

# Decolonization Learning Journey

A four-part Learning Journey with Mi'kmaw Elders and knowledge sharers.

## Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia

Decolonization Learning Journey – Resource document

Webinar #3- June 16, 2020

### Hosting team:

- Elder Jane Meader, Elder, BACS & MEd
- Mary Beth Doucette, Assistant Professor and Purdy Crawford Chair in CBU's Shannon School of Business
- Nicole Cammaert, Associate Executive Director, CSCNS

### Guest speaker:

Stephen Augustine, Hereditary Chief on the Mi'kmaq Grand Council and Associate Vice President of Indigenous Affairs and Unama'ki College, Cape Breton University

### Topic:

Contact and historical conflicts, treaties, and significance of Indigenous People's Day

## Questions & Responses

**When a First Nations person does not agree with beginning sessions with a land acknowledgement because it does not get to the systemic issues we are trying to address, how, as a non-indigenous colleague, do I reconcile this, know what to do, and how to respond appropriately?**

This is a question being asked by organizations across Canada. In some ways, questioning the inclusion of an unceded territory statement signals an important movement beyond the "window dressing" of reconciliation work and pushes us toward systemic change and real action. There is much debate about whether or not to read these statements, but, ultimately, it comes down to your organization, the membership of your board, and the informed decision you will collectively make about how you will move forward in reconciliation. Any actions toward reconciliation should be done in consultation with, and with the inclusion of, First Nation people.

Here are some answers to big questions around unceded territory statements:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136>

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## What was the book Jane spoke about toward the end of the session?

Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life - by James Daschuk and Elizabeth A. Fenn

James Daschuk gives a lecture also called *Clearing the Plain* that is available on Youtube.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=c2IUCd4yX6E>

## There are a number of similar questions about how to mobilize our knowledge to action:

- How do we move beyond awareness of treaties to ACTION to decolonize our settled spaces?
- I am all for decolonizing education, but I honestly am not sure exactly what that means or how to do it. Ideas? What is my place at the table?
- I'm white, European descent. I don't know how to appropriately be involved with T&R.

The answer to this question would widely vary depending on each individual's personal and career situation, but a good place to begin is to be a good ally. As Canadians learn about and acknowledge efforts towards reconciliation with the Indigenous people of this land, we more and more hear the term “ally.” Being an ally can take many forms, and in some ways is defined by each individual and their actions. However, there are some standard guidelines which individuals are encouraged to adopt in their approach to reconciliation:

[https://segalcentre.org/common/sitemedia/201819\\_Shows/ENG\\_AllyToolkit.pdf](https://segalcentre.org/common/sitemedia/201819_Shows/ENG_AllyToolkit.pdf)

## Please explain the sentence at the beginning of events that states we are standing on...land? I don't know the rest. Why? When?

Acknowledging Indigenous territory and unceded land shows recognition of and respect for Indigenous Peoples. It is recognition of their presence both in the past and the present. Recognition and respect are essential elements of establishing healthy, reciprocal relations between nations. While acknowledging territory is very welcome, it is only a small part of cultivating relationships with First Nation communities. Acknowledging territory should take place within the larger context of genuine and ongoing work to forge real understanding, and to challenge the legacies of colonialism. Territorial acknowledgements should not be included as a formality before getting on with the “real business”; they must be understood as a vital part of the business of reconciliation.