

Decolonizing our Relationships to Mentorship and the Value of Lived Experience

For YouthREX x Mentor Canada

By Future Ancestors Services

31 January, 2022



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**“In the settler mind, land was property, real estate,
capital, or natural resources.**

**But to our people, it was everything: identity, the
connection to our ancestors, the home of our
nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the
source of all that sustained us.”**

*Excerpts from Braiding Sweetgrass
by Robin Wall-Kimmerer*

Taanishi, Larissa Crawford dishinkaashoon.



- Founder and Managing Director, Future Ancestors Services Inc.
- Certified mediator and restorative circle keeper with teachings from Métis, Anishinaabe, and Blackfoot First Nations
- Award-winning ribbon skirt artist and Indigenous and anti-racist researcher
- York University 2021 Top 30 Under 30
- Learn more about Larissa [here](#)

Miyoonakishkatoohk, Future Ancestors Services.



- We are an Indigenous and Black-owned and operated, youth-led professional services social enterprise that advances climate justice and equity with lenses of anti-racism and ancestral accountability.

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Aen kiiwii tootamaan.

This Session will explore **reciprocal mentorship** in a way that can support both aspiring mentees and established mentors in **reimagining the roles and values one holds in a mentoring relationship.**

Tangible tools and practices will be shared with **the purpose of empowering the participants to reflect and articulate the value and wisdom they carry**, regardless of age, status, or education.

Maarsii, Dr. Lorne Foster pi Ruth Kolezar.



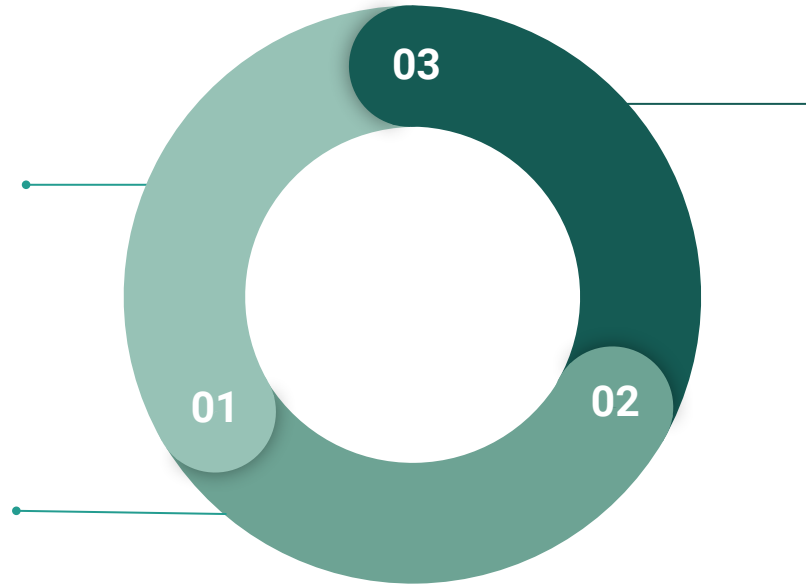
Aen kiiwii tootamaan.

Understanding Decolonization

What is decolonization, and how does it relate to my life? What does it have to do with mentorship?

Articulating Your Values and Needs for Respect

What does respect look like to me? What are my values and what are the consequences of honouring them?



Asserting Your Lived Experience

Am I investing in learning opportunities that allow me to explore and build my skills, interests, and community?

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Understanding 'Decolonization'

Decolonization aims to unpack the impact of colonization on a very fundamental level.

It emphasizes power differences and assigns constant attentiveness to colonial influences, which is necessary to identify how colonial influences are persistent and pervasive in research and society.

(This is one vision of decolonization; there are many.)

Understanding ‘Decolonization’

Decolonization should be regarded as an important means to an end. It has and does create space for Indigenous ways of knowing and being to emerge in a process sometimes called “**Indigenization.**”

Decolonization does not, and can not, only exist in academia. It can shape the way we live; an example of this can be critically reimagining our relationship to time.

Decolonizing Experience and Expectations of Time

How people culturally understand use and relation to time has been weaponized as a tool of colonization, and addressing how contemporary societal, organizational, and personal practices continue this legacy is important in building relationships with Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities.

Nanni, G. (2006). The colonization of time: ritual, routine and resistance in the 19th-century Cape Colony and Victoria. PhD thesis, History, University of Melbourne.

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By the beginning of the nineteenth century a wide cross-section of British society had strongly correlated the notions of ‘civilization’ and ‘true religion’ with **the accurate measurement and profitable use of time.**

Decolonizing Experience and Expectations of Time

In the British colonies, the portrayal of indigenous societies as being 'time-less' (i.e.: culturally lacking regularity, order and uniformity) came to operate as a means of constructing an inferior, 'irregular other'.

Such apparent inferiority, bolstered the depiction of Indigenous societies as culturally inadequate – a representation that helped to rationalize and justify settler-colonialism's claims upon Indigenous land.

Nanni, G. (2006). The colonization of time: ritual, routine and resistance in the 19th-century Cape Colony and Victoria. PhD thesis, History, University of Melbourne.

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Decolonizing Experience and Expectations of Time

The process of temporal colonization was neither homogeneous throughout the colonies, nor uncontested by Indigenous societies.

Time in the colonial context may be seen as a two-edged sword: not only as an instrument of colonial power, but also as a medium for anti-colonial resistance.

Nanni, G. (2006). The colonization of time: ritual, routine and resistance in the 19th-century Cape Colony and Victoria. PhD thesis, History, University of Melbourne.

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Decolonizing Mentorship

“traditional rule-oriented models of mentoring rest on assumptions of individualism and a meritocratic academic hierarchy that spring from the history of colonization; they lack historical context and an understanding of the discourses of power and belonging that can trouble any...relationship...Because it is borne from, and woven into the fabric of, a time-honored Eurocentric academic approach to training and guiding protégés, traditional mentoring is capable of neither disrupting dominant...norms nor overcoming structures that limit relational possibilities.

Decolonizing Mentorship

“When a relationship is culturally safe, both the student and the mentor can discuss their experiences and feelings around issues of culture and race with the confidence of knowing they will not be judged or ridiculed.

The relationship will respect, value and honour the differences that may exist between mentor and student, being mindful that these differences provide an opportunity for joint learning and growth.”

Decolonizing Mentorship

“Cultural safety is a concept that recognizes that there are power imbalances in every relationship; this can be seen as a residual element of colonization.

The concept of cultural safety may be easier to understand by considering the opposite. Culturally unsafe practices are “any actions that diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well being of an individual.”

Understanding Decolonization

- [The colonization of time: ritual, routine and resistance in the 19th-century Cape Colony and Victoria](#), Article
- [Our Statement on the Decolonization of Time](#), Document
- [Kaaweechimoseaywat program: Mentor Guidebook](#), Document
- [Literature Review: Decolonizing and Indigenizing Mentorship](#), Report

Articulating Your Values and Needs for Respect

**What does respect look like to me?
What are my values and what are the
consequences of honouring them?**

Zyra began class at 12-days
old, York University, 2016



Larissa before a life-saving surgery associated with disabilities, 2019



Articulating Your Values and Needs for Respect

Respect looks different to everyone, and whether you're working in a team or introducing yourself to a group, vocalizing and asserting how we need to be respected is an important step in creating equitable spaces of engagement and communication.

Being intentional about identifying and articulating these needs for yourself is a first step in holding others accountable.

Articulating Your Values and Needs for Respect

- What does respect look like to me?
- When should I be communicating what respect looks like to me?
- Have I experienced conflict because my needs for respect were different from another's? What can I learn from this?
- What do I regard as a valuable use of time?
- What are the consequences of honouring my relationship to time?
- What are my values? Why are they my values?

Articulating Your Values and Needs for Respect

- [Our Statement on Tayhkay di miyootootow](#), Document
- [Larissa's Tayhkay di miyootootow](#), Document
- [Why We Ask 'What Does Respect Looks Like to You?'](#), Post
- [Our Statement on the Decolonization of Time](#), Document
- [Tedx Talk on Defining the Impact We Seek to Make](#), Video
- [Reimagining Healing](#), Article

**The Future Ancestors Services
Founding Team, 2020**



Asserting Your Lived Experience

How does my lived experience contribute to my qualification and value?

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Redefining “Qualification”

Qualification is defined by worldview, cultural and social norms, and often the living legacies of colonialism. Barriers are consequently created when one worldview is positioned as the only unbiased, legitimate worldview.

Often times, **through required qualifications, institutions deem only one or few valid pathways to gain the experience to succeed in a position, program, partnership, etc.** This is often done unnecessarily, and with consequences of overt and covert discrimination.

Working at the Ontario
Ministry of Energy, Northern
Development, and Mines, 2018



Asserting Lived Experience as Qualification

- How does my lived experience contribute to my qualification?
- What interdisciplinary and community-based experiences contribute to my qualification?
- What barriers have I been faced with, and how have I adapted and grown to overcome them? When haven't I, and what did I learn from this?
- What are the skills that I have, and how are they transferable?
- How does asserting my value impact others?

Asserting Lived Experience as Qualification

- Practice writing biographies that explicitly demonstrate how your lived experiences contribute to skills, knowledge, and experience that holds value in a professional setting
 - [Example of Larissa's Application](#), Document
- Practice asserting your lived experience as qualification out loud
- Reflect on any opportunities you have to shift an organization's understanding of qualification
 - [Description of Work](#), Document

Action Canada Fellowship,
2020, Public Policy Forum



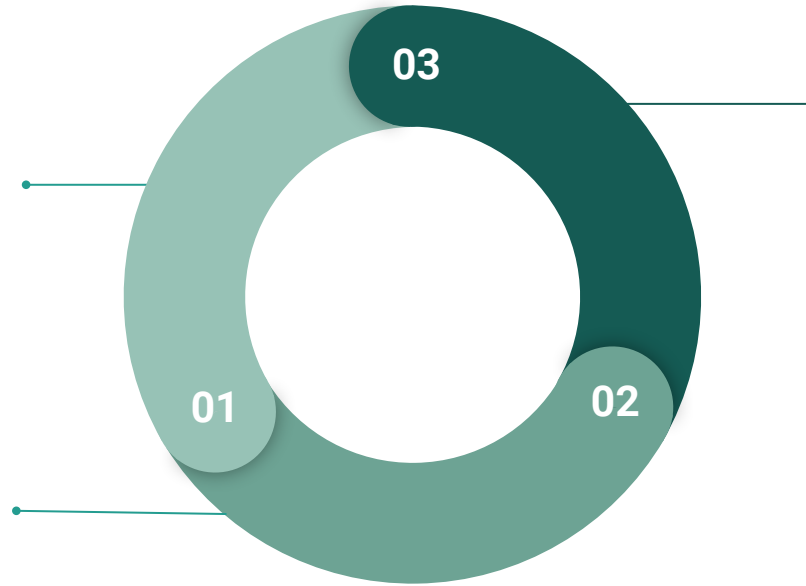
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**Do you have questions for any of the
presenters; debrief reflections; or
knowledge you'd like to share?**

Group Dialogue

FUTURE ANCESTORS SERVICES INC.

Larissa Crawford

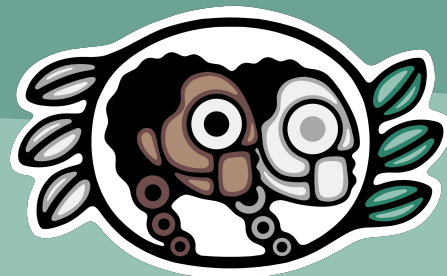
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