldview-questionnaire>.
- Indigenous communities across Canada are actively engaged in reclaiming their true history, honouring their legacy, revitalizing their identity, and celebrating their unique culture.
- Reframing Canada's colonial past through the lens of truth and reconciliation is essential to establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships with Canada's Indigenous people and mapping a way forward together.

Want to learn more?

- Resources shared by Reciprocal Consulting Inc. can be found [here](#).
- Reciprocal Consulting Inc. led a subsequent webinar titled *Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE) Frameworks*. The [recording](#) and [slide deck](#) are available.

