Chapter 1

DECOLONIZING DESIGN MEANS Putting Indigenous First

When I moved to Canada in 2016, I knew there were going to be two major cultural shifts that would affect my new job as dean of Design at OCAD University. The first was learning about and understanding my relationships to the Indigenous Peoples and lands in Canada, as these relationships would be different from my experiences with Indigenous Peoples and lands in the United States and Australia. The second was cultivating the humility to put Indigenous recognition and rights first, even over Black recognition and rights. In the United States, the Civil Rights Movement has meant that Black voices dominate the conversations on equity, diversity, and even decolonization, whereas in Australia, Blakness and Indigeneity are conflated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Thus, I had to learn what my positionality needed to be in relationship with the Indigenous Nations and peoples living in Canada. If you want to decolonize design, a lot of self-preparation is needed to become useful in co-creating conditions for Indigenous sovereignty. If you are not ready to do the work of self-preparation, your efforts will fail because you will not be able to build trust and respect with Indigenous communities. This chapter describes how decolonizing design means putting Indigenous first in your decisions and actions.

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The Red and The Black

I acknowledge the ancestral and traditional territories of the Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Kaskaskia, and Myaamia (Miami) nations, who are the original custodians of the lands in which I grew up in a place now called Indianapolis, Indiana.[1] In elementary school, we learned about the many Indigenous nations whose land we inhabited in Indiana: the Miami Nation, about whom we learned the most; the Kickapoo, the Delaware Nation, the Odawa, the Shawnee, the Ojibwe, and the Potawatomi. I remember visiting the green earthworks burial mounds of the Henge Complex, an hour outside of Indianapolis, on a school field trip. Ball State University archaeologists, who desecrated this ceremonial and burial site from 1965 to 1971 and again in 1999, attribute its origin to the pre-Columbian colonization Hopewell and Adena cultural groups and date the site from 250 BCE to 350 CE.[2] When I was growing up in the 1970s to the 1990s, the racial dynamics of Indianapolis seemed to be mostly between Blacks and whites. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, signed into law by President Andrew Jackson, forced the original Indigenous Peoples and those who sought refuge from colonial incursions on the East Coast to move further west of the Mississippi River. Growing up, we were told to believe that there were no Indians left in Indiana.

But we knew this to not be true. The 1980 United States Census listed 9,495 Indigenous people in the state of Indiana, which were out of the total 1,478,523 counted in the census for the entire United States.[3] Even from just following my own family lineage, we knew it not to be true. Like most Black folks who have lived multiple generations in the United States, I had heard stories of Indigenous ancestors. My maternal great-grandfather, Raymond Campbell, was said to be "part Cherokee," such that he looked, according to my great-grandmother Katrina, like a Black Clark Gable. The first time I got my hair braided in cornrows with extensions, the same great-grandmother asked me why I was wearing my hair like an African, saying, "Your heritage is Indian, Baby." I remember my biological mother once gifting me when I might have been six or seven a wooden "peace pipe" and a wallet with feathers on the cover to "remember my Indian heritage." Like a three-strand braid, it is said that our family lines are an interweaving of African, European, and Native American/Indian heritages. And since we could trace our Woods family connections at least five generations to the actual location of the Woods family's homestead in southern Indiana, there were at least some partial Indians in Indiana.

Yet, I never have nor would ever claim Indigeneity. I once tried to explain why to my friend, OCAD University colleague, and proud Métis, Jason Baerg when we were working on a project on Black and Indigenous relations with students. First, there are only stories of Indigenous heritage in my family. There is no documented proof. While 23andMe genetic tests can show that one has Indigenous gene characteristics, it does not give one claim to Indigenous community. Second, my family has had no contemporary connections with

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Indigenous communities. In our family stories of migration from New Orleans to Memphis to southern Indiana, and then the big city, Indianapolis, we talk about unknown mixed Black and Indigenous or white and Indigenous women, but never about a specific Indigenous community. The community lines and cultural transmissions have been broken for many generations. But third and most important, my soul is satiated by the depth of African American culture. As a novel and hybrid culture coming out of the encounters between African, European, and Native American peoples, African American culture has its own deep history. Since 1619, it has created its own foods, languages, spiritualities, music, dances, dress, and styles, which are constantly evolving. As I watch others search for belonging and meaning by tracing their Indigenous heritages, I am already connected to my own deep sense of belonging within African American culture. This is not a denial or erasure of Indigenous culture and community, but a recognition that African American culture had already infused crucial aspects of Indigenous ways of being and thinking within it.

And here, I want to introduce two important theoretical frameworks that deeply shape my understanding of the positions among different peoples and the ways in which cultures evolve over time in the context of colonization and decolonization. These frameworks have helped me define the boundaries as well as the possibilities in my co-facilitation of decolonization processes across the North American and Australian continents. I offer them as being possibly helpful to you.

The first is the settler-native-slave triad of relations in settler colonialism that Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang define in their foundational essay, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." First, they define settler colonialism as different from other forms because "settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain."[4] The native positionality is that of the original custodians of the land. In settler colonialism, native bodies and cultures must be eradicated in order for the settlers to impose their own order on the land, which is now seen as property. Native peoples are reordered in settler colonialism as bodies for labor or elimination. The settler positionality is that of the dominator "over the earth and its flora and fauna" because they believe they are more deserving. Through extreme violence, they seek to subdue the land to make it produce much more than its normal capacities by taking excess land and creating excess labor to work the land. The chattel slave positionality is that of people treated as "excess laborers" whose "bodies and lives become the property, and who are kept landless."[5]

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While Tuck and Yang are careful to point out that the triad describes structural positions and not identities, I have found it a useful framework to describe why, for example, the term IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, and People of Color) introduces an important nuance in our discussions of decolonization. In the context of North America, there are specific identities that are more enmeshed in these structural positions in their relationship to the land and their relationship to colonial assimilationist policies.

IBPOC Identity	Triad Positionality (Native, Slave, Settler)	Relationship to Land	Relationship to Settler Colonial Assimilationist Policies
Indigenous	Native, Slave	Original custodians	Fight assimilation for over 500 years
Black	Slave	Involuntarily brought to the land as excess labor	Structurally not assimilated to preserve white supremacy
People of Color	Settler and sometimes Slave	Come to the land to escape the colonial violence and destruction done to homelands	Have privileges based on skin color, education, and wealth to make difficult choices to assimilate as a buffer against Blacks in maintaining white supremacy

Table 1.1 Indigenous, Black, and POC identities related to the Triad Positionalities of Native, Slave, and Settler.

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Indigenous Native American/First Nations and tribes are deeply enmeshed in the position of natives, who are related to the land as its original custodians and have fought colonial assimilationist policies for over five hundred years. They have also been positioned as chattel slaves, until their deaths from the lack of immunity to European diseases forced settlers to find another source of excess labor.

Black enslaved Africans and their descendants are deeply enmeshed in the position of chattel slaves. Having been brought involuntarily to this land, they have specific claims of innocence when it comes to colonization. Since the legal establishment of white supremacy in 1681, their personhood has been kept structurally outside of assimilation by the settler colonial state in order to preserve this white supremacy. The United States Constitution originally ascribed Black folks three-fifths of personhood, before being repealed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The calls of Black Lives Matter are the contemporary expression of Black exclusion from the protection of the law.

People of Color, an inadequate term to describe anyone who is not Indigenous, Black, or of white European heritages, but one that allows for coalition building, are deeply enmeshed in the positions of either settlers or chattel slaves. Depending on their educational level, skin color, and wealth, some people of color make difficult choices to give up their languages, names, customs, and value systems in order to better approximate the dominant culture of the settler colonial state as a survival technique.

My positionality vis-à-vis Indigeneity and the settler colonial state can illustrate how Indigenous people and Black people were treated differently in North America, and thus where our goals do and do not overlap in the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and Black liberation. In his 1969 book *Custer Died for Your Sins,* Vine Deloria Jr. wrote a chapter entitled "The Red and The Black," where he describes how white men approached each group differently:

> He [the white man] systematically excluded blacks from all programs, policies, social events, and economic schemes. He could not allow blacks to rise from their position because it would mean that the evolutionary scheme had superseded the Christian scheme and that man had perhaps truly descended from the ape.

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> With the Indian the process was simply reversed. The white man had been forced to deal with the Indian in treaties and agreements. It was difficult, therefore, to completely overlook the historical antecedents of Thanksgiving, the plight of the Pilgrims, and the desperate straits from which various Indian tribes had often rescued the whites. Indians were therefore subjected to the most intense pressure to become white. Laws passed in Congress had one goal—the Anglo-Saxonization of the Indian.[6]

Deloria is critical of the Civil Rights Movement and explains Indigenous skepticism of the March on Washington of 1968 because "in our hearts and minds we could not believe that Blacks wanted to be the same as whites" (that is, have legal equality and cultural conformity with whites). He is more embracing of the Black Power movement because its message of self-determination and self-sufficiency was more aligned with Indigenous goals. "The Red and The Black" have shared the fight against settler colonial oppression, but our experiences and tactics differ.

The second theoretical framework I draw upon is the concept of transculturation introduced by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in his book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. This book underpins my understanding of culture and how it changes over time and place. Ortiz argues that when cultures encounter one another, three processes can take place:

1. Acculturation, in which a culture might take on elements of another culture;
2. Deculturation, in which a culture lets go or loses aspects of its culture; and
3. Neoculturation, in which a completely new culture emerges that is distinct from the original cultures.[7]

African American culture is a neoculturation of the distinct remix of African, European, and Indigenous cultural elements derived from the intimacies through which the three groups interacted in North America. The music form jazz is one of the highest expressions of the African American remix culture: European melody meets African syncopation meets Indigenous heartbeat. Similar neoculturations can be said to exist for Afro-Caribbean and Afro-South American cultures, and are equally expressed through highly original musical forms, which are tied to original religious and cultural practices.

Importantly, Ortiz recognizes that these processes of cultural encounter often happen under unequal power relationships. So, for example, acculturation might be English culture imposing calico skirts on the bodies of Indigenous women by force. Deculturation might be enslaved Africans losing their languages, such as Wolof, because slave owners forbade the use of it, with the threat of

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maiming or death if caught speaking it. Neoculturation might be the invention of chop suey by Cantonese immigrants in the 1880s, when forced by anti-Asian discrimination to go into the restaurant and laundry businesses and move from the West Coast further east. This dish of vegetables, various meats, and noodles adapted for Western tastes and ingredients "joined ham and eggs and coffee with donuts as a standard part of the urban diet, while Chinese-American restaurants began to pop up in every city and most towns across the country."[8]

The theoretical frameworks of the settler-native-slave triad and transculturation have been useful for me in understanding the histories of colonization and the fight for Indigenous sovereignty in the three settler colonial states where I have lived: the United States, Australia, and Canada. Preparing yourself to be useful in the facilitation of decolonization requires that you learn the history of the lands on which you live, work, and build community. I have touched on my experiences growing up in Indianapolis, Indiana. I will focus on my experiences at Stanford University; Melbourne, Australia, where I lived from 2009 to 2015; and Toronto, Canada, where I have lived since 2016. I will not present a comprehensive history, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and historians have more knowledge to impart. I only hope to convey the specificity of the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and how it has pushed me to Put Indigenous First.

The Fight for Indigenous Sovereignty and Stanford University

I acknowledge the ancestral territories of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which Stanford University sits. Throughout my life, I have sought knowledge about Indigenous ways of being through books, but at Stanford I had the opportunity to learn directly from Indigenous classmates. As an example of my book learning, in junior high school I wrote a book report on the Shawnee war leader Tecumseh and how he was nearly successful in stopping American expansion into the Northwest Territories of the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin as well as Upper Canada. He used diplomacy to create a pan-Indian nation confederacy, hold off American incursions following the 1809 Treaty of Fort Wayne, and later establish military alliances with the British.[9] Here I offer a trigger warning about colonial violence. While Tecumseh was on a diplomatic mission to recruit more Indigenous nations, the American military attacked the settlement of Prophetstown, where three thousand Indigenous pilgrims had come to live out the religious words of Indigenous cultural revitalization from Tecumseh's brother, Tenskwatawa, under Tecumseh's political organization. At the Battle of Tippecanoe of 1811, an American army of a thousand soldiers led by Governor William Henry Harrison defeated the warriors and burned the village and its food supplies. Tecumseh returned three months later in February and

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decided to make an alliance with the British.[10] A few months later in June 1812, the United States officially declared war on Britain, starting the War of 1812. Together, the British armies led by Major General Isaac Brock and Tecumseh's armies won control over the crucial trade and military post of Fort Detroit. After Brock's death in battle and due to the cowardice of his replacement, Major-General Henry Procter, Tecumseh and his warriors were trapped in the swamps of Moraviantown and defeated in October 1813. It is said that Tecumseh's dead body was mutilated for war trophies.[11]

The story of Tecumseh is instructive in understanding the fight for Indigenous sovereignty in the United States in a few ways:

1. European colonization used a series of treaties to push Indigenous nations further to the West. Some of the reasons Indigenous communities signed the treaties included their sickness and death from European diseases, their military defeat due to the brutality of the colonial settlers, misleading interpretations of land agreements, and their intentional starvation by settlers.

2. Indigenous Peoples used both diplomacy and armed conflict to stop the incursions of European settlers into their territories. They relied on conflict when diplomacy failed.

3. Indigenous armed conflict on Turtle Island, which is how many Indigenous communities refer to the continent of North America, was also part of the colonial proxy wars between France, Britain, the United States, Canada, Spain, and Mexico. Indigenous Peoples had their own interests in fighting, but the colonial powers were the ones who provided weapons and intelligence as well as stoked the conflicts.

4. Indigenous Peoples have never stopped fighting for their sovereignty.

But these are things that I learned in the abstract, when I took classes on Indigenous literature and histories at Bryn Mawr College. Since I studied anthropology in college, almost all of the courses in my major had colonial content about Indigenous tribes and nations from around the world. While at Bryn Mawr, I had a few classmates who were Indigenous, from whom I could learn more directly: one from the Crow Nation, who told me how the Crow were enslaved by other Indigenous tribes; one who was Chickasaw from Oklahoma and adopted into a white family, and was reconnecting with her Indigenous family; and one who was Afro-Indigenous, who shared with me the depth of anti-Black racism in Indigenous communities. But nothing would be as life-transforming as my experience with Indigenous classmates at Stanford University, where I learned first-hand what it feels like to Put Indigenous First.

In some keynote talks, I mention the "Congress of the Oppressed," which refers to the cohort of PhD students who took Professor Renato Rosaldo's Cultural Citizenship course in the Anthropology

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Department at Stanford University in autumn 1994. The course was my first real experience of true diversity. Professor Rosaldo was Chicano, and among my classmates, we were one African American woman (me), one biracial African American queer person, one biracial Jamaican and British man, one Chinese man from mainland China, one Indo-American woman, one Indo–South African man, one Japanese-American woman, one Jewish woman, one homosexual white man, two Chicanas, one Mexican-American man, one indigenous Carib man, one Métis woman, one Ho-Chunk woman, one Yaqui man, one Muscogee woman, and one Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape woman. I still talk about the course today because it was my first experience of decolonizing education.

During the first half of the course we oppressed one another in spite of our diversity. For many of us, it was the first time we were not the only "diverse" ones in a university class. Thus, when we found our voice as intellectuals, it came out sounding like the voice of a white European poststructuralist male. Halfway through the term, we realized what we were doing and changed the direction of the course. Maria and I led the change by bringing in English and French hip-hop music and playing it for the class. The following weeks, others brought poetry, food, art, and music of their cultures and communities. Through each week in the class, I learned the deep histories of my Indigenous, Black, and POC colleagues not through books, but directly through their food, music, literature, and stories from their grandparents and great-grandparents. We still mixed this in with poststructuralist theories, but we were writing ourselves into the curriculum. I learned in that class that while there are stories, there are first stories. And that is when I decided that in whatever educational endeavor I pursue, I would put Indigenous stories first.

And I continue to do so. When I taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I created my favorite class, Transcultural Aesthetics and Contemporary Design, which I have taught a version of across two continents for over fifteen years. The first module of the course begins with readings and films about contemporary Indigenous design. For this module, I have invited Indigenous designers and played recordings of Indigenous stories and poetry. The second module focuses on design from Zimbabwe, so I invited my friend Saki Mafundikwa to remotely connect with my class along with his students at the Zimbabwe Institute for Vigital Arts (ZIVA). The third module focuses on Indian design, and I remotely invite colleagues from the Indian National Institute of Design in Paldi Campus in Ahmedabad. In the fourth module, focused on Chinese design, I invite colleagues to connect remotely from the Central Academy of Fine Arts located in Beijing. In the Transcultural Aesthetics course, I have attempted to recapture the feeling of an inclusive and decolonial education that I experienced in the Cultural Citizenship course and my other courses with the Congress of the Oppressed. And when I moved to Naarm (Melbourne) in 2009, I was able to co-build an entire Master of Design program focused on decolonizing design.

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The Fight for Indigenous Sovereignty and Regional Naarm (Melbourne)

"We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Swinburne's Australian campuses are located in Melbourne's east and outer-east, and pay our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging."[12]

The only time that I experienced overt racism during the six, almost seven, years that I lived in Naarm was when I was mistaken for an Aboriginal woman. Dr. Ken Friedman, the dean of the Faculty of Design, had hired me as well as Dr. Norm Sheehan, a Wiradjuri man, as associate professors at Swinburne University of Technology. Norm and I attended a meeting with a white Australian external consultant who was helping us develop a strategic plan for the faculty. The consultant ignored me the entire meeting and directed his comments to Norm, who could pass for white. Norm had to repeat anything I tried to contribute to the discussion for the consultant to hear it. When we left the meeting, I turned to Norm and asked, "What was it that just happened?" Norm replied to me, "Oh, he just thought you were an Aboriginal woman." I complained to the dean and my colleague Deirdre Barron, who was another associate dean. Dean Ken Friedman must have told the consultant who I was—that is, the Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching, who shouldered the major responsibility for the strategy—because the next day the consultant would not stop kissing my arse.

That moment confirmed for me two things which I had felt but could not describe about racism in Australia. The first was that unlike in North America, Blakness and Indigeneity are conflated there. In the triad of native-settler-slave, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were both positioned as native and slave by the settler colonial state. The goal of the Australian settler colonial state was to destroy the native population in order to take the land. Through the practice called blackbirding, South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders were kidnapped to work on sugar plantations in Queensland and aboard whaling ships.[13] The second thing I realized was that my Black Americanness, plus high education and professor status, protected me from a lot of racism. As a Black American, I was deemed worthy of respect by this racist consultant in spite of my dark skin. Some people said the strong presence of Black American armed forces in Australia was responsible for this respect. American imperialism creates a different kind of "Blackness" from that of the later first- and second-generation African immigrants, and of the Indigenous Blak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Colonialism happened in very specific ways in Australia. Aboriginal nations, with 200 to 300 language groupings, had lived on the continent for over 65,000 years before the British first arrived in 1770, with Captain Cook claiming the land for the British. Having learned that treaties slowed down the process of colonial theft in North America, the British did not enter treaties with the Aboriginal

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and Torres Strait Islander nations. With a few exceptions, they skipped the processes of negotiation and went straight to physical and cultural genocide, using the doctrine of *terra nullius* (empty land) to justify their terrorism. In 1788, the first fleet of British ships carrying convicts arrived in Botany Bay to establish a penal colony. Just a few years later, the first armed conflicts between the British settlers and Eora Aboriginal groups in Sydney took place as settlers kept disturbing their food sources and burial sites.[14] At every turn, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples resisted invasion. The British settler response was wide-scale and state-sanctioned genocide. In 1788, the estimated population of Aboriginal nations was said to have been at the lower range of 300,000 and at the higher range of 1 million people, although Aboriginal scholars say that it was much higher.[15] According to a census report in the 1920s, though, the Aboriginal population was estimated to be only 58,000 people. The three key causes of death were gun and food-poisoning massacres, the sexual abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, and European diseases, both accidentally and through intentional biological warfare.[16] For example, during the Black War from 1824 to 1831, it is estimated that 60% of the Aboriginal population in Tasmania were killed in the twelve months after martial law was declared in November of 1828.[17]

A common mindset for British settler colonial states in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa was established by the 1837 House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines, which condemned incidents of colonial violence such as massacres and suggested better social policies toward Indigenous Peoples. The committee's sixth suggestion provided the context for the establishment of residential schools and missions; it stated that the revenue of each colony should be spent for "religious instruction and for the protection of the survivors of the tribes" whose lands had been taken or were in the process of being settled by "Her Majesty's Subjects."[18] As a result, from 1890 to the 1970s, one out of three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth were taken from their communities to work as domestic and/or sexual slaves of settlers in missions, boys' and girls' homes, and foster families. The atrocities committed by the Australian colonial settler state on these children, known as the Stolen Generations, were documented in the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997.[19] In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologized to the Indigenous Peoples for the forced removal and assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and its continuous effects on Indigenous communities.

The living memories of places outside Naarm, including Broadmeadows Foundling Home, Tarana Youth Centre, and Ballarat Orphanage, provoke deep intergenerational pain for the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation.

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Creative Healing and Aboriginal Cultural Revitalization

Under the doctrine of *terra nullius*, the colonial settler state attempted to eradicate all Indigenous arts and design, including the design and wearing of possum skin cloaks that told the story of country, kin, and person; the construction of eel traps; body painting in clay; and the carving of wooden shields. Reconstructing and adapting Indigenous arts and design are still part of the process of healing. When I lived in Naarm, artists and designers such as Lee Darroch, Vicki Couzens, and Treahna Hamm were ten years into the revitalization of the making of possum skin cloaks. They were hosting workshops for Elders and youth to understand the history and make their own cloaks. On the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) website, Lee Darroch describes the healing workshops run by the Banmira Arts, an Aboriginal arts collective: "When we run a cloak healing workshop with community and we have a group of people from one language group all together, it is really powerful because the elders will be telling the stories that should go on that cloak. They're the story tellers and knowledge keepers ... and the parents are listening, the young people or teenagers are listening, the little kids are listening. Everyone gets to hear and those stories get put on the cloak and that is really powerful because that's the Telling."[20]

At Swinburne University, I had the honor to work with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives who were continuing the fight for Indigenous sovereignty in Australia. I was able to work closely with my colleague Dr. Norm Sheehan; N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, the Senior Elder of Boon Wurrung peoples; student Myles Russell Cook (Wotjobaluk); and community members Ray Thomas (Gunnai/Kunnai), Samia Goudie (Bundjalung and Mununjali), and Jefa Greenaway (Wailwan and Kamilaroi) to integrate Indigenous principles of Respect, Know, Care, and Share into module one of the Fundamental Design Studio course for all of the master's of design programs and the four-course specialization in Indigenous Knowledge as part of the master's of design (Design Anthropology) program. We were able to fund and host weeklong Indigenous art and design exhibitions and lecture series, showcasing the work of Kelly Koumalatsis (Wergaia and Wemba Wemba and Greek), Maree Clarke (Mutti Mutti, Yorta Yorta, Boon Wurrung/Wemba Wemba), Treahna Hamm (Yorta Yorta), and Ray Thomas. We were able to place students in Indigenous organizations to do their service learning. In chapter four, I will address how these interactions with Indigenous ways of making in the Fundamental Design Studio course changed the understanding of the modernist project of design and the Bauhaus. The outcome of the relationships that I built with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Naarm is what got me the job at OCAD University in Canada. When they asked for a dean who could help facilitate decolonization and Indigenous revitalization, I knew what the possibilities could be.

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The Fight for Indigenous Sovereignty and Regional T'karonto (Toronto)

OCAD University acknowledges the ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of the land on which we gather and create. One of the purposes of the land acknowledgment is to remind people to learn about the history of the land and the peoples of the land. T'karonto stands at the intersection of waterways created by the melting of the glaciers during the Ice Ages around 9,000 BCE. It is where the Don Valley River and the Humber River, which connects to the Georgian Bay via the Toronto Passage, flow into Lake Ontario.[21] The area has been an important trade route, especially for fur, which accounts for the complex history of groups both from Indigenous nations and European nations living there and competing for the land and water access. Among Indigenous nations living there since the fourteenth century, the Haudenosaunee, also referred to as the Iroquois, and the Algonquin language speakers, who were the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Anishinaabe, and later their Iroquoian-language allies, the Huron-Wendat confederacy, competed for control of these lands. The Haudenosaunee is a confederacy of six nations: the Mohawk (Kanien'kehaka), Oneida (Onayotekaono), Onondaga (Onundagaono, Bayuga, Guyohkohnyh), Cayuga (Guyohkohnyoh), Seneca (Onondowahgah), and the Tuscarora (Ska-ruh-reh), which joined in the eighteenth century. The union is recounted in the Hiawatha Wampum Belt, which also is represented on their flag. Their reservation, the second largest in Canada by size, is located a one to two hours' drive by car or bus from T'karonto. Their confederacy model of governance influenced the structure of the United States Constitution.

These nations were treaty people and are known for their great diplomacy in resolving conflict. The Two Row Wampum was an agreement made between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch government in 1613 that "Each nation will respect the ways of each other and will not interfere with the other."[22] When some of my Indigenous colleagues define the goals of decolonization, one goal they mention is attaining the Two Row Wampum's respect for Indigenous sovereignty over their own affairs, especially their remaining land and water rights. By the 1600s, European diseases were ravaging Indigenous populations. According to the City of Toronto Museums, half of the Indigenous populations in southern Ontario and the Great Lakes region died from European-brought diseases, just between 1634 and 1640.[23] The need to rebuild population power bases and to counter the westward pressures of Europeans' deep incursions onto Indigenous lands to the east led the two regional Indigenous power players to use the British and the French in their proxy wars with one another, just as the European powers were using their Indigenous allies in their own proxy wars.

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With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, French-held lands were passed to the British. King George III recognized First Nation Rights through the Royal Proclamation that "it is just and reasonable, and essential to Our Interest and the Security of Our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians, with whom We are connected, and who live under Our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to, or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds."[24]

With the Royal Proclamation, the British Crown embarked on a series of treaties, thirty-five in all, to purchase Indigenous lands and establish Indigenous reserves. Conflicts over the interpretation of these treaties ensued, and still continue in land claims today. After the Dominion of Canada was established in 1867, the fight for Indigenous sovereignty intensified with the passing of the Indian Act of 1876. Bob Joseph (Gwawarnuk Nation) outlined the act's intentions of cultural genocide in a 2016 article "21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act," which included a description by Canada's first prime minister John A. Macdonald that "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change."[25]

One of the twenty-one things to come out of the Indian Act was the system of residential schools for Indigenous children. From the 1870s to the 1990s, an estimated 150,000 four- to sixteen-year-old First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children were taken from their communities and put into one of 139 Indian residential schools, paid for by the Canadian government. The children were mentally abused by rules that forbid them from practicing their cultures and speaking their languages and forced them to take on European religions, languages, and cultures. They were physically abused by assaults on their hair and bodies through grooming and dress routines, starvation, overwork, and medical experimentation. In some cases, the children were sexually abused.[26] As I discussed earlier, this model was also implemented in Australia. In addition, the United States has had residential schools for Indigenous children, with the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania serving as the model for the modern residential schools in Canada.

Along with the reservation system, the residential school system even influenced Nazi Germany. According to historian Carroll Kakel III, Hitler's war for *Lebensraum* (living space) in the lands of eastern Europe, in which he planned to colonize Poland, Russia, and the Baltic nations, was modeled on the colonizing missions of Britain and the United States against First Nations and tribes, in that "wars for 'living space' in the 'American West' and the 'Nazi East' served as the trigger for genocidal violence against indigenous civilian non-combatant populations."[27] Residential school–like systems were to be created for those who were eligible for "re-Germanization" such as racially acceptable Poles. At first, Hitler planned to push the Jews into

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a system of reservations: Kakel describes the Nazi Party's "territorial solution" to the existence of the Jewish population as moving them to the Lublin region of Poland into a *Judenreservat* (Jewish reservation).[28] Other plans included creating a reservation for Jews in Madagascar and then Russia, but these plans ended with the defeat of the Nazi military by the Soviets. As Kakel describes the options available to early America and Nazi Germany: "With the closure of the US frontier (in the 1880s) and the Soviet victory in the 'Nazi East' (1944/1945), there was no 'space' left for 'removal' options: in these circumstances, mass killings or assimilation became the only eliminatory options available to policymakers in Early American and Nazi Germany."[29]

While North American policy makers chose assimilation and expanded the residential schools, Nazi Germany chose the industrial mass killings of Jews, Roma, and others considered racially undesirable to the Nazi state. Both were genocidal acts. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report of 2015, the Indian residential school system was an act of attempted cultural genocide of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. In the next section, I will describe the residential school's contemporary impact on my relations with Indigenous colleagues for whom this is a living history in their parents' and grandparents' experience.

Failures in Putting Indigenous First: Not Being Present

Throughout my life, my positioning in relation to Indigenous Peoples has been that of second or third cousins; there is recognizable and real kinship, but we are not necessarily close family. I accept this as a distancing move on my part. I locate my need for distance to the ways in which Indigenous trauma triggers African American trauma. The thing that I most struggle with in being useful to the process of decolonization is being present in the face of the raw pain and trauma still within Indigenous communities. When I underwent the Indigenous Cultural Competency Training at OCAD University in 2016, I nearly had to shut down. In the workshop, the Indigenous Friendship Centre facilitators had us role-play the taking away of Indigenous children from their communities, and then the social and cultural impacts it had on the Elders and the adults in those communities. I was overwhelmed, not out of guilt, like some of my mostly white colleagues, but because I was reliving in present time the reverberating experiences of violent separation, whether from imaginative empathy with other participants in the workshop (as I am a highly sensitive empath), epigenetic memories of enslaved African children being separated from their parents and sold, epigenetic memories of unnamed Indigenous ancestors and their separations from kin, or knowledge of how close I came to being one of many of the Indigenous and Black youth put into foster home systems. The last experience is important because while all of the residential schools are closed, the contemporary welfare and fostering systems

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continue to carry out the residential schools' policies of separation and forceful assimilation of disproportionately Indigenous and Black youth. According to the 2016 Canadian census, Indigenous youth made up 52.2% of children through age fourteen in foster care, although they constitute only 7.7% of the youth population.[30] In a 2015 Toronto report, Black youth represented 30% of youth in Toronto foster care, although they were only 8.5% of the city's youth population.[31] These reverberations of pain have built and maintain the long solidarity between Indigenous and Black communities, such that during the racial justice protest of the summer of 2020 we spoke of decolonization as involving both Indigenous sovereignty and Black liberation.

With wisdom and a good therapist, I have learned to be more present for the pain, trauma, and joy of my Indigenous friends, colleagues, and chosen kin. In the summer and fall of 2021, Canada experienced a reckoning as Indigenous stories claiming that the bodies of Indigenous youth had been buried on residential school grounds were confirmed through imaging technologies. For Indigenous readers, I offer a trigger warning on the following discussion. As of August 2021, it has been estimated that the bodies of more than 5,409 Indigenous youth are buried in unmarked graves in residential schools across North America. There are 3,213 youth documented in the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Report. The estimated count of those at different residential schools include:

215— Kamloops, BC

104— Brandon, MB

38— Regina, SK

35— Muskowekwan, SK

751— Cowessess First Nation, SK

182— Ktunaxa Nation, BC

160— Penelakut Island, BC

161— Fort Providence, NWT

189— Carlisle Indian Boarding School, PA, US

227— Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, MI, US

21— Grand Junction, CO, US

39— Dunbow, AB

74— Battleford, SK[32]

As my Indigenous friends and colleagues express their grief, anger, resilience, and determination to break intergenerational trauma for their own children, I now stay present with them. I show up for the OCAD University community gatherings organized by Nadia McClaren (Anishnaabe Nation) and Peter Morin (Tahltan Nation).

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I donate money to Indigenous causes. I share their messages on social media. I listen when they want to share, and I care about their feelings. I am learning what it means to be present with Indigenous communities. It requires another form of humility to put aside my own pain in order to bear witness to their pain. It is putting Indigenous first. This is part of the work that must be done to be useful in co-facilitating decolonization.

Failures in Putting Indigenous First: Colonized Time and Task

An area in which I consistently fail is cultivating patience for the length of time that Indigenous deliberation and relationship-building processes take. At least two or three times, I have had projects break down, go forward without Indigenous participants, or just be intensely frustrating because I did not respect the Indigenous participants' sense of the timeframe in which something needed to be done. An example of this is the It's My Future Toronto (IMFTO) project that I started in June 2020. The project sought to recruit one hundred eight-to-twelve-year-old Indigenous, Black, and People of Color youth to design a better postpandemic future for the city of Toronto. I had asked Camille Georgeson-Usher (Coast Salish/Sahtu Dene/Scottish) of the Indigenous Curatorial Collective (ICC) if she wanted to join in the project, as her collaboration would be a great way to bring Indigenous youth and might align with some of the youth programs of the ICC. The IMFTO project was really complicated because it involved students, staff, and alumni from OCAD University; industry partners from Wolff Olins, the *Globe and Mail*, Sid Lee, Juliet Creative, Microsoft, Oya Media, and Operation Pre-frontal Cortex; plus we needed to recruit fifteen community partners.

Nervous about managing such a large team of professionals on top of my day job as dean of design, I made my first mistake in the relationship. I created a Gantt chart of the entire project, with eight separate teams, key tasks, and deadlines, and then sent an email asking people to sign up for a respective team. I noticed that Camille had not signed up for the Project Management and Community Engagement team, to which I had mentally assigned her, but I assumed that she was busy. I sent everyone reminders, including Camille. Then I made my second mistake. As the project kick-off meeting got closer, I sent everyone a detailed email regarding tasks that I hoped they could do. To Camille, I asked if she could help make introductions to Indigenous organizations from which we wanted to recruit Indigenous youth, find an Indigenous Elder to guide the project, and provide more details about the city poster project she had described in our original phone call. Still not hearing back from her, I did what I should have done in the first place and set up a Zoom meeting.

Immediately, I noticed a chill in comparison to our previous interactions. We talked about all that she had going on with projects and her PhD. I asked if she still had the bandwidth to participate as I noticed

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she had not signed up for any teams. She said that she did not know which team she should sign up for. I explained that I was hoping she would sign up for the Project Management and Community Engagement team, as it was the one where we do all of the planning for the project and discuss how we want to approach the community. When she replied that this was the part she was excited about, I asked her to do a bunch of tasks.

This is where I clued into my mistake, and asked, "I did that thing that people do, right? Where they ask the Indigenous person to handle all of the Indigenous things, but not shape everything else, right?" She nodded. I apologized and told her, "I thought that we were going to be talking about everything as well. I just thought you were too busy to meet with me weekly and that you would want to participate in some minimal way. I am sorry."

The energy visibly shifted between us. She confirmed that she was very busy and balancing a lot of commitments. She could help connect me with Indigenous organizations and named a few, and help things out, but mostly at the minimal level. I contacted the Indigenous organizations she suggested and made another mistake of using her name for an organization that she had not suggested, but I had written down incorrectly. Camille and I are social media cool in that we follow and comment on each other's achievements and initiatives, but my mistakes cost IMFTO an important partner, not just because of the Indigenous connections that she could bring, but because of how smart and active she is as an artist and curator. Don't be like me.

Because of my nature as a doer, I will have to constantly struggle with cultivating patience for the length of time taken in Indigenous deliberation and relationship-building processes. I dropped out of OCAD U's Indigenous Education Committee after we spent nine months talking about things without my getting a sense of productive action. I had not realized that my presence mattered until one of the Métis faculty in design, Howard Munroe, told me, "You really need to come back to the IEC. We need your thinking." Since he was stepping up to co-chair the IEC, I regretted that my decision left him feeling under-supported. My Indigenous colleagues are generous. They recognize that we are all learning and growing. No one has done this kind of decolonization before. I make mistakes, admit them, ask what I can do to make amends, and then do the work required of me. Simple to say, but complex to do.

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Possibility Model of Success: What Is Decolonizing Design? An Indigenous and Black Sharing

Yet, I do have moments of shining success, where all of the positioning of self, research and learning stories, practicing humility and patience work out. I am confident that I can be useful to the process of decolonizing design. Moments of success include the hiring of Indigenous faculty at Swinburne University and the two Indigenous cluster hires at OCAD University. My favorite moment of success is represented in this sharing between Peter Morin (Tahltan Nation), the Indigenous advisor to the provost at OCAD U, and me.

Block Magazine had asked me to conduct a conversation about decolonizing design for their readers for the Fall/Winter 2020 issue. Since our principles of decolonization say that one cannot talk about decolonizing design without including Indigenous perspectives, I persuaded the editor to let me structure it as a dialogue between an Indigenous architect and me. The Indigenous architect declined to participate, so I offered the spot to my colleague and one of my favorite people to talk with in the world, Peter Morin. To make it more interesting for us, I proposed that we approach the sharing based on what we would say to one another about decolonization and design without considering the white gaze. I instructed the editor that she could give us the word count and overall structure, but we would edit the transcripts ourselves, so as to not be translating for the white gaze. Everyone agreed. *Block Magazine* has kindly given permission for me to republish our conversation.[33]

If you want to understand what it means to decolonize design when you put Indigenous recognition and rights first, this sharing is a possibility model of what we might achieve, not aspire to or be inspired by, but actually achieve. To prepare yourself to be useful in the decolonization of design, you need to commit yourself to this model of possibility for what design can do and mean for all our relations.

> **Dori Tunstall:** The question we've been asked to discuss is: What is decolonizing design? But first we must unpack what decolonization is, and I think that conversation is led by those who are Indigenous.
>
> **Peter Morin:** Decolonization is about power, right? And it's an acknowledgment of how certain white folks have built and maintained a system that enables them to keep themselves drowning in that power. When I work with students, community members and elders, I have to explain colonization before we can even start talking about decolonization. My working definition of colonization is: Colonization is the forced removal of resources from Indigenous territories. Resources are not singularly tied to what's under the ground or on the ground. Resources include the land itself, intellectual property of Indigenous people, intellectual production, artwork and our bodies.

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D.T. That's such a rich definition. It opens up so many nuanced possibilities around a holistic understanding of what the colonial project does and has done.

P.M. In the work that I used to do, I needed to be able to say to an elder or a youth, "This is what colonization is." Back home, folks are using that word to describe a lifetime of experiences, and also trying to understand [that term] so that they can stop apologizing for feeling powerless. Decolonization becomes an active interrogation and a dismantling of the privileges and powers that you receive as a result of colonization. And how to activate a decolonizing methodology is something you have to determine for yourselves. But keep in mind: If it doesn't hurt, then you're not doing it right.

D.T. The discourse of decolonization from my Black American perspective comes out of the liberation struggles in Africa and then, to a certain extent, the Caribbean as well. We often forget the deep interrelationships between the Caribbean and Africa. But that means that notion of decolonization is more centred in the body than it is in a sense of land. There are similar experiences of displacement from the land, but it's complicated by the fact that we can't go back to the land. The "motherland" rejects you.

P.M. Well, the land can kill you or welcome you. It is always complicated.

D.T. I've always gravitated to design because design has been the communication of ideas through adornment for at least 65,000 years. To me, decolonizing design is about getting to the point where making, as it relates to our bodies and adornment, brings liberation.

P.M. I'm thinking a little about how decolonizing design can also mean that we design the object, make it and give it to somebody to use. In thinking about what you're saying, decolonizing design also enables liberation for the community. The sharing of the object makes us free. I feel like I need to put on my grandpa's hat for the rest of our visit ...

D.T. I'm channeling my great-grandmother's hat.

P.M. When we think about decolonization, what we're also trying to do is understand how potent and expansive the knowledge of Indigenous and Black and folks of color actually is. It goes beyond the containers. These knowledges are joy and celebration, and they help you to see your family better. This competes with colonial power. Like racism, colonial power is very slippery. It took me 42 years of life to realize that when I'm using that word "racism," I'm actually reporting how your behaviour is causing me pain. ...

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D.T. There's something very optimistic about how we might recognize all the nuances of our various identities, which were lost or hidden, and celebrate them without hierarchy. A lot of damage has been done by the systems of hierarchy that say that "this" is better than "that."

P.M. It gets complicated for Indigenous folks. I'm speaking with this body and using the word "appropriation," which [we've experienced] at times as outright theft. But then you come from a deep history of sharing knowledge as a priority. We're community members. You share with me and I share back with you to honour the gifts of your sharing with me.

D.T. This is where I think the problem with appropriation and misappropriation is actually the stopping of the free flow. They say, "this is mine and I'm going to exploit this without being in dialogue with you."

P.M. It's about how we meet each other with love, kindness, care, and grace, which are part of our cultures. It is also about how that well-made object is so powerful. The priority was to gather and trade for materials for the artists and the designers so that they could make new things for the community. This making and sharing of that object is joy, and until you start decolonizing your design thinking or design, you can't see that joy or that love of making.

D.T. Joy brings us back to our discussion of the liberation of the body. I always think of joy as our expression of the ultimate freedom and connectivity to all things around us. And so to think that that could be embodied in an object is so powerful.

P.M. It's so powerful. When you hold it, that object remembers how the joy flows into your body. And as a future maker, try to hold on to the actual objects made by your ancestors.

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Key Takeaways for Putting Indigenous First

This chapter was about how to prepare yourself so that you can be useful in the process of decolonization. There are four key takeaways from this chapter on how you can prepare to Put Indigenous First:

1. **Figure out your positionality vis-à-vis Indigenous sovereignty over the land.** You must understand your own positioning in relation to the specifics of your local settler colonial state. What is the specific configuration of native-settler-slave of your country? Which identities are enmeshed in those structural relationships? If your positionality is native, the work you need to do is different than if it is chattel slave or settler. This work requires a tremendous amount of humility.

   For those readers outside of North America and Australia, ask yourself questions such as who are the Indigenous Peoples of your lands? (There are Indigenous people all around the world.) Who have been the powerful and who have been the structurally excluded populations of the land? Who has been brought in to provide excess labor? What does it mean for you, as an individual and collectively as a community, to build your "good life" in the place where you are living and/or working?

2. **Learn the colonial histories of the places where you are.** Practices such as land acknowledgments may at first seem superficial, but they won't be if they are the first steps of learning the history of the land and Indigenous relationships to the land before colonization and within continued colonization. Decolonization is about the land. If you do not understand the land, you will not be engaged in decolonization.

   For those outside of North America and Australia, what have been the histories of migration within your lands? Where did the wealth of your nation come from? Was it built from extracting the lands and resources of other peoples?

3. **Make mistakes, but also make real amends.** You will make mistakes. Having authentic relationships with Indigenous Peoples is the only way of being able to hold yourself accountable for your colonial ways. But understand that each mistake you make with them will cause them harm. If they trust you, they will tell you what you did and what can be done to make amends. You should follow those directives to repair the relationships and open an opportunity for healing. This will be easier for us racialized folks than for white folks, because of the histories of broken treaties between Indigenous and white people.

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For those outside of North America and Australia, what harms have been done to populations who have been structurally excluded from wealth, health, education, and other resources in your country? In what ways are you or are you not contributing to their sovereignty?

4. **Design objects that can transmit liberatory joy to the body and community.**

In the next two chapters, I bust some of the myths of the modernist project in design. After preparing yourself to be useful to decolonization, re-storying design is the next step required to make it able to more closely align with the final takeaway of this chapter: design as making objects of liberatory communal joy.

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Figure 2.1 Dori reveals the exploitation behind the modernist "White City" of Chicago. *Illustration by Ene Agi.*

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