

Guidelines to Reading to Decolonize (Spring 2020)

Adapted over time from Anti-Racist Guidelines from the Anglican Church

At each iteration of *Reading to Decolonize*, we look at these guidelines anew, rejecting some parts, rewriting others, occasionally happy to see that we seem to have got some parts right. We invite you to take your own red pens to this, rewriting and rethinking what reading to decolonize means for you, these days.

1. We acknowledge that Canada is a settler-colonial state, and that settler colonialism reproduces itself through the occupation of land, the establishment of settler systems of government, and the creation of a settler culture.
2. To achieve this, settler societies tend to see Indigenous people as obstacles to development, and their lands, labours and cultures as resources to be exploited and profited from.
3. Settler colonialism works in concert with and reinforces any number of other systemic forms of oppression, including white supremacy, patriarchy, ageism, ableism, classism/capitalism, and heteronormativity; we actively respect the dignity, resilience, and vibrancy of all peoples, particularly those who have been systematically oppressed.
4. Like other systems of oppression, settler colonialism's greatest trick has been to convince settlers that it doesn't exist, that it isn't a system at all. Instead, settlers might think of settler colonialism as modern, rational, universal or even inevitable.
5. We recognize that systems of oppression have shaped the world in which we live today. These systems shape our workplaces, our homes, our intimate and professional relations, our understanding of what it means to learn and our sense of the future and what it may bring.
6. Many of us have simultaneously benefited from some of these systems and been oppressed by others, which means we may be prone to reproducing these systems of oppression ourselves.
7. We are committed here to recognizing and unlearning those patterns of oppression that have shaped who we are, and which we may replicate.
8. Those of us who are settlers will have shared in some of the spoils of colonialism, as well as the shame of it. Shame has many faces: some of us wish to proclaim our exceptional innocence, some of us wish to declare our endless guilt, some of us want to hide away. We accept the shame of settlerhood, and will let that shame be one of our teachers.

9. We welcome constructive dialogue that would work to undo our own participation in the cycles and systems of oppression that define too much of life today.
10. Our primary commitment to this group is to read the texts and to keep the texts central to all conversation that takes place in our sessions. We will read closely, listen and respond to one another's thoughts and questions, maintaining a spirit of openness and an intention to learn (and unlearn).
11. Committed to holding space open for others and for the texts we read, rather than simply taking up space for ourselves, we are gathered first of all to paraphrase what is being said, how it is said, and to whom; to remark on how this may seem familiar or unfamiliar; and to formulate questions about what remains unclear.
12. In these ways, we are each of us participants fostering new relations and facilitating a learning experience for one another that may radiate out into and transform all of our respective communities.
13. We assume the best of those who have gathered here.

Use this rest of this space to write in what is missing and what might be removed from this list, or rephrased, in our attempt to better articulate the intentions and manner of our meeting together?